Big city mayors: Still avatars of local politics?

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ABSTRACT

With globalization and the decline of nation states, cities have become more important economically and politically around the world. As this trend has established itself, city leaders – and particularly their elected mayors – have assumed greater importance as political actors. In important respects they are avatars of local politics. This significance is visible in the local context, but more city mayors are operating at the local, national and international levels. The paper looks at the local political motivations for this trend, focusing on two factors: local constituency influences, and attempts to strengthen important local policy directions. Given the wider scope of elected mayors in a more globalized world, what are the implications for our understanding of local politics?

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

Within the overall context of globalization, urban populations have been growing at a furious pace, both in the Global South and North. Thus, there are more large cities, and more people live in cities. Of the 28 largest cities in 2014, virtually all have grown in population since 1970 (United Nations, 2015). Moreover, cities are growing significantly larger in terms of their geographical coverage (Angel, Parent, Civco, & Blei, 2012). Between 1990 and 2015, the population size of cities over 300,000 increased in every region of the world, for an average yearly increase of 3.2% (United Nations, 2015). One consequence of this trend towards larger and more populous cities is that cities are occupying a more important place in the world's economic system and are important as a source of economic growth (Jacobs, 1970) and of innovation. For Glaeser (2012), cities stimulate innovation by enabling face-to-face interactions, attracting talent and bringing about competition through entrepreneurship, and enhancing social and economic mobility. This includes flows of professionals, tourists, artists and migrants, and financial trading networks, global commodity chains, imports and exports (Sassen, 2006).

These financial and migratory networks have important local effects. Because of a worldwide decentralization trend[1] (Grindle, 2007; Smoke, 2015; Stren, 2012), cities (and other local government bodies) in many regions have, overall, gained more functions and powers. An important result is that local political representatives have been invested with more power and incentives to pursue their constituents' interests. As cities grow, they become more complex socio-economically and with more interests, there are complex demands on policymakers.

Given these well-known transformations, how have these changes affected mayors? Despite numerous assertions about the importance of mayors, their situation is not well understood. The most well-known work on these transformations by Benjamin Barber (2013) suggests that mayors should "rule the world." Yet researchers note that "the role of city leaders has remained relatively unscrutinised" (Acuto, 2013a, p. 483) and "rarely are their roles discussed in any detail" (Sattherwaite, 2009, p. 4).

In an important contribution to this discussion, Mark Jayne (2011, p. 802) argues that mayors are now 'avatars' which "allows engagement with both the political and policy world of mayors' (un)knowing involvement in (un)bounded networks and webs." The idea of mayors as avatars (or virtual spiritual embodiments/personifications of the politics of their cities) is attractive, as mayors have become central to the way we think about urban politics. As Jayne (2011) notes, this idea of mayors as avatars, by going beyond the image of mayors as political actors like other local and regional politicians, draws on ideologies of place, community and politics based on both relationality and territoriality as cities "stretch" through time and space and are constituted by interconnected global networks (Amin, 2004; Massey, 2007). For

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[1] Decentralization may be defined as "the transfer of significant powers and functions, along with fiscal responsibility to carry out these powers and functions, from the national to the local level of government" (Stren, 2012, p. 573).

Table 1
Countries with directly elected mayors, by region (City Mayors Foundation, n.d.)

Region	Number of countries	Countries with directly elected mayors
Americas	22	20
European Union	28	10
Europe outside EU	12	6
Asia & Australia	19	11
Africa	9	6

Jayne (2011), using the avatar metaphor permits engagement with both political and policy domains of mayors in unbounded relations of networks and flows. The metaphor thus helps us to understand how mayors clearly play a unique role in relation to the city.

In this paper, we propose to extend the range of this metaphor to focus on mayors as avatars of a politics that is no longer purely local. Rather, mayors – particularly directly elected mayors – underpin a global web of relationships in which their constituents are increasingly involved. But what motivates engagement in these relationships? We argue that two key motivations encourage local elected officials' engagement internationally: (1) the maintenance and strengthening of local constituency support; and (2) the promotion of policies overseas to reinforce the legitimacy of local policy choices. Both elements reflect the dominant interest of all elected mayors: to represent and be influential in local politics. Paradoxically, the more mayors extend their geographic profile, the stronger are their ties to their local political constituencies, which are the most compelling when mayors are elected.

