Scaling Paradiplomacy: An Anthropological Examination of City-to-City Relations

By Jennifer Hubbert

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The seventeenth-century Peace of Westphalia established a long-standing diplomatic order, albeit with shifts across the centuries, in which sovereign nation states are presumed to be the most logical and important diplomatic actors. Yet, at this juncture in history, we are witnessing the growing inward-leaning nationalism of many leaders of nation-states that negates the importance and utility in these state-to-state engagements: The United States promotes wall-building and withdraws from global climate-change and health governance networks; Britain "Brexits." These estrangements have only been exacerbated by the recent COVID-19 pandemic in which nations closed their borders to the outside world, engaging in a nationalistic blame game over the arc and trajectory of the virus. Yet, in the past several decades, the world has also experienced global processes that increasingly ignore the boundaries of the nation state in favor of rapid transnational flows of investment, people, services, and information.

These concomitant rejections of global accord and disregard for national boundaries have been accompanied by the growing engagements of urban metropolises in interstate political, humanitarian, and economic governance: Portland, Oregon (United States) provides sanctuary to undocumented immigrants; Qingdao (China) joins the C40 Cities Climate Leadership Group; Rio de Janeiro (Brazil) works with London and Amsterdam to establish a bike sharing program. Subnational diplomatic relations such as these are increasing at a faster rate than relations between nations (Tavares 2016) as subnational entities work with their global counterparts to attend to many of the same dilemmas addressed by federal governments—to deliver better education, provide adequate infrastructure, ensure consistent health care, build personal relationships, maintain peace, and promote economic development. Indeed, in this age of what some have called "planetary urbanism," it

has been claimed that "everyone thinks cities can save the planet" (Keil 2020: 2).[1]   And what might happen, the late Benjamin Barber asked, "if mayors [rather than presidents and premiers] ruled the world" (Barber 2013)?

    As cites are increasingly positioned as alternatives to nation-states as agents of diplomacy, a new domain of urban paradiplomatic exchange is taking shape. Therefore, our traditional analytical approaches and questions about international relations will benefit from additional methodological and conceptual inputs to make sense of this shift. This paper argues that anthropological research is particularly well-suited to analyze what it means for cities to become arbiters of global diplomacy. Offering an anthropological lens to a field largely dominated by urban studies, international relations, political science and public diplomacy scholars, this study of urban paradiplomacy offers an analytical approach focused on both micro and macro level scales of analysis.[2] First, I seek to understand the relationships of paradiplomatic actors to broader institutions, practices, and structures of power, to reveal the assumptions, values, and cultural beliefs that inform the processes and outcomes of paradiplomacy. Second, rather than taking for granted specific agents of paradiplomacy, for example the "electeds" (as one former mayor called them) or official city employees, I think broadly about who constitutes "the city" through asking the following questions: Who are the actors who represent and act in the city's interests? Are the elected officials of the metropolis the most important paradiplomatic actors or can we think more broadly about other constituencies who have skin in the game and consider their roles in defining the city and seeking change on its behalf? This project is thus less about policy and the specific results of urban paradiplomacy and more about understanding its process and methods for its analysis.

Based on over two years of research in the city of Portland, Oregon, I apply this research approach to two issues that dominated Portland's city-to-city encounters: sustainability and economic development. In this paper, I explore these two issues within the context of Portland's diplomatic relations with cities in China and Japan. Urban diplomacy is often cast as a solution to the challenges of national diplomacy due to its proximity to the problems at hand and its ability to "get things done" (Landry 2015). As we see through examining the micro levels of experience and their relationship to macro-level structures of power, urban diplomacy is often innovative, able to bypass federal bureaucracy, and more in touch with its constituent base. While the ability of actors not in the official municipal cadre to get their interests to the table may be more tenuous than that of their elected counterparts, they have an important pulse on the nature of urban problems and their solutions that warrants their inclusion into more formal structures of power. At the same time however, city diplomacy often attempts to tackle problems that are reflections of larger structural, cultural, and ideological formations beyond the capacity of cities themselves to address. As such, I argue that this methodological approach facilitates both an understanding of "the logics and politics of power" that inhere in modern diplomatic practices (Altman and Shore 2014: 352) and an appreciation of how the quotidian everyday interactions of situated individuals embodying the city shape its urban aspirations (see also Roy and Ong 2011).[3]

Where Mayors Rule the World: What is Paradiplomacy and Why Cities?

The term paradiplomacy is an abbreviation for "parallel diplomacy," a term coined in the 1980s to reference Nixon's "new federalist" model of decentralization (Tavares 2016: 7-8).[4] While the most orthodox uses of the term focus on

the art and practice of more formal, institutionalized forms of statecraft, paradiplomacy has more broadly come to reference an expansive host of city-to-city engagements that have arisen in the global era in response to the entrepreneurial imperative created by the devolution of federal power and diminution of federal funding, and the increase in monetary flows, growth of multinational corporations and the accelerations of global communications and transportation technologies (Clarke 2009; Cremer, de Bruin and Dupuis 2001; Harvey 1989; Keating 1999; van der Pluijm and Mellissen 2007). Indeed, in the light of these conditions, Dan Chan argues that traditional nation-state diplomacy is "in trouble" in the face of twenty-first century global interdependence and its concomitant increasing permeability of seventeenth-century Westphalian boundaries (2016: 134).

Yet what exactly constitutes this "parallel" space of diplomatic practices? Rogier van der Pluijm and Jan Melissen define city-to-city diplomacy as the "institutions and processes by which cities…engage in relations with actors on an international political state with the aim of representing themselves and their interests to one another" (2007: 6). While city diplomacy remains embedded within a nation-state framework—each city after all has a global postal code that references a higher order of place-making—through these paradiplomatic engagements cities circumvent the state-centric assumption that labels them "mere places" (Acuto 2013: 5). These engagements span a broad range of encounters and activities including issue-specific transnational networks such as C40 and the Global Covenant of Mayors; single-themed Memoranda of Understanding between cities for general economic cooperation; formal, urban international relations office outreach; international conferences and events (world's fairs for example); sister/twin city agreements; city branding programs; private business arrangements; and sports exchanges, amongst a

host of other activities. This essay discusses several of these, including public-private partnerships concerned with urban farming, entrepreneurship, workshops, private development initiatives, and sustainability related official city bureau projects and transnational networks.

