

Security and Diplomacy in the City: Local Leadership in Global Governance

Chapter 1: Cities as Sites of Human Security

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Introduction

Cities are an increasingly important non-state actor in international studies, with many cities larger and more capable than nation states. After the US declined to sign the Paris Climate Accords, over 100 mayors from around the world declared that their cities would meet or exceed the goals of the Paris deal. Ironically, the Trump doctrine of “dismantling the administrative [nation] state” has substantially devolved power to cities picking up the slack: while national governments may not have a strategy for combating extremism or guaranteeing housing, food, and healthcare, cities around the world are taking on the responsibility of providing basic, everyday human security. Pioneered after the Cold War, the “Human Security” approach to security studies focuses the unit of analysis less on militaries and nations, but on the object or user of security, the person (Kaldor 2007). This allows scholars to evaluate processes and institutions providing security of all sorts, including physical, political, environmental, economic, community, food, and health security. Disaggregation of security this way reveals an innovative and stark reality: *Cities provide people with more substantive and tangible security than just about any other institution.*

Furthermore, these cities are internalizing the work of others, bypassing national governments and building an epistemic community that is governing human-centered security institutions. In other words, cities are a key unit of analysis for process tracing how human security becomes

adopted in some microgeographies, but not at the nation-state level, and how those microgeographies can then produce transnational outcomes.

Building on seminal literature on Human Security ([Paris 2001](#); Martin and Owen 2013; Kaldor 2007; Kaldor, Martin, and Selchow 2007) this volume disaggregates the concept of human security into seven categories to better understand how global cities functionally fulfill human security obligations and frame new global governance expectations around security. This human security focus is held in dialogue with urban planning ([Moskowitz 2018](#); [Montgomery 2014](#); [Florida 2010](#); [Jacobs 2016](#)), city-centered sociology ([Katz and Nowak 2018](#); [Schragger 2016](#); [en Comu et al. 2019](#)), international political economy studies ([Sassen 2001](#); [Sassen 2002](#)), and international regime theory and global diplomacy ([Chan 2016](#); [Krasner 1983](#); [Haas 2015](#); [Pouliot 2010](#); [Beaverstock et al. 2000](#)). In addition to the fusion of disparate literatures, the volume's qualitative research design triangulates three years of personal ethnographic experience in the field, hundreds of interviews, and survey instruments of city experts. This strategy allows for focus on concrete policy examples in each arena of human security with data from mayors, chief resilience officers, police chiefs, and leaders of city-to-city international organizations. This data, embedded in the following chapters, tells a larger global story about the rise of city responsibility and capacity in the domain of human security, and in turn, reveals how cities are furthering the sharing practices with one another to advance standards across the globe.

The fusion of these disciplines create new knowledge for cross-disciplinary audiences including public policy and administration, security studies, and international relations. Policy implications span a breadth of areas, but include in-depth comparative suggestions for how cities can work together to advance physical, political, environmental, economic, community, food, and health security. The book highlights what cities around the world are doing on issues ranging from gang violence, to climate change, to gender protections, to elections security, culminating in an intellectual mapping of how cities can better network together to form coalitions at the international level to advance their human security agenda, perhaps bypassing nation-state inaction altogether.

Cities as a Site of Human Security

While classic notions of war-making, military force posture and readiness to defend territory fall under the purview of national governments, everyday security for the clear majority of humanity is actually provided by city and municipal jurisdictions. In short: if you're in the market for an aircraft carrier - consult the head of state, but if you are interested in any other type of security, the best place to start is City Hall. Security studies is increasingly shifting the frame of reference to humanity and the security of persons, rather than nation-states. Pioneered after the Cold War and during the rise of terrorism, the "Human Security" approach to security studies focuses the unit of analysis less on militaries and nations, but on the object or user of security, the person (Kaldor 2007). Freed from the nationalist conceptions of security, the field increasingly understands that the product of security is fragmented, functional, multi-spatial, and centered on providing particular services to a defined population. This allows scholars to evaluate processes and institutions providing security of all sorts, including physical, political, environmental, economic, community, food, and health security. Disaggregation of security reveals an innovative and stark reality: Cities provide people with more substantive and tangible everyday security than just about any other institution.