Directly elected mayors have been a feature of cities in the "north" and "south" for a long time, as Table 1 indicates. While there is no comprehensive study of the extent of this institutional format, a count of the countries with directly elected mayors from the City Mayors Foundation's current website shows that directly elected mayors are common. In a separate listing of 129 capital cities around the world, City Mayors shows that 83 (64%) directly elect their mayors (City Mayors Foundation, 2018). While many cities – Copenhagen, Melbourne and Prague – do not directly elect their mayors, the trend supports Hambleton's (2013) argument that this is "an international rising tide." Given that mayors are elected by their constituents rather than appointed by higher-level authorities or selected by other councillors, they should be more responsive to diverse constituencies, and more accountable to the local population. For this reason, this paper focuses on directly elected mayors.

This paper is largely suggestive and exploratory, based on an extensive review of the literature – including biographies, newspaper and media accounts, and research articles – dealing with elected mayors and their behavior since the 1980s. In an earlier paper (Stren & Friendly, 2017), the authors interviewed mayoral staff in Toronto and São Paulo to ascertain the international approaches of each city. Both cities have directly elected mayors. Here we extend the argument to document some of the many other cities in which elected mayors pursue international objectives as a starting point to more adequately understand the role of local elected officials. Given the breadth of this trend, the geographical scope of this paper is global. To explain this dynamic, we first review the formal powers and status of mayors. In section three, we review literature on the international actions of mayors as an extension of local politics, before extending this argument to explore the local political reasons *why* mayors pursue international activities in section four. In the conclusion, we return to the idea of mayors as avatars of a politics that is no longer only local. A schematic outline of the main arguments of the paper, along with major sources, is presented in Table 2.

2. The powers and status of mayors

While mayors around the world pursue international objectives, the literature on mayors is the most elaborate and developed for North America, where the political analysis of cities has been highly influenced by the notion of "city limits," referring to the restrictions on US cities' ability to raise revenue and take on debt (Peterson, 1981). These economic restrictions diminish the intensity of local conflicts over the powers permitted to cities, reduce interest in local issues and voter participation, and steer politics into petty local disputes (Peterson, 1981). Frug (1999) notes that American cities do not have the power to solve their problems nor to control their future development. Rather, cities have powers delegated to them by state governments, which have been traditionally circumscribed by judicial interpretation. The judicial principle called Dillon's Rule, first formulated in the 1870s in the US, asserted that municipal corporations were allowed to exercise only those powers that were essential to their purposes, and were expressly granted by state governments. In a recent study, Schragger (2016, p. 102–3) explains that:

> Lyndon Johnson famously quipped that '[things] could be worse. I could be a mayor.' City leaders exist in a system that demands they meet their responsibilities, but often without the power to do so… Within her sphere, the mayor may be able to exercise significant authority, but that sphere is limited, and she exercises relatively little influence outside of it…The very commitment to the vertical division of authority produces American cities that are "constitutionally" parochial.

To this idea of limited local powers (in theory), Magnusson (2014, p. 1565) underlines the idea of implicit hierarchy for local government everywhere:

> [there is a] commonsense understanding of the way politics is structured. A hierarchy of levels is normally assumed…because the common understanding is that 'beneath' the state system that secures state sovereignty, and 'above' it is an international system that secures state sovereignty as a regulative principle…this hierarchy of levels has to be assumed…So, when attention turns to … the great issues of policy and diplomacy that characterize 'high' politics – the politics of state – it is normally assumed that these matters are above and beyond the domain of urban politics.

According to this common understanding, then, local politics has no relation to international politics.

Despite the major changes occurring in cities, the formal functions and powers of their mayors have remained strangely static. For example, a 1990s survey of local government officials in 23 countries asked about issues of local spending preferences from education to low-income housing. Although these issues could have international dimensions, they are all local in origin (Clark, Merritt, & Siroky, 2003). Similarly, a survey of local policymaking reviews the scholarly literature on US cities, indicating that the overwhelming elements of local policymaking and spending are on local services. It also highlights US cities' differential interests based on the interests they represent and in the distribution of these interests geographically and politically. These interests, however, are all defined by their local nature (Hajnal, 2014).

A strong base in local issues, while long characteristic of American mayors, is clearly changing. In 1977, Yates (1984, p. 177–8) suggested that evolutionary forces "that once made possible the rise of a city hall-based form of governance seem to work against city hall… [U]rban policy problems constantly spill over city boundaries… the centrality and integrity of city hall as a policy-making system have been progressively undermined by the increased involvement of state and national government in urban affairs." He concluded that city hall need not become a "political dinosaur," but urban policy evolution posed major problems for mayors and their governments.