The growth of paradiplomacy studies represents much more than an academic fad; at this point in history, cities offer a host of reasons that demonstrate the urban space as a crucial tool for how foreign engagement may be used to improve domestic urban experience. In 2013, at an OECD roundtable of ministers and mayors, then New York City mayor Michael Bloomberg, arguing for the efficacy and efficiency of an international relations network of urban metropolises, made the claim that cities "...are the level of government closest to the majority of the world 's people. We are directly responsible for their well-being and their futures. So, while nations talk, but too often drag their heels—cities act" (cited in Acuto 2014: 77). As Bloomberg suggested, this ability to act and the proximity of governance to the governed are central to a host of claims for the importance of urban paradiplomatic relations, claims that span a variety of rationales from the pragmatic to the philosophical and aspirational.

Urban space is fundamental to our sense of belonging and cities are especially privileged sites for the negotiation of belonging through urban social movements, such as Black Lives Matter protests or Pride parades for example. Indeed, cities are where the global disembarks, local needs are expressed and made manifest, and policy is translated into practice. While most of the world's citizens belong to nations, their daily lives occur at the level and scale of the cities they inhabit. For over half of the world's population, cities are the bridge between everyday experience and the more expansive narratives of international diplomacy. They

have more proximate perspectives on identifying both the problems that need to be solved and the potential methods for resolution. And they produce 80% of the worlds GDP. Clearly, cities matter to global well-being and as some have argued, how they work to solve their local problems has the potential to offer an alternative global governance model (Chan 2016).[5]

Paradiplomacy in Portland

Portland provides a fruitful site from which to investigate new forms of city diplomacy. As an average city with few claims to global city status, Portland arrives at the paradipomatic table with desires to innovate and engage with the global community to solve local problems, but understanding that many places in the world would not even recognize its name. As such, Portland may provide a theoretical example that pertains to a broader swath of experience than the world's most celebrated cities. At the same time, it also provides a level of intimacy that renders research with the city's "ordinary" population *and* its "movers and shakers" arguably more accessible because the layers of bureaucracy are reduced and less unyielding and the degrees of separation fewer and more permeable.

The most populous city in Oregon, with 650,000 people in the city and 2.5 million in the broader metropolitan region, Portland has neither the banking or start-up industry of its southern neighbor, San Francisco, nor the tech savvy of Seattle, its closest northern urban "competitor." Its median per capita income is slightly elevated relative to the US average, its rainfall much higher. It is rather "ordinary" in many ways, not rising to the level of the "global city" theorized as models of modernity by Saskia Sassen and others (Friedman 1986; Sassen 2005; Zukin 1992): the New Yorks, Parises, and Londons.[6] Indeed, I am told by one of my interlocuters that

Portland is "not yet a global city." And yet the city imagines itself as sufficiently different as to be worthy of notice, priding itself on its forward-thinking environmental policies, its collaborative nature of governance and its food scene. Its recent "Go Somewhere Different" advertising campaign defines Portland as a "misfit," enamored with used books, tree moss, cave wine and craft beer, vintage clothing, and rain water, and offers its citizens as a diverse array of ethnicities that defies a demographic that more strongly tilts toward greater homogeneity.[7]

This project employs a multi-scalar, multi-sited methodological approach to data and evidence collection. This includes to date, 1) semi-structured interviews with thirty Portland-based urban actors and eight Suzhou, China-based urban actors, and unstructured interviews and conversations with key participants during participant observation engagements in China, Portland, and the United Kingdom; 2) multi-sited participant observation in Portland, Oregon; Suzhou, China; and multiple cities in the United Kingdom; 3) content analysis of what I call the "ephemera" of everyday life, the various documents (textual, visual, etc.) that provide data for paradiplomacy.[8] Semi-structured interviews in this research drew upon a list of questions relevant to paradiplomatic engagement, some of which were common to all interviews and others linked to the context of the specific interlocuter. The interviews followed a general thematic question protocol but incorporated questions open-ended enough to allow the interviewees to express opinions, ask follow-up questions, and co-direct the conversations. Interviews took place in formal office settings, local coffee shops, restaurants, and homes. Unstructured interviews are more informal conversations that occurred during participant observation, instigated by the contexts and situations of the events at hand. These transpired, for example, on bus rides between cities on a

Portland city-sponsored "best practices trip" to the United Kingdom to learn about congestion pricing, innovation hubs, and regional governance, during coffee breaks at entrepreneurialism workshops, while examining posters at a Japanese student exchange program, in City Hall hallways before and after sister city board meetings; and in urban history museums, among other spaces.[9]

The Portland-based interviews central to this project included mayors and other elected officials, attorneys involved in drafting global trade contracts, data analysts involved in economic forecasting, sister city board members, engineers and academics working on climate change and transportation issues, travel professionals, community activists, economic development consultants, Port of Portland executives, business entrepreneurs, students, college presidents, and directors of cultural exchange programs, among others. The Suzhou-based interviews included real estate developers, foreign affairs office officials, museum directors, and employees of cultural exchange programs.

In addition to interviews, participant observation—the key anthropological method—helps us to understand the complex, situated nature of paradiplomacy. Participant observation is an approach to data collection that prioritizes immersing oneself in the experiences of the cultural groups that are the object of research, ideally participating in their everyday life. Paradiplomacy does not have a "field" in the sense of a singular space where one may observe its practices; this research took place in multiple spaces: in sister city board meetings and ceremonial events, meet-and-greet sessions for entrepreneurs, Chinese museums, urban development agency meetings, cultural exchange presentations on university campuses, board rooms and classrooms, foreign affairs offices in Asia, trade missions,

place branding offices, and best practices trips. This multi-sited research allowed for unique opportunities to interpret behaviors, events and contexts as understood by those participating in them, explore informal networks and agendas of engagement, and probe the routine actions and social calculations that constitute the unspoken assumptions of paradiplomatic practice.

