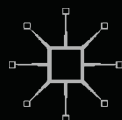




CITIES AS INTERNATIONAL ACTORS

Urban and Regional Governance
Beyond the Nation State

Tassilo Herrschel and Peter Newman



Cities as International Actors

Tassilo Herrschel • Peter Newman

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PREFACE

This book results from our long-term interests in city and regional governance and the ways in which apparently ‘borderless’ challenges—a globalised economy, climate change, migration—have come to dominate the concerns of the policy-makers we talk to. Faith in the ability of national institutions and governments to respond and look after their cities and regions has declined. Cities have been among the first to realise the declining ability—or inclination—of nation states to maintain economic cohesion and comparable conditions of life and opportunities for all. And a rising anti-globalist, cultural nationalism also challenges the legitimacy of international organisations, from the G20 to the EU and the UN. Working at both levels—the global and the local—we became more and more interested in how sub-national actors are responding.

We also became aware of the enthusiastic case for cities and regions to take to the international stage being made by lobbying networks such as UCLG, and some academics such as Benjamin Barber’s notion of a global ‘parliament of mayors’. On the other hand, our conversations with urban and regional policy-makers over the last decade or so suggested to us that city and regional actors were not so much concerned with the big picture of defining a ‘new global governance’, but much more concerned with effective day-to-day management of the impacts of the global on the local. And, whilst some ‘global cities’ were envisioning their global ‘leadership’, many other actors in less glamorous locations were increasingly thinking and acting internationally to better their chances of survival in a globalised world. City and regional actors were telling us about their new international alliances, joining lobbying groups, or exploring new possibilities of joining up with the private sector. This prompted us to try to understand the growing

variety and complexity of these new activities in the international/global arena. So, we became interested in how all the newly engaging, different types of sub-national governments were responding, and what shaped their decisions and strategies: local, regional, national or international factors? And how did they relate to each other and gain influence?

We set on the objectives of both giving an overview of these changes and collecting evidence of the detail of city and regional activities. As we found out from the many discussions we had with policy-makers over the last 10–15 years in different cities across Europe and North America, local factors, such as economic success, political culture and leadership, all combine to a particular—greater or lesser—local impetus to ‘go international’. But this was just one side of the coin. We discovered that nation states continue to matter as they set the conditions under which cities and regions can, and feel the need to, engage internationally, facing either support or obstacles for such action, and that international organisations were increasingly keen to recruit sub-national ‘partners’ to increase the efficacy of their own policies.

Over the past few years, this has involved extensive and often repeated conversations with policy-makers in a large number of localities and government agencies. The international (Swedish–Danish) region of the Øresund has been a particularly inspiring example of such dynamics, illustrating the increasingly more independent role of some of the main cities, the emergence of a division between cities as actors and the ‘rest’ of the administrative regions involved (such as Skåne), the resulting political tensions about responsibilities, loyalties and legitimacies of policies and, last but not least, the continued responsibilities and more or less cogent influence of the nation state. Policy-makers in Malmö, Skåne, Ystad, Landskrona, Helsingborg, Kristianstad, Copenhagen and other locales have over the last 15 or so years provided fascinating insights into the international ambition—and thus increasingly multi-scalar dimension—of local and regional policies, their rationales and challenges. And here, Cecilia Gyllenkrok and Pontus Tallberg need to be mentioned in particular. Similarly, on the other side of the world, the Pacific Northwest has demanded our ongoing attention as the local and the international are tied together ever more closely. Portland, Tacoma, Seattle, Victoria and Vancouver have all been places of repeated encounters and inspirational discussions with policy-makers and fellow academics, with particular thanks going to Brian Walisser, Gary Paget, Janet Young and Peter Holt, and, among colleagues, Ethan Seltzer, Yonn Dierwechter and Emmanuel Brunet-Jailly. They all have been part of ongoing discussions and reflections on city-regional

governance in a globalising world and the tensions, challenges and opportunities for policy-makers and politicians that spin from that.

We also need to thank those academic colleagues who have listened to these developing ideas in meetings and conferences and who have responded to earlier presentations of some of the main ideas. Coming from within spatial sciences and also outside, they have been instrumental in sharpening our rationale and conceptual argument underlining the book through critical questions, repeated stimulating and enjoyable discussions during workshops and also joint projects. In particular we would like to mention Frands Pedersen, Igor Calzada, Gerd Lintz, Manfred Kühn, Marius Guderjan and Magnus Lindh, and, at the end of a conference in Bristol, John Keane. Particular thanks go also to colleagues at the Vrije Universiteit, who provided a most helpful sounding board for our developing ideas during Tassilo Herrschel's stay as research fellow there during 2015: Bas van Heur, Stefan de Corte and Nicola Dotti. And while in Brussels, fascinating insights were gained from many discussions at the international Brussels representations of cities, regions and their networks.

