

THE IMPACT OF CITY DIPLOMACY ON SMALL-SCALE CITY GOVERNMENTS IN THE CONTEXT OF LOCAL SERVICE*

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Abstract

Studies on city diplomacy have highlighted the increasing role of cities in international relations. However, they have rarely focused on the local demands and needs of cities. This study answers the question: Can city diplomacy be considered a service delivery method at the city level? The aim of the study is the identification of the impact of cities' international relations on local values and interests. Through a literature review, the study identified five distinct areas of city diplomacy at the local level: These are: Encouraging and increasing participation in cities at different levels; Sharing knowledge, practices and experiences; Addressing wicked problems; Developing institutional capacity; and accessing financial resources. The study contributes to the strategic use of city diplomacy by cities/local governments and the assessment of its impact on local communities in the fields of public administration, urban studies and globalization/localization studies.

Keywords: City Diplomacy, City, Local Governments, Local Service, Urban Policy

JEL Codes: R00, R58, R28

YEREL HİZMET BAĞLAMINDA YEREL DİPLOMASİNİN KÜÇÜK ÖLÇEKLİ KENT YÖNETİMLERİ ÜZERİNDEKİ ETKİSİ

Öz

Yerel diplomasi alanında yapılan çalışmalarda kentlerin uluslararası ilişkiler alanındaki artan rolüne vurgu yapılırken, bu ilişkilerin kentin yerel talep ve ihtiyaçları bağlamında taşıdığı öneme nadiren değinilmektedir. Bu çalışmada yerel diplomasinin kent ölçeğinde bir hizmet sunma yöntemi olarak değerlendirilip değerlendirilemeyeceği sorusuna cevap aranmıştır. Bu çalışmanın amacı, kentlerin/yerel yönetimlerin uluslararası ilişkilerinin yerel değer ve çıkarları üzerindeki etkilerinin tespitini içermektedir. Çalışmada, literatür taraması yöntemiyle yerel diplomasi alanının yerel ölçekte yarattığı beş farklı alanının tespiti yapılmıştır: Yerel diplomasinin kentlerde çeşitli düzeylerde katılımı teşvik etmesi ve artırması, bilgi, uygulama ve deneyim transferi sağlaması, karmaşık sorunlarla mücadelede rol oynaması, kurumsal kapasitenin geliştirilmesi ve finansal kaynaklara erişim yönünden doğrudan ya da dolaylı olarak yerel hizmetlerin sunumunda etkili olduğu sonucuna ulaşılmıştır. Çalışma, yerel diplomasi alanının, kentler/yerel yönetimler tarafından stratejik bir biçimde kullanılması ve yereldeki etkilerinin değerlendirilmesi bağlamında kamu yönetimi, kent çalışmaları ve küreselleşme/yerelleşme literatürüne katkı yapmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Yerel Diplomasi, Kent, Yerel Yönetimler, Yerel Hizmet, Kentsel Politika

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INTRODUCTION

We are witnessing the largest wave of urban growth in history. In 1950, 29 percent of the world's population lived in cities; by 2018, that figure had risen to 55 percent. Today, more than half of the world's population lives in cities. By 2030, it is estimated that the number of urban dwellers will increase to approximately five billion. By 2050, nearly three billion more urban dwellers are expected to join the world's population (United Nations Population Fund, 2023). The growth of the population therefore also means, to a large extent, the growth of the urban population. As urbanization continues to grow, cities are emerging in new forms shaped by economic, technological and other aspects of globalization. Cities have begun to play a role in a much wider area than their own residential areas, in a system where the interdependence of time and space is decreasing and interdependence is increasing. The role played by cities in international politics in the post-World War II era in building peace and resolving conflict has become relevant in many areas, including human rights, the environment, health, culture and history. As cities have become part of global policy agendas, the concept of city diplomacy has been on the rise due to the increase in the number of relationships and collaborations they have developed in the international arena. Municipalities, as the administrations of cities, are both the local entities closest to the citizens and the most important actors in city diplomacy. The concept of local governance is changing. The process of globalization makes international relations an unavoidable field for local governments. Beyond the distinction between global and local, the fact that cities are beginning to build relationships with international actors and other foreign cities creates a space where the two intersect. In international relations, the actions of cities appear in three ways: international, national and local. From the international perspective, cities are involved in global agendas such as climate change and migration. The national perspective considers how national and urban diplomacy interact. The local perspective is a consideration of the impact of international relations on cities (Grandi, 2020, p. 2-3). This study analyzes and evaluates the international relations of cities from a local perspective. Cities are local units. The implementation of various activities in the international arena by cities can be questioned in this context. Therefore, the extent to which cities follow their own local policies while conducting international activities is an answer to this question. In this context, the strategic approaches of cities in the field of city diplomacy mean that the field in question should not only be developed in line with global policies, but also be evaluated as a field that is used to serve the interests of cities. City diplomacy is becoming a part of local service policy rather than an objective in the field of international relations, given the increasing complexity of urban problems, interdependence, limited resources and growing needs. In this context, this study analyzes the concept of city diplomacy together with the development process of cities' international relations. It provides a classification of types of city

diplomacy and presents an evaluation of five main areas in which city diplomacy activities are used by municipalities.