Advocates of human security approaches point us towards the locations of authority: "Human Security has emerged as a result of profound changes in political authority and these provide the context in which its relevance can be understood"(Martin and Owen 2013, page 5). My argument is that the locations of authority, precisely in everyday security for a majority of the world's population, is within cities. Just as globalization is ephemeral in concept but fixed to the capacity and agglomeration occurring in global cities ([Sassen 2006](#)), so too does the global concept of human security live in physically manifest locations. Human security arises because of the evolving power of cities, giving human security studies a physical, geographical scope and focus.

However, cities as a site of empirical research on human security has received little scholarly attention. On the one hand, research on cities has tended to view municipalities as parts of national socio-economic and political processes – segments of larger systems. Similarly, security has traditionally been thought of within the boundaries of the nation-state. On the other hand, the human security approach emerged at a global level of analysis, arguing that the nation-state system had failed to curb everyday violence impacting people ([Paris 2001](#)). The human security research agenda has tended to focus on transnational, global civil society as a unit of analysis to move beyond the boundedness of the nation-state, leading to languishing implementation and stalled promises of what the “paradigm shift” can deliver to humanity. The dominant accounts in human security studies suggest that place-bounded geographies like the nation-state are of diminishing concern when considering security in a globalized world (Kaldor 2007; Black, MacLean, and Shaw 2006). These perspectives leave little room for empirical research on how microgeographies can produce transnational outcomes (human security).

In particular, IR-centered accounts of human security are lacking in three ways. First these approaches privilege ideational and normative forces over material sites, physical practices, and place-boundedness of globalization. In response, this book privileges material production sites - cities - over normative ideational approaches to human security. Second, traditional accounts emphasize transnational phenomenon like “global civil society” as an explanatory framework rather than as an outcome of locally produced factors. This book alternatively conceptualizes the local as an explanatory factor in the production of human security at the transitional ideational level and specifically argues that the projects arising out of cities set the normative pathways for transnational movement on human security norms. Finally, human security literature tends to focus on consumers of security (humans) rather than the sites where that security is produced. A new body of literature on municipalism as a source of global governance (Barcelona en Comu et al. 2019; Shragger 2019) challenges scholars not to ignore cities, and this volume refocuses the conversation on the producers of human security.

Cities as Sites of Capacity, Talent, Diplomacy

The volume is further built on three additional theoretical foundations. First, drawing on authors like Saskia Sassen (2001, 2002, 2005), the book argues that providing security for residents is a function of governance that global cities are both expected and capable of performing. Global cities have vast resources from forces of economic globalization, agglomeration of capital, and innovation production (Sassen 2006, 7), which this volume shows resulted in these hubs of global power also seeking to protect residents in new ways. Moreover, residents of global cities make demands for goods of their local institutions, pushing for city involvement in global issues such as climate change, inclusion in economic development, and water security. As cities have sought to provide goods expected of them as hubs of globalization, their host national governments have simultaneously devolved powers to them, often allowing cities to bypass national-level partisan politics to access services and advocate for themselves at the global level. Localities thus operate as testing grounds for disruptive and innovative public police - water purification and delivery, school choice, smart street lights, socially-centered apps, all based on the idea that cities have the power and mandate to make the lives of citizens better regardless of national permission.

Using the city as a unit of analysis recovers the material conditions, production sites, decision making apparatuses, and place-boundedness of human security, rooting the field in an empirically observable range of activities, practices, advocacies, infrastructures, offices, and discourses that link local and global structures. The preponderance of human security then, is an outcome of political, cultural, economic globalization processes located within cities. A focus on human security within cities argues that human security is a concrete, physically identifiable production that we can observe local processes evolve to global ones.