There are many others who have provided critical and encouraging support to a developing theme of the 'conceptual gap' between Urban Studies and International Relations, encouraging us to step out of our own disciplinary comfort zones. We are grateful to all those who have helped us clarify what we meant by this gap (not least the often quizzical colleagues in our own Politics and IR Department), and we have made the academic challenge of interdisciplinary learning a major theme of the book. Our view is that across the disciplines there is much to learn from other perspectives in the ongoing challenge of developing and refining our understandings of urban and regional governance beyond the nation state.

We have benefited from some very helpful comments from readers of drafts of the manuscript. And we must put on record our appreciation to our editorial team, Christina Brian and Amber Husain, for their support and continuing patience with slipping deadlines, while maintaining sufficient pressure to keep the project 'on the road'.

Thanks to all.

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June, 2016

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Cities Joining States as International Actors

This book is about the increasing presence as actors in their own right of cities and regions in international policy-making and governance. The book is also about the ‘conceptual gap’ exposed by the presence of sub-national actors between the concepts of internationality developed by the two main relevant disciplines International Relations and Urban Studies. Both recognise the emergence of new international actors, but largely fail to step out of their respective disciplinary confinements. The book thus seeks to address and investigate the ways in which cities reach across spatial and institutional scales and get themselves directly involved in the international arena. But what have the two disciplines have to say about this from their different analytical and discursive traditions? Are the narratives and conceptualisations complementary in what they have to say, or contradictory? And can the two broad disciplines with their particular engagement with, and explanation of, the governance of the international arena learn something from each other and thus provide a more complete narrative of the new international arena? What can we learn from such a cross-disciplinary perspective about the forces behind this sub-national challenge to the traditional concept of the sovereignty of nation states as the predominant international actors? Traditional views presume that states and ‘national interest’ are coterminous, each between a set of equally clearly defined borders. Yet, reality is no longer as clear-cut, if ever it was established conceptualisations of ‘state’, ‘sovereignty’ and ‘national interest’ require revisiting, as new sub-national actors are adding complexity and agency to the picture.

In adopting a broad, cross-disciplinary view, this book identifies three main ways in which cities are becoming international actors: (1) building or joining networks for collective engagement, (2) lobbying, and engaging with, existing international organisations (IOs) to also act on their behalf (rather relying on nation states), and (3) directly engaging as individual actors with own agendas vis-à-vis states and IOs as the established forces ordering the international realm. We locate our analysis within wide-ranging debate in Urban Studies and International Relations as the two primary disciplines addressing the two main subjects of this book: the city-region and ‘internationality’ respectively. Based on this, one of our intentions is to encourage more debate across disciplinary boundaries. The book examines the different analytical and conceptual lenses and points to a ‘conceptual gap’ that the changing nature of the international realm and its governance is exposing. Established disciplinary comfort zones and conceptual demarcation lines no longer can offer satisfactory answers to an increasingly dynamic and uncertain international environment. Accustomed certainties of structure, order and representational responsibility no longer seem to hold in the face of a world that seems increasingly disorderly and beyond the reach of traditional concepts and responses.

The book sets out to explore the broadening range of international action by looking in depth at a range of illustrative cases in different national settings and global contexts, with the primary focus on Europe and North America. In so doing, we acknowledge the impact of national context—in the form of traditions, structures and values—concerning the organisational nature and institutional role of the state across the different scales from the local to the international. The role of local factors, such as economic structure and success, institutional capacity and political capability, are clearly important in shaping policies that recognise and seek to address proactively the developmental prospects of a city or city-region by stepping out into the international or global economic realm. Through the illustrative cases we explore the interdependency between these factors on the ways in which local political and economic actors work together, and seek to shape local fortunes through individual and/or collective policies across spatial scales. Our cases do not attempt to provide a comprehensive account of the many varieties of possible combinations of contextual factors and forms of international action, but, rather, we aim to point to linkages and interdependencies, as well as gaps, between existing concepts and interpretations of these processes and thus encourage further research.

Through this approach, we identify the main challenges facing sub-national actors as the ‘new kids on the block’, as they enter the realm of states, IOs and other cities and regions, and thus add to the evolution of a more complex, and as yet unsettled, global governance which will continue to demand further explorations. What this book seeks to do is point to the analytical and conceptual gains to be drawn from making links between Urban Studies and International Relations about the role and functioning of the state as an expression of institutional traditions, power relations and democratic constructs, and how that shapes governance across scales. We explore how established views of the state as a holistic, legal entity, with internationally accepted and agreed powers and responsibilities, including the notion of sovereignty, can gain from taking a more differentiated look at the internal agency of a state, with varying relationships and uneven access to, and distribution of, power and so more accurately capture theoretically the role and workings of the ‘nation state’ in the international arena.