THE CONCEPT AND TYPES OF CITY DIPLOMACY

There are many different ways in which cities can engage in international relations. Diplomacy is used as an umbrella term to describe the international activities of cities (Amiri and Sevin, 2020, p. 3). After the Second World War, one of the most appropriate definitions for the concept of city diplomacy is certainly "a means of promoting social cohesion, conflict prevention, conflict resolution and post-conflict reconstruction in order to create a stable environment in which local communities can live in peace, democracy and prosperity" (Sizoo, 2007, p. 2). This definition draws attention to the importance of the role of local authorities in peacebuilding and considers city diplomacy as a subset of traditional public diplomacy. The international relations of local governments were expected to support reconciliation processes and build lasting peace in the post-war period (Husson and Mestre, 2017). The other most commonly used definition of city diplomacy today is that it is the institutions and processes through which cities, or local governments in general, engage with actors on the international political stage to represent themselves and their interests to each other (Van Der Pluijm and Melissen, 2007, p. 6). Similarly defined, city diplomacy is international relations of cities seeking to build mutual relationships between local governments to overcome specific challenges (Chan, 2016, p. 141). In general, city diplomacy includes the international activities of autonomous regions, states and municipalities, while narrowly, the units mentioned are local governments, mostly municipalities. As such, it is the conduct of international relations or global politics by representatives of cities. Daoudov (2012, pp. 39, 40) considers the plans and strategies of the local government towards the international arena as the concept of local foreign policy, while city diplomacy is a method of implementing local foreign policy.

In the process, city diplomacy has been subject to changes and developments in its scope (Acuto, Morissette, and Tsouros, 2017, p. 16). Since the 2000s, it has been the case that city diplomacy activities have been evaluated within a more strategic approach (Balbim, 2016, p. 145). The range of issues that bring cities together in the global arena has become a rather comprehensive one. In particular, international city networks have been considered as a tool for the integration of different sectors and policy areas (Acuto and Rayner, 2016, p. 1153). The establishment of close economic, political and social ties between cities in different countries is facilitated by the growing trend of mutual cooperation and learning between organizations (Campbell, 1987, p. 87). Trade and economic development issues have also become increasingly important to local governments in recent years. Local governments have chosen to structure their existing social and cultural relationships according to their economic relationships. This has resulted



in successful municipal initiatives. Therefore, the field of city diplomacy is also reconstructed as an economic tool for local governments, enabling the growth of agglomeration economies (O'Toole, 2000, p. 54; Cremer, De Bruin and Dupuis 2001: 388; Shaw and Karlis, 2002: pp. 46-47). Functionally, the economic, cultural and political aspects of city diplomacy cannot be separated. The cultural functions consist largely of experiential relations. But they also aim at improving the position and competitiveness of cities in the global market (Lefebvre and Ernesto, 2007, p. 321). According to Dougless (2002, pp. 64-67), the most difficult level to reach in the field of city diplomacy is the political functions. These functions have a higher decision-making power than individual cities. In accordance with its cultural, economic and political functions, the city engages in a variety of city diplomacy activities to achieve its goals. Although sister city agreements are among the traditional roles of cities in public diplomacy, cities are involved in multiple and diverse international activities such as the hosting of the Olympic Games, the organization of various cultural and educational exchange programs, the use of city branding strategies and advocacy (Amiri and Sevin, 2020, pp. 1-2). In order to understand how cities, use international strategies in their urban policies, it is useful to categorize city diplomacy activities.

Table 1: Classification of city diplomacy activities

Bilateral relations	Sister city agreements Cross-border cooperation
Multilaretal relations	International networks and operations Interntional Project Patnerships
Continuous activities	International events Intenational visits
Other activities	

Source: Prepared by the authors of the study.