Second, democratic functionality depends upon civically engaged citizens who invest in institutional capital and not just relational capital (Putnam, Leonardi, and Nanetti 1994). While small-towns may be driven by personal relationship (who you know), larger cities, global cities,

are driven by those who invest in institutional capacity. In large cities, talent and skill as a subject matter expert (what you know) are more effectively harnessed by broad bureaucracy and robust private sectors. Expert boards and commissions, for example, on a host of public policy concerns allow for SMEs to directly advise elected officials. Cities, furthermore, are the geography where institutions grow and interlap - thousands of churches and schools and neighborhoods and HOAs and clubs - these produce a kind of productive civil energy unparalleled by any other human terrain ([Katz and Nowak 2018, page 8](#)). Civil society and SMEs are institutionally empowered to innovate at the local level on a host of global issues like climate change and trade policy. The Mayors that they advise then take the innovations abroad, through complex city diplomacy efforts that 1) mainstream policies, 2) promote best practices, and 3) raise the expectations of policies a city can work on. More broadly, city politics make visible the non-formal actors that may seem irrelevant at a national level by accommodating a wide range of activities like protest, public comment, open meetings, and access to officials. Global civil society activists engaged on subjects like water security, for instance, can engage in a direct way with officials, SMEs, and local bureaucrats. Cities are the location where local energies create conditions of global, transnational identities leading to the possibility of affinity with other city communities of practice. In other words, cities are a key unit of analysis for process tracing (Bennet and Checkel 2014; Pouliot 2014) how human security becomes adopted in some microgeographies, but not at the nation-state level.

These ideas culminate in showing how microgeographies can produce transnational outcomes in security policy. Cities are utilizing city public diplomacy networks to bypass dysfunctional or restrictive national government foreign policy and together are building an epistemic community that is setting the global agenda for a myriad of human security issues (Day 2019). This epistemic community is seen in the over 200 city-to-city international networks such as the Strong Cities Network, Cities for Affordable Housing, or Climate Mayors (Acuto and Rayner 2016). Furthermore, the compounding effect of local actors, across the world, all working on shared (yet differently located) challenges hypercharges the innovations occurring and creates a competitive and mutually reinforcing effect among global cities.

Using global cities as the unit of analysis (Sassen 2006), gives scholars the ability to trace how human security programs are adopted in microgeographies and then produce transnational outcomes such as global compact, an international treaty, or set of consensus policies and practices. Through public diplomacy of cities, a new set of expectations about security are produced at the transnational level. The process is clear: as local activists engage on topics like food and water security, pushing their cities to act programmatically, local programs are increasingly replicated as a best practice at the global level through city-to-city networks. There are significant cases of cities developing expectations around how residents are to be cared for, especially around health and environmental security, and then pressuring other actors, like nation-states, to internalize these norms and practices, such as with the Paris Accords. Global cities and their diplomatic networks are powerful yet burgeoning international regimes, producing rules, practices, and expectations for the global governance of human security (Krasner 1982; Haggard and Simmons 1987; Cull 2008).

Following the logic above, cities are epistemic communities of practice (Haas 2015; Adler and Barnett 1998) that produce new forms of global governance. The book builds on International Relations literature on “regime theory,” (Krasner 1983) which finds that regimes are “implicit or explicit principles, norms, rules and decision-making procedures around which actors' expectations converge in a given area of international relations” (Krasner 1982, 187). In the case of human security, cities, not nation-states, are developing regime-like expectations around how local residents are to be treated in numerous security areas. Rules, practices, principles, and norms are all emerging in each of these governance silos, and cities are the driving actors and targets of these regimes. Most interesting, the emergence of global city regimes, means that the ideas of local subject matter experts are transmitted via mayors and bureaucrats and influence the direction of regime-building through norm promotion, rule-making, and the dissemination of best practices. Global city regimes are indeed emerging in every area of human security. Put another way, cities are forming epistemic communities of practice around providing all sorts of security goods (Haas 2015).

If cities are setting the normative evolution of global politics, then special attention must be placed on the burgeoning population in the global south. By 2025, there will be twenty-seven cities with populations greater than 10 million - much of this growth is occurring in African megalopolises like Lagos, Karachi, Kinshasa, meaning that global cities will bear burdens and challenges that will not be addressed by their national governments. In such cities, many residents live in informal settlements, favelas or slums, lacking property rights, access to governmental service, and invisible to power centers. The opportunity provided by this theory of global cities is the potential empowerment of these growing power centers in the global South. As cities take command of the security agenda, it is incumbent upon New York, Tokyo, London, and others to seek to provide tangible resources to other cities in order to advance best practices and grow the footprint of city power around the globe. Finding ways to bring Lagos and London, Kinshasa and Chicago together to solve issues of insecurity is the opportunity to effectively bypass inefficient international organizations, and instead imagine the globe as a co-constituted, mutually beneficial network of cities. This presents practitioners and policymakers with opportunities beyond the limitations of the nation-state and academics with theoretical horizons beyond traditional international relations theory.