Scaling up Paradiplomacy: The Domain of Economic Development

Throughout my fieldwork, issues of sustainability and economic development rose to the fore as notable domains in which Portland sought out and was solicited for paradiplomatic relations. This first section considers two examples in the province of economic development, an entrepreneurial workshop and a series of business development projects to explore the first analytical approach described above, linking individual actors and singular events to broader values, normative assumptions, and cultural beliefs that moderate paradiplomatic practices and products.

The first example comes in the form of an entrepreneurial networking event of dozens of entrepreneurs and start-up business representatives from Japan and Portland, sponsored by Portland Innovates, a local economic development agency. The aspiration for the event was to provide face-to-face contact for entrepreneurs to exchange ideas and create strategic partnerships in the interests of recruiting Japanese businesses to Portland, selling Portland products in Japan, and innovating entrepreneurial forms of social equity. An ambitious order. Marcus, the organizer, was fluent in Japanese, and had a long history of educational, trade, and business connections with a medium-sized port city in Japan. As a senior manager at Portland Innovates, Marcus

was involved in working with Portland-based businesses, organizing industry seminars, developing supply chains, and managing industrial land, among many other tasks, and had a special interest in linking entrepreneurialism and equity. The participants came from a wide swath of backgrounds and experiences, including members of the Portland maker community seeking markets for their products, social workers from Japan seeking solutions for elder isolation, architects with design dilemmas, and Japanese government officials tasked with growing trade relations.

As I mingled over coffee before the event began, I could sense an overarching buzz about entrepreneurial engagement, an ideology of innovation promoted in the contemporary era as the core of sustainable economic development at both local and global levels (Harvey 1989).[10] This exchange between Japanese and US entrepreneurs was meant to promote mutual innovation and provide global contacts, a need driven by perceptions of global isolation and ensiled creativity. Yet, as I interviewed participants and brainstormed with my tablemates, I began to hear conversations that highlighted motivations other than entrepreneurial ones and constraints to paradiplomatic innovation that that were about far more than meeting the right person. For example, in many ways, the Portland makers' problems were far less about silos and more about stability, such as not having access to health care and other social supports that would allow them to leave their "day" jobs for more entrepreneurial endeavors, or about facing a dominant economic ideology of self-sufficiency and free enterprise in the face of the unfreedoms of child care, elder care, and health care burdens that stymied one's ability to innovate, if not one's desire. And, while the Japanese participants also began conversations with rapid fire exchanges of design concepts and business cards, and had access to universal health care insurance, by the end of the

day, the incentives that had driven them to Portland seemed, for many, more concerned with cultures of business and gendered hierarchies rather than with a dearth of contacts and/or imagination.

One of the participants, Himari, provides a cogent example. Himari was a community nurse at a daycare center for sick children. The nursing center is part of a broader community center for single mothers and incorporates not only health care provision but also daycare, furnished bedrooms for families, and a small business where mothers may find employment. She explained that the building is slowly becoming a hub for the community and emphasized how the construction of social community can help create a healthy community. Portland is known among urban studies scholars and practitioners for its community based leadership and several people at the event, including Himari, mentioned that Portland was "famous" in Japan as a model of neighborhood-based community engagement and that this had influenced their decision to engage in paradiplomatic relations with members of the city.[11] As we discussed her participation in the Portland program, Himari initially focused on the self as the problem behind the construction of community, validating the day's purpose. "I can't think outside the box," she explained. "Here [in Portland], I get new ideas. The community nursing community is too small in Japan. There's very little information exchange. So, I'm here to discover myself, to find out what I'm really curious about. My question is 'who am I'?" Discovering herself, she explained further, involved working with Portlanders on ideas for creating community and figuring out her role in that process.

Such musings mirror the ideological imperative behind the global push for entrepreneurialism as a savior of eco-nomic distress. Entrepreneurialism as an ideology places the

impetus of engagement upon the individual and structures failure not as a result of policy or institutional imperative but of the motivated self. Himari's question, "Who am I?" and her sense that the problem with the lack of community engagement concerns her inability to "think outside the box," reflect a set of principles that see the neoliberal self rather than broader structural imperatives as the locus of transformation. And yet, as we continued our conversations throughout the day, her musings over the problem that drove her paradiplomatic participation exposed a more expansive quandary of engagement that reflected less a problem of individual constraints and more those of ensconced, aged- and gender-based hierarchies of power and a concomitant disenfranchisement that confound attempts to revolutionize the status quo through entrepreneurial endeavor.

While Himari's discussion about her goals initially highlighted the self as locus for change, her later commentary relocated responsibility to broader social institutions and ensconced practices. "I found out what I want to do, I want to change the organizing, to get involved in emerging leader support, to make good relations with my colleagues," deflecting the problem away from entrepreneurial endeavor that the paradiplomatic event was to address. Yet later in the afternoon, her words took on a different tone: "At home, there is conflict between different professions…in professional development in Japan, [there is a] tendency with professional development to focus on what went wrong… this is negative and makes change all about competition… no one is seeing a vision together [as a community]. It's not just my own company that is the problem. We have interns with the program and the [male and older] management just ignores them. It's a bad spiral. It does not encourage people being helpful to each other…lots of young people quit because of these kinds of relationships. It's a very hierarchical society. Young people can't do anything."

In a follow-up conversation with me, the American organizer of the meet-and-greet event, who as mentioned above, had a long history of education and work in Japan, reiterated Hirami's thoughts: "Well, the thing about Japan is that there are lots of bad ideas that get enacted because that's the direction some director or elder wants." He also explained to me that one of the groups that participated in the event established a set of rules of engagement for their trip to the United States. One rule was no "keigo"—an honorific language used to address superiors—in an attempt to diminish formal structural hierarchies that Himari presented as diminishing the possibilities for innovation and change.