Sister city relationships are typically diplomatic activities between two local governments in which at least one side interacts and benefits by representing the city (Van Der Plujim and Melissen, 2007). The most common type of bilateral relationship is a sister city agreement. Sister city relationships as a city diplomacy activity refer to agreements signed between cities in different countries. Sister city agreements are a type of activities that have established cultural, economic, political and social relationships between world cities (Jayne, Hubbard, and Bell, D. 2011, p. 25). Since the 1950s, the number of sister city agreements between cities in general has increased rapidly. By the end of 1988, sister city agreements were known to exist in 190 countries. During this period, the majority of sister city agreements in the world were within

European countries (Zelinsky, 1991, pp. 7, 11-13). By the 1980s, sister city agreements had spread to the former Eastern Bloc and Third World countries (Clarke, 2011, p. 115). Today, the number of sister city agreements continues to grow. Over the past four decades, there have been more than 11,000 sister city agreements between different municipalities in at least 159 countries (Clarke, 2011, p. 115). With the impact of the globalization process, sister city agreements have evolved into a more complex relationship (O'Toole, 2000, p. 45; Sllalahi, 1998, p. 29). Sister city agreements have evolved into a more concrete and functional form of cooperation (Joenniemi and Janczak, 2017, p. 424). Since the 1970s, the possibility of achieving mutual benefits covering various objectives has been the focus of sister city agreements. The agreements have come to cover various objectives such as trade, investment, economic, socio-cultural and tourism activities. They have focused on achieving mutual benefits (Sllalahi, 1998, p. 30). Cross-border cooperation is, in fact, a part of the sister city agreements. Neighboring communities on both sides of an international border are often expected to share problems (Maathuis, 2007, p.8). In this context, cross-border cooperation is a type of bilateral relationship between local units that are geographically adjacent to each other. Adjacency also applies to regions separated by sea (Tschudi, 2002). For example, Istanbul (Turkey) and Odessa (Ukraine) are sister cities on the Black Sea. The relationship between the two cities is also cross-border cooperation.

Multilateral relations are a type of city diplomacy in which more than two actors on behalf of cities from different countries have a role in the process (Van Der Plujim and Melissen, 2007). International networks and organizations are one of the types of multilateral relations through which cities can work together to address different challenges (Fontana, 2017, p. 17). The main characteristics of international networks and organizations are that they have horizontal relationships, provide benefits related to economies of scale and externalities, advocate for cities, provide knowledge and practice transfer, and facilitate cooperation among different actors (Garesche, 2007, p. 108). International networks and organizations have a wide range of objectives. Issues such as the environment, energy, peace, poverty, gender and inequality play an important role in the formation of networks (Acuto and Rayner, 2016, pp. 1151-1153). For example, the United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) is the most active and comprehensive network of local and regional governments, representing 240,000 cities around the world and about 5 billion urban dwellers in 140 countries. UCLG provides services in many areas such as creating joint projects between cities, bringing global agendas to the local level, representation and advocacy (Union of Local Governments of Turkey, 2021). The issues that bring international networks together are quite broad. Issues such as the environment, energy, peace, poverty, gender and inequality are among the important topics in the formation of networks (Acuto and Rayner, 2016, pp. 1151-1153). On the other hand, local governments can establish international project partnerships with foreign cities, NGOs, universities, or foundations to find solutions to

common problems, transfer practices, or provide funding for the implementation of local policies. An international project can also provide benefits such as learning about the culture of the geography in which they live and identifying similarities or differences with other geographies (Maathuis, 2007, pp. 8, 35). In this context, the European Union (EU) is one of the leading organizations providing funding for the implementation of many projects for local governments (Ozcan, 2006, p. 15). For example, the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA) II process, which covers the period 2014-2020, defines "democracy and governance" as a pillar and lists "promoting town twinning with EU local governments" among its priority areas. Accordingly, the Turkey-EU Town Twinning Project, which includes capacity building and grant components, is being implemented. The project "aims to enhance cooperation between Turkish and EU local authorities and to improve their capacities in line with the EU *acquis*". Through the implementation of the grant scheme, the project aims to "strengthen the existing sister city relations, transfer the experience in EU countries and improve the interaction between local authorities"(yereldiplomasi.gov.tr).

Continuous activities are evaluated regardless of the number of actors involved in the process. In contrast to previous types of city diplomacy activities, they constitute a more flexible field of activity. Educational programs, scientific conferences, historical and cultural symposiums, excursions, festivals, and international Olympic games are among the scientific, cultural, and sports activities in which cities and municipalities are involved (Daoudov, 2013; Ersavas Kavanoz, 2017). International events play an important role in the international recognition of cities. Events are not limited to the participation of local representatives. NGOs, the private sector, universities, foundations, associations and other relevant institutions can also participate in these events. Between the actors that come together through different events, there is a transfer of experience and an exchange of knowledge. The events are also a source of motivation for the future diplomatic actions of the cities. International visits also provide opportunities for local units to meet and exchange views with other actors (Jones and Blunt, 1999, p. 387). Business visits provide an opportunity to exchange experiences in many areas, such as waste management, crime, education, youth and employment. Business visits allow local governments to get to know each other's environments and teams. This gives them the opportunity to consider different ways of approaching a situation or problem.