Over the past twenty years or so, there has been rapid growth of city and regional networks as new vehicles to protect and promote local and regional interests in a globalising, yet politically still largely state-centric, world. As a consequence, nation states and their territories come into sharper focus, as their borders lose the function of protecting and maintaining an image of a sovereign, cohesive entity in the international arena. Instead, the picture is becoming more detailed and differentiated, with a growing number of sub-national entities, cities, city-regions and regions, becoming more visible in their own right, either individually, or collectively as networks, by, more or less tentatively, stepping out of the territorial canvas and hierarchical institutional hegemony of the state. Prominent and well-known cities, and those regions with a strong sense of identity and often a quest for more autonomy, have been the most enthusiastic, as they began to be represented beyond state borders by high-profile city mayors and some regional leaders with political courage and agency. While some have ventured out individually with confidence, such as the mayors of the main ‘global cities’, others have invested time and resources in networking with like-minded others, and with the United Nations (UN) and other IOs, to gain the necessary capacity and desired impact which, individually, they felt lacking. Variations in economic success, and thus associated confidence and sense of self-reliance, matter here, too. They have created platforms for the voice of cities and regions to be heard at growing numbers of international conferences and elsewhere on the

international stage, raising awareness of the fact that states are not merely undifferentiated ‘black boxes’, but the composite of sub-national entities with their own dynamics, interests and agendas.

Sub-national actors have been gaining a foothold in international policy-making and developing a growing confidence in articulating their own political agendas beyond the borders of their nation states. This novel international activity includes finding new partners beyond nation states and their established, formal governmental representations, either at the sub-national level—in the form of local/regional governments or business actors from other countries—or supra-nationally, in the shape of IOs, such as the UN. And these new partners are then to be used as policy levers to gain more influence on the international arena next to the nation states as the established dominant actors. In turn, IOs can have more direct influence on urban and regional policy. The result is an increasingly complex international web of opportunity-seeking by a growing range of actors and their interconnections vertically and horizontally. These interrelationships and strategic engagements criss-cross, as they connect a range of individual local and regional actors both within and between state territories.

As a result, the international realm now looks very different from the static mosaic of nation states that defined international relations during the Cold War years. For some, this may be worrying, as we can see in the rapid rise of right-wing populism in Europe and North America, promising to resurrect the ‘reliable’ world order of yesteryear, while for others it offers a more progressive scenario of carving out new opportunities in more fluid arrangements which offer opportunities to other actors than foreign ministries and offices. The Cold War arrangement was focused exclusively on the relationships between sovereign nation states within their respective geo-ideological alliances around the two superpowers, producing an, in essence, frozen structure. Initially, the ability of sub-national actors to work with others across national borders may have been limited to a few economically or politically powerful cities—such as the ‘world cities’ identified in the mid-twentieth century by Peter Hall (1966). For others, such ventures very much depended on an explicit encouragement, or, at least, toleration, by the respective nation states. One example is the Sister Cities International programme initiated by US President Roosevelt to reach out to (at first) Europe as a step to rebuild political bridges in the aftermath of the Second World War. In a similar vein, the French and German governments, through the two leaders Charles de Gaulle and Konrad Adenauer, pushed their respective municipalities into *jumelages* (or *Partnerschaften*)

across the border as a low-key, grassroots approach to support reconciliation efforts between the two 'arch enemies', as the official discourse went until 1945. This, then, became part of the much bigger political project of the European Union (EU), which has offered a particularly supportive environment for international engagement by—and among—sub-national governments as part of its inherent integrationist agenda.

Now, economic globalisation is a dominant force driving international action by sub-national actors concerned about 'losing out' in the race for increased competitiveness for new, or continued, foreign direct investment. As borders surrounding nation states have become less effective as barriers to the movement of goods, capital and people, national economies transformed from state-based forms of mercantilism to an increasingly open global market with - increasingly - unhindered free trade. Cities and regions thus found themselves much more exposed, as state protection from the harsh winds of international competition lost its effectiveness. The much increased range of direct competitors around the world, rather than merely those within a country, has caused cities and regions to be concerned about the wisdom of continuing to rely on the notion of an inherently favourable home market compared with the global 'outside'. With states no longer being able and/or willing to take care of the interests of 'their' localities and regions, sub-national actors sought to develop greater independence and stronger own feet to stand on in the global market of investment and economic opportunities.