This policy evolution was clearly visible when Yates was writing. A

Table 2

Key arguments and research sources.

Key arguments	Major authors and sources
Big city growth and interest diversity	Sassen (2006); United Nations (2015)
Decentralization	Stren (2012); Smoke (2015)
Mayors as avatars	Jayne (2011)
Trend to directly elected mayors	Hambleton (2013)
Powers and status of mayors	Peterson (1981); Frug (1999)
Emergence of international involvement	Yates (1984); McEnery (1994); Wolff (1997)
Mayors as diplomats	Barber (2013)
Examples of mayors' international initiatives	Baldersheim, Bucek, and Swianiewicz (2002); Bäck, Heinelt, and Magnier (2006); Martins and Rodríguez Álvarez (2007); Soffer (2008); Bloomberg and Pope (2017)
A local political logic: Constituency and policy influences	McCann and Ward (2010); Beal and Pinson (2014); Porto de Oliveira (2017)
Conclusion: New TORs for modern mayors	

study of international civic activism in the 1980s and early 1990s identifies 353 American cities that were active supporters of foreign-policy-related political causes such as promoting a nuclear test-ban treaty, supporting nuclear-free zones, and divestment from South African holdings. The cities were disproportionately located in Massachusetts, New Jersey, and California; in large cities; in cities with large minority populations; and in cities with mayor-council governments where mayors had significant powers (Hobbs, 1994). An example of this trend is an account of "the new city-state" by Tom McEnery, mayor of San José, California from 1983 to 1991. McEnery describes a 1989 visit to Asia as more than a "junket," recognizing "the need for cities to extend their vision beyond provincial horizons" (McEnery, 1994, p. 236). To strengthen the city's ability to work overseas, in 1990 the city established a Center for International Trade and Development to connect with its Office of Economic Development and expanded its sister-city connections. In San Antonio Texas, Mayor Nelson Wolff has detailed his activities to promote the early stages of the NAFTA agreement through visits to Mexico, meetings with President Salinas, and opening a trade office in Guadalajara (Wolff, 1997). Despite public concern for the cost of municipal and state "junkets" in the US (Kincaid, 1989), these kinds of trade and cultural contacts expanded, corresponding to what Clarke and Gaile (1998) characterize as "the fourth wave" of economic policy initiatives, visible among the large sample of US cities they surveyed in the 1990s. In their study, the authors incorporate the economic activities and strategies of cities into historical phases relating to the approaches of city administrations. In the final wave, they saw "policy initiatives aimed at integrating local economies into global markets, developing local human capital resources, and increasing use of telecommunications as a development tool" (Clarke & Gaile, 1998, p. 181).

In Canada, where local government under the Constitution comes under the purview of the provinces, mayors and their roles are defined by provincial legislation. In Ontario, Canada's largest province, local government functions of the local councils (cities, towns or rural counties) include local matters, such as roads and highways, and zoning and signs (Ontario, Municipal Act, 2001). But sub-paragraph 226.1 notes that the "head of council" (who may be elected) shall…act as the representative of the municipality both within and outside the municipality, and promote the municipality locally, nationally and internationally. While the structures supporting these non-local activities are not defined in the Act, the function is a legitimate part of the role of the head of the council. It is of note that Canada is more dependent on international trade than is the US, which might mean that urban economic interest groups in Canada are more concerned with external market relations than in the US. According to OECD (2016) figures, exports in the US were 12% of GDP, while imports were 15%; in Canada, exports represented 31% of GDP, imports 33%. In these figures, the US has the lowest level of trade (both exports and imports) in relation to GDP of all 30 countries listed (plus the European Union).

The extension of the role of mayors from a local to an international platform – already underway by the first decade of the new millennium – is taken up as a normative question by Benjamin Barber (2013). Barber argues that mayors (a) are better able to deal with complex issues, particularly in a non-ideological manner, than are national representatives; and (b) are closer democratically to their constituents than are representatives of states making up international bodies. While Barber focuses on mayors of large cities, the attributes he describes include higher political approval ratings than legislators or chief executives of nation states (Barber, 2013), a practical rather than ideological approach to current problems, and being personally engaged in their cities and issues. Consequently, and because cities are deeply involved in international networks, they should play a more active role in international fora dealing with global warming, international terrorism and violence. Barber's emphasis on the role mayors play locally, and potentially internationally, lends further support to the notion that – particularly when they are elected at large – mayors personify the qualities and aspirations of cities more than other political actors. A direct connection between the elected mayor and the iconic qualities of the city – as implied in the 'avatar' metaphor – was clearly the intention of the British government when they proposed legislation to promote elected mayors in England. In the *Plain English Guide to the Localism Act*, the government argued:

> Many major cities in the world outside of the UK have a strong and powerful executive mayor. The Government believes that elected mayors can provide democratically accountable strong leadership which is able to instigate real change for the benefit of our largest cities. Mayors *will be clearly identifiable as the leader of the city* [emphasis added] and will have a unique mandate to govern as they will be directly elected by all local electors (DCLG, 2011, p. 6).

