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CITY DIPLOMACY: THE ROLE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENTS IN CONFLICT PREVENTION, PEACE-BUILDING AND POST-CONFLICT RECONSTRUCTION

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SUMMARY

This paper first sets out to define city diplomacy, or rather to highlight the various interpretations of the term in current use, and then to explain what the relevance of city diplomacy to local realities may be. As the title of this chapter suggests, we see it as all activities by local (i.e. sub-national) governments undertaken to contribute to conflict prevention, peace-building and post-conflict reconstruction. In particular, we focus on how local governments in peaceful areas or countries can help their counterparts in more-troubled regions.

This paper is based on a book with the same name, produced with the support of the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The paper briefly skirts theoretical analyses and the legal justification for local authorities to become involved in peace-building outside their own region. Some data taken from case studies show what can be achieved in areas as diverse as Colombia, Croatia and the Middle East.

Common themes that we see in the book and running through the work of VNG International, the international co-operation agency of the Association of Netherlands Municipalities, will be identified. They illustrate the various ways that local governments can contribute to peace-building activities and the factors that need to be taken into account before become involved in this area. Taking lessons from the various case studies it illustrates how ill-considered or poorly carried out activities can have a negative impact on peace – that is, they can make the situation worse.

Our hope is that the examples and our summarising of debates under the heading of the term of city diplomacy inspire many local governments and their leaders to contribute to making this a more peaceful world.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 This paper

The term city diplomacy has been applied to many types of international action by local governments. Nevertheless, it has increasingly come to mean the involvement of local governments in peace-building.[1] City diplomacy is a relatively new term and it is not widely known in which ways local governments are involved in conflict situations, nor why they do it. This generates questions. Is diplomacy something carried out only by states? What makes local governments want to become involved in peace-building? What is their justification for doing so? Do they have sufficient capacity to do so? Are we talking about local government involvement in issues at home, or in conflict areas far away?

The book on which this paper is based (Musch, A., Valk, C. van der, Sizoo, A.J. & Tajbakhsh, K. eds. (2008)) addresses the questions posed above and others. It identifies achievements and contributions to conflict prevention, peace-building and post-conflict reconstruction by local governments within and beyond conflict areas, while weaknesses and pitfalls are also highlighted.

This paper provides an overview of the debate on city diplomacy and outlines a light conceptual framework. It presents both its own story lines and important points made throughout the book. It deals with issues that practitioners have raised on various occasions. We have tried to provide access to a diverse knowledge base, while concentrating on certain activities that we consider typical.

Section 1 of this chapter explains the purpose and focus of the paper, and offers some definitions and concepts. Section 2 deals with what city diplomacy can be, starting with the broad outlines and moving on to specific categories of activities with which foreign local governments help local governments in conflict areas. Issues associated with this are identified throughout the book. We synthesize the most important ones in Section 3 of this chapter. Finally, Section 4 reflects on the lessons learnt and the future.

1.2 Local governments building peace: an international issue

The issue of the involvement of local governments in peace-building is the subject of much discussion. Local governments engage in international activities and receive increasing recognition for this role. Concrete, and sometimes desperate, demands from local governments in conflict areas proliferate. Partnerships are forged between international actors and local governments, within and beyond conflict areas, in attempts to create political and institutional environments in which reconstruction lasts. Concretely, humanitarian aid agencies, UN organizations, transitional administrations, peace-keeping forces and NGOs invite local governments to join their peace-building efforts.

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[1] Musch & Van Veldhuizen (2008)

City diplomacy may be a new term, but the phenomenon has a longer history. Local governments seem to feel a responsibility to contribute to dialogue and peace, to create a secure environment for their citizens. They have a history in international engagement, and they also have a history in dealing with conflicts at home. They are the layer of government that often feels the consequences of conflicts most directly, that is, in the streets of the city. Local governments have gained experience in projects and programmes involving international co-operation. They have long-term relationships with partner municipalities outside their own countries, and they work together in international platforms and associations.

The worldwide organization of local governments, United Cities and Local Governments, is an organization that promotes city diplomacy.[2] Another such organization is the Congress of Local Authorities and Regions of the Council of Europe. It recently recommended to the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe that it should include city diplomacy in its priority activities.[3] Local governments work through such organizations because they expect international attention to be a positive force in conflict areas, because they value the knowledge and experience of counterparts when local democracies are challenged by violence,[4] and because they need platforms where the demand and supply of city diplomacy can be matched (Musch, A. en Veldhuizen, O. van (2008)).

Various other international platforms use the city diplomacy concept, or promote the potential contribution of local governments to peace in general.

1.3   City diplomacy as defined by various organizations

The term city diplomacy registers an increasing amount of hits on the worldwide web. It is a container concept – used in different ways by various actors, and defined according to need and practice. A short history of definitions illuminates how different the perspectives can be.

Over the years, certain aspects of city diplomacy have been couched in other terms, such as municipal diplomacy, citizens diplomacy, and city-to-city diplomacy.[5] One of the first users of the term city diplomacy in conjunction with peace-building was the Glocal Forum, a network of cities, in its study on 'glocalization' (Glocal Forum 2003).[6]

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[2] http://www.cities-localgovernments.org

[3] The Council of Europe adopted this point of view on 13 March 2008 when discussing recommendation CPL/BUR(14)1 REC, 13 February 2008, City diplomacy, Onno Van Veldhuizen, Netherlands (L, ILDG), Draft recommendation, Bureau of the Chamber of Local Authorities.