In this case, attending to conversations about rules, hierarchies, and entrenched structures of power that are juxtaposed with ideological assumptions about the value and practice of an entrepreneurial-forward economics, offers an important way of analyzing the processes of paradiplomacy. The problems of paradiplomacy are multiple and shifting, embedded in cultural and political discourses of power and the actors and goals of paradiplomacy are sometimes thus limited by entrenched frameworks of power. While such events as this entrepreneurial workshop project an interest in economic development, thinking through different scales of engagement helps us to see those entrepreneurs not as agents acting in isolation but rather in relation to larger structures that may be elided by assumptions about the paradiplomatic frame. Ideologies of entrepreneurialism construct a resilient, neoliberal subject that marks a shift from seeing external structure as the locus of change toward what Anthony Giddens calls the "autotelic" self—the autonomous and responsible citizen (1994). Yet, Himari's efforts to entrepreneurialize the self, to embody that individualized subjectivity demanded by neoliberal economic ideologies, meet with cultural norms about male and elder social

hierarchies that, in her experiences, impede her efforts to innovate socially and to achieve paradiplomacy's goal, in this case, of economic development.

A second example of financially driven urban paradiplomacy that reveals the importance of examining the relationship between micro and macro levels of encounter comes through a consideration of several business development projects between Portland and cities in Japan and China. Similar to the ways in which the entrepreneurial workshop described above brings to light how urban paradiplomacy often tackles problems that reflect larger ethical concerns with the management of power and disenfranchisement that ultimately cannot be solved by individuals or cities, these business development cases show how paradiplomatic encounters elided a complex assemblage of participant relationships with cultural and political practices that stymied the intended effectiveness of the projects.

Japan is Oregon's largest food and agricultural export market and in 2019 was Oregon's third largest export market overall; in the same year Oregon exported $7.2 billion in goods to China, the third largest US exporter to China after California and Texas. Clearly, business with the Pacific Rim is central to Portland's economic well-being. One market analyst who has been engaged in a number of business development projects in Japan spoke prolifically and enthusiastically about the general relationship: "Portland and Japan just connected, it's not just one thing…There's a lot of, you know…similarities. There's just a comfort level that people have here. It's a relationship that is just very strong." The co-lead of the Japan focus group at a large corporate litigation firm that works with Japanese FDI reiterated the sentiment: "Japanese people feel welcomed and comfortable here. The mutually beneficial relationships

promote further growth and prosperity for the people on both sides of the Pacific." The market summed up the relationship as "just very strong…It's two-way."

It's two-way. And yet there was also a consistent verbal contiguity that arose often enough within these conversations about "two-wayness" to give pause and suggest assumptions about the forms of difference assumed and constructed through paradiplomatic exchange. While the engagements discussed here were linked to economic development, conversations frequently tacked back and forth between matters of economic diplomacy and cultural engagements and political practices, out of which emerged a different register of engagement, one no longer pivoting on the idea of equivalence and often locating Portland as the guardian of value and praxis and Japan as the necessary object of pedagogy. "One thing," one paradiplomatic actor explained to me, while describing Portland's business deals with Japanese cities, "is that [Portland] is artisan, unbound by tradition. You know, like they [Japan] have a tradition…you're in line with 700 years [of history]. Here a white guy with a tattoo and a beard can go to Japan and be a sushi chef, and then come back here and he's unbound by tradition. And then they [the Japanese] come here and, and just love this." While Japan's love of artisanry and craft translates to Portland DIY culture, the engagement is represented in a manner that decouples tradition and value with Portland providing the opportunity for the Japanese, through engaging in artistry in Portland, to abandon historical burden and discover a model for cosmopolitan innovation.

Similarly, a marketing professional engaged in Portland place-making efforts for a global audience explained to me that "A Japanese visitor chooses Portland… to be transformed and to take that value back home." What are these values? I wondered. "They're starting to look at our

women's empowerment," noted a project manager at an urban economic development agency. One well-connected member of the Portland community who runs leadership programs for Japanese business people tied the interest to Japanese cultural norms. "Portland is known for civic engagement...like using grassroots to solve issues in the community. If they want to do that in Japan...sometimes it doesn't work because the government will maybe crush you...because of their hierarchical cultural structure. We try to make sure that cultural component is there for them to learn from how we do things in Portland...from the bottom up." Through these commentaries, one sees a move from presumed equivalence of place through finance to the space of culture that rewrites assumptions about equivalency.

Where Japanese cities are structured as mirroring Portland economically, and as appreciating how they can learn from Portland culturally and politically, within a geopolitical context of fractious trade wars and a reheated cool war, city-to-city relations with China have the potential to be worked out in terms of assumptions about essentialized cultural and political differences that attest to the ways in which cities are nested within broader scales of politics that constrain how they act and the very problems they can act upon.

A narrative I heard retold through different municipal offices: Portland was close to signing a large business development project with a big city in China. "But the feedback was super sketchy. Like they would sign a contract but ask for things like a suitcase full of money." Another city actor, speaking of this same development project, "We tested them a couple times. They didn't show up to meetings in like warm-up suits. But we want people who want to learn how Portland builds, maybe interested in taking that to Hong Kong, people who could meet Portland at Portland

level…We did the sniff test. You just start to get really good at sniffing out the capital…I don't know if Portland's ready for that ethical quandary that happens in dealings with China." But is it really only "ethics" I find myself wondering? What does surprise at the absence of the track suit imply about global hierarchies of power and the subsequent possibilities for engagement?

Yet Portland arguably needs China, as mentioned above, its markets account for $7.2 billion in exports from the region. Sometimes the deals align, sometimes they fall through. Portland refuses, sometimes China refuses. "We had all these things teed up [with a prominent industrial city in central China]" a former economic development officer explains. "We had the [Portland] mayor, the [Portland] vice mayor going. We had the [Chinese Communist] Party representation and then our mayor didn't want to go. *He didn't get it*…So, it never went anywhere. There was a tremendous amount of leg work we had done." And yet, rather than framing the diplomatic collapse as a result of local Portland insufficiency, it was represented as Chinese cultural insistence on official recognition. "In China," he argued, you can't do it without the big people involved. You have to have the mayor…Cause we're so casual. Right. They don't understand our city things…In China, you get caught up with all this diplomatic protocol…As opposed to…Tokyo. They don't give a shit."

