Norwegian University of Life Sciences

**Master's Thesis 2021 30 ECTS**
Faculty of Landscape and Society

# **At the Intersection Between Local and Global:** Understanding Oslo's International Engagement.

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## Declaration

I, Hege Louise Guttormsen, declare that this thesis is a result of my research investigations and findings. Sources of information other than my own have been acknowledged and a reference list has been appended. This work has not been previously submitted to any other university for award of any type of academic degree.

Signature..Hege L Guttormsen.....Date..13.08.2021.

# Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the interview participants for taking the time to share their perspectives and knowledge with me.

I would further like to thank my supervisors, Marianne Millstein from OsloMet and Ingrid Nyborg from NMBU for valuable feedback, guidance and support throughout this process.

Lastly, I would like to thank Arthur and Chris.

*Any errors are mine alone.*

# Abstract

Cities are increasingly asserting themselves at the intersection between the local and global. Over the past decades, one has seen cities progressively seeking to partake in global governance processes, and their capacity for impact is perhaps best illustrated through joint efforts by city networks. One has further seen cities beginning to engage in foreign policy topics traditionally understood to belong within the state's sphere of authority. While cities are undoubtably claiming political space in international processes, this space remains largely undefined.

The scholarly recognition of the city as an international, political actor has been slow within the field of IR. While the interest in the topic has picked up in recent years, the growing body of literature is skewed towards so-called 'global cities'. Focusing this thesis on the international agency of the City of Oslo provides a small contribution to the diversification of the field. In doing that, this thesis seeks to answer the following research question: *Why does Oslo engage internationally, and how can Oslo's international agency be understood in relation to the Norwegian state?*

This question was sought answered by analysing 10 key informant interviews and 10 of Oslo's official documents. The findings indicated a range of rationales guiding Oslo's decisions to engage internationally, wherein both pragmatic and idealistic motivations were identified. Oslo's international engagement consists of several different thematic areas, wherein the nature of the topic appeared to determine the state's perception of the city's international activities.



**Keywords:** global governance, foreign policy, city diplomacy, city networks, international relations, climate, Oslo, Norway

## Acronyms and Abbreviations

| | |
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| C40 | C40 Cities Climate Leadership Group |
| CNCA | Carbon Neutral Cities Alliance |
| EEA | European Economic Area |
| EU | European Union |
| ICLEI | Local Governments for Sustainability<br>*(previously International Council of Local Environmental Initiatives)* |
| KMD | Kommunal- og moderniseringsdepartementet<br>*Ministry of Local Government and Modernisation* |
| KS | Kommunesektorens Organisasjon |
| ICAN | International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons |
| IR | International Relations (the study of) |
| MFA | Ministry of Foreign Affairs |
| MNC | Multinational corporation |
| NGO | Non-governmental organization |
| OECD | Oil |
| UCLG | The United Cities and Local Governments |
| UN | United Nation |
| UN SDGs | United National Sustainable Development Goals |
| US | The United States |

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# 1. Introduction

"While nations talk […] cities act" (Acuto, 2013a, pg. 494). This frequently cited quote by former Mayor of New York, Michael Bloomberg, illustrates a perceived impatience by many the world's cities over states' inability to cooperate and achieve salient solutions to pressing global issues. Whereas states have long held the legitimate authority to engage in global governance, one is increasingly seeing cities claiming a seat at the table. Cities are actively establishing their own international relations, collaborating in networks, and their capacities as international, political actors makes the city an actor to be reckoned with in the future.

The preceding decades of intense globalization may have begun blurring the divide between the national and international spheres, wherein cities seem to increasingly be asserting themselves at the intersection of these. Global cities, such as New York or Tokyo, may be illustrative of how globalization and urbanization manifests in a changing international environment (Acuto, 2010, p. 426-427), and Curtis (2016, p. 459) describes the network of global cities as the "material exoskeleton of globalization". Acuto (2010, p. 427) explains how the location of such cities at the crossroads of global processes is "playing an essential role in the development of new governmental rationalities by adding to the complexity of the global landscape," connecting the local and global levels.

As global issues like climate change hold no regard for borders, the diffusion of the line between the governance levels becomes further highlighted. One may here consider the dual role of cities when it comes to some of the most pressing global problems of today. Drawing on the example of climate, one can assert that while metropolitan may be responsible for vast emissions and environmental degradation, they simultaneously represent "an immense creative resource to generate solutions to such problems" (Curtis, 2016, p. 466). Furthermore, cities find themselves at the forefront of transnational security risks, prompting city involvement in security governance, for example related to terrorism or nuclear weapons (Curtis, 2016, p. 464-465). Whereas the principles of the Westphalian system have long gone unquestioned in its assumption that the state is "the only entity with the legitimacy, authority and capacity to pursue a foreign policy," cities are seen increasingly seeking a role in issues of foreign policy nature as well (Curtis & Acuto, 2018, p. 8).

Cities are not only contributing to finding solutions to global issues that they contribute to and are affected by, but they show will and capacity to partake in shaping broader international agendas and regulatory frameworks. Curtis and Acuto (2018, p. 11) demonstrate how efforts by city networks such as United Cities and Local Governments

(UCLG) within various UN framework, or the Climate Leadership Group (C40) roles in both the development and subsequent implementation of the Paris Agreement, is illustrative of how the scale-jumping capacities of cities through networks have been successful in "linking local actions to global governance outcomes, independent of state government activities" (Curtis & Acuto, 2018, p. 11).

The tendencies outline above are visible in Oslo as well, where the city participates in several international city networks and displays international objectives in a range of areas. As will be evident throughout this thesis, Oslo's climate ambitions figure prominently in its international engagement, wherein the city also seeks to contribute to finding global solutions. However, Oslo is also seen voicing its own positions on matters previously securely positioned within the state's sphere of authority, which has triggered a certain level of debate. In 2011, then chair of the Norwegian Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence, Ine Eriksen Søreide, reflected upon the involvement of the local level in foreign policy matters in an opinion piece in Dagsavisen. She asserted that at best, these discussions are merely symbolic and distract politicians and the media from the 'important tasks' of local governments, while noting that in the worst case these discussions contribute to undermining or weakening official Norwegian foreign policy. Her conclusion was clear in stating that "we cannot have 430 different foreign policies in this country" (Søreide, 2011, own translation). While Søreide made this statement a decade ago, it prompts interesting considerations for how the state and city adjust to one another as the latter is claiming space for international action.

