

Studying The Symbolic and Cultural Practices of City Diplomacy: The Case of Seattle

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### Thesis Abstract

This thesis uses the case of Seattle's city diplomacy to identify, describe, and evaluate aspects of this phenomenon that have hitherto been ignored or given little priority in extant research. This case study's theoretical framing applies insight from social constructivism and practice theory. With this theoretical pluralistic framing, city diplomacy is conceived as a constellation of practices that implicitly and explicitly socially construct cities as global actors in global society. This approach provides nuance to scholarship and practitioner viewpoints in which a city's identity as a global actor is taken for granted. The thesis conceives four heuristic categories of city diplomacy practice. These are documenting, networking, gifting, and gardening. Global surveys presented at the beginning of each empirical chapter show that these practices occur across geographic and political contexts. Furthermore, using insight from social constructivism and practice theory, these city diplomacy practices are understood as sayings and doings with narrative and discursive implications on social reality. Together, these symbolic and cultural practices contribute to local and global narratives and discourses in which cities are identified, either by themselves or by other actors, as capable and critical global actors in various areas of global governance.

The case of Seattle emphasises examples from the last few decades to build on and fill in the gaps in existing research about Seattle's global engagement. However, examples also show that Seattle has implicitly and explicitly socially constructed itself as a global actor for over a century. Documents like city council resolutions, participation in international city networks like C40, gifting of objects like totem poles, and the creation of gardens like sister city parks, are some of the empirics analysed in this case study of Seattle's city diplomacy. Moreover, the thesis emphasises that future city diplomacy should further consider the constitutive effect of practices

and should further research the specific hitherto unidentified practices of gifting and gardening. In sum, this thesis provides strategies to study city diplomacy and makes theoretical, empirical, and methodological contributions to the role of cities in world politics.

### List of Abbreviations

100RC - Rockefeller 100 Resilient Cities Network

C40 - C40 Climate Cities Global Leadership Group

CEDAW - Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women

COP - Conference of the Parties

IR - International Relations, the discipline of

MoU - Memorandum of Understanding

SMA - Seattle Municipal Archives

UCCN - UNESCO Creative Cities Network

UCLG -United Cities and Local Government

UN - United Nations

US - United States of America

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The first person who deserves acknowledgement for this thesis is Jeff Hauswald. He was responsible for my first trip outside of the US. Jeff allowed me to be a student representative of Kokomo High School to visit Dongyang, Zhejiang, China, when my hometown was establishing a sister city relationship. This visit infected me with the ‘travel bug’ and sparked my interest in international relations. I also met former Kokomo Mayor Greg Goodnight on that trip, who introduced me to urban issues.

I also want to acknowledge current and former academics at the UNNC. First, Gregory J. Moore helped with my application, and original research proposal and served as my initial lead supervisor. Gary Rawnsley also previously served as a lead supervisor and helped me think about the practice and impact of public diplomacy. Alain Chong facilitated a research exchange at the University of Connecticut. Jeongwon Bourdais Park and Maria Julia Trombetta joined my supervisory team in the later stages of the project. Nevertheless, their consultations and assistance helped me finish the project. Finally, Christian Müller taught me to think critically, analytically, historically, and more importantly, beyond the nation-state.

My fellow PhD cohort at UNNC also should be mentioned. While I cannot name them all here, I would like to thank André Hantke for introducing me to practice theory and Tapiwa Matonhodze for the late-night discussions on IR and other topics. I also enjoyed urban studies discussions with Emmanuelle Khoo Fong Yi, who was kind enough to read and comment on the first draft of this thesis. Outside of UNNC, Jeremy Breedlove is another friend who cannot be omitted. He ensured that I always had a couch to sleep on while I waited for China’s borders to reopen during Covid-19. Amy also supported throughout this research project.



I would also like to thank Jake Hodder at the University of Nottingham for giving me a home in the School of Geography when I participated in the university's inter-campus mobility scheme.

In the summer of 2021, I participated in a workshop organised by Agnieszka Szapak and Joanna Modrzynska at Nicolas Copernicus University on cities as non-state actors in global politics. During this workshop, I developed my idea to research the gifting practices of city diplomacy.

The very helpful archivists and librarians of various institutions also deserve acknowledgement. They were extremely accommodating to research difficulties during the Covid-19 pandemic. Special thanks are given to the archivists at the Seattle Municipal Archives for their efficiency, patience, and quick responses to my many requests for scanning. They went the extra mile to send me additional documents and items held by the archives, records, and objects I likely never would have found.

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the other cities and countries visited in between. Thanks for the ping-pong table, which, unbeknownst to all of us at the time, prompted this PhD thesis on the practice of city diplomacy.

## Introduction

### **Project Motivation**

This thesis inadvertently developed from a series of events that occurred a decade ago in my city of birth and upbringing. In 2013, my hometown of Kokomo, Indiana, USA conducted practices that gave the city a minor claim to an existence as a global actor. In 2013, Kokomo formed a sister city relationship with Dongyang, Zhejiang, China. As a student, once in high school and once during my Bachelor's studies, I visited Dongyang twice as a student representative. During these trips and after reflection and study of International Relations (IR) and (city) diplomacy, I came to the realisation that what initially appeared as a novelty is a standard practice of cities around the world in their pursuit of interests, identity, status, knowledge, capital, etc. Although Kokomo has been unsuccessful in developing an identity as a global actor, which can be attributed at least partially to its lack of sustained globally oriented symbolic and cultural practice, as this thesis will show, other cities around the world have been more successful and determined in their conduct of city diplomacy.

The conduct of city diplomacy is diverse. Whether cities create relations via sister city or town twinning schemes, join international city networks, send officials on a study mission, trade mission, or to an international conference about transnational issues, give a gift to recipients across national borders, build a symbolic cultural garden, or some other related practice, cities participate in global society and construct a reality in which cities are global actors. However, the identity or role of cities was not immediately apparent in my academic training in IR and diplomacy. Despite my years of study about world politics, global history, and international law, cities' global engagement always seemed to be missing in textbooks and classroom discussions. In a discipline like IR that remains state-centric – cities are rarely an object of analysis. Thus, to fill this gap and further bring

the city into IR, this thesis develops strategies to study the global engagement and conduct of cities as global actors, what is now often known as city diplomacy. Furthermore, the following study investigates the social processes whereby cities construct and normalise their identity and existence as global actors in various issue areas.

Although the following study of city diplomacy does not contend to revolutionise the discipline of IR and its foundational concepts and theories, social and political trends are such that make me optimistic that the role and importance of cities as actors in global society will continue to advance in the future. Similar predictions are often accompanied by statistics about how more than half of humanity now lives in cities. However, rather than rehash these acknowledged facts, it is worth reflecting on the role of the academic in normalising ideas and popular beliefs.

Although this thesis argues that cities' actions and practices, either intentionally directed at such a goal or not, socially construct their identity as global actors, scholars also play a role in social construction. In other words, continued scholarly recognition of city diplomacy will buttress cities' own efforts to embed themselves within global society. With the constitutive effect of scholarship in mind, it is essential to stress the importance of qualified claims over hasty triumphalist generalisations. Rather than argue that all cities are already global actors, should be members of the United Nations, are the most effective governmental units to solve global issues, or some other broad prescriptive claim about the nature of the city in world politics, this thesis seeks to strike a more nuanced balance tone between the normality of observed patterns of cities' global engagement and the potential utilitarian effects of city diplomacy on the ontology of global society. To avoid misleading statements about the revision of global order or normative predictions, this study of city diplomacy prioritises nuance and develops strategies to study this phenomenon. This will help reorient studies to what is happening rather than what scholars or activists want to

or think will happen. Furthermore, this approach is adopted to counter visionary statements like the teleological view apparent in the Global Parliament of Mayors' mission state, for example, that seeks 'A world in which mayors, their cities and networks are equal partners in building global governance for an inclusive and sustainable world.'<sup>1</sup> Because discourse has constitutive ramifications, scholarship needs to proceed carefully to avoid disconnects between perceptions and reality about the position of cities within the hierarchy of global politics. Thus, this thesis is not a 'think piece' about the good that is believed to result from city diplomacy, either in terms of human development, efficient urban governance, or the creation of friendly relations between peoples, cultures, and nations. Instead, practical strategies and ideas are presented to study city diplomacy rather than assuming, without questioning, that cities are indispensable to global governance.

However, cities matter and that they are not idle entities in global society. I draw an issue with a problem of overestimation or assumption of importance. While I concur that cities are not simply places or sites on the planet where social and political processes and events occur, nor are they, to use one common metaphor in IR, inconsequential billiard balls that are knocked around by states, scholarship should not take anything for granted. Rather, this thesis tries to show that through various interrelated symbolic and cultural practices, cities construct social reality, carve out space to act in and influence multiple global issue regimes, and form relations with various other actors in pursuit of local interests. In sum, cities are not spectators to world affairs; they are active participants, and this can be observed via their practices.

As such, this thesis will interest students and scholars interested in city diplomacy and the role of non-state and sub-state or paradiplomatic actors in world politics. It will also interest

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<sup>1</sup> Global Parliament of Mayors, n.d. 'Mission Statement'. Available at <https://globalparliamentofmayors.org/mission-statement/>. Accessed August 2023.

practitioners and advocates of a globally engaged city looking to understand better cities' symbolic and cultural practices and the plausible impact thereof. But before the specific content of this thesis is outlined, one final word on the selection of Seattle, as it relates to the motivation of this project, is necessary.

In addition to my trip mentioned above to Dongyang, China, another more recent trip during this project's research phase unexpectedly shaped the content and argument of this thesis into its current form. This motivated me to pursue certain lines of inquiry. In the summer of 2021, I visited Seattle for the first time while unable to return to China because of Covid-19 restrictions. While I originally planned to include case studies of Chinese cities and Sino-US sister city relationships (including the Seattle-Chongqing relationship, one of the oldest within this binational context), after a realisation that I might not be able to return to China to conduct data collection and field visits, these developments compelled a change in research design. Furthermore, the realisation that my background knowledge, experience, and academic expertise are better suited to the US context, I decided to focus on only US city diplomacy. Thus, while travelling to various US cities when most international borders were closed and the concurrent deep reading of existing scholarship on US city diplomacy, I concluded during my trip to Seattle that the city is both exceptional and representative of US city diplomacy. Thus, later in this introductory chapter, Seattle's city diplomacy and motivations for the selection of Seattle are further explained. But before this occurs, this study's research questions and goals need to be presented.

## **Research Questions**

As a study that identifies hitherto ignored features of city diplomacy and as a study that applies theories that have either marginally, if not at all, been applied to study this phenomenon,

this thesis arguably raises as many questions as it answers. However, the question-raising nature of this study is important for it gives future researchers of city diplomacy ideas and topics to debate and discuss. However, problem-solving does occur in this thesis. These problems mainly relate to the difficulty of studying city diplomacy and the challenge of determining how and to what extent cities have developed identities as global actors across multiple issues areas of world politics.

This study mainly asks: To what extent does applying social constructivist and practice theory insight to the case of Seattle's city diplomacy and its globally oriented symbolic and cultural practices help to study and understand city diplomacy, and how cities implicitly and explicitly develop and sustain an identity as a global actor?

Answering this question will contribute to the knowledge of Seattle's city diplomacy. It will make theoretical, empirical, and methodological contributions to research on cities' global engagement in the early twenty-first century. While the single case study approach makes generalising from this case arguably better suited to understanding other US cities, because of the importance of political and legal context, the thesis argues that the social constructivist and practice theory approach applied to the case of Seattle can be adapted to study other cities around the world. Moreover, answering this question is important to improve current research that takes cities' global 'actorness' for granted. Thus, this thesis' emphasis on the social constructivist impacts of sustained practices helps explain how cities became recognised in specific issue areas in world politics as legitimate members of global society.

To help answer the above main research question, other guiding questions are utilised in this study. These include:

- Why does Seattle conduct a variety of globally oriented symbolic and cultural practices?
- Why does Seattle maintain relations with other actors in global society?

- How do Seattle's city diplomacy practices and transnational relationships constitute the city as a global actor?

Moreover, to identify and theorise on unidentified practices of city diplomacy, this study also asks:

- Why do Seattle and other cities worldwide conduct the practices of documenting, networking, gifting, and gardening?

This question is important to publicise to academic and practitioner communities the existence of these practices and develop avenues for future practical research about the actual conduct of city diplomacy.

Taken together, these questions will advance the study of city diplomacy, give social constructivists and practice theorists a new unit of analysis for future studies, and problematise and add nuance to studies that assume cities are global actors that hold an important role in certain areas of global governance, to mention just a few areas of advancement. However, to explain why Seattle has been judged to be a case study capable of making these advancements, Seattle's city diplomacy needs to be introduced.

### **Introducing Seattle's City Diplomacy**

Seattle's city diplomacy is worthy of sustained academic inquiry, and the case is useful to develop the theoretical and methodological academic field that focuses on this particular phenomenon. Previous sustained academic inquiry about Seattle's foreign policy supports the claim that this case study merits attention. Sometime before my aforementioned Seattle trip that occurred during my pilgrimage to better understand the state of US urban politics and city diplomacy, I read Daniel Bush's 1998 dissertation titled, 'Seattle's Cold War Foreign Policy, 1957-1990: Citizen Diplomats and Grass Roots Diplomacy, Sister Cities and International



Exchange'. When I first read it, I felt it focused too much on sister cities, did not employ IR theory, and was therefore not central to my project. However, after touring Seattle's sister city parks, after visiting the redeveloped downtown areas transformed since the rapid rise of the global e-commerce industry epitomised by Amazon's headquarters, after learning more about Seattle's relations with Chinese cities in the last few years, which significantly do not use the sister city concept suggesting a move away from simple voluntary cultural exchanges to more strategic relations, after learning more about Seattle's participation in international city networks formed in the twenty-first century, and after reviewing the city's vocal opposition of Trump Administration policies, I realised that Seattle would be a perfect case study about US city diplomacy. Furthermore, after considering the examples in Bush's dissertation and rereading them considering IR theory and developments in Seattle and other US cities' city diplomacy since the 1990s, I concluded that aspects of Seattle's globally oriented symbolic and cultural practices are both typical and unique.

Seattle illustrates both the particularity and normality of cities' global engagement. Seattle is particular in its geographical advantages, and these influence its city diplomacy and direction of global engagement. As an economically and demographically growing port city on the Pacific Northwest with major technological industries, the city is better poised than others to engage globally. For instance, Seattle prides itself on its relationships with Asia and the fact that multiple Chinese heads of state of visited the city since the normalisation of Sino-US relations. In some of its newer formalised relationships with Chinese cities, Seattle has also moved away from the sister city framing. This can be interpreted as an effort by Seattle to be more strategic in global relationships and avoid the dominance of cultural or youth exchanges that fall within the connotations of the sister city idea. This move away from the sister city strategy of global engagement is different from cities like Carmel, Indiana which just recently in 2023, formed a

sister city relationship with Visakhapatnam, India. But at the same time, as this thesis' empirical chapters will show more fully in its global survey sections, Seattle's globally oriented symbolic and cultural practices are comparable to other cities worldwide. Many cities around the world document their claims to a global city or global actor status, thousands of cities participate in dozens of international city networks, cities around the world give and accept diplomatic gifts from foreign counterparts, and cities on various continents develop garden spaces to symbolically honour and communicate to local and visiting populations the existence and value of a cities' global engagement. However, although studies of Seattle's city diplomacy (albeit in other terms) exist, these need to be updated and the various practices aforementioned practices deserve critical attention.

Thus, after rereading Bush's study of Seattle's global engagement during the post-WWII and Cold War years, I determined that a sequel of sorts was needed, especially considering the formation and popularisation of the term 'city diplomacy' to describe forms of similar action and interactions investigated by Bust. But importantly, the following thesis is not a simple continuation of Bush's history of Seattle's sister city relations with Kobe, Tashkent, and Managua. While the thesis makes an empirical contribution to understanding Seattle's contemporary political urban history and recent city diplomacy activities and cites evidence from Seattle's relationship with Kobe and Taskent (e.g. gifts given to these cities or gardens created because of these transnational relationships), thus building on Bush's work, it also makes a methodological contribution to city diplomacy research.

This thesis outlines an approach to inquiry that focuses on the practical and observable behaviour of cities that contributes to their growing recognition in practitioner and academic circles as important global actors. In other words, by theorising on and identifying city diplomacy

practices, especially those currently unacknowledged in the academic literature, the study creates a map for future researchers to study other cities' globally oriented activities and interactions. Furthermore, by adopting constructivist and practice theory lenses and by explicating cities' globally oriented practices of documenting, networking, gifting, and gardening, the thesis demonstrates that through these practices, municipalities communicate and construct their desired identity to local and external audiences, constitute their global city status through the reiterations of practices, and notably, construct themselves as global actors in global society. Moreover, as constructivist and practice theory approaches are diverse, considering them here for the first time begins the scholarly debate about how to understand city diplomacy in ways other than via the lenses of sister cities, citizen diplomacy, public diplomacy, soft power, or some other related IR or diplomatic studies concept. A political cartoon about Seattle's sister city relations from the 1980s further introduces this thesis' case study, probes the inadequacies of overemphasising the sister city model, and serves as an entry point to think about the social constructivist and practice theory approaches employed in this study.

A political cartoon from a 1985 issue of *The Seattle Times* cynically depicts one common feature of cities' globally oriented symbolic and cultural practices, i.e. the practice of sister-city relations.<sup>2</sup> The cartoon portrayed the signing of a trade pact between Seattle and Chongqing. In the first panel of the illustration, a fictional city official from Seattle, while shaking hands with his Chinese counterpart and waving a trade pact in the air, declares, 'May this lead to an exchange of **culture, technology, and trade.**' In the second panel of the cartoon, the same Seattle official, while wearing a Hawaiian-style floral shirt, checks into a hotel in China; the hotel receptionist declares, 'Welcome to China - Here are your **tickets to the ballet**, the keys to your **new air-**

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<sup>2</sup> Basset, Brain. 1985. *The Seattle Times*. August 2, 1985. A6.

**conditioned rooms, and fresh baskets of fruit.**<sup>3</sup> In this visual satire, the political cartoonist critiqued the practice of sister city relations as a junket. The cartoonist suggested that sending and receiving delegations and signing symbolic trade pacts are excuses for city officials to go on holiday and eat expensive meals using tax-payer money. However, the political cartoonist failed to consider how the formation of sister city relationships and other related practices, in the aggregate, inserts Seattle into global society and constructs and maintains the city's identity as a global actor.

While political comedy should not be expected always to illuminate the concerns of a political or social scientist, the political cartoon discussed above illustrates one common perception of the lay public and media regarding cities' foreign affairs. But in addition to common 'junket' explanations or 'citizen diplomacy for the construction of mutual understanding and a pacific world' explanations for why cities create and maintain international relationships, other possible explanations for cities' agency in global society need to be investigated.<sup>4</sup> Thus, by analysing Seattle's city diplomacy using social constructivist and practice theory lenses, this thesis develops an alternative nuanced understanding of cities' global engagement beyond simplistic quests for mutual understanding or economic promotion. Additionally, the case of Seattle is used to probe the forces and motives that provoke city diplomacy and the relevance of the city to the study of global society. Moreover, this analysis problematises the assumption that cities are global actors. In other words, by actually studying how cities symbolically act across national borders,

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<sup>3</sup> Original emphasis. Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> This latter explanation is especially prominent in US discourse where sister cities are thought to have emerged from a 1956 White House Conference on people-to-people exchanges. In some texts, former US President Dwight D. Eisenhower is represented as having allegedly 'invented' the sister city practice. For an example of this discourse, see one statement from the website of the US-based non-profit Sister Cities International, an organisation that encourages and funds the practice of sister cities. This text states 'Sister Cities International was created by President Eisenhower's 1956 White House summit on citizen diplomacy, where he envisioned a network that would be a champion for peace and prosperity by fostering bonds between people from different communities around the world.' Viewable at <https://sistercities.org/about-us/>. Accessed April 2023.

understandings of how these practices construct and reproduce cities' status as actors in global society are made.

Furthermore, this study of city diplomacy challenges the perceived inconsequentiality that remains in the minds of some city officials who manage cities' global engagement. For example, some circles consider sending city government delegations abroad unimportant. Mierzejewski summarised the views of non-Chinese city officials who receive delegations representing Chinese cities: 'Local governments complain that visits by Chinese delegations often produce no tangible results. They argue that the Chinese side exerts pressure on signing cooperation agreements, which are not implemented, but only serve as proof of a foreign trip and are submitted to higher Chinese authorities.'<sup>5</sup> In this analysis, domestic political factors and emphasis on human officials' promotion-seeking motives are emphasised. However, a different story emerges when these documenting practices are viewed with social constructivist and practice theory lenses. While cities that receive Chinese cities may not obtain tangible results like capital investment, cities can gain important intangible results.

Cities gain social benefits from their sustained globally oriented symbolic and cultural practices. While there might not be immediate tangible results locally in areas like economic development, job creation, influx of foreign tourists, or improved infrastructure, policy, or best practices, sending delegations to partner cities or transnational summits and signing transnational documents offers a wealth of intangible benefits to cities.<sup>6</sup> For instance, similarly to how sustain

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<sup>5</sup> Mierzejewski includes provinces in his conceptualisation of 'local government'. However, this thesis emphasises city governments and the sentiments described in this quote are applicable to urban actors. Mierzejewski, Dominik 2019. 'The roles of local governments in the New Silk Road' in Mendes, C. ed. *China's New Silk Road*. London: Routledge: 147.

<sup>6</sup> However, a recently created entity in the realm of city diplomacy argues that tangible benefits are more immediately available. For example, the mission of the State Department's 'Special Representative for City and State Diplomacy' claims that the office will 'bring the benefits of U.S. foreign policy, such as jobs, investments, innovative solutions, and international experiences, to the local and state level.' However, it is yet to be seen whether such tangible results will be easily and quickly obtained by US and non-US cities that liaise with this new State

state practice can become recognised as customary international law, sustained city practices can contributed to the processes through which become recognised as global actors. Additionally, as recent scholarly commentary has argued, the inclusion of cities and other subnational actors into the international system improves the effectiveness of the system.<sup>7</sup> Thus, while cities' globally oriented symbolic and cultural practices might not immediately bring money into the city, cities can improve their standing in global society and improve the efficiency of global society itself. Although the claim of improved efficiency of the global system because of the recognition and inclusion of cities is not explored in this thesis, the case of Seattle and its recent representation at UN fora suggests that the cities' decades of sustained globally oriented and cultural practices have translated into a social awareness by other members of global society that city is a partner in global governance.

Furthermore, although the connotations of the word 'symbolic' is sometimes used synonymously with the word 'inconsequential' or 'irrelevant', the use of the term symbolic in this study should not be interpreted in this way. Rather, symbolic refers to its more traditional sense that these actions represent something else or have alternative or multiple meanings.<sup>8</sup> For example, in the case of Seattle, its practices can be interpreted as actions that are sometimes framed as efforts to improve transcultural understanding or obtain foreign investment, but at the same time, these practices can be interpreted as a desire to enhance publicity and recognition in global society and

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Department office. For this mission statement, see U.S. Department of State, n.d. 'The Special Representative for City and State Diplomacy'. Available at <https://www.state.gov/bureaus-offices/under-secretary-for-economic-growth-energy-and-the-environment/the-secretarys-office-of-global-partnerships/the-special-representative-for-subnational-diplomacy/>. Accessed May 2023.

<sup>7</sup> Slaughter, Anne-Marie and Gordon LaForge. 2021. 'Opening Up the Order: A More Inclusive International System' *Foreign Affairs*. 100 (2) (03): 154-162.

<sup>8</sup> The Cambridge Dictionary provides the following definitions of 'symbolic'; 'representing something else' or used to refer to an action that expresses or seems to express an intention or feeling, but has little practical influence on a situation'. Cambridge Dictionary. 'SYMBOLIC'. Available at <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/symbolic>. Accessed August 2023.

institutions of global governance. Extant scholarship with a social constructivist orientation demonstrates how symbolic acts have consequences.

Seattle has developed itself as a global actor in transnational migration. This is epitomised by its ‘Welcoming City’ policy and statements promulgated in opposition to the anti-migration policies of the Trump Administration. Seattle’s conduct in this realm is comparable to the scholarship of Stürner-Siovitx that shows how cities directly participate in transnational migration governance and construct themselves a role in this field through symbolic acts like the promulgation of declaratory statements and the alter-casting of states as being incapable or incompetent.<sup>9</sup> Through these efforts’ cities constitute their existence as entities distinct from the nation-state. In this way, depending on the situation, cities do not want national identities imposed on them. Because cities are also political entities tasked with managing transnational issues, when nation-states are deemed ineffective, cities conduct symbolic practices to socially construct themselves as global actors in their own right. Furthermore, setting oneself apart from other global actors is essential in the global competitive economy. These factors prompt cities to adopt policies, strategies, discourse, and symbols of urban uniqueness. For example, cities use their own unique symbols (e.g. city flag, city seals, city nicknames) when conducting city diplomacy. Seattle is no different, and its city seal frequently appears whilst conducting its city diplomacy.

Chapter 2 will further elaborate on this thesis’ methodology and the selection of Seattle, but it some of these selection factors are briefly introduced here to set the stage for the following study of city diplomacy. The lengthy existence of Seattle’s international relationships and global engagement as early as a century ago demonstrates the city’s sustained interaction with foreign audiences and foreign agents. For example, Seattle hosted the 1909 Alaska-Pacific Exposition, the

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<sup>9</sup> Stürner-Siovitx, Janina. 2022. ““All the World's a Stage?” A Role Theory Analysis of City Diplomacy in Global Migration Governance.’ *The International Migration Review*.

1962 Century 21 Exposition, and has had sister city relationships since 1957. Furthermore, Seattle's contemporary city diplomacy is part of the more than century-long history of US cities' globally oriented symbolic and cultural practices. For example, Seattle contributed to an exhibition at and sent representatives to the 1911 International Municipal Congress and Exhibition in Chicago.<sup>10</sup> But recent actions by Seattle demonstrate that the city is cognisant of trends in global society and acts accordingly.

The persistence of outbound delegations (e.g. to visit partner cities) and inbound delegations (e.g. incoming city officials or even heads of state like the Chinese President Xi Jinping in 2015) illustrates Seattle's city diplomacy results in frequent and sometimes high-level exchanges and discussions. Moreover, the repeated visits and recognition from a head of state of a powerful state (e.g. multiple Chinese heads of state have visited Seattle) gives Seattle legitimacy and recognition as important in global society. Also, Seattle's signing of new memoranda of understanding within new foreign cities of growing importance in recent years (e.g., Shenzhen in 2015) indicates that Seattle continues seeking new strategic relations based on geopolitical developments. Finally, Seattle's record of documenting opposition to US national foreign policy (e.g. opposition to policies of the Trump Administration) suggests that Seattle views its identity as an independent political actor capable of pursuing its own foreign affairs separate from the US nation-state.

Finally, there are several values that are inductively observable in Seattle's globally oriented symbolic and cultural practices. These values are judged to be in alignment with the prevalent operating principles of the early twenty-first-century global society. These values pertain

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<sup>10</sup> n.a. 1911. *The International municipal congress and exposition, Chicago, United States of America, September 18 to 30: a world conference and exhibition for the development of 20th century ideals of municipal economy, progress and perfection*: 10. Digital version held by the Library of Congress. Available at <https://www.loc.gov/item/11028504/>.



to environmental protection, technological advancement, cosmopolitanism, and the respect and protection of indigenous populations and cultures. Although not all actors in global society hold or pursue these values, many state, non-governmental organisations, international organisations, multinational corporations, non-state actors, etc. do conduct themselves in a manner that is aimed at environmental sustainability (e.g. adaption to the green economy), technological prowess and implementation (e.g. digital governance), and the respect for all people regardless of nationality, race, gender, ethnicity, etc. (e.g. the passage of minority protection policies or the creation of diversity and inclusion officers within governments). While there are other obvious dominant values and principles of global society (e.g. respect for territorial integrity or self-determination) these are less applicable to the practice of city diplomacy. Thus, environmentalism, technology as a source of good governance and high status, and cosmopolitanism are the main narrative themes that emerge whilst observing Seattle's city diplomacy. By pursuing these values in policy and projecting them in documenting, networking, gifting, and gardening city diplomacy practices, Seattle embeds these notions into the city's identity and constitutes itself as a global actor.

All these qualities mentioned above along with the fact that Seattle's international engagement occurs across mayoral administrations and city councils at the local level and multiple Congresses and presidential administrations at the national level, suggests that Seattle city diplomacy and identification as an independent global actor is a standard operating practice (i.e. habitual or routine) inherent to the city itself rather than a practice dependent on the dominant party in power at the local or national level. Thus, rather than adopt a cynical view where these city diplomacy practices are inconsequential or an excuse for city government officials to travel abroad and imbibe expensive liquor, this thesis argues that social constructivist theory and practice theory helps to explain Seattle and other cities' city diplomacy and that the application of these

theories suggests that sustained globally oriented symbolic and cultural practices can constitute cities as global actors.

Now that this thesis' motivation, research question, and rationale for the selection of Seattle as a case study have been introduced, a summary of this thesis in its entirety is presented. In other words, the following section delivers a chapter outline to introduce further the theoretical insights, heuristic devices, and empirical categorisations that are utilised in this study of city diplomacy.

## **Chapter Outline**

This thesis is divided into seven chapters. Chapter One conducts a literature review on city diplomacy to demonstrate that there is a growing interest in research about how and why cities act transnationally. Because this thesis' case study employs social constructivist insight, this literature review emphasises city diplomacy research publications that specifically employed this strand of IR theory. After it is established that there has been a wealth of publications in recent years employing the term city diplomacy, the definition of this concept itself is considered. This chapter also presents the definition of city diplomacy that is used in this thesis. This definition combines insight from previous studies, but at the same time, it deviates from extant definitions to foreground the social constructivist and emphasise the importance of practice to this study's understanding of city diplomacy. As such, in addition to the literature review, this chapter also provides the theoretical framework for this case study of Seattle's city diplomacy. Basic social constructivist understandings of identity are provided in order to explore how cities' sustained symbolic and cultural practices can be understood as acts that constitute and maintain cities as global actors. By combining ideas of social constructionism to city diplomacy, while providing hitherto unapplied concepts from this theory, this theoretical framing contributes to and builds on extant city

diplomacy literature. During this discussion, discussions of Alexander Wendt's understanding of the interplay between identity, interests, and behaviour are considered. But social constructivism is not the only theory adopted in this thesis. The literature review portion of this chapter also demonstrates that practice theory has not been used in city diplomacy studies. Thus, considerations of practice theory are also presented and combined with ideas from city diplomacy literature. Here, a definition of practice provided by Theodore Schatzki is adapted to the practice of city diplomacy. Additionally, the narrative strand of practice theory is prioritised in this preliminary effort to apply practice theory to city diplomacy. Proceeding in this fashion contributes to the 'practice turn' and 'narrative turn' in the social sciences and IR while also engaging in theoretical pluralism and providing additional ways for scholars to research city diplomacy. Finally, the chapter concludes by explicating the specific city diplomacy practices and the novelty and usefulness of such a typology that are used in this study to concurrently study the case of Seattle while also giving a road map for future praxeological studies of cities' globally oriented behaviour. The practices introduced in this theory-building portion of this preliminary chapter are documenting, networking, gifting, and gardening.

There are multiple goals in Chapter Two. First, the chapter conducts a further literature review to demonstrate the prevalence of interview and survey methods in extant qualitative studies of city diplomacy. At the same time, the chapter argues that methodological diversity is needed in city diplomacy studies and that the approach employed in this thesis makes progress towards this goal. For instance, the chapter outlines new sources of data that can be collected and analysed as texts that contribute to cities' narrative and discourse as global actors. These include gifts and gardens. Hitherto, research on city diplomacy has either been unaware of these objects or judged them to be insignificant and unworthy of sustained philosophical inquiry. This chapter also further

considers the prevalence of case study methodologies in city diplomacy research and gives additional explanations for the selection and importance of Seattle as this thesis' single case study. To provide more background information about how this case study research was designed and how information was collected, the chapter also described which repositories (e.g. Seattle Municipal Archive) were inspected and how public record request acts are an important source of data for this study of contemporary city diplomacy in the age of the Internet and ubiquity of digital governance. Brief mentions of field visits are also described. Following discussions of data collection, the chapter also provides elaboration on how texts were analysed via discourse analysis and visual analysis to come to conclusions about how discourse constructs social reality and by extension, the development of cities' existence as global actors. The chapter concludes by reiterating how the research design of this thesis and the artefacts that are introduced to the study of city diplomacy make advancements to academic inquiry and can be emulated and adapted in future case studies of city diplomacy.

Chapter Three begins by elaborating on what documenting within city diplomacy means. Furthermore, the types of city diplomacy documents that fall under this category are identified and described. To introduce the practice briefly here, documenting is conceived as a practice of city diplomacy that simultaneously says and does. In other words, by inscribing on ceremonial documents or official websites that a city is a global city or global actor, these texts announce, construct, and manifest this identity. Then, the chapter surveys the documenting practices of other cities worldwide and international city networks to demonstrate how Seattle is not the only urban actor that authors political declarations, resolutions, or communiqués to construct and enhance a role or status in global society. After these preliminary discussions, the chapter analyses empirics from Seattle's city diplomacy documenting practice. The empirics considered include city council

resolutions, mayoral declarations, and memoranda of understanding. Together, these interrelated nexuses of sayings and doings constitute Seattle's identity and reality in which Seattle is an actor in global society. Additionally, two types of documents emphasised in this chapter's empirical analysis concern Seattle's documentation of its unique municipal foreign policy during the Trump Administration that opposed the national foreign policy and Seattle's bilateral resolutions of the last decade that formed relationships with Chinese cities like Shenzhen and Hangzhou. The chapter also briefly introduces and discusses how visual documentation, like photographs (e.g. photos of incoming delegations), contributes to Seattle's social construction as a global actor and how visual texts could be the source of future city diplomacy research.

Chapter Four considers networking practices of city diplomacy. Introductory comments in this chapter also briefly review extant scholarship about international city networks. However, the chapter attempts to clarify that explanations for why cities join international city networks are more nuanced than the pursuit of knowledge and best practices. Rather, the chapter emphasises how cities implicitly and explicitly use networks to construct and communicate their identities as global actors. After these preliminary discussions, the chapter surveys the thematic areas of historical and extant international city networks to emphasise the different types of knowledge and ideas that have driven cities to create, organise, and join these various transnational urban collectives. At the same time, this survey demonstrates the normality of this aspect of city diplomacy. In the empirical analysis of Seattle's city diplomacy networking practice, the focus is given to Seattle's participation in the C40 Climate Cities Leadership Group, Rockefeller's 100 Resilient Cities program, and the UNESCO Creative Cities Network. By participating in these various international city networks, Seattle inserts itself into the discourse and negotiation of transnational climate change governance and by doing so constitutes and stabilises the city's

identity as a global actor. Additionally, the chapter considers how Seattle's sister city and sister port relationships can be viewed under the category of city diplomacy networking practice. Moreover, the chapter argues that these sister city and sister port relationships also relate to Seattle's cosmopolitan values and constructs the city as a global actor. Stated differently, networking within sister city or sister port schemes is neither unimportant nor outdated. Rather, these symbolic relationships contribute to how Seattle and other cities normalise their existence as actors in global society. The chapter concludes by reiterating how defamiliarizing international city networks and providing alternative explanations for this city diplomacy practice is an avenue for future city diplomacy research.

Chapter Five is the first scholarly effort to identify and theorise how the symbolic and cultural practice of gifting is an important part of city diplomacy and how cities are socially constructed as global actors. The chapter draws from anthropological and diplomatic studies research about the importance and meaning of the gift in social relationships. For example, gifts convey meaning and help sustain social relations, in part by creating obligations to reciprocate. Although much has been written about gifting exchanges in inter-human or inter-state relationships, no similar effort has been made regarding cities' transnational gifting exchanges. Because no other research has focused on this practice, the chapter simultaneously creates a new strand of research in the study of city diplomacy and the study of the gift. A brief survey of examples from cities' gift-giving is presented to open this new field of research and begin the scholarly work of creating a consolidated source of data about city diplomacy gifts. As with this thesis' other empirical chapters, this global survey shows that Seattle is not an outlier regarding this city diplomacy practice. Specifically, the chapter analyses Seattle's gifting of statues, totem poles, bicentennial medals, and model aeroplanes to show how these different objects contribute in different ways to

Seattle's narrative and reflect how the city's values are comparable to the prevalent values of other global actors. The chapter also considers Seattle's reception of gifts from other global actors, both urban and non-urban. For example, Seattle has received painted scrolls from a Chinese city, Shenzhen, and a Chinese head of state, Xi Jinping. The way cities receive gifts – public display or letters of thanks are common responses – are also part of cities' globally oriented symbolic and cultural practices. In sum, focusing on gifts is another possible approach to research city diplomacy.

Chapter Seven also opens a new strand of city diplomacy research by theorising generally and empirically analysing Seattle's gardening practice that relates to the city's global engagement. So far, there has been no scholarly attempt to understand the city diplomacy practice whereby cities construct gardens that honour international relationships. Moreover, the constitutive effects of these gardens on cities' identity as global actors have not been considered. The chapter argues that cities' physical construction of gardens has implications for the social construction of reality. Furthermore, these gardens can serve as spaces to display cities' unique symbols and host foreign delegations. In this way, gardens serve as tools and platforms for city diplomacy. A global survey of city diplomacy gardens is also included in this chapter and presents examples from cities as diverse as Berlin, Nanjing, and Tashkent. As such, this survey demonstrates the normality of this city diplomacy practice. Thus, understanding Seattle's city diplomacy gardening practice will help future researchers more fully understand other cities' similar practices. In the empirical analysis of the case of Seattle, both gardens inside the city itself (e.g. Seattle Chinese Garden) and gardens outside Seattle and US national borders (e.g. the Seattle Park in Daejeon, South Korea) are analysed. The artistic and textual elements within these parks and how these elements construct and maintain city identity are also interpreted. For example, the construction of 'Peace Parks' or 'international friendship parks' aligns cities with the values of global society. Finally, the chapter

reiterates the usefulness of studying this aspect of city diplomacy and how future researchers can learn from this thesis' consideration of the cause and effects of gardens on cities' identities as global actors.

Chapter Seven summarises and compares Seattle's city diplomacy and the four globally oriented symbolic practices investigated in the thesis. Both Seattle-specific and general conclusions about the practice of city diplomacy are drawn. The chapter also briefly considers the study's limitations and other possible categories of city diplomacy practice not considered here that also potentially possess constitutive effects on cities' identity as global actors. The chapter concludes by reiterating that cities matter to the study of world politics and that this thesis presented new strategies, frameworks, and approaches to study city diplomacy.

In conclusion, to contribute to city diplomacy scholarship and provide new strategies and theories and possible types of data or observation to collect and analyse, this thesis uses the case of Seattle to interpret the meaning, motives, and social constructivist impact of cities' global engagement across several interrelated symbolic and cultural practices. As such, the thesis argues that city diplomacy scholarship needs to explore further and emphasise the social constructivist impact of documenting, networking, gifting, and gardening practices and the meaning, narrative, and values inherent in these actions. Thus, this case study of Seattle serves as a preliminary effort to identify, describe, and theorise the social construction of cities as global actors via a constellation of actors, relationships, and transnational practices.



## Chapter 1: The Study, Theory, and Practice of City Diplomacy

### **Abstract**

This chapter begins by reviewing extant city diplomacy literature to demonstrate that there is a growing academic interest in this social phenomenon. This brief literature review indicates that a range of disciplines and research interests have sought to understand cities' engagement in global society as independent social actors. However, the literature review also suggests that extant scholarship generally ignores the role of social practices in the development of cities' identity as global actors. Therefore, to fill this gap and outline strategies to study city diplomacy and the emergence and normalisation of cities as recognised members of global society, the chapter reviews, adapts, and applies social constructivism and practice theory to city diplomacy. Then, the specific globally oriented practices conducted by cities that are judged to have an impact on how cities narrativize their identity as global actors and align their values with other recognised actors of global society are briefly introduced and outlined. Finally, a reworked definition of city diplomacy that emphasises the constructivist impact of sustained cultural and symbolic practices on cities' identity as global actors is given.

## A Growing Interest in City Diplomacy

There is a growing interest in the study of cities as global actors. These studies straddle an arrange of disciplines and research the various ways cities and their representatives participate in either directly (e.g. attendance at global forums) or indirectly (e.g. affect the global ideational landscape about the role of cities in the world) the debate and governance of global society and research and management of transnational issues.

Research on cities as global actors often focuses on specific global issues. Specific themes like health and peace or specific types of cities or events in cities that contain a global remit (e.g. smart cities or Olympic host cities) have been studied. In the area of international public health, previous studies have considered the creation and practice of transnational healthy city networks championed by the World Health Organisation.<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, Covid-19 prompted a great deal of research on the international relationships of cities that involved dialogue about health issues and analysis of potential new formal city networks specific to communicable diseases.<sup>2</sup> Peace research and the international nuclear disarmament movement have also been the focus of inquiry.<sup>3</sup> These studies considered the development of urban nuclear-free zones during the Cold War and other related efforts to develop peace cities. Heidi Hobbs specifically focused on US cities' involvement in comprehensive municipal bans of nuclear testing, nuclear-free zone declarations, and municipal divestment from South Africa during the apartheid era.<sup>4</sup> Additionally, Daniel Bush's 1998 PhD dissertation titled, 'Seattle's Cold War Foreign Policy, 1957-1990: Citizen Diplomats and Grass Roots Diplomacy, Sister Cities and International Exchange' focused on the specific global

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<sup>1</sup> Acuto, Michele, Mika Morissette, and Agis Tsouros. 2017. 'City Diplomacy: Towards More Strategic Networking? Learning with WHO Healthy Cities.' *Global Policy* 8, no. 1: 14-22.

<sup>2</sup> Rudakowska, Anna and Craig Simon. 2020. 'International City Cooperation in the Fight Against Covid-19: Behind the Scenes Security Providers' *Global Policy Journal*.

<sup>3</sup> Miyazaki, Hirokazu. 2021. 'Hiroshima and Nagasaki as Models of City Diplomacy.' *Sustainability Science* vol. 16, no. 4: 1215-228.

<sup>4</sup> Hobbs, Heidi H. 1994. *City Hall Goes Abroad: The Foreign Policy of Local Politics*. Sage Publications.

engagement of Seattle in different regions around the world and different geopolitical and historical contexts. In the sphere of smart cities and city-to-city knowledge-sharing cooperation, Mursitama and Lee considered how new technology, globalisation, and the international competitive environment contributed to the Asian cities' transnational dialogue about local and transnational urban issues and the potential of smart cities to solve problems and improve local governments' public service.<sup>5</sup> London's international relations and the way in which the city developed its urban narrative and urban fabric and globally represented itself for the 2012 Olympic Games has also been a topic of interest within studies that are interested in cities as global actors.<sup>6</sup> Specific international city networks are also often the focus of scholarship that assumes and contributes to the more and more ubiquitous belief that cities are effective and just or moral global actors. For instance, David J. Gordon studied the C40 Climate Leadership Group (C40) and argued that the C40 has earned capital and recognition in global society and that this international city network has been effective in coordinating cities' policies in the field of global climate change governance.<sup>7</sup>

Historians have also been interested in the global interactions of cities via their representation at transnational urban congresses, epistemic communities, or study missions to observe the practices and policies of cities in foreign countries. These recent studies have contributed to the growing interest in cities' global engagement and helped demonstrate that this type of action is not unique to the twenty-first century. For example, historian Anthony Sutcliffe demonstrated that the international planning movement of the early twentieth century was 'linked

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<sup>5</sup> Mursitama, T N, and L. Lee. 2018. 'Towards a Framework of Smart City Diplomacy. *IOP Conference Series. Earth and Environmental Science*. vol. 126, no. 1: 12102.

