

CITY NETWORKS AND DIPLOMACY

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SINOPSE

A característica internacional das cidades é intrínseca, dando relevância a seu papel geopolítico no cenário global. A recente criação e relevância de um espaço interconectado de cidades que pode ou não ser influenciado por Estados-nações tem fomentado pesquisas sobre as relações internacionais protagonizadas por cidades. O objetivo deste artigo é apresentar a diplomacia das cidades para além da diplomacia ocidental. Buscamos conceituar e categorizar a diplomacia das cidades, suas estratégias e agentes desde seu surgimento. Tendo como foco o Brasil, busca-se compreender de que maneira o Sul global tem se engajado nesse campo. Considerando que o território das cidades é central para estratégias globais de produção e acumulação, por vezes a diplomacia das cidades encontra-se em meio a contradições, num campo de forças em que grandes corporações, Estados-nações, agências multilaterais, organizações não governamentais (ONGs) e cidadãos disputam espaços de poder e visões da cidade e de mundo. Este cenário leva à formação de redes: i) de projeto; ii) corporativas; e iii) de cidades. As cidades brasileiras têm se postado internacionalmente como consumidoras do mundo, muito mais do que produtoras; entretanto, outras cidades do Sul global buscam inserir-se como produtoras de soluções globais a partir da valorização de estratégias locais. De um modo geral, o campo de estudos sobre a diplomacia das cidades demanda avanços teóricos e metodológicos para compreender este complexo fenômeno.

Palavras-chave: diplomacia das cidades; redes de cidades; Sul global; neoliberalismo; solidariedade organizacional.

ABSTRACT

The international character of cities is intrinsic, giving relevance to their geopolitical role in the global arena. The recent creation and relevance of an interconnected space of cities that may or may not be influenced by nation-states has fostered research on international relations carried out by cities. The purpose of this article is to present the city diplomacy beyond western diplomacy. We seek to conceptualize and categorize city diplomacy, its strategies, and agents since its inception. Focusing on Brazil, we seek to understand how the global South has engaged in this field. Considering that the territory of cities is central to global production and accumulation strategies, city diplomacy sometimes finds it self in the midst of contradictions, in a field of forces in which large corporations, nation-states, multilateral agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and citizens compete for spaces of power and visions of the city and the world. This scenario leads to the formation of three types of networks in which cities take part: i) project; ii) corporate; and iii) city. Brazilian cities have positioned themselves internationally as consumers of the world, much more than producers, however other cities in the global South seek to insert themselves as producers of global solutions based on the valuation of local strategies. In general, the field of study on city diplomacy requires theoretical and methodological advances to better understand this complex phenomenon.

Keywords: city diplomacy; city networks; global South; neoliberalism; organizational solidarity.

JEL: F02; F54; F55; O19.

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1 INTRODUCTION

Cities, especially the largest ones, have always been international in some ways. Their emergence as crossroads of routes (Mumford, 1991) emphasizes their geopolitical role. Since ancient times, several cities have actively participated in global geopolitics by constituting power fields in the international domain. Athens, Rome, Sparta, Bangkok and many others were recognized as sources of power, imprinting their rationality on vast regions of the world. However, the power of City-States declined over two centuries of revolutions and territorial unification that followed the development of the Nation-State since the Peace of Westphalia (1648).

Nowadays cities play different roles in the international scenario. In some ways, they still play as a generic actor, attached to the roles designated by States, particularly in the peacemaking process and soft power strategies. However, it is also clear that cities, both ordinary and global cities, all over the world are speaking out about their own issues, interests, solutions, and conditions in a coordinated way. This constellation of cities forms a supra-regional space of connections and flows that can be, or not, influenced by Nation-States.

Although recent, this process has been intense and rapid, leading some authors to envision scenarios of a new world order (Bulkeley et al., 2003; Acuto, Morissette and Tsouros, 2017; Moita, 2017) or new state spaces based on urban governance (Brenner, 2004; Sassen, 2005). For some (Moita, 2017), in the future, city networks would resemble a Hanseatic system² of global power organization, in which cities and corporations will respond to an essential dimension of the global order.

In this context and considering that this article's author is a researcher affiliated to a public think tank located in the global South, the primary goal of the article is to present the diplomacy of cities beyond the western public diplomacy and global studies approach, where the theme was first established.

We aim to present, conceptualize, and categorize city diplomacy, its strategies, and agents since its inception in 1913, and its interactions with nation's soft power. Additionally, using Brazil as a case study, this paper presents some examples and ideas about the global South's engagement in city networks and diplomacy, which are typically overlooked in academic works from the global North.

With this work, we hope to contribute to improving communication between knowledge fields and to a more robust conceptual understanding of the phenomenon.

2 CITY NETWORKS CONCEPTION AND HISTORICAL PERIODS

Since 2016, as a result of the efforts to produce Brazil's official report for the third United Nations (UN) Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III), the need to conceptualize the idea of city diplomacy has become evident. To this end, the main landmarks of cities' international relations were recovered, resulting in a periodization that supports the conceptualization presented later in this article.

2. In "reference to what happened in the vast coastal area of the Baltic Sea, since the end of the Middle Ages, on a proto capitalist experience in which, in the absence of a unifying political power, the management of that zone was assured by an alliance between cities (Lübeck, Bergen, Hamburg, Riga...) and a merchant league, the Hanseatic League" (Moita, 2017, p. 9).

The global process of city internationalization can be understood, from a historical perspective, through four periods (Balbim, 2016; 2021). The first period, from 1913 to the end of World War II (WWII), was characterized by a “protodiplomacy” that was affected by the conflicts between nations.

In the 1950s, under the auspices of the United States and European countries, cities became sisters as a soft power strategy. This period is called here the “cities for peace” period, identified with the post WWII world reconstruction order and the progress of the nations also based on technical cooperation among cities.

The third period, from the 1970s to the 2000s, saw a strengthening of technical cooperation between countries along the north-south axis, implemented by cities. This was a result of the various UN conferences on cross-cutting issues with significant impact on cities (environment, peace, human rights, and settlements), especially in Europe and its areas of influence. This period’s logic was founded on the world order idea of development and underdevelopment, which recognized the role of cities in the international arena, particularly marked by Habitat I (1976).

In this scenario, a global rationality was established through multilateral agreements, which also stemmed from UN conferences. These agreements were implemented through multilateral agencies, programs, and financing, with cities playing a major role in bringing them into effect. Based on a technical-scientific and informational environment (Santos, 1996), different institutions and forms of global governance arose, along with organizational solidarity (Santos, 1996), a global rationality that has influenced relations and lifestyles all over the world.

Between the third and the fourth periods, a new kind of cooperation between cities gained strength: decentralized cooperation. The European Commission defines decentralized cooperation as “the publicly and privately funded aid provided by and through local authorities, networks, and other local actors” (EU, 2008, p. 3). Regional programs³ such as the Italian 100 Citta, the Rhône-Alpes Region, and the Junta de Andalucía Cooperation involved several cities in the global south and significant financial contributions (EU, 2008).

