

Mayors in Local Politics: A New Look

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Mayors in Local Politics: A New Look

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ABSTRACT

Since the second World War, cities have become more important both economically, and politically all over the world. As this trend has established itself, city leaders – and more particularly their mayors – have assumed greater importance as political actors. This importance is visible in the local context, but more and more city mayors are operating at both a national and international level. Given the wider scope of mayors in a more globalized world, what are the implications for our understanding of local politics? This paper will consider some of the major issues around this question, and suggest new lines of research on the appropriate role and function of mayors, especially mayors of big cities.

KEYWORDS



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1. Introduction: Larger, more populous, and more complex cities worldwide.

Since the end of the Second World War, urban populations have been growing at a furious pace. This is particularly the case for regions in the global South, but it is also (to a lesser degree) true for the global North. And as the planetary urban population increases in proportion to what is left in rural areas – from 36.6 percent of the total in 1970 to 53.6 percent in 2014 (United Nations 2014, 78), the size of cities is also growing. Thus, in 1970 there were only 3 cities in the world with a population of 10 million or more; 15 with 5 to 10 million; and 126 cities with populations of 1 to 5 million. Forty-four years later, there were 28 cities in the first (largest) group, 43 in the second group, and 417 in the third group. By 2030, the United Nations Population Division estimates that there will be 41 cities with population of 10 million or more, 63 with 5 to 10 million, and 558 with a population of 1 to 5 million. In short, more of the population lives in cities, and there are more large cities (United Nations 2014, 79). Of the 28 largest cities in the world as of 2014, virtually all have been growing in population since 1970 and only one (Tokyo) is expected to show a decline in the period up to 2030 (United Nations 2014, 90).

One aspect of this population trend deserves more attention. Cities around the world are growing significantly larger, in terms of their geographical coverage (Angel, Parent, Civco and Blei 2012). At the same time, their average population size is increasing rather markedly. Thus, in the 25 year period from 1990 to 2015, the average population size of cities over 300,000 increased in every main region of the world, as Table 1 shows. Based on UN population figures, the largest average growth was, as expected, in the least developed region (Africa), and the lowest average growth was in the most developed regions (Europe and North America, and Oceania).

**Table 1. Average Size of World Cities (over 300,000),
1990-2015**

| REGION | Number of Cities | 1990 | 2015 | Total Increase (in %) | Avg. Yearly Increase, 1990-2015 |
|---------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------|-------------|--------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|
| WORLD | 1684 | 743,990 | 1,334,960 | 79.4% | 3.2% |
| Africa | 187 | 580,410 | 1,306,010 | 125.0% | 5.0% |
| Asia | 877 | 667,000 | 1,416,210 | 112.3% | 4.5% |
| Europe | 254 | 823,940 | 905,000 | 9.8% | 0.4% |
| North America | 151 | 990,960 | 1,416,580 | 46.1% | 1.8% |
| LAmerica and Caribbean | 202 | 923,760 | 1,477,980 | 60.0% | 2.4% |
| Oceania | 13 | 1,009,560 | 1,398,620 | 38.5% | 1.5% |

Source: United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division. (2015). *World Urbanization Prospects: The 2014 Revision* New York: United Nations.

There are many consequences of this trend towards larger cities. One consequence is that cities are occupying a more important place in the world's economic system, but at the same time their political representatives are invested both with more resources, and with more incentives to pursue the interests of their constituents. In addition, and as cities grow in size, they become more complex in many respects, including in socio-economic differentiation. More interests are created, with more and more complex demands. Finally, as a result of a worldwide trend (interrupted only occasionally) to decentralization (Stren 2012; Smoke 2013), cities (and other local government bodies) in many regions of the world have been given both more functions and more powers. How have these changes affected their major political representatives, the mayors?