City diplomacy activities have continued to grow since the early 20th century, when international organizations were established and sister city relationships gained momentum after World War II. Changes in the context of city diplomacy activities over the years have gone beyond post-war peace and reconciliation efforts, resulting in the proliferation of a wide range of city diplomacy activities. On the one hand, these relationships are intensifying and expanding globally, and on the other hand, they can be developed in

different ways by each implementing country. Examples of city diplomacy activities include letters of goodwill, the opening of representative offices abroad, development cooperation diversified through research and development programs, and many other types of relationships. The types of city diplomacy activities can also include other types of activities, it should not be forgotten. In this context, city diplomacy is a complex system of governance that is intertwined in the sense that one model of cooperation that has been initiated can be transformed into or promote another model of cooperation.

The study is composed of an introduction and four main sections. The second section explains city diplomacy conceptually and presents the classification developed in the context of city diplomacy types. The third section explains the theoretical framework developed for the strategic use of city diplomacy to emphasize the relationship between international relations and local interests. In this section, five strategic uses of city diplomacy for cities are explained. Finally, the study concludes with a conclusion that includes the evaluation of the article.

THE IMPORTANCE OF CITY DIPLOMACY IN THE CONTEXT OF LOCAL SERVICES / LOCAL INTERESTS

The positioning of cities' international relations within the global governance system is important. When evaluated in the context of local service delivery, city diplomacy is closely related to local interests. Local governments evaluate the field of international relations in search of local interests. Local interests are what local governments expect international relations to achieve for the city and its citizens (Husson and Merse, 2017). Local interest emerges where the local character of local governments and their international character merge. In this sense, city diplomacy becomes an explicit or implicit part of local politics. Grandi (2020, p. 9-10) refers to this as value-based city diplomacy. Value-based city diplomacy leads to the establishment of international partnerships to implement or defend goals that the international sphere deems relevant to the local community. The expansion and global recognition of city diplomacy is largely linked to a values-based approach. Value -based city diplomacy revolves around tangible benefits for the local community as a whole. One of the expected outcomes in this context is the improvement and strengthening of local service delivery. The second is enhancing attractiveness, a common priority in both the economic and cultural dimensions of city diplomacy. This reflects the role of local governments as providers of services and competitive advantages. This paradoxical reality of local governments sometimes forces them to make choices in the international arena. For example, international initiatives by local governments in search of financial resources create a dilemma between accepting restrictive rules and protecting local autonomy (Jessop and Sum, 2000). The economic orientation of local governments in the global arena leads them away from their daily and community life. Value-based city diplomacy will become possible to the

extent that local governments are able to strategically use the advantages they gain from international recognition at the local level. In this context, important questions include how cities' internationalization strategies work, what are the tangible effects of internationalization on the city and its inhabitants, what specific opportunities cities seize through international activities, and how internationalization affects the negative effects of globalization (Vaquer, 2022, p. 3).

Local governments often tread the line between networking and joint efforts to maintain the attractiveness and economic vitality of cities in the international arena and meeting pressing local needs (Curtis and Acuto, 2018: 14). In other words, international relations create a contradictory situation between the role of local government as "efficiency (increasing pressure to incorporate local interests into the global sphere)" and "service provider (obligation of local government to meet community needs)". To say that all international relations developed by local governments will produce positive outcomes in terms of urban services is only possible if international relations provide possible positive outcomes in terms of urban services, and if the realization of these relations depends on taking into account local interests. Therefore, the alternative way of providing services in local governments in the context of local diplomacy should be sought at the intersection of local governments' international relations and local interests.

Although local governments have no constitutional or legal obligations, their implicit obligations in the global arena stem from their technical competence in dealing with urban problems and their constitutionally recognized role as democratic representatives of the population they govern (Salomon, 2011, p. 47). Papisca (2008, p. 27-28) argues that the basis for the international role of local governments should be sought in international human rights law. The argument that human development and human security can be pursued where citizens actually live makes local governments guarantors of international human rights. Discussing the importance of city diplomacy for the local politics of cities is also an answer to the question of the legitimacy of the local in the global arena. In this context, the tangible effects of city diplomacy activities in urban areas are related to five different areas: participation; transfer of knowledge, practice and experience; tackling complex problems; developing institutional capacity; and providing access to financial resources. These relationships are explored under separate headings and through case studies.

Strengthening the City's Participatory Mechanisms

In the paradigm shift in public administration, the notion of the common good to be created through public value, dialogue and negotiation comes to the fore (Bryson, Crosby and Bloomberg, 2014, p. 446). City diplomacy is based on network power and has evolved into a vast system of relationships between cities and other local, national and global actors (Curtis and Acuto, 2018, pp. 2, 6). The ways in which cities

connect and relate to each other are drawing a new map of the urban age (Acuto and Rayner, 2016, p. 1158). Without the obligations of sovereignty, cities can overcome ideological constraints and focus on concrete goals. Due to the nonpartisan and pragmatic nature of local governments, city diplomacy offers potential engagement tools for networked solutions (Chan, 2016, p. 141). The participation mechanisms that city diplomacy can create are considered at three different levels: citizen participation (individual participation), the city's cooperation with other actors at the local level (institutional participation), and the city's engagement in the global sphere (global participation).