As of 2018, 8 metropolitan mayors (including London), and 16 city mayors (out of a total of 324 local authorities) were directly elected (City Mayors, 2018).

While the role of mayors in international affairs has been highlighted, and some work has begun categorizing the types of agency that mayors pursue externally, the arguments do not consider the political motivation of mayors in pursuing these international activities. Understanding the logic behind these political actions would clearly help to chart the resources and institutional support mayors need to play this larger role.

3. Mayors on the international stage

Why do directly elected big city mayors increasingly choose to operate internationally? Being more democratically accountable than other national representatives, or being more practical and experienced with global issues (*pace* Barber) does not directly answer this question. Before discussing this issue, we first survey the literature on the international activities of mayors in the Global North and South. In doing this we propose two hypotheses. First, by travelling and representing

their cities internationally, mayors may increase their local support base through appealing to patriotic loyalties, and supporting local business and policy groups with international connections. Second, as mayors gain local legitimacy (through elections and increased powers and responsibilities), they may choose to promote their local agendas by linking with other cities and international networks that support the same political approach. We can call these two hypotheses the "constituency hypothesis" and the "policy hypothesis." Despite the lack of theoretical analysis on why mayors operate internationally, several examples illustrate what McNeill (2001, p. 355) calls a "new mayoral class" intervening at national and supranational scales. In London, the creation of a directly elected mayor, Ken Livingstone, by the Labour administration in 2000 opened a new chapter in London's political history. The new mayor had considerably more power and centrality in the system (Kantor, Lefevre, Saito, Savitch, & Thornley, 2012). Nonetheless, Livingstone "developed a prominent and networking style of working" (Greasley & Stoker, 2008, p. 729), although his international activities began before this time. For Gordon (2003), this case can be understood in terms of external relations and how the city and mayor presented themselves to establish legitimate claims to resources controlled by the central government. Livingstone thus acted as "a voice for London" (Gordon, 2003, p. 12), making a successful bid for the 2012 summer Olympics. London's environmental focus in planning the Olympics was an extension of its claim to international leadership in tackling climate change (Acuto, 2013b).

In 2016, London mayoral candidate Sadiq Khan became worldwide news with his criticism of US Republican Presidential candidate Donald Trump. Khan was pro-European, comfortable with immigration, a model of liberal Islam, and captured London's contradictions: "internationalist and parochial, swaggering and insecure, original and clichéd, socialist and capitalist" (Bagehot, 2016). Following his election, Khan criticized Trump's candidacy for pledging to ban Muslims from entering the US. When Trump was asked about Khan's electoral 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. In an interview with the BBC about these remarks, Khan highlighted Trump's ignorant views about Islam. Subsequent long-distance verbal skirmishes between the two continued, culminating in an exchange initiated by Trump following a terrorist attack in London in June 2017 (Baker, 2017; Calamur, 2017). Khan, like London mayors before him, occasionally travelled overseas to promote the city. Major visits to North America (in 2016) and to South Asia (in 2017) were heavily reported in the press. In his five-day visit to North America, for example, the mayor visited Montreal, Chicago and New York where (according to his website) he attended 29 events, made 13 speeches to around 3000 people, and was able to share platforms with the Prime Ministers of Canada and Italy, the President of Argentina, the former President of the US, and mayors for all three cities (Mayor of London, 2018).

In a study of Madrid, Rome and Budapest from the 1990s–2000s, Martins and Rodríguez Álvarez (2007) show that these cities and their mayors took many initiatives overseas, pointing to an expansion of the personal power of mayors through international initiatives. In Madrid, Mayor Alberto Ruiz-Gallardón utilized international initiatives (such as bidding for the 2012 Olympics) to strengthen and institutionalize relationships between the city council, business and labor, reinforcing the city's role within its regional government. In Rome, Mayor Walter Veltroni strengthened his support from local civil society groups through overseas initiatives such as setting up Rome's Office for Peace in Jerusalem in 2002. In Budapest, Mayor Gabor Demszky used the city's membership in international bodies to professionalize Budapest's civil service, making it more independent of the national government which was operating in a different political direction (Martins & Rodríguez Álvarez, 2007). Variations in approaches among these European mayors, while they can be explained by local historical and institutional contexts, are also a function of the personal qualities of the mayors themselves, particularly since the personal element in leadership has been enhanced.