A growing effort has thus been directed towards attracting internationally mobile capital by sharpening and advocating the city and regional profiles of states more proactively and visibly, rather than relying on a conventionally expected trickle-down effect from national economic development and policy. The economic rise of the Asian city, and the leading cities of the BRIC countries (Brazil, Russia, India, China) raised the spectre of increased competition from a wider range of locational profiles, state structures and policies, and economic conditions. One result is an enlarged field for connections and alliances between sub-national actors, as well as, of course, head-on competition and rivalries. The growing importance of direct connections and interrelations as part of a global division of economic activity in an increasingly febrile and rapidly changing market also means that it is an advantage to have a finger on the (economic) pulse, so as to be quick enough in responding effectively to changing circumstances and opportunities. Losing these connections, or being bypassed by them, reinforces existing, and produces

new, marginalities and exclusions with correspondingly deteriorating prospects. Cities and regions have thus increasingly ventured out into the global arena of economic flows in the hope of identifying, creating and utilising opportunities for successful competition. Nation states may have been weakened by this multiplication in new competitive forces and economic crises and related loss of opportunities and competitive advantages. They thus may have been unable to respond in sufficiently specific and differentiated ways, so as to enhance effectively competitive opportunities for individual locales. As a result, some cities and regions, especially those with fewer independent means and capacities to act, may feel worse off by losing the support and protection they once had, while not feeling sufficiently empowered, resourced or confident to take independent steps onto the international arena of competitive capitalism to boost their own prospects for economic development.

At the same time, the demand for effective collective responses to the challenges of climate change has also created space for non-nation state actors in diverse forums to create new and complex international relationships both horizontally within networks and with other local and regional actors, and vertically, with IOs. Other global issues, for example the struggle for natural resources and international migration, also create a need for cities and regions to add their voice to inter-‘national’ debate to promote their interests beyond economic opportunity. In Europe, the EU provides incentives and institutional frameworks for multiple new forms of city and regional networking and lobbying, including at the international EU level. But a growing number of cities and regions also seek to ‘go it alone’ by establishing their own representations in Brussels, either individually or in shared accommodation, as the base for European lobbying. So, in Europe, and especially there, but also increasingly beyond, sub-national governments find themselves engaged in various networks with other sub-national actors, and with private sector, civil society groups, and national and international bodies, in developing policy responses to economic, environmental and other challenges that cross borders and demand collective solutions. This, in turn, demands both taking a broader, holistic perspective at the international or even global level, while also allowing for a more specific, detailed view that takes on board place- and institution-specific circumstances and ways of doing things. It is a seeming contradiction that the term ‘glocalisation’, introduced by Eric Swyngedouw in the early 1990s (Swyngedouw 1992, see also 2004), tries to capture. While such glocalism was first developed as an economic concept—just as globalisation was

initially seen first and foremost as economically driven—policy responses have had to attempt to follow, so as to remain relevant and effective. The outcome of ‘political glocalisation’ can be seen as manifested in the growing engagement of the ‘local’, i.e. cities and regions, with the ‘international/global’, all in the pursuit of achieving more locally effective and successful responses to the challenges of globalism.

The forces of globalisation may be seen as a crisis of ‘statism’, as neo-liberal responses dominate global policy (Curtis 2014). But that does not automatically mean that public policy is powerless, and the state a mere bystander, as globalisation unfolds. Rather, political responses and governmental policy-making have faced the need to find new ways of working and being effective. As a consequence, cities and regions find themselves having to navigate ever more complex webs of networks of formal and informal relationships—webs which they themselves increasingly contribute to building, crossing established territorial scales and institutional areas of responsibility along the way. For academic analysis and interpretation to be able to capture this process adequately, conceptual responses are needed that draw on a greater number of accounts of broader-based studies of these fundamental structural changes in attempts to govern globalism. New networks, new voices, new perceptions of local–global relationships seem to present a ‘messy empirical complexity’ (Moran 2010, p. 42). And understanding the roles of new global players and new relationships across policy fields, institutional sectors and operational scales, presents a challenge for analysts of how to break out of the ‘territorial trap’ reflected on by Agnew at first in the mid-1990s, and then, again, more recently (2009). This ‘trap’ restricted—and in several ways continues to do so—our understanding of international policy and politics to a world of states as fixed, single scale, cohesive territorial entities. In this understanding, no other actors really matter, nor are any sub-nationally visible. This concern with solely the scale of the nation state ignores emerging sub-national actors as relevant players in the arena of political-economic international relations. Yet, the growing intermingling of sub-national actors, especially powerful and confident cities and regions, with international and global matters, raises question marks over the salience of such a conceptual head-in-the-sand approach, as states face—potentially existential—challenges ‘from within’. Growing inequalities as a result of neo-liberal globalism, such as between the successful cities and the less successful, struggling, often peripheral, cities and regions, produce rising political discontent, such as we are now facing across Europe and in the

United States as populist accusations of self-serving metropolitan elitism. Claims for more nationalist, anti-globalist and protectionist approaches, or explicit demands for devolved responsibilities and even outright independence, undermine established political certainties and notions of nationality, which fundamentally shape the ways in which states can work and operate internationally. Ignoring such processes reduces the potential relevance of messages and explanations offered by academic disciplines.