In this process, there was less or even no direct intervention from Nation-States in cooperation instruments. Instead, national and multilateral agencies and banks took over, representing the interests of States, international corporations, and funds (Balbim, 2016).⁴

In the current period, which is clearly installed since the beginning of the second decade of this century, it is possible to observe a multiplication of city networks, which now form a tangled web of connections. These networks deal with diverse issues, often overlapping and extending throughout the world. They work as instruments for the diffusion of “organizational solidarity”.

3 SOLIDARITY, NETWORKS AND CITIES

The process of internationalization of cities has reached its current apex with the formation of several international city networks, a particular form of organization that cities have adopted and which

3. From the European perspective, city diplomacy is linked to the secular regional phenomenon and identity, the recognition of which is at the foundation of the European Union’s common ground. The external dimension of the regional phenomenon and its substantive capacities, i.e. structural funds, were deeply analyzed by Aldecoa (1999).

4. Interview carried out with Vicente Trevas, Municipal Secretary of International Relations of the City of São Paulo (SMRI/PMSP). São Paulo, 2015.

is the focus of this paper. However, before discussing this phenomenon and its particularities, such as the solidarity that engages and organizes cities in networks, it is necessary to highlight some critical approaches for a deeper understanding.

First, it is important to note that the academic production on this subject is usually descriptive or non-critical. This approach is likely related to what Brenner and Theodore (2002, p. 369-372) describe as the “urbanization of neoliberalism”, a global process that is related to the commoditization of urban land (Rolnik, 2019), or, in other words, the global financial capitalism order. Additionally, it is not difficult to notice the commitment of part of this academic production to business opportunities, the concerns of international urban services corporations, and global urban requalification projects, as will be seen later.

Secondly, it is important to clarify the difference between city networks and urban networks. From a monocentric to polycentric region, the concept of urban network seeks to identify the life of relations established between cities. This means identifying the limits of the influence of a large city and analyzing the existence and location of several hierarchical intermediate cities. This theoretical approach was developed in different schools over a century to overcome the limitations of the natural conditions or the landscape homogeneity used to define the region and explain territorial configuration. The flows of all orders and the necessary infrastructure are organically and hierarchically organized. The hierarchical relations of functionalities and complementarities between nodes form a fabric, differently composed depending on the scale of analysis. The urban network theory works with homogeneous and delimited space (scale), including the global one. This is the understanding behind definitions and explanations of global cities, a homogeneous space of production, financial institutions, cultural services, and other modern flows hierarchically organized.

However, city networks do not necessarily result in flows, hierarchical functionalities, and complementarities. At first, when analyzing a city network, in addition to the political, cultural, humanist, and other explicit commitments that establish the organization, it is not obvious to verify hierarchies or homogeneity (more than the commitments) among their nodes or participants. It is the organization of cities, institutions, and agreements that draw the flows and connect the nodes. City networks can be understood using social and spatial network knowledge, but the network results from political decisions more than practical logic.

In this sense, it is possible to say that urban networks result from organic solidarity, involving interdependence, complementarity, and functionality. In comparison, city networks are the expression of a kind of organization that defines the conditions and structures of solidarity, cooperation, and competition.

The “organic solidarity” (Durkheim, 1978) is responsible for the organization of individuals in the division of labor, establishing complementarities that enable social unity. In geography, organic solidarity responds to a local order of interaction between beings and objects in a contiguous way, in a delimited space (Castillo et al., 1997) on multiple scales.

Complementary to this understanding and responding to the transformations of the “technical-scientific-informational milieu” (Santos, 1994a), Milton Santos (1996) proposed the concept of organizational solidarity, which responds to a global order that enables the gathering of sparse objects according to an exogenous reason, mainly by making use of information.

Following Santos's argument, the local and the global order constitute two genetically opposite situations, even if, in each one, it is possible to verify aspects of the other. In the first case, the local reason is organic. Its organization is a result of solidarity established based on communication, which takes precedence. In the second case, the universal reason is organizational. Solidarity is a product of organization and information, which takes precedence. Information, in fact, is synonymous with the organization (Santos, 1996, p. 338-339). Organic solidarity is characterized by interdependence, complementarity, and communication. Material flows design the skeleton of the urban system, the urban network. Organizational solidarity, as Milton Santos suggests, is marked both by cooperation and competition. In this case, information flows design the space of relations.

Based on "organizational solidarity", city internationalization subverts hierarchies and connects cities designing new urban flows and frames. As a result, it is no longer accurate to talk about this or that city as an international, cosmopolitan, or global city. Instead, we should talk about the city as an agent that combines its strategies, means, and mechanisms of participation in the global scenario according to an organization that escapes their own and individual control.

The primary expression of this phenomenon, given its complexity, is the network of cities, its increase in numbers and subjects discussed, as well as the proliferation of other diplomatic mechanisms (i.e., agreements, forums) used by cities in their joint, complementary and supportive action on the international scale.

Regarding strategies and agents involved, it is important to first define accurately the city's internationalization process. Here, we understand it as the intentional action taken by the local public authority to project the city abroad, to promote attractiveness (capital, science, innovation, culture) in search of investments, exchanges of experiences and knowledge, and, on a higher level of importance, to assert the city's influence in international networks and multilateral organizations, thus participating in global governance.

International cooperation between cities is strictly instituted by heads of local government, citizens, and city representatives. These actors have legal prerogatives that are more or less established to enforce non-binding international agreements of various kinds with other subnational powers.

Non-governmental corporations and organizations can also initially establish cooperation between cities, acting as ambassadors. The wide range of agents involved in the internationalization of cities is due to the closeness between local authorities and other public and private groups that coexist in the complex urban space and diverse urban lifestyle production.

The internationalization of cities can happen in multiple ways, starting with different agents and far surpassing the individual capacity of the local government. It can even be intrinsic to the city, a constituent of its social and spatial foundation.

The city's internationalization strategy is not only a response to transnational reasons. It is also associated with gains and changes in local, national, or regional policy. Local authorities – mayors and others – engage in these processes not only to take part in and influence processes and decisions on a global scale, but also because they see gains, often symbolic, in the internal scenario of their countries and regions.

Governance at the global, regional, national, and local scales all play a role in the internationalization of cities. The decentralization of power and the gathering of nations that has characterized the

constitution of the European Union (EU) since the 1980s has influenced discussions about global governance models that involve cities in networked multilevel governance.

This experience and other forms of multilevel international cooperation benefit from both technical and informational development, which make possible the simultaneous and instantaneous connection of places. Paradoxically, this also leads to the multiplication of worldwide issues related to the increase in connections. From food and sanitary safety (pandemics, for example) to migration, innumerable are the global problems that affect the multiple scales of the social, economic, and political order in different ways.

The relationships of cities with particular global challenges reveal their central role in the new world order. At Habitat III (Quito, 2016), cities once again called for a leading role in negotiating the Urban Agenda. The UN did not meet this demand, but it did receive a request to revise its governance model to include cities as members.

Regarding climate change and social development themes, cities have earned a relevant spot in the international scenario. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) reveal a significant advance to cities' centrality into development and a significant challenge (Slack, 2015). A specific SDG to address cities and several urban policy indicators show this significant role. However, there is still a challenge to advance towards an effective governance strategy that builds on existing efforts and engages most local governments in the success of this agenda.

