



Shanghai Consensus on the Role of Cities in International Relations

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1. Diplomacy

City diplomacy as the officially recognized activity of local actors in international relations, parallel to state-based diplomacy, underscores the importance of representational diversity and diplomatic actors' proximity to society. It signals how real, concrete deliverables enhance diplomatic actors' output legitimacy. City diplomacy embodies the requirement of governmental reconnection with their citizens, as for instance expressed by local attention for transnational issues and global public goods. City diplomacy is dynamic; it puts a premium on collaborative frameworks and is driven by a variable mix of both top-down and bottom-up dynamics.

2. Agency

Engaging in city diplomacy, local governments and local leaders acquire international agency. Within the framework of the society of states and working in parallel to policy agendas set at the level of national government, cities can influence the agenda of the UN system and impact on global governance outcomes.

3. Rescaling

The contributions to international relations by cities help shape a world that borrows from experiences before the rise of the society of states, and in which sub-state actors do not only become more important in their own right, but are also essential to meet objectives of state-based diplomacy and global challenges. As actors, cities are the highly dynamic interface between the global and the local.

4. 'Cityzenship'

Cities and their leaders are today serving constituencies that go far beyond national identities: cities are hubs of communities of common destiny and hinges of global flows of people, ideas and commerce. It is in the city that most people encounter governance, partake in community and confront global challenges. The idea of a city-based citizenship ('cityzenship') implies ascribing to urban dwellers duties, but also rights, to the city. *Cityzenship* might be the most accurate way to convey the relation between urban dwellers, the international system and global dynamics, while not necessarily denying states and other formations.

5. Creativity

Cities are most productive places for the development of innovative processes. Their creative potential arises from the productive tensions appearing where different social, cultural, economic and political stakeholders gather. As an international endeavor, public diplomacy can be inspired by how cities have been such creative interfaces. City diplomacy has to foster and reinforce this creativity by establishing, promoting and nurturing innovative and transcultural spaces for discussions, and platforms for public exchange.

6. Diversity

All cities have their own character, shaped by history, people and landscapes. The cultural variety of cities and the international relations they build add to the cultural richness of a country and provide an opportunity to demonstrate a diverse image of a country.

7. Continuity

Cities are one of the most common markers of civilisation throughout the whole history of humankind, and their external relations have persisted throughout the ages. City diplomacy has historical roots that date back millennia: cities have for centuries carried out diplomatic activities with each other and with foreign entities, and this historical continuity of city diplomacy should be acknowledged to stress the global, long-lived and well-established influence of cities on human trajectories. *Continuity* is one of the most pervasive characteristics of city diplomacy.

8. Peacebuilding

Cities can play vital roles in international peace building when state-to-state relations are caught in a stalemate. Mayors and local politicians can serve as mutually acceptable intermediaries between national governments. Cities can host dialogues, symposiums, workshops or cultural events to facilitate mutual understanding and alleviate a sense of animosity among opinion leaders and the general public. They can also successfully take the lead in advancing collaboration with foreign counterparts to promote the global common good. Traditional initiatives such as 'sister cities' and cities performing as 'cultural capitals' can be upgraded and invigorated for these purposes.

9. Global public goods

In the interconnected world of the 21st century, challenges posed to global public goods (GPGs) have immediate and intensified effects at the local level. In cities and other local communities people experience these effects, learn through them and know how to innovate and implement action for the provision of GPGs. The adaption to specific local conditions makes such efforts therefore more efficient and sustainable. Cities can share their best practices worldwide and successfully take the lead in advancing collaboration in the interests of GPGs, for instance in the fields of environmental protection.

10. Identity

A major factor behind the unique characteristics of European cities, despite previous planning errors, is the still visibly human scale of city planning as much as it reflects a sense of historical obligation. Their citizens live and challenge existing urban identities as much as they are shaping and confirming them within a framework that provides the necessary conditions for an active citizenship.