2. The Formal Powers and Status of Mayors

In spite of the major changes going on in and about cities, the formal functions and powers of their mayors – if we can believe established textbooks and guides to local government structure – have remained strangely static. In the US literature, one of the most important distinctions is between municipalities with mayor-council systems and those with council-manager systems. In either case, the mayor may be elected, but his/her functions as described in most accounts appear to be almost entirely local. For example, an extensive survey undertaken during the 1990s of local government officials in a number of countries (including the US) asked about the following mayoral issues: education, social welfare, streets and parking, mass transit, public health/hospitals, parks and recreation, low-income housing, police and fire protection, capital stock, number and salaries of municipal employees. Although these issues could have an international dimension, they are essentially local in origin (Clark, Merritt and Siroky, 2004). More recently an authoritative survey of “local policymaking” in *The Oxford Handbook of State and Local Government* surveys the scholarly literature on the subject up to the point when the chapter was published (in 2014). Two issues are noted in this survey. One issue, expenditures on policy, is that the overwhelming constituent elements of local policy-making and spending are on local services. The second issue is that cities differ in the interests they represent and in the distribution of these interests both geographically and politically. These interests, however, are all defined by their local nature. The chapter, with some 104 references, contains virtually no discussion of local government outside the United States (Hajnal 2014). A survey of 848 mayors of nineteen major American cities who were in office between 1820 and 1995 finds that mayoral electoral success – as measured by tenure in office – comes to those who physically develop their cities, who improve law enforcement, and who provide social services (McNitt 2010). A more recent survey of mayors from 104 large US cities (with populations exceeding 160,000) over the period of 1992 to 2012 examines the influence of mayoral performance on their seeking of higher office. The article concludes that mayors are more likely to seek higher office (such as Senator, Representative, or Governor) if they have performed well in terms of three major measures: the city has gained in population, crime has decreased, and the city has hosted a major event such as a presidential nominating convention. Only one of these three factors, however – a decrease

in crime rates – seems to have affected their rates of success in seeking higher office (Heberlig *et al* 2017). And all three factors have an entirely local focus.

In Canada, where local government under the Constitution comes under the direct purview of the provinces, mayors and their roles are defined by provincial legislation. In Canada's largest province, Ontario, local government functions are defined in considerable detail in the 2001 Municipal Act. The list of major functions of the local councils (cities, towns or rural counties) include classic local matters: roads and highways, zoning and signs, transportation, public utilities, parks and recreation, drainage and flood control, parking, animal control, economic development services including support for markets and exhibitions, health and safety, licensing and protection of the natural environment (Ontario, *Municipal Act 2001*). But in a small subparagraph (226.1) we are told that the "head of council" (who may be an elected mayor) "shall...act as the representative of the municipality both within and outside the municipality, and promote the municipality locally, nationally and internationally; and...participate in and foster activities that enhance the economic, social and environmental well-being of the municipality and its residents" (Cited in Sancton 2014, 228). While the structures to support these extra-municipal activities are not spelled out in the Act, the function is proposed as a legitimate part of the role of the head of the council.

The extension of the role of mayors from a local to an international platform is the theme of a very important book by the late Benjamin Barber, entitled *If Mayors Ruled the World* (2013). In this book, supported by a number of case studies of mayors in large cosmopolitan cities around the world, Barber argues that (a) mayors are better able to deal with complex issues, particularly in a non-ideological manner, than are representatives of nation states; and (b) these mayors are closer democratically to their constituents than are the representatives of states who make up international bodies. While he speaks mainly of mayors of very large cities, the attributes Barber describes include much higher political approval ratings than legislators or chief executives of nation states (Barber 2013, 84), a strong practical rather than ideological approach to current problems, and being personally engaged in their cities and their issues. As a result, suggests

Barber, and because cities are already deeply involved in international networks (chapter 5, table 3, 118-9), they ought to play a much more active role in international fora dealing with such problems as global warming, international terrorism and violence, and a variety of social issues. As mayors, he argues, they are better able and positioned to deal with many of these issues than are nation states through established international institutions.

A major area of analysis left out by the normative approach – as important as it has been – of Barber to the international activities of mayors is: why do they choose to increasingly operate on the international stage? Being more democratic leaders than other national representatives, or being more practical and experienced with regard to global issues does not answer this question. Before we can answer this question with any confidence, we need to survey – at least briefly – some of the most important literature on the international activities of mayors, in both northern and southern regions of the world. As we do so we will discern several patterns. One is that, as mayors gain in local legitimacy (through elections and increased powers and responsibilities) they often choose to promote their local agendas by linking with other cities and international networks that support the same political approach. This suggests that the involvement of mayors in international or extra-territorial events and relationships is increasing over time, as cities grow and as the world becomes more interconnected. A second pattern revealed is that, by travelling and representing their cities internationally, mayors may both increase their local support base through appealing to patriotic loyalties, and through supporting local business and policy groups that have international connections. But individual cases are extremely contextual, and no two mayors are remotely alike. We begin our survey with some examples of British mayors.