The Framework of the Book

Human Security approaches disaggregate the concept of human security into broad categories of activity (Hillebrecht, White, and McMahon 2014; Martin and Owen 2013; Kaldor 2007; Kaldor, Martin, and Selchow 2007; Black, MacLean, and Shaw 2006; Paris 2001; Owen 2004). I echo this categorization to systematically present how global cities functionally fulfill human security obligations. Each chapter attempts to explain human security developments in seven specific policy areas.

After introductory and theoretical/methodological chapters, Chapter Three begins with the most commonly understood frame, *physical security*. The term is easily understood as the protection of an individual from bodily harm, is the first order of business for cities and their police

departments. It is no surprise that nation states are not leading in providing this good, but rather, following localities whose mayors craft strategies tailored around neighborhood needs and discrete challenges. More than first responders, city officers are responsible for preventing all sorts of potential physical harm, engaging in programs to combat domestic violence, gang activity, violent extremism, and are the front lines of counter-terrorism. In the US, for example, cities are increasingly filling the void on gun-policy, enacting local red-flag warnings and municipal restraining orders to get guns out of the hands of mentally ill or criminals. This trend had spiked in recent months, as mayors and city attorneys continue to share their models around the nation. The trend transcends the local, however. Networks of cities are increasingly working together on initiatives such as the Strong Cities Network, an organization spanning over 130 cities working on combating hate crimes and extremism. The chapter highlights the spectrum of physical security provided by cities, from critical infrastructure to gang violence and terrorism prevention.

Chapter Four focuses on *political security*, in which a city protects the ability for one to express, participate and dissent in political processes. Keeping freedom of speech and assembly, secure voting locations, and transparent rule of law are activities tied to local places, such as sheriffs or city clerks. Strategies to provide political security are created and executed by local authorities, who are held directly accountable by their constituents. The cases considered here focus on counter-corruption efforts, implementation of voting architecture, and most importantly, the processes necessary to protect freedom of assembly, speech, and protest ([en Comu et al. 2019](#)). Interviews with city security officials reveal the type of preparations that go into effect during events like the Women's Marches or general strikes, which manifest political security on city streets. I note in particular the mechanisms of learning between city security agencies at the global level, highlighting both tactical and norm transfer from local to international practice.

Environmental security is considered in Chapter Five. Environmental security consists of various protections against degradation, deforestation, climate change and other threats (Barnett and Adger 2007), and the city plays a key role in this agenda's implementation ([Barber 2017](#);

[Dawson 2017; Roaf et al. 2009](#)). In the wake of President Trump's pulling from the Paris Climate Agreement, mayors from around the United States committed their cities to the accords, committing their city to climate action even in the absence of the national government. As climate change is a threat to major port cities around the world, it is no surprise that local advocacy has trickled up to an international regime level, with the global C40 Mayors association bringing together city leaders to discuss how cities are implementing the most progressive climate action plans currently in effect.

Chapter Six considers trends in *Economic Security*, and speaks to jobs, vocational training, workforce development, affordable housing, and educational opportunities. Through tuition-free city community college, for instance, cities seek to provide economic security for all residents. Locally controlled Workforce Investment Boards, economic development departments, housing commissions, and other hallmark city functions prove that cities are in the business of creating economic security, yet also grappling with booming housing costs, homelessness, and slumification on public right of way ([Davis 2007; Moskowitz 2018](#)). The chapter highlights the work of Smart Cities, UNESCO tourist sites, tenant protections, anti-gentrification, basic-income, and tensions between economic expansion vs. socio-economic protection programs at the foundation of many city agendas. Despite these tensions, we note the rise of a global-municipalist conversation around fundamental economic rights and economic security provided by governments through diplomatic conversations like the international network *Cities for Affordable Housing*.