In these cases, Japan is accorded equivalence when capital is involved. An affective equivalence, a language of love. But to be truly modern, Japan's citizens and its government need to relax, step up community engagement and proffer equality to its women. "We have helped them so much," insists a local university president. China fails to recognize Portland's value. Ideas about the Other appear to inform the desire to collaborate. In these cases,

paradiplomacy often emerges as a practice of alignment with an Other that reproduces a desired image of the self, rather than through more materially instrumental questions of utility, thereby granting certain diplomatic partners an identity as worthy cities of exchange.

Through a methodological approach that moves analysis through different scales of engagement, we see in these processes of paradiplomatic economic development, that while interactions might be motivated by fiscal benefit, the ways in which actors respond, and hence the potential outcomes of the engagements are patterned by larger ethical, cultural and structural concerns that are more wide-ranging than the space of city finance. Assessments and analyses that focus on the localization of urban policy transfer—whether a policy or collaboration might "work" politically—miss the ways in which these broader issues matter, not only because of personal concerns but because they have the potential to affect outcome, regardless of intention: real estate development deals are cancelled in part because of assumptions about cultural assumptions about protocol, community engagement is stymied because of normative practices of gender and age.

Distinct levels of engagement, the corporation, the development agency, the entrepreneur, all are working through complicated assemblages of practice, global power, and cultural ideologies that have important implications for urban economic development. Through methodological and analytical movement from the local through the state, nation and transpacific, we see how the workings of power through the everyday interactions of city actors and the paradiplomatic practices of the city are contingent on cultural norms, expectations and ideologies. While there may be new material connections at stake, and while cities build distinctive engagements and bypass hierarchies, and

in the process contest the parameters of the Westphalian order (Acuto 2013: 55), they remain firmly lodged within power geometries beyond the scale of their specific forms and places of urbanity.

Identifying the Urban Agents of Paradiplomacy: The Domain of Sustainability

While the above section explored the relationships between micro level paradiplomatic processes and broader structures of power, this section turns to the constitution of the city itself, asking who counts for an urban actor and why that matters, analyzing how these actors wrestle with local-global relations in embodied and situated ways that do not take for granted urban interests as a reflection of national interests or as the effect of specific "official" institutions. When the late Benjamin Barber suggested that city mayors offered a compelling new version of global governance (2013), despite the more visionary nature of his locating cities at the crux of international relations, he drew upon a history of understanding city agents as constituted by local government. Moving beyond formally elected actors to interrogate who represents the city in its paradiplomatic endeavors, this section asks what exactly is the constitution of that city that, some have argued, will "save the world" (Brescia and Marshall 2016)?

Portland is somewhat unique among US cities of a comparable size and economic base in its early enactment of broad-based sustainability mechanisms. As part of progressive policies by the Republican governor Tom McCall in the 1960s and 1970s, Oregon became the first US state to enact urban growth boundaries to protect green space and bottle bills to reduce pollution. And where other cities, as one of my interviewees explained, might have one city employee tasked with working on sustainability issues,

Portland has a Chief Sustainability Officer and an entire, well-funded, office devoted to the subject in addition to scores of private citizens whose careers are dedicated to environmentalism. In discussing Portland's global eco-related diplomatic activity, one interviewee articulated how this form of paradiplomacy gets Portland's "sustainability brand enhanced...[Portland] is always right at the top of the charts of visibility" when sustainability issues are concerned. This allows Portland, a former mayor explained, to "punch in above its weight" relative to the "mega cities...because [Portland has] been...innovating."[12] Focusing here on Portland's participation in sustainability related transnational municipal networks and on an urban farming case study provides insight, among other things, into who constitutes the paradiplomatic actor, the importance of local, situated knowledge, and the roles of cultural hierarchies of power in making meaning of paradiplomatic processes.

Transnational Municipal Networks: Efficacies of Scale

Transnational municipal networks (TMNs) are broad-scale organizations that foster and sustain cooperation between cities on defined, common goals. Organizations working toward climate change initiatives dominate the literature on transnational networks. Scholars have argued that while "scalar" diplomacy (between two cities) may facilitate bilateral flows of personnel, commerce, and information, TMNs have a bigger impact because they are multi-scalar, embedded in formal institutions of government, and carry more political clout (see Leffel and Acuto 2017, for example).

Scholars frequently offer the C40 Cities Climate Leadership Group as the paradigmatic example. Founded in 2005, C40 is a network of 96 cities around the world that reads like a who's who list of mayoral movers and shakers. Initiated by former London mayor Ken Livingstone, it has been

chaired by Los Angeles mayor Eric Garcetti, former New York City mayor Michael Bloomberg, and Anne Hidalgo, mayor of Paris. Its original membership was limited to the "megacities" of the world, but has now expanded to include "innovator" cities that have shown leadership in climate change work and "observer" cities that are interested in the topic but fail to meet the minimum-size and GDP participation guidelines. Portland is an innovator city member.[13] Its website claims that "cities get the job done."

Portland's participation in the C40 network arose as a common topic of conversation in my interviews. And yet as a space in which "things get done," my interviewees did not uniformly laud its potential. Mayors, for one, loved it. One former mayor, in discussing the complex and time-consuming management activities of the mayoral office that limited time spent on "outside" engagements, called C40 "one shining example" of cities leading the world on global issues, a "great example of cities... [which will] determine whether we succeed or fail in climate action." Through participation in the C40 network, he claimed, "our climate action plan team learned a lot from other cities."