[4] This was forcefully presented in a speech by Mr Deetman, former mayor of The Hague, 13 March 2008 at the spring session of the Council of Europe.

[5] The Center for Innovative Diplomacy, founded in 1982 by Michael Shuman, promoted, among other things, global peace through direct city and citizen participation in international affairs. These terms were thus already in use at that time.

[6] The term glocalization points to the link between the globalization of technology, information and economics on the one hand and local realities on the other.

The Committee on City Diplomacy, Peace-building and Human Rights of United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) defines the concept as *'the tool of local governments and their associations in promoting social cohesion, conflict prevention, conflict resolution and post-conflict reconstruction with the aim to create a stable environment in which the citizens can live together in peace, democracy and prosperity'* (Sizoo 2007 – this is UCLG's concept paper on city diplomacy).

In 2007, the Netherlands Institute of International Relations 'Clingendael' issued a research paper on city diplomacy. This paper defines it as *'the institutions and processes by which cities engage in relations with actors on an international political stage with the aim of representing themselves and their interest to one another'* (Pluijm 2007 p11). In the paper, there are six things that city diplomacy can be about: security, development, economy, culture, networks and representation. Peace-building is part of the security dimension.

The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe adopted the fairly specific UCLG definition in the recommendation mentioned in note 3. The report on which the recommendation is based contains another, narrow definition: *'For the purposes of this report, city diplomacy is defined as the activity whereby a municipal authority in a conflict area receives support from one or more municipal authorities outside of the area'* (Musch & Van Veldhuizen 2008 p2).

So, in a relatively short period, various definitions with different implications have surfaced. This is probably because the idea of local governments being involved in peace-building took root in different locations, quite independently of one another. Two areas of differences stand out so far:
- Value-free definitions that stress process as against definitions that include city diplomacy's purposes (human rights, conflict resolution, social cohesion etc.).
- Definitions with a broad reach (worldwide appeals and/or defence of local interests in the international community) versus narrow definitions which focus on peace-building.

In a field that is developing, such differences are productive: they generate conceptual progress. Now, we have to present and justify the perspectives taken in this paper. This forms the next subsection.

1.4   Research needs and choice of perspectives

As with the Council of Europe's report, this book does not intend to adjudicate between definitions, or to legitimize any inclusion or exclusion of activities. (Musch & Van Veldhuizen 2008 p2). However, city diplomacy can mean many things, and this paper cannot deal with all of them, so some constraints must be imposed. We base our arguments on a choice of perspectives, and on a judgement as to what is needed at this point in time.

Let us talk about the needs first. These have been identified by the international team of authors and editors of the city diplomacy book, through working with local governments and their associations the world over, while preparing for the first World Conference on City diplomacy in The Hague (2008), and while attending the preparatory conferences in Perugia (2006) and Barcelona (2007). In this process, we have identified the following needs:

- Local governments in conflict areas need a way to present their case at the international level that maximizes their chances of receiving help. They also need to know which parts of their municipal agendas are best served with outside help from counterparts. Finally, they need to know what their options are if help is not forthcoming.
- Local governments who want to help[7] in conflict areas need to know what it takes to be effective alongside other organizations, such as NGOs or the UN. Also, foreign local governments feel a great need for a sound justification for their engagement.
- Foreign local governments who do not want to go to a conflict area but still become involved have different needs. They need to know what global peace initiatives are out there, how to lobby international platforms and organizations and how to foster a culture of peace in their own cities.
- International organizations, national governments and peace and development agencies, as well as 'domestic' civil society organizations in conflict areas, need to know how to work with 'foreign' local governments in conflict areas. They may also find it valuable to know how to involve local governments in lobbying and monitoring.

In this paper, we prioritize local government issues in conflict areas, and issues that foreign local governments face when they go to conflict areas, over issues of global conflict and of lobbying through international platforms. This leads us to the following perspective.

Using the word 'city' indicates that we focus on the involvement in peace-building of local governments or, more precisely, sub-national governments. We do not consider local representatives of the central government to be local governments. Furthermore, local government is not the same as local communities. We use the following definition: local governments are 'the legitimate and accountable local layer of government – both the elected politicians and the administration – that represents the local community and provides public services to this local community' (Klem & Frerks 2008 p58).

It is important to understand that this paper uses the term local governments to cover a vast diversity of situations. The systems and the constituent bodies (such as the council and the executive) vary from place to place. The relationships with the citizens are different everywhere, and so are the loyalties to national governments and other actors with power. Decisions to engage in city diplomacy, both at home and abroad, are taken in particular local political environments.

Using the word 'diplomacy' suggests international relations or careful and astute handling of any issue involving diverging interests. Section 2 starts from the perspective of sub-state diplomacy to locate city diplomacy in relation to more traditional forms. When local governments foster social cohesion, also a subject in the next section, they build bridges, but they do not necessarily engage in international relations. While this book has a bias towards international relations, many local governments consider fostering social cohesion to be part of city diplomacy, like we do.