The approval and support of the population concerned is crucial for the success of local governments' international strategies. The aim is to stimulate the local population's commitment to certain universal values, such as human rights, cultural, ethnic and religious diversity, natural disasters, aid, peace and education, and to arouse their interest in world issues (Garesche, 2007, pp. 60-61). The project between the municipalities of Amstelveen (the Netherlands) and Villa El Salvador (Peru), a bilateral relationship that began in 1997 and lasted from 2004 to 2007, focused mainly on municipal financing and environmental management. However, a large number of neighborhood environmental trainings (international events) increased citizen participation in environmental management (Bontenbal, 2009, p. 186). At the local level, the cultural interactions that occur in the context of international events have local consequences regarding citizens' sense of belonging and adapting to the city. Citizen participation is an indirect result of city diplomacy activities, even though it is often not the primary objective.

Local governments are not the only responsible actors in the field of international relations. Many actors are involved in the international relations of the local. This is a redefinition of the concept of governance (Husson and Mestre, 2017). A coalition of motivated communities comes together in city diplomacy. NGOs, universities, trade unions, chambers of commerce, associations, foundations, cooperatives and civic groups are potential partners in local government internationalization (Garesche, 2007, p. 68). City diplomacy is like political coalition building in this sense. The important thing is to find stakeholders who are willing to cooperate around a common goal (Wijnem 2010, p. 15). In this direction, especially in the 1970s, a trend could be observed in the course of twinning from developing friendly relations to economic, cultural and tourist relations, where mutual benefits were achieved (Sllalahi, 1998, p. 30; O'Toole, 2000: p. 45; Ramasamy and Cremer, 1998, p. 449; Joenniemi and Janczak, 2017, p. 424). For example, in the bilateral cooperation between the municipalities of Treptow-Kopenick (Germany) and Cajamarca (Peru) (1998), two municipalities and a business representative from Cajamarca participated in workshops in Germany on urban environmental management, ecological efficiency and public participation, and learned about relevant processes in Germany. Internships were offered in companies and organizations

located in and surrounding Treptow-Kopenick. In this context, a conference was organized in 2000 with the participation of non-municipal institutions such as municipalities and NGOs. The conference brought together many actors in waste and water management (Bontenbal, 2009, pp. 184-185). Similarly, one of the prominent participation practices of the 21st century is the interaction of cities with other cities abroad. International networks promote equal participation among cities. They transcend the traditional power struggle between nation-states and city diplomacy. C40, for example, is realizing "global" governance as an institutionalized platform that enables cities to globalize, to make their voices heard in global public policy, and to connect the diverse global governance with the everyday life of cities. In this context, it supports its member cities by providing financial resources and sharing experiences, and helps them come together to overcome technical constraints, especially regarding climate change (Chan, 2016, pp. 135, 136).

Cities are increasingly seeking to connect at the global level. Engaging cities in the global arena increases their capacity to act and allows them to harness the benefits of international recognition for their own policy goals. To increase the participation of cities in the global arena, a wide range of tools are available. What is important is the extent to which these tools can be linked to the day-to-day activities of cities. How city diplomacy takes cities beyond the nation-state hierarchy and out of their local contexts is demonstrated by the London Olympics. But city diplomacy is a complex field. It has much more to offer cities than the integration of the local into the global. Again, the Olympic Games have served as a catalyst for local action. For example, hosting a mega sporting event like the Olympics has led London to implement many green public diplomacy practices (Acuto, 2013, 287, pp. 309-310). Membership in international networks, such as international mega events, is an important city diplomacy activity that helps cities to strengthen themselves internationally. Research argues for a more integrated and strategic approach to the existing potential of international networks at local and global levels (Acuto, Morissette, and Tsouros, 2017, p. 14).

Knowledge, Practice and Experience Sharing

Transferring local services through learning is one of the most important aspects of city diplomacy for cities. Cities are not equal in terms of resources. They have different levels of capacity. The learning process allows cities to speak the same language, to share and address problems together, and for each city to contribute its different experiences in solving problems (Johnson and Wilson, 2009, pp. 211-212). It is important for cities to benefit from other experiences that allow them to gain different and creative perspectives in solving problems, even if a project or plan may not have the same positive or negative results in one city as in another (Council of Europe, 2015, p. 1-2, 7). In this way, city diplomacy contributes to the

incorporation of global experiences into local policies. It brings knowledge exchange and learning processes to the global arena.