Another set of examples includes the creation of fora for mayoral collaboration. In Europe, where the EU's interest in the local dimension drove the spread of city-to-city connections, these include the Eurocities movement, the Council for European Municipalities and Regions, and the URB-AL network (Acuto, 2013a). 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, showing why these countries engage considerably within Europe (Baldersheim et al., 2002). Thus, it is not merely the local administration itself but the particular mayor that makes a difference in the international involvement of cities.

From an aggregate level, a comparative study of European mayors shows that the mayors of the largest cities, responding to a range of interests and extra-jurisdictional pressures, are most likely to promote visionary international futures for their cities (Bäck et al., 2006). The political support function which the mayor derives from these activities is similar to the support which other sub-national leaders gain from international travel. Indeed, a study of the chief ministers of five Indian states shows that since the mid-1990s, they have taken increased interest in foreign relations, but that the ministers used international travel to strengthen context-specific and particular aspects of their domestic political support base (Wyatt, 2017).

Likewise, South African mayors are often active internationally. In Cape Town, Mayor Patricia de Lille – elected in 2011 – has an active platform combining local and international initiatives. De Lille promoted the city as a tourist destination and for international investment. She serves as the Chairperson of the Global Parliament of Mayors, a group of 60 global mayors begun in 2016. Her interest in climate change locally is reinforced internationally by her membership in the Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy, the World Energy Cities Partnership (she is Vice President), and the Global Commission on Economy and Climate.

While these are recent examples, there are some interesting cases before this. Ed Koch, New York City mayor from 1978 to 1990, was concerned with rescuing the city financially, since it had defaulted on its debt in 1975. Through strategic policies and by promoting New York's bureaucratic capacity as a global financial centre, Koch revitalized the city. Koch developed a municipal foreign policy fitting both a neoliberal vision among New York's financial community and the nationalist aspirations of the city's ethnic groups (Soffer, 2008). He formed well-publicized relationships with overseas cities whose national groups formed major voting blocs in New York. After visiting Cairo in 1981, Koch formed a sister-city relationship with Cairo. While the political effects were minimal, the move was popular among part of Koch's Jewish base and New York's racial minorities, giving support to Israel, a personal interest of Koch (Soffer, 2008). He also revived a longstanding relationship with Tokyo, encouraging Japanese investment in New York; with Beijing in 1980; with Madrid in 1982; and with Santo Domingo in 1983. In 1985, Koch funded an office under the authority of diplomat Gillian Sorrensen to manage the sister-city program. As the home of the UN, diplomatic relations with global cities were essential in Koch's domestic policy (Soffer, 2008).

Like Koch, Michael Bloomberg, New York City mayor from 2001 to 2013, played an active role internationally through his involvement in the international climate change movement (Bloomberg & Pope, 2017). Bloomberg connected climate change, health, and the local economy when the city first started planning for an extra million inhabitants that it would likely accommodate. Bloomberg learned from other cities in developing New York's environmental policies including Bogota, Curitiba, Copenhagen, Paris, London and Singapore. When asked why he took these initiatives, Bloomberg noted it was in New Yorkers' interest. He joined London Mayor Ken Livingstone with representatives from 18 cities to highlight their climate work, growing into the C40 Cities

Climate Leadership Group (Bloomberg & Pope, 2017).

4. International initiatives: A local political logic

To understand the changing role of mayors, we have reviewed literature that considers their new functions as an extension of local politics. What theoretical ideas emerge from this reading? For Beal and Pinson (2014), despite growing attention to the international activities of cities (Jayne, Hubbard, & Bell, 2011), there has been little academic attention to the *reasons why* mayors pursue international activities. But some studies stand out.

Jouve (2007) offers a perspective on city internationalization through the lens of *urban regimes*. Looking at Paris, Rome and Montreal, Jouve (2007, p. 375) explains the nature of cities' international strategies as an outcome of urban regimes, given that "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 he explains, public authorities are unable to conduct urban policies independently; consequently, they collaborate with local civil society actors who contribute resources, expertise, legitimacy, and values. Such collaboration between elected local officials and civil society groups, when it is a stable system with a defined purpose, is the classic definition of what Stone (1989) calls an urban regime.