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[7] All intervening local governments will be called 'foreign' local governments from now on, but they can be from the same country or even from the same conflict area.
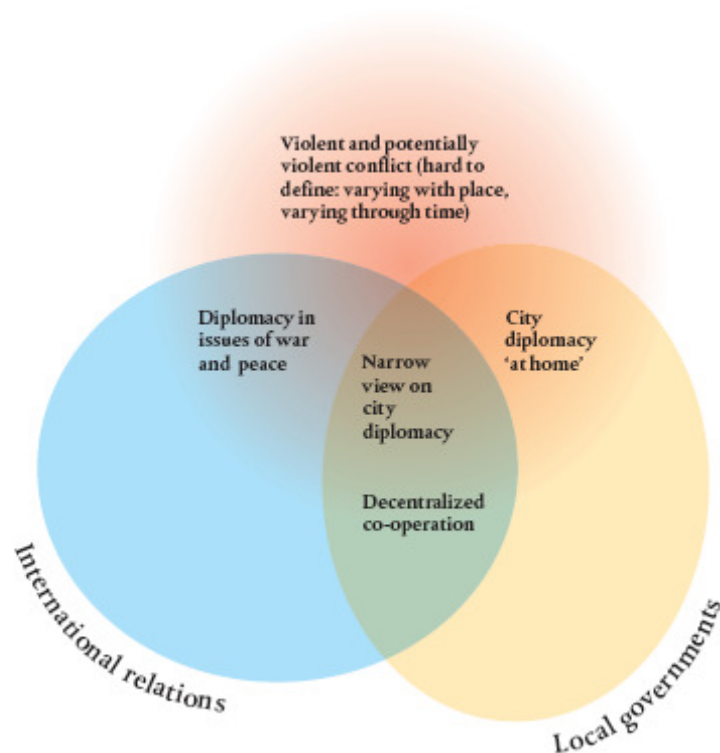
What is our perspective on conflict and peace-building? Peace-building in our view consists of all activities that aim to keep the use of violence at bay and to create conditions that make peaceful conflict resolution a more attractive option. This perspective builds on Galtung in the sense that it distinguishes the absence of violence, called 'negative peace', from building the conditions and institutions for peaceful resolution of conflicts of interest, labelled 'positive peace'.

Kenneth Bush points out that this involves 'un-building the structures of violence' (Bush 2004) This takes us into a grey area: how violent must a conflict be to be able to speak of peace-building and of city diplomacy? Do occasional outbursts in poor neighbourhoods of otherwise peaceful countries count? Do *potentially* violent conflicts count, making early warning a part of city diplomacy? There are certainly local governments with good contacts in potential conflict areas who can, and do, sound the alarm at the international level in a bid to get the conflict onto agendas before it turns violent. What about un-building the structures of violence on a global scale?

Even war zones, the most violent of all areas, rarely follow straight paths from warning to conflict to resolution to reconstruction. Long periods of instability are normal, in which fighting occasionally stops but picks up again when political deals collapse. Conflict areas are also not homogenous: not all local institutions have disappeared everywhere, and there may well be areas where the conflict subsides while it rages on around it (Hilhorst 2007).

Our position is that all these situations, including the global and the potential and the temporary zone of peace, are important for city diplomacy. The term has a broad reach. This paper, however, tends to pay more attention to situations of local violent conflict. Figure 1 visualizes our perspective on city diplomacy.

Figure 1 Our perspective on city diplomacy

2. ASPECTS OF CITY DIPLOMACY – WHAT CAN IT BE?

2.1 Sub-state diplomacy: how city diplomacy and state diplomacy relate

Local governments may be relative newcomers to diplomacy, but international relations are clearly no longer the exclusive preserve of national governments. On the contrary, we live in a world in which international, national and domestic arenas blur together (Pluijm 2007). Issues of war and peace are part of these interconnected arenas. The phenomenon of actors, other than states, engaging in international relations is called sub-state diplomacy here.

The driving force behind this trend, in the context of today's globalization, is de-territorialization: local governments and other non-state actors disregarding borders and appealing to, working with, and holding to account international platforms and organizations (Papisca 2008, p30). The converse is also true; international organizations and platforms increasingly work with local governments and other non-state actors.

That said, there is a worldwide issue of identity and autonomy of local governments in their relationship with central governments. The many debates about decentralization reflect this. With respect to city diplomacy, the issue is whether a local government's initiatives need to be aligned with its central government's foreign policies. We will see that the practice varies.

Let us deal with the relationship between international organizations and local governments first. The former clearly see the benefit of working with the latter, and their associations, as evidenced in their projects and programmes.[8] They involve foreign local governments to assist them in international capacity building programmes with peer-to-peer activities and decentralized co-operation. International organizations sometimes explicitly express their interest in working with local governments and their national associations. Examples are the Cardoso report which identifies local governments as a constituency of the UN with a growing role in global governance, (Panel of Eminent Persons on UN–Civil Society Relations 2004) and the UN General Assembly, in its 60th session (September 2005), stating that local authorities play an important role in attaining the millennium development goals, just as earlier UN conferences had expressed in Local Agenda 21, the Habitat Agenda and elsewhere. An example of fully-fledged formal involvement is the Committee of the Regions of the European Union, one of the bodies of this supranational organization.