<sup>6</sup> Acuto, Michele. 2013. 'World Politics by Other Means? London, City Diplomacy and the Olympics.' *The Hague Journal of Diplomacy* Vol. 8, no. 3-4: 287-311.

<sup>7</sup> Gordon, David J. 2020. *Cities on the World Stage: The Politics of Urban Climate Governance*. Cambridge University Press.

to the idea that revitalized and reorganized cities, as the obvious centres of economic and social dynamism, could replace the nation-state as the basic political unit, allowing regional and world government to be secured by federations of cities.’<sup>8</sup> While cities today do not necessarily advocate to replace the nation-state entirely, they do project narratives in which the city is seen as a political entity that should indeed be a recognised political unit of early twenty-first century global society and bear an even more important place in future global hierarchies. Another historian, Patrizia Dogliani, commented that this revisionist form of global governance in which cities are capable and important global actors in the hierarchy of global society was linked the idea (championed by earlier internationalists like Paul Otlet) that a global city could be the ‘primary cell of a universal society of peoples.’<sup>9</sup> Historians have even identified early efforts of cities and their advocates to advocate for and propagandize the importance of constructing a more prominent role of cities in global society. This effort to construct cities a more prominent place in global governance is epitomised by a 1924 painting (Figure 1).

A recent historical study by Stephen Couperus explored the global action of cities in the interwar years; he dubbed this phenomenon ‘transnational municipalism.’<sup>10</sup> In his essay, Couperus described a painting by the Dutch artist, Martin Monnickendam, that epitomised the belief that the involvement of cities in global governance was more effective than global governance by nation-states alone. Couperus writes, ‘In 1924 the Dutch painter Martin Monnickendam completed a painting commissioned by the Dutch committee of the World League of Cities. It depicts the globe of the world pulled out, by two horses, from an inferno of war onto a calm, illuminated and fertile

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<sup>8</sup> Sutcliffe, Anthony. 1981. *Towards the Planned City: Germany, Britain, the United States, and France, 1780-1914*. New York: St. Martin's Press: 164.

<sup>9</sup> Dogliani, Patrizia. 2016. ‘The Fate of Socialist Internationalism’ in Sluga, Glenda, and Patricia. Clavin. eds. 2016. *Internationalisms: a Twentieth-Century History*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 52.

<sup>10</sup> Couperus, Stephan. 2011. ‘In Between “Vague Theory” and “Sound Practical Lines”’: Transnational Municipalism in Interwar Europe’ in Laqua, Daniel. ed. 2011. *Internationalism Reconfigured: Transnational Ideas and Movements between the World Wars*. London: I. B. Tauris & Company, Limited: 84.

lawn of peace. An angel drives the two horses; one is white, and is clearly determined to use all its power to pull the globe out of the fire – it does not need the angel's guidance. The other horse is black and prances, and needs all the angel's attention to keep its task: guarding the world from war.<sup>11</sup> A century later, this sentiments remains and the growing interest in cities as global actors has even seen scholars advocate for revisionist global order in which mayors rule the world.<sup>12</sup>



Figure 1 (Special thanks to the Friends of Martin Monickendam foundation for allowing the reproduction of this painting.)

<sup>11</sup> Couperus, Stephan. 2011. 'In Between "Vague Theory" and "Sound Practical Lines": Transnational Municipalism in Interwar Europe' in Laqua, Daniel. ed. 2011. *Internationalism Reconfigured: Transnational Ideas and Movements between the World Wars*. London: I. B. Tauris & Company, Limited: 84.

<sup>12</sup> Barber, Benjamin. 2013. *If Mayors Ruled the World: Dysfunctional Nations, Rising Cities*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Taken together, these studies, either contemporary or historical, either general or thematic, either descriptive or prescriptive, of cities' global and transnational action fit under the category of action and research that is often described as 'city diplomacy'.

The notion of city diplomacy evolved from scholarship on paradiplomacy, subnational diplomacy, and multi-level governance.<sup>13</sup> During the last several years, the concept has become more and more popular among practitioners and scholarly circles and has reached the point in the latter sphere that three full-length books either simply titled *City Diplomacy* (or with the phrase appearing before a subtitle) have been published by academic publishers.<sup>14</sup> This popularisation has coincided with multiple efforts to define the term and give it more analytical rigour.

City diplomacy has been defined in several ways. For example, Amiri and Sevin point out that the term city diplomacy (although they themselves admit that the term lacks an analytical framework) 'is used as an umbrella term to describe the actions by local governments that intend to raise the global profile of their cities and influence global policies in ways that advance the interests of local constituents'.<sup>15</sup> In a separate piece, Amiri defines city diplomacy as 'the conduct of international affairs by a city government to benefit the security and prosperity of local constituents'.<sup>16</sup> Acuto et al. define city diplomacy as 'the conduct of external relations undertaken

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<sup>13</sup> The paradiplomacy literature is vast and cannot be reviewed in full here. Instead, the city-specific literature is reviewed. For one earlier 'classic' of paradiplomacy, albeit one that focuses more on provincial foreign affairs rather than the urban level, see Duchacek, Ivo D., Daniel Latouche, and Garth. Stevenson, eds. 1988. *Perforated Sovereignities and International Relations: Trans-sovereign*. New York: Greenwood Press. See also, Hocking, Brian. 1993. *Localizing Foreign Policy: Non-central Governments and Multilayered Diplomacy*. Macmillan Press. For a more contemporary consideration that more thoroughly considers cities, see Tavares, Rodrigo. 2016. *Paradiplomacy: Cities and States as Global Players*. Oxford University Press. For a consideration of multi-level governance and whether or not this contributes to the 'unraveling' of the state, see Hooghe, Liesbet and Gary Marks. 2003. 'Unraveling the Central State, but How? Types of Multi-level Governance'. *American Political Science Review*. Vol. 97, No. 2: 233-243.

<sup>14</sup> Amiri, Sohaela and Efe Sevin. eds. 2020. *City Diplomacy: Current Trends and Future Prospects*. Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan; Grandi, Lorenzo Kihlgren. 2020. *City Diplomacy*. Switzerland: Springer Nature; Marchetti, Raffaele. 2021. *City Diplomacy: From City-states to Global Cities*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

<sup>15</sup> Sohaela Amiri and Efe Sevin, 2020.

<sup>16</sup> Amiri, Sohaela. 2022. 'City Diplomacy: An Introduction to the Forum', *The Hague Journal of Diplomacy*.

by official representatives of cities with other actors, particularly other cities, nation-states, NGOs, and corporations.’<sup>17</sup> The definition of city diplomacy employed in this thesis synthesises and adds nuance (in part because of the multidisciplinary nature of this study) to the above understandings. But before this reworked definition is presented, it is necessary to further review the disciplinary diversity of studies that have employed the idea of city diplomacy. Doing so will help demonstrate how this thesis’ elaboration on the specific globally oriented practices of cities (and how to study them) will contribute to research on cities’ global engagement and will potentially benefit a wealth of approaches to city diplomacy studies.

City diplomacy studies employ a diversity of disciplinary perspectives. To further demonstrate the growing academic interest in this topic, this section will first present a general overview of studies outside of the specific discipline of International Relations (IR) or international studies. The following section will then present a more in-depth overview of city diplomacy studies that more accurately fit within IR; concurrently the following section will specifically outline how this study fits into and contributes to this specific discipline.

Geography and border studies are common approaches to study the global engagement of cities. Thirty years ago, in a pioneering study of the frequency and geographical distribution of twinning relations, Zelinsky mapped and quantitatively described the global state of the sister city practice.<sup>18</sup> This study was the first to assess how widespread was the practice of cities’ town twinning efforts. More recently, Liu and Hu have focused on transnational twinning practices in Chinese cities and provinces and considered whether or not domestic political geographies

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<sup>17</sup> Acuto et al. 2018. ‘Toward City Diplomacy: Assessing capacity in select global cities’. *Chicago Council on Global Affairs*.

<sup>18</sup> Zelinsky, Wilbur. 1991. ‘The Twinning of the World: Sister Cities in Geographic and Historical Perspective.’ *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* vol. 81, no. 1: 1-31.

determine the establishment and selection of sister provinces/states/cities.<sup>19</sup> Border studies, especially when cities are located on the border of nation-states (e.g. Blagoveshchensk, Russia and Heihe, China or San Diego, USA and Tijuana, Mexico), are also an academic focus through which twin towns are studied.<sup>20</sup> In sum, these studies emphasise the territoriality of cities' global action.

Furthermore, a large portion of city diplomacy research can be described as sister city or twin town studies. Because the urban officials who create or manage these global urban relationships often assume that sister cities will lead to economic development and investment, business studies, economics research, and similar academic disciplines that use financial and statistical analysis are frequently the focus of research on sister cities. Research on Chinese sister-city relationships studies these relationships' impact on foreign investment.<sup>21</sup> Similarly, Mascitelli considered the extent to which Australian cities can use sister-city relationships to facilitate local companies' entry into the Chinese market.<sup>22</sup> In the case of Australian cities, O'Toole considered the commercial factors that drive Australian cities' twinning relationships.<sup>23</sup> Brakman et al. used existing data sets and conducted statistical analysis to determine if there is a correlation between town-twinning relationships and population growth.<sup>24</sup> Using the idea of strategic business alliances, De Villiers surveyed South African cities and suggested 'success factors' of international city

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<sup>19</sup> Liu, Xingjian and Hu, Xiaohui. 2018. 'Are 'Sister Cities' from 'Sister Provinces'? An Exploratory Study of Sister City Relations (SCRs) in China.' *Networks and Spatial Economics* Vol. 18, 473–491.

<sup>20</sup> For example, see the introduction to a special issue of the *Journal of Borderland Studies*. Joenniemi, Pertti, and Jarosław Jańczak. 2017. 'Theorizing Town Twinning-Towards a Global Perspective.' *Journal of Borderlands Studies* 32, no. 4: 423-28.

<sup>21</sup> Zhang, Yameng, Wu Zhan, Yekun Xu, and Vikas Kumar. 2020. 'International Friendship Cities, Regional Government Leaders, and Outward Foreign Direct Investment from China.' *Journal of Business Research* vol. 108: 105-18;

Han, Yonghui, Hao Wang, and Dongming Wei. 2022. 'The Belt and Road Initiative, Sister-city Partnership and Chinese Outward FDI.' *Economic Research*. vol 35, no. 1: 3416-436.

<sup>22</sup> Mascitelli, Bruno, and Mona Chung. 2008. 'Using Sister City Relationships to Access the Chinese Market.' *Journal of International Trade Law & Policy* vol. 7, no. 2: 203-15.

<sup>23</sup> O'Toole, Kevin. 2000. 'From Mates to Markets: Australian Sister City Type Relationships.' *Policy & Society* Vol. 19, no. 1: 43-64.

<sup>24</sup> Brakman, S., Garretsen, H., & Oumer, A. 2016. 'Town Twinning and German City Growth.' *Regional Studies*, vol 50. no. 8, 1420-1432.



relationships.<sup>25</sup> However, the positive economic or demographic impact of sister-city relationships is still anecdotal at best. No evidence indicates that these relations will undoubtedly deliver economic development. Fortunately, inconclusiveness in this area has not stifled the growing academic interest in sister cities and city diplomacy in disciplines and areas of interest outside of economic or business studies.

Historical and ideational factors are also the focus of sister city and city diplomacy research. For example, Edwina Campbell, in her binational study of post-WWII Franco-German twinning, argued that the reconciliation movement played out at the local level fits within the supranational movement of European Unification and cities were driven to form relations because of the potential political-military threat from the Soviet Union, cultural inundation from the US, the rising nationalism of the Third World, and the hope to make the average European citizen prosperous.<sup>26</sup> In a single country-specific historical study, Antoine Vion looks at the history of the town twinning practice in France and the importance of French linguistic connections in cities' practices of global relationship-building.<sup>27</sup> However, while there is certainly diversity in research, some of the most insightful results of scholarly efforts in recent years come from IR.

Scholarship that can be described as 'city diplomacy studies' will often employ International Relations (IR) theory. However, in the vast amount of IR scholarship, theories, perspectives, concepts, etc., the idea of city diplomacy is still quite niche. However recent scholarly outputs like full-length monographs suggest that the concept is developing a more robust academic following, which necessitates the formation of practical suggestions on how to study city

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<sup>25</sup> De Villiers, J.C, E.v.d.M Smit, and T.J De Coning. 2007. 'Towards an Understanding of the Success Factors in International Twinning and Sister-city Relationships.' *South African Journal of Business Management* vol. 38, no. 1: 1-10.

<sup>26</sup> Campbell, Edwina S. 1987. 'The Ideals and Origins of the Franco-German, Sister Cities Movement, 1945-70.' *History of European Ideas* Vol 8, no. 1: 77-95.

<sup>27</sup> Vion, Antoine. 2002. 'Europe from the Bottom Up: Town Twinning in France during the Cold War.' *Contemporary European History* Vol. 11 no. 4. 623-40

diplomacy, which further justifies the approach and agenda for future scholarship outlined later in this thesis.

One of the most prominent indicators that the idea of city diplomacy has developed a status as a legitimate scholarly concept in IR is the inclusion of a ‘city diplomacy’-specific chapter in an academic handbook.<sup>28</sup> Beyond this indicator of academic legitimacy, some scholars go beyond simple recognition of the idea or phenomenon within IR and make radical revisionist claims. For example, Simon Curtis proclaimed that the growing urban megaregions of the world should ‘shake the IR scholar from his or her state-centric vision of the world’.<sup>29</sup> Curtis is not the only one making such claims. Joenniemi and Sergunin suggest that the practice of city-twinning disrupts foundational claims of IR theory.<sup>30</sup> To buttress arguments that the modern global city is revising the nature of global society and that cities themselves have been able to construct themselves as global actors, city diplomacy scholarship often draws from constructivist IR and the philosophy and political theory in which constructivism itself is grounded.

Constructivist IR and city diplomacy are synthesised in a variety of ways. For example, Kangas used the Foucauldian notion of *dispositive* to argue that global cities actually contribute to the fabrication of the world.<sup>31</sup> Similarly, Oomen and Baumgärtel’s discuss the interplay between international human rights law and the city, the authors consider the construction and normalisation of cities’ influence in this field and cities’ self-confidence to act within international

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<sup>28</sup> Acuto, Michele. 2016. ‘City Diplomacy’ in Constantinou, Costas M., Kerr, Pauline, and Sharp, Paul. eds. 2016. *The SAGE Handbook of Diplomacy*. Los Angeles, CA. SAGE.

<sup>29</sup> Curtis, Simon, 2014. ‘Introduction: Empowering Cities’ in Curtis, Simon. ed. 2014. *The Power of Cities in International Relations*. London: Routledge.

<sup>30</sup> Joenniemi, Pertti & Alexander Sergunin 2017. ‘City-Twinning in IR Theory: Escaping the Confines of the Ordinary’. *Journal of Borderlands Studies*, Vol. 32, no. 4, 443-458.

<sup>31</sup> Kangas, Anni. 2017. ‘Global Cities, International Relations and the Fabrication of the World’ *Global Society*. Vol. 31. no. 4. 531-550.

human rights discourses and the international legal arena more broadly.<sup>32</sup> Nijman applied constructivist ideas to analyse practices in which cities adopt agreements based on international law, instances when cities independently implement international law locally, and examples whereby cities directly interact with international non-governmental organisations.<sup>33</sup> Nijman demonstrated how cities adopt international norms and thus reconstruct local norms based on international legal regimes. In the US context, one typical instance of this interplay between global and local norms and practice relates to the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the cities' local political and symbolic implementation of the treaty despite the US Senate's lack of ratification of this particular international convention. Regarding scholarship of this particular example of the construction of local norms and policies, Och argued that this manifestation of international law and norms at the local level, i.e., municipal implementation of CEDAW, mostly occurs via the symbolic recognition of norms rather than the adoption of binding resolutions that locally mandate the implementation of such norms.<sup>34</sup> But despite the non-bindingness of such practices, as this thesis will further demonstrate, these practices help construct cities' status as legitimate and important actors in global society.

Additionally, in two other pieces of constructivist literature that seek to understand the globally oriented actions of cities, Nijman engages with the notion of 'constitution'. Nijman argued that by using the language, norms, and practices of international law and foreign policy, cities are (re)constituted as global actors.<sup>35</sup> In a separate piece Nijman contended that 'Cities and

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<sup>32</sup> Oomen, Barbara and Moritz Baumgärtel, 2018. 'Frontier Cities: The Rise of Local Authorities as an Opportunity for International Human Rights Law', *European Journal of International Law*, vol. 29, no. 2: 607–630

<sup>33</sup> Nijman, Jane, 2016. 'Renaissance of the City as Global Actor,' in Hellman, Gunther, Andreas Fahrmeir, and Vec Miloš, eds. 2016. *The Transformation of Foreign Policy Drawing and Managing Boundaries from Antiquity to the Present*. Oxford: Oxford University Press: 209-242.

<sup>34</sup> Och, Malliga. 2022. 'More Than Just Moral Urbanism? The Incorporation of CEDAW Principles into Local Governance Structures in the United States. *Journal of Human Rights Practice*, 1-22.

<sup>35</sup> Nijman 2016.

transnational city networks are constituted by international law and institutions, yet they, in turn, use international law and institutions, and global policy, to constitute themselves as a global actor'.<sup>36</sup> One example of this is how cities have come together to author and sign different 'communiqué' to lobby extant international institutions and thereby constitute themselves within these institutions. For example, through the recently formed U20 network, cities try to include themselves within global economic governance institutions and shape decisions of the G20.<sup>37</sup> In this case, cities constitute themselves as actors in global economic governance regimes. Furthermore, recent scholarship argues that cities' use of language indicates how the city as a social agent mutually constitutes global society and reinforces certain aspects of the global society. For example, Szpak and her co-authors considered the reaction of European cities to the 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine. They hypothesised that through collective speech acts and direct humanitarian assistance, 'cities help to maintain fundamental international norms'.<sup>38</sup> In sum, city diplomacy scholarship has developed a firm constructivist IR foundation. However, more practical and nuanced ways of studying are needed to further identify and more deeply evaluate the processes and practices through which extant scholarship alleges cities have constructed themselves a prominent place in the current global hierarchy. In other words, rather than assuming cities are global actors, it is important to study the practices that socially constructed cities this role. But before methodological and practical advancement to the study of city diplomacy that is outlined in this thesis occurs, it is necessary to further explain the ideas and concepts of social constructivism that are applied in the following case study of Seattle's city diplomacy.

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<sup>36</sup> Nijman, Jane E. 2019. 'The Urban Pushback: International Law as an Instrument of Cities.' *Proceedings of the Annual Meeting - American Society of International Law* vol. 113: 121.

<sup>37</sup> The communiqué from 2 October 2020 is accessible at <https://www.urban20riyadh.org/sites/default/files/2020-10/U20%202020%20Communique.pdf>. Accessed June 2022.

<sup>38</sup> Szpak, Agnieszka, Joanna Modrzyńska, Robert Gawłowski, Paweł Modrzyński, and Michał Dahl. 2022. 'Reaction to the Russian Aggression against Ukraine: Cities as International Standards' Supporters.' *Journal of Contemporary European Studies*: 1-17.

## Social Construction and City Diplomacy

Although extant literature proceeds otherwise and simply assumes that cities hold an identity as a global actor by virtue of their multinational populations, transnational ports, location of headquarters of globally operating companies, or some other indicator, this study seeks to illuminate the less recognised processes through which cities socially construct, preserve, and communicate their identity as a global actor and the values that intersect with this identity. Thus, rather than suggesting *a priori* that cities are actors in global society, this thesis identifies and illustrates how cities' globally oriented symbolic and cultural practices can be understood as actions that explicitly and implicitly socially construct an identity as global actors. This analytical shift helps to develop genealogical approaches to the study of city diplomacy and global cities. Put differently, such an approach allows researchers to consider social processes (rather than economic or political) that contribute to cities' status and identity in global society. To achieve this reoriented focus of city diplomacy, social constructivist insight is employed to evaluate how cities emerge as global actors in global society. Additionally, social constructivism helps to elucidate how cities create and stabilise their multiple urban identities and narratives that are projected during cities' various globally oriented practices. Put differently, cities' globally oriented practices carry symbolic meaning (by virtue of symbols apparent in the acts and the underlying meaning of the practices themselves) that contribute to city identity. To begin the development of the theoretical framework that is applied in this study of Seattle's city diplomacy, extant literature that combines social constructivism and city diplomacy is considered. Then, more classic, and non-city-diplomacy-specific studies of constructivism are applied to cities' globally oriented symbolic and cultural practices.

The interplay between social constructivism and city diplomacy has been acknowledged in previous scholarship. As Kirby et al., wrote 'Perhaps the most interesting and least understood aspect of the [city diplomacy] phenomenon is the way in which cities have been constructed by citizens as global actors'.<sup>39</sup> In the nearly three decades since Kirby et al. made this statement, further understanding of the social construction of cities as global actors is still needed. Importantly, ideas other than citizen diplomacy or the role of voluntary sister city organisations need to be considered for this is just one part of cities' globally oriented praxis. Thus, this study contends that a constellation of actors, not just citizens or local volunteers, contribute to the construction of cities as global actors. Government officials, foreign visitors, regional and global media outlets, and as this study will outline, the documents cities create and promulgate, the networks that cities join and participate in, the gifts cities give, and the cultural spaces that cities create, all contribute to the cities' social construction of global status and identity as global actors. A complex picture of interrelated social practices emerges, all of which are part of city diplomacy and the way in which global status and identity emerge. Thus, this thesis' case study of Seattle's city diplomacy contributes to understanding these less-understood aspects of the phenomena mentioned by Kirby et al. One way understanding can be advanced is by considering the structural conditions of the global society in which cities operate and classic academic understandings about the nature and changeability of this structure.

The structural conditions of global society and the extent to which cities can alter these conditions in which Seattle and other cities around the world conduct their various globally oriented practices of city diplomacy need to be considered. Anarchy is the most obvious and most

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<sup>39</sup> Kirby, Andrew, et al. 1995. 'World Cities and Global Communities: the municipal foreign policy movement and new roles for cities' in Knox, Paul L., and Peter J. Taylor, eds. 1995. *World Cities in a World-system*. Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press: 275.

pervasive condition that permits cities' social construction of status and identity in global society. Furthermore, the condition of anarchy in world politics impacts both the behaviour of cities and states alike. As Wendt argued in his highly influential article, 'anarchy is what states make of it'.<sup>40</sup> But states are not the only political actors operating under anarchy conditions. In other words, rules, norms, customs, and institutions can be created and shaped by states *and* other political actors to alter the structure and behaviour of the global system and the array of actors that inhabit this political space. As was previously discussed, extant literature demonstrates how cities are both rule-makers and rule-takers in global society; cities are involved in the construction and implementation of transnational norms.<sup>41</sup> Furthermore, cities create and participate in transnational networks with a variety of global actors including other cities, business groups like chambers of commerce, international organisations like UNESCO, and even representatives of states like prime ministers or cabinet-level officials. These sustained practices and recurrent transnational relations normalise and routinise cities' global engagement. In the same way that sustained state practice creates customary international law, sustained city practice creates a social reality in which cities are viewed as global actors. Whereas previously, it was abnormal for cities to lobby or comment on global issues, as more and more cities involve themselves in solving climate change or transnational migration crises, to name just two issue areas, cities collectively contribute to their legitimisation as global actors with a status and identity as important members in global society.

Furthermore, although the anarchical world of international politics remains state-centric, cities have had some success inserting themselves into transnational debates and gaining

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<sup>40</sup> Wendt, Alexander. 1992 'Anarchy Is What States Make of It: The Social Construction of Power Politics. *International Organization* vol. 46, no. 2: 391-425.

<sup>41</sup> For another example of this process, see recent scholarship that considers the genealogy of Sustainable Development Goal 11 which directly pertains to cities, was developed by urban actors, but at the same time is also a norm pursued by states (which suggests a parallel role for cities and states in shaping certain aspects of global society), see Aust, Helmut Philipp, and Anél. Du Plessis, eds. 2019. *The Globalisation of Urban Governance: Legal Perspectives on Sustainable Development Goal 11*. New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group.

recognition about the value and importance of cities to various global issues. While the question of impact is not addressed here, nor is the quantitative extent to which states recognise cities as meaningful actors explored, this study contends that by identifying globally oriented urban practices and behaviour through which cities normalise their existence as global actors, future studies can further probe and operationalise cities' recognition vis-à-vis other actors as legitimate players in world politics. But more importantly for this discussion and this thesis, as stated earlier, there have been attempts to create world governments by cities or world governments in which cities are able to enter into dialogue with other more recognised global governors like states and international organisations. For example, most recently, in the last decade a 'Global Parliament of Mayors' was created and membership and involvement of other global actors with this urban collective has gradually expanded. However, cities have hitherto been unable to construct a fully equal status to states in global society. For instance, at a 2018 conference on the global governance of migration held in Morocco, many mayors from around the world attended. However, they could only enter the 'dialogue room' (one massive tent reserved for transnational actors and charities), not the 'plenary hall' (a separate massive tent) where state representatives, UN official, and employees of the International Organization for Migration, convened to negotiate and construct migratory regimes.<sup>42</sup> In this example, cities' status in global society was diminutive to States and IOs. As leading city diplomacy scholar Michele Acuto has pointed out previously, 'The city has thus generally acquired a diminutive status that has located urban politics below the more prominent contexts of the state and the international.'<sup>43</sup> However in recent years cities have tried to counter this trend by 'altercasting' states by reshaping global discourse in such a way as to make

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<sup>42</sup> For a description of this 'Othering' at the intergovernmental meeting about the Global Compact for Migration, see Oomen, Barabara. 2021. 'Cities, refugees and migration' in Marcenko, Miha, ed. 2021. *Research Handbook on International Law and Cities*. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing Limited: 240-250.

<sup>43</sup> Acuto, 2013: 11.



states seem incompetent in managing certain global issues.<sup>44</sup> However, a status of full equality does not preclude cities from global engagement nor does it prevent them from conducting practices that socially construct their global status and identity. In fact, the social construction of status and identity as equal to states is not the goal of cities. Rather, these urban social practices are better explained by the attempt to attract economic development and bring order to multi-ethnic urban populations by developing narratives of cosmopolitanism. But before explanations are deduced or tested, the practices themselves and how to study them is needed. Thus, further research on the meaning and symbolism of the practices of city diplomacy undertaken and mapped out in this thesis will give additional insight into how cities (re)shape their status and dominant political narratives that pertain to cities' agency and importance as actors in global society. But before these globally oriented practices that socially construct cities as global actors are explicated, additional consideration of identity and status helps to clarify the likely causes and effects of city diplomacy.

Social constructivist insight on identity is also useful to understand the phenomenon of city diplomacy and its multiple interrelated iterations. Alexander Wendt's constructivist theorisations on identity can be used to understand city diplomacy. Wendt's conceptualisation of identity refers to 'a property of intentional actors that generates motivational and behavioral dispositions.'<sup>45</sup> Using this understanding of identity and adapting it to the city as an agent in the international arena, it can be said that the specific ways in which cities' intentional international practices unfold generate and reaffirm the city's identity as a global actor. When cities act or react, their conduct can be explained by their identity. But at the same time, identity can drive conduct. Thus, the connection between identity and interests is tricky, and parallels can be drawn with the chicken and egg problem, i.e. which comes first or what explains what. Fortunately, Wendt also considered

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<sup>44</sup> Stürner-Siovit, Janina. 2022

<sup>45</sup> Wendt 1999: 224.

this problem in his classic text. Wendt argues that ‘Identities refer to who or what actors *are*....Interests refer to what actors *want*’.<sup>46</sup> Applied to the city as a global actor, it is difficult to determine if cities’ symbolic and cultural practices occur because of what the city *is* or because of what the city *wants*. To overcome this problem, Wendt suggests that identity and interests can be treated as ‘complementary explanatory roles’.<sup>47</sup> A hypothetical consideration of the aforementioned role of cities in the global governance of transnational migration illustrates the interplay of identity and action or city diplomacy practice and global actor status.

Cities involve themselves in international city networks about migration and refugees because cities *are* global actors (i.e. it is the appropriate thing to do), because cities *want* to further construct and concretise themselves as global actors, and because cities have an *interest* in solving these problems to prevent an influx of vulnerable populations that put a strain on municipal resources and services. These different logics can be basically divided into the ‘logic of consequence’ (simply understood here as a rationalistic cost-benefit analysis that drives political behaviour) or a ‘logic of appropriateness’. In this latter logic, March and Olsen describe it this way; ‘Actors seek to fulfill the obligations encapsulated in a role, an identity, a membership in a political community or group, and the ethos, practices, and expectations of its institutions.’<sup>48</sup> Thus, in this thesis, although cost-benefit analyses are fruitful for analysing many city diplomacy practices (e.g. why does a city spend thousands of dollars to construct and ship overseas a statue given as a gift?) the logic of appropriateness is mostly applied. In other words, the following case study of Seattle’s city diplomacy is understood as a collection of practices that Seattle conducts because it is expected

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<sup>46</sup> Original emphasis. Wendt 1999: 231.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> March, James G. and Johan P. Olsen. 2011. in Goodin, Robert E. ed. 2011. *The Oxford Handbook of Political Science*. Oxford University Press: 478.

of the city as a global actor and because Seattle wants to uphold this status. After the explication of documenting, networking, gifting, and gardening practices of city diplomacy are explicated and the empirical case of Seattle is analysed, future studies can further dig into these different logics. But before this more in-depth analysis of political behaviour can occur, this study contributes to the preliminary theoretical work that is needed for this to occur. In other words, this thesis develops a stronger foundation of how to study the practice of city diplomacy and what types of hitherto ignored aspects of the phenomenon exist. But, to understand the practice of city diplomacy, an understanding of practice itself and practice theory's applicability to the study of city diplomacy needs to be presented.

### **Practice Theory and City Diplomacy**

This section contends that practice theory can be applied to city diplomacy studies. This theoretical approach is noteworthy because hitherto no extant study of city diplomacy has sought to incorporate ideas of practice theory. This emphasis on practice helps show how exactly cities insert themselves into global society and through what tangible and observable processes cities construct their status and identity as global actors. Furthermore, because there is a wealth of scholarship on practice theory and diplomacy, this attempt to combine these insights with city diplomacy opens an entirely new strand of research on city diplomacy. However, because there is a wealth of scholarship on practice theory, and because there is controversy in these different approaches and understanding of practice theory, bringing practice theory into the study of city diplomacy is a double-edged sword. While practice theory can bring insights, it will inevitably also bring critics or detractors. Nevertheless, this line of inquiry is pursued because of the belief that the potential useful insights outweigh the controversy and futility of reconciling debates in practice theory. While the following outline of practice theory is fairly general, it presents a general

overview of different approaches deemed applicable to city diplomacy. Further researchers can continue the debate. Rather, it is sufficient for this thesis to synthesise insights from practices theory that are judged to be applicable to understanding the case of Seattle's city diplomacy.

To begin this discussion of practice theory, an understanding of 'practice' is necessary. Although the vast scholarship of Theodore Schatzki is not engaged with in this study, his definition of practice is utilised. Schatzki defines practice as the 'temporally unfolding and spatially dispersed nexus of doings and sayings'.<sup>49</sup> This definition is adapted in this study to say that the practice of city diplomacy is the aggregate of a city's sayings and doings across time and space that involve external actors or deal with diplomatic issues like solving transnational issues or developing global status. Furthermore, although Schatzki did not research IR or cities, his definition and its adaptation here can be placed within the 'practice turn' and 'narrative turn' in IR.

This study of the symbolic and cultural practices of city diplomacy that socially constructs cities' status and identity as global actors contribute to the 'practice turn' in social theory and IR. The 'practice turn' has been described as 'one of the most productive theoretical and empirical endeavours of IR scholarship in the present decade.'<sup>50</sup> However, as previously mentioned, this approach is not without its critiques. These critiques often pertain to how practice theory understands social theories or social theorists, how the idea of practice itself is understood, or the extent to which practice theory actually contributes to IR theory.<sup>51</sup> Furthermore, it has been said

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<sup>49</sup> Schatzki, Theodore R. 1996. *Social Practices: A Wittgensteinian Approach to Human Activity and the Social*. Cambridge/New York: Cambridge University Press: 89, quoted in Beuger and Gadinger 2018: 60.

<sup>50</sup> Drieschova, Alena and Christian Bueger. 2022. 'Conceptualizing International Practices Establishing a Research Agenda in Conversations' in Drieschova, Alena, Christian Bueger, and Ted Hopf. eds. 2022. *Conceptualizing International Practices*. Cambridge University Press: 9

<sup>51</sup> Hopf, Ted. 2022. 'Critiques of the Practice Turn in IR Theory: Some Responses'. In *ibid*: 28-44.

that '[t]here is no consensus on what studying practices in IR really entails.'<sup>52</sup> While this study of city diplomacy will obviously not reconcile these debates, it contends that the application of practice theory is productive to understand cities' global engagement via their various practices.

In IR, practice theory is often used to analyse states' diplomatic practice or the conduct and negotiation tactics of diplomats in bilateral discussions or multilateral global governance settings. But, this thesis argues that practice theory can also be used to analyse cities' diplomatic practices and the ways in which cities construct themselves as global actors and how cities reconstitute global society. However, extant practice theory scholarship on diplomacy has ignored the role of the city in the composition and maintenance of global society and global governance. For example, in a recent review article about practice theory and the study of diplomacy, Pouliot and Cornut wrote, 'practices actually play a fundamental - if oft overlooked - role in making the world go round.'<sup>53</sup> In other words, practices social construct and reproduce global society. But Pouliot and Cornut overlooked how cities' globally oriented practices also play a role in 'making the world go round'. It is becoming more and more common for cities to contribute to 'making the world go round' via cities' involvement and proactiveness in a variety of global issue areas. Furthermore, by consistently networking with other agents and by documenting the local implementation of international norms like the Sustainable Development Goals via municipal policy, it can be said cities (re)constitute global society. This emphasis on policy is also a commonly noted benefit of practice theory approaches.

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<sup>52</sup> Andersen, Morten Skumsrud, and Iver B. Neumann. 2012. 'Practices as Models: A Methodology with an Illustration Concerning Wampum Diplomacy.' *Millennium* vol. 40, no. 3: 480

<sup>53</sup> However, they also stated that 'Diplomacy is all about human intercourse,' which obviously ignores the intercourse between other non-human objects like gifts and gardens that are also involved in diplomacy. Pouliot, Vincent, and Jérémie Cornut. 2015 'Practice Theory and the Study of Diplomacy: A Research Agenda.' *Cooperation and Conflict* vol. 50, no. 3: 298, 307.

Practice theory is useful from both an analytical and a practitioner's perspective. This is because practice theory allows both scholarly inquiry and real-life application. This latter point is especially important for urban practitioners who seek to insert construct cities more effectively into global actors and attract the social and economic capital that is attached to such a status. Additionally, practice theory's growing popularity in diplomatic studies and its omission from city diplomacy studies shows how the approach of this thesis both contributes to and fills gaps in current literature.<sup>54</sup> Furthermore, the analytical usefulness of practice theory is complementary to the inductivist approach of this study. As Bueger and Gadinger point out, 'Scholars focusing on practices as a core unit of analysis do not want to begin with fixed assumptions of what people are like, how they behave, or what logic they follow. Nor do they start with claims about the nature of the international system or global politics. Instead, they consider an account that starts by paying attention to what actors do and say and how their activities are embedded in broader contexts.'<sup>55</sup> Thus in this study, the practices of city diplomacy themselves are foregrounded rather than the domestic or global political system in which the practices are conducted. But, as previously mentioned, there is a great wealth of practice theory scholarship. Thus, clarification of what exact type of practice theory is applied here needs to be outlined.

Basically, in this thesis, the strand of practice theory related to narratives is emphasised. This strand was selected because the symbolic and cultural practices conducted by cities during their global engagement often can be understood as telling certain stories about either local history and prestige or universal values. In other words, city diplomacy practices tell a story, and these

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<sup>54</sup> For one recent review of diplomatic studies literature that utilized practice theory where city diplomacy was omitted, see Constantinou, Costas M, Jason Dittmer, Merje Kuus, Fiona McConnell, Sam Okoth Opondo, and Vincent Pouliot. 2021. 'Thinking with Diplomacy: Within and Beyond Practice Theory.' *International Political Sociology* vol. 15, no. 4: 559-87.

<sup>55</sup> Bueger, Christian, and Frank. Gadinger. 2018. *International Practice Theory*. Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan: 2.

stories often contribute to cities' stories as important capable actors both locally and globally. Thus, the narrative strand of practice theory is utilised to analyse how city diplomacy narratively constructs cities as global actors.

The French thinker Michel de Certeau, who famously drew people's attention to their quotidian practices, is a useful starting point for considering cities' narrative practices. In addition to his writings on everyday human practices, de Certeau also wrote about the necessity of creating narratives to promote and develop urban space. In one essay de Certeau discussed how myth, heritage, and the imbuing of stories into objects and into the city itself makes people do things and makes the city inhabitable. Specifically, De Certeau gives the example of how urban planners and property developers try to artificially bestow new housing and urban developments with narratives because otherwise, these homes and office buildings would remain deserted.<sup>56</sup> By giving a place an artificial story and a pleasant name (e.g. 'Riverview Street' despite the fact that there is no river in the vicinity), a place obtains (at least, the creators hope) a positive reputation. A similar pattern is observable in the practices of city diplomacy. For example, by developing a peace or friendship garden, a city contributes to narratives in which cosmopolitan values are championed and protected. Then, by extension, the narrative of cosmopolitanism feeds into the global actor narratives. Scholarship from IR theory and its 'narrative turn' along with practice theory, support these narrative processes and the importance of stories in world politics.<sup>57</sup> Furthermore, narratives and narrative power are becoming more popular in IR analysis.<sup>58</sup> The common argument in this line of theorisation is that actors' persuasive stories influence other actors' decisions. This can also be

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<sup>56</sup> De Certeau, Michel. and, Luce. Giard, ed. 1998. *The Practice of Everyday Life. Vol. 2, Living and Cooking*. Minneapolis, Minn; London: University of Minnesota Press: 142.

<sup>57</sup> Roberts, Geoffrey. 2006. 'History, Theory and the Narrative Turn in IR; *Review of International Studies* vol. 32, no. 4: 703-14.

<sup>58</sup> Hagström, Linus & Karl Gustafsson. 2019. 'Narrative power: how storytelling shapes East Asian international politics', *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, 32:4, 387-406

understood as soft power or how actors charm other actors into making certain decisions or conducting certain behaviour.<sup>59</sup> However, rather than apply the controversial idea of soft power (which is judged as distracting owing to its fuzziness and lack of academic and political consensus), this study emphasises practice theory's engagement with narratives. Proceeding in this way will help keep the focus on the symbolic and cultural city diplomacy practices that construct cities as global actors, rather than get bogged down in the usefulness of the soft power idea.

As Bueger and Gadinger described in their overview of international practice theory, there are many ways to think about narratives, stories, and myths and how social agents convey, adapt, change, and reiterate these stories to fit their perceptions of themselves and the world.<sup>60</sup> Furthermore, it has been pointed out that narratives can be understood as 'a form of configuration device...[to] make sense of the world and order it in a specific way'.<sup>61</sup> Applied to the narratives that are observable in the practice of city diplomacy, it can be said that cities generate and project narratives to make sense of their place in global society and simultaneously configure the system in such a way develop and maintain a status and identity as a legitimate global actor in global society.

Furthermore, outside the realm of practice theory, albeit related in its argumentation and emphasis on the important of narratives, previous research argued that city narratives contribute to cities' political capacity.<sup>62</sup> This is because urban narratives can benefit and improve cities' status or standing in the world and this standing can translate into the obtainment of capital in its various

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<sup>59</sup> Nye, Joseph S. 2006. *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics*. New York: London.

<sup>60</sup> Bueger and Gadinger. 2018: 70.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> Cole, Alistair and Renaud Payre, 2016. 'Cities as political objects' in Cole, Alistair, and Renaud. Payre. eds. 2016. *Cities as Political Objects: Historical Evolution, Analytical Categorisations and Institutional Challenges of Metropolitanisation*. Cheltenham, UK; Northampton, MA: EE, Edward Elgar Publishing: 1-27;  
Cole, Alistair, Aisling Healy, and Christelle Morel Journal. 2022. 'Introduction to the role of urban narrative: governing the (re)making of cities' in Cole, Alistair, Aisling Healy, and Christelle Morel Journal, eds. 2022. *Constructing Narratives for City Governance: Transnational Perspectives on Urban Narration*. Edward Elgar. 1-16.



forms. For cities, their narrative power often relates to urban planning discourse. According to Throgmorton, future-oriented urban planning storytelling constitutes cities and their global reputation.<sup>63</sup> The narratives that produced by various urban actors, including neighbourhood action groups, agents of various city government departments, urban politicians, property developers, architects, and urban residents, contributes to cities' status and identity in global society.<sup>64</sup>

Another example of a common narrative that cities use to develop their authority and legitimacy to govern on global issues originated with the former mayor of New York City, Mike Bloomberg, while announcing the cities' involvement in an international city network that focuses on climate change. Bloomberg said, 'We're the level of government closest to the majority of the world's people. We're directly responsible for their well-being and their futures.'<sup>65</sup> Many other urban officials and mayors in recent years make similar claims.<sup>66</sup> Projecting a narrative of closeness to domestic and foreign audiences legitimises cities' involvement in global governance issues like climate change. Geographic, political, or social closeness to local populations advances cities' claims of importance and legitimacy as global actors dealing with global issues.

In sum, narrative city diplomacy practices socially construct cities as global actors with legitimacy and recognition in global society. However, the specific practices that will be analysed using social constructivism and practice theory have yet to be explicated. The following section identifies, describes, and explains the rationale for the selection of these four city diplomacy practices, i.e., documenting, networking, gifting, and gardening. Additionally, the following

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<sup>63</sup> Throgmorton, James A. 2003. 'Planning As Persuasive Storytelling: In A Global-Scale Web Of Relationships.' *Planning Theory*. vol. 2, no. 2: 125-51.

<sup>64</sup> The identification of these various actors involved in cities' storytelling is derived from Cole, et al. 2016: 2.

<sup>65</sup> 'Mayor Bloomberg Launches New C40 Global Networks To Support Sustainable Policy And Generate Economic Growth In Cities Around The World'. March 8, 2012. Available at <https://www.nyc.gov/office-of-the-mayor/news/087-12/mayor-bloomberg-launches-new-c40-global-networks-support-sustainable-policy-generate>.

<sup>66</sup> For another recent instance from the mayor of Boston, Michelle Wu, see Wu, Michelle. 2021. 'Boston, this is our moment to walk together into our shared possibility'. November 16, 2021. *Boston Globe*.

section further outlines how social constructivism, practice theory, and these specific practices are synthesised to develop new insight that contributes to the city diplomacy literature.