While the emergent international, political agency of cities is becoming increasingly visible, the scholarly recognition of this phenomenon has been slow. As Van der Plujim and Melissen (2007, p. 5-6) observed, "while NGOs, associations of states and MNCs have gained academic attention as new actors, cities have received less attention," a curious omission given the extensive international activities undertaken by cities. However, the body of research on cities' international agency has begun picking up, and a large portion of studies focus on 'global cities'. Bassens, Beeckmans, Derudder and Oosterlynck (2019, p. 4) note how this skewed focus may "produce a divide between the largest urban economies generating policy and agency and 'other' cities that are seen as neither having nor needing such agency," and urge consideration for more diverse urban contexts. The need to diversify the research in this field presents a gap in which a case study on Oslo presents a contribution to the field by exploring the perceived need for a smaller, more ordinary city to engage internationally. While international engagement is not a designated task of the city, nor does

the city hold any defined role in Norwegian foreign policy, Oslo is seen joining the ranks of cities asserting themselves in international settings. This prompts the research question of this thesis to be:

- *Why does Oslo engage internationally, and how can Oslo's international agency be understood in relation to the Norwegian state?*

The objective of this master thesis will then be to position Oslo within the growing body of literature on global urban agency, as well as to contribute to gaining a better understanding of the overall international role of cities. Guided by the research question, the thesis will draw on both documents and reflections by interview participants to explore why a city like Oslo engages internationally, and what the nature of its international agency entails for its relationship with the state.

### 1.1. Overview of the Thesis

Following this introduction, **chapter 2** builds the thesis' theoretical framework by discussing how various scholars engage with cities' international agency. The first part of the chapter discusses rationales and drivers behind the international engagement of cities, including how cities may be positioned within the study of IR. The second part focuses on the foreign policy dimension of this, including the concepts of city diplomacy and networking. **Chapter 3** presents the research strategy and methods employed for this thesis, and addresses the choices made throughout the process. **Chapter 4** is intended to give the reader context for the following chapter by briefly outlining certain background information about the City of Oslo. The findings derived from both interviews and documents are presented and discussed in **chapter 5**. The first part of the chapter is dedicated to the rationales driving Oslo's international engagement, whereas the second part explores the relationship between Oslo and the Norwegian state in light of the city's international activities. The thesis culminates in **chapter 6**, where the conclusion ties the main findings to the research question.

## 2. The City Asserting Itself in Global Governance

This chapter will draw on a variety of literature on cities' international engagement to illustrate the ways in which cities interact with the international system and how they seek a role in global governance processes. Several authors point to broader processes of globalization and urbanization as important drivers of the involvement of cities on the

international stage. While increased interconnectedness and interdependence are typical characteristics of globalization, one may here also consider the "gradual erosion of state sovereignty, and the location of transnational spaces within national territories" following these processes (Mohanty, 2020, p. 205). As Curtis (2016, p. 475), notes, "the emergence of novel configurations of transnational space has made it far more difficult to 'draw the line' between the inside and the outside of the state," implying less clearly demarcated boundaries typically associated with the sovereign state.

Van der Plujim and Melissen (2007, p. 8) suggest that globalization has created new opportunities for the international involvement of territorial non-state actors, while arguing that the diffusion of the distinction between national and international political spheres also implies changes to the roles of the state and city. In describing cities as key players in globalization, Curtis (2016, p. 466) explains that "global cities have generated astonishing levels of growth and economic power, an unprecedented concentration of people and wealth, and have the most advanced technological infrastructures available on the planet. They have scale that stretches across traditional state boundaries, and vast populations that place the traditional understanding of what international politics is into question". While cities may increasingly be recognized as actors in, or even drivers of, globalizing processes, one should keep in mind that cities are also affected by those same processes, through ex. migration and the local reach of international policies (Van der Plujim & Melissen, 2007, p. 8). One might then consider how cities may be seen as key sites for the dynamics of international processes, while also increasingly asserting their agency by claiming a voice in, rather than simply being subjected to, global governance processes.

Several authors have argued that the acceleration of city participation on the global stage is a response to states' inabilities to cooperate and achieve impactful results on increasingly pressing global issues (see ex. Bassens, Beeckmans, Derudder & Oosterlynck, 2019, p. 3; Van der Plujim & Melissen, 2007, p. 27). The opening quote of the introduction, "while nations talk […] cities act" encapsulates this sentiment (Acuto, 2013a, pg. 494). The vast scale of several of the most urgent global issues, requires truly global and concerted efforts, i.e. efficient global governance. Whereas global governance is a field where states have traditionally been regarded the main legitimate actors, the 'urban turn' in international relations has spurred debates about a potentially declining, or changing, role of the state on the global scene, again suggesting that cities may be asserting themselves as global actors in response to ineffective state cooperation (see ex. Barber, 2013 cited in Corjin, 2019, p 28). While the rise of the international city actor may destabilize a long established relationship

between city and state, it also opens for this relationship to be renegotiated, wherein "it remains to be seen whether states and cities will be partners in global governance or whether they will increasingly come into conflict" (Curtis & Acuto, 2018, p. 11). As Curtis (2016, p. 456) suggests, "this is not a zero-sum game, where the rise of cities necessarily means the decline of states,". Instead of the replacement by one actor of the other, one may see this as a way of adapting to a changing international environment (Curtis, 2016, p. 456).

In light of a potential renegotiation of different actors' roles in global governance, it is also interesting to look at the assertion of cities on the global stage in relation to the growing number of international agreements and widening of international agendas. As Blank (2006, p. 265-266) explains, "the more international law extends its reach over non-state actors, the more they become involved in international relations, transnational dialogue, and conflict," which also includes how localities are bound to comply with commitments states make through international treaties and agreements. Within this lies the need to clarify the roles of actors at different levels of governance, especially related to the implementation of internationally formulated agendas that the local level is subjected to through obligations made by states. Instead of remaining passive recipients of international affairs, one observes an increasing number of cities aiming to assert influence over the processes that are affecting them.

Additionally, cities may also choose to enforce "frameworks beyond their government's participation," which illustrates how cities are not simply elements within an international 'norms cascade' channelled through states (Acuto, 2013a, p. 492). An example of this is how several cities' ambitions for emission reductions far exceed that of their national governments (Ljungkvist, 2014, p. 48). In this way, cities may also be seen as norm entrepreneurs by seeking to expand global ambitions on global concerns. Ljungkvist (2014, p. 39-40) explains how cities through assuming such a role pursue international norms in a more autonomous matter than previously, including within more traditional International Relations (IR) areas such as human rights and nuclear disarmament.

However, when talking about the active participation of cities internationally, it is important to consider which cities are in focus. Similar to the prevailing focus on 'great powers' in the study of international relations (IR), the type of city discussed in the majority of scholarship presented in this chapter falls within the 'global city' category. Expanding on Saskia Sassen's concept of the global city from the 1990s, Acuto (2011, p. 2953) characterizes a global city "as the status of connectedness to the global attained by some world cities, which rests upon an urban entrepreneurial spirit that situates these metropolises

as the strategic hinges of globalisation". This kind of city is often exemplified by large, worldly cities such as New York, London or Tokyo. While global cities have tended to be the main focus when theorizing international, urban agency, a deeper understanding of how this agency influences global processes requires consideration for more diverse cases. Keeping this in mind, the following section will briefly explore how one may conceptualize 'the city' in IR.

