



Special Session Proposal

Local governments, diplomacy, regionalism

Dessislava, Poleganova, National Institute of Geophysics, Geodesy and Geography, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences; Acad. Georgi Bonchev Str., Bl. 3, 1113 Sofia, Bulgaria;

Petra Kinga, Kézai, research fellow, West Hungarian Research Department, Institute for Regional Studies, ELTE Center for Economic and Regional Studies; Liszt Ferenc u. 10., H-9022 Győr, Hungary; kezai.petra@krtk.elte.hu (ERSA Congress Secretariat)

Abstract

According to Nicolson (1969), diplomacy refers to “the handling of international relations by negotiation; the method by which these relations are shaped and directed by ambassadors and envoys; the activity or art of the diplomat” (Nicolson, 1969, p. 4). The fundamental objective of a country's diplomatic service is to establish friendly and mutually beneficial relations with other states (Dietrichsen & Niekert, 2021). City diplomacy represents a subnational form of diplomacy – cooperation between municipalities across borders, often initiated through *twinning* or *sister-city* relationships. In this framework, official representatives of cities engage in foreign relations not only with other municipalities but also with nation-states, international organizations, NGOs, and private entities. Initially rooted in post–World War II reconciliation efforts (Zelinsky, 1991), these relationships have evolved beyond symbolic gestures or cultural exchanges. In recent decades, city diplomacy has become a significant platform for pursuing global agendas such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (Acuto, 2013). Scholars argue that intercity cooperation possesses substantial potential to enhance urban development and improve local governance outcomes (Acuto et al., 2018). The organization, maintenance, and coordination of such international engagements are typically managed by local governments. Accordingly, this section invites research exploring the emergence of new urban systems and transnational municipal networks that developed throughout the 20th century. It also encourages studies presenting *best practices* that can guide local governments in addressing specific community challenges through shared learning and adaptation of successful solutions from their partner cities.



References:

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