### **Documenting, Networking, Gifting, and Gardening**

In this thesis, the practices of city diplomacy that are identified, described, and empirically analysed in the case of Seattle are documenting, networking, gifting, and gardening.<sup>67</sup> By identifying these specific globally oriented symbolic practices and by focusing on the constructivist impacts of such sustained conduct, this thesis presents a novel approach to studying city diplomacy which can be applied in future case studies. This section will first outline each practice individually and offer hypothetical examples when helpful. Afterwards, a reworked definition of city diplomacy will be presented. As this is the first attempt to describe these four globally oriented symbolic and cultural practices and their social constructivist impact, the following elaboration is based on the inductive observation from the case of Seattle and other cities worldwide.<sup>68</sup> Future studies can further elaborate, focus on their instantiations in other cities, and apply different theoretical approaches or logics of political behaviour to explain them.

Cities' practice of documenting the establishment or extension of their international relationships constructs the relationship itself. They contribute to a city's overall effort to narrativise the fact that a city holds a status as a global actor. In other words, these documents evince and constitute that the city is globally engaged and possesses global relationships. Furthermore, by documenting global engagement or proactiveness on global issues (e.g., signing

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<sup>67</sup> This study also previously considered separate heuristic categories of summitry practices and digital practices. Practices of sport, education, and cultural exchanges were also given additional emphasis in previous drafts of this study. However, summitry and digital engagement are arguably forms of, or closely related to networking practices. Chapter 4's discussion of networking and Chapter 7's discussion of future research will further elaborate on these similar forms of city diplomacy practice. As for the omission of sport, education, and cultural exchanges, it was determined that these approaches are already prevalent in literature on twin towns/sister cities. Thus, this thesis opted for a lesser known (or practices with little academic research) to add diversity to city diplomacy studies.

<sup>68</sup> Each empirical chapter includes a 'Global Survey' of these specific practices.

a global petition or declaration like the ‘Mayors’ Declaration for Better Pandemic Prevention, Preparedness, and Response’), cities forge proof of their engagement in world affairs and thus their existence as participants in global society. These documents, in either physical or digital formats, create a body of evidence that contributes to the city’s narrative of global engagement. Furthermore, cities constitute themselves as global actors by adopting a specific policy on global issues or issuing symbolic resolutions about global engagement. Basically, documenting can be understood as a form of action. It is simultaneously a ‘saying’ and a ‘doing’. For example, when a city commits to pursuing the SDGs locally or when a city conducts a Voluntary Local Review of the SDGs, the city signals its alignment with the norms of global society, creates a record of participation in global society, and thus constitutes itself as a global actor in the realm of sustainable development.

Cities’ practice of networking in international city networks (especially those that possess a large staff, budget, and some form of legal incorporation) or cities’ networking in bilateral relationships like sister city or sister port relationships constructs cities as global actors. Although the case of the Rockefeller 100 Resilient Cities network demonstrates that these networks are not immortal, these relationships serve as a platform for cities to frequently obtain knowledge or a vehicle through which cities can represent themselves to foreign actors and audiences. Although the recent development and popularisation of five-year international cooperation agreements between cities suggest that this networking practice might be changing from a continuous or *ad infinitum* type of networking, joining and engaging with networks is an effective way cities (re)constitute themselves as global actors in global society.<sup>69</sup> Being a member of a formal international city network, especially ones that focus on global issues, recognised by states of

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<sup>69</sup> See for example Vancouver’s ‘Friendship City Program’ policy created in 2022 in which new relationships are limited to five years with the option for renewal. Available at <https://council.vancouver.ca/20220705/documents/r5.pdf>. Accessed July 2023.

United Nations officials, or maintaining more traditional transnational urban relationships like twin town relations, gives cities legitimacy in global society because other actors from around the world recognise the practicing city as a globally engaged actor in their own right, separate from the nation-state in which the city is located

Cities give gifts that incorporate elements of their urban identity, symbology, or mythology. Moreover, the gifts often require obligations for the receiving party to reciprocate. In other words, gifts help sustain relations between giving and receiving agents through chains of reciprocation and obligation.<sup>70</sup> Symbolic gifting exchanges permanently imbue objects with meanings, create transnational diplomatic obligations, and when publicly displayed, gifts symbolise the mutual recognition of each actor's existence as a global actor. The symbolic gift of a statue epitomises the potential impact of this practice. While statues rust or rot, they can, in theory, persist for more than a century. During this long existence, in addition to perpetuating urban narratives and symbology of the artwork itself, these gifted statues serve as a concrete reminder that cities hold global relationships and thus by extension, serve as proof that cities are global actors.

Lastly, cities' gardening practice symbolically reconstructs urban space locally and globally to symbolise cities' status as global actors. By maintaining a permanent physical space that local and foreign populations can actually visit, gardens serve as a tool to communicate that a city is globally engaged, i.e. that a city is a global actor. Although gardens can quickly fall into disrepair from simple lack of maintenance, when properly taken care of, gardens are a useful strategy in cities' diplomatic repertoire. Furthermore, the proliferation of sister city gardens in

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<sup>70</sup> Marcel Mauss famously discussed the obligation to reciprocate gifts. Mauss, Marcel. 1954. *The Gift; Forms and Functions of Exchange in Archaic Societies*. Glencoe, Ill: Free Press.

recent years (especially Chinese-style gardens) suggests that this city diplomacy is becoming more common in certain contexts.

Taken together, these four practices suggest that city diplomacy is multifaceted, and the cities conduct a range of strategies that explicitly and implicitly contributed to a city's status and identity in global society. Now that the specific practices that will be described and evaluated in this thesis have been briefly introduced, along with understandings of social constructivism and practice theory that will be applied to study city diplomacy, a reworked definition of city diplomacy can be presented.

### **City Diplomacy Reworked**

A reworked definition of city diplomacy helps to orient this study and give future case studies specific observable practices that can be researched. This reworked definition will buttress scholarly efforts that either eclectically or intuitively describe cities' global engagement. For example, Ray Lara previously asked how cities 'insert' themselves into the international system, where the verb 'insert' was understood as 'the ability of the cities to act in, intervene and influence world politics without needing another international actor to support it'.<sup>71</sup> However, while Lara's discussion helps to underscore the possibility and impact of cities' independent global engagement, Lara's categorisation of 'insertion' practices lacked clarity and precision. Furthermore, Lara did not consider how the projection of identity narratives via specific practices like documenting, networking, gifting, and gardening also contribute to this 'insertion' into the international system. Like others writing about cities' global engagement, Lara took cities' identity as global actors for granted. Therefore, a reworked definition of city diplomacy is developed to remedy these

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<sup>71</sup> Lara, Ray. 2020. 'How Are Cities Inserting Themselves in the International System?' in Amiri, Sohaela and Efe Sevin. eds. 2020. *City Diplomacy: Current Trends and Future Prospects*. Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan: 193.

weaknesses and other failings in extant literature that ignores the importance of the social construction of identity via sustained symbolic and cultural practices for cities' participation in global society.

Although extant definitions of city diplomacy were previously discussed and contain merits, rather than opt to reuse one of these, this study proposes an alternative definition that considers social constructivism, the narrative strand of practice theory, and the four specific practices that are empirically analysed in this case study. Thus, for this study, city diplomacy is understood as; the aggregate of globally oriented symbolic and cultural practices, including but not limited to documenting, networking, gifting, and gardening practices, that project a particular narrative that constructs and reflects a reality in which cities are viewed as global actors.

This definition will be applied to this thesis' case study of Seattle. However, the definition can also be applied to other case studies of city diplomacy. Employing a common definition with specifically identified practices and recognising their potential impact will serve for future comparison and debate about the world-making impact of cities' global engagement strategies. The following chapter identifies methodological gaps in extant city diplomacy research to clarify further how this thesis studies Seattle's city diplomacy practices and their constitutive effects regarding the city's identity as a global actor. It also describes how discourse analysis and other related methods align with this study's theoretical framework.

## Chapter 2: Researching City Diplomacy

### **Abstract**

This chapter presents the specifics of this thesis' research design. It discusses the convergence and divergence with extant city diplomacy studies. Regarding convergence, this thesis can be best described as a qualitative case study, which is a common approach in recent academic literature. Regarding divergence, this chapter discusses how this thesis collects original types of data like gifts and gardens, which are related to city diplomacy and processes by which cities are socially constructed as global actors. At the same time, the chapter presents the archives and repositories of data, like the Seattle Municipal Archives and the Seattle Public Library, which were inductively searched to collect empirics. Also, the chapter elaborates on how discourse analysis and visual methods are applied to the case of Seattle and how these methods can be used in future case studies. The chapter reflects on how future studies can use portions of this thesis' research design to open new avenues of scholarly debate in city diplomacy.

## Diversifying Prevalent City Diplomacy Methodology

Before elaboration on this study's research design can proceed, it is important to assess the current state of city diplomacy methodology. Proceeding thus helps to foreground this study's advancement regarding strategies and types of data and texts that can be collected and interpreted to research city diplomacy. Identifying and evaluating prevalent approaches to the study of city diplomacy illustrates the omission of certain methods or lack of creativity in the types of sources and artefacts that are useful to consider cities' globally oriented symbolic and cultural practices and the constitutive effects these practices have on cities as global actors in global society.

Extant city diplomacy and global city research employ both quantitative and qualitative methods. Regarding quantitative approaches, scholars will use existing data sets like trade investment or demographic statistics to ask questions about the effectiveness or causality of city diplomacy practices.<sup>1</sup> However, although quantitative approaches have their merits, as the following case study of Seattle is qualitative in its outlook, existing city diplomacy research that uses qualitative approaches are further reviewed here. Doing so creates a basis for comparison to demonstrate the similar and novel aspects of this thesis' research design.

Regarding qualitative approaches, surveys and interviews of city government officials are the most popular methods. For example, Anne Bach Nielsen interviewed chief resilience officers to study the 100 Resilient Cities Network.<sup>2</sup> Leffel and Amiri used phone interviews to analyse sister cities in China and the US.<sup>3</sup> Hsu also used interviews to study Montreal's sister-city relationship

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<sup>1</sup> Brakman et al. 2016; Zhang, et al. 2020; Han et al. 2022.

<sup>2</sup> Nielsen, Anne Bach. 2020. 'Governing the transnational: Exploring the governance tools of 100 Resilient Cities' in Hoff, Jens, Quentin Gausset, and Simon Lex, eds. 2020. *The Role of Non-state Actors in the Green Transition: Building a Sustainable Future*. Routledge. 230-246.

<sup>3</sup> Leffel, Benjamin and Sohaela Amiri. 2018. 'Sino-U.S. Sister City Relations: Subnational Networks and Paradiplomacy. *Rising Powers Quarterly*. Vol. 3. no. 3. 111-123.



with Shanghai.<sup>4</sup> Acuto et al. surveyed twenty-seven cities via email to inquire about each city's overall international strategies, budgets related to local foreign affairs policies, governance structure, training for city officials involved in international affairs, and the participation of each city in international city networks.<sup>5</sup> However, these approaches neither foreground the actual practices of city diplomacy nor do these approaches directly observe and interpret the specific acts of, and meanings behind, cities' global engagement. Thus, there is a methodological gap of sorts because extant studies often focus on human resources or budgeting aspects of city diplomacy. While human and economic capital are certainly needed to conduct globally oriented practices, an analysis of these symbolic and cultural practices themselves is needed to develop propositions about how cities construct and maintain identities as global actors. Emphasising practices and the sociocultural sphere adds diversity to city diplomacy studies. Hypothetical and specific examples from the case of Seattle further explain this methodological innovation. Furthermore, as the following discussion will describe, these various types of data and observations can be analysed using social constructivism and practice theory.

Documenting, networking, gifting, and gardening are viewed in this study as sociocultural practices that impact cities locally (i.e., alter urban spaces) and importantly, contribute to cities' social construction as global actors. Empirical analysis of these practices is possible via a range of observations and forms of data collection. Furthermore, the interpretation of the instantiations of these practices deviate, or provide alternatives, from current city diplomacy methodologies.

Documenting practices, formal (e.g., city council resolutions) and informal (e.g., websites or social media posts) city government documents are collected and their discourse, meaning, and

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<sup>4</sup> Hsu, Yon. 2008. 'The Municipal Making of Transnational Networks: A Case Study of Montreal's Twinning with Shanghai' in Saunier and Ewen eds. 2008: 135-152.

<sup>5</sup> Acuto et al 2018.

context can be interpreted to assess the type of self-perceived identity a city holds. Additionally, the creation and promulgation of these texts can be interpreted as communicative acts that implicitly and explicitly project the beliefs and values held by a city. For instance, when a city self-describes in official documents as a ‘global city’, this identity becomes further entrenched into the urban socio-cultural fabric. Further elaboration on the method of discourse analysis later in this chapter further describes this process. But, the important point here is that hermeneutic analysis of documents is useful beyond the current approach in city diplomacy studies that uses these documents as a source of statistics about, for instance, the date when a relationship was formed. Rather, the approach in this study is that documentation has reality-making effects.

Cities’ involvement in bilateral and multilateral international city networks can be observed by examining records that emerge from these transnational urban collectives (e.g. multilateral declarations). This practice can also be observed in local news media that reports on cities’ accession to these networks or city representatives’ attendance at meetings or congresses of these networks. Additionally, city representatives’ speeches or presentations at these transnational conventions of cities are a source of insight that can be viewed as speech acts that socially construct the city as a global actor. In this study, rather than only describing networks as where cities learn about global best practices, networking practices are judged to be actions that contribute to how cities position themselves as relevant and important actors in global society. For example, when Seattle consistently sends representatives to meetings of international city networks where these city representatives interact with representatives from other recognised global actors like the United Nations or nation-states, Seattle normalises itself as an entity with similar a status to non-urban global actors.

Hitherto in city diplomacy scholarship, gifting practices and interpretation of the gifts given and received by cities have been totally ignored by researchers. However, gifts either given or received (along with cities' reaction to such diplomatic objects) are sociocultural objects that hold and convey meaning and importantly, can be viewed as artefacts that feed into processes whereby cities are socially constructed as global actors. The identification of gifts by mining the historical record and subsequent symbolic analysis of these objects in their various forms (e.g., vases, books, statues, etc.) develops a novel stranding in city diplomacy studies. Moreover, when viewed with a social constructivist and practice theory lens, gifting can be viewed as a practice that sustains cities' transnational relationships which is a prerequisite for cities to hold an identity as a global actor.<sup>6</sup> It is also a practice whereby cities communicate and maintain their values and local myths. For example, by gifting a totem pole, Seattle reiterates to other actors and audiences in global society that the city is a political entity like the UN, i.e., political entities that protect and respect indigenous populations. In sum, the collection and analysis of gifts of city diplomacy is a new area of research for city diplomacy studies.

The identification and analysis of gardens (and the realisation that these are related to the practice of city diplomacy) is another way to diversify the current dominant methodology in qualitative city diplomacy studies. A consideration of either planned, completed, or in-progress gardens and an analysis of the discourses and symbolism connected to these cultural spaces demonstrates how gardens transform urban space and feed into the cities' narrative as a global city with worldwide connections and cosmopolitan populations. For example, the surface level intent of such spaces (like honouring local populations of a specific ethnic group) can be more critically analysed from a social constructivist point of view to consider the extent to which these

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<sup>6</sup> It is difficult, if not impossible, to be a global actor if an entity has no relationships or interactions across political borders.

multicultural spaces create and sustain cities as global actors. For example, these gardens can be read as visual texts within the urban fabric that symbolise how cities respect and protect local populations regardless of nationality. Thus, the creation and maintenance of Seattle's various sister city gardens can be interpreted as a city diplomacy practice in so far as these parks are viewed as tools and symbols that communicate the city's cosmopolitanism. In sum, the recognition of the importance of studying gardens creates a new strand of city diplomacy research.

Now that the qualitative aspects of this thesis' research design (and how they add diversity to current approaches) have been considered, it is necessary to explain the points of convergence with extant case studies of city diplomacy and explain the value of such an approach. At the same time, the following section shows the contributions that this study makes even though case studies of Seattle have been conducted previously.

### **The Case Study Approach, Selection, and Justification**

Case studies are a very common approach in city diplomacy research. The single case study approach of this thesis aligns with extant literature that focused on the international relations of specific cities. For example, Adamovská et al. used Thessaloniki, Greece as a case study of city diplomacy.<sup>7</sup> Auschner et al. studied the international strategies of Medellin, Colombia.<sup>8</sup> Intentilia et al. researched Denpasar City in Bali, Indonesia.<sup>9</sup> This single case study strategy is popular because of researchers' realisation that all cities are unique and thus demand individual considerations. As such, this study of Seattle's globally oriented symbolic and cultural practices

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<sup>7</sup> Adamovská, Nikola, Michaela Zemanová & Bilal Bahadır Karaca. 2022. 'The way out of a crisis? the role of cities in Europeanization: a study of Thessaloniki city diplomacy, *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies*.

<sup>8</sup> Auschner, Eika, Liliana Lotero Álvarez, and Laura Álvarez Pérez. 2020. 'Paradiplomacy and City Branding: The Case of Medellín, Colombia (2004–2019).' in Amiri and Sefin 2020: 279-303.

<sup>9</sup> Intentilia, Anak Agung Mia, and A. A. B. N. A. Surya Putra. 2021. 'From Local to Global: Examining Sister City Cooperation as Paradiplomacy Practice in Denpasar City, Bali, Indonesia. *Jurnal Bina Praja* 13, no. 2: 357-67.

contributes to the city diplomacy case study literature. Focusing on Seattle specifically allows for an in-depth understanding of how Seattle's various practices have contributed to its development as a recognised global actor. However, a brief explanation is warranted for why a multi-case study approach is not pursued. This rationale mainly pertains to the novelty of the data collected and analysed and the theoretical framework that is applied to the case of Seattle.

Multi-case studies of city diplomacy also exist. Often these studies are organised based on transnational regional geography or subnational administrative or geographic regions within a specific nation-state. For example, Koelemaij and Derudder study and compare cities in the Belgian region of Flanders.<sup>10</sup> Kuşku-Sönmez analysed cities in the Black Sea Basin.<sup>11</sup> Unkovski-Korica studied the transnational relations of Yugoslav cities and the impact of domestic politics and the non-aligned movement on cities' international praxis.<sup>12</sup> Karvounis analysed Greek cities.<sup>13</sup> However, the multi-case approach is not pursued in this thesis because of the desire to place emphasis on theoretical development related to the identification and importance of practice to cities' social construction as global actors. By selecting one city, methodological, epistemological, and theoretical considerations are better balanced. If a multi-case study is pursued, then there is a requirement to compare empirics across cases. However, by selecting just one city for in-depth consideration, the practicality of studying documenting, networking, gifting, and gardening and the usefulness of employing social constructivism and practice theory can be foregrounded rather

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<sup>10</sup> Koelemaij, Jorn, and Ben Derudder. 2022 'City Diplomacy Beyond Metrocentricity: The Case of Flanders.' *Tijdschrift Voor Economische En Sociale Geografie*. vol. 113, no. 5: 435-49.

<sup>11</sup> Kuşku-Sönmez, Eda. 2014. 'Regional Cooperation in the Black Sea Basin: What Role for City Diplomacy?' *Journal of Southeast European and Black Sea Studies*. vol. 14, no. 4: 489-507.

<sup>12</sup> Unkovski-Korica, Vladimir. 2022. 'Non-aligned Cities in the Cold War: Municipal Internationalism, Town Twinning and the Standing Conference of Towns of Yugoslavia, c.1950–c.1985'. *The International History Review*, vol. 44, no 3: 559-576.

<sup>13</sup> Karvounis, Antonios. 2023. *City Diplomacy and the Europeanisation of Local Government*. Springer Nature.

than being distracted by a need to compare Seattle to other cities. Elaboration on the usefulness and how to pursue the novel approach proposed in this thesis is required first. In the future, other researchers can apply the approach to other single case studies or multi-case studies of cities' multifaceted array of globally oriented symbolic and cultural practices.

Therefore, this thesis is best described as a single-case study. However, a range of examples from around the world are also included to demonstrate the normality of cities' globally oriented symbolic and cultural practices. This occurs in brief 'global survey' sections that appear in each empirical chapter. But, regarding the Seattle-specific empirical analysis, the case of Seattle is studied via multiple in-case observations from the city's hosting of the 1909 World's Fair to the city's participation in the 'Cities Summit of the Americas' held in Denver in 2023.<sup>14</sup> Although most examples derive from more recent a most recent chronology that emphasises twenty-first-century practices (to build on the previous case studies of Seattle's global engagement), this century-long chronological delimitation demonstrates that Seattle's social construction as a global actor is a long and ongoing process in which the city has been involved in multiple issues of world politics. In addition, by delimiting the study to one nation-state, i.e., the US, the analytical context is simplified. But the justification of Seattle as a case study is more nuanced.

The selection of Seattle is justified for several reasons. While many cities around the world possess interesting and understudied examples of globally oriented symbolic and cultural practices or involvement in global issues, often studies focus on obvious cases of global cities like London and New York City and thus ignore the diversity and ubiquity of city diplomacy.<sup>15</sup> Furthermore,

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<sup>14</sup> This delimitation of a case and consideration on types of observations within a case is based on Gerring's definition of a case. Gerring, John. 2019. *Case Study Research: Principles and Practices*. Cambridge University Press: 19.

<sup>15</sup> For studies from London see Massey, Doreen B. 2007. *World City*. Cambridge: Polity; Clark, Greg. 2014. *The Making of a World City: London 1991 To 2021*. New York: John Wiley & Sons, Incorporated. For a study that focuses heavily on New York City, see Ljungkvist, Kristin. 2015. *The Global City 2.0: From Strategic Site to Global Actor*. United Kingdom: Routledge.

Seattle is not granted extended academic inquiry in city diplomacy literature. Only fleeting references to Seattle's existence as a global city exist. For example, in Greg Clark's short history of global cities, Clark only allocated Seattle three sentences, where he claimed that as a result of the formation of the Seattle International Trade Alliance in 1991, 'A culture of international learning and visits was embedded that has made Seattle's leaders highly responsive to how the city is positioned in the global marketplace.'<sup>16</sup> However, Clark did not support his claims with evidence of how this culture and positioning were constructed. Yet, there are a wealth of instances of symbolic and cultural practices and relationships undertaken by Seattle, before, after, and without the Seattle International Trade Alliance, which this study illuminates. Thus, this thesis remedies deficiencies in the existing literature to properly makes sense of Seattle's city diplomacy practices and its social constructivist effects.

Moreover, Seattle consciously constructed itself as a global actor much earlier than the formation of the Seattle International Trade Alliance emphasised by Clark. In fact, Seattle possesses more than a century of sayings and doings whereby it narrativised itself as an important node in regional and global contexts. For example, when Seattle hosted the 1909 Alaska-Yukon-Pacific Exposition, according to a leading historian on world expositions, John Findling, Seattle 'advertised itself as a new gateway to the Pacific and to Alaska.'<sup>17</sup> Specifically, in 1909, the Seattle city council adopted a city song declaring Seattle as 'The gateway to the orient'.<sup>18</sup> Although the song is not used in Seattle's contemporary global engagement (i.e. the song is not performed when a foreign delegation visits the city), references to Seattle as a gateway are still part of the discourse

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<sup>16</sup> Clark, Greg. 2016. *Global Cities: A Short History*. Washington, D.C: Brookings Institution Press: 76.

<sup>17</sup> Findling, John E. 1990. *Historical dictionary of world's fairs and expositions, 1851-1988*. New York: Greenwood Press: 206.

<sup>18</sup> For a discussion of the city song and other city symbols, see the following article on the SMA website. 'Seattle City Symbols'. Available at <https://www.seattle.gov/cityarchives/seattle-facts/city-symbols>. Accessed March 2023.

projected by the city in its diplomatic interactions.<sup>19</sup> For instance, in explanatory notes attached to the itinerary for a 2012 delegation trip to Chongqing, the Seattle Chinese Garden was described as ‘a tribute to Seattle’s role as a gateway to Asia’.<sup>20</sup> The recurrent invocation of the gateway metaphor narrativizes Seattle’s importance in global flows of capital, people, knowledge, etc, which contributes to the social construction of the city as a global actor. But beyond improving the shortcomings of extant hasty generalisations in academia like those of Clark, there are other methodological rationales that lead to the selection of Seattle as a case to develop a social constructivist and practice theory approach to the study of city diplomacy.

In addition to the aforementioned historical considerations (i.e., the chronological recurrence of Seattle's narrativization of itself as a global actor), political considerations contributed to the selection of Seattle. In other words, this case study is deemed a current policy concern, which fits Stephen Van Evera and Jack Snyder’s well-known advice on case selection.<sup>21</sup> Seattle’s city diplomacy is a current policy concern because the city’s globally oriented action sometimes is tangential or in open conflict with national and international issues. For example, Seattle’s existence as a major port city on the Pacific Ocean and the rapid economic rise of China compels the city to form and maintain friendly relationships with Chinese governments (at multiple levels) and businesses (in various industries). There are also examples of recent instances of

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<sup>19</sup> Seattle’s omission of the city song from its contemporary city diplomacy is likely attributable to a lack of historical precedents. This is further supported by academic understandings of logical political behaviour, especially the idea of ‘logic of appropriateness’. In other words, modern city officials do not find the performance of this song either normal or appropriate. Whereas the playing of the US national anthem at events like sporting events (e.g. Seattle Seahawks football games) is a deemed normal social practice because of its recurrence over the decades, the city song has not sustained frequent and expected implementation over the past century since its creation. But, the symbolic and ritualistic performance of the city song, especially if this occurred in lieu of the performance of the national anthem, would certainly contribute to Seattle’s construction of a unique political identity (and an identity as a global actor if the only the city song was performed for incoming foreign delegations).

<sup>20</sup> ‘Seattle Week in Chongqing/Beijing: Mayor’s Delegation Itinerary, March 19-26, 2012’. Obtained by Public Record Request.

<sup>21</sup> Van Evera, Stephen. 2016. *Guide to Methods for Students of Political Science*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press. 83.



Seattle's bold involvement in global issues related to international immigration (e.g., its 'Welcoming City' initiative). It is evident that Seattle is an active political entity in various global issues. It is also clear that the exact place of cities within global political hierarchy is still in a state of fluctuation. Taken together, a case study of Seattle is of both local, national, and global policy concern.

Seattle also is a case of policy concern because of its strong liberal orientation which can place the city in conflict when conservative national-level administrations hold power. When clashes in foreign policy occur, these situations further entrench or serve as opportunities for Seattle to entrench its identity as a moral global actor. Recent outspokenness on foreign affairs can be partially attributed to the fact that Seattle is one of the most liberal and progressive cities in the US. Recent influxes of liberally leaning voters and recent poll data from 2020 indicate that Seattle is one of the top ten cities in the US with a Democratic voting tendency.<sup>22</sup> However, Seattle's establishment as a global actor occurred even prior to recent demographic developments. For example, according to Bush, through a ballot initiative in 1983, 'the city of Seattle formulated a municipal foreign policy concerning Central America, one which brought their city into open defiance of national policies'.<sup>23</sup> With this defiance, when Seattle foiled itself against US foreign policy, Seattle declared and constituted itself as an actor that was a separate global political actor from the US federal government.

Additionally, as early as 1986, Seattle opposed federal immigration policy by declaring itself a 'sanctuary city'.<sup>24</sup> Moreover, Matthew Sparke argued that the infamous Battle of Seattle,

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<sup>22</sup> Based on polling data from the market-research firm, Nielsen, as reported in the Seattle Times. Balk, Gene 2020. 'The Seattle area has gotten even more liberal - here's why'. February 24, 2020. *The Seattle Times*.

<sup>23</sup> Bush 1998. 106.

<sup>24</sup> Tibbits, George. 1988. 'Seattle Declared A Sanctuary City, Anti-Apartheid Resolutions Hit Obstacles' *The Associated Press*. January 14, 1986.

in which activists converged in the city and clashed with police during their protest of the negative impacts of globalisation at the 1999 meeting of the World Trade Organization's Ministerial Conference, 'ensured Seattle's new reputation as a global city associated with global justice.'<sup>25</sup> In sum, to reiterate how this case study aligns with Van Evera and Snyder's guidance, when Seattle contests federal policy or when Seattle develops closer ties with its Chinese or other foreign counterparts despite scepticism or fear of such relationships by certain political factions in national policy establishments, Seattle certainly involves itself in issues of current policy concern. Moreover, and perhaps even more importantly from the social constructivist point of view, when Seattle openly engages with issues of current policy concern, the city explicitly constitutes itself as a relevant actor in these issues areas. For example, Seattle is active in climate change and immigration policy debates and implementation. If Seattle or other cities do not engage in these issues, there would be no change to attain an identity as a global actor. However, a city does not need to be engaged in every single global issue to construct and maintain this identity. While engaging with a range of issues helps to stabilise a city as a global actor, even if a city only involves itself in one issue like global climate change, for example, and even if this involvement is more symbolic rather than practical, i.e. the simple signing symbolic declarations rather than actually implementing carbon reduction schemes championed by multilateral collectives of global actors, this involvement or symbolic undertaking contributes to the social construction of a city as global actor. However, Seattle is involved in a range of overlapping issues and this proactiveness across issue areas enhances its claim as a global actor.

Another analytical justification for the selection of Seattle pertains to an aspect of its local government structure that manifests the city's efforts to codify its identity as a global actor. As

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<sup>25</sup> Sparke, Matthew. 2011. 'Global Geographies' in *Seattle Geographies*. eds. Brown, Michael, and Richard L Morrill. University of Washington Press: 50.

early as 1986, Seattle created an Office of International Affairs.<sup>26</sup> Now, the office and staff that manages the city's globally oriented symbolic and cultural practices (although not exclusively, i.e. the mayor's offices and citizen groups, as entities within the constellation of actors that constitute the city, conduct themselves in a way that contributes to Seattle construction as a global actor) are housed within Seattle's Department of Intergovernmental Affairs. Although Seattle is not an outlier in this regard globally, it is one of the few cities in the US to possess such a specialised and professionalised local administration that specifically focuses on global engagement (as opposed to an independent economic development organization or chamber of commerce that leads local and regional foreign trade delegations).<sup>27</sup> Furthermore, a formalised management structure suggests that Seattle values and seeks to effectively and purposefully manage its relationships and conduct in global society. Thus, the selection of Seattle is justified for study because the city likely serves as a model or source of best practices for other US cities contemplating how to manage their global engagement and construct their identity as a global actor more effectively.

Lastly, there are practical justifications for selecting Seattle as a case study. In a federal government like the US, which is highly decentralised, the existence, preservation, and organisation of city government documents are highly variant. This makes a widespread collation of documents and artefacts burdensome. In other words, as an individual researcher, it is difficult to collect vast amounts of data from many cities across the US, especially when public record

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<sup>26</sup> For a brief discussion of the early actions of the office, like the establishment of an 'International Trade Institute' at the North Seattle Community College, see ohn, Theodore H. et al. 1989. 'North American cities in an Interdependent World: Vancouver and Seattle as International Cities' in Fry Earl H. Radebaugh H Lee and Panayotis Soldatos. 1989. *The New International Cities Era: The Global Activities of North American Municipal Governments*. Provo Utah: Brigham Young University Press: 94-95. For another discussion of the office and a reference to staffing levels (i.e., five people allegedly worked for the office in 1986), see Fry, Earl H. 1990. 'State and Local Governments in the International Arena.' *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* vol. 509, no. 1:123.

<sup>27</sup> Other examples from the US include San Antonio, Texas' 'Global Engagement Office'.

disclosure processes or municipal archives are variant in quality and efficiency. As Dagenais and Saunier point out, ‘the availability of municipal records is very uneven in American cities, and not all communities have civic archives.’<sup>28</sup> As a result of this situation, access to documents and texts becomes a major factor in selecting a US city as a case study. Fortunately, the Seattle Municipal Archives are well-organised, well-funded, and many of its holdings have been digitised and are available online.<sup>29</sup> Additionally, attributable in part to Seattle’s liberally leaning tendencies whereby government transparency is highly valued, the public record request process for the city is straightforward and can be initiated only.<sup>30</sup> Moreover, these public record requests include electronic, or digitally native, sources. This is important in a study that focuses on contemporary governmental practices in which many texts (e.g., emails and estimated budgets outlined on Excel) originate and are preserved digitally. Additionally, in Seattle during the time when records from municipal departments have not been handed over to city archivists for filing and preservations, filing public records requests is necessary to obtain data directly from individual city government departments. In sum, in the case of Seattle, data was collected from a range of repositories.

However, despite these discrepancies in the procurement of data that pertain to cities globally oriented symbolic and cultural practices, this thesis does include certain data from other cities around the world that was discovered during the course of research. This data from other cities was inductively collected and analysed to demonstrate the ubiquity of these symbolic and cultural city diplomacy practices. Often, these examples were discovered from online news articles about city diplomacy or sister cities or simple searches on Google Maps for parks or gardens with ‘sister

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<sup>28</sup> Dagenais, Michèle & Pierre-Yves Saunier, 2003. Tales of the periphery: an outline survey of municipal employees and services in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries’ in Dagenais, Michèle et al. eds. 2003. *Municipal Services and Employees in the Modern City: New Historic Approaches*. Ashgate.

<sup>29</sup> The official Seattle Municipal Archives website can be viewed at <https://www.seattle.gov/cityarchives/>.

<sup>30</sup> For an overview of policies and the process to request public records from the Seattle city government, see <https://seattle.gov/public-records>. Accessed August 2023.

city' in their name. However, sometimes evidence was accidentally discovered, somewhat in the tradition of flaneurs who wander the city to learn more about it. For example, Los Angeles-Platz, in Berlin, was simply stumbled upon. In another case, examples of gifts given to Ningbo, China was possible only because an exhibition was coincidentally held during this research project. Unfortunately, there is currently no collective database of diplomatic city gifts or transmunicipal urban spaces. Thus, for the time being, widespread systematic research into the city diplomacy practices of documenting, networking, gifting, and gardening, is difficult and will rely on discovery. Nevertheless, by identifying these practices and making initial reflections on the plausibility of such research undertakings, this thesis develops a foundation and starting point for future systematic inquiry into the breadth, depth, and impact of these practices.

Now that the case study design of this thesis has been outlined and the analytical and practical justifications for the selection of Seattle have been presented, the following section will further describe archival, discourse and visual methods that are used to collect and analyse instantiations of Seattle's social construction as a global actor. Proceeding thus clarifies the conclusions and interpretations that are drawn in subsequent empirical analysis. Additionally, this sustained explication of methodology further connects empirical analysis to this study's theoretical framework and initiates the scholarly discussion on how these practices and various artefacts of city diplomacy can be understood.

### **Archival, Discursive, and Visual Methods**

Although general issues of municipal archives and public record requests have been briefly mentioned in the previous section, this section presents a more detailed overview of the archives consulted. Additionally, this section outlines the discourse and visual analysis methods used to

understand Seattle's city diplomacy practices along with a more prolonged discussion of what type of texts are analysed and how these relate to social constructivist and practice theory. Additionally, a consideration of the implications of digital archival research, especially as they were necessary during the Covid-19 global pandemic (when the bulk of this project occurred), is reflected upon. Lastly, because site visits were conducted for portions of this study, a brief consideration of fieldwork and the use of photography in social science research is delivered.

The bulk of this case study's primary data collection was obtained from the Seattle Public Library, the Seattle Municipal Archive (SMA), field visits to Seattle, and public record requests made to the Seattle city government, especially the mayor's office. Taken together, these newspaper articles, government records, photographs, and gifts and gardens themselves, are representative records of Seattle's globally oriented symbolic and cultural practices which construct and maintain Seattle's identity as a global actor.

Like any work of urban or political history, libraries and archives are essential repositories for sources that can be read, interpreted, and intertextually analysed and transformed into knowledge about situations, events, and motives. The Seattle Public Library was useful for its holdings of the city's two major newspapers, *The Seattle Times* and *The Pacific Post Intelligencer*. These sources were important to understand Seattle's city diplomacy efforts prior to online news media. Additionally, the library was also the repository of city diplomacy gifts, i.e., books that were given to Seattle as gifts by its sister cities or other foreign entities that visited the city. For example, the Seattle Public Library holds a photo album given by Chongqing, China, which contains photographs of the Chongqing Library. This photo album not only evinces the existence of this relationship but the preservation of this book by Seattle can also be interpreted as a practice of documentation or preservation through which the city accumulates a wealth of evidence that the

city is globally engaged. Seattle's acceptance and maintenance of diplomatic gifts factor into the city's social construction as a global actor. Thus, the municipal library serves not only as a source of information for this case study of city diplomacy, but the municipal library also serves as an actor within the myriad of entities that contribute to Seattle's globally oriented symbolic and cultural practices and the cities' construction and maintenance as a global actor.

The Seattle Municipal Archive (SMA) is a key source of records from multiple city government administrations and even the history of towns that were annexed into Seattle. These various texts (mayoral statements, mayoral photos, city council resolutions, press releases, planning documents, meeting minutes, etc.) are necessary to collect and analyse because the mayor and city councillors often serve as Seattle's representatives, both in interactions with inbound foreign delegations to the city and on the occasions when Seattle represents itself abroad. These texts are essential to understand Seattle's city diplomacy. These texts offer insight into the values and motives behind Seattle's globally oriented cultural and symbolic practices. Tracing the chronology of these texts also serves as an indicator of the longevity and frequency of Seattle's global engagement. Additionally, the SMA contains records related to the foreign travels of other Seattle officials like parks department superintendents or heads of various other city departments. These records demonstrate the multifaceted quality of Seattle's city diplomacy. In other words, Seattle's city diplomacy is not only instigated by an intensely internationalist mayor. Furthermore, the SMA also holds records on inbound foreign delegations, like photos of delegates and their itineraries. Moreover, like municipal librarians and municipal archivists also fall within the constellation of individuals and organisations involved in Seattle's city diplomacy (most specifically, city diplomacy documenting practices). These archival practices can also be interpreted as impacting the construction of Seattle as a global actor.

Finally, regarding the official or quasi-official repositories of evidence of Seattle's city diplomacy, as mentioned before, when records are not already catalogued or stored in a publicly accessible location, research requests are necessary. These requests are directed towards the city government and organisations that work on behalf of or enter into a cooperative agreement with, the city of Seattle. In the former situation, especially to obtain data from approximately the last decade that has yet to be transferred to the SMA or to procure records of digitally-born sources like emails, public records requests were filed. In the latter situation, in this case, study, some local organisations were directly asked to furnish grey literature related to Seattle's city diplomacy. For example, documents pertaining to Seattle's participation in the UNESCO Creative Cities Network were provided by the non-profit entity, 'Seattle City of Literature', which manages the city's involvement with this international city network on behalf of the city government. This situation in which a non-profit organisation and city government share management responsibility not only indicates the common practice of public-private-partnership but also further demonstrates the diversity of actors involved in Seattle's city diplomacy and the difficulty in collecting data because of its disseminated locations. Another example is the volunteer organisation that often manages cultural and youth exchanges between sister cities. These volunteer organisations sometimes have their only legal incorporation, financial records, and websites. Again, the diversity of repositories and actors involves indicates two things of importance to this study. First, from a practical perspective, research on city diplomacy in the US context can be tricky because of the lack of a central repository. Second, to provide additional elucidation into the practice of city diplomacy in Seattle and the US, this diversity is mentioned to raise awareness to future researchers of city diplomacy that symbolic and cultural practices that socially construct the city as a global actor are not limited to the city government itself.



Lastly, although not repositories in the sense that documents are organised and preserved, other urban sites serve as storehouses of information related to city diplomacy and the symbolic practices that contribute to a city's identity as a global actor. In other words, gardens and locations where city diplomatic gifts are on display, are sites where information can be gathered. Thus, in this study, field visits were conducted. Specifically, field visits to locations of Seattle's gardening practices inside and outside Seattle allowed for photography and note-taking about the gardens' features or signage that presents the history and context for the garden's creation. Although newspaper or government reportage evinces these gardens' planning and existence, actually visiting these sites allows the research to obtain data not described in other reports. For example, the researcher can assess the maintenance of a garden or observe the context in which a garden is located or the number of visitors, i.e., popularity of a garden. These observations, insights, and inferences that cannot be provided without a field visit are needed to develop nuance and reach non-obvious propositions about the nature and impact of these various practices of city diplomacy.

Now that the various repositories of data have been elaborated, additional consideration of how the interpretation of the data collected from these repositories is warranted. Although it was previously mentioned how some of these repositories and actors involved in city diplomacy are less obvious or difficult to engage with, the process that occurs has these sites of information have been identified and mined needs further elaboration. In other words, identifying and accessing an archive is just the first step in research.<sup>31</sup> The interpretation of the material found in archives is just as important. Thus, textual and discourse analysis, as applied in this study's following empirical chapters, needs to be discussed.

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<sup>31</sup> Lamont offers a very basic introduction to how archives are used in IR research. Lamont, Christopher K. 2022. *Research Methods in International Relations*. SAGE. 98-101.

To analyse the various types of data in this study of city diplomacy, all these artefacts and documents are treated as texts (both literary and visual) that hold meaning and communicate narratives that construct cities as global actors. Additionally, when reading and interpreting a text, specific questions and an explicit and consistent theoretical framework or perspective should be applied. For instance, all analyses undertaken within this study, whether it pertains to Seattle or other cities, are viewed with a transnational lens. Specifically, Pierre Yves-Saunier's transnational approach is applied in this study.<sup>32</sup> In his approach, Saunier offers an array of visualisations to hone in on and interpret the meanings and the types of human and nonhuman objects that move across nations. This perspective can be applied to cities' globally oriented symbolic and cultural practices to observe and analyse the movements outside, through, and within the city, both in terms of physical objects like gifts or non-physical objects like ideas or best practices. Focusing on these various movements and their underlying logic helps to identify and analyse the transnational connections of the city and counter the state-centric tendencies in IR. So, a transnational lens is used to make sense of the practices of city diplomacy. But while the transnational lens demonstrates that cities are not confined to act within a specific nation-state, at the same time, discourse analysis is combined with social constructivist and practice theory ideas outlined earlier in this thesis.

Discourse analysis is useful for this study because the method emphasises how discourse (re)constructs social reality. Thus, the discourse present in Seattle's symbolic and cultural practices (re)constructs its identity as a global actor and the social reality in which cities are recognised as members of global society. Ivan Neumann, describing the use of discourse analysis in IR puts it

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<sup>32</sup> Saunier, Pierre-Yves. 2013. *Transnational History*. Basingstoke, Hampshire; New York, NY. Houndmills.

this way, ‘realities are maintained by the frequent repetition and confirmation of representations’.<sup>33</sup> Applied to city diplomacy and cities’ practice thereof, the reality where a city is a global actor or where a city is recognised by other more traditional actors in global society like states is created and maintained by the repetition of statements like those that pertain to how cities are an important partner in the fight against climate change. Briefly, discourse affects the social world.

The impact of discourse on society is supported and recognised widely in general social science literature and more specific methodological inquiry on discourse analysis. For example, as Norman Fairclough, a leading methodologist on discourse analysis writes, ‘[t]exts constitute one important form of social action’.<sup>34</sup> Applied to research on city diplomacy, analysis of texts that pertain to city diplomacy illuminates how these texts have identity and world-making effects. Once again, consideration of Seattle clarifies how this works in practice.

When Seattle produces or shares texts (in their diverse forms like documents, speeches by city representatives, gifts, gardens, etc.) Seattle constitutes its identity as a global actor and communicates this status to cognisant audiences. However, as Neumann notes, ‘A discourse usually contains a dominating representation of reality and one or more alternative representations.’<sup>35</sup> For example, depending on the text, sometimes Seattle is represented simply as a US city, a leading city in the binational Pacific Northwest region, or a global city. The goal of this study is not to determine which type of representation of reality is most common in the case of Seattle. Rather, the goal is to point out that the representation of Seattle as a global city or global actor is one representation and there are multiple practices and texts where this representation of

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<sup>33</sup> Neumann, Ivan. 2008. ‘Discourse Analysis’ in Klotz, Audie, and Deepa Prakash. eds. 2008. *Qualitative Methods in International Relations: A Pluralist Guide*. Basingstoke, England. New York: Palgrave Macmillan: 66.