Analytical responses, however, have varied already, with several attempts at addressing the nature of 'governing' the global, such as in International Relations (IR) or International Political Economy (IPE). This is the case especially in terms of promoting international free trade, or securing peace in a geo-political setting with inherent contestations for influence. IOs were created to take on that role of bringing some order to a presumed inherently anarchic internationality (Brown et al. 1995). They were put in place by collective agreement between nation states as, from a traditional 'realist' IR perspective, it is only states that are relevant actors in organising the international realm. And so IOs are, in essence, viewed as agents controlled by, and working on behalf of, nation states. Meanwhile, and separate from that, economic perspectives recognised the importance of intra-state variations in production factors and comparative advantage, and thus a variable scope for market-based competition for new investment. Yet, while some regions gained more attention as important 'entrepreneurial' actors in economic development, e.g. in the example of Emilia-Romagna as the Third Italy (Cooke 1996), or the state of Baden-Württemberg in southern Germany (Staber 1996), the local level was associated much more with the image of more or less passive locales as stages where international/global capitalism acted itself out. The localities studies in the early 1980s (Cooke 1989), viewing cities and other localities as places which got 'restructured', illustrate this view. Only later, cities were seen as also strategic actors with 'urban entrepreneurialism' and 'urban boosterism' (Harvey 1989). Yet, such ideas generally located cities and regions in their national contexts, rather than on the international stage. Fig. 1.1 illustrates the analytical and conceptual foci of the different approaches to the issue of cities in a globalising (economic) world.

Our aim in this book is therefore to understand how and why sub-national actors are developing more agency and are increasingly engaging in international policy and politics more directly. To do that, we need to explore how the academic disciplines that deal with the urban and the international scales are responding to the demands for a new

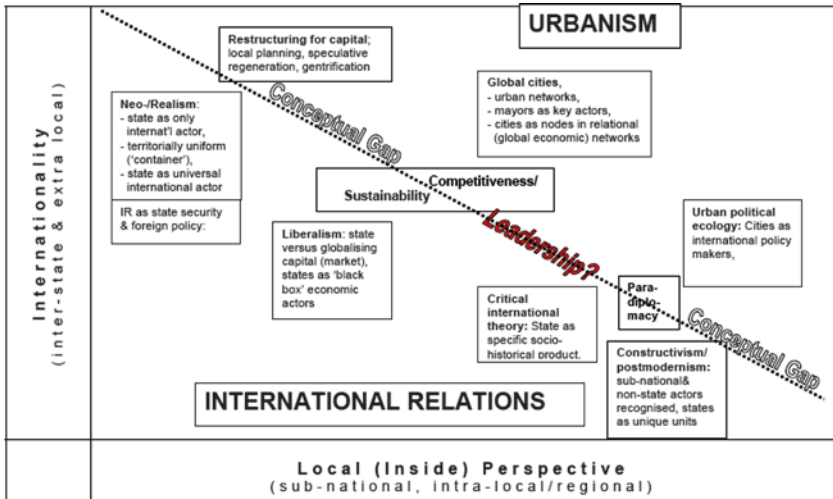


Fig. 1.1 Changing perspective of internationality as state and urban spheres of engagement

global governance that recognises and incorporates actors over and above sovereign nation states. We need to understand the forces pushing cities, regions and other sub-national actors onto the global stage, and need to develop the conceptual tools to make sense of the increasingly complex and changing relationships of the international realm in which cities and regions now find themselves.

Taking a look back, such a role for individual cities and regions is not in itself a novelty. It appears so only in the context of the legacy of nineteenth-century nationalism and imperialism, and the ascent of the territorially defined nation state as primary international actor. Networks of internationally powerful cities existed before the forging of nation states and an imperial international order. Some academics, for example Agnew (2009), argue that the supreme authority of the nation state as sovereign actor was, in fact, never complete. Other analysts suggest that new global realities are guiding the world back to the pre-Westphalian era, when networks of trading cities—the ancient Silk Road, the medieval Hanseatic League—provided the platform for relationships of mutual benefit and exchange (Katz and Bradley 2013). One needs to remember that then, as now, city actors had to engage with other powers to secure their interests. Going

it alone was not always the best strategy to achieve that. The merchants of the Hanseatic League, for instance, enjoyed substantial trading privileges as a result of inter-city diplomacy and collective agreements within the networks (Lloyd 2002), as well as with larger powers, such as states. That way, the League could negotiate ‘extra-territorial’ legal spaces with special privileges, such as the ‘German Steelyard’ in the port of London (Schofield 2012). This special status was granted and guaranteed by the English king as part of an agreement between the state and a foreign city association. If there are lessons from previous eras, then they include the need to look beyond the post nineteenth-century fixation on the construct of the ‘nation state’ and at the historic precedence of a much more varied, cross-scalar picture of relationships between cities—both individually and as collective networks—IOs and states.