In contrast, when one moves "down" the formality ladder, beyond the confines of elected government officials, and engages with sustainability office workers, or with private energy consultants and engineers working through paradiplomatic engagements, the efficacy of C40 begins to be questioned. "Well," explains one interlocuter, hesitating as she grappled with how to explain her critique, "C40 is really good at the political stuff. We send the mayor, he's on stage with other mayors, lots of hoopla, good for political visibility. It's much more top down. It can be kind of maddening. It makes work [for everyone else] and can be distracting from what is really important to the cities." Similarly, explained another: "It gets the mayors excited.

They're super competitive." One energy consultant, who had attended multiple C40 global meetings, called them "PR for the mayors. We're all sitting there in the audience, and there's literally a light show when the mayors come out. And all the practitioners roll their eyes. There are a lot of conversations that happen that can help people get inspired, but there is a lot of stuff that doesn't get said at these meetings because the mayors are there."

While C40 receives a good deal of attention in the urban studies literature as a prime example of global urban diplomacy, through expanding our concept of who counts for the city, we see a different perspective on global engagement, one where, my interviewees often claimed, official offices of governance are concerned with public relations and practitioners get things done. In that case, relevant knowledge is situated and local, and there is a decent element of random chance in finding success. What "works" for the city then is sometimes divorced from the authoritative city itself. Sustainability specialists work with several other small-scale TMNs, run by practitioners rather than mayors, and it was these organizations that city actors lauded for efficiency and innovation.

In a discussion about the successes and failure of global collaborations, one paradiplomatic actor involved in an eco-exchange project in China, stressed the importance of situated knowledge: "We are realizing that we can get all these inspirations from other places, but really in order to put them into place, it's the local knowledge that is the most important. We need to work with the local communities to see how things work." And when I asked another interviewee about how the initial ideas for collaborative projects came about, she responded, "Well, Portland has a climate action plan, and we map our priorities from that plan." But the

specific ideas, she emphasized, are often driven by situated and particular staff interests rather than official city dictates.

One former mayor defined it as driven by "an element of randomness," although I argue here that "randomness" emerges as a synonym for social relations. Sometimes someone in an organization "would have the connections and lead the elected, and the elected would, you know say, 'Oh I like that'." The projects, he explained, tend to be "advanced or retarded by personal connections...It's a little bit random in the sense that there may be a specific agenda like cleaning up the river or revitalizing the waterfront or building urban transit that you know about from other cities that provide good examples and you go spend some time studying them and you start discussion with their leadership. But not unless somebody *knows* that and tells you, you're not going to go down that path." And that path can be equally "random." Another person described the process as haphazardly driven by whom you have cocktails with at a conference. A focus on political or economic processes would miss the ways in which these social relations can be driving factors in paradiplomatic relations.

Even when the formal element of government is central to participation in sustainability networks, there remains an element of contingency around an organization's ability to realize its goals. While C40 might be all about "optics" for the "elected," there is a level of legitimacy that mayoral support provides to paradiplomatic projects that defies attempts to work around strictures of formal governance and partly defines success as getting the mayor on board. Despite some fairly common sentiment in my interviews that mayors fail to get the job done, there was a recognition of the politics of legitimacy in which having the mayor on board provides validity to the issue and to the connection. While mayors "get in the way" as several people mentioned

(people are franker in their absence they explained), mayoral presence lends an authenticity to private, non-elected actors and a practicality at the level of policy that can be central to implementing change.

And yet getting the mayor on board is similarly grounded in situated, contingent experiences, histories, and cocktails. In asking how one gets the mayor on board, in tracing the routes of engagement, we see how much the social informal comes to play a role in the formalization of the constitution of the city, processes that a focus on the formal realm of diplomacy and on its outcomes has the potential to occlude. "So, I knew a guy in the state department," mentioned one of the key players in the above-mentioned US-China eco-project, "who had an idea for an eco-partners program with China. He was going to go visit his mom and if it's convenient [he told me], I'd love to come by and say 'hi'." But this Portland player also "knew the mayor" who "called him out of the blue" one time, having heard that "I was a good resource for China stuff so when the state department friend [came to visit his mom], he hooked him up with the mayor who "looked at him and says, 'Where do I sign up'?"

While cocktails may be read as code here for idiosyncrasy, they also perhaps provide a metaphorical representation for the practice of diplomacy itself. Cocktails are a blend of ingredients, some shaken, some stirred, their success at the mercy of ratios, harmonious pairings, and taste buds. And who gets to have cocktails and influence? While formal officials provide legitimacy, it appears that actors other than "the electeds" play a consequential role in driving the construction of paradiplomacy's foundation and in the scaffolding that arises from the ground. In understanding city diplomacy from their perspectives, we see how differently situated actors uniquely structure the experiences of everyday urban life. Thus, our understanding of diplomacy may transform

when we view its practices from different scales and with an analytical lens directed toward the situated manner in which the practices are assembled. This also allows us to question assumptions about efficacy to assess who actually "gets things done." While the ability of these "informal" actors to get their interests "to the table" may be less predictable, they may in effect be the ones with the "true" pulse on urban problems and their solutions.

Urban Farming:

As a C40 "innovator city," Portland has been widely recognized for its early adoption of sustainability practices, one of which is its urban growth boundary. Urban farming and farmers markets have come to be lauded in the city as methods of reinforcing and intensifying this original commitment to restricting sprawl, and some of the city's more intriguing forms of diplomatic endeavor revolve around urban farming and related issues of food production. This is particularly true with Portland's various engagements with a port city in Japan that I call Nakasato, two cities I am told that share many characteristics. According to one paradiplomatic actor who grew up in Nakasato but has since settled in Portland, and who works at the intersection of food and farming practices in both cities, Portland and Nakasato are both relatively small port cities, but located near and in the shadows of larger cities that have "more economic vigor and dynamism." She explained that they are "gastropolises,"[14] newer cities, and are easily accessible to farmland. That half of the traits she listed are sustenance-related is indicative of the food-centric nature of the relationship between the two cities.