<sup>34</sup> Fairclough, Norman. 1995. *Critical Discourse Analysis: The Critical Study of Language*. London, New York: Longman: 208.

<sup>35</sup> Neumann 2008: 70.

reality is observable. It is through discourse analysis that these different meanings, representations, and even plausible motivations for cities' globally oriented symbolic and cultural practices can be ascertained.

As this case study engages with a variety of texts, including ones like gifts and gardens which are perhaps not generally afforded such a status, the idea of intertextuality needs to be discussed.<sup>36</sup> This is also important because of the occasional overlap in texts that emerge from the different types of symbolic and cultural practices that are focused on in this thesis. This intertextual nature of these documents can impact the meaning and interpretation of these documents. For example, local policy that is created and implemented in Seattle (e.g., a mayoral executive declaration) can reference texts from global society like international legal conventions (e.g., Paris Climate Accords). As such, there is an interplay between different texts and practices that needs to be considered when analysing city diplomacy.

Additionally, there is sometimes an overlap of texts and discourse between the local and global levels. For example, Seattle and other cities' rhetoric, discourse, and social imaginary that they communicate and reproduce through their practices are influenced by and influence other discourses. For instance, the Green New Deal (i.e., an increasingly popular slogan within global sustainability discourses) is uttered by various actors in global society, cities included. In another example, in the last few years, one international city network (United Cities and Local Governments) started to invoke the phrase 'local multilateralism' in press releases and published documents. By doing so, this international city network and the cities that participate in or interact with the network position themselves as relevant and legitimate within global society where

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<sup>36</sup> For a brief consideration of intertextuality by a noted discourse analysis methodologist, see Fairclough, 1995: 188.

multilateralism is an important organising principle.<sup>37</sup> Because multilateralism is an idea and word frequently invoked in the discourse of global society, by adapting the idea to the urban level, cities construct themselves as similar to other multilateralist global actors.

The importance of discourse is recognised by IR methodologists. As Lamont points out, ‘discourse does more than just describe, discourse also plays a role in how international affairs is practiced.’<sup>38</sup> For the case of Seattle analysed in this thesis, this idea can be reinterpreted to mean that the vocabulary and implicit meanings of texts that emerge from the city’s symbolic and cultural practices indicate how Seattle actually practices and perceives itself in global society. For example, by invoking the the discourse of global governance like the Paris Climate Accords in its executive orders, Seattle constitutes itself as an actor in the global environmental governance regime.<sup>39</sup> In this example, echoing Lamont’s point above, Seattle’s invocation of this multilateral convention does more than describe the city’s local political ambitions; rather, this discourse in which the Paris Climate Accords are referenced actually plays a role in how cities practice international affairs and how other global actors interact with cities in the practice of their own international affairs.

Furthermore, analysis of discourse over time also shows the evolution of meaning and practice. Fairclough puts it this way, texts are ‘extraordinarily sensitive indicators of sociocultural processes, relations, and change’.<sup>40</sup> As mentioned above, cities’ use of the phrase multilateral can be viewed as a change in urban sociocultural practices and the discursive interplay between the

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<sup>37</sup> So far, Seattle does not seem to have used the ‘local multilateralism’ phrase. For one instance of the phrase’s use by the Secretary-General of this city network in the run-up to the organisation’s 2022 world conference, see <https://www.uclg.org/en/media/news/today-more-ever-local-and-regional-governments-must-have-voice>. Accessed May 2023.

<sup>38</sup> Lamont, 2022: 197.

<sup>39</sup> For more on this invocation by Seattle, see Chapter Five’s discussion of Seattle and the C40 international city network.

<sup>40</sup> Fairclough, 1995: 4.

local and global level. But texts also indicate continuity. For example, analysis of vocabulary over time of Seattle-originated texts demonstrates that while word choice might slightly vary, underlying meanings remain the same. For instance, whereas Seattle previously described itself as a ‘sanctuary city’ in the 1980s in different local government documents, recently the city uses the phrase, ‘welcoming city’. Although word choice is slightly different (which is a strategy to rework phrases that have developed a bad reputation by its opponents) indicates the stability of Seattle's existence as a global actor in international migration. In other words, these texts about Seattle's stance and policy on global immigration issues, be they about immigration crises from past decades or crises of the last few years spurred on by new geopolitical conflict or the development of a new class of refugees (i.e., climate migrants), indicate how the city constantly views itself and acts appropriately as an actor in the field of transnational migration.

Finally, in addition to spoken or written linguistic considerations considered in the following empirical analyses, visual language is also interpreted. In other words, this study also conducts discourse analysis on visual texts related to Seattle's globally oriented symbolic and cultural practices. This is because, the visual elements (e.g., symbols and icons on city flags or coats of arms) themselves, and the practice in which a visual text is created, displayed, altered, etc. contribute to the social construction of cities as global actors. For instance, in this study, gifts and gardens are also treated as visual texts. Although these sometimes also possess textual elements like signage describing the history of a park to visitors or accompanying textural descriptions when gifts are displayed in an exhibition, their visual elements add to cities' narratives and identities as global actors. As a result, researchers of city diplomacy can and should use photographs to research cities' globally oriented symbolic practices and their constitutive effects.

Although the use of photographs as a method is more advanced in visual anthropology and visual sociology than in IR, not to mention city diplomacy, images of cities' transnational encounters can also inform researchers about cities' identity narratives.<sup>41</sup> For example, by examining the ceremonial and candid photographs taken during Seattle's interactions with foreign representatives, researchers can interpret the implicit and explicit narratives, choreographed or otherwise, that occurred when Seattle conducted diplomatic practices with non-Seattle agents. Moreover, the analysis of the visual elements of city diplomacy aligns with recent scholarly efforts in IR to study the 'sensible politics' of international relations or 'visual global politics'.<sup>42</sup> Thus, the specific emphasis on the visual aspects of city diplomacy which are attempted for the first time in this study, contributes to studies of visual global politics and gives future city diplomacy researchers another avenue to pursue. Furthermore, in addition to the visual records intentionally left by cities or dedicated urban activists who advocated for cities to obtain a global actor status (e.g., the World League of Cities painting discussed earlier), visual records created by researchers themselves are a useful and recognised method in social research.<sup>43</sup> Therefore, photos of gifts and gardens taken by the researcher are included in this study. For example, photos of the Taihu stone given by Suzhou currently located at the Seattle Chinese Garden and a photo of the signage at the 'Kobe Terrace' in Seattle are included, referenced, and analysed in this study.<sup>44</sup> Future research

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<sup>41</sup> But IR is making major advancements in the study of the visual aspects of world politics. Bleiker, Roland. ed. 2018. *Visual Global Politics*. Routledge. For an introduction to the use of photos in 'wordy' disciplines, see Ball, Michael S., and Gregory W.H. Smith, 2012. 'The Use of Photographs in a Discipline of Words' in Hughes, Jason, ed. *SAGE Visual Methods*. SAGE: 65-79. The most well-known general textbook on visual methods is Rose, Gillian. 2012. *Visual Methodologies: An Introduction to Researching with Visual Materials*. Los Angeles; Thousand Oaks, California: SAGE Publications.

<sup>42</sup> Callahan, William A. 2020. *Sensible Politics: Visualizing International Relations*. Oxford University Press; Bleiker, Roland. ed. 2018. *Visual Global Politics*. Abingdon, Oxon; New York, NY: Routledge.

<sup>43</sup> For an overview of the various ways photographs are used in human geography scholarship, see Rose, Gillian. 2008. 'Using Photographs as Illustrations in Human Geography.' *Journal of Geography in Higher Education* vol. 32, no. 1: 151-60.

<sup>44</sup> For another methodological consideration on how photos can be used to study society, see Hall, Tim. 2009. 'The Camera Never Lies? Photographic Research Methods in Human Geography.' *Journal of Geography in Higher Education* vol. 33, no. 3: 453-62.

should also consider including these visual records in future publications in order to disseminate and facilitate the comparison the visuality of cities' globally oriented symbolic and cultural practices. These are included in this study and advocated for in future studies of city diplomacy because as visual methodologists have noted, photos serve as 'straightforward descriptions of what a place [or gift] looks like'.<sup>45</sup> In sum, visual approaches will advance qualitative studies of city diplomacy.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter outlined interrelated themes that straddle both the research design of this specific thesis and suggestions to add nuance and diversity to future city diplomacy studies. While case studies are a normal approach in city diplomacy studies, alternative in-case observations can be emphasised. Furthermore, in addition to the research necessity that entails the contention that future studies should also adopt practice theory approaches in order to continue the scholarly debate about this theory's usefulness to city diplomacy – including future academic discussion about the typology of practices utilised in this thesis – one of the main assertions presented in this chapter is the need for creativity when collecting and analysing observations and instantiates of city diplomacy. In other words, future case studies can and should collect and analyse similar artefacts of city diplomacy like those considered in this thesis, especially the novel types of data like gifts and gardens that are treated as texts subjectable to interpretation. If future research on city diplomacy engages with these methodological ideas, great strides can be made regarding the breadth, depth, and impact of cities' globally oriented symbolic and cultural practices.

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<sup>45</sup> Rose 2008: 157.



So, to test demonstrate these methodological ideas reflected upon in this chapter in practice, the following empirical chapters of Seattle's city diplomacy describes and analyses the city's various interrelated practices and how these socially construct Seattle as a global actor operating with varying degrees of legitimacy and recognition in global society. To begin this empirical analysis, Seattle's documenting practice is analysed.

### Chapter 3: Documenting

#### **Abstract**

This chapter describes how cities' different sayings and doings in the form of various types of textual and visual documents like city council resolutions, memoranda of understanding, and photographs socially construct cities as global actors. For instance, documenting cities' values aligns local values with the values of global society. When this alignment occurs via symbolic inscription on formal and informal documents, cities are better positioned to insert and normalise themselves as global actors. The chapter also presents a global survey of how cities and coalitions of cities document their political stances and how this constitutes their existence in the global governance of issues like the environment, migration, wealth distribution, etc. In the main empirical portion of the chapter, Seattle's documenting practices during the Trump Administration (e.g., formal city council opposition and appeals to alter national foreign policy) with Chinese cities (e.g., MoUs on biotechnology) are interpreted as symbolic acts that implicitly and explicitly constitute Seattle as a global actor.

## On Documentation

The city diplomacy practice of documenting, in either textual or visual forms, is a practice of construction and preservation. These acts simultaneously create, maintain, and project a city's identity as a global actor. Furthermore, the city diplomacy documenting practice also often conveys cities' values, especially those that align with global society's prevalent values. For instance, when cities record local governmental opinions or policies related to global issues, perform, and document a commemorative act like granting honorary city citizenship to a foreigner,<sup>1</sup> or create, document, and promulgate a symbolic holiday that honours a sister city relationship or a local diaspora, these 'sayings and doings', which often touch on the theme of cosmopolitanism, socially construct cities as global actors. Furthermore, when a meeting of city representatives from different cities located across national borders is documented, this act contributes to cities' narratives of global engagement. These documentary practices are the textual and visual evidence of cities' globally oriented narratives. However, these symbolic documenting practices are not new to early twenty-first-century city diplomacy.

In the early modern period of diplomacy, the documenting practices of European free cities were centralised in 'books of ceremonies', which have been called the 'textual treasures of cities'.<sup>2</sup> Although cities no longer maintain 'books of ceremonies' (i.e. a centralised document that collates every instance of incoming and outgoing foreign delegations)<sup>3</sup> and the global society of the early

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<sup>1</sup> In 1963, the Seattle City Council and Mayor granted Kobe's mayor as an honorary citizen of the city. Bush 1998: 54-55.

<sup>2</sup> Krisher, André J. 2019. 'Ritual Practice and Textual Representations: Free Imperial Cities in the Society of Princes' in Sowerby, Tracey Amanda. ed. 2019. *Cultures of Diplomacy and Literary Writing in the Early Modern World*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press: 225.

<sup>3</sup> However, although the form of a book no longer exists, cities will occasionally have a record of transnational engagements listed online (albeit with discrepancies or omissions) or will occasionally create either temporary or permanent exhibitions about the history of cities' global engagement. In the former case for example, 'Chicago Sister Cities International' the public-private entity that manages the cities' sister cities, compiled and posted on their website

twenty-first century is quite different from the society of princes of the eighteenth century, cities' modern documenting practices are part of their civic identity and can be 'regarded as a gain of symbolic capital materialized in writing'.<sup>4</sup> In other words, documenting is a practice of city diplomacy that enshrines in local history cities' history of global engagement and records the existence of cities' permanent and continuous engagement with actors across national borders. Taken together, contemporary city diplomacy documenting practices in its various forms are comparable to practices of princely free cities; documenting grants cities symbolic capital and socially constructs their identity as global actors.

Moreover, documenting is confirmation. It is a narrative practice. Documenting confirms and embeds a city's values and beliefs into local narratives. Documenting confirms that an event occurred or frames an event as successful and productive towards the improvement of a relationship.<sup>5</sup> For instance, documenting evinces that a city diplomatic delegation or head of state and their entourage came or went to other cities. In the aggregate, documenting practices construct, communicate, and preserve a city's narrative, identity, and values.

Various motives can be ascribed to documenting practices. Sometimes documenting is evidence of a city's global activism (e.g., welcoming city declarations). Sometimes documenting is a declaration of a city or group of cities' shared political desire (e.g. Mayors' Declaration for Better Pandemic Prevention, Preparedness, and Response).<sup>6</sup> Furthermore, these documents are

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documents called 'History of Exchange' for each of Chicago's bilateral relationships. Chicago Sister Cities International's Official Website is viewable at <http://www.chicagosistercities.com>. Accessed August 2023. In the latter case, Nanjing, China, created and maintains a permanent exhibition hall ('Nanjing Sister Cities Exhibition Hall') at the city's 'Nanjing International Friendship Park'.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid: 237.

<sup>5</sup> Of course, there is much to say here about misinformation and fake news, but this is outside the scope of this thesis. Moreover, the author is not aware of an example in which a city pretended and created false documents allegedly an important person from abroad visited the city or that the city created a brand new strategic partnership with some other foreign city.

<sup>6</sup> In this example, the Global Parliament of Mayor's and the Geneva Cities Hub sought explicit recognition from states that local governments play a crucial role in pandemic prevention, preparedness and response. This declaration is

often symbolically imbued with additional meaning and importance via the practice of ceremonial signings. In the practice of city diplomacy, the most common example of this occurs when mayors ceremonially apply their signatures to memoranda of understanding. In this case, the text of the document is important, but so too, is the ceremony surrounding the document itself. These interrelated acts of city diplomacy documentation and the mimicry of diplomatic treaty-signing ceremonies contribute to how cities have emerged in many spheres and actors as recognised global actors.

Additionally, the visual variety of city diplomacy documenting practices also constitutes and narrativizes cities' existence as global actors. Commemorative group photos of transnational meetings of cities and their foreign diplomatic counterparts and candid photographic documentation by an officially accredited communications officer of a city specifically designed to record city diplomacy are perhaps the two most common types of city diplomacy visual documentation. These visuals simultaneously convey to viewers the existence of cities' engagement with other members of global society and document these interactions to serve as evidence in cities' future narrative projects. For example, when Nanjing, China, accepted and captures photos and videos during the unveiling ceremony of a statue of a baseball player given by St. Louis, Missouri,<sup>7</sup> the visual documents were used in local news media. Then, when Nanjing's sister city exhibition hall was created, Nanjing already had visual documents in its possession which the city could and did include in its permanent exhibition about its city diplomacy. These interrelated documenting acts all fed into the city's narrative that Nanjing is a

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viewable at <https://globalparliamentofmayors.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/Mayors-declaration-for-better-pandemic-preparedness-prevention-and-response.pdf>. Accessed August 2023.

<sup>7</sup> An image of this statue taken by the author is included in Appendix A. This city diplomatic gift is further discussed in Chapter Five.

global actor. In sum, when cities conduct visual documentation, they strengthen, construct and sustain identities as a global actor.

Finally, in addition to creating a document itself, cities are sometimes keen to share these documents across national borders. In these cases, physical artefacts of cities' narrative of global engagement or evidence of their identity as a global actor is transferred across space. For instance, in the 1984 city council resolution that established a sister city relationship between Seattle and Limbe, Cameroon, the resolution itself specifically stated that the mayor of Seattle would transmit a copy of the resolution to the Mayor and City Council of Limbe.<sup>8</sup> By sharing this document with foreign elites and audiences in Limbe, Seattle inserted documentation of its identity as a global actor into Limbe's local situation. Although these documents may not be preserved or valued by the receiving party when shared, this is another aspect of the city diplomacy documenting practice that merits consideration in future research.

Having said that, as this is the first attempt to theorise the features, patterns, and implications of this city diplomacy practice, future research should contribute to the theory-building about this aspect of how cities participate in global society. But rather than continue more abstract theorisations of this practice here, the following empirical global survey of such documentary practices further discuss the real-life variety and scope of this component of city diplomacy and demonstrates that Seattle is not alone in conducting such documenting activities.

### **A Global Survey of Documenting**

This global survey of the city diplomacy practice of documenting begins with a discussion of century-old comments about this particular practice and a more recent document created by a

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<sup>8</sup> Resolution 27089. SMA

city and another subnational actor that strives to construct its identity as a global actor. Beginning in this way illustrates the longevity of the practice and serves as an entry point to further consider the geographical and chronological scope of this practice. The 1911 International Municipal Congress and Exhibition in Chicago is the setting for this discussion. Dr. Alexis Tylin of the Imperial Russian Technical Society presented a paper at this congress titled, ‘Duties of an International Municipal Congress’, arguing for the importance of congress resolutions. He maintained, ‘A congress that has not adopted any resolutions has in reality not done the work for which it was called together. The main duty of a congress, I take it, is to show the various city officials the proper solution of municipal problems and in this way to protect them from making costly and unnecessary mistakes.’<sup>9</sup> But, despite Tylin’s suggestions, the historical record does not seem to indicate that any formal resolutions emerged from the 1911 Chicago Congress. However, in the early twenty-first century, Tylin’s advice is now frequently followed. Nowadays, many types of documents are created during transnational gatherings of cities, either bilateral or multilateral. For example, cities often co-author and sign memorandum of understanding, pledges, communique, declarations, agreements, resolutions, to list a few of the nomenclatures used to describe these city diplomacy documents. By documenting these meetings and the shared opinions or policies agreed upon at the meeting, or by invoking phrases that align with diplomatic terminology or the discourse of global society, cities construct their identity as global actors. Furthermore, the continued creation of these documents created and signed with a range of actors, not just other cities, normalises cities’ membership in global society. For example, cities and other subnational governments might document their relationships and shared political goals. For

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<sup>9</sup> Tylin, Alexis. 1911. ‘Duties of an International Municipal Congress’ in International Municipal Congress and Exposition. 1911. *Municipal Advance: Extracts From Papers On Various Municipal Services Read At the First International Municipal Congress And Exposition. Chicago, September 18-30, 1911*. Chicago: 166.

example, in 2015, the State of California signed an MoU with the Shenzhen Municipal People's Government about the development of low-carbon development goals.<sup>10</sup> By working across national borders towards goals of global environmental governance and documenting these shared efforts, Shenzhen and California insert themselves and normalise their involvement in this issue area of global society. But conference resolutions and bilateral agreements are just two of the types of city diplomacy documenting practices. Thus, this survey will further highlight the diversity of this city diplomacy practice and point to areas that deserve further sustained scholarly inquiry about the causes and effects of this type of saying and doing.

One of the most common types of city diplomacy documents pertains to sister-city relationships. Since the popularisation of the sister city or twin town idea, countless cities worldwide have signed some sort of memorandum of understanding that simultaneously creates and documents the relationship. This practice is even conducted by cities that are located in states lacking full sovereignty and recognition in global society. For example, in 2019, Ramallah and Oxford signed documents to become twin towns.<sup>11</sup> This example demonstrates that widespread global recognition of a state where a city is located does not preclude a city from forming transnational relations or constructing itself as a global actor. US cities have also formed and documented the existence of a transnational relationship with Palestinian cities. For example, in 2016, Boulder, Colorado, a city that has developed a liberal city identity, declared Nablus to be its sister city. These documents related to sister-city relationships certify that cities are engaged beyond national borders. Moreover, textual analysis of these documents indicates cities' values.

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<sup>10</sup> 'Memorandum of Understanding To Enhance Cooperation On Low Carbon Development Between The City Of Shenzhen Of The People's Republic Of China And The State Of California Of The United States Of America' September 15, 2015. Available at [https://www.energy.ca.gov/sites/default/files/2019-12/MOU-Shenzhen\\_China\\_ADA.pdf](https://www.energy.ca.gov/sites/default/files/2019-12/MOU-Shenzhen_China_ADA.pdf). Accessed January 2023.

<sup>11</sup> Casale, Elena. 2019. 'Oxford and Ramallah sign twin city agreement'. March 12, 2019. *The Oxford Student*. Available at <https://www.oxfordstudent.com/2019/03/12/oxford-and-ramallah-sign-twin-city-agreement/>. Accessed January 2023.



When these sister city documents reference sustainability or mutual understanding, the cities involved narrativize their alignment with the environmentalist and cosmopolitan entities operating and advocated for such ideals in the various institutions of global society.

Cities are also able to narrativize their values and identity via international city networks. These international city networks often collectively document cities' alignment between urban and international norms. For example, upon the conclusion of the 2019 United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) annual congress, 'The Durban Political Declaration' was published and stressed the importance of norms like the right to housing, gender equality, and resilience.<sup>12</sup> For the cities that supported and signed this document, these documents reflect and sustain cities' beliefs in these political stances. More explicitly, these collective declarations actively seek the normalisation of cities' involvement in global society and as the Durban Political Declaration stated, indicate cities' 'commitment to partner with the international community'.<sup>13</sup> Documenting such explicit commitment to the international community and its values is a rhetorical strategy used by cities that reflect and entrenches their identities as global actors. The UCLG frequently publishes this type of document, and future analysis should focus on the frequency of this international city network's claims to partnership or equality with other actors in global society.

Transnational summits of cities on specific issues result in the city diplomacy practice of documenting. For instance, in response to national policies and the awareness of the impacts of climate change on cities, Chicago, in coordination with philanthropic organisations and international city networks, hosted the 2017 North American Climate Summit. This summit resulted in the 'Chicago Climate Charter.' This charter narrativized that all cities can be global

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<sup>12</sup> United Cities and Local Governments. 2019. 'The Durban Political Declaration. Available at [https://www.durban2019.uclg.org/sites/default/files/2019-11/UCLG\\_TheDurbanPoliticalDeclaration\\_EN\\_.pdf](https://www.durban2019.uclg.org/sites/default/files/2019-11/UCLG_TheDurbanPoliticalDeclaration_EN_.pdf). Accessed February 2023.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

actors in the governance and problem-solving of climate change, By conveying a discourse in which cities are capable of involving themselves in global environment governance ‘regardless of size, geography, or previous efforts’, cities document and construct their belief and identity that cities are legitimate actors in global society.<sup>14</sup> Another example when cities constructed themselves a role in environmental governance regimes occurred when they engaged with biodiversity issues. For example, the 2007 ‘Curitiba Declaration’ documented cities’ efforts to protect biodiversity and even made a political effort to influence the actions of a supranational agency; the document urged specific action by the United Nations Environment Programme.<sup>15</sup> By directing their efforts specifically at one of the key institutions of global society, the UN, these cities placed themselves on the same level as the specialist agencies of one of the key actors in global society. This discourse and directed rhetoric constructs cities as global actors. But cities do not only construct themselves as global actors by documenting their stances on environmental issues. In fact, cities also document their stances on issues of another key institution of global society, i.e., war and peace.

Although cities do not wage war, through the globally oriented symbolic practice of documenting, they involve themselves in war and construct themselves as actors in global society. An example from this thesis’ case study shows how this can occur. During the US military occupation of Iraq, the Seattle City Council passed multiple resolutions about this international political event. In one example, in 2007, the Seattle City Council called for a withdrawal of all US

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<sup>14</sup> Notably for this thesis’ case study, Seattle’s mayor was one of the signatories. For a copy of the charter, see <https://www.chicago.gov/content/dam/city/depts/mayor/Press%20Room/Press%20Releases/2017/December/2017ChicagoClimateCharter.pdf>. Accessed February 2023. For a press release from the City of Chicago pertaining to the summit and the charter, see Chicago Office of the Mayor, 2017. ‘Mayor Emanuel and Global Mayors Sign the Chicago Climate Charter at the North American Climate Summit’. December 5, 2017. Available at [https://www.chicago.gov/city/en/depts/mayor/press\\_room/press\\_releases/2017/december/ChicagoClimateSummitCharter.html](https://www.chicago.gov/city/en/depts/mayor/press_room/press_releases/2017/december/ChicagoClimateSummitCharter.html). Accessed February 2023.

<sup>15</sup> This declaration can be viewed at <https://www.cbd.int/doc/meetings/city/mayors-01/mayors-01-declaration-en.pdf>. Accessed December 2022.

troops from Iraq.<sup>16</sup> Although this text can be interpreted in a number of ways, by applying a social constructivist and practice theory lens to this city council resolution, the document can be viewed as a saying and doing that falls within Seattle's narrative as a global actor. Although other causes can be attributed to this action, this can also be considered possible because of Seattle's long-held identity as a global actor that can and does involve itself in international conflicts. As Bush previously described, Seattle involved itself in multiple events during the Cold War and even post-conflict truth and reconciliation efforts after WWII.<sup>17</sup> Thus, issues of war and peace, partly because war is one of the primary institutions of global society, are an area whereby cities effectively develop themselves as global actors.

But the war in Iraq is not the only international political conflict in which cities involved themselves and which constructs their identity as a global actor. More recently, because of the 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine and the destruction of cities, international city networks and individual cities, and mayors have involved themselves in this international political conflict. For instance, Eurocities and the Ukrainian Congress of Local and Regional Authorities, documented their desire to collaborate on reconstruction projects that contribute to urban security.<sup>18</sup> Many cities also suspended or cancelled their sister city relationships with Russian cities in response to Russian aggression. In these cases, these acts reconstruct cities' as pacifist global actors that abide by the international norm in which wars of aggression are prohibited. But cities also use documents pertaining to other major areas of global society to construct and sustain themselves as global actors.

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<sup>16</sup> Chan, Sharon Pian. 2007. 'Seattle City Council unanimous in call for troop pullout'. *The Seattle Times*. March 20, 2007.

<sup>17</sup> Bush 1998.

<sup>18</sup> Green energy, health, and inclusivity were also areas of desired collaboration. Available at <https://eurocities.eu/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/Memorandum-Eurocities.pdf>. Accessed December 2022.

Cities also document and attempt to sway the international political economy. At the same time, cities involve themselves in the discourse and negotiations of international organisations and global economic governance. For example, since the creation of the Urban 20 network (often abbreviated to U20) in 2018, this network of cities convenes annual summits that result in the authorship and promulgation of a ‘communiqué’. After its finalisation and the affixion of signatures, this communiqué is relayed to state officials attending the G20 summits. For example, the 2022 U20 communiqué lobbied states to invest more strongly in economic and social rights like health, housing, and education.<sup>19</sup> In sum, by documenting cities’ views and policy opinions about the global economy, their desires for economic reform, and their hope to cooperate with other global actors on economic issues, cities create and sustain their identity as global actors with a role in the management of the international political economy.

Cities also create and sign documents that symbolise the quantitative expansion of their formal transnational relationships which thus serves as evidence of increased global connectedness and therefore a stronger claim to a status as a global actor. For example, every time the European town twinning network known as ‘The Douzelage’, expanded (in 2001, 2004, and 2011), ‘codicils’ were created, signed, and stamped with each city’s unique seals.<sup>20</sup> These documents not only symbolised the network’s expansion and cities’ claim to global interconnectedness, but because official city seals were affixed, each city sustained its unique political and visual identity. Simply put, symbolic documents are a tool of city diplomacy to evince global connectedness and project city’s independence using their unique symbols.

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<sup>19</sup> This communiqué was endorsed by just two US cities, Los Angeles and New York. Seattle has yet to use the U20 as a platform to construct and maintain itself as a global actor. Available at <https://www.urban20.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/U20-2022-COMMUNIQUE-280822.pdf>. Accessed January 2023.

<sup>20</sup> These three codicils can be viewed on The Douzelage’s website. Available at <https://douzelage.eu/the-douzelage-constitution/>. Accessed December 2022.

Finally, cities also use documents to honour foreign or non-native urban populations. These symbolic documents contribute to cities' cosmopolitan narratives, reinforcing their claims to global actorness. For example, in 2000, Seattle's city council passed a resolution to honour Asian and Pacific Islanders and locally recognise Asian Pacific American Heritage Month.<sup>21</sup> By honouring and commemorating local transnational populations, Seattle and other cities that conduct similar symbolic documentation of such values and holidays, advance their claim to a status as a global actor. To further elaborate on how documenting practices construct and sustain cities' narratives and identities as global actors, claims to legitimacy in global society, and liberal values that align with the dominant operating principles of global society, Seattle's city diplomacy documenting practice is analysed. However, as the concluding chapter will further explain, additional theoretical and empirical consideration of this specific practice is needed in future practice. But, for now, the case study of Seattle is considered.

### **The Case of Seattle**

For decades, from the 1957 city council resolution to the present, Seattle created an array of documents that contributed to the social construction of the city as a global actor. As this thesis is not a piece of historical scholarship, not all of these documents are evaluated in the following analysis. Rather, to remain true to this case study's methodology and selection criteria, i.e., the selection of a case with current political relevance, the following empirical analysis emphasises documenting practices from the last decade or so. Delimiting the analysis in this way builds on extant case studies of Seattle's city diplomacy. In addition, it illustrates how Seattle occasionally challenges national foreign policy (thus demonstrating how the city operates as its own

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<sup>21</sup> Resolution 30182. SMA.

independent political entity with its own identity, values, and interests) and how the city orients its globally oriented practices to changes in geopolitical distributions of power. Thus, the following analysis focuses on documents that pertain to Seattle's newfound relations with Chinese cities in the last decade and Seattle's formation of documents about foreign policy authored during the Trump Administration. But to begin, to add context and discussions of convergent and divergent city diplomacy practices, other documents related to Seattle's global engagement are briefly considered below.

To analyse Seattle's globally oriented documenting practice, studying a master plan of international strategy would be an obvious point of departure. However, unlike other cities worldwide, Seattle has not created this type of document.<sup>22</sup> In other words, Seattle's global engagement is not centrally planned. There is no document that explicitly describes and plans how Seattle constructs itself as a global actor and how the city engages with global society. Moreover, even within Seattle's current comprehensive plan, known as 'Seattle 2035', references to global engagement or global issues are generally lacking.<sup>23</sup> Although the plan mentions climate change and states that the city's economic development planning is aimed 'to provide direction about how to maintain and grow Seattle's vibrant, diverse, and increasingly global economy', the bulk of the document pertains to neighbourhood planning and plans for street design and land use.<sup>24</sup> The document has no provision to explicitly make Seattle a global actor. Furthermore, the word 'international' mostly appears in reference to the city's International District or the international airports within the vicinity. Rather, like Seattle's other city diplomacy practices that communicate

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<sup>22</sup> For an academic exploration of Singapore, Dubai, and Sydney's international strategic plans, see Acuto 2022.

<sup>23</sup> Seattle 2035: Comprehensive Plan. November 2020 Edition. Available at <https://www.seattle.gov/Documents/Departments/OPCD/OngoingInitiatives/SeattlesComprehensivePlan/CouncilAdopted2020.pdf>. Accessed June 2023.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid: 124.

narratives of global engagement which social construct the city as a global actor, documenting occurs via a range of local actors, most of which are governmental entities.

But documents related to Seattle's city diplomacy can also reinforce national narratives. For example, the 1957 city council resolution, which established a sister city relationship with Kobe, Japan, stated that one of the goals of the relationship was to bring peace and goodwill between the peoples of 'our two great nations'.<sup>25</sup> In this case, the resolution documented Seattle's global engagement and reinforced the belief that America is 'great', thus perpetuating patriotic narratives. However, in many instances of Seattle's city diplomacy documenting practice, nationalist sentiments are either wholly absent or less obviously foregrounded, as in the 1957 Kobe sister city resolution.

Narratives of advancement and importance appear in the city's city diplomacy documents. Furthermore, as early as 1985, Seattle created a document to regulate how the city uses the strategy of sister cities towards the cities' construction as a global actor. This 1985 city council resolution limited the types of entities with which Seattle forms transnational relationships. In this document, Seattle decided to only permit affiliation with other actors in global society if they possessed similar qualities or values to Seattle; 'In order to have some commonalities on which a meaningful relationship can be based...Seattle will consider a new affiliation if...A prospective sister city is a port city, or has a major university, or has some other major economic aspect that is similar to or complementary to the economic character of Seattle'.<sup>26</sup> The emphasis on commonalities was designed to ensure common ground to facilitate exchanges and to sustain Seattle's identity narratives and claims to fame in global society. This documented (re)constituted Seattle's narrative

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<sup>25</sup> Resolution 17608. SMA.

<sup>26</sup> Resolution 27359. SMA.

and perpetuated its reputational claims as a great, prosperous, educated, economically developed port city.

Previously Seattle also constructed itself as a global actor via documents that pertained to how the city involved itself in the global movement against the apartheid system in South Africa. These documents inserted the city into global society's discourse on international human rights and contributed to Seattle's local narratives of hospitality, indigeneity, and cosmopolitanism. Specifically, in a city council resolution, Seattle stated that the city abhorred South Africa's apartheid policies.<sup>27</sup> Furthermore, these efforts also strengthened local citizens' and media outlets recognition and pride that Seattle is a global actor in this issue area, which further strengthened the effect of the local government's documenting policies. For example, a local newspaper editorial expressed pride and support towards the government's efforts to establish relations with a black community in South Africa.<sup>28</sup> In sum, Seattle's practices of documenting its anti-apartheid stance and practices of building relationships with communities in South Africa, constructed Seattle's identity as a global actor because these practices directed inserted Seattle into one of the major global political issues of that epoch.

Lastly, Seattle's narrative as a central node in the global economy can appear in its city diplomacy documenting practice. Documentation that mutually recognises centrality is a feature of Seattle's municipal resolutions. For example, Seattle sometimes describes its sister cities as strategically positioned, and then subsequently refers to Seattle as possessing similar characteristics. For example, the city council resolution which established Seattle's relationship with Christchurch, New Zealand stated that Christchurch 'is located in a major seaport region and is a center for international trade and commerce...[and] the City of Seattle occupies a similar

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<sup>27</sup> Resolution 28177. SMA.

<sup>28</sup>n.a. 1990. 'Seattle should join hands with Daliwe'. *Seattle Times*. April 24, 1990.



position in the Pacific Northwest.’<sup>29</sup> Thus by narrativizing its centrality and by recording a comparison to other nodes in the modern global economy, Seattle socially constructs its status as a central node, which, as Sassen famously identified, is necessary to be identified a global city.<sup>30</sup> So, centrality in the global economy can also be narratively constructed by cities through their city diplomacy documentary practices.

Although there are countless documents that can undergo hermeneutical analysis, to further explore the narratives that appear in Seattle’s city diplomacy documenting practices and focus on practices of current political relevance (i.e., Sino-US relations), a few documents related to Seattle’s relations with Chinese cities are analysed.

#### *Seattle-China Documenting Practice*

Seattle’s documenting practice pertaining to the city’s relationship-building with Chinese cities is a prominent component of its city diplomacy. These documents and relationships contribute to Seattle’s social construction as a global actor. This subsection will analyse documents from 1982 to 2016 in both their content, form, and subtextual meaning.

One of the first instances of Seattle’s relationships with Chinese cities occurred on 14 June 1982. At that time, City Council President Jeanette Williams and Mayor Charles Royer signed a resolution to establish Seattle’s sister city relationship with Chongqing, China.<sup>31</sup> By composing such a document that archived such sentiments like ‘the City of Chongqing, China has expressed a special sentiment of friendship’ and ‘the Mayor of Chongqing, Yu Han-qing, has extended a warm and generous offer of friendship, which the people of Seattle accept’, and by foregrounding

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<sup>29</sup> Resolution 26492. SMA.

<sup>30</sup> Sassen, Saskia. 2001. *The Global City: New York, London, Tokyo*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.

<sup>31</sup> Resolution 26736. SMA.

the concept of friendship, Seattle socially constructed a status friendship with Chongqing, and by extension, the Chinese public. Moreover, this formal recording fed into Seattle's narrative as a Chinese-friendly and cosmopolitan city identity, both of which are important to legitimation as a global actor in the early twenty-first century in which China is now one of global society's main poles. As IR theorisation on friendship has previously argued, symbolic statements of this type can construct a reality where distinct polities in global society are friends.<sup>32</sup> Moreover, statuses of friendship and enmity in global politics are socially constructed. Thus, for Seattle in its city diplomacy, by documenting its desire for friendship, this situation where Seattle is a transnationally active polity seeking friendship with Others in global society is narrativized and normalised. But friendship is not the only theme evident in Seattle's documentation of its relations with Chinese cities.

Technological advancement is a theme apparent in a document that recorded Seattle's relations with Shenzhen. This theme contributes to Seattle's identity as a relevant global actor. In a 2015 MoU titled, 'Memorandum on Medical Research and Healthcare', signed by Seattle and Shenzhen, the two cities conveyed their claims to technological prowess. The first clause of the memorandum states, 'Both sides agree that the two cities are leaders in life science and the healthcare industry.'<sup>33</sup> Mutual recognition and documentation of this ontological claim perpetuates both cities' claims. However, a far more accurate statement would be that the city of Seattle and Shenzhen geographically contains many leading businesses and academic institutions that

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<sup>32</sup> While it is not possible to review all the IR literature about friendship here, the point here is that friendship is socially constructed. For one recent volume on friendship and IR see Koschut, Simon and Andrea. Oelsner. eds. 2014. *Friendship and International Relations*. Houndmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan; for a Chinese-specific treatment of the subject, see Nordin, Astrid H M, and Graham M Smith. 2018 'Reintroducing Friendship to International Relations: Relational Ontologies from China to the West.' *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific* vol. 18, no. 3: 369-96.

<sup>33</sup> 'Memorandum On Medical Research And Healthcare Between The City Of Shenzhen Of The People's Republic Of China And The City Of Seattle Of The United States Of America' 2015. Obtained by Public Record Request.

specialise in healthcare and life science. But instead, by stating that these cities are leaders in these industries, the two cities rhetorically incorporate these other entities into the city's identity. While Shenzhen might have a more legitimate claim to these businesses and academic institutions because of the nature of Chinese governance (i.e., the prevalence of state-owned enterprises), Seattle relies on such rhetoric in its transnational interactions to construct and sustain its reputation as an important player in this crucial field of global politics. Although Seattle does not own the companies involved in life science or healthcare research and development, because these industries have social value deemed important by global society (e.g., human development and the preservation of life), Seattle uses documents to narrativise that the city has a claim to involvement in global human development. Thus, Seattle's city diplomacy documenting practices can construct the city as a global actor and carve out a space in the political realm of international development.

The digital economy is also a theme in Seattle's documenting practices with Chinese cities. The digital economy is a major political arena in early twenty-first century global politics. Furthermore, if a city can narrativize its importance in this issue area, it can normalise and project its identity as a global actor. This can be seen in Seattle's city diplomacy documenting practice with Hangzhou. In 2016, the Washington State China Relations Council organised a trip centred around the theme of e-commerce. Seattle was represented by government and business officials from companies like Amazon, Blue Nile, Costco, Boeing, Microsoft, and Alaska Airlines; these various representatives visited Hangzhou and its businesses.<sup>34</sup> By collaborating with and visiting a technologically-advanced city like Hangzhou (by virtue of the fact that e-commerce companies like Alibaba are headquartered in Hangzhou), Seattle perpetuated its reputation as a leading city in advanced industries. This is important to Seattle's discourse as a global actor because of the

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<sup>34</sup> Beekman, Daniel. 2016. 'Seattle mayor signs trade, research agreements on China trip'. *The Seattle Times*. May 13, 2016.

value global society places on development and wealth. Seattle advances its narrative as an important and developed global actor by signing trade and research agreements with Hangzhou. Similar processes are noticeable in Seattle's relationships with Shenzhen.

Technology and digital government were also evident when Seattle documented its newfound relations with Shenzhen. However, a possible change in Seattle's values, or at least the potential for such flexibility in values, is also apparent. Whereas most of Seattle's documentary practices reflect the city's liberal values that align with the dominant Western-led post-WWII discourse, the MoU signed by Seattle Mayor Edward B. Murray and Hangzhou Mayor Xu Qin during the 2016 trip contains a hint of the language and discourse of Chinese political philosophy. While this does not imply Seattle's city identity is changing (this instance still contributes to Seattle's social construction as a global actor), the invocation of certain phrases suggests how structural conditions (i.e., shifting polarity to China) can influence Seattle's documentary narratives within its city diplomacy. Specifically, the first article of the MoU between Seattle and Hangzhou states, 'Both sides, under the principle of equality and mutual benefits, mutual trust and common development, agree to carry out extensive economic and social exchanges and cooperation, in order to promote common prosperity.'<sup>35</sup> The last two words of this article are significant. The idea of 'common prosperity' is not common in the diplomatic discourse of global society, nor is it part of US political discourse or even local Seattle discourse. At the surface, 'common prosperity' can be interpreted as having connotations related to improving economic equality. However, the phrase represents a key idea of current Chinese government thinking.<sup>36</sup> Thus, the fact that Seattle documented its implicit consent to this idea indicates that Seattle finds

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<sup>35</sup> This memorandum is viewable on Seattle's Office of the City Clerk website. Available at [http://clerk.seattle.gov/~CFS/CF\\_319408.pdf](http://clerk.seattle.gov/~CFS/CF_319408.pdf). Accessed November 2022.

<sup>36</sup> 共同富裕. Gong tong fu yu. For one explanation of the phrase's meaning, see Yao, Kevin 2021. 'Explainer: What is China's 'common prosperity' drive and why does it matter?' *Reuters*. September 2, 2021.

no qualms with this particular Chinese political slogan. This is likely because of the potential economic benefit that can be drawn from relationships with Chinese cities. In this case, Seattle is willing to adjust and adapt its values based on global power shifts to pursue its interest in economic development and desire to sustain itself as a legitimate global actor. Regarding the complementary explanatory role of interests and identity described by Wendt, Seattle's interest in attracting new streams of wealth into the city demonstrates how its urban narrative is flexible and how the city's discursive practices can change to reflect the changing structural conditions of global society. Assuming the continued rise of China, future studies of city diplomacy should be cognisant of the potential inclusion of other phrases from Chinese political discourse into the city's documenting practices, for these rhetorical changes offer insight into how global power shifts affect cities' narratives. Nevertheless, while Seattle's discourse and narrative might be changing slightly, this document with Hangzhou still evinces that Seattle is globally engaged and thus worthy as a player in global governance. But Seattle's relations with Chinese cities are just one part of its global actor narrative. Another set of documents through which Seattle was socially constructed as a global actor was created during the Trump Administration. Moreover, this set of documents covers a wider range of global political issues and themes than those that appear in city diplomacy documents with Chinese counterparts.