### 2.1. Cities in IR

While cities are becoming increasingly visible in global governance processes, the appreciation of their formal role on the international arena remains underdeveloped in theory, often occupying an unspecified place among other non-state and civil society actors (Acuto, Kosovac, Pejic & Jones, 2021, p. 1). Acuto (2010, p. 426) presents the concept of inattentional blindness in reference to the slow scholarly recognition of the emergence of cities on the global stage: a phenomenon that occurs when one fails to perceive something in plain sight because one is preoccupied focusing on something else. According to Curtis (2016, p. 457-458), the 'historiography' of IR has contributed to this inattentiveness, wherein cities have largely been regarded as sub-national entities, thereby occupying space at a different level of analysis than that of IR concern. This scholarly tradition has long been characterized by a statist ontology where the prevailing debates on globalized political processes have largely focused on "state agency within international institutions, organizations and regimes, as well as the state's responses towards emerging non-state actors" (Barthold, 2019, p. 148). Less attention has been paid to the potential merits of these emerging non-state actors in their own right. Drawing on insights from several scholars who have contributed to bringing the city into the study of IR, Peyroux (2019, p. 191) sums up potential reasons for the significant inertia of the field to engage with city political agency by asserting that:

> First, the integration of non-state actors in the field is recent. Second, acknowledging the power of cities in international relations destabilizes the assumptions that international relations make about the international system (Curtis, 2014): it challenges the state-centred (Viltard, 2010) and territorial perspective (Acuto, 2013, p. 25), the fact that subnational governments are under the (sole) influence and direction of national government (Betsill and Bulkeley, 2006).

One should further be mindful of that theorizing cities as international, political actors in the language of IR, may run the risk of uncritically imposing state-properties onto cities, potentially assuming that cities are simply mimicking state behaviour. Acuto et al. (2021, p. 7) remind IR scholars to be "mindful not to conceptualize cities as 'mini-states' in the international system," and instead propose a less fixed and more relationally oriented way of understanding urban agency. While one should be cautious of expecting or assuming state-behaviour from cities, there might still be benefits of speaking the same language. Instead of seeking new concepts to capture international city activity, one may more actively attempt to allow for more pluralistic understandings of concepts when applying them.

The ways in which different scholars engage with the concept of the city as an international actor in IR may be illustrated through a brief discussion of neoliberalism and constructivism. It should be noted that only a few relevant aspects of these theoretical perspectives are included for illustrative purpose, meaning that their broader foundation and implications will not be covered here.

*Neoliberalism*

The body of research on cities' international emergence was long dominated by an economic perspective, with many aspects fitting well into the neoliberal tradition in IR. Part of the neoliberalist perspective is its concern with achieving cooperation between actors in the international system, and particularly relevant here is its focus on how the growth of international institutions and increased interdependence is deemed important to enable concerted responses to global concerns (Sterling-Folker, 2013, p. 114-115). The neoliberal discourse that has accompanied the emergence of today's global cities continues to remain highly relevant. Acuto (2019, p. 134) notes how "sensationalist pro-urban writing" is typically guided by neo-liberal frameworks, and Bassens et al. (2019, p. 3) exemplify this with former mayor of New York Michael Bloomberg's emphasis on cities 'competitive advantage' internationally. This economistic framing is not surprising considering the strong capitalist grip on globalization in the past decades. However, Acuto (2011, p. 2969) urges reflection on globalization beyond its economic aspects, implying that the 'engines' of globalization (here referring to global cities) are significant in many other contexts than what the neoliberal discourse may imply. Keeping this in mind, one may begin to conceptualize the city beyond international economic activities (though this naturally remains important), and to further theorize its scope for international political action.

*Constructivism*

The constructivist emphasis on how actors and the relations between these are socially constructed, its critiques of traditional IR assumptions of a static, materially determined international society, as well as its perspective on the mutually-constitutive relationship between agents and structure, are highly relevant notions when theorizing cities as international actors (Nijman, 2016, p. 222). The constructivist perspective includes a focus on understanding change, something that opens the space for theorizing the impact of emerging actors such as the city. Furthermore, the constructivist focus on norms, rules and values is particularly relevant as several authors describe cities as taking on roles as 'norm entrepreneurs' in today's international environment (see ex. Curtis, 2016, p. 466; Blank, 2006, p. 268; Brütsch 2013 p. 312). It is not uncommon to see cities promoting international norms by for example adhering to the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in their operative frameworks, and there are examples of localities reacting strongly when states or corporations violate human and labour rights (Blank 2006, p. 268). Fierke (2013, p. 190) explains how from a constructivist perspective, norms do not merely shape the behaviour of actors, but is constitutive of their identities. The norms which actors seek to promote or adhere to, are in this sense largely reflective of 'who' they want to be perceived as. Furthermore, material realities are seen as existing by virtue of the meaning ascribed to them, exemplified by how sovereignty and borders exists because humans have ascribed meaning to them (Fierke, 2013, p. 192). This line of thinking might also imply that the city as an actor depends on recognition for its international existence to be meaningful.

## 2.2. City Agency

Recognizing the city as an international actor, thereby considering its potential to influence, is a quite political exercise which involves "ascribing 'power' to these entities as a relational effect of their socio-political interaction with the geography of global governance" (Acuto, 2013b, p. 10). In practice, theorizing city agency and identifying cities as capable of influencing internationally is also about localizing power in the international order (Acuto, 2013b, p. 42).

Cities' capacity for purposeful agency speaks to their embeddedness in the international political sphere. However, this embeddedness also presents the idea of cities as international actors facing the same conundrum as states when encountering structural constraints to their constitution and exercise of agency. Acuto (2013b, p. 53) asserts that cities are neither "completely 'excused' from, nor independent from, the rules of the world-

system". The theorization of urban agency is thereby faced with the unresolved agent-structure quandary of international relations, which at its core questions "whether agents shape social structures or vice versa" (Braun, Schindler & Wille, 2019, p. 791). Acuto (2013b, p. 53) explains how the ways in which cities operate internationally largely follow "the systemic logic of the Westphalian order," while at the same time contesting the order by bypassing parts of it. This somewhat echoes the constructivist position, largely influenced by Alexander Wendt, who sees agents as being "constrained by social structures, but also hav[ing] the power, through their acts, to transform these same structures" (Braun et al., 2019, p. 791). One may here consider Braun et al. (2019, p. 796) focus on the relational nature of agency, where they conceive of 'the ability to act' as not being an "intrinsic characteristic of an individual entity," but rather as deriving from its positionality within a system of actors. Cities' ability to act on the international stage is naturally not a given, but it seems like cities are to an extent able to contribute to shaping the space for potential action.