The immense challenges that cities will face in the 21st century, especially megacities, such as climate change and access to housing, make it clear that urgent action is needed to establish global, innovative, and effective city governance structures. Trevas⁵ proposes a multilateral tripartite body composed of cities, citizens, and Nation-States to define future global plans. This body would ensure civil participation in order to hold governments and corporations accountable for implementing agreed-upon agendas.

In a globalized world, the internationalization of cities and the consequent formation of a new power space has led to a much wider range of cities participating than just megacities and global cities. Regional capitals, medium cities, and even small cities comprise dozens of international organizations representing various interests, seeking to interfere in global processes by negotiating with corporations, multilateral organizations, and the Nation-States.

The role of cities in the current system of power is no longer determined by the prominence of any single city or by hierarchical urban network explanations. Instead, what matters is the emergence of an advanced stage of globalization in which global rationality, a totality, organizes solidarity between the parts, the cities, that form it.

The analysis of academic production on the process of internationalization of cities reveals the multiplicity of fields of knowledge that deal with the subject. These include international relations, sociology, political science, economics, geography, urbanism, history, public management, and a myriad of related thematic interests, such as peace processes, culture, migration, health issues, innovation, employment, financing, and human rights. Given the diversity of perspectives, a rigorous definition of this process is needed. Moreover, the insertion of this process in a broad theoretical framework

5. Interview carried out with Vicente Trevas, Municipal Secretary of International Relations of the City of São Paulo (SMRI/PMSP). São Paulo, 2015.

will allow the communication between fields of knowledge, resulting in a better understanding of the matter at hand.

It is possible to state that the field of action and knowledge about the internationalization of cities, particularly about city diplomacy, is still in its initial stage of formation. However, this theoretical fragility does not arise, as sometimes pointed out, from the lack of academic production on the subject. On the contrary, since the 1990s, there has been a profusion of works that advocate for a new world order based on networks of all kinds, and especially on city networks. This work was pioneered by authors like Craven and Wellman (1973) and Castells (1996).

The field of knowledge about the internationalization of cities is deficient in theoretical and methodological rigor. This is due to the fact that many of the concepts and frameworks used in this field are borrowed from political sociology and economics without being adequately adapted to the specific context of cities. This is evident in the broad use of the term global city to refer to both internationalization and city diplomacy.

The repeated use of this yardstick is most likely due to the relevant theoretical and empirical production about global cities since the 1960s, following the publication of a seminal book by Peter Hall (1966), *World Cities*, resulting in the wide diffusion of the concept to several areas of knowledge. All of these discussions are based, to some extent, on the ideas that come from the central place theory (Christaller-Lösch)⁶ and the functional hierarchical areas of influence of each city. As Santos (2017, p. 19) argues, the predominant use of the term “global city” represents a generalization or a consideration of the big picture as the only reality.

The notion of a hierarchical network remains a central concept in the study of global cities. Over the years, this explanatory framework has been adapted and refined, becoming a kind of theoretical paradigm with wide practical application, including in urban planning. In 1996, Peter Hall revealed a load of truth in the widely held idea that the networks were replacing hierarchical logic. However, linked to this movement of horizontal network spreading, there is a reinforcement of the leadership position of corporations from global cities.

The need to explain the internationalization process of non-global cities and their participation as agents of global rationality in the formation of power spaces highlights the urgency of overcoming the reductionism of the global city theory, which has been transposed to other knowledge areas too quickly.

Several analyses based on Saskia Sassen's (2005) and also Castells (1996) studies consider the intrinsic characteristics of the urban economy to qualify cities as global, reinforce the notion of city hierarchy and the understanding of the city as an “organizational commodity” (Sassen, 2005, p. 39). This idea, which is often used generically in other academic disciplines, seals the city off as a mere functional part of the global sphere, without recognizing its differences and particularities or understanding its active role.

6. The central place theory was first introduced by the German geographer Walter Christaller in 1933. Its seminal piece entitled *Central Places in southern Germany* proposed a hierarchical distribution of settlements according to the provision of goods and services. In 1940, the German economist August Lösch, in his book *The Spatial Organization of the Economy*, expanded this theory and proposed a regular pattern of specialized places' distribution which configure the hierarchical system of towns and cities.

In turn, theoretical insights such as the idea of glocalization in contrast to the project of national territorial equalization associated with Keynesian welfare national states and their role in the global scenario, emphasize the nation states strategies of

Glocalizing Competition State Regimes (GCSRs) in which (a) significant aspects of economic regulation are devolved to subnational institutional levels and (b) major socioeconomic assets are reconcentrated within the most globally competitive urban regions and industrial districts (Brenner, 2004, p. 447).

Although there is a rescaling to the regional level and a recognition of the cities and nation-states dissociation role in the global scenario, these analyses reinforce the economic role of the urban process and fails to encompass the everyday relationships, the politics of places and their active role in international agendas and agreements.

Thus, the study of the internationalization of cities is essential to understand new geopolitics aspects and to produce an explanatory framework that: i) reaches the universe of all cities that participate in the process; ii) recognizes the active and autonomous role of cities in the process, rather than simply seeing them as a stage for globalization or as part of the Nation-State; and iii) considers the dialectical understanding of relations established between cities as a driving force for creating the internationalization space, that is, of globalization.

4 PARADIPLOMACY OR CITY DIPLOMACY?

For many scholars of international relations, cities, as well as corporations, unions, churches, political parties, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), have been challenging the State-centric paradigm of international relations by engaging in a sort of paradiplomacy. The process of internationalization, which was once almost exclusively the domain of Nation-States, is now also being carried out by social agents, subnational entities, and increasingly influential transnational corporations. At the same time, global issues – such as climate crisis, deterioration of human rights, drug trafficking, migration, terrorism, and violence – emerged, transcending the responsibility of any single Nation-State, crossing national borders and directly affecting local governments.

Paradiplomacy of cities has played a prominent role in the international geopolitical scenario since the 1990s, associated with major UN conferences on human rights, environment, urbanism, and social issues, sparking a debate about the most appropriate terminology to describe this phenomenon.

The strategic actions of local governments in the international arena have most often been based on the terms paradiplomacy or diplomacy of cities. Local diplomacy and federative diplomacy have also been used, but they have been less common and have had more limited explanatory power. Local diplomacy, for example, is a broad term that refers to all forms of diplomacy exercised from a local scale. The term federal diplomacy, in turn, is more limited in scope, as it refers specifically to the diplomacy of federal states.

More recently, the term metro diplomacy has appeared, seemingly restricted to the North American area of influence (Attwell, 2014; Hormats, 2013). The United States Department of State created or supported the strategy to strengthen the diplomacy of growing metropolitan areas around the world. The goal of this strategy is to increase business opportunities.

For some authors, the strategies established by cities to act in the international arena constitute parallel diplomacy or semi-diplomacy, which use city networks as one of their instruments (Moita, 2017).

Despite this multiplicity of wordings, the term paradiplomacy is still more frequently used than other terms (Balbim, 2016, p. 140), though it encompasses not only subnational governments but also non-state social actors engaged in diplomatic negotiations. However, this myriad of actors, both public and private, gathered under the same conceptual umbrella unquestionably leads to analytical inaccuracies.