### *Seattle's Documenting Practice During the Trump Administration*

This section analyses three documents created by Seattle during the Trump Administration that deal with global issues and thus can be considered to fit within Seattle's city diplomacy. These documents are significant for they demonstrate how Seattle's documenting practice constructs the city as a global actor distinct from the nation-state or federal government. These documents pertain

to Seattle's 'Welcoming City' policy formulated after the Trump administration's travel bans, Seattle's response to a US military missile strike that killed an Iranian general, and Seattle's response to India's national policies.

The first document analysed here pertains to the Trump Administration's anti-immigration rhetoric and policies and Seattle's opposition thereof. These issues of immigration policy are useful from this study's social constructivist point of view because they pertain to the construction of 'us' versus 'them'.<sup>37</sup> In Seattle's case, because of its cosmopolitan values, Seattle takes a broader view of the type of people that fall within the category of 'us'. Thus, in response to the so-called 2017 'Muslim Ban' of the Trump Administration, Seattle promulgated a 'Welcoming City' resolution. This document is a major milestone in Seattle's construction as a global actor for it codifies that the city's multicultural values and desire to create a cosmopolitan polity that is not delineated based on the US nationality.

The extensive list of types of people mentioned in the resolution's title is illustrative of the city's efforts to construct a cosmopolitan city identity. These categories include, but are not limited to, immigration or refugee status, race, color, creed, religion, ancestry, national origin, age, sex, marital status, parental status, sexual orientation, gender identity, and political ideology.<sup>38</sup> This resolution challenges the present circumstance in which nationality is a marker of modernity and the related argument made by Holston and Appadurai that 'one of the essential projects of nation-building has been to dismantle the historic primacy of urban citizenship and to replace it with the national.'<sup>39</sup> Thus, this 'Welcoming City' resolution can be viewed as an effort by Seattle to reverse this process and carve out its own political space regarding what defines citizenship. Seattle's

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<sup>37</sup>Klotz, Audie, and Cecelia. Lynch. *Strategies for Research in Constructivist International Relations. International Relations in a Constructed World*. Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 2007: 74.

<sup>38</sup> Resolution 31730. SMA.

<sup>39</sup> Holston, James and Arjun Appadurai 1996. 'Cities and Citizenship'. *Public Culture*. vol. 8: 187-188.

efforts in this regard fall into the recently coined neologism, ‘cityzen’ or ‘cityzenship’.<sup>40</sup> The way Seattle constructs its form of ‘cityzenship’ and its identity as a global actor is evident in the first clause of Seattle’s ‘Welcoming City’ resolution which states, ‘Seattle fosters a culture and environment that makes it a vibrant, global city where our immigrant and refugee residents can fully participate in and be integrated into the social, civic, and economic fabric of Seattle’.<sup>41</sup> This self-proclamation of the city as a global city, along with the more substantive cosmopolitan policies outlined in the city council resolution itself and the resolution’s direct opposition to national policy, all contribute to Seattle’s social construction and narrativization as a global actor. In addition to opposition to national immigration policy, Seattle also constructs itself as a global actor by opposing national military policy.

In January 2020, Seattle’s city council passed a resolution condemning the missile strike conducted by the US military that killed Iranian General Soleimani. The resolution is significant to the normalisation and narrativisation of Seattle’s city diplomacy for it explicitly recognizes ‘the importance of people-to-people diplomacy at the local level’.<sup>42</sup> This reference to people-to-people diplomacy signal Seattle stance that city diplomacy matters and is a legitimate practice. Thus, by rhetorically inserting Seattle into the diplomatic and military discourse, i.e., the discourse of global politics, Seattle develops, sustains, and advances its identity as a global actor.

When considering this resolution, it is important to remember that the US and Iran have not had formal state-level diplomatic relations since 1980. But despite this lack of formal national bilateral relations at the national level, Seattle discursively positioned itself as a distinct polity capable of global engagement. In other words, via this document, Seattle voiced its opinion about

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<sup>40</sup> Vraati, Wanda & Smaran Dayal. 2016. ‘Cityzenship: rightful presence and the urban commons’ *Citizenship Studies*, vol. 20, no. 8: 994-1011.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Resolution 31925. SMA.

US-Iran issues and practiced its right to speak on issues of global politics. Furthermore, in this resolution, Seattle went so far as to lobby direct policy change, which can be interpreted as how the city claims agency to be involved and affect the management of global political issues. While no national foreign policy changes were altered due to this instance of Seattle's city diplomacy, this symbolic practice reinforced Seattle's existence as a global actor.

Finally, when Seattle involved itself in Indian national politics and the visit of the Indian Prime Minister to the US, the city conducted city diplomacy documenting practices that reconstituted the city's identity as a global actor. In 2020, the Seattle city council passed a resolution to further normalise the city's right to voice its opinion about foreign affairs, such as transnational religious issues.<sup>43</sup> The resolution reaffirmed Seattle's claim to be a 'Welcoming City', stated the city's support for all people regardless of religion, and symbolically opposed the policy of a foreign state. By inserting itself into foreign policy issues – which can be viewed as a sort of transnational activism – Seattle constituted itself as a global actor.

## Conclusion

Like all practices, Seattle's city diplomacy documenting practices are 'iterative and help stabilize meanings and action'.<sup>44</sup> By creating documents that directly engage with issues of global politics, Seattle practices, claims, and stabilise the situation in which it, and by extension other cities, are normal and legitimate global actors to a certain extent. Furthermore, when Seattle iteratively documents its cosmopolitan values and disapproval or total opposition to national policies, Seattle stabilises itself as an actor separate from the state. Thus, when Seattle documented its opposition to foreign policy decisions or formalised transnational relationships via symbolic documents that

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<sup>43</sup> Resolution 31926. SMA.

<sup>44</sup> Pouliot and Cornut 2015: 306.



emphasised important global industries, Seattle held and even strengthened its internationalist values and its claims to be a global actor. In sum, how cities chronicle their values and identities via city diplomacy documenting practices is a social phenomenon through which these globally oriented symbolic and cultural acts realise values and identities. Future studies should continue to focus on how cities' various documenting practices socially construct cities as actors in global society and (re)construct urban identity and values. But it also needs to be discussed how some of these documents are only possible if networking across national borders is practiced.

## Chapter 4: Networking

### **Abstract**

This chapter begins by discussing how the networking strand of city diplomacy praxis relates to scholarly inquiry into transnational networking between various global actors and its potential impact on global society. The chapter also presents a survey of international city networks from different geographical, historical, and thematic contexts to demonstrate the diversity and ubiquity of this aspect of city diplomacy. Finally, the chapter empirically analyses the city's participation in C40, 100 Resilient Cities, the UNESCO Creative Cities Network, and sister city and sister port networks, arguing that these various transnational engagements socially construct and normalise Seattle's identity as a global actor.

## On Networking

Networking is a core practice of city diplomacy and one of the main ways through which cities are socially constructed as global actors. Furthermore, from a more practical standpoint, networking gives cities access to knowledge about urban best practices and serves as platform to interact with other global actors like states and IOs. In other words, city diplomacy networking practices provide social benefits to cities. Moreover, these sustained transnational interactions simultaneously (re)shape the identity of cities themselves and the nature of global society.

IR scholars who consider the importance and implications of increased networked connections worldwide are aware of how networks are reshaping global governance and global society. However, these IR scholars only recently started to recognise cities' role in the world's reconstitution. For example, in 2004, Anne-Marie Slaughter argued that a new world order has appeared in which parliamentarians, judges, and NGOs all contribute to networked global governance.<sup>1</sup> However, Slaughter was silent on city diplomacy networking practices in this work. However, in her more recent 2017 book on similar subjects, Slaughter acknowledged that global cities like New York City and Jakarta 'engage with one another after terrorist attacks to share information and develop protective strategies' and thus, 'many city officials are essentially practising urban foreign policy, working with their counterparts in other cities across borders to address problems ranging from climate change to terrorism.'<sup>2</sup> Although these aspects of city diplomacy occurred in practice prior to Slaughter's scholarly recognition, her acknowledgment contributes to the social legitimization of cities as competent global actors. But while cities are only

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<sup>1</sup> Slaughter, Anne-Marie. 2004. *A New World Order*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

<sup>2</sup> Slaughter, Anne-Marie. 2017. *The Chessboard and the Web: Strategies of Connection in a Networked World*. New Haven, CT. Yale University Press: 13, 20.

recently recognised in certain IR circles as important actors in their own right, cities' appearance as a global actor in world politics did not suddenly appear. Rather, this was the result of decades of interaction between cities across national borders.

For more than a century, cities have cooperated across national borders via official and nonofficial representatives working on behalf of the city. For example, 'l'Union Internationale des Transports Publics' was formed in 1885 and exists to this day.<sup>3</sup> Around the same time that these urban transit engineers created transnational networks, municipal 'sanitary engineers' collaborated transnationally to improve local urban hygienic conditions.<sup>4</sup> Then, in 1913, cities came together in Ghent to form the International Union of Local Authorities, which continues today as in a successor international city network known as United Cities and Local Governments.<sup>5</sup> In the following empirical analysis, although the entire history of Seattle's city diplomacy networking practice and its involvement in these early international city networks is not assessed here, a long durée perspective is useful to contextualise the social situation in which Seattle's city diplomacy and identity as a global actor emerged.

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<sup>3</sup> For more on the organisation's history, see the introduction on its official website at <https://www.uitp.org/about/>. Accessed June 2023.

<sup>4</sup> Frioux, Stéphane. 2015. 'Sanitizing the City: The Transnational Work and Networks of French Sanitary Engineers, 1890s–1930s' in Rodogno, Davide et al. eds. 2015. *Shaping the Transnational Sphere: Experts, Networks and Issues from the 1840s to the 1930s*. Berghahn Books: 44–59.

<sup>5</sup> For a history of the International Union of Local Authorities, see Couperus 2011 in Laqua, Daniel. ed. 2011. Another useful piece of scholarship pertaining to the ideas and leading figures of the 'Union Internationale des Villes' is Van Acker, Wouter. 2019. 'Legitimizing the Transnational Associative Expert: The Union Internationale des Villes and the UIA' in Laqua, Daniel., Wouter Van. Acker, and Christophe. Verbruggen eds. 2019 *International Organizations and Global Civil Society: Histories of the Union of International Associations*. London; New York, NY: Bloomsbury Academic: 114–132. For a reprint and discussion of the papers presented in 1913 Ghent, see Meller, Helen. ed. 2014 *Ghent planning congress 1913: premier Congress International et Exposition Comparée des Villes*. London: Routledge. For brief history prepared for the organisations' centennial celebrations, see United Cities and Local Government, 'Centenary of the International Municipal Movement' available at <https://www.uclg.org/en/centenary#:~:text=The%20foundation%20of%20UCLG%20in%20Paris%2C%202004%2C%20was,and%20regional%20government%20associations%20from%20across%20the%20globe>. Accessed June 2022.

As understood here, cities' city diplomacy networking practice refers to various permanent or intermittent transnational associations of cities and their representatives who interact in pursuit of epistemological and other economic and social interests. As such, cities' networking practices includes sister city relationships, sister port relationships, and organisations that are formally incorporated and professionally staffed.

Sister ports are an example of how city diplomacy networks can offer different benefits to cities. From a social constructivist point of view, sister port connections can be interpreted as a form of symbolic practice that constructs cities' identity as global actors. This is because when cities are perceived as central nodes in the global economy, they are also likely viewed as global cities. As such, sister ports fit into cities' narratives as global actors. Relatedly, the existence of the sister city relationship itself also adds to a cities' narratives of global connectedness and existence as a 'gateway city'. At the same time, sister port networks also result in conferences on port management or logistical management of global waterborne trade.<sup>6</sup> But cities' networking practice is not limited to sister city schemes or formal international city networks with a permanent secretariat.

Seattle's participation in a conference organised by the Vatican State further illustrates the variety of city diplomacy networking practices and how these practices insert cities into the global political discourse. In July 2015, the Pontifical Academies of Sciences and Social Sciences held a conference titled, 'Modern Slavery and Climate Change: The Commitment of Cities'. This conference was attended by dozens of mayors from around the globe, including Seattle's Mayor

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<sup>6</sup> For one example of conference that resulted from sister port networking practices, see the following local newspaper report about when Seattle previously hosted discussions with representatives of its sister ports. Goldberg, Jeff. 1986. "Kobe, Rotterdam, Seattle Ports Learn from Each Other." *Puget Sound Business Journal*, October 20, 1986: 13.

Ed Murray.<sup>7</sup> Although Seattle obviously does not maintain continuous formal diplomatic relations with the Vatican State, Seattle's attendance at this conference advanced and communicated the city's identity as a global actor. By inserting itself into the discourse of international human rights and climate change, Seattle sustains its existence as an actor in these fields. Moreover, during this interaction with the Vatican State, Seattle did not represent the US state. Rather, Seattle represented the city itself and the city alone.

Cities' informal networking using social media or messaging telecommunications technologies during, before, and after the Covid-19 pandemic, also socially constructs cities as global actors. For example, in 2020 during the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic, mayors and city officials from different cities around the world communicated using WhatsApp.<sup>8</sup> Not only did this practice allow cities to remain in contact with one another, but this practice could also be used as evidence by cities' representatives to point towards city's global proactiveness in the management of transnational public health issues.

As scholars have pointed out, in recent years international city networks are multiplying.<sup>9</sup> This fact requires additional scholarly inquiry into the global societal impacts of such multiplication. Furthermore, cities' growing global recognition by legitimate actors in global society constitutes a reality in which cities themselves are also viewed as legitimate actors in global society. For example, when the UN Secretary-General attended and spoke at the 2019 C40

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<sup>7</sup> For the conference booklet see [https://www.pass.va/content/dam/casinapioiv/pass/pdf-booklet/2015\\_booklet\\_mayors.pdf](https://www.pass.va/content/dam/casinapioiv/pass/pdf-booklet/2015_booklet_mayors.pdf). Accessed 13 November 2022. For a photo of Ed Murray with the Pope and other mayors, see 'Mayor Murray attends conference with Pope Francis in Rome/Vatican City'. Object no. 195330. SMA.

<sup>8</sup> Pipa, A.F, Beria, M.V. and Hachigian, A.N. 2020 'The Brookings Institutions Webinar: Global City Cooperation in the response to Covid-19'. Available at: <https://www.brookings.edu/events/webinar-global-city-cooperation-in-the-response-to-covid-19/>. Accessed November 2022.

<sup>9</sup> Michele, Mika Morissette, and Agis Tsouros. 2017. 'City Diplomacy: Towards More Strategic Networking? Learning with WHO Healthy Cities.' *Global Policy* Vol. 8, no. 1: 14-22; Boyce, Matthew R, and Rebecca Katz. 2021. 'COVID-19 and the Proliferation of Urban Networks for Health Security.' *Health Policy and Planning* Vol. 36, no. 3: 357-59.

Mayor's Summit and claimed that 'Cities are where the climate battle will largely be won or lost' and declared that 'You [mayors] are the world's first responders to the climate emergency', because of the legitimacy and authority that the office of the UN Secretary-General holds in global affairs, cities were legitimised as global actors.<sup>10</sup>

To demonstrate the different thematic networks and the geographic variety of cities' globally oriented networking practices, a global survey of international city networking follows. This survey demonstrates the normality of Seattle's city diplomacy networking practices and contextualises the empirical examples analysed in this chapter's following case study portion.

### **A Global Survey of International City Networking<sup>11</sup>**

As previously mentioned, cities and their representatives have been networking with other actors across national borders for over a century. Networks formed before WWI include the International Association of Chiefs of Police (est. 1893), the Association Générale des Techniciens et Hygiénistes Municipaux (est. 1905), and the International Federation for Housing and Town Planning (est. 1913). Cities networks formed during the interwar years include the International Municipal Lawyers Association (est. 1935) and the Pan American Commission on Intermunicipal Co-operation (est. 1938). City networks formed after WWII include the International Institute of Municipal Clerks (est. 1947) and the United Towns Organisation (est. 1957). The wealth of transnational city networks formed over the past century demonstrates the normality of this practice. But, to further illustrate the ongoing evolution of this city diplomacy practice, the remainder of this survey focuses on international city networks created in the last few decades.

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<sup>10</sup> António Guterres. 2019. 'Secretary-General's remarks at C40 World Mayors Summit' 11 October 2019. Available at <https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/statement/2019-10-11/secretary-generals-remarks-c40-world-mayors-summit>. Accessed October 2022.

<sup>11</sup> For another survey of paradiplomatic networks that includes some city networks and other subnational networks (e.g., gubernatorial networks) see Tavares, 2016: 15-26.

Some city networks are based on language, region, or even religion. For example, in the Arab and Muslim world, the Arab Towns Organization has more than six hundred member cities across the Arabic-speaking world.<sup>12</sup> The Organization of Islamic Capitals and (est. 1978) now holds consultive status with three UN agencies.<sup>13</sup> The Asian Cities Climate Change Resilience Network facilitates Asian cities' entry into global environmental governance.<sup>14</sup> In Japan, the Council of Local Authorities for International Relations, often known by the acronym CLAIR, is a government-affiliated foundation that manages, supports, and encourages local government international exchange in the form of sister-city relationships and international conferences on local government issues.<sup>15</sup> In the Spanish and Portuguese-speaking world, the Union of Ibero-American Capital Cities was formed in 1982.<sup>16</sup> 'Eurocities', formed in 1986, is the leading European city network; it brings together over two-hundred cities on the continent.<sup>17</sup> The 'Eurotowns' network (est. 1991) is also specific to European cities; however it is composed of just twenty-eight towns and is exclusive to cities with populations between 50,000 and 250,000.<sup>18</sup>

Some city networks focused on specific policies. Environmental issues are a common theme of cities' networking practice. For example, the 'Association of Cities and Regions for Sustainable Resource Management', as the organisation's title indicates, is concerned with sustainability.<sup>19</sup> The 'Cities For Mobility' network focuses on developing sustainable and human-centred transportation policies and technologies.<sup>20</sup> The 'Kitakyushu Initiative' is a network named after the eponymous Japanese city that is recognised as a trailblazer in urban air and water pollution

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<sup>12</sup> Official website. <http://www.arabtowns.org>.

<sup>13</sup> Official website. <https://www.oicc.org/en/>.

<sup>14</sup> Official website. <https://www.acccrn.net>.

<sup>15</sup> Official website. <https://www.clair.or.jp/e/clair/>.

<sup>16</sup> Official website. <https://ciudadesiberoamericanas.org>.

<sup>17</sup> Official website. <https://eurocities.eu/about-us/>.

<sup>18</sup> Official website. <https://www.eurotowns.org/>.

<sup>19</sup> Official website. <https://acrplus.org/en/>.

<sup>20</sup> Official website. <https://www.cities-for-mobility.net>.



clean-up efforts; thus, the network focuses on pollution clean-up.<sup>21</sup> ICLEI, is one of the largest sustainability-focused networks in which cities participate; more than 2500 local and regional governments from more than one hundred countries are members.<sup>22</sup> All these international city networks constitute their member cities as actors in global environmental governance.

Peace is also a theme in city diplomacy networking practices. For example, member cities of the Mayors for Peace organisation advocate and cooperate for nuclear abolition.<sup>23</sup> The International Association of Peace Messenger Cities, which emerged from deliberation at the UN, seeks ‘to recognize and encourage the role and responsibility cities have in creating a culture of peace’.<sup>24</sup> Cities that participate in these networks align themselves with global society’s norm prohibiting wars of aggression.

Postcolonial ties, common interests in cultural development or cultural preservation, and energy issues are also themes of international city networks. For instance, the Commonwealth Local Government Forum (est. 1994) promotes and strengthens local democratic government throughout the Commonwealth.<sup>25</sup> The Organization of World Heritage Cities (est. 1993) shares best practices on urban heritage preservation.<sup>26</sup> The World Craft Council contains a subnetwork of ‘Craft Cities’ in order to promote cities’ creative tourism related to pottery, woodwork, weaving, etc.<sup>27</sup> The Lighting Urban Community International, or LUCI (est. 2002) is an international city network spearheaded by Lyon, France; it deals with lighting policy and lighting technology within urban environments.<sup>28</sup> The World Cities Energy Partnership was first proposed in Houston, Texas

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<sup>21</sup> Official website. <https://kitakyushu.iges.or.jp/about/index.html>.

<sup>22</sup> Official website. [https://iclei.org/about\\_iclei\\_2/](https://iclei.org/about_iclei_2/).

<sup>23</sup> Official website. <http://www.mayorsforpeace.org/en/>.

<sup>24</sup> Official website. <http://www.iapmc.org/About-Us>.

<sup>25</sup> Official website. <https://www.clgf.org.uk>.

<sup>26</sup> Official website. <https://www.ovpm.org>.

<sup>27</sup> As of January 2023, there are no US cities. For an overview on the World Craft Council’s official website, see <https://www.wccinternational.org/craft-cities>.

<sup>28</sup> As of January 2023, there are no US cities. Official website. <https://www.luciassociation.org/about-luci/>.

in 1993; this network facilitates cooperation between cities in which the energy sector is a key local industry.<sup>29</sup>

In the early twenty-first century, multiple international city networks focusing on human rights have been formed. For example, the International Cities of Refuge Network (est. 2006) was formed to create safe havens for writers and artists threatened by political persecution in their home countries.<sup>30</sup> The Human Rights Cities Network shares best practices to help cities advance and promote human rights at the urban level.<sup>31</sup> The European Union, the Council of European Municipalities and Regions, and individual cities created the ‘INCLUCITIES’ (a portmanteau of the words ‘inclusive’ and ‘cities’) to share best practices and fund small and medium-sized cities’ policies to integrate displaced refugee and migrant populations into urban life.<sup>32</sup> Similarly, the ‘Strong Cities Network’ (est. 2015), seeks to bring cities together to share best practices to confront and prevent hate, polarisation, and extremism.<sup>33</sup> Participation in these city networks constructs cities as global actors because this form of networking inserts cities into the discourse of the global human rights issue.

Existing IOs can also form new city networks. For the cities that participate in these types of networks, additional social constructivist impact on the formation of cities as global actors occurs because of the higher levels of legitimacy that IOs hold in global society. For instance, the ‘OECD Champion Mayors for Inclusive Growth’ (est. 2016) was created to develop policies that combat and prevent urban economic inequality.<sup>34</sup> Additionally, in 2019, the Asian Pacific Mayors Academy was formed in cooperation with the United Nations University, UN-Habitat, and the

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<sup>29</sup> Houston is currently the only US city member to this network. Official website. <https://energycities.org>.

<sup>30</sup> Ithaca, New York and Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania are two US cities that participate. Official website. <https://www.icorn.org>.

<sup>31</sup> Official website. <https://humanrightscities.net/>

<sup>32</sup> Official website. <https://www.inclucities.eu/>.

<sup>33</sup> Official website. <https://strongcitiesnetwork.org/en/>.

<sup>34</sup> Official website. <http://www.oecd-inclusive.com/champion-mayors/>.

United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific.<sup>35</sup> Because this academy was created by leading institutions of global society, the mayors, as representatives of their cities, gain recognition for their cities as global actors. Lastly, the Geneva Cities Hub was formed in early 2022 with the support of the City and Canton of Geneva and the Swiss Confederation to support discussions of urban issues between cities, city networks, and the multitude of international organisations and diplomatic missions that are based in Geneva.<sup>36</sup> Because of Geneva's identity and geography as one of the major centres of global society, cities that participate in the programs organised by the Geneva Cities Hub empower cities as global actors in their own right.

As the above survey shows, a multitude of networks exists, all of which affect cities' identity in global society. To further demonstrate how social process occurs, the next section considers Seattle's city diplomacy networking practice. Specifically, the following analysis considers Seattle's participation in the C40 Cities Climate Leadership Group, the Resilient Cities Network, and the UNESCO Creative Cities Network. Additionally, it considers Seattle's networking via sister cities and sister ports relationships.

### **The Case of Seattle**

Seattle's constructs and maintains its identity a global actor through its networking practices. Although Seattle can obtain knowledge and donations from these networks, epistemological and material effects are second to considerations of identity and values in the following analysis.<sup>37</sup> Preference is given to these concerns because, prior to Seattle's participation

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<sup>35</sup> Official website. <https://www.asiapacificmayorsacademy.org/>.

<sup>36</sup> Official website. <https://www.genevacitieshub.org/en/>.

<sup>37</sup> For instance, Seattle's C40 network connections helped the city obtain knowledge and material benefits targeted at Covid-19. It was reported that because of Seattle's relations with other cities in the C40, former Mayor Jenny Durkan was able to work with the South Korean consulate and city government officials in Seoul to learn about

in these city networks, Seattle already possessed designated city government departments focusing on issues like the environment and culture. This is important because it implies that the motivation for networking is not to manage local environment or cultural affairs. In other words, because Seattle created its Office of Sustainability and Environment in 2000, prior to the formation of C40 and Resilient Cities, and because Seattle formed its Office of Arts & Culture in 2000, prior to the formation of the UNESCO Creative Cities Network, it is evident that Seattle is not reliant on international city networks to obtain knowledge in these fields.<sup>38</sup> Rather, joining international city networks is an opportunity for Seattle to build its global actor narrative. To further elaborate on this globally oriented symbolic practice, Seattle's participation in the C40 Cities Climate Leadership Group, the 100 Resilient Cities program, the UNESCO Creative Cities Network, and sister city and sister port networks are considered.

#### *C40 Cities Climate Leadership Group*

Seattle's participation in the C40 Cities Climate Leadership Group (C40) constructs the city as an actor in global society, specifically in the realm of climate change governance. Moreover, in talking points prepared for the mayor of Seattle's participation panel at the 2019 C40 Mayor's Summit in Copenhagen, it is evident that Seattle operates with the assumption that the city has agency to socially construct itself and reality. These prepared remarks stated, 'In Seattle, we don't

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testing procedure and procure testing supplies which ultimately helped Seattle to become one of the first cities in the US to provide free citywide testing. Anderson, James, and Jorrit de Jong. "A Nationwide Response from an Unusual Place: City Halls." *The Hill*, 10 July 2020. Available at [thehill.com/opinion/white-house/506786-a-nationwide-response-from-an-unusual-place-city-halls/](https://thehill.com/opinion/white-house/506786-a-nationwide-response-from-an-unusual-place-city-halls/). Accessed 2 Oct. 2022.

<sup>38</sup> In fact, in 1955 Seattle already possessed a Municipal Arts Commission which advocated local cultural industries. For a history of the Office of Arts & Culture, see Becker, Peter. 2013. 'Seattle Arts Commission/Office of Arts & Culture' *historylink.org*. Essay 9684. Available at <https://www.historylink.org/File/9684>.

For the resolution that created the Office of Sustainability and Environment, which mentions some of the office's precedent forms, see Resolution 120121. SMA.

wait for others to tell us what our future will look like – we create it.’<sup>39</sup> In this case, Seattle used the C40 network to voice its progressive and proactive stance regarding global issues. Thus, although the C40 at the surface level is oriented towards climate issues, Seattle uses this network as a communication platform to declare to other actors that Seattle possesses its own agency in global society.

Seattle joined the C40 in 2006, and the city participates in multiple thematic subnetworks. These subnetworks include the Clean Energy Network, Private Building Efficiency Network, Building Efficiency Network, Zero Emission Vehicles Network, Public Transit Network, Land Use Planning Network, Food Systems Network, and the Inclusive Climate Action Forum.<sup>40</sup> Even though not many practical benefits emerge from participating in these subnetworks, Seattle’s involvement in these subnetworks feeds into its narrative as an actor in global environmental governance. At the beginning of 2023, ninety-six cities worldwide participate in the C40, fourteen of which are US cities.<sup>41</sup> Thus, by participating in the network, Seattle joins a somewhat exclusive club of other cities. This exclusiveness contributes to Seattle’s narrative of global prestigiousness.

Although Seattle also participates in other environmentally focused city networks. like, the Global Compact of Mayors, the Mayors National Climate Action Agenda, and the Carbon Neutral Cities Alliance, which socially construct the city as a global actor in the environmental sphere, because C40 is acknowledged by a broad range of global actors, the C40 is more impactful to the development and maintenance of Seattle’s global actor identity.<sup>42</sup> This is because, in addition to cities themselves, agencies of the UN and heads of state perceive C40 as important in global

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<sup>39</sup>Seattle Mayor’s Office. ‘Key Messages: C40 Panel, “Going Further Fast: What Needs to Happen to Deliver the Future We Want?”’ October 10, 2019. Obtained by Public Record Request.

<sup>40</sup> For Seattle’s profile page on the C40’s official website, see <https://www.c40.org/cities/seattle/>.

<sup>41</sup> In addition to Seattle, these are Austin, Boston, Chicago, Houston, Los Angeles, Miami, New Orleans, New York City, Philadelphia, Phoenix, Portland, San Francisco, and Washington, DC.

<sup>42</sup> These other networks in which Seattle participates are indicated in the municipal resolution that affirmed Seattle’s commitment to the Paris Climate Agreement. Resolution 31757. SMA.

climate issues. For example, at a 2009 conference in Seoul in which Seattle presented its urban forestry policy, remarks were also given by the UN-Habitat executive director and some sessions of the conference were even attended by the Prime Minister of South Korea.<sup>43</sup> When Seattle interacted with these other actors in global society, Seattle also normalised itself as a global actor.

Finally, by participating in the C40, Seattle has the opportunity to obtain awards that can be narrativized as evidence of Seattle's global prowess. For example, at the 2022 C40 World Mayor's Conference in Buenos Aires, C40 announced that Seattle earned an award in the 'Building a Climate Movement' category for the city's local 'Green New Deal' policy. After being awarded this particular accolade, an announcement from Seattle's Office of the Mayor proudly declared that the award granted Seattle 'global recognition.'<sup>44</sup> As symbols of distinction, the receipt of these C40 rewards and the way Seattle reacted to these awards, strengthened the city's global actor narrative.

In sum, Seattle's networking practice conducted with the C40 preserves, strengthens, and communicates Seattle's identity as global actor in sustainable and environmental spheres. Similar patterns are evident in Seattle's city diplomacy networking in the Rockefeller Foundation's '100 Resilient Cities' program.

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<sup>43</sup> For the transcript of the UN-Habitat executive director's remarks see 'Statement By Ms. Anna Tibaijuka Under Secretary General & Executive Director at the 3rd C40 Large Cities Climate Summit Plenary Session 1: Climate Change and the Economic Crisis: The Financial Benefits Associated with Greenhouse Gas Reduction' available at <https://mirror.unhabitat.org/content.asp?cid=6704&catid=649&typeid=8>. Accessed December 2022. For a reference to Seattle's presentation at the conference, see Na, Hang Ryeol; Heisler, Gordon M. 2009. 'C40 Large cities climate summit 2009 -- from Seoul to Copenhagen' *International Association for Urban Climate*. 34: 2-5.

<sup>44</sup> Housen, Jamie. 2022. 'Seattle's Green New Deal Wins Global Recognition and Award at the C40 World Mayors Summit'. Available at <https://harrell.seattle.gov/2022/10/25/seattles-green-new-deal-wins-global-recognition-and-award-at-the-c40-world-mayors-summit/>

*The Rockefeller Foundation's '100 Resilient Cities' Program*

Seattle's previous participation in the Rockefeller Foundation's '100 Resilient Cities' (100RC) programme contributed to its narrative as a global actor.<sup>45</sup> Because the Rockefeller Foundation is globally recognised, because philanthropies are recognised as actors in global society, and because the idea of resilience is directly related to global climate change (e.g. preparing for and rebuilding after hurricanes or heatwaves), Seattle's networking in the 100 Resilient Cities programme and its successor organisation can be interpreted as a practice that further entrenched Seattle into the sphere of global environmental governance.

Although short-lived, the 100RC was a network through which Seattle learned about innovative urban resiliency policies and obtain funding to hire a staff member who focused exclusively on resiliency issues. 100RC was founded in 2013 and funded one hundred cities' local resiliency efforts (including the salaries for full-time city resilience officers). 100RC officially terminated on 31 July 2019.<sup>46</sup> However, some cities and advocates of the original network cooperated to create a successor organisation known as the Resilient Cities Network, which was formed and officially launched in 2020.<sup>47</sup> Seattle joined 100RC in 2016 and upon inclusion, the city promptly appointed a 'chief resiliency officer', a requirement to join the prestigious group.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> For a press release about the centennial celebrations of the Rockefeller Foundation during which this city network was launched, see Rockefeller Foundation. 2012. 'The Rockefeller Foundation Launches Global Centennial Initiative to Identify and Pursue Innovative Solutions for the Next 100 Years'. Available at <https://www.rockefellerfoundation.org/news/the-rockefeller-foundation-launches-global-centennial-initiative-to-identify-and-pursue-innovative-solutions-for-the-next-100-years/>. Accessed July 2022.

<sup>46</sup> For a description of the programme on the Rockefeller Foundation's official website, see <https://www.rockefellerfoundation.org/100-resilient-cities/>. Accessed July 2022.

<sup>47</sup> For a brief history of the Resilient Cities Network, see its Official website at <https://resilientcitiesnetwork.org/our-story/>. Accessed July 2022.

<sup>48</sup> Jessica Finn Coven, who was already the director of the city's Office of Sustainability and Environment, was appointed as the Chief Resilience Officer. Connelly, Joel. 2017. 'Seattle now has its first 'chief resilience officer' *Seattle Post Intelligencer*. March 9, 2017; Rockefeller Foundation. 2016. '100 Resilient Cities And The Rockefeller Foundation Announce 37 New Member Cities, Reaching 100 City Milestone For Its Global Network'. Available at <https://www.rockefellerfoundation.org/news/100-resilient-cities-rockefeller-foundation-announce-37-new-member-cities-reaching-100-city-milestone-global-network/>.

Although previous research on 100RC argued that ‘100RC is not a value-neutral actor, it is a political actor whose worldviews are channelled into active political strategies through its different governance tools’, Seattle was still able to use the organisation towards its own political narrative goals.<sup>49</sup>

Furthermore, Seattle used the 100RC to tell its urban narrative. For example, in Seattle’s ‘resilience plan’ (a requirement for 100RC membership) titled ‘Seattle-Future City: Resilience Roadmap’, Seattle claimed that the city is ‘the epicenter for much of the global innovation that is happening today’.<sup>50</sup> Additionally, during media interviews about the network, Seattle boasted that the city has ‘some of the most ambitious climate targets anywhere in the world’.<sup>51</sup> Taken together, these statements illustrate how membership in the 100RC itself and Seattle’s use of 100RC as a platform promulgated the city’s importance in global society. Although 100RC is now defunct, Seattle continues to network with 100RC’s successor organisation because it can aid in sustaining Seattle’s narratives and because Seattle’s identity is such that is considered appropriate or normal to participate in transnational networks about global issues that affect Seattle.

But the social construction of Seattle as a global actor does not only occur within initiatives of well-known global philanthropies. Seattle’s social construction as a global actor also occurs by participating in networks spearheaded by UN agencies.

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<sup>49</sup> Nielsen 2020.

<sup>50</sup> City of Seattle 2019. ‘Seattle-Future City: Resilience Roadmap’: 10. Available at [https://durkan.seattle.gov/wp-content/uploads/sites/9/2019/08/Resilient-Seattle\\_ONLINE.pdf](https://durkan.seattle.gov/wp-content/uploads/sites/9/2019/08/Resilient-Seattle_ONLINE.pdf).

<sup>51</sup> This comment was made by Seattle’s aforementioned Chief Resiliency Office. PBS 2017. ‘New to the Pack, Seattle Sets Aggressive Targets for Climate Resilience’. Available at <https://www.pbs.org/wnet/peril-and-promise/2017/08/new-pack-seattle-sets-aggressive-targets-climate-resilience/>.



### *UNESCO Creative Cities Network*

Seattle's involvement in the UNESCO Creative Cities Network (UCCN) socially constructs Seattle as a global actor. This is related to the fact that the idea of the creative city is popular in early twenty-first-century urban planning discourse and urban development policies.<sup>52</sup> While the idea of the creative city emerged from scholarly considerations of cultural economics, the creative industry, and evidence suggesting the effectiveness of museum and artistic development for the growth of a city's economy (e.g. job creation and tourist promotion), the idea of the creative city is not just an economic idea or a market strategy. Rather, the idea of the creative city can also be understood as social identity or a narrative role to which cities aspire. In other words, cities want to *be* a creative city because creativity is valued in global society. For example, the UN embraced the creative economy concept and has created a 'World Creativity and Innovation Day'.<sup>53</sup> Thus, for the case of Seattle, UCCN is yet another piece of how Seattle normalises its participation in global society.

In 2004, UNESCO formally adopted the idea of the creative city and created the UCCN with the intention 'to promote cooperation with and among cities that have identified creativity as a strategic factor for sustainable urban development.'<sup>54</sup> Here, sustainability and creativity are interlinked. Because of this connection of concepts, cities that join the UCCN simultaneously develop globally oriented urban narratives that touch upon both thematic areas and which support cities' claims to being a global actor. At the beginning of 2023, there are almost three hundred

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<sup>52</sup> For an overview of the idea, see Landry, Charles. 2008. *The Creative City: A Toolkit for Urban Innovators*. Routledge.

<sup>53</sup> For an overview of the UN's World Creativity and Innovation Day and how the UN views the role of creativity and culture in solving global issues and advancing human development, see UN, n.d. 'World Creativity and Innovation Day'. *United Nations*. Available at <https://www.un.org/en/observances/creativity-and-innovation-day>. Accessed May 2023.

<sup>54</sup> The official UNESCO webpage for the UCCN can be viewed at <https://en.unesco.org/creative-cities/>. Accessed May 2023.

cities within UCCN across the creative fields of literature, design, crafts and folk art, film, music, media arts, and gastronomy. Although Seattle joined the UCCN as a city of literature, participation in the network does more than publicise authors living and working in Seattle or promote Seattle's local publishing houses.

Seattle wants to be globally recognised as a creative city (and by extension a global actor) and attract the capital allegedly connected to this city identity. A 2014 Seattle city council resolution which endorsed the city's participation in the UCCN is clear on these two points; the resolution stated that joining the network 'will create artistic and economic opportunities for the residents of Seattle, as well as opportunities for the world to recognize Seattle's significant contributions to literature'.<sup>55</sup> Here, it is evident that Seattle perceives UCCN as a network that is both a tool for urban development and a platform to communicate and sustain urban narratives of creativity and innovation. But Seattle's journey to join the UCCN was not a straightforward process.

Seattle needed two attempts to be recognised by UNESCO. After submitting and failing to be selected in the 2015 round of UCCN expansion, Seattle joined the UCCN as a City of Literature in 2017.<sup>56</sup> Upon being accepted, Seattle further embedded itself as an actor in global society. As of early 2023, forty-three cities worldwide are designated as cities of literature; Iowa City is the only other US city with the designation. Thus, this instantiation of Seattle's globally oriented networking practice distinguishes Seattle from other cities in the US, which aids Seattle in achieving a higher status in its domestic inter-urban competition. But more importantly, because

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<sup>55</sup> Resolution 31500. SMA.

<sup>56</sup> Gwinn, Mary Ann. 2015. 'Seattle misses out on City of Literature bid'. *The Seattle Times*. December 11, 2015; Macdonald, Moira. 2017. 'UNESCO declares Seattle a City of Literature' *The Seattle Times*. October 31, 2017.

UNESCO is a UN agency and the UN is a core institution of global society, participating in the UCCN socially constructs Seattle as a global actor.

Although an array of local Seattle actors is involved with the UCCN, taken together, their efforts advance Seattle's publicity and recognition in global society. A local voluntary organisation manages Seattle's participation in UCCN, and the city government and local writers are also involved.<sup>57</sup> These different individuals represent Seattle at multiple transnational conferences. Since joining the UCCN, Seattle has been represented at conferences in Kraków (2018), Fabriano (2019), and a 2021 digital conference.<sup>58</sup> In fact, even before Seattle's formal acceptance by UNESCO, the city participated in the 2014 UCCN conference in Chengdu.<sup>59</sup> The practice of networking at these conferences, during which UN officials and other cities' representatives interact with, sustains Seattle as a globally active polity.

Furthermore, Seattle's networking with the UCCN promotes the city's support for indigenous peoples. This helps Seattle align itself with the prevailing liberal discourse of global society which supports Seattle as a global actor. For example, Seattle's Office of Arts and Culture used the opportunity to publicise a local 'Indigenous Writers Exchange' program which connected Seattle with other indigenous literary communities around the world.<sup>60</sup> Seattle also organised events that celebrated indigenous voices (e.g., writing exchanges with Dunedin, Melbourne, and

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<sup>57</sup> The local effort to join the network was spearheaded by a group called 'Seattle City of Literature'. The organisation kindly furnished 'grey literature' which informs part of this analysis. The organisation's Official website can be found at <https://www.seattlecityoflit.org>. Accessed January 2023.

<sup>58</sup> The 2020 conference was cancelled because of Covid-19. Seattle, City of Literature 2020. 'Seattle Membership Monitoring Report: 2017-2020': 4. (Furnished by Seattle, City of Literature).

<sup>59</sup> Seattle City of Literature 2017. 'UNESCO Creative Cities Network 2017 Call for Applications': 5. Furnished by Seattle, City of Literature.

<sup>60</sup> Lindsay, Erika. 2017. 'UNESCO designates Seattle as City of Literature in Creative Cities Network'. Art Beat Blog: Office of Arts and Culture. Available at <https://artbeat.seattle.gov/2017/10/31/unesco-designates-seattle-as-city-of-literature-in-creative-cities-network/>. Accessed January 2023.

Christchurch-based authors). These exchanges narrativize Seattle as a cosmopolitan and liberal city which in turn narrativizes that city as a global actor.

Seattle's city diplomacy networking with the UCCN also sustains Seattle's narrative as a multicultural and important port city in the world, i.e., a major node in the global economy. In the mayoral letter of support required by UNESCO to apply to the UCCN, Mayor Edward B. Murray stated, 'We are home to hundreds of languages that can be heard in the halls of our schools. Our position, as a port city on the Pacific Rim, within a state bordering Canada, predisposes us to value different perspectives and welcome diverse voices. A book published in any language in the world can find an audience in Seattle.'<sup>61</sup> Thus, Seattle's participation in UCCN serves to narrativise itself as a significant player in the global network of ports and the multicultural-valuing global society.

Moreover, Seattle inserts itself into global society using the UCCN even in spite of the whimsy of the US state towards certain institutions of global society. Although the US National Commission for UNESCO supported Seattle's accession to the UCCN, the Trump Administration announced it would withdraw from UNESCO just months after US national authorities supported Seattle to join the UCCN.<sup>62</sup> Despite this, Seattle was unaffected and was not prohibited from participating in the UCCN. Instead, Seattle continues to participate in this UNESCO initiative even after the US's formal withdrawal. This shows that although the US national authorities held a minor gatekeeping role to join the UCCN (and a minor gatekeeping role for the extent to which Seattle can construct itself as a global actor), Seattle's array of city diplomacy practices build redundancy into the way Seattle embeds itself into global society. In this way, if one iteration of

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<sup>61</sup> Mayor Edward B. Murray to Creative Cities Committee. June 1, 2017. In Seattle City of Literature 2017. 'UNESCO Creative Cities Network 2017 Call for Applications'. Furnished by Seattle, City of Literature.

