WHAT'S NEXT? NEW FORMS OF CITY DIPLOMACY AND EMERGING GLOBAL URBAN GOVERNANCE

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Witnessing city leaders participate in major multilateral fora, such as the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) or the Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD), has provided a convincing visual representation of their emerging role in global governance. Narratives of city engagement and participation in the "international system" are now also being correlated with systematic evidence of the way multilateral processes are being reshaped, albeit timidly, to include urban actors as critical partners in addressing the world's most pressing global challenges. For example, a recent analysis of United Nations (UN) frameworks found that 80% of documents that referred to cities had been published since the year 2000 and, of these, 85% characterised cities as "actors" capable of influencing the achievement of collective global goals (Kosovac et al., 2020a). Despite these trends, without radical reform, cities are likely to be granted only marginal and consultative positions in multilateral institutions, akin to other non-state actors. These positions will not be representative of the importance of city leadership in governing global challenges in a predominately urban world. Accordingly, the diplomatic activities of cities have focused not only on influencing traditional multilateral actors and processes, but on developing alternative modes of global urban agency, whether through bilateral relations, city networking, or partnerships with other international actors such as non-government organisations, philanthropies and research organisations. This city diplomacy has resulted in emerging forms of formal and informal "global urban governance", which are operating both within and outside what is traditionally understood as the international system. Global urban governance recognises that urban political agency involves interactions with actors at the local, national, regional and international levels. To understand 21st century global governance and its increasingly urban dimensions we first must unpack this multiscalar reality.

Global urban governance is already impacting a range of major policy areas such as the environment, sustainable development, migration, health and culture, to name but a few. City leaders can be effective global governors, but they are constrained by institutional, legal and

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resource barriers, in terms of both finance and expertise). Hence, they play to what the scholarship on modern urban governance tells us are their key strengths – working in partnership and building coalitions of likeminded actors, often operating across political scales, in order to advance the interests of their constituents (Beal and Pinson, 2014). In this way, the global agency of cities closely reflects the principles of multistakeholder governance; however, mainstream international relations has given limited consideration to how cities fit into multistakeholder typologies (Raymond and DeNardis, 2015). In this chapter we focus specifically on the way cities partner with other non-state actors such as universities, philanthropies and the private sector to maximise the impact of city diplomacy and support initiatives that build the capacities of global urban governance. Drawing on a recent survey of the diplomatic activity of 47 cities around the world and a brief case study of Amsterdam, the chapter contends that if we seek to understand the governance of modern challenges through a multistakeholder lens, we need to focus on city leaders and their interactions with academic, philanthropic and business partners. Based on these trends, we also project forward to provide some tentative predictions of how the future of global urban governance may be shaped by these coalitions of actors and the changes that may result from the COVID-19 pandemic.

## I. Emerging trends in city diplomacy

Within urban studies and to some extent international relations, there have been long-standing discussions on the increasing role of city diplomacy; however, to date limited systematic empirical evidence has underpinned these dialogues. To contribute to closing this knowledge gap, in 2019 we conducted a global survey (together with the Chicago Council on Global Affairs) to understand how cities structure and deliver their international engagement programmes. A total of 49 responses were received from 47 cities, representing a cross section of regions and forms of local government.[1] The results provide valuable context for understanding the way cities structure their international activities both within and outside multilateral processes and suggest some trends for predicting future city diplomacy.

The international activities of cities tend to be run from designated international offices or departments within the government. Of the cities that responded, 88% indicated that they have a dedicated international office within their city, with only 6% stating that they did not. This finding reveals a clear intent from the majority of cities to position themselves globally in a manner that is more than ad hoc. This also helps understand the respondents: that internationalisation occupies a formal place within their institution is a key element in contextualising the data.

Our results indicate that private actors and philanthropies have a major role in the way cities conduct their international engagement activities (Figure 1): 96% of those surveyed were part of at least one city network, while around half engage regularly with philanthropies (56%) and multilateral lending agencies (48%); 40% of respondents indicated that they partner with multinational companies as part of their international engagement.

1. Please note that there are more responses than cities because two cities responded twice. For the full list of participant cities, see Kosovac et al., 2020.