*Developing Agency*

Thus far, the discussion has centred around how cities may assert themselves internationally, but it has not reflected much upon how their agency to do so develops. Pinson (2019, p. 78) observed how city agency seems to be strengthened where there are "conflictual, or at least competitive, relations between centres and peripheries, in particular between states and cities". Where this is the case, local governments have been 'forced' to acquire the resources and skills to develop subnational capacities (Pinson, 2019, p. 80). However, where the relationship between state and city is less contentious, the space for local governments to develop political agency has paradoxically been much smaller (Pinson, 2019, p. 80). This latter observation is largely in line with Van der Plujim and Melissen's (2007, p. 16) finding that where national governments represent the interests of cities, local governments display less of a need to develop their own diplomatic capabilities.

When discussing the factors that contribute to strengthening (or weakening) a city's international agency, several authors also emphasize the rising prominence of city leaders (see ex. Curtis, 2016, p. 464 ; Acuto, 2013a). Van der Plujim and Melissen (2007, p. 14-15) also highlight how "personal engagement from the side of influential figures in city governments […] appears to be crucial" for cities' decisions to engage internationally. Complementing these findings, Curtis (2016, p. 464) notes how mayors have been important figures in encouraging cities to "develop capabilities as networked actors," which in turn allows them to address global issues at a larger scale. In occupying central roles in cities'

international activities and relations, city leaders may also be seen as the public face of their city, reflecting the city's identity and status.

*Identity and Status*

Behind an actor's purposeful agency lies the constitution of its 'actorhood'. One may perceive of actors in IR through their underlying identities, which may be expressed and shaped through the strategies they employ outward. Kavaratzis and Ashworth (2005, p. 506) describe how places often seek to distinguish themselves from other actors through signalling their identities outwardly when pursuing "economic, political or socio-psychological objectives". In other words, one sees that often, "global cities claim political authority in foreign and security affairs […] on the basis of a locally developed collective identity" (Bassens et al., 2019, p. 7).

When considering the formation of a city's identity, one should keep in mind that identities are typically constituted in relation to others, making them "intrinsically hierarchical," (De Carvalho & Neumann, 2015, p. 4). This implies that one's identity may be closely tied to one's status in the global hierarchy, thereby affecting one's space for action. A related term, reputation, refers to how one is perceived by others, and is important as it "may inform the actions of others" (De Carvalho & Neumann, 2015, p. 4). Being perceived as an attractive and legitimate partner is particularly valuable when cities seek collaboration for impact on global issues. To influence how one is perceived by others, cities may turn to 'city branding', which Kavaratzis and Ashworth (2005, p. 513) explain as pertaining both to attracting "attention and place recognition," and raising "associations between the place and attributes regarded as being beneficial to its economic or social development". Through this, cities may actively market a specific version of themselves to appear attractive and noticeable.

Cities' identities are important considerations when exploring 'who' cities are internationally, both as actors in their own right and in relation to the state. Cities with clearly articulated identities may be more recognizable, and they may actively engage in activities to signal their interests and values, or to distinguish themselves from the state. Examples of this include how Brexit or the US' withdrawal from the Paris Agreement caused "vivid reactions by coalitions of mayors and local leaders that seem to pit major 'global' cosmopolitan and 'open' cities against reactionary national governments" (Curtis & Acuto, 2018, p. 15). This shows why cities may actively signal the interests and values it wants to be associated with internationally.

### 2.3. Cities and Foreign Policy

Having discussed how the literature engages with the emergence of cities internationally, this section will explore cities' international endeavours from a foreign policy perspective. While there is no universally agreed upon definition of foreign policy, Hill (2016, p. 4) suggests that one may understand it as "the sum of official external relations conducted by an independent actor (usually but not exclusively a state) in international relations". While this definition does not restrict foreign policy to states, he is reluctant to use grand terms such as "municipal foreign policy," while also recognizing that cities do in fact hold international capabilities outside of state governments' official foreign policies (Hill, 2016, p. 206). Curtis and Acuto (2018, p. 8) are less reluctant in employing the 'city foreign policy' term and offer a limited definition of it as "a city's formal strategy in dealing with other governmental and non-governmental actors on an international stage". The principles of the Westphalian state system have for a long time gone unquestioned in its assumption that the state is "the only entity with the legitimacy, authority and capacity to pursue a foreign policy" (Curtis & Acuto, 2018, p. 8). It is therefore quite fascinating to look at cities' "mission creep," implying that cities seem to in fact be entertaining the idea of their own foreign policies (Ljungkvist, 2014, p. 32). Ljungkvist (2014, p. 32) remarks how we are already seeing local governments having begun engaging with issues traditionally placed securely within the foreign policy of states, with examples including "nuclear proliferation, human rights, climate change mitigation, and counterterrorism".

A potential reorganization of the actors involved in global governance and foreign policy prompts questions about the roles and relationship between the different levels of governance. This includes how power is divided and adjusted, and importantly how autonomous the local level can and should be (Blank, 2006, p. 264). Hill (2016, p. 298) also raises questions about how one may ensure a satisfying level of national cohesion in light of sub-national foreign policy ambitions, which may or may not align. As long as this relationship remains somewhat undefined and malleable, there remains a risk of tension between the two levels of governance. Acuto et al. (2021, p. 15) exemplify the potential for confrontation with the divergence between the US government and several US mayors on stances on climate change and refugees. They raise further questions on what the recognition of city actors within UN frameworks will entail, and what may happen when city and state diplomats have diverging views or ambitions (Acuto et al., 2021, p. 15). Drawing further on the example of the UN, Curtis and Acuto (2018, p. 16) raise concern with how one has already seen tension arising from the increased presence of cities within this system, noting

how Russia is seeing this “as a dangerous precedent indicating the possible erosion of the supremacy of state sovereignty”. These potential, and already appearing, frictions are recognized by Van der Plujim and Melissen (2007, p. 12) as well, who note that some states may view the international activities of cities as an infringement upon their role, including how the establishment of sub-national diplomatic presences in Brussels may be perceived as interfering with the state’s diplomatic presence.

While there are examples of cities directly challenging the positions of their respective governments, there are also many cities that remain more wary of ‘overstepping’. Reflecting upon cities’ balancing act in relation to the state, Brütsch (2013, p. 314) suggests how local leaders should carefully consider how their international endeavours may be perceived by states, if anything “as a matter of prudence”. He further notes that cities’ international strategies often do display this prudence through careful wording, and that one frequently sees local leaders “reassure host governments that they recognize the pre-eminence of "national interests"” (Brütsch, 2013, p. 314). These considerations may imply that there is an underlying perception of the city holding real capacity to challenge the state, which requires them to tread carefully in balancing their potential and intent as it relates to ‘interference’.