<sup>62</sup> Paul Mungai to UNESCO Creative Cities Network. June 14, 2017. In *ibid.* The Trump Administration filed its notice to withdraw in October 2017; the US officially withdrew on January 1, 2019. PBS. 2019. 'U.S. and Israel officially withdraw from UNESCO'. January 1, 2019. Available at <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/politics/u-s-and-israel-officially-withdraw-from-unesco>. Accessed February 2023.

city diplomacy fails or is interrupted, other practices ensure that Seattle's narrative and identity are sustained.

Finally, Seattle's application to join the UCCN indicates Seattle's desired narrative. According to the city's application, the literary ecosystem is a key element of Seattle's cultural identity.<sup>63</sup> Furthermore, Seattle portrayed itself as 'an international center of economic and cultural innovation', with many 'international cultural connections'.<sup>64</sup> In these examples, Seattle narrativised its literary, cultural, and economic assets as distinguishing features of the city and perpetuated claims that Seattle is an important cultural entity. These claims of importance contribute to Seattle's claim to its global actor identity.

#### *Seattle's Networking Via Sister Cities and Sister Ports*<sup>65</sup>

Seattle also conducts its city diplomacy networking practice via sister city and sister port relationships. But despite common understandings of sister cities as efforts to promote cultural understanding, aspects of global politics are observable. The following analysis elaborates on how these various global issues appear. But more importantly, the following analysis considers sister cities and sister ports as relationships that construct a status for cities as global actors.

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<sup>63</sup> Seattle, City of Literature, 2020: 6.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid: 3.

<sup>65</sup> Table 5.1 lists Seattle's sister cities and the years these relations were formed. Table 5.2 lists Seattle's sister ports and the years these connections were established. Information on Seattle's sister cities can be found on the following city government website. Available at <https://www.seattle.gov/oir/sister-cities/seattles-sister-cities>. Accessed February 2023. Information on Seattle's sister ports can be found on the Port of Seattle's official website. Available at <https://www.portseattle.org/community/global-connections>. Accessed February 2023.

Table 5.1: Seattle's Sister Cities

<u>Year Formed</u>	<u>City</u>	<u>Country/Territory</u>
1957	Kobe	Japan
1967	Bergan	Norway
1973	Tashkent	Uzbekistan
1977	Be'er Sheva	Israel
1980	Nantes	France
1981	Christchurch	New Zealand
1981	Mombasa	Kenya
1983	Chongqing	China
1984	Limbe	Cameroon
1986	Galway	Ireland
1986	Reykjavik	Iceland
1989	Daejeon	South Korea
1991	Cebu	Philippines
1991	Kaohsiung	Taiwan
1991	Pécs	Hungary
1991	Surabaya	Indonesia
1993	Gdynia	Poland
1993	Perugia	Italy
1996	Haiphong	Vietnam
1999	Sihanoukville	Cambodia

Although Seattle's sister-city relationships have previously aligned with US public diplomacy, the case is different today and Seattle continues to construct itself as a global actor distinct from the US state. For example, in the early years of the Seattle-Kobe sister city relationship, the United State Information Service and the State Department liaised with Seattle and the Seattle-Kobe relationship was viewed as having helped improve the U.S.'s image abroad.<sup>66</sup> However, nowadays, despite the 2022 appointment in the State Department's Office of Global Partnerships of a 'Special Representative for City and State Diplomacy', Seattle's sister cities are not managed by the State Department or other departments of the US federal government.<sup>67</sup> Furthermore, despite national-level Republicans' fear of Chinese spying via sister-city relations, Seattle continues to network with multiple Chinese cities.<sup>68</sup> This suggests that Seattle possesses agency to involve itself in global society in the way that it wishes, rather than defer to national foreign policy or restrain itself from directly engaging sensitive areas of global politics.

Regarding sensitive areas of global politics, sovereignty issues have previously appeared in Seattle's sister city relationships with Chongqing and Kaohsiung. In these cases, national identity complicated Seattle's efforts to construct its global actor status. Currently, both Chongqing and Kaohsiung are official sister cities of Seattle. Still, in the leadup to the establishment of these municipal relationships, local politicians and community members voiced their opposition. They expressed opinions about how this could detract from Seattle's global actor status and instead involve Seattle in issues of global politics that do not fall within the purview of urban governance. For example, individuals and groups opposed the city council resolution that would declare

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<sup>66</sup> Bush 1998: 57.

<sup>67</sup> In October 2022, former Los Angeles Deputy Mayor for International Affairs and former US Ambassador to ASEAN, Nina Hachigan, was appointed to this position. For her profile page on the State Department's website, see <https://www.state.gov/biographies/nina-hachigian/>. Accessed March 2023.

<sup>68</sup> Conklin, Audrey. 2021. 'Republican lawmakers warn China using US 'sister cities' to spy, gain influence'. *Fox Business*. March 11, 2021. Available at <https://www.foxbusiness.com/politics/blackburn-china-us-sister-cities-spy-gain-influence>.

Chongqing as Seattle's sister city, because they did not want Seattle to become identified as a communist-friendly city.<sup>69</sup> But, the city council resolution passed, and its text contains no hints of communism.<sup>70</sup> Rather, Seattle did not form relations with Chongqing to align itself with the Communist world. Rather, this was just another relationship created to advance Seattle's as a global actor.

The issue of sovereignty appeared again just three years after Seattle's relationship with Chongqing was declared. In 1986, the local debate to establish relations with Kaohsiung began. A local newspaper quoted former Councilmember Jeanette Williams as saying, 'No matter how you cut it, we are entangled in something we ought not to be into'.<sup>71</sup> In the same report, former director of Seattle's office of intergovernmental affairs, Bill Stafford, said that he hoped to avoid a 'big stew' (i.e., a state of agitation, anxiety, or fuss).<sup>72</sup> But despite the potential geopolitical quagmire and opposition from leading political figures in the city, Seattle formalised its sister city relationship with Kaohsiung. This indicates that Seattle is not deterred from participating in global society and conducting city diplomacy networking practices even in the face of controversy. Stated differently, Seattle's identity as a distinct global actor trumps its ontology as a city geographically bounded within a state that gives preferences to what country is legitimate.

However, even when controversies of sovereignty were absent, Seattle did not always seize opportunities for additional sister city network connections. For example, Seattle turned down offers to associate with Leros, Greece and Adelaide, Australia.<sup>73</sup> In this case, the decision was made based on practical concerns. i.e., a lack of funding and staffing. However, if money and

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<sup>69</sup> Comptroller File 291701. 1982. 'Petitions to the City Council in opposition to Resolution 26737, establishing a Sister-City relationship between the City of Chongqing, China and the City of Seattle' (sic). SMA.

<sup>70</sup> Resolution 26736. SMA

<sup>71</sup> Maier, Scott. 1986. 'Proposal for Seattle to play sister to city in Taiwan creates a stir'. *The Pacific Post Intelligencer*. March 19, 1986.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> Bush. 1998: 73.



human resources were more available, Seattle would likely pursue these additional sister city network connections because they would advance Seattle's reach as a global actor.

Finally, a brief discussion on Seattle's networking practices via sister port relationships further illustrates how these symbolic networking practices narrativizes Seattle as a global actor. As early as the 1960s, Seattle formed sister port relations. One early instance related to China's reopening to the world demonstrates how Seattle uses sister port relations to develop the city's status in the global marketplace.

In 1979, before Seattle formed sister-city relations with any Chinese city and before any other US city formed a sister-port relationship with a Chinese port, the Port of Seattle and the Port of Shanghai symbolically became the first pair of Sino-US friendship ports since the normalisation of relations between the US and China.<sup>74</sup> In this case, Seattle was eager to construct friendly ties and gain access to the Chinese market. Although Seattle obviously saw this as an opportunity for economic development, this can also be interpreted as an act that socially constructed Seattle as a global actor. This occurred because the sister port relationship with Shanghai extended the geographical reach of Seattle's global connections. Now, Seattle has sister port relations with over a dozen cities, and they all contribute to Seattle's narrative as a global actor. In sum, by building network connections and signifying the city's centrality in maritime trade, Seattle socially constructs its position of prominence in the world.

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<sup>74</sup> n.a. 1979. 'Seattle Has Made 'Friends' in Shanghai' *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*. September 26, 1979: D7.

Table 5.2: Seattle's Sister Ports

<u>Year</u>	<u>City</u>	<u>Territory/Country</u>
1967	Kobe	Japan
1967	Rotterdam	The Netherlands
1979	Shanghai	China
1981	Busan	South Korea
1990	Singapore	Singapore
1990	Miyagi Prefecture	Japan
1991	Fremantle	Australia
1993	Vostochny	Russia
1995	Qingdao	China
1995	Tanjung Perak	Indonesia
1997	Taichung	Taiwan
2007	Dalian	China
2011	Orissa	India

## Conclusion

As Pouliot and Cornut note regarding the influence of practice on social reality, ‘Practices generate effects that, put together, form the big picture of social life.’<sup>75</sup> Applied to Seattle’s city diplomacy networking practice, it can be said that these practices generate effects like how Seattle has become acknowledged a relevant actor in multiple global issue areas. Put together, these networking practices and Seattle’s other city diplomacy networking practices form the big picture of Seattle’s social life and existence in global society. Furthermore, as Seattle’s networked interactions with recognised global actors illustrates, Seattle’s city diplomacy is not limited to interactions with cities alone. Because of the longevity and geographical and thematic scope of city networking practices, cities seem to be predisposed to network transnationally, especially in the early twenty-first century. Thus, future research on cities’ globally oriented networking should continue to focus on this practice’s world-building and status-building effects. But in addition to less tangible practices like networks, tangible practices like the exchange of objects also construct cities’ identities and global awareness that cities act across national borders.

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<sup>75</sup> Pouliot and Cornut, 2015: 309.

## Chapter 5: Gifting

### **Abstract**

This chapter identifies and theorises the city diplomacy practice of gift-giving. The chapter explicates this hitherto ignored aspect of city diplomacy and thus opens a new strand of research. This chapter also presents a global survey of cities' gifting practices to demonstrate that Seattle is not alone in conducting this practice. Finally, the chapter's empirical analysis focuses on instances when Seattle gifted a totem pole, a salmon statue, bicentennial medals, a Boeing model aeroplane, and other unique items to other cities and actors in global society, including a head of state. The chapter concludes by iterating how the theorisation and survey presented in this chapter allow future city diplomacy researchers opportunities to continue philosophical inquiry into the meaning of cities' transnational gift-giving and how this practice socially constructs cities as distinct global actors.

## On Gifting<sup>1</sup>

In interpersonal and diplomatic relations, there are many types of gifts; these include birthday gifts, anniversary gifts, Christmas gifts, and wedding gifts, to name just a few. Furthermore, there are many reasons to give gifts; these include friendship, charity, to elicit a future favour, or even simply to ‘show off’ wealth. As previous sociological consideration of the gift has noted, ‘the exchange of gifts is a primal phenomenon of sociality’.<sup>2</sup> Applied to this study of city diplomacy, as this chapter will show, gifting is also a part of cities’ sociality in global society.

As Mauss famously elucidated, the giving of gifts creates an obligation to reciprocate.<sup>3</sup> In this way, gifts sustain relationship and forces mutual acknowledgement of the giver and receiver’s social existence. Thus, when cities give gifts to other actors in global society, this action compels the receiver to reciprocate and acknowledge the cities’ symbolic gesture. Therefore, it can be said that city diplomatic gift-giving process constructs cities’ existence as actors in global society because it allows transnational relationships to persist and elicits recognition.

Moreover, the practice of gift-giving and the gifts themselves convey meaning. Gifts construct and communicate the giver’s identity and values through the meaning and symbolism of these objects. Also, the selection of recipients for these gifts, the reception of these objects, and the receivers’ perception and treatment of such objects affect the extent to which a city is viewed as a global actor. For example, when a city decides to give a gift to a recognised global actor, this act signals mutuality. When a receiving entity accepts a gift and displays it publicly, this act can

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<sup>1</sup> Marcel Mauss’ pioneering essay from 1925, *Essai sur le don*, undoubtedly informs much of this chapter. The English translation consulted was Mauss, Marcel. 1954. *The Gift; Forms and Functions of Exchange in Archaic Societies*. Glencoe, Ill: Free Press. But to avoid the temptation to deviate into sociology or a reinterpretation of Mauss, this chapter emphasises more recent scholarship from the realm of diplomatic studies that specifically deals with the gift.

<sup>2</sup> Berking, Helmuth. 1999. *Sociology of Giving*. London; Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage: 3.

<sup>3</sup> Mauss 1954.

also signal mutuality. In these hypothetical situations, a global actor's recognition vis-à-vis another global actor reconstitutes one another as global actors.

In recent years, the diplomatic gift has been considered from both scholarly and practitioner perspectives. This research emphasises that gifts are political and communicative acts. For instance, in Siever's study of the politicisation of gift-giving at the UN, he writes, 'rarely is a diplomatic gift merely a gift'; rather gifting is driven by the interest to obtain favour or communicate technological prowess.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, as the former Chief Protocol Officer of the US writes, 'Gifts are a language.'<sup>5</sup> Applied to city diplomacy, gifting is a type of communicative act driven by an interest to create favourable views of the city by the receiving entity. However, the implicit social constructivist ramifications of this acts need to be considered. By virtue of the fact that these gifts are given across national borders, gifts communicate to recipients and observers that cities are active globally, which by extension, communicates that cities are global actors.

Psychologists' understanding of gifts can also be applied to city diplomacy gifting practices. For example, Barry Schwartz showed how gift-giving constructs social identity and how philanthropy or charity in the US context 'have always been a source of prestige in the United States' and these acts of giving are 'an important mode of the public presentation of self'.<sup>6</sup> Thus, cities' acts of gifting can also be understood as a public presentation of themselves and serve as a source of prestige. This type of public presentation, in which cities used gifts to project prestige, was evident during the Covid-19 pandemic.

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<sup>4</sup> Sievers, L. 2021. 'Purposes, Politicisation and Pitfalls of Diplomatic Gift-giving to the United Nations', *The Hague Journal of Diplomacy*, Vol. 16 no.1: 110-119

<sup>5</sup> Marshall, Capricia Penavic. 2021. *Protocol: why diplomacy matters and how to make it work for you*. New York: Ecco. Chapter 10.

<sup>6</sup> Schwartz, Barry. 1967. 'The Social Psychology of the Gift.' *The American Journal of Sociology* vol. 73, no. 1: 1-11.

When cities gifted medical supplies during the Covid-19 pandemic, a practice that was sometimes referred to in the media as ‘mask diplomacy’, this symbolic act created prestige for the giver and presented the giving entity as possessing positive characteristics. In addition, these gift exchanges also constructed cities as actors involved in transnational health governance and global public health issues.<sup>7</sup> However, a fairly insignificant number of masks were donated in these cases.

<sup>8</sup> As such, these gifting acts were wholly symbolic and did not help prevent the virus's spread in the recipient cities. Rather, cities’ donation of masks and other medical supplies signalled feelings of solidarity, communicated the belief that cities can and should play a part in solving transnational issues like pandemics, and thus contributed to socially construction of cities as global actors or the narrative in which cities are benevolent problem-solvers, more capable than the state.

Recent diplomatic studies scholarships engage with gifting exchanges and their impact on political and social relationships are also applicable to the study of city diplomacy. For example, in 2021, *The Hague Journal of Diplomacy* published a forum on diplomatic gifts.<sup>9</sup> Entries in the forum considered Byzantine diplomatic gifts<sup>10</sup>, how the practice of gifting create colonial relationships (as was the case in nineteenth-century British gift-giving in Uganda)<sup>11</sup>, and the politics of gifts given to the US president in the twenty-first century.<sup>12</sup> Prevalent in all this scholarship is the underlying sentiment that gifting is often a political act with social consequences.

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<sup>7</sup> For a discussion of mask diplomacy and city diplomacy in cities from the US, China, and Taiwan, see Rudakowska and Simon, 2020.

<sup>8</sup> A large-n quantitative analysis of multiple cities around the world is not necessary here. But for one example, it was reported that Shenzhen donated 270,000 masks in March 2020 to its eight sister cities. If divided evenly this is only 33,750 masks to each city. China Daily 2020. ‘China’s Shenzhen to Donate 270,000 Masks to Sister Cities’, *China Daily*. March 19, 2020. Available at [www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/202003/19/WS5e72d8c6a3101282172805c2.html](http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/202003/19/WS5e72d8c6a3101282172805c2.html) Accessed January 2023.

<sup>9</sup> Kustermans, J. 2021a. ‘Diplomatic gifts: An introduction to the forum’ *The Hague Journal of Diplomacy*, Vol 16. no. 1, 105–109.

<sup>10</sup> Kustermans, J. 2021b. ‘Gift-giving in byzantine diplomacy.’ *The Hague Journal of Diplomacy*, Vol 16. no. 1. 155–165.

<sup>11</sup> Bennett 2021. ‘British material diplomacy in precolonial Uganda: The gift exchanges of John hanning speke’, 1860-1863. *The Hague Journal of Diplomacy*, vol 16. no. 1: 166–174.

<sup>12</sup> Brummell. 2021. ‘A gift for a president.’ *The Hague Journal of Diplomacy*, Vol 16. no. 1: 145–154.

There have also been recent attempts to bring Mauss into international studies research. This was most evident in a 2018 special issue of *The Journal of International Political Theory*. In this issue, gift-giving was defined as ‘the generous transfer of socially valued objects without any (legal or contractual) guarantee of reciprocation’.<sup>13</sup> However, the definition is unsuitable for understanding cities’ globally oriented gifting practice. Rather, in the case of cities’ diplomatic gifting practice, while generosity might be feigned or perceived in a donation of an ambulance, these gifts are not truly altruistic. Rather, a definition that uses this study’s social constructivist and practice theory framing is the following: cities’ gift-giving is the repeated practice in which a transfer of objects to various entities across national borders occurs and these gifting acts maintain social relationships with other actors in global society. To consider empirical examples of how this city diplomacy gifting practice and its consequences occur, the next section presents a global survey of cities’ gifting practice to demonstrate the frequency and variety of this globally oriented practice of cities.

### A Global Survey of City Gifting Practices

Cities all around the world give gifts to other cities and representatives of other polities. While the majority of city diplomacy gifting practice is directed towards sister cities, the aristocracy and heads of state are also destinations for cities’ gifting diplomacy. While there is no

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<sup>13</sup> Heins, Volker M., Christine Unrau, and Kristine Avram. 2018. ‘Gift-Giving and Reciprocity in Global Society: Introducing Marcel Mauss in International Studies.’ *Journal of International Political Theory*, vol. 14, no. 2: 127. Entries in the issue pertain to reciprocity, hierarchy, and obligation within colonial contexts, international pharmaceutical markets, the assimilation of refugees, and hostage situations. Oates, J. G., & Grynaviski, E. 2018. ‘Reciprocity, hierarchy, and obligation in world politics: From Kula to Potlatch’. *Journal of International Political Theory*, vol. 14, no. 2: 145–164; Ramel, F. 2018. ‘How to understand international society differently: Mauss and the chains of reciprocity.’ *Journal of International Political Theory*, vol. 14, no. 2: 165–182; Mallard, G. 2018. ‘The gift as colonial ideology? Marcel Mauss and the solidarist colonial policy in the interwar era.’ *Journal of International Political Theory*, vol. 14, no. 2: 183–202; Guilbaud, A. 2018. ‘Generous corporations? A Maussian analysis of international drug donations’. *Journal of International Political Theory*, vol. 14, no. 2: 203–222. Heins, V. M., & Unrau, C. 2018. ‘Refugees welcome: Arrival gifts, reciprocity, and the integration of forced migrants.’ *Journal of International Political Theory*, vol. 14 no. 2: 223–239; Colonosmos, A. 2018. ‘Hostageship: What can we learn from Mauss?’ *Journal of International Political Theory*, vol. 14, no. 2: 240–256.



database of city diplomacy gifts, certain patterns emerged from this, first of its kind survey. For example, there are several similar objects gifted in particular cultural contexts. Also, photo books are a common item through which cities convey their visual narratives of progress and development. To begin this survey, city diplomacy gifts from the Chinese context are presented.

Taihu stones (太湖石)<sup>14</sup> are one of the more unique types of city diplomacy gifts discovered from this survey. In the last few decades, multiple Chinese cities have gifted Taihu stones to US cities. For example, in 1998, Suzhou gifted a 16-foot tall and 17-ton Taihu Stone to Portland, Oregon.<sup>15</sup> In 2003, Suzhou ‘donated’ a Taihu stone to Seattle.<sup>16</sup> More recently, in 2019, Wuxi gifted a Taihu Stone to San Antonio, Texas, which, interestingly, was specifically requested by San Antonio authorities.<sup>17</sup> These Taihu stones, because of their uniqueness and cultural importance, are a strategy through which the Chinese cities narrativise their prestigiousness to foreign audiences. These acts support the processes through which Chinese cities develop standing and awareness in global society.

Cities often gift paintings, ceramics, or other locally produced artist handicrafts. This promotes local industries and contributes to city’s local narratives. For example, in 2015, during Shenzhen’s signing of a memorandum of understanding with Seattle, Shenzhen gifted a long scroll

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<sup>14</sup> Taihu stones, along with all the other instances of gift-giving presented in this chapter, could be the topic of individual study. Moreover, more detailed description and interpretation of the circumstances of each gift (e.g. the planning, purchasing, and intended meaning) and the circumstances of reception (e.g. the positive, neutral, or negative sentiments held by receiving officials) could further elucidate the semiotics of city diplomacy gifts. However, as this is the first scholarly effort to outline this particular practice, depth is sacrificed for breadth.

<sup>15</sup> The stone is displayed in the Terry Schrunk Plaza across from city hall. The height and weight dimensions are listed on a nearby plaque. It is also mentioned that the mayor of Suzhou personally selected the rock. Based on the author’s site visit in July 2021.

<sup>16</sup> A plaque at the Chinese Seattle Garden where the stone is currently located used the word, ‘donated’. But this can be understood simply as an instance of Suzhou’s gifting practice. Author’s visit. June 2021.

<sup>17</sup> Zhou, May. 2019. “Enormous Taihu Rock Lands in San Antonio.” *China Daily*, November 8, 2019. Available at <https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/201911/08/WS5dc58d76a310cf3e355764d9.html>. Accessed May 2022.

painting that depicts the cityscape and iconic buildings of Shenzhen's downtown area.<sup>18</sup> In this instance of visual rhetoric, the city perpetuated its narrative as a modern city by depicting Shenzhen's skyscrapers on the city diplomacy gift. This is especially important because prior to Chinese reform and opening up, the city basically did not exist and is still relatively unknown outside of China. Thus, Shenzhen's gift constructed and communicated to foreign audiences the city's existence and identity as a modern city.

However, there can be inconsistencies in the type and quality of objects exchanged during city diplomacy gifting exchanges. For instance, in 2022, Shiojiri, Japan gifted hand-crafted lacquer wood products to Mishawaka, Wisconsin; in the reciprocal exchange, Mishawaka gifted Shiojiri a manufactured rug depicting Mishawaka's landmarks.<sup>19</sup> In this exchange, Shiojiri communicated and preserved its local artistic traditions. However, because Mishawaka does not have an equivalent artistic heritage, the city gifted an object with the city's landmarks to narrativise to foreign audiences the recent efforts to preserve architectural heritage in Milwaukee to develop these areas as cultural heritage sites.

Cities also give books. This type of city diplomacy gifting practice conveys local history and narratives to the receiving entities. For example, on multiple occasions, Seattle gave books introducing the city to various representatives like the vice mayor of Shenzhen, the Chinese Consul General in San Francisco, the Governor of the Wakayama Prefecture in Japan, and even officials from the United Arab Emirates' office of the prime minister.<sup>20</sup> Chicago also has gifted books to businesspeople, ambassadors, consul-generals, princes, princesses, kings, domestic and foreign

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<sup>18</sup> Viewable in Appendix A. 'Mayor Ed Murray meeting with Mayor Xu of Shenzhen China to sign memorandum of understanding' Object no. 194371. SMA.

<sup>19</sup> Peterson, Mark. 2022. 'Mishawaka and Shiojiri celebrate 50-year-anniversary as sister cities' *WNDU*. April 30, 2022. <https://www.wndu.com/2022/04/29/mishawaka-shiojiri-celebrate-50-year-anniversary-sister-cities/>.

<sup>20</sup> Unfortunately, the exact title of the book given by Seattle is not known. It is simply described as 'Seattle Intro Book'. Seattle Office of the Mayor. 2015. 'Intl Gifts to-from Dignitaries'. Obtained by Public Record Request.

politicians at various levels of government, visiting mayors and city officials from cities like Amman, Vancouver, and Kyiv.<sup>21</sup> Gifting books to representatives of various polities and companies communicates cities' local history and culture and serves to educate foreign audiences on the uniqueness and positive aspects of the giving city.

Cities also gift statues. These statues often depict local myths or legendary characters that have come to be associated with the city. Statues received by Ningbo, China, illustrate this.<sup>22</sup> Nottingham, England, gifted a statue of Robin Hood, thus further advancing the city's claim to this character, who is now central to the city's branding.<sup>23</sup> Florence, Italy, gifted a statue of Dante and a replica of Michelangelo's David. By laying municipal claim to these famous humanists, Florence sustained its global reputation as a city of arts and culture. Verona gifted a statue of Julia from the Shakespearean play. The statue and the story are now a major attraction for Verona and the city's tourism industry. Waitakere, New Zealand, gifted Māori-style sculptures which sustained how the city's values indigeneity.

As the following empirical analysis of Seattle will further show, US cities also give statues as gifts during their city diplomacy. Another example worth mentioning here is the 2019 gifting by Seattle to Nanjing, China the statue of a baseball player.<sup>24</sup> The statue depicts the St. Louis Cardinals baseball pitcher, Adam Wainwright. The statue's plaque states: 'This Statue is a gift from the City of Saint Louis, Missouri, USA, to the city of Nanjing, Jiangsu, PRC for the 40th Anniversary of the first Sino-American Sister-City relationship. Adam Wainwright, pitcher for the Saint Louis Cardinals baseball team, is seen here throwing a pitch toward Saint Louis. A second

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<sup>21</sup> 'Chicago Books' spreadsheet, June 21, 2006. Box 5-40, Folder 13. 'Book Lists' in Richard M. Daley Papers. University of Chicago Illinois Special Collections and University Archives.

<sup>22</sup> An article on the Ningbo Archive's official WeChat platform discusses these statues. Available at <https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/WYc8gUQTD6uHKkpW3RPWGA>. Accessed March 2023.

<sup>23</sup> For example, to use the city's transit services, one can load money onto a 'Robin Hood Card'.

<sup>24</sup> Viewable in Appendix A.

sculpture in Saint Louis, depicting a batter from Nanjing with the number 40 inscribed on his jersey, awaits Wainwright's pitch from across the sea.<sup>25</sup> In this case, St. Louis decided to use a local celebrity and sports team to narrativize itself abroad.<sup>26</sup> Although baseball is far less popular in China than basketball, because St. Louis currently lacks an NBA team, the city uses the Cardinals and the gift of a baseball statue to improve its image in China.

The geographical distribution, both origin and destination, of city diplomacy statues is widespread. For example, the City of Johannesburg gifted a statue of Nelson Mandela to Ramallah. Kyiv donated a statue of the Ukrainian poet Taras Shevchenko to Florence. Genoa, Italy, gifted a statue of Christopher Columbus to Columbus, Ohio. Kunming gifted a peacock statue to Denver. Berlin gifted a statue of the city's symbolic animal, a bear, to Los Angeles. In 2018, St. Paul, Minnesota gifted Changsha, China statues of 'Peanuts' cartoon characters with Hmong characteristics to honour the city's local minority population and develop a point of similarity between the two cities.<sup>27</sup> In sum, cities gift statues to preserve cities' 'claims to fame' and communicate them to foreign audiences. At the same time, like all gifts, statues create chains of obligation and imbue a physical object with meaning symbolising that cities are global actors not confined to their urban borders.

In addition to statues, city diplomacy gifts of other forms can also have large physical size. This is evident in the big peace bells that cities, especially Asian ones, have given. This type of gift is significant not only because of its size, but also because of the meaning associated with peace, especially in the context of peace as a universal goal for many actors in global politics. In

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<sup>25</sup> Based on the author's site visit in September 2023. For news coverage of this gift, see MLB 2019. 'Cardinals celebrate 40th anniversary of Nanjing/St. Louis "Sister City" program'. Press Release. October 14th, 2019. Available at <https://www.mlb.com/press-release/press-release-adam-wainwright-statue-in-nanjing-china>. Accessed April 2023.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Hagstrom, Aaron. 2018. 'Peanuts plays role in St. Paul-Changsha sister-city ties' *China Daily*. February 28, 2018. Available at <https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/201802/28/WS5a964edea3106e7dcc13ea10.html>

other words, because of the liberal values these peace bells symbolise, gifting these objects constructs cities as members of the global society in which the settlement of disputes by peaceful means is a fundamental operating principle. For example, Kobe, Japan gifted Seattle a peace bell for the 1962 World's Fair.<sup>28</sup> In 1988, Ulsan, South Korea, gifted a bell dubbed the 'Bell of Sisterhood' to Portland, Oregon.<sup>29</sup> Also, in 1988, Hiroshima gifted a peace bell to Hannover, Germany.<sup>30</sup> In sum, gifting these peace bells has a social constructivist impact. These gifts narrativise cities as peaceful actors with a role in preserving global peace.

In addition to metal or stone statues or bells, cities also gift wooden pavilions during their diplomatic engagement. For example, Taipei gifted a pavilion to Houston for the American Bicentennial.<sup>31</sup> In 1998, Daejeon, South Korea, gifted Seattle a pavilion.<sup>32</sup> In 2010, Gwangju, South Korea, gifted a pavilion to San Antonio.<sup>33</sup> In 2011, Fuzhou, China, gifted a pavilion to Tacoma, Washington; it is now located in the 'Tacoma Chinese Reconciliation Park.'<sup>34</sup> Because of their size and the fact that people can actually sit inside them, these wooden pavilion gifts transform urban space in foreign locales and prominently communicate the giving city's existence to foreign audiences. As such, these wooden pavilions symbolise cities' global activeness which in turn constructs them as global actors.

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<sup>28</sup> For a brief description of this bell, see <https://seattlecenter.com/explore/campus-grounds/gardens>. Accessed March 2022.

<sup>29</sup> The bell is located outside the Oregon Convention Center. Visited by the author in July 2021.

<sup>30</sup> For a brief English description of this bell on the Hannover city government website, see <https://www.hannover.de/en/Government-Service/State-Capital-Hannover/Twin-Cities-of-the-State-Capital-Hannover/Hiroshima>. Accessed March 2023.

<sup>31</sup> This pavilion is in Houston's Herman Park. For a description, on the Herman Park Conservatory's website, see <https://www.hermannpark.org/poi/150/>. Accessed March 2023.

<sup>32</sup> Discussed further in the following 'View from Seattle' section.

<sup>33</sup> For an introduction to this pavilion, see the following video published on the City of Antonio's Youtube account, available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=op5PBN3yk0M>. Accessed March 2023.

<sup>34</sup> For more information about the park which seeks to make amends for the expulsion of Chinese labourers from Tacoma in the late nineteenth century, see <https://tacomachinesepark.org>.

Finally, to offer additional historical and localised contextualisation to the following case study of Seattle, it is useful to emphasise how US cities have given and received gifts between the US and foreign actors for almost ninety years. For example, perhaps the earliest relationship sister city type of transnational municipal affiliation between a US city and a foreign city that involved an exchange of gifts occurred in 1934. That year, Toledo, Spain, gifted Toledo, Ohio, a medal.<sup>35</sup> Although this relationship is inactive today and is more coincidental than anything, by virtue of the two cities' shared name, this early example illustrates that the city diplomacy practice of gifting is not new to the twenty-first century. In another early example of this practice from almost seventy years ago, in 1957, Washington DC gifted the symbolic "key to the city" and awarded honorary citizenship to the mayor of The Hague.<sup>36</sup> A year later, in 1958, Osaka gifted two large lanterns to San Francisco, which San Francisco displayed for a time in the rotunda of its city hall.<sup>37</sup> Taken together, these early examples of city diplomacy gifting prior to the 1960s demonstrate the longevity of this practice and offer proof that US cities have conducted this practice for decades. But what cities do with received gifts from abroad also needs to be mentioned in this survey. Outlining the variety of cities' receptive practices regarding diplomatic gifts will give future studies of city diplomacy additional avenues of philosophical inquiry.

The way cities display received gifts also contributes to their social construction as global actors. The way in which cities publicly display gifted objects communicates and reproduces cities' narratives of global connectedness. For example, the Ningbo Municipal Archives held a temporary exhibition of the hundreds of gifts the city (and its constituent administrative districts) received

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<sup>35</sup> n.a. 1934. 'Spaniards Honor Toledo' *The New York Times*, June 2, 1934.

<sup>36</sup> This occurred at the 1957 International Union of Local Authorities congress' closing ceremony. Washington DC was represented by Robert E. McLaughlin, the president of Washington DC's Board of Commissioners. International Union of Local Authorities. 1958. *La Ville Et La Campagne; Les Problèmes Posés Par L'expansion Des Villes, L'encombrement De La Circulation Dans Le Centre Des Villes, Le Développement De La Vie Communautaire Dans Les Régions Rurales. Compte Rendu Du Congrès De La Haye, 12-18 Juin 1957*. La Haye: 98.

<sup>37</sup> "Gift for City" *San Francisco Chronicle*. August 20, 1958: 13.

over the past few decades.<sup>38</sup> Nanjing constructed a permanent exhibition space, the ‘Nanjing Sister Cities Exhibition Hall’, to display some of the gifts it has received. If these gifts were only kept in archival warehouses, never to see the light of day, Ningbo and Nanjing would miss out on opportunities to publicise their global connections. However, to contrast this practice to the case of Seattle, it appears that Seattle has not organised similar exhibitions or developed dedicated spaces to tell its story of global connectedness with gifts as the main character. As such, Seattle’s gifting practices are potentially missing an opportunity to convey itself as a global actor.

Nevertheless, over the decades, Seattle presented several different gifts to various foreign agents. Applying social constructivist theory and practice theory to these gifts, it can be said that these gifts and the practice of gifting itself sustain Seattle’s global relationships and perpetuate the city’s identity as a global actor. This study now turns to the specific gifting acts of Seattle.

### **The Case of Seattle**

The following analysis of Seattle’s city diplomacy gifting practice is the first prolonged discussion and analysis of this type of global engagement. As such, this effort makes empirical and methodological contributions to the scholarly literature on city diplomacy. To begin this discussion, sections of Seattle’s Municipal Charter related to gifts are discussed vis-à-vis other gifting practices and regulations thereof.

Article 1, Section 1 of The City of Seattle’s municipal charter contains provisions related to the city’s legal competence to receive gifts and donations. While the intent of this provision is to manage large financial or property donations that may be bequeathed to the city, the charter serves as an entry point to contextualise and consider Seattle’s globally oriented gifting practice.

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<sup>38</sup> 童丹阳 2021. ‘宁波对外交往礼品档案陈列展开展’ 宁波市档案局. Available at [https://www.nbdaj.gov.cn/yw/bddt/202106/t20210608\\_34419.shtml](https://www.nbdaj.gov.cn/yw/bddt/202106/t20210608_34419.shtml). Accessed January 2023.

Seattle's municipal charter states that the city 'may receive bequests, devices, gifts and donations of all kinds within and without the City for its own use and benefit, or in trust for charitable or other public purposes, and do all acts necessary to carry out the purposes of such gifts, bequests, devices and donations, with power to manage, sell, lease or otherwise dispose of the same. No gifts of munitions, military supplies, gas or police equipment shall be accepted by The City of Seattle without approval by ordinance.'<sup>39</sup> Interestingly, for this thesis' consideration of how Seattle engages globally, the charter does not stipulate any restrictions based on differences between the type or national origin of the entity that gives the gifts, i.e., foreign or local parties. Whereas there are strict rules in US campaign finance laws prohibiting the contribution of donations from foreign nationals, Seattle maintains no such restriction. Thus, Seattle can, and has on multiple occasions, accept gifts from foreign agents. For example, as early as 1957, Kobe gave a vase to Seattle.<sup>40</sup> This gift was given in the first year of the Seattle-Kobe sister city relationship and ignited the chain of obligation in which the two cities are compelled to reciprocate. Decades later, no new policies have been locally introduced to prevent or regulate what types of gifts Seattle can receive. Thus, as recently as 2014, Luoyang gifted peony flowers to Seattle.<sup>41</sup> In 2015, Chinese President Xi Jinping gave a scroll painting to Seattle during his visit to the city.<sup>42</sup> This openness facilitates Seattle's effectiveness as a global actor because it reflects the city's cosmopolitan values.

Although there are many examples when Seattle received gifts, the remainder of this chapter focuses on when Seattle gave gifts to foreign entities. The rest of this first attempt to analyse city diplomacy gifts looks at Seattle's 1961 gifting of a totem pole to Kobe, Japan, the city's 1975

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<sup>39</sup> For current and previous city charters of Seattle, see the official website of Seattle's Office of the City Clerk. Available at <https://www.seattle.gov/cityclerk/legislation-and-research/seattle-municipal-code-and-city-charter>. Accessed March 2023.

<sup>40</sup> 'Japanese "Sister City" Presents Vase to Seattle,' *The Seattle Daily Times*, 9/20/57, p.2. Cited in Bush 1998: 17.

<sup>41</sup> Diltz, Colin. 2014. 'Seattle-Luoyang Peony Festival' May 4, 2014. *Seattle Times*.

<sup>42</sup> Edward B. Murray to Xi Jinping. October 15, 2015. Obtained Public Record Request.



gifting of medals celebrating the bicentennial of the USA to multiple government and business officials and their spouses in Japan and the Philippines, the 1982 gifting of a model of a Boeing aeroplane to Chongqing, China, the 2005 gifting of a salmon statue to Gdynia, Poland, and the 2015 gifting of a decorative box to Chinese President Xi Jinping. This recent gifting to a head of state is discussed first to emphasise that this city diplomacy practice is not limited only to cities' relationships with other cities.

In 2015, Seattle commissioned a local indigenous artist to create a piece of art to give to the head of a visiting delegation from China. This bentwood box was given to Chinese President Xi Jinping in this case. The box featured symbols of the Pacific Northwest and Chinese elements: Guardian lions (Fu dogs).<sup>43</sup> This gift was significant to Seattle's social construction as a global actor. This gift contributed to friendly relations between Seattle and the head of state of a country that exports many products to the US, a great deal of which arrive at the Port of Seattle. As such, this seemingly insignificant box helped Seattle to maintain friendly relations with a powerful actor in global society. Having such a positive relationship with and being recognised China as an agent separate from the US federal government is an important way that Seattle constructs itself as an actor in global society. Furthermore, this box communicated Seattle's indigenous values and respect for Chinese culture. This multiculturalism also contributes to the development and recognition as a global actor. But Seattle's gifts are not only targeted to specific countries. Sometimes, Seattle's city diplomacy gifts construct Seattle as an actor in transnational environmental governance.

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<sup>43</sup> Walker, Richard Arlin. 2015. 'Eighth Generation Launches Line of Native-Designed Wool Blankets?' *ICT News*. September 23, 2015. Available at <https://ictnews.org/archive/eighth-generation-launches-line-of-native-designed-wool-blankets>. Accessed May 2023.

In 2005, Seattle gifted Gdynia, Poland, a statue titled ‘Coming Home’, of a salmon leaping through the air during their migratory travels.<sup>44</sup> By selecting this symbol of the natural ecosystem to be represented in its city diplomatic gift, Seattle signalled to the people of Gdynia that Seattle is a city endowed with a wealth of natural resources and is a steward of the environment. Concurrently, this statue can be interpreted as playing into Seattle’s narrative as an important node in the world. The statue’s title, ‘Coming Home’, refers not only to the migratory behaviour of salmon; it also narrativises Seattle as a central location within transnational flows of people and economic capital. Thus, although this statue might at first glance pay homage to the wilderness of the Pacific Northwest because this statue is a gift and because Seattle determines it appropriate to project its narrative as an environmental steward globally, this statue also signals and constructs Seattle’s identity as a global actor in protecting the world’s natural resources. But environmental stewardship is not the only feature present in Seattle’s history of city diplomatic statue gifting.

Seattle’s stewardship of Native American heritage, peoples, and iconography is also observable in its gifting practice. On two occasions, Seattle gifted totem poles to cities abroad. On the first occasion, Seattle gifted a totem pole in 1961 to Kobe, Japan. On the second occasion, in 1971, Seattle gifted a totem pole to Bergen, Norway, for Bergen’s 900<sup>th</sup> anniversary.<sup>45</sup> Before one of these cases is analysed more in-depth, a brief digression of US cities’ history of embracing Native American imagery contextualises these instances of Seattle’s globally oriented gifting practice.

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<sup>44</sup> ‘Seattle City Councilmember Jean Godden visits Gdynia, Poland to unveil a statue of leaping salmon given by Seattle to its Polish Sister City’, Image 153934 and Image 153932. SMA Digital Collection. (Titles for both images are the same).

<sup>45</sup> For a reference to the Bergen Totem Pole, see the following newspaper article. To avoid repetition, only the Kobe example is discussed below. ‘A totem pole for Bergen, Seattle’s little sister’ *Seattle Daily Times*. April 18, 1971: 38.

Seattle's incorporation of Native American heritage into its local and global identity narrative is somewhat unique to the storytelling and myth-making of other US cities. Thrush puts it this way, 'Certainly, Seattle contrasts with other West Coast cities such as Portland, where Indian imagery is rarely used and is overshadowed by the ghosts of Lewis and Clark and the Oregon Trail, or San Francisco or Los Angeles, with their mythology of the Spanish colonial past.'<sup>46</sup> Furthermore, Thrush notes that while other nearby US cities like Spokane, Tacoma, and Yakima also have Native American monikers, Seattle more fully embraces such characteristics. In fact, according to Thrush, this is 'central to its [Seattle's] self-fashioning'.<sup>47</sup> Moreover, in Seattle's gifting practice, Native American elements are, although perhaps not central, they are certainly prominent to Seattle's self-fashioning and presentation of itself abroad.

To contextualise Seattle's transnational gifting of totem poles, a brief history of this artform, as used in Seattle's urban development and boosterism, is useful. Totem poles, although not actually a traditional practice of the Coast Salish Native Americans who are local to the Seattle region, first began to be associated with Seattle after a now infamous campaign by local boosters at the turn of the twentieth century. This voyage to a village in Alaska resulted in removing and transporting a sixty-foot totem pole to Seattle's Pioneer Square.<sup>48</sup> Nowadays, totem poles are scattered throughout Seattle which can be viewed as part of how the city's stewards Native American heritage and honours the city's namesake. Over time, despite the somewhat problematic origins of the practice, the use of totem poles within Seattle was normalised. But the normalisation of this particular narrative theme within Seattle also appears in its city diplomacy.

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<sup>46</sup> Thrush, Coll. 2017.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> It can also be said that this totem pole was stolen. The act still provokes debate about cultural appropriation today. Wilma, David. 2000. 'Stolen totem pole unveiled in Seattle's Pioneer Square on October 18, 1899.' *HistoryLink*. Available at <https://www.historylink.org/File/2076>. Accessed March 2022.