3. Examples of international initiatives of mayors

London, UK. A number of examples illustrate what McNeill (2001, 355) calls a “new mayoral class” intervening at both national and supranational scales. In London, the creation of a directly elected mayor (by independent candidate Ken Livingstone) by the Labour administration in 2000 was apparently inspired by the Rudy Giuliani executive style of leadership of New York, seen as able to cut local government bureaucracy. With this background influence, Livingstone

“developed a prominent and networking style of working” (Greasley and Stoker 2008, 729), although his international activities began well before this time.

The election of Livingstone’s “‘new urban left’ regime” (Gordon 2003, 5) as the first mayor of London was preceded by tensions with Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher in the 1980s, when Livingstone had been head of the Greater London Council (GLC). Livingstone had entered into discussions with Gerry Adams of Sinn Féin, then banned from entering Britain. Given this expanding gap between the GLC and the national government and Livingstone’s increasing international independence, Thatcher famously abolished the GLC. Exploring the London Plan of the early 2000s through the city’s global role, Gordon (2003) shows how the London case can be understood in terms of external relations and how the city and the mayor presented themselves to establish legitimate claims to resources controlled by the central government. In this way, Livingstone acted as “a voice for London” (Gordon 2003, 12). Livingstone went on to make a successful bid for the 2012 summer Olympics. Sporting mega events puts major cities – and their mayors – at the center of international relations. And the environmental focus that London adopted as a theme in planning the Olympics was an extension of its claim to international leadership in tackling climate change (Acuto, 2013b).

A subsequent mayor of London became worldwide “breaking news” with his criticism of US Republican Presidential candidate Donald Trump in the spring of 2016. The Labour candidate for mayor at the time, Sadiq Khan was trained as a lawyer and, having been a Labour MP (2005-16) had spent time in two portfolios in the cabinet of Gordon Brown (Minister of State for Communities, later Minister of State for Transport) during the first decade of the millennium. As a mayoral candidate against a redoubtable Conservative candidate in the spring of 2016, he was many things to many people. In the words of the Economist, Khan was “firmly pro-European, comfortable with immigration and a model of liberal Islam (he backed gay marriage and fought to keep a local pub open), he encapsulates the city’s contradictions: internationalist and parochial, swaggering and insecure, original and clichéd, socialist and capitalist” (*Economist* 4 February, 2016). In a single preferential vote system (in which voters voted for a preferred and

second preferred candidate), he received 56.8% of the votes in two rounds, to win handily and assume office in early May, 2016. Almost immediately, he freely expressed criticism of the Trump candidacy, which had pledged to ban Muslims from entering the U.S. When Trump was asked about Khan's victory, he said he was "happy" that London had elected its first Muslim mayor, adding that there would always be "exceptions" to the travel ban. The BBC, in an interview on May 10, asked Khan about these remarks. Khan replied "I think Donald Trump has ignorant views about Islam", and said that he supported Hillary Clinton. "I hope that she trounces him" he said. In a lengthy answer to another question about whether he would welcome Trump in Britain should the latter eventually win the US election, he said,

Personally I'd like him to come here so I can introduce him to Muslims like myself who are tolerant, respectful and I can show him that all parts of London are open for business. There are no no-go areas. I'm in favour of debating him, showing him how wrong he is, proving what a buffoon he is. But, he's got to recognize his views lead to people thinking all Muslims may be terrorists, thinking that Muslims are the other, that's why his views are so divisive and so offensive. I want to educate him to realize the follies of his ways so when he loses the Republican race, hopefully and when he loses the Presidential race I'm looking forward to educating him and giving him a tutelage on how to be a good citizen, a world citizen (BBC Interview, May 2016).