One may also view the capacity that cities hold on the international arena as a strength, considering the potential that lies in the coordination between the levels, particularly as foreign policy is a field in which continuity and coherence is highly beneficial (Van der Plujim & Melissen, 2007, p. 13). In this way, the international activities of both state and local governments could be complementary to one another. Pinson (2019, p. 61-62) warns that much pro-urban literature tends to portray a zero-sum relationship between cities and states, but that one instead may consider how states can actively empower sub-national governance levels for mutually beneficial outcomes. Curtis and Acuto (2018, p. 15) echo this sentiment by suggesting that “we need not pit cities against states”, but instead explore the potential for cities to aid in the revamping of international institutions to overcome “state-centric gridlocks”. Similarly, Brütsch (2013, p. 311) has observed that “national governments and supranational authorities usually play along” when cities engage internationally, and the increasing professionalization of cities’ international work through the establishment of international offices and a bureaucracy dedicated to coordinating cities’ international endeavours may be another indicator of the acceptance of the practice (see ex. Van der Plujim & Melissen, 2007, p. 34, Ljungkvist, 2014, p. 42).

As mentioned, the recognition of cities as foreign policy actors is recent and faced with a variety of challenges, not least in defining their role in global governance. Finding ways to effectively communicate with state actors and international institutions will be necessary to play on each other's' strengths to achieve synergies on mutual ambitions, as well as in finding ways to handle diverging interests (Melissen & Van der Plujim, 2007, p. 34). One should also consider more closely the possibility for national governments to use cities more actively to further their foreign policy objectives, wherein cities may have access to different channels than the state in fostering international relationships (Peyroux, 2019, p. 203).

Keeping these considerations in mind, highlighting both the potential for tension and synergies between governance levels, the next sections will discuss two of the most prominent ways in which cities engage in international issues. Those being through city diplomacy and city networks. While the two overlap to some extent, it should be noted that one might not consider all activity taking place through networks as diplomacy, but they are included here since they represent an important tool for how cities engage internationally.

### 2.3.1. City Diplomacy

As one of the main tools of foreign policy, it is interesting to consider the concept of diplomacy in relation to cities' international engagement. In conceptualizing how cities may engage in diplomatic activities, Van der Plujim and Melissen (2007, p. 6) define the concept of 'city diplomacy' as "the institutions and processes by which cities, or local governments in general, engage in relations with actors on an international political stage with the aim of representing themselves and their interests to one another". Another concept capturing sub-national international activity is found in the literature on 'paradiplomacy', or parallel diplomacy, gaining grounds in the 1980s (Tavares, 2016, p. 7). While the concepts are closely related, theorization on paradiplomacy tends to differ in its conceptualization of the spheres in which central and non-central governments operate. This may be illustrated by how Van der Plujim and Melissen (2007, p. 9), referencing Duchacek et al. (1988), suggest that 'paradiplomacy' "creates an image of a central route of diplomacy on which national governments 'ride', and a separate, peripheral route of diplomacy on which city actors 'ride'". They propose that the diplomatic reality is much more complex than this, and they offer the analogy that "state and city actors do not necessarily 'ride' along different diplomatic routes, but rather along the same route although in a different car" (Van der Plujim & Melissen, 2007, p. 9). The following discussion will largely rely on Van der Plujim

and Melissen's (2007, p. 9) conceptualization of city diplomacy as it encourages the exploration of a continuously changing "web of interactions" that take place in a "multilayered diplomatic environment".

While the way cities' act internationally may to some extent be seen as mimicking state behaviour, cities have not simply adopted state diplomatic functions, but largely adapted them. Cities engage in diplomatic activities for a variety of reasons, and Van der Plujim and Melissen (2007, p. 15) suggest three main motives. The first, and perhaps leading motive for most, is that cities engage in diplomatic activities "in order to serve the interests of their city and its community". Secondly, citizen activism may 'force' local leaders to engage in issue-specific diplomacy, which could be exemplified by citizen movements against nuclear weapons (p. 15). The third motive is solidarity, and while self-interest often plays a part here as well, "cities too can have 'idealistic' motives for engaging in diplomacy" (Van der Plujim & Melissen, p. 15). These motivations may be illustrated through certain central dynamics of city diplomacy as outlined through the below examples of cities' security, economic, representative and networking functions internationally.

Cities' relevance in the security domain is increasing, and Acuto and Rayner (2016, p. 1154) urges critical reflection on the commonly held assumption that cities' diplomatic activities are "less 'central' to classical IR concerns like security". One may look to the Mayors for Peace initiative regarding cities' engagement in conflict prevention; involvement in the conflict between Israel and Palestine as an example of cities' presence during conflict; and the increasing engagement of cities in post-conflict contexts through development assistance and activities aimed at strengthening democratic structures (Van der Plujim & Melissen, 2007, p. 21). Alger (2011, p. 18) also points to the 2008 'First World Conference on City Diplomacy' in the Hague, an initiative of the UCLG, as a "very important indication of the growing significance of local authorities in global governance," particularly within the domain of security as it largely focused on local governments' involvement in conflict areas. While city engagement on security issues may still be more aligned with advocacy work than policymaking, Acuto and Rayner (2016, p. 1154) emphasize that cities' efforts in the security domain is becoming increasingly visible, "serving important traditional and non-traditional security purposes".

Regarding the prevalence of the economic dimension of city diplomacy, Van der Plujim and Melissen (2007, p. 25) emphasize that self-interest is crucial when cities decide to engage in diplomatic activities, suggesting that it may even be the "only leading motive" for some. This is evident through both pull and push diplomatic activities. The former may be

exemplified through cities' efforts to attract foreign capital, or in securing the establishment of corporate headquarters in their city (Van der Plujim & Melissen, 2007, p. 25). The latter may be illustrated by how cities work for economic growth by "exporting services and knowledge to other cities or entering into partnership agreements with other cities," which also involves the exchange of services and best practices (Van der Plujim & Melissen, 2007, p. 26).

Another significant domain of city diplomacy to be exemplified here is the representative dimension, wherein the aim is typically "to participate and influence decision-making at the supra-national level" (Van der Plujim & Melissen, 2007, p. 30). The most prominent example of this is perhaps cities represented at the EU-level, including their diplomatic presence in established offices in Brussels. Lobbying is an important element in cities' trying to influence decision-making processes, which may be exemplified by the work of Eurocities at EU level, or through the dialogue between he UCLG and different UN bodies (Van der Plujim & Melissen, 2007, p. 30-31). However, it should be noted that while cities may assert influence through both informal and formal channels, "their powers come neither naturally nor are they automatically accepted by states," and therefore cities still need to actively and continuously assert themselves in this domain (Van der Plujim & Melissen, 2007, p. 31).