International networks are new forms of institutionalized urban networking. They facilitate the sharing of resources and knowledge. ICLEI for sustainability, UNESCO for culture, UN-Habitat for urban settlements, and the World Health Organization (WHO) for public health reflect the strategic direction of city diplomacy through network-based initiatives that facilitate the sharing of resources and knowledge (Acuto, Kosovac, and Hartley, 2021, p. 3). In a similar vein, C40 is a network that supports cities to collaborate effectively, share knowledge, and take meaningful, measurable, and sustainable action on climate change (Wu, 2020, p. 22). Efforts to transfer knowledge are also being put into practice. For example, an online portal that allows municipalities and citizens to access comprehensive data at the local level, such as demographic trends, economic and environmental indicators, and information on municipal financing, was created in 2012 through a collaboration between the South African Local Government Association (SALGA) and the Centre for Municipal Research and Advice (CMRA), the international cooperation agency of the Dutch Union of Municipalities (Kaliati, Kachieng'a, and de Lanerolle, 2017 cited in Grandi, 2020, p. 103). The exchange of information between sister cities is also extensive. Sister city relations are also a form of city diplomacy, involving the exchange of experiences and best practices, in which most cities are involved. In Turkey, a similar learning process has been observed in the sister city relationship between Trabzon and Zigetvar (Hungary) (Ersavaş Kavanoz and Erdem, 2019, p. 199) or between Istanbul and Odessa (Ukraine) (Erkut and Baypinar, 2006, p. 15). Especially in the case of Istanbul and Odessa, similar problems (environmental problems in the Black Sea region) can be shared. Similar needs can be met for settlements that share the same borders. Common problems and needs provide a suitable environment for several settlements or administrative units to meet and find common solutions. However, in most cases, sister city agreements are far from being sustainable and effective diplomatic tools according to the content of the partnership agreements. This is due to the failure to select appropriate partners. For the sustainability of sister city relationships and the realization of the expected benefits, the choice of partners is crucial. Generally, two cities (or communities and sites) should be comparable and possess the characteristics necessary to be compatible partners (Zelinsky, 1991, p. 4). For example, it may be important for the sustainability of the relationship between two cities to be comparable in size (population) or to be geographically close or distant. According to Gil (2021, p. 342-344): "Sister cities with similar population sizes can be beneficial to both cities. This is because large cities often seek the attention of similarly sized cities, while smaller cities in search of similar experiences through sister city relationships may not be attractive to large cities. According to Sergent (cited in Zelinsky, 1991, p. 23): "The distance between sister cities should be neither too great nor too small. Too great a distance results in high financial

costs and makes it difficult to maintain a sufficient number of exchanges; too short a distance hinders learning about other cultures and ways of life.

The importance of city diplomacy in sharing knowledge, practices, and experiences is reaffirmed by the Covid-19 pandemic and smart city practices. International networks allow cities to collaborate and share information and approaches to the pandemic's impact on cities (Acuto, Kosovac, and Hartley, 2021, p. 7), allowing cities to better manage the pandemic collectively. Shortly after the WHO declared H1N1 a pandemic, the mayors of the C40 network published the Agenda for a Green and Just Recovery to address the crisis (Solarczyk, 2020). Scandinavian cities such as Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Finland, Iceland, and Norway have set an example for many cities in smart city practices. However, until recently, they did not have a platform to share their expertise. International events were the places where these cities could share their best practices. Later, the Nordic Smart City Network was launched to support smart city practice, and the network's first project, the Nordic Urban Living Labs (2018-2020), was created as a web platform to facilitate collaboration and communication (Spielberg-Stelzer, 2020, cited in Grandi, 2020 pp. 105-106).

Tackling Wicked Problems

A wicked problem is a problem area with no clear definition, no end point, no right or wrong assessments of solutions to problems, uncertainty about the nature of problems and their solutions, one-off solutions, problems that develop as a symptom of other problems at the same time, and effects of problems that have significant consequences for human life (Rittel and Webber, 1973). In the context of their different characteristics, many public problems such as disasters, water management, food, poverty, environment, and migration can be characterized as wicked problems. Forms of governance based on collaborative and network governance come to the fore precisely when dealing with wicked problems. City diplomacy provides a platform for cities to come together with other cities and actors to share knowledge, practices and resources in the fight against wicked problems. Cities are actively engaged in global governance on a wide range of wicked problems, from climate change to public health to human migration. Multilateral relationships are particularly important in addressing complex issues. They bring together different resources, knowledge and perspectives, and provide a multidimensional perspective.