As Pluijijm (2007) states, the use of paradiplomacy evidences the existence of a central and a parallel system. However, Santos (2017, p. 33) argues that this contradicts the current reality, in which cities often exceed the Nation-State in different areas of diplomatic activity, such as trade agreements.

The growing role of cities in the international business arena is one of the reasons why a specific term should be used to describe their diplomatic activity. For example, cities often play a central role in promoting significant private investments, which can have a major impact on the respective national economy. As another example, we can mention that the international competition to host the Olympic Games is strongly associated with the symbolic capital of each contender.

The relative autonomy of cities on specific global issues is another reason for using the term city diplomacy, instead of paradiplomacy. North American cities that have opposed the federal government's decision to withdraw from the Paris Climate Agreement are an example of this autonomy (Boffey, 2017; Tabuchi and Fountain, 2017; Pinault and Cavicchioli, 2017; Palacková, 2017).⁷ As Abraham (2015, p. 37) points out, when a national government does not reflect local interests, cities can legitimately act as operative agents alongside transnational bodies, other cities and countries (technical cooperation), and even corporations. In this sense, we could remember Borja and Castells (1997) when they proposed understanding the local scale as a territorial manager of the global forces, exercising an effective, active, and relatively autonomous diplomacy.

In addition to an active and relatively autonomous role, diplomacy exerted by cities has its own instruments, characteristics, means, and attributes, which are distinct from those used by national States. All these conform to an active professional field of diplomacy.

Pluijijm (2007, p. 6) defines city diplomacy as the process by which cities, or local governments in general, engage in relations with actors in an international political arena in order to represent themselves and their interests. In short, city diplomacy is the conjunction between the intentions and competencies of local governments and their "ambassadors" to represent the symbolic, cultural, social, economic, and political power of a place and its people, history, and fate. Alternatively, city diplomacy can be understood as the representation, on an international scale, of a specific and particular socio-spatial formation, which constitutes a totality and represents, in the international arena, the fundamental factors of each place, including its political, cultural, social, territorial, technological constituents, and so on.

The concept of socio-spatial formation (SSF), proposed by Milton Santos (1977a; 1977b), is an extension of the Marxist concept of social and economic formation. The importance of the concept

7. Available at: <https://medium.com/@ClimateMayors/climate-mayors-commit-to-adopt-honor-and-uphold-paris-climate-agreement-goals-ba566e260097>.

lies in its application to the analysis of specific societies. Societies are totalities that differ from each other by their distinct techniques, means and modes of production as well as their different stages of development.

In this sense, each city has its own unique way of generating urban space, constituting a totality with its own practices, techniques, technologies, and lifestyle. This distinguishes cities from each other. If the theoretical, methodological, and empirical viability of using this concept can be established, city diplomacy could use this framework to advance in two critical issues that are related to each other: i) overcoming the exclusive view of a city as a stage for international actions (Acuto, Morissette and Tsouros, 2017, p. 15); and ii) legal recognition of the city as an entity with relative autonomy from States to establish relations with other SSFs in the international arena.

Cities have been solidifying their diplomatic action through a series of instruments, the main ones being city twinning, bilateral agreements, and participation in international networks. These instruments help cities to leverage their power in a scenario of disputes and agreements between large corporations, nations, regions, and other cities.

In addition to networks, cities use a variety of instruments to establish diplomatic relations, including bilateral agreements; thematic agreements and/or protocols; technical cooperation protocols; decentralized cooperation protocols; delegations; organization of international events; capacity building; technological and professional exchanges; participation in international campaigns, councils, federations, leagues, covenants, forums, committees, platforms and, last but not least, programs and projects counting on exclusive financing.

Among the characteristics and specific aspects of city diplomacy, it is essential to note that the initiatives are generally flexible and customized mainly in the image of their representatives, who often voluntarily choose to establish and/or reinforce diplomatic instruments. Additionally, city diplomacy is characterized by being very pragmatic. The ability to institute peculiar and precise thematic relations of variable duration and commitment should also be noted.

City diplomacy, which differs from traditional Nation-State diplomacy, requires specific aspects of local governance. These include healthy interdependence between social actors and groups, as well as a robust intersectoral understanding of the issues at hand.

The mayor or head of government is the main agent of city diplomacy, but there are also other essential actors, such as universities, companies, and sports' teams, which carry the city's ideals and play the role of city ambassadors.

The necessary infrastructure for implementing city diplomacy include hotels, venues for events, ports, airports, technological platforms for communication and transportation. These infrastructures enable cities to host international visitors, facilitate trade and investment, and promote cultural exchange.

However, basic infrastructure does not seem to be the main attribute to ensure the internationalization of a city and its participation in city networks and other forms of diplomacy. The social environment that characterizes a place, its identities, and its method of generating urbanity, seem to be the elements that contribute to the city's international reputation and its ability to project itself onto the global stage. Nonetheless, the essential means and attributes for

internationalization and city diplomacy are not always clear-cut. They vary depending on the networks and other instruments with which cities are associated.

Universities play a particularly important role in cooperation and city diplomacy. They have a number of unique characteristics that make them valuable partners for cities, including their history of international exchanges; their ability to articulate different sectors of the economy and society (especially linked to innovation and entrepreneurship); their appeal to foreign investors; their contribution to technical cooperation; their ability to transfer knowledge; their ability to articulate social networks through university extension programs; and their ability to shape public opinion through the speeches of students, professors and their disciplines.

Beyond the search for investment and market opportunities, city diplomacy affirms its symbolic space and identity as strategic, something that differs it from the diplomacy exercised by the Nation-States which, on its turn, is based on the art of mediation and their representation in disputes for domination, security, trade, and affirmation among peoples.

5 SHARED VALUES IN THE INTERNATIONALIZATION OF CITIES

While the specific goals and objectives of each city's internationalization strategy may differ, they often share a common set of values. Here, we identify four essential values that have historically driven the strategies of cities' internationalization.

Cities share three central values in their internationalization strategies: peace, culture, and sustainability. Additionally, there is a set of values associated with social participation, decentralization of power, and local management, which together could be called democratic values. These four sets of values each constitute transversal problems, with expression in multiple scales, often projecting places to an international scale.

The limited political and geographic capacity of cities to enforce common goals when participating in city networks or other forms of international cooperation is offset by their ability to build solidarity and soft power. In this respect, although competitiveness increasingly appears in official discourses and efforts related to the internationalization of cities, it remains marginal in practice. When discussing city internationalization, it is important to consider the diversity of the parts that constitute each city as a totality – in other words, cities are not monolithic entities. Furthermore, the value of competitiveness does not emanate from cities themselves, but rather from markets and their agencies tailoring organizational solidarity between cities. Underlining this is crucial to a better understanding of city networks.

Peace is a central pillar of the world order established by the UN after the WWII. The subject of peace was also present in the formation of the first networks of cities and at the beginning of city diplomacy, with the twinning of cities and other soft power instruments. It is both a way for cities to stand autonomously on the international stage, overcoming differences between national States, and a way to associate cities with national diplomacy and its efforts to reconcile and build peace. Furthermore, we cannot overlook the growing importance of cities and their internationalization in the field of security, surveillance, and safety business promotion (products, services, markets, and networks) (Balbim, 2016).

