

Cities' participation in international decision-making processes - the impact of selected European cities on international law and international relations

What if the mayors ruled the world? – asked Benjamin Barber in 2014. This provocative question draws attention to the phenomenon of the growing role of cities in international relations. The objective of the project is to catalogue areas of intensive cooperation of cities at the international level where cities' participation in decision-making processes occur. This will enable to define the role and impact of selected European cities on the nation-State, governmental authority, sovereignty and shaping or creating international law, in other words the role and impact of those cities in the international relations field: whether and how they participate in such relations and in international law decision-making processes and whether they bypass or attempt to bypass States in the field of international law making and its enforcement. Cities and other urban areas are underrepresented in the literature on international relations, including foreign policy analysis, as well as on international law. In the latter they are almost absent, especially in the international law text books. And their role in creating and implementing international law is also growing (in other words, the room for their manoeuvre in the realm of international relations and international law decision-making is widening). The research of cities in the global politics and their impact on nation-State, sovereignty and international law has thus, by definition, to be interdisciplinary. Hence, this project will require analysis of cities from different angles: international relations, international law, European Union law, global multilevel governance and sometimes urban studies' angle. This will be additional value of the project.

In order to verify the hypotheses formulated below, it is necessary to answer the following research questions: What is the status of European cities in the international legal and political system? Are cities capable of creating international law? On the basis of already visible trends related to the growing role of cities in international relations, can it be already observed that cities formally or informally participate more actively in the international law-making and its enforcement? Do cities use any of the attributes of international legal subjects (are they subjects or merely objects of international law)? What is the legal status of various regulations created by cities and their networks? What are the main areas of intensive cooperation of cities at the international level where international decision-making processes occur? What kind of tools do they use to participate in decision-making processes?

The hypotheses of the project are as follows: the city is becoming an active and informal actor in the international law-making and enforcing and the role and status of cities within their States and in international relations and law is reflected by the international connections and activities of the cities.

To verify the hypotheses it is necessary to research European cities' activities and status through the lens of: the Council of Europe Congress of Local and Regional Authorities; the Committee of the Regions of the European Union; city networks such as one of the most largest networks of European cities, i.e. Eurocities in Brussels and United Cities and Local Governments headquartered in Barcelona with Europe section in Brussels which includes *inter alia* the Association of Polish Cities; the sister cities system with reference to the cities under examination; participation in international conferences, summits, meetings such as Paris Climate Summit in 2015 or summits organized by the UN-Habitat (with its liaisons office in Geneva and Brussels, the latter accredited with the European Union institutions). Those various activities of cities are called city diplomacy which embraces direct contacts and mutual assistance between cities across the borders (including *inter alia* cultural diplomacy or sport diplomacy). Finally, the future of international relations with cities as its actors must be examined and a prognosis made. Here the role and potential of the Global Parliament of Mayors (in the Hague) will be analysed.

The basic criterion for the selection of research methods is the need to verify the adopted research hypotheses, and thus achieve the assumed research objective. It is also necessary to take into account the interdisciplinary nature of the issues under examination. Research methods mirror the qualitative character of the present research and as such include: comparative analysis, interviews, formal-legal analysis (including the analysis of various legally binding and non-binding documents) and the critical analysis of the relevant literature (international relations, international law, political science, urban studies literature).

The impact of the expected research results on the scientific development includes enlightening of the future of international relations and the role of cities in them, through the lens of European cities. The project will make it possible to assess the impact of European cities on the international law decision-making and implementing processes and their actual and potential role in it.