The idea that the international strategies of mayors are local in origin is considered by McCann and Ward (2010). Conceptualizing cities globally, they highlight how, despite the constant motion of policymakers to internationalization, such policies are "fundamentally local, grounded, and territorial" (McCann & Ward, 2010, p. 175). The locally-grounded nature of cities is connected to locally dependent interests, such as those involved in growth coalitions (Logan & Molotch, 1987). McCann and Ward (2010, p. 176) use the term "local globalness" of urban policy to underline the unique territoriality of such urban-global activities.

Within this trend towards research on cities going global, there has been considerable attention to European internationalization. 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 vary, the reasons relate to variations in problems, opportunities, locations, politics or institutional factors. As the authors (Baldersheim et al., 2002, p. 127) note, there are variations:

> 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.

For Beal and Pinson (2014), in Europe, the motivation beyond mayors' participation in international activities relates to urban policymaking rather than local politics, by which they refer to constructing an electoral base. The authors find that the functions of international initiatives relate more to the localized activities of coalition-building and resource mobilization than to constructing an electoral base. Rather than maintaining their power base, elected officials put considerable effort into social and professional networks reinforcing urban projects; and these networks depend on participation in international activities. Mayors are thus more engaged in influencing public policies and less concerned with their electoral constituencies.

Viewing these international actions as an extension of local politics, Porto de Oliveira (2017, p. 6) makes a case for Ambassadors of Participation – political operators who use their political, theoretical, technical and practical authority, and cosmopolitan skills, to support the adoption of participatory budgeting transnationally. 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 (PT) and to civil society. As for the PT, it tried to establish participatory budgeting in the Brazilian cities under its control as a laboratory and political platform. Importantly, the party (and its elected leaders) used the international diffusion of participatory budgeting as a domestic strategy (Salomón, 2011).

To summarize, several key motives emerge from the sparse literature on the local dimension of mayors' international actions. They help us to better understand the connections which mayors have as avatars of local politics, while also extending their activities nationally and internationally. First, as Beal and Pinson (2014) find, many of these initiatives of local elected officials are tied to *coalition-building and resource mobilization* – what we have called the "constituency hypothesis." Jouve (2007) describes how collective projects between social groups within cities help to explain the content of cities' international strategies. Baldersheim et al. (2002) classify these motivations as 'push factors,' those focusing on the capacity to undertake representation. A second category of motivations derives from the *promotion of public policies*. Examples include the case of the overseas promotion of participatory budgeting by PT mayors in Brazil; the promotion of climate change mitigation policies by the mayor of Cape Town, the mayor of New York and other C40 mayors; and the promotion of pro-immigrant policies by the mayor of London. These examples fit our "policy hypothesis". Although the motivation equation for each mayor is undoubtedly complex and extremely contextual – and varies according to the personal needs and situation of individual mayors (Baldersheim et al., 2002), the local basis of international urban politics is clearly central.

5. Conclusion: Towards a new understanding of local politics

As we show in this paper, local politics in many large cities is no longer purely local. Influences from the outside through migration, trade, tourism and policy networks are enlarging the political perspectives of elected officials, and particularly, elected mayors. While much of these mayors' concern is still with local issues and running a city, increasingly their own constituents and their political networks pursue interests nationally and internationally. In following these interests, mayors reinforce the global web of relationships in which their constituents are involved, extending the influence of their cities beyond what is clearly parochial. As Jayne (2011, p. 807) notes, "circuits, networks and webs of connections bound up in urban governance are constituted, articulated and contested via the agency of the mayor." Building on Jayne's (2011) idea of mayors as avatars (as opposed to actors) offers a theoretical underpinning to understand both the tangible practices of local politics, and the unbounded relationalities fashioned through flows and networks. Mayors are thus avatars of a politics which has transcended the local, but is still grounded in a local political logic.

This new protocol of politics has many implications, but three are particularly relevant. One has to do with the kinds of people who are recruited into local politics. With a greater likelihood of elected mayors representing their city nationally and internationally, more cosmopolitan, perhaps more educated and experienced local leaders will have an advantage in the eyes of their electors. A second more practical implication 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. A third, and more general implication is that it will require both imagination and more research to construct accurate and appropriate terms of reference for mayors in the future. As their offices are defined and

restricted by law, new legislation will have to take into consideration both the national and international perspectives and levels of initiative that are becoming more important in the everyday political life of cities around the world.

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