The cooperative dimension of cities' international activity is also closely related to city diplomacy, which is evident in how cities increasingly organize in networks. Van der Plujim and Melissen (2007, p. 28) have noted that unlike traditional conceptualizations of diplomacy where "cooperation is usually not a diplomatic aim in itself but more a means to achieve higher goals," that in the realm of city diplomacy, one sees that "becoming organized on a regional, continental and global level is indeed a diplomatic goal in its own right". That is an interesting observation, and the dynamics of city networks as a foreign policy tool will briefly be expanded upon below.

*City Networks*

The literature sometimes speaks of city diplomacy and networking rather interchangeably, and several aspects of city networking may indeed rightfully be placed within the concept of city diplomacy. This may be because many of the activities undertaking by and through city networks "constitute mediated 'international' relations between rightful representatives of polities (cities in this instance), and that they result in agreements, collaborations, further institution-building and cooperation across boundaries" (Acuto & Rayner, 2016, p. 1148).

Cities may further use networks as lobbying platforms, and to represent their interests and the views they want to be associated with (Peyroux, 2019, p. 189). It is therefore valuable to explore the ways in which cities organize in networks, and why this strategy seems to have gained such prominence.

City networks cover a wide range of issue areas, and Acuto and Rayner (2016, p. 1153) found that the environment holds primacy, followed by networks engaging with "poverty, gender and equality," and "energy and peacebuilding". Their estimates also revealed that close to 71 percent of the networks qualify as "'multi-purpose' in that they formally act across at least two major areas of policy" (Acuto & Rayner, 2016, p. 1153). Furthermore, one sees a high degree of pragmatism in the way cities use networks, exemplified by the sharing of information, technology, and best practices, particularly related to municipal challenges (Van der Plujim & Melissen, 2007, p. 29). It should further be noted that city networks increasingly also involve private actors, where an example is C40 which relies heavily on "public-private hybridization," and is connected strategically to both the World Bank and Clinton Foundation, as well as the OECD (Acuto, 2013a, p. 489). Additionally, Acuto and Rayner (2016, p. 1163) stress how networks have become significant "gateways through which business actors can make connections not just with individual cities but also within pools of cities," and thereby "offering networked windows into market opportunities".

While the networking of cities has clear pragmatic aspects, one may reflect upon why networking has gained such prominence by looking at the form of power cities hold internationally. Cities would largely be regarded soft-power actors, and Curtis and Acuto (2018, p. 8-9) note that in comparison to the sovereign powers employed by states in their foreign policy activities, cities' foreign endeavours are more centred around 'network power,' meaning "the ability to convene and lead coalitions of actors towards specific governance outcomes". Building on this, De Carvalho and Neumann (2015, p. 8) note how small states often differ from large states in that they seek to lower the costs related to their foreign policy activities through 'joint action,' as well as engaging more in "multiple-actor fora". This observation seems illustrative of why many cities work through networks as well, as this allows cities to minimize the cost of international activities by pooling member's resources (Acuto, 2013b, p. 159). However, relying on network power also places cities in a peculiar position in the global governance architecture, because in practice, this means that cities' "influence is never really stabilised, and is always shared with other actors, peers and flows" (Curtis & Acuto, 2018, p. 13). This observation was also made by Van der Plujim and

Melissen (2007, p. 31), who reflect upon how in "in order for the group to speak with one voice externally," it is necessary for cities to gear their ambitions and objectives to each other.

While cities' roles as networked actors, and the roles of the networks themselves, have not yet been securely defined within the global governance architecture, their significance is becoming increasingly visible. Expressed in the words of Curtis and Acuto (2018, p. 15): "If one accounts for the thousands of climate actions undertaken in Bloomberg's C40 Cities network, and multiplies that by at least 200 similar city networks, cities might have a case for claiming that they can fill the governance gaps states have failed to plug".

### 2.4. Tying in Oslo

The above discussion has aimed to explore how the literature engages with key aspects of cities as international actors, therethrough providing the theoretical and conceptual framework for the analysis of Oslo. To briefly summarize some of the main trends in the literature, one may see the emergence of cities on the international stage to a certain degree as a reaction to states' inability to cooperate on global issues. Alternatively, one may tie their emergence to the expansion of international institutions and treaties, wherein the local level is increasingly intertwined with international agendas. While some literature pits cities and states against each other in the changing global order, others focus on a re-organization where different governance levels may complement each other. Whereas cities for a long time received little scholarly attention and were subsumed to mere places within a territorial state, more recent scholarly contributions have aimed to conceptualize the city as an actor, thereby appreciating cities' capacities for purposeful agency.

The second part of this chapter focused on the international activities of cities from a foreign policy perspective. Several authors have engaged in discussions on whether these activities cause tensions with national governments, or whether the city and state can create synergies to further both level's international objectives. Cities are seen engaging in diplomatic activities in a range of areas, and a significant part of cities' foreign endeavours take place through city networks. By networking, cities may assert collective influence, establish relations, share knowledge and technology, and more. Cities international presence is wide-reaching, and their capacities to partake in the global governance architecture seems to be increasingly recognized.

From this, one may begin to form certain expectations regarding the case in point, namely Oslo. It is difficult to see the internationalization of Oslo as a reaction to shortcomings of the Norwegian state itself, but it could potentially relate to an impatience over progress on global issues it deems important, perhaps climate in specific. Additionally, Oslo is to a large degree affected by the international agreements Norway is signatory to, and decisions made at the EU/EEA level have direct impact on the city, prompting the expectation that Oslo might seek to influence supranational decision making as well.

Drawing on Pinson's (2019) observation that city actors tend to be strengthened "in national contexts characterized by conflictual, or at least competitive" relations between state and city, (p. 78) one would not immediately expect Oslo to have carved a large space for its autonomous agency. However, one may find tendencies towards tension where Oslo has been vocal on issues more firmly established within the national foreign policy domain, for example on nuclear weapons. Drawing on Van der Plujim and Melissen's (2007, p. 12) observation that cities' diplomatic activities can at times be seen as infringing upon state actors' roles, one may expect to find certain issue-specific tensions in the case of Oslo. Whether this has any substantial impact on Oslo's relationship with the state may hinge on the perceived saliency of Oslo's international agency itself, and whether Oslo holds the capacity to challenge the state.

At the same time, the less conflictual Norwegian context may hold potential for synergies between the governance levels on shared international ambitions. One may expect there to be a degree of coordination and cooperation regarding the environment, but also potentially in the ways Oslo and Norway interact with the EU/EEA framework. While these may be areas where Oslo's international engagement may be perceived in a complimentary manner, the way the state engages Oslo in collaborations likely also depends on the extent to which it recognizes Oslo's capacity for impact.

## 3. Research Design and Methods

In this chapter, I will present the research strategy applied when conducting this study. The purpose of the chapter is to provide transparent descriptions of the choices made throughout the research process for the reader to gain an understanding for how this study came to be, and of the methods used to derive the findings of this study.