Community security concerns protections for identity groups and marginalized communities. Chapter Seven outlines how cities have been at the forefront of protecting minorities, beginning with a case study of San Francisco pioneering protections and voice for LGBT communities, echoed at the global level with the Rainbow Cities Network initiative. Cities even provide microgeographic designations for communities such as Little Tokyo, Korea Town, Little Italy, etc, with police patrol units recruited from those very neighborhoods. Community policing in this way is about more than boots on the ground, but about forging protective, trusting

relationships within specific groups. Nowhere is the protection of identity cities starker than in the debate over “sanctuary cities” in the US, where cities are standing up against federal law enforcement to protect undocumented residents from deportation. Chapter Seven notes through all of these issues that cities are regularly pushed to choose to protect wealth and capital, or bring all communities into a security umbrella regardless of status.

Food and water security are likely to become even more intense geo-strategic issues in the years to come. New data indicates that conflict futures are intrinsically tied to resource limitations (Hendrix and Brinkman 2013), but cities are increasingly facing the brunt of an impending crisis: as urban populations surge, estimates show that cities will need to double their food supplies by 2050 (McKeon 2015). Chapter Eight will outline how global cities are attempting to leverage third-sector partnerships and national-level distribution programs at the local level, while creating coalitions to address food insecurity. Cities are also at the forefront of clean water technology and water reclamation: San Diego’s Pure water program creates security for drought sensitive Southern California and Tel Aviv has leveraged similar desalination programs in Israel. The chapter illustrates the ties between city resource consumers and rural resource producers, raising the stakes for city intergovernmental bodies trying to navigate political relationships at the regional, national, and global levels.

Chapter Nine, *Health Security*, outlines how health is not only provided at the national level. Increasingly, local governments are providing community clinics and family health centers for their residents. Physical care in cities includes ordinances to mandate paid sick-leave and parental leave. Throughout the world, global cities are using local budgets to address serious gaps in national healthcare systems - in Valparaiso, the mayor and council have, for instance, set up pharmacies providing medicine at no profit and free medical clinics (Barcelona en Comu et al. 2019, 19). Other cities have also begun to see homelessness populations as inexorably tied to the urban landscape posing threats, from mental healthcare to preventing communicable diseases, that must be addressed with local resources.

Each chapter highlights the norm-creating iterative process from local advocacy to global practice. Analysis of these seven sectors, disaggregated measurements of human security, are core functions of what it means to be a globally engaged city. The volume's policy implications are thus extraordinarily broad, offering examples of best practices for numerous areas of human security globally. The 10th chapter, *Cities as International Regimes: Local Action and Global Impact*, outlines how work being done in cities transfers into international society, building the capacity and normative commitments of other cities. In this conclusion, I argue that cities are powerful transnational (though place-bound) nonstate actors that create norms and expectations beyond their borders or municipal projects ([Keck and Sikkink 2014](#)). The concluding chapter discusses the future of the human security agenda advancing at the municipal and transnational levels simultaneously.

Methods

The central task of the volume is to better understand how and why cities have stepped in to fill a human security vacuum. How have cities sought to create physical, political, environmental, economic, community, food, and health security? Beyond the *how*, each chapter will also answer the *why* - why are cities pursuing outcomes and programs around each of these areas of human security? Chapters describe various security policy programs in action, such as food security or economic security programs. I then trace the origin of each program and the dynamics which produced the impetus for the city to provide security of that sort. Finally, each chapter will explore the global connections between cities working in that area of human security, to better understand how those coalitions form, their commitments to one another, and the elaboration of the community's norms and practices.

The research design employed will be qualitative, triangulating three years of personal ethnographic experience in the field, interviews, and survey instruments. This design intends to discuss the policies in cities of various size and location, rather than focusing only on megacities. This strategy allows for me to focus on concrete policy examples in each arena of human

security with data from over 100 mayors, chief resilience officers, police chiefs, security policy leads, and leaders of city to city international organizations. This data will be used to tell a larger global story about the rise of city responsibility in the domain of human security, and in turn, discuss how cities are furthering the sharing of knowledge and expectations with one another.