Culture, in turn, is one of the most prominent areas of internationalization for cities. It is multifaceted, involves various sectors, and is capable of forming identities and symbolic values. This makes it a powerful tool for cities to use in their diplomacy and internationalization efforts. Cities often use culture to cooperate with other cities in areas such as technology, education, and research. They may also use culture to support humanitarian and pacifist causes. Due to their cultural aspects, sports and tourism are also important components of cultural diplomacy.

International cultural events, such as book fairs and expositions, provide a transversal platform for cities to support their internationalization process. However, culture also plays an ambiguous role in the internationalization of cities, as the cultural industry associated with it involves harsh competition, global marketing strategies, and cultural domination. Culture is as much an expression of the local scale as it is of the global one. The intersection between these two scales of life occurs in a variety of ways, often spontaneously, taking the monopoly of diplomacy out of the hands of the State.

Just like culture, sustainability plays a central and strategic role in the internationalization of cities. “City networks for global environmental governance show how cities can matter beyond their territories and are one expression of our globalizing world in which norms and practices are shaped and dispersed through networks” (Bouteligier, 2013, p. 2). Sustainability is also a key aspect of a strong marketing strategy for cities, just as it is for companies.

Social participation, decentralization, and local management – themes associated with democratic values – have been linked to the internationalization of cities since the formation of the first city network in 1913.⁸ Democracy and decentralization were also present in the agendas of “international partisan organizations” in 20th century Europe, and more expressively after the WWII, which was one of the events that fostered international cooperation between cities.⁹ The very presence of local governments in the international arena presupposes the existence of a minimally democratic environment in the local, national, and regional arenas.

The improvement of local management is often seen as a goal associated with other issues related to the internationalization of cities. However, it is important to note that improved management is not just a goal in itself, but also a necessary foundation for internationalization and it plays a vital role in each city’s domestic environment.

In turn, social participation is a potent symbolic content in the internationalization strategies of cities. It is often required by funding bodies and global policy managers, but it is also important for local authorities to speak out on behalf of their inhabitants in the global arena.

6 URBAN REQUALIFICATION: THE ACTIVE ROLE OF THE CITY?

For more than a century, urban requalification projects and major urban modernization projects have been a key part of the local and global strategies of city internationalization. These large-scale projects are used to market cities to investors and tourists, and to make their land markets more

8. In 1913, the first international network of cities emerged in Europe. L’Union Internationale des Villes arose from a search for inter-communal cooperation, raising the flags of local democracy, solidarity and peaceful relations among peoples. It was the first constitution of a diplomatic space for cities on the international level. However, that evolved very little between the two world wars, delaying transformations to a further historical period.

9. Interview carried out with Vicente Trevas, Municipal Secretary of International Relations of the City of São Paulo (SMRI/PMSP). São Paulo, 2015.

attractive to foreign investment. The driving force behind these projects is competition for investment and marketing.

These projects involve academic and stylistic debates, architecture competitions, internationally recognized professionals, and urban planning offices. There is also a whole complex composed by normative, financial, engineering, and architecture elements that involve international organizations and agencies.

The current model of these interventions is part of a postmodern global urban process marked by what Brenner and Theodore (2002, p. 349) call “creative destruction”. This term describes “the geographically uneven, socially regressive, and politically volatile trajectories of institutional/spatial change that have been crystallizing under these conditions”. Ribeiro (2012, p. 58) reminds us that this is a condition of capitalism, represented in the

famous statement of the Communist Party Manifesto that, under the ruling of the bourgeoisie, all that is solid melts into air, [which] contains an ever-current truth: capitalism builds and destroys. Its dynamics imply the control of nature and other men, as well as the desecration of scriptures, laws, limits, and previous certainties.

By “scriptures, laws, limits, and previous certainties”, one can also take to mean the territory.

Urban requalification projects are initiated by changes in local legislation and the establishment of benefits that favor specific groups of investors and segments of society. These changes enable the appropriation of spaces that were previously occupied by dysfunctional uses and groups. The space is then refunctionalized through the normalization of the territory, as is the case of urban operations in Brazil (Balbim, 2011). This process often leads to the eviction of those who previously lived there, which is also known as gentrification (Brenner and Theodore, 2002).

These business models are often presented and developed by international consultants, through projects financed by banks or multilateral agencies. The argument is that large-scale projects are not financially viable without the involvement of multiple actors, including all levels of government, different types of companies, and various forms of financial securitization. In practice there is the establishment of a regulatory environment that goes beyond the previous legal understanding of the rules – in other words, “organizational solidarity”, the global rationality that influences relations and lifestyles all over the world, enables urban operations to join the international market.

Such projects also allow the opening of the market to international companies, with all the guarantees defined, involving small risks for investors. This is one of the mechanisms of urban land commodification, which inserts land into the global market following neoliberal rationalization.

Neoliberal ideology calls for and establishes competitive economic development mechanisms with deregulated markets and minimal state interference. However, as in other sectors, the production of urban space requires a series of new regulations that enable the international action of corporate groups, often deepening and expanding inequalities.

However, the global market and cities’ marketing often portray these different places and processes as homogeneous, ready to receive the same rationality and investments, in the analysis of urban restructuring under the neoliberal order, which Brenner and Theodore (2002) call the “urbanization of neoliberalism”. This global rationality must be sensitive to the characteristics of each place, their

“roughness”¹⁰ or their peculiarities, in a simplification. This means that the global rationality, in order to promote the “urbanization of neoliberalism”, must adjust and/or adapt to each place.

The goal is to produce an ambiance with less resistance. To achieve this, international agencies and corporations not only scrutinize and investigate the produced space, its fixed physical forms. They also need to rationalize its flows, institutional frameworks, political regimes, regulatory practices, political forces, and symbolic contexts. In this sense, each city and its particular socio-spatial formation plays an active and crucial role in this process, often identified as the source of resistance.

Urban requalification mechanisms are part of a new context of the neoliberal ideology in which global rationality acknowledges the existence of “roughness” and imposes local adaptation strategies. These strategies often involve partnerships between different levels of government and governance mechanisms that “normalize” or “standardize” the various fragments of the world (Brenner and Theodore, 2002).

Different places should constitute a unique business environment, forming a “smooth” space at the exclusive service of the corporations. This exclusivity of the corporations in the appropriation of city internationalization happens because the Nation-State operates internationally but limited to its territory. Companies seize fragments of territory in various countries, forming and operating those in networked space. It would, therefore, be questionable how city networks resemble the corporate organization of territories on a global scale.

In many ways, large urban projects participate in the globalized agenda of capital accumulation, and urban territory increasingly becomes global merchandise, a commodity. These projects create “spaces of globalization” (Santos, 1994b, p. 24), which are constantly refunctionalized to serve the most modern interests with a high level of urbanity and information infrastructure, often symbolically segregated from other city areas. The international negotiation of these megaprojects is also part of city diplomacy.

To illustrate how the internationalization of cities takes place, we present some examples of destruction-creation processes discussed by Brenner and Theodore (2002). They reveal typical situations of production of “spaces of globalization”, which are driven by the internationalization rationality of cities.