There is a growing view that international organizations should engage with local actors on conflict management.[9] This means, for example, that the United Nations Development Programme supports local government peace-building efforts. International organizations engage with local governments in conflict areas and appeal to foreign local governments to come and help.

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[8] Papisca (2008) lists many UN programmes which do work with local governments, and many EU programmes, bilateral donors and international NGOs do likewise. The European Union is especially active in contracting associations of municipalities to carry out programmes in decentralization and municipal services.

[9] See Cravero & Kumar (2005) for an example. Such literature is part of a broader movement of local government involvement that started with the UN conference in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 which resulted in Agenda 21 in 1992, which later resulted in the creation of UN Habitat.

Rogier van der Pluijm has identified some reasons why cities tend to play a diplomatic role: they tend to know local-level problems well, they are disinclined to see them as security problems and they are often perceived as more neutral than states (Pluijm 2007 p20).

The converse, local governments engaging with international organizations, also happens. For instance, United Cities and Local Governments has signed memoranda of understanding with UN Habitat and with the Alliance of Civilizations.

Turning to the issue of local governments' relationships with national governments, we see that some national governments regularly involve local governments and their associations in the implementation of foreign policy, mainly in capacity building and reform programmes in developing countries.[10] An issue is the degree of freedom that local governments have to act in this way. The strongest view on this yet found is in the treaty entitled the European Charter of Local Self-Government. Its Article 10.3 states that 'local authorities shall be entitled, under such conditions as may be provided for by the law, to co-operate with their counterparts in other states'. Additionally, Recommendation 234 of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe invites the representatives of national governments to support city diplomacy 'in the general framework of their foreign policies'.

There are two possible interpretations here. The first is that national governments should make it a matter of policy to support city diplomacy. The second is that national governments can use the law and their policies to set limits on city diplomacy. The practice varies. Some countries leave it up to the local governments to develop their own international policy (e.g. France, Italy, Spain). Other countries only want their local governments to engage in international co-operation if it involves funding from the central level, and therefore comes with conditions (e.g. Sweden). Some countries take a midway position: local governments are allowed to engage in international politics, but their central governments prefer it to be in line with national policies (e.g. Canada, the Netherlands).

In publications by the Netherlands Institute of International Relations 'Clingendael', city diplomacy is analyzed in a way that is relatively unconcerned with the division of responsibilities or discussions on who should prevail. It describes the relationship between local and central governments as one of 'competitive co-operation' in which there may be instances when city and state actors work for mutually exclusive policy outcomes, and instances when city and state actors work for identical or complementary policy outcomes (Pluijm 2007 p13).

Our position is that there is value in both the analysis of practice and the establishment of norms. In other words, we need both the researchers and the activists if we are to advance the field of city diplomacy. Both central states and local governments should act in accordance with their responsibilities and expertise. Overarching ideas of human rights and building trust at grassroots level exist that apply to the agendas of both levels of government when they address issues of war and peace. Under these conditions, we consider the fear that representing the interests of states is incompatible with representing the interests of local governments to be unfounded.

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[10] This is the case, for example, in Canada, France, the Netherlands and Sweden.

2.2 City diplomacy and global issues

The term diplomacy in its classical meaning involves the representation of interests at the international level. Discussions on global interests are part of this. Local governments unite in organizations and platforms to address the international community on their perception of international developments.

Mayors for Peace is one such organization. It was established following the Mayor of Hiroshima proposing, in 1982, a new programme 'to promote the solidarity of cities toward the total abolition of nuclear weapons'.[11] Today, member mayors lobby the international community with campaigns such as 'Cities Are Not Targets'.[12] In the 1980s and 1990s, numerous European municipalities got involved in peace campaigns, often in alliance with peace movements. Examples are the nuclear-free local authorities, the twinning with Nicaragua, municipal anti-apartheid policies and the East-West municipal twinning contacts (Van den Berg 2008).

The Alliance of Civilizations is another example. It is a UN body that sets out to support projects and initiatives aimed at building bridges among a diversity of cultures and communities.[13] Local governments gain access to local groups of different cultures, can foster dialogue and work on a culture of peace which makes people identify with the global issues. Through United Cities and Local Governments, local governments contribute to the discussion by adding a local perspective.

2.3 Peace-building at home: local governments promoting social cohesion

Local governments can deal with issues of global interest, but also with issues that are felt important by its own local community. This element of city diplomacy is referred to as the promotion of *social cohesion* in the city. The argument is that mayors, councillors and officials are responsible for the creation of free and just societies for their citizens. This implies that local leaders have to overcome problems caused by divisions, playing a stabilizing role among different ethnic, religious or otherwise antagonistic groups. The problems to overcome may have a mainly local character but, more often than not, they are caused by conflicts that originate elsewhere, or that play a role on a much broader international scale, but that are reflected and felt within the local community.

Martijn Klem's case study on Croatia, in the city diplomacy book on which this paper is based, provides illustrations and cases where social cohesion was important. He describes efforts of local authorities, after the war in former Yugoslavia, to intervene in ethnic disputes in their own communities, and to stimulate citizens' participation in peace-building efforts. He also identifies interesting feats of co-operation between mayors of various ethnic backgrounds. Of the many local leaders in the conflict area, only a few took initiatives to build positive peace in their own cities.