Subsequent long-distance verbal skirmishes between the two men continued over the course of the next year, culminating in an exchange initiated by Trump following a terrorist attack in London in June, 2017, in which 7 were killed and many others injured. In one of many comments meant to reassure Londoners, the mayor said that there would be an increased police presence in the city, but "there's no reason to be alarmed". Trump misinterpreted this as a reference to the attack, and criticized the mayor through Twitter for making light of a serious and dangerous situation. Khan's office replied that Trump had taken the mayor's remarks out of context but that he had no time for recriminations. Trump replied (again on Twitter) that this was a "pathetic excuse". (New York Times June 4, 2017; The Atlantic June 5, 2017; New York Times June 5, 2017).

The recriminations stopped only after other issues took over the news cycle in the US, and the presidential administration turned to other matters.

Other European Mayors. The theme of an expansion of the personal power of mayors through international initiatives is taken up in an important study of Madrid, Rome and Budapest through the 1990s and 2000s. Martins and Rodriguez Álvarez (2007) show that over this period, these major cities and their mayors took many important initiatives overseas. In the case of Madrid, Mayor Alberto Ruiz-Gallardón utilized various international initiatives (such as bidding for the 2012 Olympics) as a means of strengthening and institutionalizing a relationship between the city council and both business and labor, while at the same time strengthening the role of the city within its regional government. In the case of Rome, Mayor Walter Veltroni strengthened his support from local civil society groups by a wide range of overseas undertakings (such as setting up the City of Rome's Office for Peace in Jerusalem in 2002). And the Mayor of Budapest, Gabor Demszky used the city's membership in international bodies to professionalize the city's civil service, making it more independent of the national government which was operating in a different political direction (Martins and Rodriguez Alvarez 2007). Variations in approaches among these three important European mayors, while they can be explained by local historical and institutional contexts, may also be a function of the personal qualities of the mayors themselves, particularly since (with enhanced informational techniques resulting from a growing internet penetration) the personal element in leadership has been enhanced. ¹

Another set of examples includes the creation of fora for mayoral collaboration. In Europe, these have included the Eurocities movement, the EU's Committee of the Regions, the Council for European Municipalities and Regions, and the URB-AL network. In Europe, the EU's interest in the local dimension drove the spread of city-to-city connections (Acuto 2013a). For example, mayors in Eastern Europe are extensively involved in cross-border networks with their counterparts in other European countries through co-operative activities, yet geographic location and historical ties matter for these relations, making it clear why these countries engage considerably with their European counterparts (Baldersheim et al. 2002). As a result, it is not

merely the local administration itself but the particular mayor elected that makes a difference in the international involvement of cities.

From a more aggregate level, a large comparative study of European mayors clearly shows that the mayors of the largest cities, responding to a wide range of interests and extra-jurisdictional pressures, are the most likely to promote visionary international futures for their cities (Bäck, Heinelt and Magnier 2006, 190). The political support function which the mayor derives from these activities is very similar to the support which other sub-national leaders (such as state governors, provincial premiers) gain from international travel. For example, a study of the chief ministers of five Indian states shows that since the mid-1990s they have taken an increased interest in foreign relations, but that each of five ministers identified has used international travel to strengthen very context-specific and particular aspects of their domestic political support base (Wyatt 2017).

Cape Town, South Africa. South African mayors are often active in international networks. For example, the mayor of Cape Town, Patricia de Lille – first elected in 2011 – has an active policy platform that combines both local issues and international initiatives. Locally, de Lille (representing, for most of her career, the opposition Independent Democrats and more recently Democratic Alliance party) has promoted better service delivery to disadvantaged neighbourhoods, improved public transport, and improved the local planning process. Internationally, however, she has been equally active, promoting the city as a tourist destination and a focus for international investment. She currently serves as the Chairperson of the Global Parliament of Mayors, a group of some 60 mayors from around the world, begun in 2016 in The Hague, Netherlands. De Lille's interest in climate change locally (promoting solar water heaters, and becoming the first African city to use electric buses in the public transport system) is reinforced internationally by her membership in a number of international networks: the Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy, the World Energy Cities Partnership (of which she is Vice President), and the Global Commission on Economy and Climate.