The empirical evidence supporting this thesis was gathered through key informant interviews and document analysis. The research conducted forms a case study on Oslo, a

method that "investigates a contemporary phenomenon (the "case") in depth and within its real-world context" (Yin, 2014, p. 16). It should here be noted that the contemporary phenomenon to be investigated here is the City of Oslo with its current political composition. Characteristic for a case study is the gathering of "extremely rich, detailed, and in-depth" information on a case, and it typically has a more holistic focus in explaining a phenomenon than what may be stressed by other strategies (Berg & Lune, 2011, p. 326-327). Furthermore, the case study strategy is well suited for answering 'how' and 'why' questions (Yin, 1994, p. 6), and because this study is concerned with answering why Oslo engages internationally, this strategy was favoured. However, as Bryman (2016, p. 64) notes, a common critique of the case study is that the findings typically cannot be generalized to the larger population. The purpose of a case study is rarely to present generalizable findings, but rather to reveal unique features and "generate an intensive examination of a single case," from which one may inquire into theoretical analysis (Bryman, 2016, p. 61-64). Adding to this, Yin (1994, p. 10) explains how case studies may instead be generalized to "theoretical propositions," meaning that the goal could be analytical generalization. Recognizing this, this study is not aimed at providing generalizable empirical findings, but rather to provide theoretical and analytical insights that could be relevant in, or transferable to, other contexts.

Before describing how this case study was conducted, I will present the intention behind the overall research strategy. Lastly, I will reflect upon the study's reliability and validity, as well as comment on the ethical considerations made in this process.

### 3.1. Research Strategy

This qualitative study aims to situate Oslo within the growing body of literature on cities' international political agency. As such, the study takes an exploratory approach to the phenomenon of cities' international engagement, and it attempts to gain a deeper understanding of the internationalization of Oslo. While a quantitative approach could have traced Oslo's international engagement over time, revealing patterns and trends by mapping how often and what types of activities Oslo has engaged internationally, this study has a different aim. For the purpose of this study, I am interested in how actors involved in Oslo's international processes perceive the city's international agency, and therethrough its potential for both national and international impact through its international endeavours. A central part of this is exploring how the actors themselves formulate the opportunities and challenges of international city engagement, and how they define its meaning and purpose. Central official documents related to this will complement the interviewees' perspectives. I therefore chose a

qualitative approach, which allows for a deeper and more nuanced exploration of these aspects of the topic, encouraging an investigation into why Oslo is engaging internationally.

The ontological positioning guiding the study is informed by a constructionist standpoint, referring to the understanding of social objects and categories as being socially constructed, and that "social phenomena and their meanings are continually being accomplished by social actors" (Bryman, 2016, p. 29). This implies the assumption that social reality cannot be observed objectively, and that subjective interpretation necessarily shapes one's perceived reality. This is important to keep in mind both for the research process described below, as well as for the findings to be presented later. In this study, I have been interested in exploring how and why the research participants understand different events and phenomena the way they do, and how they reflect upon the importance and relevance of these. Additionally, while the official documents analysed in this study may appear as a 'given', they are written for specific purposes, and should not be assumed neutral nor objective. The aim of this study can therefore not be to present an objective 'reality' or to claim objective findings, but to construct a 'partial-reality' that can contribute to broader theoretical insight on the issue of cities' international roles, and Oslo's role specifically.

In combination with this ontological positioning, this study has been guided by an exploratory and inductive approach to theory formation from the data collected. While the results from the study will provide some empirical evidence, it is largely concerned with adding onto and diversifying the research on cities international agency, rather than attempting to establish new theory based on empiricism. This background and purpose have informed the choice of methods for data collection and analysis which will be explained below.

### 3.2. Data Collection

*Sampling*

The population from which a sample for interviewing was generated was broadly defined as all actors involved in Oslo's international(ization) processes. These included representatives from municipal offices within the City Council and City Government, as well as actors belonging to regional and international offices connected to Oslo Municipality. Additionally, government actors from different departments were included to explore how national government actors view the international role of Oslo. See appendix 8.1. for a list of participants. The sample selection criteria were purposefully broad, though not unclear, as this allowed for new types of relevant actors to potentially be revealed and included

throughout the process. The sites from where the sample was selected thereby included the local, regional, and national spheres. This entailed the inclusions of perspectives about Oslo from within its core, as well as from the periphery 'looking in'. In addition to the study's theme being explored from a variety of vantage points, this allowed exploration of the relationship between the levels of governance.

The participants making up the sample were selected strategically through a combination of generic purposive sampling and snowball sampling methods, ensuring their relevance to the study. Bryman (2016, p. 412) describes generic purposive sampling as a method in which "the researcher establishes criteria concerning the kinds of cases needed to address the research questions, identifies appropriate cases, and then samples from those cases that have been identified". As mentioned regarding the population, the main criteria for inclusion was the participants' relevance and connection to Oslo's international processes, and several potential participants were identified. Only the two initial participants were selected with this approach, occupying positions particularly relevant to the study and representing both the local and national perspective. These initial respondents then suggested "other participants who have had the experience or characteristics relevant to the research," which characterizes the snowball sampling method (Bryman, 2016, p. 415). These suggestions included both specific persons, but also organizations or offices more generally. While the population in question does not comprise a closed community, and the potential participants could all be found online, the snowball method help identify the most relevant candidates among a large number of potential candidates.

The identification and selection of documents to be included in the analysis followed a similar pattern of sampling. While most were purposefully selected based on relevance, some of the interview participants also suggested further important documents for inclusion. The document sample consisted of the city's international strategy, including its international branding strategy, as well as official documents describing the city's priorities and direction, and its regional strategies. See appendix 8.2. for a list of documents consulted. All documents were available online at the time of data collection.

It should be reiterated that this sampling selection process, i.e. purposive sampling, does not allow the generalization of this study's finding to the larger population (Bryman, 2016, p. 408), nor is that the aim of this study. Furthermore, while the informants were selected based on their role or position, their perspectives are their own, though informed by their position and experience. It should therefore not be assumed that the views they express are representative for anyone but themselves. This implies that the local, regional and

national perspectives do not represent these spheres as wholes, but that the perspective belongs to an individual occupying a key position within those spheres.

The sample size was not decided prior to the study, as the aim was to reach a satisfying level of theoretical saturation. Bryman (2016) describes how theoretical saturation "involves continuing to sample until conceptual categories are fully developed and relationships between them are accounted for" (p. 412) or until "new data are no longer illuminating the concept" (p. 573). Through the combination of ten key informant interviews and ten documents analysed, the different conceptual categories related to the internationalization of Oslo were well developed. To 'fully develop' these categories would, however, require a more comprehensive study than is within the scope of this thesis.