Figure 1: Findings from the survey "In the last 12 months, which of the following organisations has your city engaged with?"
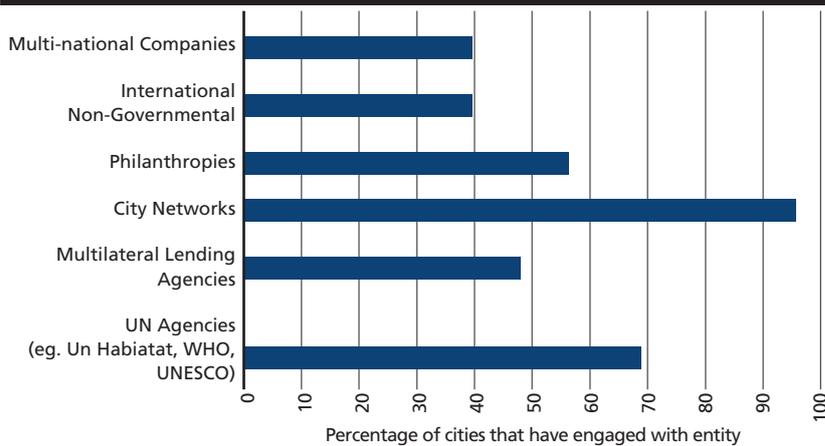
Source: Analysis of 47 cities by Connected Cities Laboratory

Funding constraints were identified as a key barrier to cities engaging in city diplomacy, with over 77% of surveyed city officials agreeing with the statement "*We would engage more in city diplomacy if we had more funds exclusively allocated for this.*"

Multistakeholder partnerships provide an opportunity to increase resourcing for international city engagement by incorporating funds and in-kind arrangements from the private sector, philanthropy and academia (leveraging research grants). Private funding arrangements can be an effective way of increasing cities' international engagement, but they come with caveats and the need to coordinate divergent objectives. The international aims of businesses often align with cities' diplomatic strategies, for example, we have seen synergy between multinational corporations looking to promote simplified pathways for labour migration and international advocacy from city leaders for more open immigration policies. City leaders generally look to support companies operating in their cities and their international ambitions, but as city governments engage more actively in areas such as environmental governance and climate change mitigation the goals and standards they adopt may work against the profit motives of private sector actors. We explore examples of these multistakeholder tensions through a brief case study of the city diplomacy of Amsterdam.

II. The role of external stakeholders in supporting global urban governance

Scholarship on urban governance and urban entrepreneurialism demonstrates the multistakeholder reality that city leaders must contend with to achieve outcomes for their constituents (Pierre, 2011). As cities increasingly project their agency internationally in order to achieve these outcomes, the constraints on their potential to govern only become more pronounced. City diplomacy operates in a realm where the actors often have limited legal and/or political legitimacy, as well as limited resourcing. Despite this, city leaders recognise that international engagement is becoming essential to addressing the urban dimensions of global challenges such as climate change, mass migration and inequality. As a

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result, local authorities look to supporting agents, such as philanthropies, universities and the private sector, for assistance in providing the resourcing, knowledge and expertise they need to maximise the benefits of their city diplomacy. Likewise, these organisations often look to partner with city governments for access to data, expertise or the legal authority/legitimacy to achieve their own urban objectives. These types of partnerships are becoming essential to the semi-formalised architecture of global urban governance.

Philanthropic partnerships

Large philanthropic funders, particularly those based in the United States, have had a highly visible impact on the ecosystem of transnational city networking. To highlight a few well-known examples, the support of the Clinton Climate Initiative (CCI) and Bloomberg Philanthropies for the C40 Cities Climate Leadership Group, and The Rockefeller Foundation for 100 Resilient Cities have been essential to the development of the capacities and prominence these networks have exhibited globally. The Open Society Foundations (OSF) have been a critical catalyst in the emergence of cities as transnational actors in migration policy, supporting the mayoral summits on migrants and refugees that led to the establishment of the Mayors Migration Council (MMC). Alongside the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG), the MMC now co-steers a dedicated "Mayors Mechanism", which is one of the key pillars of input into the multilateral Global Forum on Migration and Development. Naturally, there are risks to an overreliance on philanthropic funding to underpin the architecture of city diplomacy, as funding priorities can change. The decision of the Rockefeller Foundation to stop funding the 100 Resilient Cities Initiative, for example, demonstrates how even well-established transnational networks are vulnerable to shifting philanthropic priorities.