The environment is an important motivation for the formation of international networks, especially as a wicked problem. Acuto and Rayner (2016, p. 1156) found that most of the networks they analyzed focused on environmental issues in their classification of urban networks. Approximately 30% of the networks focused on environmental issues. In addition to the environment, other important issues within the scope of urban networks were poverty, gender, inequality, energy, and peacebuilding. It was also found that

when city networks are seen as tools to link sectors and policy areas, these issues become more diverse and intertwined. The Covid-19 pandemic, which is known to have first appeared in Wuhan on December 29, 2019, and was declared a "pandemic" by the World Health Organization (WHO) on March 11, 2020, is a phenomenon that demonstrates the importance of city diplomacy in the context of wicked problems. Shortly after the WHO declared Covid-19 a pandemic, Eric Garcetti, Mayor of Los Angeles and President of C40 (Cities Climate Leadership Group), brought together 45 mayors from around the world. In the fight against the pandemic, cities have led efforts to improve their capacity to prevent transmission, create a guide, share tools and strategies to do so, and provide emergency health services efficiently and effectively (Pipa and Bouchet, 2020, p. 602). C40 is just one of the networks cited in academic studies as one of the effective efforts in support of the local response to Covid-19. Other important findings about the role of cities in the global policy arena during the Covid-19 pandemic include the medical supplies, such as masks, provided through international city cooperation (Solarczyk, 2020), the rapid communication networks, and the learning processes they developed. According to Acuto, Kosovac, and Hartley (2021, p. 7), such practical actions provide an opportunity for Covid-19 to test the ability of cities to rapidly reorient their policy focus and mobilize collectively in response to a problem that affects the whole world. In the fight against the pandemic, cities have led efforts to improve their capacity to prevent transmission, to create a guide, to share tools and policies in this direction, and to provide emergency health services efficiently and effectively (Pipa and Bouchet, 2020, p. 602). In city diplomacy, cities can usually establish international relations directly or through informal channels. Developments in communication technologies also facilitate this process. In addition, although city diplomacy is an important value in competition, cities are relatively cooperative. While nation-states pursue inward-looking policies, cities act on the principle of multilateralism, relying on their network connections and bilateral relationships to address global challenges, often taking collective action with cities in other countries.

Developing Institutional Capacity

The objectives of capacity building include increasing knowledge and skills, achieving specific competencies, strengthening the possibility of realizing the mission, improving individual and organizational performance, and improving organizational culture (UN-Habitat, 2020, p. 3). Capacity building in local governments ensures that their services can be carried out effectively and efficiently (Vincent and Stephen, 2015, p. 1). Therefore, there is a relationship between capacity building and local services. How can the city and local communities be managed more effectively and efficiently with limited resources? Institutional capacity building is important for local governments. They need sufficient and qualified staff, technical equipment, and resources to meet their increasing roles and responsibilities.

Capacity building is a specific aspect of city diplomacy. Many cities value city diplomacy activities for their capacity building potential in areas such as human resource development, institutional strengthening, and reform (Berse, 2019, pp. 5-6). City diplomacy workshops, exchange programs, and courses can provide opportunities for staff training. City diplomacy can focus on improving governance processes, systems, structures, or institutional culture. In particular, through advocacy, local governments can target higher institutions and their mandates, including institutional and constitutional reforms (Bontenbal, 2009, pp. 182, 185). For example, since 2001, the Ile-de-France region (the regional government in which Paris is located) has funded and provided technical assistance for an exchange and assistance program with Latin America on the professionalization of local public services. The program has proven to foster collective learning among more than 20 local governments on human resources management, career services, management and finance, etc. (Garesche, 2007, pp. 137-138). Bilateral relationships in city diplomacy have also been found to have an impact on capacity building activities. The international partner with more experience can support the recipient partner as a resource city (Merrick and Peter, 1999, p. 386). Capacity building is the first proposed benefit of having an international development partner at the individual level. Especially for cities in developing countries, this is an important incentive to engage in city diplomacy. Berse (2019, p. 5) points out that the acquisition of new knowledge, know-how and skills in the context of capacity building contributes not only to the recipient city, but also to the source city:

Table 2: Mutual benefits in international cooperation of local governments

Elements of Cooperation	Source Unit	Beneficiary Unit
Technology transfer	No	Yes
Skills transfer	Yes	Yes
Knowledge transfer	Yes	Yes
Know-how transfer	Yes	Yes
Financial aid	No	Yes
Cultural understanding	Yes	Yes

Source: Berse, 2019, p. 5

Business visits by local representatives at the international level are also important for institutional capacity. Business visits enable local officials and staff in local governments to get to know each other's environments and teams. International networks and organizations are another area of city diplomacy where cities can bring together their knowledge and skills in capacity building, providing various benefits to member and non-member cities. For example, UCLG's Capacity and Institution Building (CIB) Working



Group is a technical platform for capacity building for local government staff and local government associations.