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[11] www.mayorsforpeace.org

[12] http://www.mayorsforpeace.org/english/campaign/2020vision.htm. Through this programme, Mayors for Peace seeks to encourage and assist cities and municipal associations in demanding assurances from nuclear-weapon states that cities are not and will not be targeted for nuclear attack.

[13] The Alliance of Civilizations (AoC) aims to improve understanding and cooperative relations among nations and peoples across cultures and religions and, in the process, to help counter the forces that fuel polarization and extremism (mission statement of the Alliance of Civilizations: http://www.unaoc.org)

Although few in number, they were able to illustrate the potentially stabilizing role that local governments can play in post-conflict reconstruction.

Another case from the book is the one analyzed by Andrés Paz Ramos and Marianne Moor. They present examples of local governments in the northern part of Cauca, Colombia, creating their own ways to protect their citizens in struggles between different ethnic groups and problems with armed movements. Their case study focuses on the international dimension, but one can also read how ethnic tensions within communities were handled.

The potential of local governments in this area seems great. Local governments can tell central governments what is happening on the ground and can develop early warning systems. However, local governments should not claim to be the only level that can stimulate inter-ethnic dialogue. Moreover, while they can play a positive role, they can also play a destabilizing role, for example when local governments, in line with the practices of central government, oppress some of their citizens or discriminate against them.

Quite apart from social cohesion in areas of actual or potential violent conflict, there is the issue of social cohesion in cities, towns and villages which are unlikely to see any such conflict (although this does not mean it cannot happen). In such cases, local governments can work on the prevention of conflict, developing a culture of peace, solidarity and identification with global peace issues at home. Activities in this area include peace campaigns and festivals, youth forums and peace education in schools. The international day of peace, 21st September, is a popular day for such activities and we would include them within city diplomacy, even though the city diplomacy book does not pay much attention to them.

2.4 Intervention by foreign local governments

The preceding subsections dealt with the types of city diplomacy that fit the broad perspective: campaigns for global issues with no link to a particular conflict area, and working on social cohesion without any implication for international relations. One can also take a narrow view of city diplomacy in which it is about foreign local governments helping their counterparts in areas of violent conflict. This subsection is about such situations.

We will categorize the activities of foreign local governments into three types:
- Lobbying;
- Projects;
- Dialogue activities.

The word lobby here denotes any type of political engagement with a specific actual, potential or past conflict. This fits a wide range of activities, such as campaigns to alert the public to the plight of people in the area, getting the conflict on the agenda of international organizations or onto a court roll, expressions of solidarity and moral support, visits to the oppressed or the imprisoned, human rights monitoring and election monitoring. This type of city diplomacy is the most varied and the most prevalent.

Where the conflict area is so violent that a physical presence is not an option for foreign local governments, they can contribute to halting the violence by working with international organizations and platforms, peace movements etcetera.

Lobby-type city diplomacy can set out to help officials, such as mayors, who are threatened. Andrés Paz Ramos and Marianne Moor describe just such a case in their chapter of the book. The attention or presence of foreign local governments can be of great significance, if parties to the conflict want to be seen playing according to the rules.

Lobby-type city diplomacy amounts to early warning and conflict prevention when it takes place before the conflict becomes militarized. There is great potential in this type of activity: foreign local governments with twinning relations can be among the first outsiders to notice that a violent conflict is brewing in an area.

Projects are the second type of activity undertaken by foreign local governments in conflict areas. Improving a municipal service or a planning process of a partner local government is a common aim. Supporting peace-minded local government leaders in a conflict area, so that they can actually improve services, is a way of strengthening their position. Issues of access and user/citizen participation introduce a political dimension which is discussed in several chapters of the book, such as in the Croatia case study by Martijn Klem.

Here, the term dialogue includes all activities that aim to (re-)create trust, to (re-)establish non-violent ways of resolving conflicts and indeed to strengthen social cohesion in the conflict area. Some activities are relatively straightforward. For example, the city diplomacy report to the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council or Europe notes 'Sport events and cultural events are favourites for foreign local governments (and for many other intervening actors). This is understandable; they are relatively easy to organize, often wildly popular, and access can be regimented from outside. The youth football team of mixed ethnic origin is one of the mainstays of local governments building peace. Another is the concert by artists with general appeal over factions. Rarely do football matches or concerts address the root causes of conflict. The aim is to contribute to a change of atmosphere and to make former enemies become human again. Careless selection of participants and teams may result in a conflict impact rather than a peace impact.' (Musch & Van Veldhuizen 2008)

Such, relatively straightforward, change-of-atmosphere dialogue activities are much practiced. Conversely, dialogue activities that address the heart of political disagreements are not so common (in the city diplomacy book, Chris van Hemert's case study of the Municipal Alliance for Peace in the Middle-East however, describes such a case.) It is also the most difficult type, demanding great knowledge of the conflict area and the people in it by the foreign local government.

Finally, mediation, as a subcategory of dialogue activities, such as talking to armed groups or negotiating to get someone released from captivity, is a very specific action, requiring a certain authority which is accepted by both parties to the conflict, and maybe even beyond. Mediation seems to be a city diplomacy activity that is most likely to be undertaken by local governments in the conflict area itself than by foreign local governments. Foreign local governments can however be useful in creating conditions that can favour and facilitate mediation initiatives by others.

