

Cities as international and transnational actors: history, current dynamics and future role (CITTA)

an ESF Scientific Network

Large cities all over the world are now challenging the dominance of nation states in various areas of policy and culture. In Europe, this trend is being accentuated by several factors, notably integration within the European Union, which is reducing the capacity of the State to regulate societies, and the associated economic convergence signified by the launch of the Euro in 2002. Yet so far there has been no significant comparative study of the changing relationship between city and state based on empirical analysis and put into theoretical perspective. The aim of this Network is to investigate the changing transnational and international role of cities, given their great importance in regulating societies and their increasing political influence.

Urban areas have become actors on the international stage because of their role in regulating the processes of globalisation and decentralisation increasingly independently of nation states. They have also become transnational actors through building networks that cut across national structures in order to promote and protect their own interests. To some extent these networks may conflict with the state and with other regional bodies.

The work of CITTA will be carried out through two major areas of investigation, focusing (a) on city networks, and (b) on cities. City networks are defined as institutionally formalised cooperation between cities. Key questions to be answered include how these networks function, what are the common and competing interests of the participating cities, who the leaders are, and whether networks' effectiveness correspond to actors' expectations. The role of the European Union and its policies on integration will be analysed in the light of the opportunities offered for city networks to develop. This role will be explored through comparison of intra-EU metropolitan areas with equivalents in North America and accession countries. The historical evolution of networks will be set against the development of professional elites and policy communities, as well as the wider trends of municipal autonomy and internationalism. In the end, the analysis should permit the CITTA Network to understand if and how city networking may constitute a response to the territorial impact of globalisation.

The other major focus of investigation is on individual cities as actors, and specifically the agents who represent cities on the international stage: city politicians, business leaders and other local elites or notables. We shall ask:

1) Who leads and mobilises the urban actors? Political actors themselves, business leaders, or other groups? 2) The impact of "foreign policy", and international networking, on the internal governance of metropolitan areas, on the political position of urban actors within local arenas, and on intergovernmental relationships between locality, region, state and supranational levels. The Network has a two stage research strategy. The initial phase will map the networks European cities are involved in, while the second will focus on specific city networks and the paradiplomacy of selected cities. Cities chosen for initial study include Amsterdam, London, Lyon, Madrid, Manchester, Milan, Paris, Rome, and Valencia. In North America, Montreal and Toronto (Canada) will be included as part of a comparative research funded by the Canadian government.

The most important activities of CITTA are seminars, workshops and the exchange of doctoral students. Seminars are meetings of the core group and doctoral students where the progress of the comparative research will be assessed and discussed. Workshops are larger events where the research will be discussed with the academic world and where specific issues will be addressed such as the historical dimension of city networks or the role of civil society in the paradiplomacy of cities. CITTA will also involve doctoral students as full time researchers with the intent to build structural exchanges between doctoral students under the advisorship of the core group and others belonging to additional universities of Europe.

This Network was approved by the ESF Network Group in November 2002 for a three-year period



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The ESF Network scheme is coordinated from the Foundation's Strasbourg headquarters. For further information and application procedures contact:

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