Access to the Financial Resources

Resource mobilization includes all activities related to the securing of new and additional resources in an organization, as well as the better use and maximization of existing resources (Seltzer, 2014). Problems related to financial issues in local service delivery can arise both in terms of lack of resources and ineffective use of existing resources. When confronted with such problems, local governments try to find alternative resources, and in this context, they tend to cooperate with international actors. Local governments use different types of city diplomacy activities, such as participation in international networks and organizations, membership in international local government associations, acquisition of external partners, and application for international funding sources (Durukal and Genc, 2015, p. 334). This is also an answer to the question of why local governments are in search of cooperation with international actors.

The issue of financial resources is the economic aspect of city diplomacy. City diplomacy is one of the ways to generate new or additional resources. (Van Der Pluijm and Melissen, 2007, pp. 25-27) Local governments develop collaborative forms of cooperation with their partners in the international arena and generate alternative methods to benefit from economies of scale. Another economic dimension of city diplomacy is based on the theory and practice of city branding. Here, activities are organized to increase the national and international recognition of cities by creating a brand value for the city. In this framework, the main priorities of local actors for economic gain are mostly economic initiatives such as the attraction of foreign investment to the city, the stimulation of tourism through promotion and marketing activities, and the hosting of international organizations (Erdogan, 2020, p. 502). Cohen (2021, p. 350), who examined the extent to which sister city relationships, a common program in Israel, affect local tourism, found: "As the number of sister city agreements signed between Israeli cities and foreign cities increased, the number of tourists visiting Israel in the relevant years increased dramatically. Similarly, both New Zealand and Chinese cities have found that sister city agreements have played an important role in promoting tourism growth and stimulating economic development (Carruthers, 2006).

In line with EU and other funding programs, local governments engage in various activities through international projects (Erdem and Ersavas Kavanoz, 2021, p. 34). For example, funding provided by embassies in Turkey, cross-border regional funds (European Evangelical Alliance), regional programs, UN agencies, international financing institutions (Global Heritage Fund), European Commission specific grant calls, credit institutions (International Finance Corporation), regional development agencies, and EU pre-

accession financial assistance programs (IPA funds) are among the financial resources that local governments can use through international relations (www.yereldiplomasi.gov.tr).

CONCLUSION

After the Second World War, city diplomacy was conceived as a way of fostering post-war friendships and cultural ties, especially through sister city relations, but today it has come to define more and more the role of global connections intersecting with local ones. Within the scope of the study, city diplomacy activities have been categorized in different ways in order to better understand the tangible effects at the local level. The categorization has a permeable and intricate structure. However, some types of activities stand out in particular ways in terms of their impact on local services. First of all, it is possible for participation to occur in different ways, directly or indirectly, in all city diplomacy activities. In city diplomacy, bilateral or multilateral relations increase the opportunities for cities to come together with a wide range of actors and cooperate in solving local problems. Here, the actors that cities come together with can sometimes be other institutions and organizations such as NGOs, companies, associations at the local level, as well as foreign cities. While cooperation enables cities to take concrete steps against problems, the impact of city diplomacy on citizen participation is often indirect. In their relations with actors at higher levels of government, cities create a link between the global and the local by participating in global policy-making. The exchange of knowledge, practices and experiences is one of the most prominent aspects of city diplomacy, and international networks and organizations in particular ensure the rapid dissemination of information among the world's cities. The recent Covid-19 pandemic has once again highlighted the importance of local exchanges between the world's cities. Cities are also actors in the process of tackling wicked problems, and cities are also emerging as places where these problems are felt concretely. The inherent uncertainty of wicked problems requires that they be addressed through collaborative solutions. In the context of city diplomacy, multilateral relationships in particular bring together a wide range of actors to address a wicked problem from multiple angles. The effective and efficient delivery of services at the city level is directly proportional to the development of the institutional capacity of local governments at the individual and institutional levels. Global linkages increase the potential for cities to learn from other cities and to improve their own institutional structures and human resources to deliver better services. One of the major problems faced by cities/local governments is financial insufficiency. Many international organizations such as the EU, international networks of which cities are members, and international projects provide additional financial resources for the implementation of urban policies. It is important to understand what kind of "urbanity" or "locality" cities/local governments construct as a result of their global

connections. In this context, city diplomacy emerges as a source of motivation that benefits and facilitates the implementation of local policies.

The impact of city diplomacy activities on local service delivery is shaped by local governments' experience in international relations. City diplomacy activities play an important role in developing relationships with actors at different levels, including citizens, and in increasing participation mechanisms in the city. In many city problem areas, solutions are sought by creating platforms for the exchange of knowledge, practices and experiences. In this context, city diplomacy is also an important tool for enabling different actors to work together to tackle complex problems. City diplomacy activities provide many opportunities for the municipality to improve and develop its institutional capacities for more effective service delivery. City diplomacy activities allow the city administration, which is trying to respond to unlimited needs with scarce resources, to create additional financial resources within the city, especially through the use of promotional strategies, and to use existing resources more effectively and efficiently in this context.

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