The first neoliberal location mechanism, or the production of “spaces of globalization”, can be described as a recalibration of intergovernmental relations and would be associated with the broad movement, started in the 1990s, of decentralization of State power. Central governments dismantled support systems for local action and transferred new tasks, duties, and responsibilities to local governments. This was accompanied by the creation of incentive structures to reward local entrepreneurship and catalyze endogenous growth. The model of internationally rewarding good practices is one example of this logic.

In a way, as seen in the analysis of local governments’ participation at Habitat II (Balbim and Amanajás, 2015), decentralization was more of a strategy by the Nation-State in response to neoliberal dictates than an appreciation of local governments in the international arena.

10. “Roughness” (Ribeiro, 2012) is the unique quality of each place that transforms and particularizes the result of a global movement of obsolescence, degradation, and destruction of certain areas of the city. This results in the creation of new urbanities that are then refunctionalized, requalified, and ennobled, becoming smoother for new waves of international investment.

The location of neoliberal global rationality also reconfigures the institutional infrastructure of local governments. First, local bureaucracies are dismantled. In many cases, this already precarious infrastructure is further weakened by the transfer of responsibility to community organizations and NGOs. These arrangements are often unable to meet the needs of society. Over time, these precarious arrangements are replaced by public-private partnerships (PPPs) and various forms of quasi-non-governmental organizations (quangos). The goal is to institute new forms of governance of city projects geared towards competition, redirecting the influence range of local governments and community decisions to the business field.

The final result of these internationalization of cities strategies based on urban requalification, megaprojects, and the production of spaces of globalization is invariably the destruction of the city as a space of diversity and difference, which is replaced by more homogeneous spaces that fulfill predefined roles for exogenous rationality (Highsmith, 2015).

Beyond large cities, where capital interests seem to be more explicit, the model presented is reproduced on smaller scales to enable investments and transformations that connect small and medium-sized cities to the international level. This creates a functional transnational network of spaces of globalization, or “organizational solidarity”.

7 CITY NETWORKS: A CLASSIFICATION PROPOSAL

Since the 1980s, the role of networks of all kinds has gained importance in a new form of global governance, the network governance. Regarding city networks, several authors (Acuto, Morissette and Tsouros, 2017; Bulkeley et al., 2003; EU, 2008; Moita, 2017) relate their expansion to a clear EU policy. This is evidenced by the number of networks resulting from EU financial projects and support, as well as the launch, in 1988, of the European Charter of Local Autonomy. This European Economic Community (EEC) regional strategy has spread all over the world and has served as a blueprint for other forms of city cooperation. These city cooperation initiatives often gain their political maturity when they found or join international networks of cities.

The most comprehensive survey of city networks to date was conducted in 2016 by a team led by Michele Acuto. The study was commissioned by the City Leadership Laboratory at the University College of London and the World Health Organization’s Healthy Cities Network (WHO-UN). The study used three primary sources of information: literature, national city networks, and surveys in networks formed by projects financed by multilateral bodies. The study found that there are around 200 city networks in the world, of which 170 were analyzed in greater detail (Acuto, Morissette and Tsouros, 2017, p. 15).

Although this survey does not categorize the different city networks and includes national networks in its aggregation, which may result in an exaggerated coverage that equates networks with different strategies, goals, and scales of action, its importance in creating a database warrants summarizing its conclusions below. After that, we begin the necessary refinement based on our own database, which is currently in formation.

With over two hundred networks active globally, city diplomacy is no rare occurrence and city networks are a widespread phenomenon. (...) Importantly, we see an expansion in supra-national city diplomacy. While national networks continue to represent the largest type of city networks (49 percent in total, and 36 percent of the networks created since 2001), there is also a growing trend for regional urban

associations in Europe, Latin America or Asia (21 percent in total, representing 30 percent in networks created since 2001). This is equally pushed forward by regional bodies like the EU or the Asean, but also by multilateral processes like those of WHO (...) International networks (29 percent of the total, 46 percent of the networks created since 2001) are starting to populate the overall landscape quite substantially. The WHO is not unique in its push for this cooperation. For instance, the UN agency for human settlements, UN-Habitat, launched in 2012 a Global Network of Safer Cities aimed at strengthening cooperation on matters of urban safety. The internationalization of city networks is not only being pushed by multilateral organizations but also by influential members of the private sector. Just over 63 per cent of the 'international' city networks surveyed by the Lab have forms of multilateral and corporate partnership with organizations including UNICEF, the ILO, UN-HABITAT, or private interests like Google, SAP, and Cisco, or philanthropic influence as with Bloomberg Philanthropies and the Rockefeller Foundation (Acuto, Morissette and Tsouros, 2017, p. 16).

Taking into account diverse sources of information such as literature, research reports, city management reports, EEC reports, surveys in multilateral organizations, field surveys during international seminars (particularly World Urban Forum (WUF) and Habitat III), and interviews with international relations managers, we estimate the current number of international networks of cities to be 120. Of these, probably 80 have only cities as their primary partners.

To contribute to the study of city diplomacy, it is necessary to move beyond two limiting perspectives. The first perspective is the Durkheimian view that sees city diplomacy as the simple creation of a new international bureaucracy. The second perspective is the specific and partial view that sees city diplomacy as a phenomenon that is exclusively related to the field of international relations. Instead, we should adopt a view that recognizes the active role of cities in the organization of the world system. This perspective allows us to see city diplomacy as the constitution of spaces of power. From this perspective, city networks can be classified into three types: project networks, corporate networks, and city networks.

This classification is not just analytical, it also reflects significant differences and particularities between the organizations. The most important characteristic for classifying them is to determine the institution that heads the network. In this framework, we can identify three general groups of networks, led by international organizations, corporations, or cities.

Project networks are formed by cities that are associated with projects initiated by international or multilateral organizations. These networks have a hierarchical structure, with coordination provided by funding bodies and national governments, either directly or through international agencies. Typically, these networks adhere to rigid bureaucratic standards.

Corporate networks involve cities and private capital in multiple ways. All of them are clients and can be recipients, donors, buyers, and/or sellers of specific knowledge, which is negotiated in an international consulting market. This market is usually introduced in the initial phase of the project as a form of technical cooperation.

The private lobby and its articulation with city networks are not much different from the technical cooperation of the 1990s or the decentralized cooperation of the 2000s. In those periods, rich countries and regions, through their cities, offered technical expertise and consultants to the global South to produce market viability studies for their public and private companies. The only difference is that the current consulting market has been expanded and privatized, and is no longer necessarily tied to a country or city. This has led to even greater diversity in the field of corporate

action. Like other networks, corporate networks differ from each other thematically, strategically, and according to their influence areas or regions.

Self-organized city networks are not new to global geopolitics or diplomacy, but they have gained relevance in recent decades. In the past, these networks had emerged with at least two of three key goals: decentralization, democracy, and peace. Today, there is a growing number of networks that focus on sustainability, but they still share the original principles.

City networks seek to increase the representation of cities in major global agreements, especially those taking place under the auspices of the UN and those that address specific issues with global dimensions. Some examples of city networks include United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG); Metropolis; C40; World Network of Port Cities; and International Association of Educating Cities.