New York City. While the examples we have just discussed cluster in the period after the turn of the present century, there are some interesting cases of mayoral initiatives before this. Ed Koch, the mayor of New York City from 1978 to 1990, is an excellent example. Although he was primarily concerned to rescue the city financially, since it had defaulted on its debt three years before his election, he needed to improve the delivery of all the city's major services. Through a number of strategic policies and the promotion of a bureaucratic capacity to strengthen New York's role as a global financial centre, Koch succeeded in revitalising the city. In the end, says Jonathan Soffer, Koch developed "a municipal foreign policy that fit both with the neoliberal vision that gained strong currency among a portion of New York's financial community and with the nationalist aspirations of some of the city's many ethnic groups" (Soffer 2008, 121). One of Koch's tactics was to form well-publicized relationships with overseas cities whose national groups formed major voting blocs in New York. After a visit to Cairo in 1981 during which he was photographed sitting on a camel "making like Laurence of Arabia", Koch formed a sister city relationship with Cairo. While the external political effects of this initiative were apparently minimal, the move "was popular with part of Koch's Jewish base, as well as with New York's racial minorities", and in addition gave support to Israel, one of the mayor's personal interests (Soffer 2008, 129). He also revived a longstanding relationship with Tokyo (first signed in 1960), helping to encourage much-needed Japanese investment in New York; with Beijing in 1980; with Madrid in 1982; and with Santo Domingo in 1983. In 1985 the mayor funded a separate office under the authority of the diplomat Gillian Sorrensen, to manage the sister city program. As the home of the United Nations, which contributed \$450 million to the city's economy in 1978, diplomatic relations with cities around the world were an essential element in the New York mayor's domestic policy (Soffer 2008, 127).

In a very recent book, entitled *Climate of Hope*, Michael Bloomberg, the mayor of New York City from 2001 to 2013, explains his well-known involvement in the international climate change movement (Bloomberg and Pope 2017). An electrical engineer with an MBA from Harvard University, Bloomberg could understand both the scientific explanations underpinning climate change, as well as appreciate some of the economic benefits of climate-change policies. As he

recounts his personal journey along this path, Bloomberg explains that he began to understand the connection between climate, health, and the economy when the city first started to plan for an extra million inhabitants that it would likely have to accommodate by 2030. This exercise would have to take into account the problem of waterfront erosion because of global warming (New York City has 520 miles of waterfront), attempt to provide cleaner air for the city's residents (especially those with asthma and breathing difficulties), and develop and maintain adequate parks and public facilities for the young professionals that he hoped to attract to the city. In his quest for local solutions, he visited California, where he learned about the state's ambitious plan to cut greenhouse gases; and he worked with other cities around the country in pledging to meet and exceed US carbon emission targets called for in the 1997 Kyoto Protocol. Internally, he upgraded his office administration:

To help guide our work, we created a new agency, the Office of Long-Term Planning and Sustainability, and a public-private advisory board composed of leaders from various industries and environmental groups. Three months later, our administration adopted ten goals that would guide our work in drawing up a plan for New York's future [PlaNYC]. They included giving New York City the cleanest air of any major city in America, and shrinking our carbon footprint 30 percent by 2020 – two deeply ambitious goals (26).

In the book, Bloomberg goes on to explain what he learned from other cities as he was developing New York's environmental policies -- how Bogota and Curitiba improved their bus service, how Copenhagen and Paris encouraged more biking, and how London and Singapore controlled traffic congestion during peak hours. While "congestion pricing" was eventually rejected by the New York State legislature, it was a very popular idea in New York, since the funds would be reinvested in mass transit. When he was asked why he took all these initiatives, Bloomberg – according to his own account – always said because it was directly and measurably in the interest of New Yorkers to do so (32). Significantly, he joined Mayor Ken Livingstone of London with representatives from eighteen cities to highlight their climate work; this eventually grew to the

C40 Cities Climate Leadership Group, which by 2017 had over 90 cities producing more than one-quarter of global GCP. Bloomberg currently serves as president of its board of directors. (32).

Reykjavik, Iceland. Jón Gnarr, who served as the mayor of Reykjavik between 2010 and 2014, became known as somewhat of a global cultural ambassador for Iceland. Gnarr – a former comedian – founded a new political party in 2009 called the Best Party, originally a satirical political party. Unlike most other mayors in working in international governance, Gnarr put Iceland on the map through his comedy and general quirkiness, earning him the claim to be “the world’s coolest mayor” (Gnarr, 2014). Thus while Gnarr himself showed little interest in the EU or international networks, his overall governing style and playfulness captured international attention.