This section ends with Figure 2 which provides an overview of some activities that fit the narrow perspective of foreign local governments trying to help in a particular situation. They are ordered along the categories used in this subsection, and roughly according to the level of intervention (international and local). Please note that while the types encourage analytical distinctions, in practice, activities can combine characteristics. Technical projects on service delivery, for instance, will require dialogue-type actions as soon as aspects of access to the services arise.

Figure 2 Types of city diplomacy activities related to a particular conflict

	What foreign local governments can do in an international setting	What foreign local governments can do in the conflict area
Lobby-type activities	Lobby for the respect of human rights, peace accords and rule of law, human rights monitoring, election monitoring.	
	Lobby for international attention on the plight of local governments in the conflict area, join early warning systems.	Create legitimacy with existing partner cities in the conflict area through frequent activities and meetings, expressions of solidarity.
Project-type activities		Send municipal experts to civil affairs units of peace-keeping forces, transitional administrations and humanitarian aid organizations.
		Support municipal service departments directly or in reconstruction projects.
Dialogue-type activities	Connect partner cities in forums for exchange.	Facilitate local dialogue initiatives and give them moral support.
		Organize cultural and sports events.
	Join mediation and reconciliation teams and forums.	

3. ISSUES IN CITY DIPLOMACY

So far, in this paper, we have proposed definitions and categories, and looked at what city diplomacy can be. This section is mainly about issues to be addressed if city diplomacy is to realize its potential in practice, once again with a bias towards activities in conflict areas.

3.1 Legitimacy for local governments in acting internationally

As was referred to in the subsection on sub-state diplomacy, the legitimacy of local governments to act internationally is both disputed and defended.

Antonio Papisca (2008), in a far-reaching analysis, identifies two sources of legitimacy for local governments to act beyond state borders. The first comes from their 'responsibility to protect'[14] all human beings, who have internationally recognized fundamental rights. [15] While this may immediately be seen as applying within one's own municipality, local governments are also partners in safeguarding human rights the world over. The second source of legitimacy comes from their increasing participation in a global governance agenda of human development and human security. According to Papisca, local government, in representing the interest of the global citizen, is an important government layer in guaranteeing development, security and rights.

The responsibility to protect is more than a theoretical argument. The city diplomacy book contains an excellent example that illustrates the practice. Andrés Paz and Marianne Moor describe the establishment of indigenous guards in the northern part of Cauca, Colombia, by indigenous municipal councils as a reaction to the constant threat of armed groups to their people. In this example, the local leaders were recognizing their 'responsibility to protect' the human rights of their citizens. The notion of local governments having a responsibility to protect combines well with the idea of local governments working on social cohesion.

3.2 Champions and local leadership

Good leadership is one of the preconditions for successful conflict management. The cases in this book all show it to be a vital ingredient of city diplomacy. Nevertheless, the cases are mostly about the positive scenario. It is probably fair to say that it is both dangerous and rare for local leaders to stand up against ethnic, religious and other structures at the source of the violence. Local leaders are often part of these structures, in which case local peace-building becomes very difficult.

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[14] This notion has been pioneered by the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty, an independent body supported by the government of Canada, which advises the UN Secretary-General.

[15] The fundamental rights are laid down in instruments such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which according to Papisca include the right to positive peace for the global citizen. This has inspired local governments. The City of Nantes, for instance, hosts the secretariat of a World Forum for Human Rights.

Local leadership is a key concept in the case study by Martijn Klem on eastern Croatia. It is identified as one of the three conditions that must be locally met if municipal peace-building activities are to take off and be sustainable. The case study by Chris van Hemert on the Municipal Alliance for Peace shows that leadership and commitment were essential for the success of the initiative, and notes the courageous leaderships of the Israeli and the Palestinian local government associations.

City diplomacy actions need the commitment of municipal leaders and their officials. Top-down imposed activities are less likely to work; the commitment must be felt by the local leaders. This is true both in conflict areas and in the activities of foreign local governments.

3.3   The importance of partnerships

As with actors in international co-operation in general, local governments in city diplomacy need to enter into partnerships with other organizations. This subsection will focus on partnerships with civil society organizations.

In the city diplomacy book, The chapter on the history of local government involvement in peace-building by Van den Berg provides useful information. It shows that local peace movements were able to challenge local governments to take up a political position and to take action on various international issues in the 1980s and 1990s, such as the proliferation of nuclear weapons and the apartheid regime in South Africa. Local governments did enter the front line through their stands but, in getting to this position, they were backed by civil society peace organizations.

The case studies of both Croatia and Colombia show that the involvement of non-governmental peace organizations was a condition for the municipal actions to have impact. The organizations IKV and Pax Christi can be seen as the engines behind the activities that local governments became involved in. These cases show that peace organizations, with their specific approaches, experience and drive, can create synergies with local governments.

In other situations, local governments sometimes prefer to act alone. The partnering of Israeli, Palestinian and foreign local government associations did not involve civil society organizations in either the first and second phases of the process. The leaders of the associations involved opted to maintain a low profile by involving only local governments. Involving too many partners in the early phase of the process, they feared, would only endanger the dialogue in what was a highly political process.