Despite the fixation on the nineteenth-century construct of the Westphalian nation state, there is growing, and strong, evidence that they no longer are the only actors that matter in shaping the international realm. Instead, we need to consider the rise in importance of cities and regions alongside changes within nation states, as well as the roles of IOs, all leading to a greater ‘thickness’ and, some may say, disorder in international governance. These roles come into play in response to the two different scales of ‘regions’—supra- and sub-national respectively. The former includes macro-regional associations of states, such as the EU or ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations), while the latter looks at a lower scale and embraces groups of internationally oriented cities that seek to lobby, and work with, IOs, such as in the global platform and actions of UN Habitat, and its joint meetings with global networks of municipalities such as the umbrella organisation UCLG (United Cities and Local Governments). To understand these complex international relations, different approaches are required that not only develop the new interests of urban scholars in the international/global arena, but also address the need to make connections across disciplinary boundaries. This is needed to understand how IR as the discipline focused most of all on the international sphere, views the potential for sub-national actors on the global stage. On the other hand, looking to the second main relevant academic field, what are the conceptual challenges of these new urban engagements for urban theory in particular, and political science more generally?

Arriving at these challenges from different disciplinary backgrounds, some scholars have recently begun to raise questions about the importance of the work of cities beyond national borders. For instance,

McCarney et al. (2011) point to the ‘underrepresentation of cities and sub-national regions as sites of governance or partners in global governance’ (pp. 219–220). Meanwhile, McCann and Ward (2011) collect a number of perspectives on urban policy in the face of globalisation, and Scott (2012, p. 12) looks at the responses of some US metropolitan areas, concluding that ‘in this emerging world, the logic of urban and regional development can no longer be meaningfully described in terms of purely national models but must be analysed directly in the context of an insistent process of globalization in which metropolitan areas in many different countries are increasingly caught up in an overarching system of competition, collaboration and social interaction’. Earlier, Sassen (2006, p. 347), talking about regulation of a ‘post nation state’, considers interactions between state and non-state actors, specifically global finance and cross-border activist politics. In this context, she points out that ‘the cross-border network of global cities emerges as one of the key components in the architecture of “international relations”’. More recent work shares this emphasis on the special place of global cities as they assert themselves on the global stage (for example, Lee 2014; Ljungkvist 2016).

The emphasis on global cities, of course, excludes the activities of numerous ‘lesser’ cities, and regional and sub-regional groupings, that have forged cross-border international alliances to respond to global economic forces as a form of ‘self-help’. As a consequence, there is wide acknowledgement of a global urban system that goes beyond the boundaries of national state territories (Krätke 2014). Academic interest grows in the economic power of, and challenges faced by, ‘macro-regions’, ‘mega-cities’ and ‘city-regions’ (Harrison and Hoyler 2015). Alongside the driving force of competition, other authors have been developing new analytical perspectives on the ‘transnational politics’ around climate change (for example, Bouteligier 2013; Bulkeley 2012; Bulkeley et al. 2013, 2014). Global climate governance is increasingly understood in polycentric terms: undertaken by a variety of actors, as they operate across multiple scales, utilising diverse forms of authority and rule-making. In this context, ‘the growing urgency and complex politics of governing the environment, across borders of multiple sorts and in more democratic and representative ways, are eroding or transforming state-centred conceptualisations of sovereignty, territoriality, and representation’ (McCarthy 2007, p. 190). Yet, such trans-scalar and cross-border perspectives are much less prevalent in economic policies, where competitive rationality counteracts collective action. As cities are pushing their claims across conventional borders and

boundaries, they challenge issues of democratic legitimacy and control, especially when less visible, informal networks and lobbying are concerned. For example, what happens in the network C40 Cities (Global Leadership on Climate Change) (see Chap. 3) matters to the whole world, as this grouping brings together the largest and globally most influential (also in terms of environmental costs) cities (<http://www.c40.org/about>). In the continued absence (at least until the recent COP 21 Paris Summit in December 2015) of tangible outcomes from intergovernmental efforts to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, it is increasingly significant that mayors of some of the largest cities, which claim a stake in international politics, are taking concrete actions that demonstrate that preventing catastrophic climate change is possible (C40 Cities; ARUP 2014), while also responding to the criticism that it is cities that are at the forefront of detrimentally affecting sustainable development.