Los Angeles. Mayor Eric Garcetti of Los Angeles has promoted an explicit global city approach, perhaps unsurprising in a city such as L.A. In an inaugural State of the Global City address in January 2017 to the Pacific Council on International Policy, Garcetti noted, “Los Angeles, it is time for us to lead” (Pacific Council on International Policy 2017). A report from the same organization attests to the international character and connections of Los Angeles (Neu 2015). Garcetti also chairs the US Conference of Mayors Infrastructure Task Force, for which he sees being globally competitive as an integral element, and is the co-founder of the Mayors National Climate Action Agenda, a network of US mayors to support efforts for federal and international policymaking. Garcetti’s interest in Los Angeles acting as a global city continues what previous L.A. mayors had started, such as James Hahn (2001-4) and Richard Riordan (1993-2001). With a new L.A. charter as of 1999, Hahn had more power over appointments influencing the global economy (Erie 2004).

As a general rule, mayors have also been influential through a “growing transnational agency [that] has rested mainly on a self-appointment by mayors to the central stage of global policymaking” (Acuto 2013a, 485). As Acuto (2013a) notes, this is especially the case in global environmental governance, given the key importance of local issues in international environmental politics. Examples include the role of mayors within negotiations surrounding the

UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, and the Cities for Climate Protection (CCP) campaign to gather a coalition of governments to account for at least 10 percent of global greenhouse gas emissions. The result is that city leaders “have progressively moved from ceremonial and advocacy roles to facilitating and policymaking functions” (Acuto 2013a, 485-486). As Acuto (2013b, 309) notes, “central to initiatives like the C40 are mayors and city leaders, who have progressively taken on as their prerogatives the duties of partaking in global debates and providing ‘local’ solutions to ‘global’ challenges.”

4. The expanded importance of cities

All of this activity on the part of mayors is based on the growing importance of cities, both socially and politically. A number of factors appear to support this trend. For one, cities are important as a source of economic growth (Jacobs 1970). As Polèse (2005, 1446) notes in a review of the literature, the connection between cities and national economic growth is often made implicitly, although “the presence *per se* of cities (or roads) is not a sufficient condition to generate long-term economic growth.” Glaeser’s (2012) work on efficiency and innovative properties of cities is a case in point. For Glaeser (2012), cities stimulate innovation by enabling face-to-face interactions, attracting talent and bringing about competition through entrepreneurship, enhancing social and economic mobility. This includes flows of professionals, tourists, artists and migrants among certain cities, but also financial trading networks, global commodity chains, imports and exports (Sassen, 2006). As Sassen (2006, 27) notes, “looking at globalization through the lens of these specificities allows us to recover the particular and diverse roles of cities in the global economy.”

However, according to Polèse (2005), it is hard to make a case for causality in economic growth. Indeed, “cities (urban places) are important not because they are unique engines of economic growth, but because it is increasingly in urban places that people live and that economic activity takes place” (Polèse 2012, 1447). Indeed, there has been a longstanding concern in urban research with the importance of both migration and large immigrant groups. Some of this

research has focused on the flows of migration around the world, as well as the importance of large immigrant groups (Glick-Schiller and Çağlar 2011).

International actions as an extension of local politics

One entry point to understand the changing roles of mayors is through a subset of work that explores international actions of elected officials such as mayors as an extension of local politics. Beal and Pinson (2014) point out that despite growing attention placed on the international activities of cities (Jayne et al. 2011), there has been little academic attention to the role of local elected officials and why they pursue international activities. As Jouve (2007, 389) proclaims, “in the near future, the creation of mechanisms of cooperation between municipalities in the area of international strategy will be one of the main challenges of urban governance.”

One perspective views city internationalization through lens of urban regimes. For example, based on case studies of Paris, Rome and Montréal, Jouve (2007, 375) explains the nature of the international strategies of cities as an outcome of the creation of particular urban regimes as “certain social groups enter into competition and/or form coalitions to influence the content of municipal policies and project different registers of action, different logics, on an international scale.” As Jouve (2007) explains, public authorities are unable to conduct urban policies on their own, and as a result they collaborate with civil society actors who contribute resources, expertise, legitimacy, and values.