Portland-Nakasato paradiplomacy centers upon urban farming and includes a range of actors from Nakasato government officials to Portland chefs. Dominant farming

methods in the two places differ fairly significantly and these differences have spurred the cities' engagements. As several of my interlocuters explained to me, by way of justification of the relationship, while large-scale agri-business overshadows US production, other than in the rice industry, small-scale farming dominates the market in Japan. One of the Portland-based, Japanese women who is central to Portland-Nakasato farming exchanges explained that in her experience, Portland farmers, given the predominance and predatory nature of the massive agri-business ventures in the United States, are interested in learning how to survive as small-scale farmers and have turned to Japan to see how its farms have managed to retain their independence. Yet despite this interest on Portland's end, much of the relationship between the cities has been spurred and incentivized by Nakasato central government, aided by interested citizens, as it seeks to address an aging population, a declining population, sustainability, urban growth boundaries, growing dependence on food imports, and an urbanization that is increasingly encroaching upon farmland, similar concerns with sustainability, different infrastructures with which to engage the problem.[15]

Following a government-sponsored fact-finding tour of urban farms, in 2015 Nakasato established a farmer's market based on one of Portland's most prominent farmer's markets located in the city's "park blocks," a twelve-block green space in the center of the city. One of my interlocuters, who described the exchange process as "so inspiring," explained that the founders of Portland's market located it under a copse of trees, and so Nakasato's market founders did the same thing. The Nakasato market provides a venue for organic farmers to sell their produce to wary Japanese citizens who, another interviewee explained, do not trust the organic food labels in corporate grocery stores. Portland's continued presence at the Nakasato market is not only

through its original design; one of the permanent booths sells a variety of made-in-Portland products.

Part of the appeal of these arrangements with Portland is that Portland is perceived to be "cool." And urban farming, I was told, in order to be more sustainable, needs to be made cool. Central to making farming cool in this particular relationship revolves around the efforts and popularity of one key figure who has, by her own and others' admission, become "famous in Japan." Dahlia is an urban farmer in Portland who was actively involved initially in helping to establish Nakasato's farmers market and groups of Japanese officials visit her farm in Portland on an annual basis. As Dahlia explained, "They [the Japanese officials] said there was a crisis of young people not wanting to farm. 'Can you make it cool'?" they asked. And cool she is; a self-described "tatted out, little crazy," frank-speaking urban farming advocate.

In response, every year since the first visit, at the end of the local farming season, she gathers a groups of Portland chefs and other makers (beer, salt, and cheese one year for example) and heads to Nakasato to meet with city officials, sell Portland products, host farm-to-table dinners, tour farms, and give lectures on organic farming, the slow food movement, what is means to be a young, woman farmer in a male-dominated field, and community building, among other topics. She concurs about the need to attract a younger generation to farming: "Young blood has to do it." Her farm's website lays claim to effect: "Over the last five years, these trips [to Japan] have paid off and more and more young folks in Japan are getting into agriculture. The connections, the friendships…are life changing."

Paradiplomatic engagement emerges here through the connections Dahlia makes with citizens in Nakasato and through the discourses and communities she engages.

Dahlia and her peripatetic cohort represent a paradiplomatic corps far outside the bounds of formal elected officials, indicating that how the city is constituted—who acts on its behalf—has the potential to motivate the form and meaning of the practice itself. Much of Dahlia's work, because of her particular subjectivity, reflects not only farming adventures, but also cultural practices. Wearing jeans frayed by use rather than stylistic imperative and a worn t-shirt, Dahlia explained: "Status matters in Japan, and I do get more respect when I dress better" she explains, "but they've never asked me to dress less American. In fact, they always wanted more Portland...'I love Portland' hats will be in small towns. It's weird. They like how nice people are here [in Portland], how free. Cities in Japan are even doing gay pride...because of cities like Portland." As an out lesbian, she explained, she sought to be upfront about her sexuality and "have it translated," seemingly considering combating homophobia to be part of her farming mission. "When talking with farmers, I would say 'my wife.' I could see the translator pause for a second, but then say 'wife' and these men would still respect me." "I'm gay and a woman and these men are listening *to me*," a much different experience than Hirami's ones of disempowerment in the face of elder, male privilege.

Dahlia frames much of her conversation about farming—what needs to happen in order to make it cool—in reference to cultural practices in Japan, specifically those concerning rules and hierarchies. Dahlia argued that one of the reasons Portland urban farming provided a successful model for Nakasato's efforts was its non-hierarchical relationships between farmers and the community. In recounting how the Nakasato mayor asked her, "How can we make this [urban farming] easier?" she offered an animated response: "Cut out the middleman. Bring the produce to the people instead of food distributors. High five the farmers." "Young people [in Nakasato]," Dahlia explains, "tell me they would 'love to' farm,

but that 'there are too many rules'." Continuing her thoughts, Dahlia stressed her perception of Portland's seemingly non-hierarchical friendliness in contrast with Japan's "super formal" relationship norms, and in a characteristically frank manner she "spoke" to Nakasato farmers, urging them to "break the fucking rules. Break free! Break the rules." This is unheard of for them," she explained, and recounted a story of one her Nakasato contacts crying because "she loved the idea of having direct connections." While paradiplomacy may sometimes look familiar ("I knew someone in the State Department"), here we see how these global engagements have the ability to offer different channels of influence—cool, gay, tattooed urban farmers who seek to rupture formal norms of global engagement.

Considering Portland's sustainability related engage-ments at various scales of practice—global TMNs and city block-sized urban farms—demonstrates how the constitu-tion of the city, the urban actor who acts on its behalf, is a factor in the construction and meaning of the practice or paradiplomacy itself. More than merely a reflection of the interests and motivations of formal officials, paradiplomatic actors span a range of identities and subjectivities. In addition to mayors, we see private consultants, urban farmers, chefs, and NGO representatives, among others, acting as the city to improve its well-being. Each of these actors brings to the table a range of situated histories and unique experiences, all of which inform their approach to the problem of envi-ronmental degradation, the manner in which they interact with the cultural norms of the places they seek to instruct and learn from, and the relationship of their own forms of advocacy to those of recognized, "official" actors.