I conducted three years of ethnographic research in the practice of city security as the Mayor of San Diego's coordinator for combating violent extremism, one of San Diego's representatives to international organizations, and lead architect of San Diego's agenda for immigrant economic integration. Through this work, I developed a network of global practitioners, which I employ to collect qualitative interviews and surveys with city leaders from around the world. I utilized a two-fold qualitative data collection effort. First, I conducted semi-structured interviews with mayors, city managers, and director-level leaders, for each disaggregated area of human security. Second, I developed a survey targeted to city security and resilience experts, with questions in each of the thematic areas of human security. This survey explicitly targeted the over 100 city Chief Resilience Officers in the now defunct Resilient Cities Network, who all oversee functional areas touching on all seven thematic areas of human security. I also survey the policy leads for the Strong City Network, a global city-to-city organization linking over 120 cities on every continent regarding topics of violence prevention, counter-terrorism, and anti-hate initiatives. As described above, these interviews and surveys focus on process tracing the motivation of a community in adopting a security providing program, describe policy innovations in that area, and look into how cities are sharing with one another to learn best practices and share success and failures.

The variation of municipal systems and their relationship with central governments does not lend itself easily to a structured focused comparison. Instead, from direct involvement, interviews, and surveys, I seek to identify policies of human security provision with clear processes that can be traced from beginning to end (Bennet and Checkel 2014). By using a process tracing method, I rely upon a strategy of temporal precedence for establishing cause and effect dynamics. From the data, I first describe the rise of a human security trend (e.g. environmental security) in

various cities, offering summary policy overviews for how cities are providing this type of security. Second, I ask specific questions about the motivations and trajectory of how the issue became salient in local context. The narrative focuses on driving moments, constituencies, and economic and political factors giving rise to programs employed. Finally, all interviews and questionnaires provide data on how city officials are learning and sharing best practices, noting the global connections (or lack thereof) of cities once they have deployed a specific human security initiative. In sum, the research process reveals the process of initial issue salience, the transformation from community salience into policy, and the avenues for international collaboration.

Central Puzzles and Policy Implications

Three central questions organizing this book are as follows. How and why have cities sought to create physical, political, environmental, economic, community, food, and health security? In what ways has the evolution of human security at the local level been reproduced through city-to-city global public policy networks? What happens to the international system when cities organize their human security activities together in networks and can microgeographies produce transnational outcomes? While these represent only a handful of pertinent puzzles, they focus the inquiry of study on a sequence, a process, from local activism and problemsolving to global rule and expectation-setting.

The book represents both an academic inquiry into the relationship between cities, human security, and transnational norm elaboration, but also a set of practical policy prescriptions for cities looking to lean into these areas more. Policy implications span a breadth of areas, including in-depth comparative suggestions for how cities can work together with public diplomacy to advance a physical, political, environmental, economic, community, food, and health security. I spend time highlighting what cities around the world are doing on issues ranging from gang violence, to climate change, to gender protections, to elections security. Practitioners will be able to consider a wide menu of both policies and public diplomacy

strategies on climate, extremism, gang activity, food and water security, and others, which will advance a needed conversation about the power and ability of every global city to participate in the human security framework at the local and global levels.

The ultimate policy implication remains that cities can better network together to form coalitions at the international level to advance their human security agenda as they become more aware of their global power. Through engaging these sets of arguments, this volume attempts to make one comprehensive contribution: that it may be possible to process trace the life-cycle of a global norm or rule from a set of locally, civically engaged activists. For policymakers in cities, this reinforces the idea that local governments should indeed tap into the subject matter experts that “make democracy work” (Putnam, Leonardi, and Nanetti 1994). This deepens the call by the new municipalist movement ([Katz and Nowak 2018](#)) to value cities as relevant actors in global public policy and offers policymakers who care about human security a new set of actors within which they can impact change to improve the human security condition. To the dismay of International Relations scholars, including human security scholars, who hold little value in cities as a unit of analysis, this project finds that the global governance of security politics may indeed be shaped by practices at the local level that are amplified through city diplomacy. Cities therefore matter more than ever and locally engaged activists can indeed impact change at the global level: “Acting Locally and Thinking Globally” is thus more than a bumper sticker: it is a fact of world politics.

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