3.4   The fragility of city diplomacy

Section 1 of this chapter established our perspective on city diplomacy. In our view, the concept has a broad reach and many activities of local governments in the fields of peace and social cohesion fit within it. Nevertheless, we feel that the greatest current research needs concern situations in which foreign local governments help their counterparts in actual, former or potential war zones; and processes in war zones are fragile.

Martijn Klem and Georg Frerks, in the main theoretical contribution of the book on city diplomacy, explain why this is so. Violent conflicts are characterized by broken 'social contracts'. This means that people feel that institutions such as central and local governments behave in unpredictable ways, and no longer trust them to come up with balanced policies. People then resort to violence to settle conflicts of interest. Klem and Frerks do not see much scope for local governments in stopping the violence (the absence of violence being what we call 'negative peace'). However, once this has somehow been achieved, they do see an important role for local government in re-establishing structures for peaceful conflict resolution ('positive peace').[16]

Local governments in conflict areas need the trust of their citizens to play this role. They can create trust through good performance, typically by delivering services in a peace-sensitive way. They can also create trust by handling issues of representation well, maybe through local elections, or through participatory approaches or by linking with traditional forms of representation. Gaining trust is always a complex matter, and it takes time. It may well be easier for local governments in ethnically homogenous areas; it will probably be harder for local governments entangled in the overall conflict. The list of influences is long and progress is easily reversed, and hence the processes must be seen as fragile.

What foreign local governments can and cannot do under these circumstances is an important issue.

There are several ways in which city diplomacy can help to recreate local trust. Technical assistance by municipal experts can boost performance legitimacy; lobbying can keep local governments in the conflict area on the right track and support peace-minded forces. If foreign local governments are seen as neutral parties, they can lend some of their own legitimacy to peace processes, and so on.

However, success does not come easily. Foreign local governments are constantly reminded of the fragility of city diplomacy processes in several ways. First, they are often only called upon to do things that are complementary to the efforts of others. Second, as Dion van den Berg of IKV urges, foreign local governments need to stay engaged at the political level, even if they present their activities as technical projects. Losing the political touch puts the entire result at risk. Third, Kenneth Bush, in the city diplomacy book and elsewhere, admonishes foreign local governments for not always carefully analyzing what the peace impact *and* the conflict impact of their activities are (see also the next subsection).

In the city diplomacy book, the case study on the Municipal Alliance for Peace in the Middle East by Chris van Hemert illustrates how the inherent fragility in city diplomacy can play out in practice. It is a detailed review of hurdles and favourable factors in a process of dialogue between Israeli and Palestinian municipalities, mediated by foreign counterparts. Bottlenecks are ever present at the practical level, with roadblocks and travel restrictions, at the level of the politics of local government associations and at the level of the overall conflict in which no one, and certainly not the mayors, can be seen to yield too much. There are favourable factors such as the constant willingness of local leaders to bridge divides.

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[16] However, in the subsection on interventions, we have identified some ways in which one may contribute to negative peace. Dion van den Berg's chapter elaborates on this. He analyzes lobbies with a political impact that *indirectly* help to create conditions to stop the violence.

Van Hemert describes a city diplomacy process that resulted in successful dialogue, but with so many twists and turns that concrete results have yet to be attained after five years. The chapter is a vivid reminder of the patience and diplomatic stamina that foreign local governments and their associations need to bring to the table.

The view we wish to put across is that city diplomacy processes are fragile and that gains are easily reversed. Foreign local governments should take into account the perspectives of the whole community of citizens, should work on the issue of trust, should be there for the long haul, should work with others and should remain politically engaged even if they try to minimize the visibility of the political dimension of their involvement in their project activities. Most importantly, foreign local governments cannot allow their activities to add to the conflict impact, for this will destroy their legitimacy in intervening. This is the subject of the next subsection.

3.5   Peace impact or conflict impact: city diplomacy does not always work

An appealing line of reasoning goes like this. 'Poor people are angry about their lot, which may lead them to join armed movements who pretend fighting will improve the situation. We need to deliver services to poor people so that they have less to complain about.' In this view, municipal services are an investment in peace.

Kenneth Bush, in his chapter in the city diplomacy book and elsewhere, says that reality is nowhere near that simple. A development success may boost the conflict, while development failures may have a positive peace impact. The city diplomacy report to the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe is also quite clear about this: contexts and processes in conflict areas are so complex that foreign municipalities can get it wrong. An example of a development project boosting conflict would be one that gave access to donor-financed new homes by people who did not lose their houses, so antagonizing people living in tents.

Why do such things happen? Firstly, when projects are designed, there may be little attention paid to fairness, even-handedness and transparency (Bush 2004 p10 onwards). As Martijn Klem and Georg Frerks might put it: there may be little attention to things that make people respect 'social contracts'. Secondly, while projects are being executed, the lines of communication with groups in the conflict zone and their leaders may weaken.[17] This leads to a lack of knowledge about what is going on in the conflict area, and about the impacts of the project.

Throughout this book, it is repeatedly said that city diplomacy takes time. Throughout that time, any foreign local government with activities in a conflict area *must* know the people and the context. This is difficult: political and military leaders may change, displaced people may arrive and leave, etcetera. Kenneth Bush argues that conflict areas are so dynamic that project designs should be no more than a rough guideline – flexibility and dedicated long-term commitment to peace by foreign local governments count for much more (Bush 2004 p39). Foreign local governments can team up with others on the ground to improve their information flows.