Conclusion

In demarcating the unique nature of anthropology, Danilyn Rutherford, president of the Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research, suggests that the most obvious distinguishing features that differentiate the discipline from others are its methodological approach (long-term immersive ethnographic research, participant observation, and a concomitant attention to material experience); its comparative perspective (similar to other social sciences), but one that insists on the centrality of context to meaning and practices; and its particularity—a recognition that "our findings on the human condition are provisional." "When we generalize," Rutherford writes, "we do so modestly, with a sense of adventure. We are constantly looking for new ways to tell tales that ring true" (Rutherford 2020). And yet, despite this focus on singularity, anthropology aspires to provide cultural theories adequate to the task of understanding broader relations of power and engagement (Hannerz 1986). What brings these features together, I argue, and the goal of this research, is an analytical lens that is adamant about that particularity, but attuned to the ways in which particularity is situated within cultural histories and broader structures of power, knowledges, discourses, and values. As Aihwa Ong suggests, the "vagaries of urban fate cannot be reduced to the workings of universals laws" even as cities are "principal sites for launching world-conjuring projects" (2011:1).Where traditional analyses of diplomacy often focus on the endeavors of official representatives and formal networks of exchange, my anthropological approach identifies webs of meaning and practice that move beyond official representation to include an expansive array of actors and agencies that act on behalf of a geographic location to protect its rights and interests and a broad range of cultural, social, political, economic, and ideological spaces in which these actors and agencies engage in paradiplomacy.

This research reflects a broader political and socio-economic motivational context in which cities and their paradiplomatic agents are increasingly responsible for and looking for opportunities to enhance citizen well-being. In combining reflections on who constitutes an urban actor and the broader structural atmosphere in which they act, this essay reveals how these platforms of global engage-ment bring into view different interests and relations that trouble assumptions about the constitution of the city *and* the very problems and issues that incentivize, influence, and organize paradiplomacy from the outset. The actors in these cases were sometimes mayors and other elected officials, but they were also farmers and nurses, business execu-tives and lawyers, members of the maker community and architects. They reflected and sought to solve problems of sustainability and economic development, *and* gender and generational hierarchies, the lack of health care, and as-sumptions about cultural and political essentialism, among many more. And their unique, contingent, and situated his-tories, cultures, and social worlds matter to the practice and outcome of paradiplomatic endeavors. The resultant city diplomacy is a conditional practice that suggests a com-plex and often contradictory set of values and desires that must be reflected and understood through the social and the cultural in addition to through the economic and polit-ical—more common domains of diplomatic analysis. While foreign policy here is less an end to itself and more a means to strengthen local competences (Tavares 2016), it is also a reflection of the particularity of those local competences and those who act on their behalf, working with, inspiring and shaping each other across national boundaries, pursu-ing agendas that, while always subject to broader geopoliti-cal power geometries and sometimes reflecting the political exigencies of the nation-state, strive to represent the local self and advocate for locally specific interests.

Author's Biography

Jennifer Hubbert is Associate Professor of Anthropology and Asian studies and chair of the Department of Sociology and Anthropology at Lewis & Clark College in Portland, Oregon. Her research in the intellectual field of public culture encompasses the theoretical intersections and implications of governance, political economy, and nation building. Hubbert has published extensively on China's soft power projects, including the Olympics and the Shanghai Expo, most recently examining the revitalization of urban space as a form of domestic diplomacy. Her recently published book, *China in the World: An Anthropology of Confucius Institutes, Soft Power, and Globalization*, is an ethnographic study of Confucius Institutes that studies policy intention, implementation, and reception and examines the language programs as new forms of globalization and modernity. Her research has appeared in *American Ethnologist*, *Modern China*, *Visual Anthropology Review*, and *positions: east asia culture critique*, among others. Hubbert holds a PhD in anthropology from Cornell University and a BA in international relations and MA in international policy studies from Stanford University.

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Endnotes

1.   This has become a particularly acute question in the face of US withdrawal of support for climate change mitigation with scientific communities turning to cities to circumvent the resistance of the nation-state (Keil 2020: 2).

2.   Anthropology offers to the study of international relations through this scalar approach, in this case helping us to grapple with how subnational manifestations of diplomacy get worked out in localized, non-traditional settings. My work on Confucius Institutes that examines soft power in China (Hubbert 2019a) employs a similar approach.

3.   As Massey (2005) has argued, to understand the city, it needs to be analyzed in reference to multiple scales of engagement.

4.   Throughout the essay I use the term paradiplomacy and city diplomacy interchangeably.

5.   Of course, as we will see below, cities can also be sites for new forms of inequality, both within and between as some subjectivities and places map more easily onto global maps of exchange.

6.   I address Jennifer Robinson's unique theorization of the ordinary city in Hubbert 2019b. Here I use the term in the more common sense of average.

7.   See Cameron-Dominguez (2018) on experiences of blackness in Portland.

8.   This essay focused on the first two of these methodological practices.

9.   Following anthropological protocol and privacy guarantees to interviewees, unless it is central to understanding the argument or the information is publicly available, this essay uses pseudonyms for individuals, cities, and organizations, and refers to nations rather than the city under consideration.

10. For a more global ethnographic account of dominant discourses of entrepreneurialism, see Claudio Sopranzetti's monograph on motorcycle taxi drivers in Bangkok (2017).

11. See for example, Putnam and Feldstein 2003 on community engagement.

12. I was also told that Portland, because it is so well known for its sustainability work, gets "overwhelmed" with pardiplomacy requests from other cities.

13. Innovator cities are defined as those that do not qualify as "megacities" (population over three million and in the top 25 global cities in terms of GDP, but which have demonstrated leadership in sustainability work.

14. As she explained this, she handed me with a pamphlet, written in Japanese, entitled "Nakasato & Portland as Gastropolises."

15. With 28 percent of Japan's population over 65, Japan has emerged as the "world's grayest nation" (Dooley 2019). This, in combination with an average farmer age of 67 vs. 58 in the United States, and a domestic food production rate of only 36 percent (Bailey 2019), has put Japan in need of encouraging a younger generation to take an interest farming.

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