The idea that the international strategies of mayors are profoundly local is a point taken up by McCann and Peck (2010). In a foray into conceptualizing cities in the world, McCann and Peck (2010, 175) highlight that despite the constant motion of policymakers to internationalization, such policies are “fundamentally local, grounded, and territorial.” Part of this locally-grounded nature of cities then is the connection to locally dependent interests, such as those involved in growth coalitions (Logan and Mototch 1987). McCann and Ward (2010, 176) thus use the term “local globalness” of urban policy to underline the very territoriality of such urban-global activities.

Within this trend towards research on cities going global, there has been considerable attention on internationalization in Europe. For example, in their survey of mayors in the Czech Republic, Poland and Slovakia, Baldersheim et al. (2002) focus on the forces driving international networking. The authors note that although the motivations may vary, the reasons relate to variations in problems, opportunities, locations, politics or institutional factors. As Baldersheim et al. (2002, 127) note,

Some mayors may be driven by the force of the problems they face in their municipality; others may be chiefly interested in financial or other forms of support that may be gained from international contacts or international funds, such as EU or Phare funds; others again may hope that contacts with internationally prestigious institutions may rub off on them and add to their own personal status.

To explain these variations, Baldersheim et al. (2002) divide these types of motivations into three categories: 1) push factors such as local problems and pressures; 2) pull factors such as opportunities and incentives (Marks et al., 1994); and 3) facilitating factors such as personal resources, political style and culture, and institutional features (Baldersheim and Ståhlberg 1999).

According to Beal and Pinson (2014), in Europe, the motivation beyond mayors' participation in international activities has more to do with urban policy-making than with local politics, by which they refer to the construction of an electoral base. Based on a case study of two mayors' strategies in Saint-Étienne, France, the authors find that the functions of international initiatives are related more to the activities of coalition-building and resource mobilization than to constructing an electoral base. Indeed, rather than maintaining their power base, elected officials put effort into social and professional networks reinforcing urban projects, which depend on participation in international activities. As a result, mayors – what Beal and Pinson (2014) term

urban leaders – are more engaged in influencing public policies and legitimizing their efforts through outputs.

Particularly relevant in understanding these international actions as an extension of local politics is the recent work by Osmany Porto de Oliveira (2017). Porto de Oliveira (2017, 6) makes a case for “Ambassadors of Participation,” who have used their political, theoretical, technical and practical authority, in addition to their cosmopolitan skills, to support the adoption of participatory budgeting in a transnational form. As Porto de Oliveira (2017) explains, the diffusion of participatory budgeting throughout Brazil occurred through the actions of mayors, activists and networks linked to the Worker’s Party (*Partido dos Trabalhadores*, PT) and civil society. PT thus tried to establish participatory budgeting in the Brazilian cities under its control – both as a laboratory and as a political platform. In that sense, PT used the international diffusion of participatory budgeting as a domestic strategy (Salomón 2011). Overall, this emerging work on the international actions of elected officials as an extension of local politics is an important component to understanding the growing role of mayors as political actors.

5. Conclusion: A new understanding of local politics in big, globalized cities

As we have tried to show in this paper, local politics in many large cities is no longer purely local. Influences from the outside through migration, through trade, through tourism and through policy networks are enlarging the political perspectives of elected officials, particularly elected mayors. While much of their concern is still with local issues and the daily problems of running a city, increasingly their own constituents as well as their political networks pursue interests both nationally and internationally. In the process of following these interests, mayors reinforce the global web of relationships in which their constituents are involved, and extend the influence of their cities beyond the purely local.

This new protocol of politics has many implications, but two are particularly relevant for this paper. One implication has to do with the kinds of people who will be recruited into local politics. With a greater likelihood of elected mayors having to present themselves, and to represent their city at the national and international level, more cosmopolitan, perhaps more educated and

experienced local leaders will have an advantage in the eyes of their electors. A second implication, at a more practical level, is that cities will have to prepare and organize themselves for a more robust international role. Staffing will have to include protocol officers with foreign experience, resources will have to be channeled to international issues and network maintenance, and better relationships will have to be developed between city (and mayoral) staff and the international consular corps in each country. Cities are already becoming international players; their mayors cannot be left behind.

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¹ Even in Canada, where elected mayors are almost always under the legal authority of higher levels of government, some mayors are able to control their cities in a unique fashion over a long period of time (Urbaniak 2014).