8 A LOOK AT BRAZIL

The specific study of city diplomacy in Brazil dates back to the 1950s, with the practice of city twinning¹¹ (Zelinsky, 1991; Tavares, 2016). Since then, it has evolved into an institutionally fragile and a scarcely diversified – both spatially and thematically – field (Balbim, 2018).

In the late 1980s, Brazil underwent a process of democratization and decentralization. This, along with the country's insertion into neoliberal logic and the modernizing discourse of globalization in the 1990s,¹² led some cities to diversify their international actions and even outline strategies and structures for internationalization.¹³

In Brazil, as in other countries, the international activity of subnational entities does not have a constitutional formalization. Since 2005, there is a proposal for a constitutional amendment in the National Congress (Proposta de Emenda à Constituição – PEC No. 475) that would allow subnational entities to establish international partnerships, but only with the authorization of the federal government. In the absence of such a formal mechanism, the legitimacy of cities in the formation of international cooperation could be questioned. In contrast, in the EU, this subject has been regulated since 1988, when the European Charter of Local Self-Government entered into force.

The first structures to deal with international relations in Brazilian municipalities emerged in the early 1990s, motivated by different factors. In 1993, Rio de Janeiro established an international relations office in the wake of the Earth Summit (ECO 92). In the following year, Porto Alegre

11. The process of twinning cities started in Brazil in the 1950s from the United States soft power strategies, notably the communication one. On the part of the American government, through the sister cities strategy, equipment for local radio transmission was donated, which also served to broadcast the Voice of America. "Because of opposition by US commercial broadcasters, the Voice of America did not air until 1942, after the attack in Pearl Harbour" (Gregory, 2011, p. 365).

12. During the Brazilian Social Democracy Party (Partido da Social Democracia Brasileira – PSDB) presidencies in the 1990s under the aegis of neoliberalism, the Brazilian government's willingness to internationalize relativized foreign policy nationalist perspectives from previous moments, opening space for new multilateral architectures and decentralized forms of cooperation (Mesquita, 2013).

13. The relationship between the neoliberal logic and the idea of democratization through the decentralization of policies and the strengthening of local entities' power and autonomy was identified in Habitat II's analysis. At that time, both decentralization and the increasing role of non-governmental organizations in international debates were celebrated. However, it was found in the same period that a similar process that occurred in several countries of the global South was related to the guidelines of international agencies to reduce the State and shrink national agencies in the execution of urban policies (Balbim and Amanajás, 2015).

created an international bureaucracy seeking international investment (Salomón and Nunes, 2007). Both initiatives followed global rationalities.

Other initiatives took place between 1997 and 2001. Two medium-sized cities, Santo André (in the state of São Paulo, Southeast of Brazil) and Maringá (in the state of Paraná, South of Brazil), created their international relations departments when they were ruled by the Workers' Party (Partido dos Trabalhadores – PT), which has a history of internationalism. Between 2001 and 2004, other eight cities followed suit, including the capital cities of São Paulo (state of São Paulo) and Recife (in the state of Pernambuco, Northeast of Brazil), both headed by left-wing mayors during that time (Balbim, 2018).

The internationalization of Brazilian cities is quite recent and timid, for several reasons. Global cities such as Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo have only recently played a significant role in some international networks. Rio de Janeiro's mayor chaired the C40 after the city was chosen to host the 2016 Olympics. In turn, São Paulo chaired the Mercocities network.¹⁴ However, until 2016, the effective strategies of internationalization of these cities were subject to a political-partisan agenda that, in general terms, dictates the actions of public management in Brazilian cities.

This logic can be seen in government reports, abandoned projects, and even in the mere shift of the ruling party due to elections, as portrayed by Jakobsen (2004). For example, the International Relations Secretariat of the City of São Paulo (Secretaria Municipal de Relações Internacionais – SMRI), created in 2001, was disbanded at the beginning of the next government, despite its many achievements in a short period of time and with little investment. From 2001 to 2004, the Secretariat attracted three times more investment from international sources than the city had foreseen (Jakobsen, 2004). The city also hosted its first UN conference – the 11th United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) – and was chosen to coordinate an EEC network project. During a visit to São Paulo, the UN Secretary-General at the time visited one of the city's flagship public administration projects, the Unified Educational Centers (Centros Educacionais Unificados – CEUs), exposing this experience to the eyes of the world.

There is a relative consensus that there is a strong correlation between the political party in power and the structuring of management mechanisms and internationalization policies in Brazilian cities. For example, Godoy (2013), Milani and Ribeiro (2011) and the CNM (2011) have all found that a significant part of the international relations structuring in Brazilian cities is linked to PT's local governments of the early 1990s. In turn, the multiplication of the number of cities with international relations management mechanisms in the 2000s was linked to the federal government's support for the matter, as the PT took over the country's presidency in 2003.

Analysing the internationalization strategies of the PT mayors, Godoy (2013) warns that these efforts were not just about seeking technical and financial assistance for projects. There was also a strategy to strengthen inclusive development agendas, thus symbolically and materially complementing an anti-hegemonic discourse by giving visibility to locally developed policies. This movement reinforces

14. The Mercocities network dates back to 1995. It seeks regional integration based on diversity and participatory citizenship. Today it is one of the most important local government's networks in South America, with 375 member cities from 10 countries (Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay, Uruguay, Venezuela, Chile, Bolivia, Ecuador, Peru and Colombia), representing more than 120 million people. More information available at: <https://mercociudades.org/pt-br/mercociudades/>.

some of the hypotheses raised in this article, particularly the correlation between internationalization strategies, local democracy, and social participation, which is one of the leftist banners in Brazil.

According to Trevas,¹⁵ the internationalization of Brazilian cities is rooted in the leftist governments of European countries, such as Italy, France, Germany, Spain, and Denmark, with whom the most relations were established. The socialist and communist parties in these countries developed cooperation, via cities, with cities that had left-wing governments, particularly PT, in Brazil. The internationalist foundation of these parties' ideologies, the relative and belated rise of social democracy in the South American context, and the need for support from structured leftist local administrations all influenced the PT's international practices.

In Brazil, decentralized cooperation seems to be the main instrument of city diplomacy, with city networks playing a secondary role. This is undoubtedly due (in part) to the strong encouragement of the PT's national government between 2003 and 2014, when specific areas were created in the federal government to deal with the issue, especially the Federative Affairs Office of the Presidency of the Republic. During this period, the federal government signed decentralized cooperation protocols with Italy and France, which regulated and promoted city cooperation. This period also saw the emergence of the International Relations Secretaries Forum and the Decentralized cooperation Observatory, both with support from the national Undersecretariat of Federative Affairs (Subchefia de Assuntos Federativos – SAF), as well as the promotion of the three national city networks (Federação Nacional de Prefeitos – FNP, Confederação Nacional de Municípios – CNM and Associação Brasileira de Municípios – ABM).

In most Brazilian cities, the international relations area reports directly to the mayor. This reinforces the view that the internationalization of cities is a very personalistic action. However, mayors do not necessarily prioritize the international agenda, often lacking the activism and commitment necessary to sustain internationalization efforts, thus making discontinuity one of their hallmarks. According to Trevas, in the international arena, Brazilian cities are the consumers of the world, not the producers, revealing a posture characterized by passivity, subjugation, in relation to cities that carry out and export techniques, culture, etc. Additionally, there is no national project that brings together a framework built around convergent international strategies.