In 1961, Seattle commissioned the Native American artist of the Lummi Tribe, Joseph Hillaire, to sculpt a thirty-five-foot totem pole; uniquely, it was carved on-site in its recipient city, Kobe, Japan.<sup>49</sup> For over half a century, from its installation to the beginning of the new millennium, the totem pole was displayed in a park adjacent to Kobe City Hall. But, in 2015, the totem pole began to rot and thus posed a risk of falling during typhoon season. This threat prompted Kobe to move the sculpture to the ‘Seattle Forest’ of the Kobe Municipal Arboretum. It was reported that Kobe officials placed the totem pole on its side in the traditional way that members of the Lummi Tribe would lay totem poles to rest.<sup>50</sup> In sum, the gift of the totem pole helps Seattle to align itself with the norms of global society. As the UN and its constituent units, especially UNESCO, are concerned with the protection of tangible and intangible cultural heritage, Seattle gifting of a totem pole told the story to foreign audiences that Seattle too protects cultural heritage, in this case, Native American heritage. However, national narratives have also appeared in instances of Seattle’s city diplomacy gifting practices.

During a 1975 delegation of Seattle officials who travelled to multiple Asian cities like Tokyo, Sapporo, Kobe, and Manila, Seattle’s representatives distributed dozens of gifts to various categories of recipients. On this occasion, four types of gifts were curated and given to mayors, governors, presidents of local chambers of commerce. Also, because of the gendered

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<sup>49</sup> Subsequently, Hillaire also carved totem poles for the 1962 World’s Fair which further solidified to international audiences Seattle’s identity as a city that is proud and protects its indigenous peoples. For multiple photos of the carving process itself in Kobe, the dedication ceremony, and the completed project after installation next to Kobe City Hall, and more about the life of the artist, see ‘Joseph Hillaire: Carver of the Kobe-Seattle Sister City Friendship Pole’ August 8, 2012. Seattle Art Museum. Available at <https://samblog.seattleartmuseum.org/2012/08/joseph-hillaire-carver-of-the-kobe-seattle-sister-city-friendship-pole/#:~:text=The%2035-foot-tall%20pole%20depicted%20in%20the%20image%20to,to%20the%20upcoming%201962%20World’s%20Fair%20in%20Seattle>. Accessed October 2022.

<sup>50</sup> Matsukawa, Lori. 2017. ‘Seattle totem pole laid to rest in Kobe, Japan’. *King 5 News*. March 15, 2017. Available at <https://www.king5.com/article/news/local/seattle/seattle-totem-pole-laid-to-rest-in-kobe-japan/281-422764354>. Accessed February 2023.

circumstances of the time and place, the wives of these various officials were also listed on gift distribution list. The four types of gifts Seattle gave during these transnational interactions are recorded as ‘plates’, ‘petrified wood’, ‘bicentennial medals’, and an object denoted as ‘black suns’.<sup>51</sup> Because of the nationalistic aspects of the bicentennial medals, the follow analysis of this 1975 instance of city diplomacy gifting focuses on these medal because they illustrate an important subplot in story of city diplomacy. This subplot is about the interplay between national and city identities.

During this 1975 trip, Seattle gave one-hundred-seventy-five (175) medals commemorating American independence's bicentennial. These gifting acts significantly expressed Seattle's identity as a US city. While Seattle often constructs and communicates its identities that reflect its internationalist values and status as a global actor, Seattle remains a US city, and sometimes, this aspect of Seattle's identity appears in the city's diplomatic interactions. Thus, Seattle's construction of its global actor identity does not imply a total disposal of national identity. Rather, depending on the time, place, and political context, these two identities are compatible with Seattle's interests. In this case, Seattle co-opted a significant landmark in the US nation-building project because Seattle was aware that, at the time, the receiving agents respected the wealth and values of the US. However, the serendipitous timing of the bicentennial and the conference cannot be overlooked. If this trip did not occur during the runup to the bicentennial celebrations, gifts that better reflected Seattle's own local narrative would likely have been curated. Nevertheless, in certain circumstances, embracing its nationality is beneficial to a city. But the nation-state is not the only entity that Seattle assimilates into its city diplomacy.

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<sup>51</sup> List of Gifts for Japan-American Conference (Sapporo, Japan 1975). 5287-02. Folder 85/7. SMA.

Seattle incorporates local companies into the narrative that it projects during its city diplomacy. This is evident in the way Seattle incorporates Boeing into its global actor narrative. For example, during a 1982 visit to Chongqing, Jeanette Williams, then president of the Seattle City Council President, gifted a model of a Boeing aeroplane to representatives of the Chinese city.<sup>52</sup> This act indicates how Seattle perceives itself and presents itself to the world. Although Boeing is not a municipally-owned enterprise, Seattle views the company as central to the city's identity and prosperousness. Because of the amount of Seattle residents who work for Boeing and the range of other local companies operating within the aeronautical industry, Seattle has been closely linked to Boeing and aeroplanes for more than a century. As a result of the interconnectedness and interdependency of city and company, these two entities' identities have become interlinked. Furthermore, because of Boeing's importance to global politics, Seattle incorporation of Boeing into its city diplomacy socially constructs Seattle as an important global actor.

Moreover, the gifting of the Boeing model aeroplane anticipated the even stronger identity narrative told by Seattle today, in which the city is a hub and actor in the global technology industry. For example, recently, tech firms like Microsoft and Amazon are two Seattle-area companies that feature in Seattle's local identity narratives, even prompting some commentators to grant the moniker 'Cloud City' to Seattle because of the prevalence of cloud computing technology companies in the city.<sup>53</sup> But, the extent to which this nickname sticks and whether Seattle incorporating these companies into its gifting practice (e.g. giving an architectural model of the

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<sup>52</sup> For a video of gifting to Chongqing, see the following news report which covered the trip to the city. KING-5 Magazine. 1982. 'Seattle-Chongqing Sister City Trip Video: A Billion People'. Moving Image Object no. 3231. SMA. Interestingly, Bush also indicated that Seattle gifted Kobe a model aeroplane. However, he failed to give details of the exchange or a source. Bush 1998: 170.

<sup>53</sup> Day, Matt. 2016. 'How Seattle became 'Cloud City': Amazon and Microsoft are leading a tech revolution' *The Seattle Times*. December 9, 2016.

Amazon headquarters) is too early to tell. However, based on more recent gifting examples, it appears that Seattle now prefers to use gifts to support local artists and the local creative community rather than large profitable corporations. But because there is no centralised record or annal of Seattle's gifting practice, drawing conclusions about continuity and change is difficult. Nevertheless, with a social constructivist and practice theory lens, Seattle's gifting practice seems to contribute to the city's development and recognition as a global actor. These gifts reflect values of global society, sustain global relationships, and project narratives of local development and prestige, all of which affect the extent to which Seattle can be viewed as an independent global political and economic actor.

## **Conclusion**

Over the decades, Seattle's city diplomacy gifting practices, which can be viewed as 'socially meaningful patterns of action' with 'socially generative' effects, constructed Seattle as a global actor.<sup>54</sup> By gifting objects to different types of agents across national borders in different political, geographical, and historical contexts, Seattle (re)generated across time and space its existence as a global actor. Moreover, Seattle's city diplomacy gifting practice distinguished the city from other US cities, thus constructing Seattle as a separate actor. By selecting and exchanging items that tell essential aspects of Seattle's values and identity, especially characteristics that do not appear in other US cities' city diplomacy practices (e.g. no other US city has ever gifted a totem pole or a Boeing model), Seattle constructed unique narrative. Totem poles told the story of Seattle's indigenous heritage, which has been incorporated into its city identity over the years. Bicentennial medals told the story of Seattle's pride in being an American city (at least when the city and

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<sup>54</sup> Constantinou, et al. 2021: 560.

nation's values, interests, or policies align). Boeing model aeroplanes told the story of how Seattle incorporates wealthy, world-famous, multi-national corporations into its local and global narrative. A salmon statue told the story of how Seattle views itself as a steward of the environment. An artistic box that combines indigenous and Chinese elements tells the story of how Seattle values multiculturalism and desires friendly relations with an increasingly important actor and market in the global political economy.

Future city diplomacy scholarship should continue to explore other cities' gifting practices and compare them to the case of Seattle presented here. Although only a few examples from the historical record were discovered and analysed here, as this is the first attempt to theorise and analyse this feature of city diplomacy, future studies should continue to probe into the meaning and impact of these gifts. But another aspect of city diplomacy closely related to gifting also needs to be explicated and empirically analysed. As the next chapter will show, cities can give entire gardens as gifts. But in fact, there are variations in the city diplomacy gardening practice. Thus, it is to this practice that this study now turns.



## Chapter 6: Gardening

### **Abstract**

This chapter identifies and theorises the city diplomacy practice of gardening and how this practice contributes to cities' social construction as global actors. The chapter begins by discussing how gardens have recently been identified as sites of IR and, therefore, are relevant to the visual turn in IR. Then, a global survey of cities' city diplomacy gardens is conducted. Although this survey shows that most of these gardens emerge from sister-city relationships, these gardens are nevertheless relevant to broader themes in global politics. Finally, an analysis of Seattle's city diplomacy gardening practices conducted inside and outside the city is outlined and analysed. Additionally, the chapter makes connections to the practices of gifting and gardening. Finally, the chapter concludes by arguing that gardens must be researched further in future city diplomacy studies. This is because these gardens are more than urban cultural attractions; rather, they are stages where cities' narratives as global actors are performed.

## On Gardening<sup>1</sup>

Gardens matter to the study of global politics. In William A. Callahan's recent consideration of the politics of gardens and their role in diplomacy, war, and peace (he mainly analysed the Nanjing Massacre Memorial and the Yasukuni Shrine), he shows how gardens are more than a site; they can also be an institution, enactment, encounter, or even 'ideological sites of symbolic power'.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, gardening practices matter to constructing cities' local and global identity narratives (and therefore matter to the study of city diplomacy) because they establish cities' physical presence outside national borders. Whereas previously, urban parks were designed and built for reasons of health and leisure, contemporary gardening practices related to city diplomacy communicate and sustain cities' narratives of global engagement and multiculturalism, thus contributing to the development and recognition of cities as global actors. Phrased different, these city diplomacy parks are symbolic spaces, rather than just places of exercise or entertainment, that reflect values like cosmopolitanism. For example, when gardens express sentiments of friendship and peace or when gardens specifically honour a city's global relationship, these gardens physically manifest cities' interest in global issues.

Furthermore, these gardens are cultural spaces designed to develop a city's positive reputation with global audiences and the attraction of foreign capital. In one notable example from Sydney, Australia, a local government study referenced these themes when justifying the revitalisation of the city's Chinatown. A draft of a 2009 Sydney city council study stated that the purpose of improving the Chinatown area is to celebrate Chinese culture and recognise 'the area's

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<sup>1</sup> The word 'gardening' is selected to describe this practice to emphasise that these city diplomacy gardens require planning and maintenance. Moreover, the grammatical tense of this word aligns with the idea in this study that these practices continuously contribute to cities' identity as global actors in global society. This word form is also selected for reasons of consistency, i.e. to match the style of other chapter titles. But, in addition to the processes of gardening and the history of gardens, the following chapter also analyses these city diplomacy gardens as an object or a geographical space.

<sup>2</sup> Callahan, William A. 2020. *Sensible Politics: Visualizing International Relations*. Oxford University Press: 241.

importance to contributing to the vitality and diversity of Sydney as a global City.’<sup>3</sup> While Chinatowns, as places of commerce and dwelling, are somewhat different from parks and gardens, the point remains that cities view the creation of this type of space as necessary to achieve global recognition. As such, the following discussion argues that gardens like Japanese gardens or parks honouring sister-city relationships contribute to cities’ global actor narratives. But interestingly, cities’ gardening practices are not exclusive to their own urban territory or the nation-state in which they are geographically located. This demonstrates that cities are more than local actors. Rather, cities can act in foreign spaces and can cause effects in transnational spaces.

City diplomacy gardens constitute cities as global actors by establishing a sort of extraterritorial presence. For example, when Seattle contributed to the creation of ‘Seattle Forest’ in Kobe, Seattle contributed to spatial reconstruction of Kobe. Moreover, these gardens are mutually beneficial to the cities involved because they mutually recognise each other’s existence. Furthermore, these city diplomacy gardens serve as symbolic and spatial evidence of cities’ ‘internationalness’. As such, gardens are characters in cities’ global actor narrative. But these narratives can be controversial.

Existing commentary previously employed the term ‘garden diplomacy’ to describe instances where cultural diplomacy and gardens overlap and are employed for political purposes. For example, *The Economist* used the phrase ‘garden diplomacy’ and the concept of soft power to examine Japan and China’s use of gardens to promote their respective national images abroad.<sup>4</sup> *The Economist* used the long-planned, but recently definitively cancelled ‘National China Garden’ project, originally planned for the US’s National Arboretum, as a case of how gardens can be

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<sup>3</sup> City of Sydney, *Chinatown Public Domain Study*, consultation draft (Sydney: City of Sydney Council, 2009): 3. Cited in Acuto 2022.

<sup>4</sup> The Economist, 2014. ‘Chinese Garden Diplomacy’. *The Economist*. June 28, 2014: 27.

viewed as a form of propaganda.<sup>5</sup> In this case, Chinese national authorities were eager to insert the country's gardening culture and an important feature of their national identity into the US national space. At the same time, laying claim to ancient gardening techniques and gardens that pre-existed the establishment of the People's Republic of China could also contribute to the modern 'invention of China'.<sup>6</sup> Additionally, as one commentator correctly noted, this garden was desired because China 'wants a bold presence in Washington'.<sup>7</sup> From China's perspective, this garden space would improve public opinion about the country.

The logic of city diplomacy gardens is similar. But explicit desires for improved public opinion about a city are not the only explanation. Social constructivist explanations are also possible. To further demonstrate the geographic scope and recentness of this practice, which is currently omitted from city diplomacy literature, the following section presents a survey of gardens around the world that developed from cities' global relationships or involve global themes. In this survey, these gardens are viewed as adding to the ongoing process through which cities develop an identity as global actors.

## A Global Survey of City Gardening Practices

Many cities worldwide possess gardens symbolising global relationships and internationalist values. These gardens often pertain to sister cities, but cities have even created 'sister park' relations. For example, in 2015, a sister-park relationship was established between

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<sup>5</sup> Lillis, Katie Bo. 2022. 'CNN Exclusive: FBI investigation determined Chinese-made Huawei equipment could disrupt US nuclear arsenal communications'. *CNN*. July 25, 2022. Available at <https://edition.cnn.com/2022/07/23/politics/fbi-investigation-huawei-china-defense-department-communications-nuclear/index.html>.

<sup>6</sup> Hayton, Bill. 2020. *Invention of China*. Yale University Press.

<sup>7</sup> Higgins, Adrian. 2017. 'China wants a bold presence in Washington — so it's building a \$100 million garden'. *The Washington Post*. April 27, 2017. Available at [https://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/style/china-wants-a-bold-presence-in-washington--so-its-building-a-100-million-garden/2017/04/27/a334ef18-2b61-11e7-be51-b3fc6ff7faee\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/style/china-wants-a-bold-presence-in-washington--so-its-building-a-100-million-garden/2017/04/27/a334ef18-2b61-11e7-be51-b3fc6ff7faee_story.html).

Yanghu Wetland Park in Changsha, China, and Phalen Regional Park in St. Paul, Minnesota.<sup>8</sup> But cities create new garden spaces more often than they create some honorary relationship between parks. Instead, city diplomacy parks often develop parallel to sister-city relationships (but not always, as this survey will show).

The results of this inductivist survey identify a few main types of gardens apparent in cities' transnational gardening practices. These include Japanese-style gardens resulting from cities' relations with Japanese cities, Chinese-style gardens resulting from cities' relations with Chinese cities, and gardens that either honour a specific sister city relationship or the entirety of a city's sister city relations in one centralised location. Recently, cities have invited foreign cities to design garden spaces rather than a local parks department designing them. This type of city diplomacy garden practice occurred recently in Jinan, China.

In 2020, Jinan initiated the 'International Friendship City Garden' project. Whereas other gardens emerge sporadically during sister-city relationships, Jinan made a cognisant effort to attract designs from its partner cities. This can be attributed to the city's goal of constructing itself as a global actor recognised by numerous foreign entities. Local Chinese news media's implicit reference to how city diplomacy gardening practices construct city identity accurately explains the logic driving such efforts of landscape architecture. An article from a Shandong provincial media outlet stated, 'The distinctive international friendship city gardens will help to forge Jinan's image as an open and inclusive international metropolis and comprehensively enhance the city's international landscape and cultural soft power.'<sup>9</sup> Jinan has attracted Birstonas, Lithuania; Kazanlak, Bulgaria; Siem Reap Province, Cambodia; and Suwon, South Korea, to submit gardens

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<sup>8</sup> Hagstrom, Aaron. 2018.

<sup>9</sup> n.a. 2019. 'Lithuanian ambassador visits Jinan and inaugurates international friendship city garden' July 24, 2020. *sdchina.com*. Available at <http://english.sdchina.com/show/4538486.html>.

that Jinan will pay the costs to build.<sup>10</sup> Jinan and other participating cities (re)construct their global actor identity by constructing these gardens.

However, whereas Jinan's various city diplomacy gardens are in different locations throughout the city, cities sometimes also create generalised spaces to celebrate the entirety of a city's global relationships or sister-city relationships (and thus perpetuate global actor identity narratives at a single urban stage). For example, both Los Angeles and Boulder, Colorado, have a 'Sister Cities Plaza'. Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; Brighton, Colorado; Albuquerque, New Mexico; and Duluth, Minnesota all maintain a 'Sister Cities Park'. These centralised parks or plazas are tangible indicators of cities' global engagement.

Nanjing, China, also recently created a centralised space that contributes to the city's social construction as a global actor. Although this urban ecological corridor existed previously, in 2019 Nanjing used this green space as part of its city diplomacy and renamed the park Nanjing International Friendship Garden. As with all the other parks described in this survey, this friendship garden contributes to Nanjing's global reputation. But, it cannot be separate from Chinese national level public diplomacy. The signage at the park is very clear about this. It states: 'Amity between the people holds the key to state-to-state relations...While inheriting and carrying forward the fine tradition of China's diplomacy and shaping a unique style of foreign exchanges based on the characteristics of the times, the Foreign Affairs Office of Nanjing Municipal People's Government will continue to deepen opening-up and cooperation, jointly promote the Belt and Road Initiative, expand consensus and friendship between China and foreign countries by

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<sup>10</sup> n.a. 2021. 'Jinan shares 'opening-up' mindset with the world'. *China Daily*. October 20, 2021. Available at <https://global.chinadaily.com.cn/a/202110/20/WS616ff5b5a310cdd39bc702bd.html>. Accessed February 2023; Jinan Municipal Government. 2022. 'Jinan intl sister-city garden – Suwon Garden'. July 26, 2022. Available at [http://english.jinan.gov.cn/art/2022/7/26/art\\_81804\\_4769113.html](http://english.jinan.gov.cn/art/2022/7/26/art_81804_4769113.html). Accessed February 2023.

expanding the "Circle of Friends", thus achieving common development.' <sup>11</sup> Undoubtedly, Nanjing's city diplomacy narratives align with national diplomacy narratives. Nevertheless, this international friendship park contributes to the social construction whereby Nanjing, as a single city, and cities as an overall category, develop identities as global actors.

Another style of city diplomacy gardening practices noticeable in the US and Europe are spaces devoted to one specific global relationships. Like Seattle's situation discussed in the following empirical analysis, Denver named multiple parks after its sister cities. These include the City of Axum Park; the City of Brest Park; the City of Chennai Park; the City of Cuernavaca Park; the City of Karmiel Park; the City of Kunming Park; the City of Nairobi Park; the City of Potenza Park; and the Ulaanbaatar Park. Berlin also has a similar plaza called the 'Los Angeles-Platz'. This plaza communicates to the public Berlin's connection to Los Angeles and adds to Berlin's narrative as a global actor.

Many cities have Japanese-style gardens originating from their sister city relationships with Japanese cities. These exist in Europe and China. For example, London's Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea has a 'Kyoto Garden' and a 'Fukushima Garden'. One section of Florence's 'Rose Garden' is a Japanese garden emerging from a relationship with Kyoto. Because of a relationship with Hiroshima, Japan, Chongqing, China's has a Japanese-style garden in its E'Ling Park.

There are also many Japanese-style city diplomacy gardens in the US. For instance, in the US State of Indiana, the city of Carmel has a 'Kawachinagano Japanese Garden' and the city of Mishawaka has a 'Shiojiri Garden'. San Diego, California's Balboa Park has a 'Japanese Friendship Garden' which opened in 1991 and originated from a relationship with Yokohama. The

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<sup>11</sup> Based on author's site visit. August 2023.

Japanese garden and teahouse in Phoenix, Arizona, is a result of Phoenix's decades-old relationship with Himeji, Japan. Duluth, Minnesota's Japanese garden, was built in cooperation with Ohara-Isumi City. Mountain View, California, has a Japanese rock garden originating from its relationship with Iwata. While these gardens symbolise and maintain friendly relations between these pairings of US-Japanese sister cities, they also contribute to these cities' narratives of multiculturalism, adding to their global actor narratives.

In addition to Japanese-style gardens, Chinese-style gardens are becoming increasingly popular types of city diplomacy gardens. For example, in the eastern portion of Berlin, at the city's 'Garden of the World', a Chinese Garden was constructed with the cooperation of the Beijing Municipal Government. Zurich's Chinese Garden was a gift from the city of Kunming. St. Paul, Minnesota, has the 'Saint Paul - Changsha China Friendship Garden' garden. Within the Missouri Botanical Garden in St. Louis, a Chinese friendship garden was built in collaboration with Nanjing. Dunedin, New Zealand, cooperated with the municipality of Shanghai to build the 'Dunedin Chinese Garden'. Cleveland, Ohio's 'Chinese Cultural Garden' was dedicated in 1985 and results from the city's relationship with Taipei. Hiroshima, Japan's Chinese garden, was built in 1992 to commemorate five years of friendship with Chongqing, China. These gardens help maintain relationships with Chinese cities, construct sentiments of Chinese-friendliness, and more broadly fit into grander urban narratives portraying the city as globally connected and globally engaged.

In sum, by naming urban spaces after foreign cities and incorporating foreign symbolism or information about foreign places, cities use these public spaces to maintain their global relationships. In addition to creating a cultural attraction for the city, these gardens can communicate internationalist values. Therefore, these spaces narrativise cities as global actors. Many of the trends discussed above are observable in Seattle. Moreover, the following analysis of



Seattle's city diplomacy gardening practice is the first sustained effort to consider this phenomenon. As such, future city diplomacy studies can build on the scholarship presented below.

## **The Case of Seattle**

Seattle's globally oriented gardening practice can roughly be divided into two categories: gardens or parks *inside* the city of Seattle or gardens or parks *outside* of Seattle and US national borders. In either category, these gardens or parks serve as a testament to a reality in which Seattle is a global actor. These gardens can be understood as both causes and effects of Seattle's identity as a global actor. In other words, Seattle develops these because the city views itself as a global actor. By creating this garden, the effect is that Seattle maintains and even furthers its identity as a globally engaged actor. To theorise on this idea further, gardening practices inside Seattle are considered first.

### *Gardening Inside Seattle*

This section mainly discusses Seattle's sister city gardens and the Seattle Chinese Garden. Although Seattle maintains a Seattle Japanese Garden at the Seattle Municipal Arboretum, which was partially constructed with materials donated by Seattle's Japanese sister city Kobe, its history is well-known.<sup>12</sup> Therefore, to illuminate lesser-known instances of Seattle's city diplomacy gardening practice, this section focuses on more recent or less documented gardens that contribute to Seattle's identity as a multicultural city and global actor.

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<sup>12</sup>For the reference to the Kobe donation, see Bush 1998: 170; For the official website of the Seattle Japanese Garden, see <https://www.seattlejapanesegarden.org>; For a local news article about the Seattle Japanese Garden's sixtieth anniversary see Forkner, Lorene Edwards. 2020. 'The Seattle Japanese Garden turns 60 with fitting testaments to rebirth and resilience'. *The Seattle Times*. October 3, 2020.

The Seattle Parks and Recreation Department maintains six parks that pay homage to Seattle's sister-city relationships. These homages produce and evince Seattle's global existence. These parks are Beer Sheva Park, Bergen Place, Daejeon Park, Kobe Terrace, Nantes Park, and Tashkent Park.<sup>13</sup> The parks are distributed throughout the city; only one, Kobe Terrace, is located within the city's 'Chinatown International District'. But regardless of the exact geographical location within the city, these sister city parks (re)produce Seattle's cosmopolitanism. The following discussion occurs alphabetically based on the official name of these parks used by the Seattle Parks and Recreation Department.

In 1977, Seattle and Beer Sheva, Israel formed a relationship. The Beer Sheva Park is named after this Israeli city. However, other than its name, this lakeside park lacks any symbology, artwork, or traces of the city of Beer Sheva. Furthermore, Seattle has no plans to use the park as a tool to improve its relations with Beer Sheva or encourage investment in Seattle by Israeli technology start-ups. Rather, recent park development and budget-raising activities are led by local citizen groups that lobby for improved water access.<sup>14</sup> In this case, only the name of this city diplomacy garden adds to Seattle's global actor narrative. While no overt statues or exhibition space about Beer Sheva is present at the garden, the users of the park could become more aware of Seattle's global reach by simple virtue of the park's unique name.

In 1975, Seattle's Norwegian diaspora and Seattle's relationship with Bergen, Norway contributed to the construction Bergen Park in the Ballard neighbourhood. This area is known for its shipbuilding industry and Norwegian-American population. Interestingly, a plaque at the park features the city seals of both Bergen and Seattle. Significantly no national US or Norwegian

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<sup>13</sup> In preparation for the following discussion, in June 2021, the author visited all these parks except Beer Sheva Park. Some of the following insights derive from these field visits.

<sup>14</sup> For an overview of proposed plans, see <https://www.seattle.gov/parks/about-us/projects/beer-sheva-park-improvements>. Accessed December 2022.

symbolology exists.<sup>15</sup> Rather, because cities use their own symbols and as part of their visual narratives to separate themselves from other political communities like nation-states, the Bergen Place plaque bears Seattle and Bergen's municipal coats of arms. In this way, the naming of the garden itself and the visual features with the garden distinguish Seattle as a separate political entity from the US nation-state. At the same time, Bergen place reproduces the city's multicultural and cosmopolitan city identity and thus its global actor identity.

Furthermore, Bergen Place has also served as a venue for Seattle's interactions with heads of state. On two occasions, Norwegian royalty visited Bergen Place. On the first occasion in 1975, the former King of Norway Olav V attended the dedication of the park. More recently, in 2015 King Harald V visited here and the nearby Pacific Fishermen Shipyard.<sup>16</sup> These interactions communicated the city's local industrial heritage to foreign audience and advanced Seattle's narrative and international recognition as an important and historic port city. Thus, Seattle's gardening practice enabled diplomatic encounters which contributed to Seattle's recognition as a global actor. So, it can be said that city diplomacy gardens facilitate opportunities for foreign diplomatic recognition of the city as a global political actor in their own right.

Daejeon Park, or as one sign at the park states, the 'Korea Sister City Park', contains a wooden pavilion gifted by Daejeon in 1998 to commemorate the tenth anniversary of the sister-city relationship between Seattle and Daejeon.<sup>17</sup> The dedication plaque at the park states, 'Let this [pavilion] stand for symbol of our cultural exchanges and goodwill between the two great cities.'<sup>18</sup>

The message on this sign signals to viewers that Seattle views itself as a great and important city

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<sup>15</sup> A photo of the plaque is viewable on the Seattle Park and Recreation department website for this particular park. Available at <https://www.seattle.gov/parks/find/parks/bergen-place>. Accessed November 2022.

<sup>16</sup> Beccaria, Daniella. 2015. 'King of Norway visits Ballard' May 22, 2015. *Seattle Post Intelligencer*. Available at <https://www.seattlepi.com/seattlenews/slideshow/King-of-Norway-visits-Ballard-110342.php>.

<sup>17</sup> Along with the donation of the pavilion itself, Daejeon gave Seattle a 'certificate of donation'. 'Certificate of Donation'. SMA. 4004-03 2/3

<sup>18</sup> Minor grammatical error in the original. Based on the author's site visit to the park in June 2021.

involved in transnational and transcultural relationships. In sum, the Daejeon pavilion and park inscribe on Seattle's urban fabric and communicate to visitors that the city has global connections and is, therefore a global actor.

Seattle's 'Kobe Terrace' is located on the edge of Seattle's 'Chinatown International District'. It was dedicated by Kobe Mayor Tatsuo Miyazaki and Seattle Mayor Wesley Uhlman on June 9, 1976.<sup>19</sup> The garden features cherry trees and a stone lantern donated by the people of Kobe.<sup>20</sup> Interestingly, the trees were purchased after a check was presented to Seattle by Kobe.<sup>21</sup> Thus, this is an example of how cities' city diplomacy gardening and gifting practices overlap. Furthermore, the park is dedicated to 'everlasting friendship' between Seattle and Kobe.<sup>22</sup> This contributes to Seattle's narrative as a global actor because the notion of friendship aligns with global society's appreciation of friendship, as epitomised in the UN's creation of the 'International Day of Friendship' by the UN General Assembly in 2011. So, forming friendly relations across national borders positively affects Seattle's quest to be a member of global society.

Seattle's relationship with Nantes and the Nantes Park helps legitimise Seattle as a global actor in the environmental sphere. This is because this relationship and park reflect Seattle's environmentally-friendly narrative, which helps legitimise Seattle as a relevant actor in this social and political field. For instance, the Seattle City Council resolution that formalised the relationship stated that both cities possess beautiful gardens and parks.<sup>23</sup> This documentary practice and the subsequent creation of the Nantes Park solidified the two cities' relationship and advanced one

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<sup>19</sup> As indicated by a plaque at the site. Author's site visit June 2021. Viewable in Appendix B.

<sup>20</sup> For a description of the park on Seattle Parks and Recreation Department website, see <https://www.seattle.gov/parks/find/parks/kobe-terrace>.

<sup>21</sup> A photo of the gifting of the check exists. It is reproduced in Appendix A. 'Mayor Uhlman receives check from Kobe, Japan for trees around Kobe park' Object no. 191160. SMA.

<sup>22</sup> The reference to 'everlasting friendship' appears on a plaque at the park. Author's visit. June 2021. Viewable in Appendix A.

<sup>23</sup> Resolution 26369. SMA

another's environmental narratives. Furthermore, in 2022, the city of Seattle, the local neighbourhood association, and the Seattle-Nantes sister city association cooperated to update the artistic features of the park. After discussion amongst various stakeholders, the well-known French children's author and artist Claude Ponti was commissioned to design sculptures for the park.<sup>24</sup> These new visual features, by virtue of the fact that a well-known foreign artist created them, add to Seattle's narrative as a culturally significant actor with global connections.

Tashkent Park emerged from the first-ever US-Soviet sister city relationship, formed in 1973. This city diplomacy garden's origins directly pertain to global politics and, therefore significantly affect the construction and maintenance of Seattle as a global actor. The park was dedicated in 1974, and the statue located in the centre of the park was gifted by Tashkent in 1988.<sup>25</sup> The plaque affixed to the statue states, 'Tashkent Park is dedicated to peace and understanding between the people of Seattle and Tashkent, Uzbekistan and the foresight of Seattle Mayor Wes Uhlmin, Tashkent Mayor Husnitdin Asamov and Mavor Vahid Kazimov, and the University of Washington Professor Ilse Cirtautas.'<sup>26</sup> This garden symbolises the pacifist and internationalist values that originally lead to the sister city relationship. The park remains a reminder and symbol that Seattle actively took part in the global political pursuit of peace. However, these values are just one part of this park's story.

A recent commentary from the late Professor Cirtautas offers insight into how Soviet officials perceived Seattle's identity. A 2013 short memoir about the origins of the Seattle-Tashkent relationship, penned by Cirtautas, suggests that Soviet officials viewed Seattle as a

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<sup>24</sup> For further details on these artistic elements and public comments on the planning process, see [https://www.seattle.gov/documents/Departments/ParksAndRecreation/Projects/NantesBeautificationOnlineMeetingPresentation\\_20210330.pdf](https://www.seattle.gov/documents/Departments/ParksAndRecreation/Projects/NantesBeautificationOnlineMeetingPresentation_20210330.pdf).

<sup>25</sup> n.a. 'Tashkent Park'. *Atlas Obscura*. Available at <https://www.atlasobscura.com/places/tashkent-park>. Accessed October 2022.

<sup>26</sup> Based on the author's visit to the site in July 2021.

technological leader. Cirtautas wrote, ‘One question kept coming up to my mind, “Why did Moscow without much delay agree to Tashkent’s sister-city relationship with Seattle?”’ The answer I received from the mayor of Tashkent was short and simple, “Seattle has the Boeing Company!” Indeed, the Soviets were interested in Seattle so that they could collect information on the production of world-standard airplanes.’<sup>27</sup> The allusion to the Soviet’s desire for knowledge gathering about Boeing evinces how private companies’ can be absorbed into cities’ identity and perceived as part of the city itself by foreign observers. Although Tashkent Park was not specifically built to maintain Seattle’s reputation as a global leader in this specific industry, this narrative of global prestige nevertheless appears. Thus, Tashkent Park upholds Seattle as a global actor in issues of peace and the global technological competition.

In addition to parks emphasising sister city relationships, Seattle’s globally oriented gardening practices relate to national and cultural groups. At the Seattle Chinese Garden, the interplay between culture, nationalism, diasporas, and gardening is apparent. The Seattle Chinese Garden developed from the Seattle-Chongqing sister city relationship and was first discussed by the respective city’s parks department officials during a visit by Seattle government officials to Chongqing in 1986.<sup>28</sup> Different sites were considered over the years. Still, in 1988, the Seattle City Council authorised the Superintendent of Parks and Recreation to negotiate with the Seattle Community College to obtain a property of three to five acres at the college’s arboretum.<sup>29</sup> However, the same resolution stipulated that the city did not intend to contribute to the garden’s capital costs. But even though funds from municipal coffers were not promised, the city council’s

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<sup>27</sup> Cirtautas, Ilse D. 2013. ‘Memories of Tashkent 1972 and the Start of the Seattle-Tashkent Sister City Relationship’ The Ellison Center, University of Washington. March 6, 2013. <https://jsis.washington.edu/ellisoncenter/news/memories-of-tashkent-1972-and-the-start-of-the-seattle-tashkent-sister-city-relationship/>.

<sup>28</sup> ‘Legislative Request Supporting Information’, Acting Superintendent Girtch to the City Council of Seattle, August 8, 1988. included in the files related to Resolution no. 27832. SMA.

<sup>29</sup> Resolution 27831. SMA.

act of authorisation demonstrates that Seattle officials of the time viewed city diplomacy gardens as beneficial to the city's narrative.

But despite the lack of initial financial support from the city government, private businesses and individuals involved themselves in fundraising from early on. In this case, a constellation of local actors other than governmental actors contributed to the social construction of Seattle's identity as a global actor. For example, in 1999 Boeing donated one and a half million dollars to the garden because the company, like the city, is cognisant of the importance of the China market and the importance of developing friendly relations with the country of China and China-based entities.<sup>30</sup>

Nowadays, the Sichuan-style garden, partially designed by the Chongqing Garden Bureau, is not directly managed by Seattle's parks and recreation department.<sup>31</sup> Instead, a non-profit organisation, the Seattle Chinese Garden Society, raises funds and organises volunteers to garden the grounds and pavilions. Throughout the decades since its incorporation in 1989, the Seattle Chinese Garden Society has solicited funds to build and maintain the garden. The lack of direct funding from the city contributed to the fact that it took more than twenty years for the garden to open officially. This delay arguably negatively impacted, or at least stunted, the pace at which Seattle advanced and stabilised its identity as a global actor. According to one set of preparatory notes from a 2015 meeting between then-Chongqing Mayor Huang Qifan and Seattle Mayor Edward B. Murray, some of this funding was only finally secured when previous Chinese President

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<sup>30</sup> Boeing 1999. 'The Boeing Company contributes \$1.5 million to build Seattle Chinese Garden' available at <https://boeing.mediaroom.com/1999-12-17-The-Boeing-Company-contributes-1.5-million-to-build-Seattle-Chinese-Garden>. Accessed November 2022.

<sup>31</sup> For one source that mentions the Chongqing Garden Bureau's involvement and the other horticultural features that were planned for the garden in 2011, although not all were to come to fruition, see Easton, Valerie. 2011. 'Seattle's Chinese Garden; both ancient and local' *The Seattle Times*. August 6, 2011.

Hu Jintao visited Seattle in 2006.<sup>32</sup> Similar to the aforementioned case of the Nanjing International Friendship Garden, this demonstrates how Chinese national-level public diplomacy is part of the story of Chinese city diplomacy. In other words, Chinese gardens are supported by the Chinese state because these gardens serve the goal of telling China's story well. But disregarding the involvement of the Chinese state, when the garden officially opened in 2011, only a half-acre was developed at the cost of 3.2 million dollars.<sup>33</sup> Although small and lengthy in its chronological completion, this city diplomacy garden advances Seattle's position in global society because it can garner a positive reaction from one of the poles of the early twenty-first century global order.

Additionally, the Seattle Chinese Garden is used as a site to promote relations with Chinese cities other than Chongqing, Seattle's first Chinese sister city. For example, Luoyang, China, and Seattle developed relations in the last few years and now the Seattle Chinese Garden is a location for a Peony Festival.<sup>34</sup> Thus, naming the garden the 'Seattle Chinese Garden' rather than the 'Seattle Chongqing Garden', whether intended this way or not, facilitates Seattle's relations with many Chinese cities. In sum, the Seattle Chinese Garden narrativises the city as a Chinese-friendly and, by extension, cosmopolitan city and a global actor. But Seattle's globally oriented gardening practice is not limited to the Japanese gardens, Chinese gardens, or sister city parks within the city's local geographical borders.

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<sup>32</sup> 'Courtesy Call with HUANG Qifan, Mayor of Chongqing'. September 21, 2015. Obtained by Public Record Request.

<sup>33</sup> Liu, Marian. 2011. 'Breath of China at new garden'. *The Seattle Times*. February 6, 2011.

<sup>34</sup> The peony is a symbol of the Luoyang. For a summary of the 2014 iteration of the festival along with background information and photos, see Wood, Phil. Spring 2014. 'The Seattle-Luoyang Peony Festival'. Arboretum Foundation.

Available at [https://www.arboretumfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/11/wood\\_peony-festival.pdf](https://www.arboretumfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/11/wood_peony-festival.pdf). Accessed October 2022.



*Gardening Outside Seattle*

On multiple occasions, in multiple cities and countries around the world, Seattle's name, local flora, and local cultural symbols have been inscribed in garden spaces outside of Seattle and US borders. For example, Beer Sheva, Israel, once contained a place known as Seattle Square; also, Seattle has donated trees to be planted in garden spaces abroad.<sup>35</sup> These city diplomacy gardening practices have involved the city government, local volunteers, and Seattle-based landscape architecture firms. Because of these gardens' location outside of Seattle, the city's identity narrative as a global actor is rooted in foreign space, thus potentially amplifying the social constructivist effect through which a constellation of actors and practices implicitly and explicitly create and maintain the city's existence in global society.

One of the first instances of Seattle's city diplomacy gardening practices abroad occurred in the 1960s when the Seattle Parks Department donated rhododendrons for Kobe gardeners to plant.<sup>36</sup> But eventually, simple donations of local Seattle flora to Kobe became more elaborate, resulting in a dedicated space today. In 1975, Seattle assisted with opening the 'Seattle Forest' at the Kobe Municipal Arboretum.<sup>37</sup> The 'Seattle Forest' was unveiled during a trip by Seattle officials during the Japan-American Conference of Mayors and Chamber of Commerce Presidents held that year in Sapporo.<sup>38</sup> By symbolically and ceremoniously planting trees and other native flora in Kobe, Seattle projected its narrative as a city endowed with beautiful nature. Almost half

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<sup>35</sup> The 'Seattle Square' existed as early as 1994. This date is based on SMA notes for a photo of a Seattle delegation standing in front of a sign that states 'Seattle Square'. Unfortunately, because of limited records found that pertain to this space, the history and current status of the square are not assessed here. For the photo itself, see Appendix B. 'Beer Sheva, Israel - Seattle Sister City since 1977'. SMA. Object no. 176890.

<sup>36</sup> Bush 1988: 50.

<sup>37</sup> See the following for a reference to the space on the arboretum's website. Interestingly, Kobe also maintains garden spaces at the arboretum for its other global relationships with cities like Riga, Brisbane, and Tianjin. [https://www.kobe-park.or.jp.e.abn.hp.transer.com/shinrin/guide\\_garden/spot/](https://www.kobe-park.or.jp.e.abn.hp.transer.com/shinrin/guide_garden/spot/). Accessed January 2023.

<sup>38</sup> In addition to Kobe and Sapporo, Seattle officials also went to Tokyo and Manila. SMA 5287-02, especially folders 85/6 and 85/7.

a century since the creation of the Seattle Forest, the garden continues to inform foreign audiences about Seattle's existence. Moreover, the 'Seattle Forest' is now the site of the totem pole gifted by Seattle discussed earlier.

Another early instance of Seattle's city diplomacy gardening practice conducted abroad occurred when the Soviet Union still existed. Similar to the Tashkent Park in Seattle, because of its relationship to global peace, the development of this park directly inserted Seattle into the global political discourse about tolerance and understanding between all nations and peoples. The symbolic dedication in 1988 of the Seattle-Tashkent Peace Park advanced Seattle's identity as a global actor. The park was officially dedicated simultaneously in both cities by means of a telephone connection.<sup>39</sup> In this case, multiple Seattle-based actors were involved. Specifically, local Seattle design firms and landscape architecture students at the University of Washington designed the park. Also, local Seattle schoolchildren and volunteers decorated thousands of ceramic tiles which were eventually transport to Tashkent and installed in the park. The park also contained a 'friendship grove' of trees, including trees native the Seattle region like, Washington Douglas firs, Oregon incense cedars, and California redwoods.<sup>40</sup> These trees symbolise friendship and support Seattle's claim to relevance as a global actor in environment governance. On this former point, local organisers at the time described this instance of city diplomacy gardening as the first time Soviets and Americans constructed a physical symbol of friendship.<sup>41</sup> But although

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<sup>39</sup> For two descriptions of the planning of the park, see *Bulletin of Municipal Foreign Policy*. 1988. Vol. 2. No. 1. Irvine, California: Center for Innovative Diplomacy: 49; Long, Priscilla. 2001. 'Seattle-Tashkent Peace Park in Uzbekistan is dedicated in Tashkent and at Seattle Center on September 12, 1988.' *HistoryLink*. Essay 3595. Available at <https://historylink.org/File/3595>. Accessed December 2022.

<sup>40</sup> For reference to the 'friendship grove', see, *Bulletin of Municipal Foreign Policy*. 1988. Vol. 2, No 4. Irvine, California: Center for Innovative Diplomacy. 48-49. For a reference to the species of trees shipped to the park, see, *Bulletin of Municipal Foreign Policy*. 1989. Vol. 3, No. 1. Irvine, California: Center for Innovative Diplomacy: 51.

<sup>41</sup> For an elaboration on the different organisations involved, along with details about the creation and installation of the park and its designs, see King, Marsha. 1988. 'Volunteers Signing Up to Help Build a Sister-City Park in Soviet Union,' *The Seattle Times*, February 28, 1988, p. B-1 to B-2.

the organisers' framed the effort in national terms (i.e. an intent to construct peace between that epoch's two world superpowers), from its inception until now, this park remains a physical symbol of Seattle's identity as a globally engaged and progressive city.