Analysis shows that in general transnational city networks rely heavily on multilateral organisations in partnerships that undoubtedly give some networks access to multilateral processes (Acuto and Leffel, 2020). At the same time, these relationships may subordinate city network activity. One example is the World Health Organization (WHO) who, despite long-standing support for the WHO Healthy Cities Network, have been reluctant to formalise a place for cities within their infrastructure. In this context, major philanthropic funding for city networks can provide the capacity for them to work independently both within and outside traditional multilateral systems. In the case of C40 Cities and its input into IPCC processes, or to some extent the MMC and broader discussions on migration governance, we can see the benefit of well-resourced transnational city leadership organisations who are able to coordinate city leaders and maximise their collective influence on conversations both inside and outside traditional multilateral systems. For example, in the case of migration, some city leaders provided input into the development of the Global Compact for Migration (GCM); however, they had to be invited by their respective states. This excluded cities whose states were not involved in the negotiation process, such as the United States, who withdrew from the process in November 2017. Italy and Brazil were among the countries that did not ultimately endorse the agreement (Brazil voted in favour in December 2018 only to withdraw in January 2019). Subsequent to these negotia-

tions, the mayors of Los Angeles, Milan and São Paulo committed their cities to the GCM's goals and became founding members of the Leadership Board of the MMC. They have leveraged their positions on the MMC Board to become prominent global advocates for the importance of city leadership in global migration governance, including promoting commitment to the GCM, Global Compact on Refugees and city-led initiatives such as the Marrakech Mayors Declaration and the Call to Local Action on Migration.

University partnerships

While universities have not been significant primary funders of global urban initiatives, city governments nevertheless work with academic institutions as a gateway to international knowledge and partnerships, as well as the expertise to translate and contextualise knowledge to local or regional realities. For instance, many local authorities have partnered with universities to support their localisation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The Connected Cities Lab at the University of Melbourne has brought together ten local authorities from across Asia–Pacific to work collaboratively on local projects aligned with the SDGs. This programme includes cities from diverse contexts such as Malaysia, India, Vanuatu and the Solomon Islands. These partnerships may be critical for cities of the Global South, where local authorities have even more limited resources to engage internationally. In Africa, for example, the African Centre for Cities at the University of Cape Town and the African Urban Research Initiative have been crucial in connecting African cities with international urban initiatives.

Private sector partnerships

There is a much more limited understanding of the ways private sector actors are shaping the ecosystem of global urban governance, although emerging scholarship is considering this relationship in the mitigation of climate change (see for example Gordon (2020) and Johnson (2018)). Select examples indicate they have played an important role in catalysing or supporting initiatives in urban resilience and sustainable development. For instance, Arup's decade-long partnership with C40 has produced a range of research outputs and a codeveloped Climate Action Planning Framework, while they have also supported 22 cities to develop resilience strategies as part of the 100 Resilient Cities initiative. It is not uncommon for local authorities to partner with private actors when undertaking international economic missions to other cities or regions, and this has formed an important part of sister city arrangements. There is undoubtedly significant potential to increase public–private and private–civil society partnerships on global urban issues. In the context of COVID-19, a number of private actors, such as IKEA and Siemens, have recently supported explicit urban initiatives aimed at mitigating the impacts of the virus, and in the case of Jones Lang LaSalle and the World Economic Forum have driven discussion on the impact of COVID-19 in cities (Acuto, 2020). The private sector provides access to funding that can greatly enhance the scope of global urban governance. However, in these partnership models, divergent objectives for investment need to be reconciled. In the case study we present below on the collective city diplomacy of Amsterdam, we highlight these tensions in a localised context.

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III. Collaborative urban governance and city diplomacy in Amsterdam

The multistakeholder dimensions of city diplomacy are clearly exhibited in the case of Amsterdam, where city officials consider private companies, universities and civil society organisations as both partners and key actors in driving their international engagement. While there is acknowledgement that private companies can cause or exacerbate urban challenges on a global scale (as in the cases of Airbnb and Uber), the City of Amsterdam also recognises the opportunities of partnering with such companies to solve urban problems at local and global scales.

> Our international policy is based on our urban challenges… Each urban challenge looks for the best partners to address them (city official, interview with researcher, 2019).

The "best" partners as judged by the city government may include private companies, universities, philanthropies and other civil society organisations. A strategic framework (Gemeente Amsterdam, 2012) was adopted by the international office of Amsterdam to actively invest in the development of a network of public and private partners in the city, forming a quasi-consortium of actors to inform and guide decision-making within local government on its activities abroad. A key element of the strategy is convincing these partners to engage in city-led diplomacy in order to broaden opportunities for Amsterdam in the areas of (but not limited to) trade, tourism and economic prosperity. Representatives from the private sector and universities often travel with the Mayor of Amsterdam as part of the international delegation in an effort to position Amsterdam as a global city that effectively takes a consultative and deliberative approach in its engagement with diverse city actors. The inclusion of these actors in the governmental delegation provides benefits not only to the city in its intersectoral engagement, but also "opens doors" for private and academic groups to advance their own international objectives. Partners on a dedicated mayoral international mission are often chosen on the basis of topic or interest area, and an agreed "mission statement" for the trip is circulated to all participants in the delegation. This statement acts as a coordinating tool to minimise conflict or misunderstandings during diplomatic engagement activities.