The analysts and policy-makers whose arguments we have discussed here, are approaching the questions about cities as international actors largely from the perspectives of the ‘urban’ disciplines, i.e. political geography, urban and regional studies, and urban politics. The urban perspective has much to say about the drivers pushing sub-national actors into the international realm as a way of boosting their developmental prospects and interests. Yet, when it comes to understanding more about the nature of the international arena and the mechanisms and logics of engagement found there, this work has much less to say. For instance, questions need exploration and answering that address the ways in which the international realm works, how IOs interact with states, and how international networks operate. It is at that point that the resources of other academic disciplines—political science and IR in particular—need to be drawn upon as these have a well-established track record of conceptualising and analysing ‘internationality’, albeit from a predominantly heavily state-centric vantage point. Yet, there are more signs within IR, in particular in its constructivist and post-modernist theoretical interpretations, of greater appreciation of the growing evidence of a more complex composition of the international arena beyond the nation state. Thus, if in the past IR was fixed on relations between sovereign nation states almost to the exclusion of considering sub-national actors altogether, now there is much more work from a range of theoretical perspectives, from traditional realist to more recent constructivist interpretations. And there are aspects of Global Political Economy that aim to understand the work of IOs as well as transnational businesses, non-governmental organisations

(NGOs) and states as a diverse combination of multi-scalar interests and politics. The analysis and discussion in this book draws on the diverse perspectives and agendas of the institutions entering the international arena, and rules and norms that appear to manage and guide international politics and governance. Responding to those developments, IR now perceives the contemporary international political system as more of a complex open system, rather than a ‘flat’ nation state-only arena of actors, which displays ‘emergent properties’ (Sol et al. 2013) and degrees of ‘organized complexity’ (Jessop 1998).

Sub-national actors need to navigate in this increasingly complex web of networks of actors, interests and relationships, and this may well include needing to project and/or protect their interests on the international arena through more immediate action—either through collective action with other, like-interested actors, or individually on the basis of held confidence and institutional capacity. Some IOs, such as the UN, encourage, or even co-opt, sub-national ‘partners’ to increase the reach and effectiveness and not least the legitimacy, of their own interests and policy actions. Cities and regions, rather than ceding power to IOs, may sense greater advantages to be gained from networking with, rather than being ‘subordinate’ to, them. This, they try to achieve through boosting their own international presence directly, and increase their bargaining power—both politically and economically. But how can these two major developments—direct individual, and indirect international engagement—be analytically conceptualised as a dual process of urbanisation of the ‘international’, and internationalisation of the ‘urban’, respectively?

A major ambition in this book is to explore the potential of IR theories to help explain the emerging ‘new international’ with its growing degree of ‘urbanisation’ in terms of both the prevalence of urban actors and the growth of urban agendas in the international arena of defining and making policies. How, given this urban input, can urban theories be extended into the international sphere to help conceptualise the new urban(ised) ‘international’? From both disciplinary perspectives, there is a need to take sufficient account of the complexities, discrepancies and conflicts between a slow-in-response state administrative structure and progressively more fluid communicative, and functional relations between a growing number of actors inside and outside government. They increasingly find themselves tied to, and positioned between, urban centres as connectors between the intra- and extra-national political agendas and policy processes.

1.1 CONCEPTUALISATIONS OF ‘CITY’ AND ‘INTERNATIONALITY’ FROM AN URBANIST AND IR PERSPECTIVE

The following diagram Fig. 1.1 illustrates the positions of some of the main theoretical approaches to analysing and discussing globalisation in terms of its implications for the roles of cities and regions on the one hand, and a nation state-centric understanding of ‘internationality’ on the other. This is placed in a matrix defined by two analytical perspectives: ‘Internationality’ as the dominant focus of interests, with a primary interest in relationships and interaction between nation states, and a ‘local perspective’ looking primarily at the sub-state level of localities and (intra-state) regions. The role of these two analytical and theoretical foci is then associated with the two primary disciplines of interest here—‘urbanism’ and ‘International Relations’. A diagonal notional division distinguishes two triangular halves (not necessarily following a straight line), depicting at the top left, a view that focuses exclusively on states as sole players of relevance in the international arena with no attention given to any sub-national players. This contrasts with the opposite scenario, at the bottom right of the diagram, where much attention is given to sub-national factors and conditions in their likely impact on a state’s international engagement, both through direct, individual action, and indirectly, through IOs or networks.