Korea is also the location of Seattle's city diplomacy gardening practice. The 'Seattle Park' in Taejon was unveiled in 1994 during the 75<sup>th</sup> Annual Korean Athletic games.<sup>42</sup> At the formal ceremonial unveiling Seattle was represented by an official from the city's parks and recreation department who posed in front of a black stone engraving with the park's name in Korean and English.<sup>43</sup> In addition to engraved names, engraved visuals existed on the parks stone installations. Specifically, a stone etching on the park's main sculpture features the Space Needle. Thus, 'Seattle Park' in Taejon narrativizes that Seattle previously hosted a world expo; this supports the city's claim as relevant and important in recent global history.<sup>44</sup> Although the 'Seattle Park' in Taejon was opened more than three decades after the World Expo, the Space Needle and its association with the space race, modernity, and Seattle's aeronautical industry, are all aspects of Seattle's urban narrative that enhance the city's reputation in global society.

The most recent instance of Seattle's gardening practice abroad is the 'Seattle Garden' in Chongqing. Because of the sister-city relationship between Seattle and Chongqing, Seattle was offered the opportunity to design a garden plot for Chongqing's hosting of the Eighth China International Garden Expo in 2012.<sup>45</sup> Seattle's view of the role of gardens as a tool of city

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For another brief discussion based on documents from the Seattle-Tashkent Sister City Committee, see Bush 1998: 100-103.

<sup>42</sup> At the time of writing, the more common spelling of this Korean city is Daejeon. However, the spelling used in the archival records consulted for this analysis uses the spelling Taejon. Both spellings are employed here to denote the same city.

<sup>43</sup> 'Seattle Park with Park Director and Engineer -- Taejon, Korea.' Seattle Municipal Archives. Photo. 177027. SMA.

<sup>44</sup> Also included in Appendix B. 'Seattle Park -- Space Needle [etching] -- Taejon, Korea.' Photo. SMA 177029.

<sup>45</sup> Other US cities also created garden spaces at the expo. These include Houston, Texas; Waynesboro, Virginia; and San Francisco, California. Many non-US cities also have garden spaces here. For example, directly adjacent to the

diplomacy is evident in Seattle's representatives' itinerary for the visit to open the garden officially. Referring to the Seattle Chinese Garden, talking points for the Seattle delegation that attended the opening of the Expo stated, 'The two gardens are platforms for developing even stronger ties between our two cities in the future.'<sup>46</sup> The 'Seattle Garden' was designed by the local Seattle landscape architecture firm Jones & Jones and was paid for and built by the Chongqing Parks Bureau.<sup>47</sup> The unveiling of this garden coincided with a weeklong celebration, dubbed 'Seattle Week', to celebrate the thirtieth anniversary of the Seattle-Chongqing sister city relationship.<sup>48</sup> Like Seattle's other city diplomacy gardens abroad, the 'Seattle Garden' in Chongqing symbolises Seattle's global activeness. But the garden also conveys Seattle's values and identity as an environmental steward.

The 'Seattle Garden' in Chongqing adds to Seattle's environmental discourse, which contributes to Seattle's development as an actor in transnational environmental governance. The sign at the 'Seattle Garden' states; 'Similar to Chongqing, Seattle's landscape is one of mountains, valleys and streams---a place of dark green forests and sparkling emerald waters. This garden abstracts the journey of water from the mountains to the sea.'<sup>49</sup> However, after a decade since its unveiling and little maintenance, fountains are no longer in operation and water no long cascades down the garden's stone terraces nor are the plants very lush or green. Nevertheless, this poetic sign and overall instance of Seattle's city diplomacy gardening practices outside the US continues

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Seattle Garden is the 'Australia Brisbane Garden' which features large photos of the city's buildings, bridges, and ports. The author visited all these gardens in January 2023.

<sup>46</sup> 'Seattle Week in Chongqing/Beijing: Mayor's Delegation Itinerary, March 19-26, 2012' Obtained by Public Record Request.

<sup>47</sup> As indicated by background information for a planned 2015 meeting between the mayors of Seattle and Chongqing. 'Courtesy Call with HUANG Qifan, Mayor of Chongqing' SMA. Digital File of the Murray Administration.

<sup>48</sup> Jun, Deng. 2012. 'Seattle Week Started in Chongqing. *The China Times*. 23 March 2012. Available at <https://thechinatimes.com/online/2012/03/2842.html>

<sup>49</sup> As viewed during the author's visit to the site in January 2023. Also viewable in Appendix A.

to perpetuate and communicate to foreign audiences Seattle's existence. Moreover, the garden's existence and Seattle's sustained gardening practice across time and space socially constructs the city as a global actor.

## **Conclusion**

Seattle and other cities' city diplomacy gardening practices reflect and add to local and global identity narratives. These gardens also promote urban values and, by extension, support municipal efforts to become more prominent actors in global society. Furthermore, because gardens are physical places that can be visited, gardens potentially have a larger impact on cities' reputation-building efforts. For example, in the case of Seattle, for the people who visit these parks (either inside or outside the city), Seattle's existence and identity are immediately observable. Whereas only the keenest political observer would notice documenting or networking practices, the public can directly view this particular subplot of cities' larger city diplomacy or global actor narratives because of gardens' normal ontology as public spaces.

Because a status as an actor in global society requires at least some form of human recognition (in addition to recognition by other global actors like states or international organisations), these gardens deserve additional consideration and theorisation in future city diplomacy research. Future research should continue to develop alternative frameworks, employ additional concepts, and make comparisons of other cities' city diplomacy garden practices to the case of Seattle. Although much more work is needed in these veins, by making the first attempt to make sense of this aspect of city diplomacy and the role of cities in global politics, this chapter made multiple contributions to the study of city diplomacy.

## Chapter 7: Conclusion

### **Abstract**

This concluding chapter briefly discusses the result of the study. It considers its applicability to recent instantiations of city diplomacy, like a 2023 summit held with the support of the US State Department. Additionally, the chapter presents avenues for future research on city diplomacy. This discussion identifies other city diplomacy practices omitted from this study that require additional contemplation and theorisation. Also, the chapter summarises this thesis's contributions and concludes by reiterating the importance of cities to the study of global politics.

## **Discussion and Applicability of Results**

To begin the concluding remarks of this thesis, a summary of its results is presented. For reasons of clarity and to provide general summaries of the arguments put forth in this study, this section repeats and provides brief responses to this thesis' research questions. To review, the main question this study asked was:

To what extent does applying social constructivist and practice theory insight to the case of Seattle's city diplomacy and its globally oriented symbolic and cultural practices help to study and understand city diplomacy and how cities implicitly and explicitly develop and sustain an identity as a global actor?

To answer this question, it needs to be reiterated why Seattle was given precedence and selected as the object of analysis. Seattle was directly invoked in this thesis' main research question for several reasons. From an analytical perspective, Seattle's long history of global engagement demonstrates the longevity and possibility of urban proactiveness in the conduct of city diplomacy in the US context. Additionally, Seattle's liberal values and recent precedents in which the city boldly and openly opposed national foreign policy made it suitable to explore the degree to which US cities have the political and legal space to conduct their own foreign affairs with or without the support of the state. From a practical perspective, Seattle's municipal archives and public record request protocols allowed convenient access to a wealth of information less readily accessible in other US cities. However, as each empirical chapter's 'global surveys' demonstrated, there is sufficient evidence of city diplomacy activity around the world, even within categories of activity (e.g., gifting and gardening) that have never been identified. So, although Seattle is a single case of city diplomacy, there are observable patterns across Seattle and other cities' history of global engagement. Moreover, focusing on the single case of Seattle helped to focus and organise the

study's theorisation of the different documenting, networking, gifting, and gardening practices. This approach allows future researchers to continue building theory on city diplomacy practices and apply these insights to other cases, which could also be compared to the case of Seattle presented here. So, the case of Seattle presented here advances scholarly understanding of city diplomacy because it identified previously ignored aspects of the phenomenon. Also, an in-depth study of Seattle presented different identity narratives and conveyance of multiple values, which were observable in the written and visual texts that emerged during or after these practices were conducted. However, this study also advances scholarly understanding of city diplomacy because of the novel theoretical lens that was applied.

Furthermore, this study focused on identity and built on extant studies of city diplomacy that applied ideas of social construction. At the same time, this thesis made the first attempt to apply practice theory to city diplomacy and combine these notions with social constructivism. These interrelated ideas explored in this study can be summarised here under the notion of 'configuration'. Practice theory's narrative approach and argument that practices are a form of narrative configuration device that makes sense of the world and orders it in a suitable and compatible with an agent's worldview.<sup>1</sup>

This idea of configuration, narrative, and practice helped to answer this study's supplementary research questions, namely:

- Why does Seattle conduct a variety of globally oriented symbolic and cultural practices?
- Why does Seattle maintain relations with other actors in global society?
- How do Seattle's city diplomacy practices and transnational relationships constitute the city as a global actor?

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<sup>1</sup> Bueger and Gadinger. 2018: 70.



In essence, Seattle conducts a variety of globally oriented symbolic and cultural practices and maintains relations with other actors in global society to position itself as a global actor. Furthermore, these practices and relationships constitute the city as a global actor because they project a particular narrative that configures social reality in a certain way. These conclusions follow from the results of the empirical analysis.

After collecting and analysing examples from Seattle and other cities documenting, networking, gifting, and gardening practices, the idea of narrative configuration is deemed to have explanatory value. Documenting practices record narratives in which cities are important places and agents in certain fields, thus configuring this situation by normalising and maintaining such narratives. Networking practices configure the world in such a way that cities extend and sustain their transnational relationships and connections, thus extending cities' claims of relevance on matters occurring outside urban borders. Gifting practices imbue objects with meaning connected to the giving city's understanding of itself and its role in global society. These gifts configure the world by projecting and normalising cities identities, symbols, heritage, history, and values while at the same time creating chains of obligations to reciprocate with the receiving entities. Finally, gardening configures actual physical space in cities to serve as material and visitable symbols of cities' global engagement. At the same time, these gardens ideationally configure audience perceptions by providing permanent observable evidence that a city is globally engaged. Thus, the answer to this study's final supplementary research question

- Why do Seattle and other cities worldwide conduct the practices of documenting, networking, gifting, and gardening?

The answer to this question can be summarised in the following way. Cities conduct these practices because they are judged to be the appropriate type of behaviour and because they can result in benefits, both material and reputational.

In sum, the ideas proposed in this thesis, the concepts applied to city diplomacy, and the identification of unrecognised practices of city diplomacy all add nuance to scholarly understandings of city diplomacy and provide avenues and methodological approaches for future studies of city diplomacy. These should undergo future analysis to try and find patterns of city diplomacy using the newfound insight put forth in this thesis. But for reasons of parsimony and brevity, only the case of Seattle was given extended consideration in this thesis. Yet, this case presented enough evidence to draw preliminary conclusions about how practices can be understood within social processes and discourse that construct cities' identity as global actors. Examples from three recent events suggest that cities' sustained global engagement has resulted in an effect whereby cities have implicitly and explicitly developed identities as global actors.

This type of identity is noticeable in publications from the UN-Habitat, Seattle's participation at a UN climate change conference, and a 2023 gathering of cities spearheaded by the US State Department. All these suggest that implicit and explicit recognition of cities' identity as global actors occurs in different issue areas of global politics by multiple global actors with higher standing in global society. These final examples are presented and analysed to demonstrate the ongoing changes that are unfolding within global political discourse.

The insights and propositions developed in this case study of Seattle's city diplomacy are applicable to very recent events and reports that occurred or emerged outside of the Seattle context. Additionally, they are applicable outside of the case of Seattle and are useful to understand recent events whereby cities continue to create new venues and opportunities to conduct city diplomacy

and network with diverse agents operating in global society. These new venues continue the long history of cities acting across national borders and the long saga through which cities have developed identities as global actors. Furthermore, official recognition from UN agencies gives further credence to the propositions put forth in this study that cities have socially constructed themselves as global actors because of city diplomacy practices. One recent recognition By UN Habitat demonstrates the accomplishments recently achieved by cities after a century of sustained global engagement.

Recent comments emerging from UN-Habitat explicitly recognise cities' identity as global actors. This is significant given the fact that as a specialised agency of the UN, the UN-Habitat can be classified as a norm-setter in global society. In other words, the discourse advanced by the UN has world-making ramifications. Thus, when the 2022 World Cities Report published by UN-Habitat invoked the notion of city diplomacy, cities' identity as global actors were recognised and legitimised because of the UN's own legitimacy in global society. Although the UN and its specialised agencies publish scores of reports during the year, as the premier publication of UN-Habitat, the World Cities Report and the revisionist claims held within can affect how non-city global actors view cities' role in global society.

The report boldly claimed that 'City diplomacy is reconfiguring international politics as cities engage in external relations on an international stage intending to represent themselves and their interests'.<sup>2</sup> Although, the report did little to theorise how this 'reconfiguring' occurs in practice and instead the report mostly focused on global urbanisation trends and the impact of Covid-19 on cities, this claim about the changing ontology of global society is significant and relevant to the social construction and practice theory approach developed in this study. Even

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<sup>2</sup> UN Habitat 2022. *World Cities Report 2022*. Nairobi, Kenya. United Nations Human Settlements Programme: 254.

though the World Cities Report was silent on the nuances of this alleged ‘reconfiguring’ this thesis makes important steps in understanding the processes through which cities represent themselves on the international stage. Moreover, this study makes important advances in how to study city diplomacy and the genealogy of cities' emergence on the world stage. Rather than just taking it as a fact that cities are reconfiguring international politics, this study identified four practices that implicitly and explicitly allow this reconfiguring to occur. In other words, because cities undertake globally oriented symbolic and cultural practices, their identities as global cities and membership in global society are constructed. But only time will tell if the continuation of cities’ globally oriented practices fundamentally revises the state-centrism that persists in global society. Fortunately, this thesis provided insight and strategies that help ground speculation about future world orders in which cities are protagonists. To recap these strategies and reconsider them vis-à-vis the bold claims proposed in the UN-Habitat’s World Cities Report, one final example of Seattle’s global engagement is analysed.

Whereas in past decades, Seattle was not recognised as a global actor, the sustained projection of narratives of environmental stewardship has translated into legitimacy in the arena of transnational environmental governance. Seattle’s participation at a recent UN climate change conferences manifests the constructivist nature of cities’ existence and identity in global society. This participation at one of the most important gatherings of global actors also supports the UN-Habitat’s contention that cities’ globally oriented action is reconfiguring the nature of global politics.

The representation of Seattle via its former Mayor Jenny Durkin at the 2021 United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP26) in Glasgow, Scotland, was a significant act in which the city projected its identity as a member of global society and communicated its narrative as

environmentally-friendly and liberal city. The fact that Seattle was represented at the global governance gathering was significant because cities are not a party to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change. Nevertheless, Seattle interacted with other agents in climate change governance, thus constructing and perpetuating its existence as a relevant actor in this field. Although the number of participants in UN climate conferences has steadily grown over the years and was never purely a club-like network composed *only* of states, the attendance of cities at one of global society's premier conferences is an important example of change in the constitution of global society. Moreover, Seattle took advantage of the conference to further assert and embed itself into global society.

Seattle's attendance at COP26 was an assertion of its identity as an actor within the global climate change policy regime. This was apparent in the formal speeches delivered by Seattle at the conference. Specifically, Seattle unveiled an executive order to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in the city.<sup>3</sup> In this executive order, institutions of global society like the Paris Climate Accords were specifically mentioned. Because of this explicit reference, Seattle narrativised itself as a peer polity within environmental governance and advanced its identity as a global actor worthy of equal respect in global society. By incorporating the discourse of global society into its local governance discourse, Seattle builds a bridge between the local and global. If maintained, in other words, if this discursive link is held and Seattle continues to imitate the language, ideas, and popular concepts of global governance in the environmental sphere or otherwise, then the alleged reconfiguring mentioned by UN-Habitat is likely. Future studies of city diplomacy need to continue to explore these discursive links and cities' mimicry, imitation, and amalgamation of the

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<sup>3</sup> 'Executive Order 2021-09: Driving Accelerated Climate Action' Available at <https://durkan.seattle.gov/2021/11/mayor-jenny-durkan-announces-new-executive-order-at-cop26-climate-summit-to-dramatically-reduce-greenhouse-gas-emissions/>. Accessed April 2023.

discourses of global society, especially when these discourses are implicitly and explicitly present in cities' various globally oriented symbolic and cultural practices. But in addition to future discourse analysis, future studies need to assess the constantly emerging acts and innovations in the realm of city diplomacy.

Not only is city diplomacy now recognised by the UN, but it is also recognised and supported by one of the superpowers of global society, i.e., the US. A recent effort of US national diplomacy overlaps with city diplomacy. This case is interesting to probe the links between the local, national, and global levels. Furthermore, this event is highlighted to demonstrate how recent and yet-to-occur acts of city diplomacy can be analysed using some of the ideas explored in this thesis.

The recent 'Cities Summit of the Americas' held in April 2023 in Denver, Colorado, shows how the US state has recognised the identity of cities as global actors. Notably, for this thesis' case study, Seattle was represented at this summit by the city's mayor and its Director of Innovation and Performance, who participated in panels on smart cities and mobility.<sup>4</sup> But more importantly, regarding the aforementioned 'reconfiguration' of international politics alleged by the UN-Habitat, the direct involvement of US national diplomatic authorities at this summit is worth considering. This summit and the involvement of US national authorities was partly possible thanks to the recent creation of a specific personnel role at the State Department to manage and encourage city and state diplomacy. As a result, the involvement of the State Department and its new office attracted the US Secretary of State, Anthony Blinken, to attend and speak at this summit.<sup>5</sup> As has

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<sup>4</sup> For the full agenda from the conference, see <https://www.citiessummitoftheamericas.org/agenda>. Accessed May 2023.

<sup>5</sup> For Secretary Blinken's full remarks at the summits' closing plenary, see U.S. Department of State. 2023. 'Secretary Antony J. Blinken Keynote Remarks at the Cities Summit of the Americas Closing Plenary'. April 28, 2023. Available at <https://www.state.gov/secretary-antony-j-blinken-keynote-remarks-at-the-cities-summit-of-the-americas-closing-plenary/>.

been argued throughout this thesis, high-level authorities' recognition of cities as actors in global politics stabilises and legitimises this identity. This summit also contained instances of city diplomacy documenting and networking practices. Notably, the summit produced two documents: the 'Denver Declaration on City Priorities for Regional Cooperation' and a pact called the 'Anti-Racist Cities Pact' which coincided with the creation of a new international city network dubbed the 'Anti-Racist Cities Network'.<sup>6</sup> These documents and networks are yet another instantiation of city diplomacy that merits further attention. While it is not necessary nor prudent to assess these in full here, applying the theoretical lens developed in this thesis, it can be said that these documents and networks support the global actor narratives of the cities that either signed these documents, joined this network, or both.

Moreover, from a future research point of view, as the 'Cities Summit of the Americas' suggests, cities will continue to form new relations, strategies, and platforms to interact with other global actors including cities, philanthropies, corporations, and national governments around the world. Thus, this thesis identified specific practices and presented a framework (with room for variation and degrees of rigidity) to analyse and compare the practice of city diplomacy. That being said, this thesis only theorised and used four types of city diplomacy practices as framing categories to analyse the case of Seattle's city diplomacy. But, there are other kinds of city diplomacy action that should also be theorised and synthesised with social constructivist and practice theory insight or other relevant IR and sociological theories.

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<sup>6</sup> For a full list of deliverables from the summit, see U.S. Department of State. 2023. '2023 Cities Summit of the Americas Deliverables'. Office of the Spokesperson. April 26, 2023. Available at <https://www.state.gov/2023-cities-summit-of-the-americas-deliverables/>. Accessed June 2023.

## **Future Research**

Now that the results of this study have been summarised, it is possible to consider the results' implications and avenues for future studies. First, a brief explication of additional categories of city diplomacy that deserve future theorisation and empirical analysis across geographical, political, and historical contexts is presented. Then, arguments are presented for why there is a need to explore gifting and gardening city diplomacy practices further. Taken together, the suggestions presented in this section will build on the scholarly progress made in this thesis and continue the process of filling in gaps and problematising the assumptions currently in research on city diplomacy.

Although this study only focused on documenting, networking, gifting, and gardening city diplomacy practices, other practices exist. Future practice-oriented research on city diplomacy needs to further theorise on these practices and their effects on cities' development as global actors and their role in global governance. For example, conferencing and summitry are frequent practices that can be considered part of cities' diplomacy. Two examples from Seattle and another from outside of Seattle are sufficient to introduce and explore this aspect of city diplomacy so that future research can investigate the causes and effects of these categories of city diplomacy practice. These examples are selected to further build on the empirical examples in this thesis's main part and illustrate another specific aspect of environmentalism that constructs cities as global actors in transnational environmental governance.

Conferences and summits allow cities' representatives to meet physically or virtually. These meetings can either sustain extant relationships or create new relationships. They also facilitate the transnational exchange of knowledge and urban best practices. For example, Seattle



previously hosted sister port conferences.<sup>7</sup> These conferences allowed Seattle to maintain its relations with these other globally important ports while at the same time learning from and, more importantly, for Seattle's role as a global actor, serving as a venue to communicate the city's own identity as a globally important port. While these sister port conferences might seem benign or inconsequential to the nature of global society, they remain an instantiation of how cities conduct globally oriented action and form relations with external entities outside US national borders. Additionally, future research is needed to understand how sister port relationships fit into cities' broader conduct of city diplomacy. However, other city diplomacy conferences that Seattle participated in are more obviously related to issues of global politics.

City diplomacy conferences can directly insert cities into global political discourse, debate, and action on issues of world peace and conflict prevention. Another example from Seattle helps to explore this aspect of the ongoing processes through which cities develop identities as global actors or even alter the composition of global society. Again, an example from Seattle is used as an entry point to consider this future avenue of research. During the final years of the Cold War, Seattle participated in multiple US-Soviet sister-city conferences.<sup>8</sup> While sister city relationships are often framed as efforts to improve cross-cultural and mutual understanding between peoples, the constructivist impact of these relationships and the extent to which these affect the culture or basic operating sentiments of global society (e.g. Wendt's Hobbesian, Lockean, or Kantian 'cultures of anarchy') have not been considered.<sup>9</sup> In this sense, future research on city diplomacy can analyse conferences to test these ideas from social constructivism to determine how and the extent to which cities can impact friendly relations between enemy states by organising

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<sup>7</sup> Goldberg. 1986.

<sup>8</sup> For a reference to Seattle's participation in the fourth annual conference held in Tashkent in 1989, see *Bulletin of Municipal Foreign Policy*. 1989. Vol. 3, No.3: 48-89.

<sup>9</sup> Wendt 1999.

conferences about pacificist relations between cities and peoples. This strand of future research will also build on research that contends that twin town relationships are more than just food and folk music.<sup>10</sup> Also, future research can assess the use of more grandiose terms like ‘summit’ rather than ‘conference’ and how this rhetorical choice affects the message and reception of this aspect of city diplomacy.

As previously discussed, city diplomacy summitry occurred as recently as 2023 (‘Cities Summit of the Americas’). While this summit involved multiple themes, single-themed city diplomacy summits exist. For example, in the early twenty-first century, there have been multiple iterations of a conference known as the ‘Global Biodiversity Summit of Cities and Subnational Governments’.<sup>11</sup> These summits bring together urban and environmental actors to discuss and share policy about improving the local ecosystem. Arguably, the attendees of these summits participate because of their identity as global actors in the governance of the environment or because they want to develop such an identity. While scholarly discusses of these summits exist, they have not been considered from a city diplomacy perspective.<sup>12</sup> Thus, future studies can and should look at the summitry in the biodiversity sphere and compare it to city diplomacy summitry in other areas of global politics. At the same time, future city diplomacy studies of conferencing and summitry should take a long *durée* perspective and conduct interdisciplinary historical studies.

The possibility of interdisciplinary historical studies is likely because as the 1903 Dresden Municipal Congress and the 1911 International Municipal Congress and Exhibition in Chicago

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<sup>10</sup> Grosspietsch, J. 2009. More than Food and Folk Music? Geographical Perspectives on European Town Twinning. *Geography Compass*, vol. 3. No. 3, 1281-1304.

<sup>11</sup> For a listing of some of the specifics of these summits along with a longer discussion of urban biodiversity and the international milieu in which knowledge on urban biodiversity emerges, see Breuste, Jürgen. 2022. *The Green City: Urban Nature as an Ideal, Provider of Services and Conceptual Urban Design Approach*. Berlin, Heidelberg: Springer Nature: 266- 283.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

demonstrate, cities have been conducting conferencing practices for more than a century.<sup>13</sup> This are still relevant to contemporary studies of global politics and the changing nature of global society because they are part of a continuum through which cities implicitly and explicitly challenge nation-state and the existing state-centrism of global governance. Historians recognise this power competition between the local, national, and global levels.

These conferences from a century ago were part of the international planning movement and are comparable to city diplomacy of the early twenty-first century. According to the urban historian Anthony Sutcliffe, the international planning movement, was ‘linked to the idea that revitalized and reorganized cities, as the obvious centres of economic and social dynamism, could replace the nation-state as the basic political unit, allowing regional and world government to be secured by federations of cities.’<sup>14</sup> Although it is difficult to interpret contemporary city diplomacy as a concerted effort to replace the nation-state (the most that can be said is that cities are seeking to be involved in the dialogue with nation-states), there are likely many similar patterns between the transnational interactions of cities from this era and previous eras. In sum, future work on city diplomacy should consider this scholarship and events of the international planning movement.

Finally, it is useful to point out in the conclusion of this study about how to study city diplomacy, one last type of practice that merits further research. This study did not consider digital practices. The digital practices of city diplomacy, like cities’ use of social media and how these reflect cities’ identity as global actors, were not assessed. Twitter (or the platform previously known as Twitter), Instagram, Facebook, and WeChat or Weibo in the Chinese context, are

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<sup>13</sup> For one US-based report on the Dresden Congress, see n.a. 1903. “A MUNICIPAL EXHIBITION.; Opened at Dresden - the First of Its Kind Ever Held” *New York Times*. May 21, 1903. For the official programme of the Chicago Congress in which Seattle participated, see ‘Official Program and Catalogue of the International Municipal Congress and Exposition Chicago, USA September 18-30,1911.’ Held by the Chicago History Museum. Call Number F38E.I6.

<sup>14</sup> Sutcliffe, Anthony. 1981. *Towards the Planned City: Germany, Britain, the United States, and France, 1780-1914*. New York: St. Martin's Press: 164.

important narrative platforms where cities write and convey their identity. Future studies can combine methods of media analysis with the social constructivist and practice theory ideas considered here to develop knowledge about the content and frequency of cities' online postings that include sentiments of global action, engagement, and worthiness to participate in global governance. Although recent scholarship has been published about similar city diplomacy topics, this emerging area of research may be enhanced by bringing in IR perspectives.<sup>15</sup> But in addition to future research on city diplomacy practice omitted from this study, future research is needed on the two newly identified practices of gifting and gardening that were developed in this thesis.

City diplomacy is more than the transnational exchange of urban knowledge. It is also more than youth or sports exchange between residents of different cities in different countries. As this thesis showed, city diplomacy is also a collection of symbolic and cultural practices, including the exchange of materials objects and the transformation of physical space. Both practices deserve further scholarly inquiry.

City diplomacy gifting needs additional research that directly compares this practice to the diplomatic gifting practices of nation-states. Moreover, gifts are an important part of cities' narrative strategy and even serve as vehicles that sustain transnational relationships. So, additional narrative analysis and explorations of sociological understandings of the gift should be used to analyse city diplomacy gifting practices. Additional research in this area will advance the 'visual turn' in IR and add nuance to the study of city diplomacy.

City diplomacy gardening also merits additional narrative analysis. Its continued study will also contribute to the 'visual turn'. Like future studies of gifting, the role and function of these

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<sup>15</sup> Wukich, Clayton. 2022. 'Connecting Mayors: The Content and Formation of Twitter Information Networks.' *Urban Affairs Review*. Vol. 58, no. 1: 33-67; Asdourian, Bruno, Jérôme Chariatte, and Diana Ingenhoff. 2023. 'Digital City Diplomacy and International Cities Networks: Collaboration and City Branding Strategies around Climate Issues.' *The International Communication Gazette*.

gardens can also be analysed using interdisciplinary approaches. In the case of gardens, insight from human geography and landscape architecture can be combined with IR to make sense of the rationales that lead to the creation of these gardens and the stories that these completed gardens tell. Like gifting, future studies of this form of gardening will add a new interdisciplinary strand of research to the study of city diplomacy.

### **Final Remarks**

Although the concept is relatively new, city diplomacy is a complex phenomenon with great variation and similarity across time and space. This study of Seattle helped fill a gap in research that results from the bias of studying the global activity of already recognised global cities like New York City or Los Angeles. This is important because the systematic research of the city diplomacy practices of other small and medium-sized cities can also deliver results about the ongoing changes in the composition of global society and balances of power in global politics. In recent years, cities in the US with very low populations (in one instance, only twenty thousand people) have sent representatives to China. For example, in 2019, the mayor of Sioux Falls, South Dakota, joined other small-town mayors to visit Guangzhou and Shenzhen.<sup>16</sup> This example demonstrates that even small cities are interested in global engagement for the obvious motives of constructing awareness of their cities abroad and attracting foreign capital. But, these actions and obvious motives need to be defamiliarized and put into broader contexts that consider the social constructivist impact of such actions at both local and global levels. In other words, the continued foreign representations of cities abroad should be considered in terms of how these acts develop,

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<sup>16</sup> For coverage of the trip organized and documented by the US China Heartland Association, see Ward, Ben. 2019. 'FALL 2019 MAYORS DELEGATION TO CHINA'. Available at <https://usheartlandchina.org/delegations/fall-2019-mayors-delegation-to-china/>. Accessed April 2023.

sustain, and extend these small cities' claims to global actor status and how these continued involvement and proliferations of cities acting across national borders are possibly changing global society in such a way that cities become normalised and legitimised members of this society.

By focusing on Seattle's city diplomacy, this study contributed to contemporary political urban history, the study of city diplomacy, and scholarly understanding of how the local interacts with and affects the global and vice versa. The case study served as a vehicle to begin the scholarly debate about how cities are becoming more firmly embedded in global society and, in some cases treated as peers by other more traditional global actors like nation-states. Furthermore, because of the growing recognition of the city diplomacy concept and the cities' roles in the institutions and discourse of global governance, more theoretical approaches and more empirical case studies of cities' global engagement are needed.

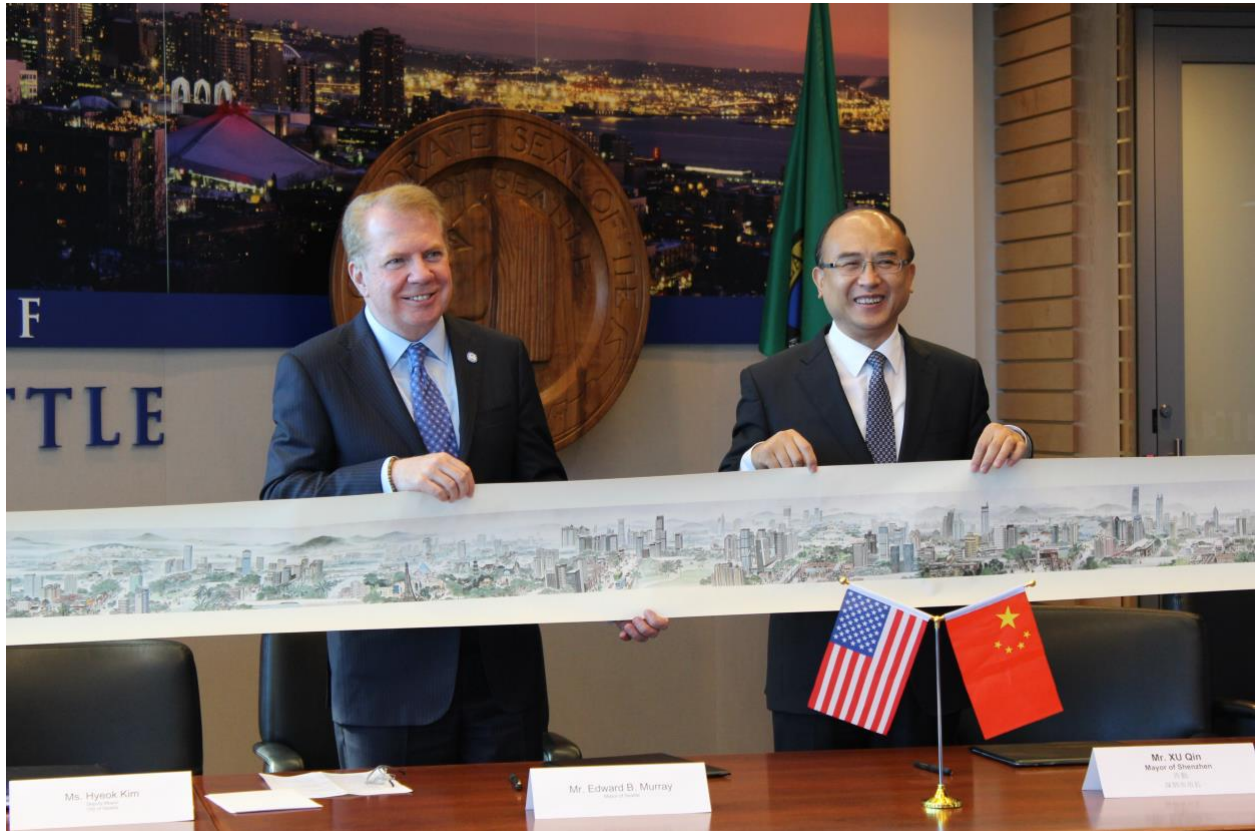
To begin this work, this study identified and conceptualised four city diplomacy practices conducted around the world (i.e. documenting, networking, gifting, and gardening) and argued that focusing on these practices helps to make sense of how local and global conditions are re(constituted) or changed. Moreover, the study showed that scores of cities across various political, legal, and geographical contexts frequently conduct these practices.

While it is well-known that cities document their urban policies through city council resolutions and other similar legal documents, analysis of these records as a specific type of city diplomacy practice that sustains city identity is less apparent. Thus, this thesis presented a new lens to make sense of this practice. Furthermore, while it is well-known that cities form and join international city networks, the emphasis of these networks is often attributed to knowledge-sharing; thus, the impact of such practices on cities' identities has not been considered. Additionally, gifting and gardening are completely absent from city diplomacy scholarship or other

related research areas. Thus, this study opened new paths for future city diplomacy research and provided a jumping-off point for future theorisation, case studies, and comparative research.

Finally, this thesis tried to show via theoretical pluralist framings, rather than assume, that cities are reshaping themselves and global society. Moreover, it developed approaches to support the belief that cities are important to the study of global politics. However, because scholars and practitioners often assume this importance without providing strategies to study cities' global engagement or how cities construct themselves as important actors in multiple global issue areas and institutions, claims of cities' importance to global politics are often dubious. To remedy this, this thesis applied social constructivism and practice theory to theorise and analyse city diplomacy documenting, networking, gifting, and gardening practices.

## Appendix A: Photos of Gifts



Above: Photo of Shenzhen's gifting of a scroll to Seattle. In 2015, Shenzhen gifted to Seattle a painted scroll of Shenzhen's skyline. This act communicated and sustained Shenzhen's narrative of rapid modernisation and development.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> 'Mayor Ed Murray meeting with Mayor Xu of Shenzhen China to sign a memorandum of understanding'. Photo. Object no. 194371. Courtesy of Seattle Municipal Archives.





Above: The Boulder-Dushanbe Teahouse (Author's Photo, June 2021)

Boulder, Colorado and Dushanbe, Tajikistan become sister cities in 1987. During a visit to Boulder in 1987, the Mayor of Dushanbe announced that the Tajik city would gift a teahouse. The teahouse was initially designed with traditional Tajikistani principles. However, after the components of the teahouse reached Boulder, Colorado (artisans first created them in Tajikistan), plans and architectural drawings were adapted to fit the local Coloradan climate and context.<sup>2</sup>

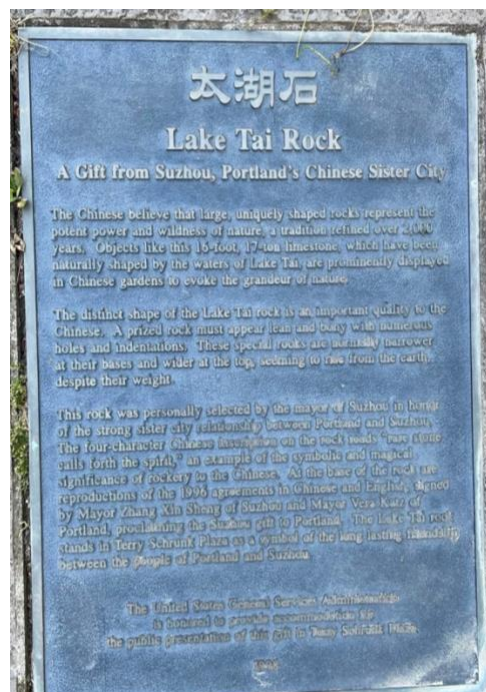
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<sup>2</sup> For more detail on the specific adaptations, see Sector, Katelyn. et al. 2019. *Architecture Of Dialogue: Learning From the Boulder Dushanbe Teahouse*. BAUU Institute.



Above: The Taihu Stone gifted by Suzhou, China, to Portland, Oregon, in 1996 (Author's Photo, June 2021).

Below: A Plaque in describing the Taihu stone gifted by Suzhou (Author's Photo, June 2021).







Above: The Taihu Stone at the Seattle Chinese Garden gifted by Suzhou, China, to Seattle, Washington in 2003 despite no sister city relationship existing (Author's Photo, June 2021).

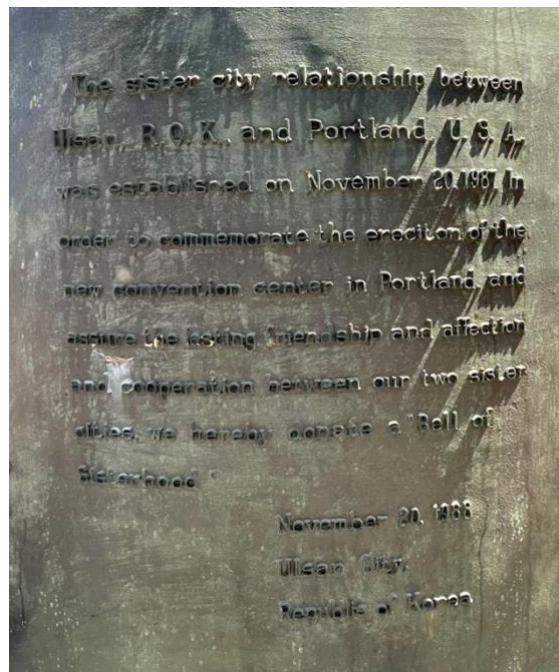
Below: A close-up of the stone's plaque. (Author's Photo, June 2021).





Above: The bell gifted by Ulsan, South Korea, to Portland, Oregon in 1998, (Author's Photo, July 2021).

Below: A close-up of the inscription on the bell (Author's Photo, July 2021).







Above: The baseball player statue gifted by St. Louis to Nanjing, China, in 2019. (Author's Photo, August 2023)

Below: Plaque on the baseball player statue. (Author's Photo, August 2023)





## Appendix B: Photos of Gardens



Above: Plaque and landscape at the ‘Seattle Garden in Chongqing that opened for the Eighth China International Garden Expo in 2012. This garden sustains Seattle’s environmentalist narrative. (Author’s Photo, February 2023).



Above: Plaque at Kobe Terrace. Seattle was able to build its 'Kobe Terrace' garden space because of Kobe's gifts. In this example, cities' transnational gifting and gardening practices overlaps. Above: Plaque at the Kobe Terrace. (Author's Photo June 2021).

Below: Photo of the Kobe's gifting of a check to Seattle.<sup>3</sup>



<sup>3</sup> Mayor Uhlman receives check from Kobe, Japan for trees around Kobe park' Object no. 191160. Courtesy of Seattle Municipal Archives.





Above: Photo at the ‘Seattle Park’ in Taejeon, Korea. This inserts Seattle’s iconography into foreign space.<sup>4</sup>

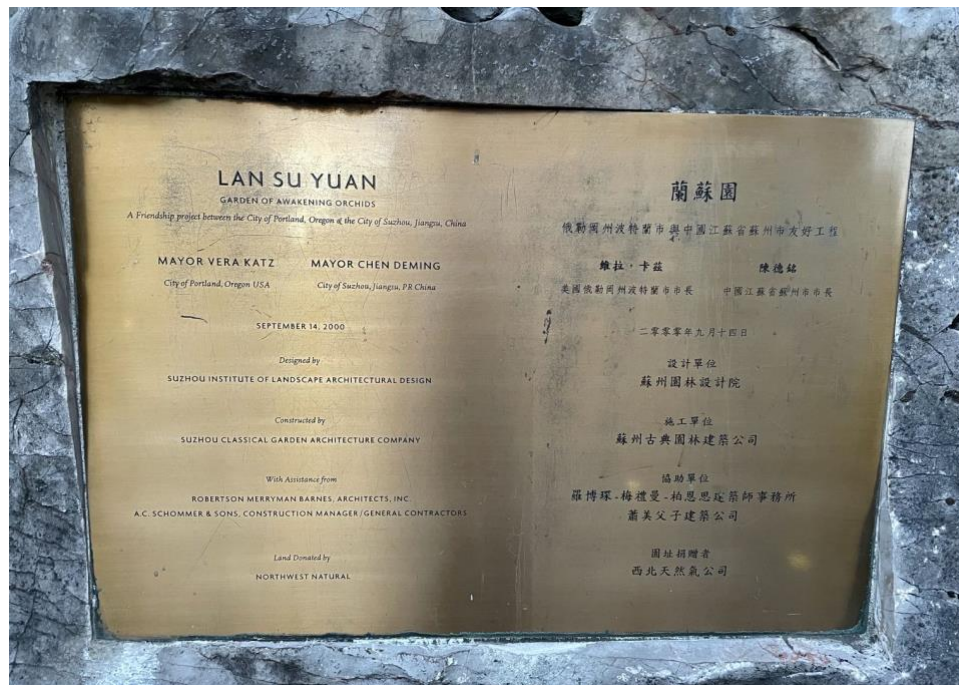
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<sup>4</sup> ‘Seattle Park - Space Needle [etching] - Taejeon, Korea.’ Object no. 177029. Courtesy of Seattle Municipal Archives.





Above: The Lan Su Garden in Portland, Oregon is an example of when a city's gifting and gardening practices occur simultaneously. The garden was a gift from Suzhou. It opened to the public in 2000. (Author's Photo, June 2021)



Above: A Plaque outside the Lan Su Garden that lists the parties involved in the project. This demonstrates that city gifting and gardening practices can be conducted in partnership with multiple entities. (Author's Photo, June 2021)



Above: Sign at the ‘City of Kunming Park in Denver. (Author’s Photo, June 2021).



Above: The stones gifted by Kunming to Denver at The City of Kunming Park and an informational board describing the history of this sister-city relationship (Author’s Photo, June 2021).





Above: The ‘Seattle Square’ in Beer Sheva, Israel.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup> The date of this photo is indicated as being creating in 1994. Thus, one of Seattle’s first instances of its transnational gardening outside of US national borders occurred almost three decades ago. ‘Beer Sheva, Israel – Seattle Sister City Since 1977’. Photo. Object no. 176890. Courtesy of Seattle Municipal Archives.

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