The increase in the number of organizations dedicated to international relations in Brazilian cities is closely linked to their participation in specific projects that involve financial resources, mainly through international agencies (Agence Française de Développement – AFD, Canadian International Development Agency – CIDA, Agencia Española de Cooperación Internacional para el Desarrollo – AECID, Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (German Society for Technical Cooperation – GTZ), Global Fund for Cities Development – FMDV and Japanese Agency for International Cooperation – JAICA) and their initial technical cooperation offers. For example, the URB-AL network, an EEC project,¹⁶ was responsible for funding and providing technical support for the structuring of the SMRI in São Paulo and, indirectly, for the creation of Mercocities.

A CNM (2011) study analyzes the actions of municipalities with international relations structures according to four axes: international politics, international cooperation, economic promotion, and

15. Interview carried out with Vicente s, Municipal Secretary of International Relations of the City of São Paulo (SMRI/PMSP). São Paulo, 2015.

16. More information on this cooperation program that aimed at developing direct, sustainable links between local communities, available at: https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP_02_598 and <http://aei.pitt.edu/51415/1/B0499.pdf>.

urban marketing.¹⁷ In the area of economic promotion, there is a clear tutelage of the national State through the Central Bank, the Ministry of Development, and the Commission of External Borrowings (Comissão de Financiamentos Externos – Cofix). However, this is not the case for technical cooperation, which has been disputed, at the federal government level, between the Brazilian Cooperation Agency (Agência Brasileira de Cooperação – ABC) and the SAF for several years. Today, technical cooperation is largely drained, leaving room for direct action by municipalities.

International politics and international cooperation are the two main axes of the internationalization strategies of Brazilian cities. This is partly due to the strategic actions of the federal government to encourage decentralized cooperation, South-South cooperation, and discourage funding from multilateral organizations, at least between 2003 and 2010. The particular performance of Brazilian cities in the scope of Southern Common Market (Mercosur), especially the border municipalities and the Consultative Forum of States and Municipalities (Foro Consultivo de Municípios, Estados Federados, Províncias e Departamentos do Mercosul – FCCR), is also worth mentioning.

As in other countries, the twinning of cities continues to be an important tool for structuring internationalization strategies in Brazilian cities. The first twinning of Brazilian cities took place between Rio de Janeiro and Istanbul in 1965. Of the cities surveyed by the CNM (2011), all except Itu, in the state of São Paulo, had sister cities, with 157 cities involved. The most common twin cities are in Portugal (22), China (15), Japan (14), United States (12), and Italy (11). The main agenda of this form of bilateral cooperation continues to be the promotion of peace and fraternity among peoples, although technical cooperation and cultural exchanges remain essential.

Although the volume of financial resources circulating in the international cooperation of cities is small, especially compared to the inter-country volume, these associations provide Brazilian cities with important benefits related to the technical and financial tools that complement local resources and capabilities.

In Brazil, as in other countries, the internationalization of a city ultimately aims to strengthen agendas that are blocked or hindered by the correlation of forces between cities and regional and national governments. After all, international recognition of local governments and politicians responsible for these projects can change the balance of power in future political disputes.

9 FINAL REMARKS

The territory of cities is central to global strategies of production and accumulation. Urban land is increasingly becoming a commodity that is bought and sold by global capital. The corporate urban space of cities is then regulated and standardized, no longer only by citizens, but, above all, by the international interests coordinated by large corporations. City networks are, in part, the vectors of this global rationality.

International programs, plans, cooperation, and agreements involving cities are multiplying in an environment of intense competition for investments and recognition of capacities and good practices. Ultimately, the internationalization of cities creates the necessary stability for new forms of accumulation to take place, by establishing a single ideal urban regulatory space.

17. It is important to note that this separation is only analytical, as there is often overlap between these categories in practice. However, we believe that categorization is necessary to advance our understanding of the specificities of international relations in Brazilian municipalities.

The commoditization of urban land seems to be the leading institute of these new forms of accumulation. To this end, urban environments and landscapes are transformed to conform to a globalized logic that erases the image of the industrial city, the working classes, and the values associated with disorder, danger, and poverty. Urban requalification, gentrification, and megaprojects are all mechanisms of this logic.

The competition between cities seeking for investments, resources, symbolic capital and cultural domination is leading to a moment of aggressive policies in search of new markets. This will likely result in the destruction of the city based on organic solidarity, and the emergence of an even more functional city based on organizational solidarity. This new city is exogenous, global, and does not result from quotidian interaction in the space, but rather produces the daily life of cities in its favor.

On the other hand, cities concentrate most of the world's population. While many people benefit only partially or precariously from the urbanity and wealth produced by the global reason, they also experience the daily consequences of climate change, deepening social inequality, increasing poverty and violence, and the side effects of geopolitical positions of Nation-States and corporations, especially migration and terrorism.

Cities are also the place of crises, opportunities, and innovations that emerge from everyday life. This other city, based on a local order, on organic and territorial solidarity, also participates in the deepening of the internationalization of cities, especially with the multiplication of its networks and the structuring of new fields of power, which seek a greater autonomy of cities to participate in global agendas.

City diplomacy is called upon to contribute to the definition of a new global order in a complex field of forces formed by transnational corporations, national States, multilateral agencies, NGOs, and, most importantly, city networks directed by citizens.

Therefore, it is necessary to advance in our understanding of this complex phenomenon, seeking to elaborate theoretical and methodological instruments for its practice. We must surpass exclusively State-centric views and ensure that city diplomacy has the adequate and necessary autonomy to negotiate in the global scenario.

A thorough understanding of the state of the art of international city networks, specifically their geopolitical cartography, is essential for cities to recognize themselves in this scenario and exert their power strategies more clearly. This information is also crucial for social movements and for citizenship, which, after all, constitutes the ultimate resistance to exogenous reasons and the first production line of a future shared by individuals, peoples, cities, and nations.

The internationalization of cities is a process that will multiply and deepen rapidly in the coming years, due to the existence of the necessary means to do so, as well as the increasing interests of corporations, humanitarian organizations, and environmental groups in regulating land use, daily life, and human-scale processes. Those interests mainly aim at market's increase and control.

Paradoxically, cities and peoples' resistance to organizational solidarity, which seeks to smooth out any kind of roughness, seems to derive from the innovation and particularities produced by the daily life of each place.

Despite the enormous potential for expansion, the internationalization of cities in Brazil does not seem to have a bright future. From a political standpoint, international relations between Brazilian cities and other cities around the world were mainly established during a time when the left-wing was in power and the country had a strong desire to participate in global geopolitics. This situation has changed dramatically since 2016. The recent return of PT to the presidency in 2023 has not yet led to a renewed focus on city diplomacy or decentralized cooperation.

On the other hand, from a structural perspective, Brazilian cities, as actors from the periphery of capital, have been relegated to the role of consumer of the world, much more than a producer. This is also how public managers have positioned themselves on the international scene. Other cities, including some cities from countries at similar development stage, such as Medellín, in Colombia, and Mexico City, have sought to insert themselves by valuing local strategies to produce global solutions.

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