The bottom left triangle is shown as shaped by an IR perspective of internationality, whereas the ‘opposite’ top right triangle depicts the growing role of local perspectives as favoured by ‘urbanism’. ‘Urbanism’ stands here for urban-centric analyses with an inherent recognition of the city as an important place of political, economic and cultural development and articulation, and subsequent action. In scalar terms, this includes in the majority of cases a locally focused perspective, reaching to a regional dimension in the instances of large metropolises and city-regional conurbations, and embracing disciplines such as planning, urban geography or, more multidisciplinary, urban studies. Increasingly, these have also included a more outward-looking perspective, as globalisation added a political-economic lens of analysis, such as in the discourse on ‘global cities’. These are portrayed as potent actors in the globalising economy, including in trans-border relations (e.g. trans-border regionalism). This view of cities as active players in globalisation contrasts with earlier interpretations of cities (and other localities), especially in the late 1970s/early 1980s,

as passive local arenas, at the mercy of an international ‘restructuring for capital’ (e.g. Massey and Meegan 1978). The underlying concern with the social costs of these changes was later picked up and developed further in work on urban political ecology, with an interest in cities as expressions of local democratic mobilisation (Heynen et al. 2006). But the ‘local’ largely remained in a passive role vis-à-vis the ‘international’. Despite these very different theoretical and ideological starting points, the connections between sub-national and supra-national scales were recognised as gaining considerably in importance vis-à-vis political-economic internationalisation and, ultimately, globalism. Their active engagement, however, challenged established structures and organisational principles of economic rationality, societal structuration and political engagement.

Opposite the urbanism-led interpretations and analyses Fig. 1.1 depicts some of the main approaches to internationality and globalism within IR. Here, the theoretical standpoints range from realist and neo-realist interpretations to those of post-modernism and constructivism. In the former, realist, view, the international is a fixed mosaic of nation states whose policies are solely driven by maximising self-interest, including securing their territorial integrity as defined by borders. They do so through the projection of power and influence in a presumed otherwise anarchic ‘outside’. Opportunities are there to be maximised out of self-interest. Understood in this way, there are some interesting parallels to the economic theory of neo-liberal globalism and the pursuit of maximum profit/advantage. Essentially, states, understood as nation states in their nineteenth-century derived rationality, are viewed from the outside as a black box whose internal structures and workings are of little consequence—and thus interest—to the presumed predominant opportunistic, advantage-maximising rationality of state action. This may go so far as depicting the state as protector of its citizens’ liberty vis-à-vis the subordinating economic (but, ultimately, also political) forces of economic globalism. This understanding of the state as a homogeneous entity becomes questioned by the critical internationalist and, especially, constructivist and post-modernist theoretical strands in IR theory. They recognise the potential role and impact of state-specific internal factors, such as histories, established political cultures, or place-specific institutional structures and practices. From a more economy-oriented view, this could also include variations in relative comparative advantage—or disadvantage—in relation to a globalised economy.

Seen from a discursive point of view, and taking into account the general direction of some of the work on either ‘side’ of the diagonal line, there seems to be evidence of potential linkages that could be drawn between the questions raised and interpretations offered by the IR and the urbanism fields. Nevertheless, very few bridges have been built across a seeming ‘conceptual gap’ between a primarily introspective urban focus, where analysis of cities’ international engagement is a minority interest, and on the other side, a mainly ‘extra-spective’ view, where consideration of what is going on beneath the political ‘surface’ of a nation state is considered of little relevance and thus also remains a minority concern. One of the few connectors between these two distinct academic traditions and established practices is ‘paradiplomacy’, seeking to combine the sub-national with concepts of conventional state-based international engagement, diplomacy. Yet, that too remains rather a niche interest within IR. In terms of policy fields, the apparent conflictual priorities and rationalities between a globalism-based competitiveness agenda, and a globally-oriented climate change and sustainability interest, highlight the close interaction between urban agendas and analytical scales, and questions of internationality in terms of necessary effective policy targeting and regulation.

Given the growing fluidity and fuzziness of borders in economic decisions and capital movements as part of globalisation, this book thus postulates an urgent need to bridge the conceptual gap between IR and urbanist approaches to, and understandings of, the role and relevance of cities as international actors. The following chapters set out to examine this complex, yet increasingly important, relationship which so far has remained in the academic ‘no-man’s land’ wedged between disciplinary comfort zones.

1.2 OUTLINE OF CHAPTERS

Following on from this chapter, Chap. 2 discusses the conceptual, analytical and practical challenges posed by a globalised ‘internationality’ to the notion of a territorially cohesive state which acts as a single entity, when it comes to international engagement. Fundamental change to international settings, especially the end of the Cold War at the end of the 1980s, set in train a growing dynamic that underpinned a ‘frozen’ geo-political territoriality as part of security arrangements between the two super-powers. A growing perforation of borders in the wake of globalisation, which partially, at least, also contributed to the downfall of communism in Eastern Europe (Herrschel 2007), sought to exploit, and thus highlighted,