By establishing these partnerships, the City of Amsterdam's international office is able to harness state-of-the-art knowledge from the University of Amsterdam to inform its policies and priorities, while also offering the opportunity for alignment between the private sector and broader city goals. Partners within the private sector then work toward addressing societal challenges within the city, providing the local government with innovative practices that do not need to be purely funded by the city. In this way, skills and funds can be leveraged to create a wider benefit for the citizens.

This form of collaborative urban governance is directly influenced by the "polder model", a uniquely Dutch approach to political consensus building. The Dutch word *polder* refers to elevated tracts of land reclaimed from bodies of water. The polder model involves the establishment of a joint system of decision-making in areas that are

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traditionally fragmented (*polder*) (Schreuder, 2001). In line with a neoliberal approach of increasing privatisation, the polder model was developed in the 1980s and 1990s as a way of creating a collective group of stakeholders to deliver a unified all-of-community approach to societal policymaking. The neoliberal drivers of this form of collaborative governance in many ways reflect broader trends toward urban entrepreneurialism, although the model has been shaped by many uniquely Dutch factors. The Dutch political system has traditionally been fractured, with a large number of political parties vying for power, resulting in no single political party being able to achieve a majority in parliament. This has produced a culture of coalitions and consultative decision-making, leading our interviewee to assert: "We are a country of people of compromises" (city official, interview, 2019). This embedding of a negotiation-based culture underpins the way Amsterdam engages internationally, presenting a multistakeholder model of city diplomacy that could be pursued by other cities.

Conclusion

Given the evidence we have provided, and changes we have witnessed as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, what predictions can be made about the future of city diplomacy and global urban governance? Naturally, in the midst of the most consequential modern global crisis much is uncertain, and we must be reserved in our forecasts. While global urban agency is undoubtedly increasing, there is potential fragility in formalised transnational urban initiatives like city networks. The challenges of COVID-19, which are impacting all areas of global cooperation, are placing unprecedented strain on multilateral initiatives, which were already experiencing pre-crisis vulnerability with global trends toward nationalism. These challenges could stall or diminish emerging forms of global urban governance, and the urban focus may re-localise. Certainly, in the case of major philanthropies, the crisis has prompted some pivoting toward national priorities, such as the OSF's shift in 2020 of significant funding towards COVID-19 support programmes in US cities. Pre-crisis, the Ford Foundation was also moving to focus its city and state inequality programme on US locales. Restrictions on international travel have increased the barriers for catalysing new initiatives, while also creating novel avenues for digital engagement across regions. It remains to be seen whether these trends will persist once the world emerges from the crisis.

In the case of universities, the pandemic and its impact on the international movement of students has placed unprecedented financial strain on academic institutions in many countries. The budgetary impacts of these challenges will persist for many years and have the potential to affect investment in new globally focused initiatives and partnerships. While universities have not been major direct funders of global urban initiatives, their role as facilitators which connect local governments to international knowledge and partners may also be diminished. A similar observation could be made for private sector actors, who are struggling through the worst economic conditions in modern history. This will undoubtedly lead to a degree of centring on core business to the detriment of more innovative and forward-thinking initiatives.

Despite this, there are reasons to be optimistic regarding the role of cities and urban initiatives in shaping global governance. To some extent, the COVID-19 crisis has solidified the centrality of local authorities and their partners in addressing global challenges. As highlighted by the Global Resilient Cities Network (the next evolution of 100 Resilient Cities), cities are on the "frontline" of COVID-19, with over 90% of cases occurring in urban settlements (United Nations, 2020). City leaders have been responsive and pragmatic in rising to meet the challenges of the virus with a number of city networks quickly mobilising to share resources and approaches to mitigating the impacts of the crisis. In some contexts, these responses have been juxtaposed with sluggish national responses. The reliance on new forms of digital connectivity, driven by the private sector, will in some way reshape post-crisis transnational collaboration. This will hopefully create new opportunities for city diplomacy, which to date has been hindered by limited travel budgets and a stigma toward city leaders who travel too frequently. The future of global governance has perhaps never been more uncertain, however what *is* certain is that the urban dimensions of global governance have never mattered more.

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