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[17] It is common to pay a lot of attention to their participation at the start of a project, but this seems to often weaken over time.

Such warnings are justified but, at the same time, they should not detract from the essential value of city diplomacy. Foreign local governments know about institutional aspects of municipal service delivery. At home, they deal with the technical processes of planning access to services and the political processes of distributing access to services on a daily basis. To avoid problems, they should combine their technical knowledge with a detailed knowledge of the politics. With this background, they can add great value to peace-building and post-conflict reconstruction.

No one should be fooled into thinking this is an easy job. In city diplomacy projects, detailed knowledge of the service to be provided should go hand-in-hand with detailed knowledge of the conflict area. Users who seem more-or-less equal in terms of a municipal service, such as drinking water provision, may be very different in terms of security and vulnerability.[18] Foreign local governments cannot afford to be unaware of such things.

4. IN CONCLUSION, WHAT DOES THIS PAPER TELL US?

Local governments, their associations and their platforms engage in conflict issues in many ways. They do so at the international level, in conflict areas and at home. This paper identifies the great potential that foreign local governments have in this regard. It is also about what local governments in conflict areas do, and how all this links with issues of global peace, peace-building and reconstruction, and social cohesion. Theoretical and legal foundations are briefly explored, and some references were made to case studies where this potential was realized in practice. This paper aims to spur on and to admonish in equal measure, for this potential is only realized under certain conditions.

4.1 The capacity for city diplomacy

Local governments in conflict areas, or in situations of tension between groups, are regularly involved in city diplomacy in the sense of working on social cohesion. Local governments, their associations and forums also regularly prove their value in working for peace at the global level and in international organizations. In a world in which states are no longer the exclusive international actors, international work has become the norm. Nevertheless, when foreign local governments find themselves in actual or potential zones of violent conflict, their capacity to act is rightly questioned.

So are foreign local governments equipped to go out and help their counterparts? Our view is that local governments possess unique knowledge of a combination of technical and political processes, and that peace-building and reconstruction are well served by their involvement. There are just too many demonstrations of their added value to deny it. That is why actors such as peace-keeping forces, peace NGOs, transitional administrations and development agencies invite local governments to join their efforts. Local governments should join these other actors to be effective and to counter the very real threat of lack of knowledge of the conflict area. The quality of city diplomacy depends heavily on the quality of partners.

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[18] Women and ethnic minority groups can be in this position, and many more such issues are at play.

'But what can we *do*?' is a regular question from municipal officials. Figure 2 of this chapter indicates that there are plenty of options, even if foreign local government officials do not fancy going to conflict areas themselves. It would seem, from a capacity viewpoint, that the real question is, 'What prevents us from taking up the opportunities to contribute to peace?' Hiring experienced staff, investing in long-term relationships and forging links to the ministry responsible for overseas affairs, international organizations and peace movements can all help to move from ideas to action.

4.2   Preconditions for successful peace-building by local governments

Local governments have the right to act internationally whenever they feel it is in their interest to do so. When they do, considerations of peace and moral support may mix with motives of city marketing and politics at home. When a conflict is too violent to allow visits to the area, lobbies and indirect action are options. However, in the case of helping counterparts in conflict areas, there are extra concerns. City diplomacy processes are fragile and activities can contribute to peace or intensify a conflict. Foreign local governments should do everything in heir power to prevent the latter.

This begs the question as to whether there is a point at which the city diplomacy process is so fragile that foreign local governments ought to consider withdrawing. Conversely, one could ask what the preconditions for continuing are. From our experiences we can derive some of these preconditions. First, foreign local governments must know the conflict area and the politics within it sufficiently well. Second, there need to be local leaders who are willing to bridge divides. Third, the violence needs to be brought under some level of control. Fourth, a sufficient number of the people involved must want to be seen to play according to the rules (human rights, representation and so on). Fifth, there needs to be a genuine opportunity for local governments to peacefully resolve conflicts and peacefully deliver services. Finally, in particular situations involving large foreign interventions, a legal framework and the direction of the reconstruction process must be widely accepted.

The primacy of local processes over the intervention by foreign local governments is evident in various instances in the city diplomacy book. Foreign local governments need to adopt approaches based on long-term commitment and modest contributions to make the most of their influence. Foreign local governments need to know many things about conflict areas, work with the right international partners, pick the right local partners, use the right approaches, and so on. In city diplomacy, you have to hit the bull's-eye many times over.

4.3   Concluding remarks

The understanding on how local governments can potentially contribute to peace-building is growing. Many local government organizations are already working on the issue in practice, and platforms have been established. It is up to local governments worldwide to continue working with the existing practices and to explore further possibilities.

Local governments that are newcomers in this area are invited to step in and prove the theory right, while always taking into account what it requires to work effectively in conflict areas and to constantly monitor the peace impact of their actions. In other words, a larger quantity of city diplomacy is called for, but the quality must also be sufficient.

Our hope is that this paper inspires many local governments and their leaders to engage in city diplomacy activities and contribute to making this a more peaceful world.