*Interviews*

After having identified potential participants through the strategy described above, selected individuals were recruited through email, with their email-addresses being readily available online. Due to restrictions for social contact in light of the Covid-19 pandemic, 10 interviews were organized through the digital video-call platform Zoom, and one through Microsoft Teams. While this could have impeded the personal connection with the interviewee and made it more difficult to observe their reactions and moods, this method was also highly time efficient. This may have enabled easier access to respondents with an otherwise busy schedule. No technical disturbances occurred during the interviews.

Upon ensuring informed consent (see section 3.5 below), the audio from the interviews was recorded both in Zoom itself and with an external, digital voice recorder as backup, and observational notes were made throughout the interview. The interviews varied in length, lasting from about 30 to 90 minutes each. The time frame was agreed upon with each respondent individually depending on their availability. The data collection period took place in intervals between December 2020 and March 2021, allowing time to reflect and analyse between interviews in order to make any necessary adjustments or inclusions of new emphases brought to my attention in previous interviews. Additionally, it allowed me to increase the sample size as needed. This non-linear approach to data collection and theory development often occurs in qualitative studies where one is not restricted by a strictly pre-defined approach. This flexibility proved valuable to this study, as it welcomed the continuous revision and improvement of the research focus, thereby making active use of new information.

All interviews were conducted in Norwegian, adhering to the working language of the participants. The interviews were largely semi-structured, allowing for a higher degree of flexibility for both respondent and interviewer (Bryman, 2016, p. 468). However, one interview resembled a more structured interview, as the participant preferred to receive a list of questions prior to the interview. Another participant responded in writing to a selection of central questions as they could not fit an interview into their schedule. Except for the more structured interview and the written response, the interviews were loosely framed by interview guides in order to ensure that the most important topics were covered. Owing to the diverse positionality of the respondents in relation to the topic, the interview guides were individualized to each respondent, in which the same themes were approached from varying angles (see appendix 8.4. for an initial interview guide). This way of interviewing does not aim to compare a set of answers to the same questions, but rather to build a web of perspectives around the topic through which one may identify thematic patterns or deviations.

The semi-structured interviews ran organically, with the order of topics adjusted to the participants' answers. Acknowledging their level of expertise, the respondents were encouraged to speak freely and to make any digressions they might want, as that could introduce new topics potentially neglected by me. This flexibility, as touched upon above, allows for "adjusting the emphasis in the research as a result of significant issues emerging in the course of interviews" (Bryman, 2016, p. 467). It was therefore valuable to conduct the interviews in intervals, as to actively use the information gathering process to gain a deeper understanding of the topic and to apply new insights from the interviews.

### 3.3. Data Analysis

The analysis of the data began in parallel to its collection, allowing for reflection between interviews and potential adjustments of the study along the way. After each interview, reflections around the interaction were noted down, complementing the observational notes taken during the interviews, which helped retain the immediate impression from the interviews for the analysis. The interviews were also transcribed immediately following the interviews. As mentioned earlier, the interviews were conducted in Norwegian, but to reduce the risk of misrepresenting the participants' responses, the transcriptions were kept in their original language, and only parts to be included as direct quotes were translated by me.

The framework guiding the analysis of data was based on a thematic analysis approach, searching for themes and patterns within the data. To do that, the large body of information ensuing from the data collection process first had to be "reduced and transformed

(coded) in order to make them more readily accessible, understandable" (Berg and Lune, 2011, p. 55, italics in original). For the interview data, this was done using a condensation approach explained by Kvale (2007, p. 118) as entailing "an abridgement of the meanings expressed by the interviewees into shorter formulations," meaning that "long statements are compressed into briefer statements in which the main sense of what is said is rephrased in a few words". This was a particularly useful approach where participants used longer examples or stories to illustrate a specific point. During the interviews, I asked for confirmation or clarification where the meaning of various statements seemed unclear, which was useful for ensuring accurate condensations of the transcripts. The condensations were kept alongside the full transcript in order to avoid loss of context, and they were colour coded according to analytical categories.

Kvale (2007, p. 119) explains how this condensation of meaning "can serve to analyse extensive and often complex interview texts by looking for natural meaning units and explicating their main themes," which then served as hinges for further theoretical analysis and interpretation. This process was also well suited to further the exploratory and inductive approach to the overall study by allowing the data to generate most of the thematic categories, in addition to exploring what the data revealed about the pre-established themes guided by the research questions. Because of the variability between interviews owing to the differently situated respondents, the process outlined above proved particularly valuable, as it allowed the exploration of each transcript within its own context before finding common theoretical ground across the different contexts of each interview.

In addition to the interviews, official documents relevant to Oslo's international engagement supplemented the collected data. The analysis of these followed a more generic coding process, where relevant excerpts were identified and marked within each document before gathering them in a coding table. Additionally, the information gathered from the documents were used to provide a backdrop to the information gathered through the interviews and establishes the 'official' position on the topics in question. The codes and categories used to sort the data were thereby mutually informed by the documents and interviews.

### 3.4. Validity and Reliability

Making a note on the study's validity and reliability is important in ensuring transparency around the research process and strengthening the study's legitimacy. These terms refer to the study's trustworthiness or quality, with the former speaking to the integrity of the data and

conclusions and the second speaking to the replicability of the study (Bryman, 2016, p. 41). These assessment tools may, however, not always be the most effective in assessing a qualitative study, and Bryman (2016, p. 384) suggests the concepts of credibility (similar to internal validity), dependability (similar to reliability), confirmability (similar to objectivity) and transferability (similar to external validity) to evaluate qualitative research.

One may consider the concept of credibility as the 'truth value' of a study. One way of enhancing the credibility is through triangulation. Denzin (1970) broadly defines this concept as "an approach that uses 'multiple observers, theoretical perspectives, sources of data and methodologies" (Denzin, 1970, cited in Bryman, 2016, p. 386). In this study, triangulation has been employed both regarding method and sources. The data was collected through both interviews and document analysis, and therethrough the sources consisted of both key informants and official documents. The purpose of triangulation is not simply about combining "different kinds of data," but it is an attempt "to relate them so as to counteract the threats to validity identified in each" (Berg & Lune, 2011, p. 6). This also includes the consideration that one is not merely attempting to demonstrate the consistency in findings across methods or sources, but also to understand inconsistencies (Patton, 2002, p. 248). In this regard, the inclusion of local, regional, and national perspectives on the internationalization of Oslo is valuable. The inclusion of differentiated understandings of the same process, the consistencies and inconsistencies, all aid in illuminating the case.

Effort has been made to ensure the dependability of this study, referring to the consistency in data collection and analysis (Bryman, 2016, p. 384). All steps involved in the collection and analysis have been recorded, making it possible to back-trace the process for clarity. The recording of the data was done carefully and with attention to detail, ensuring accurate transcriptions of the recorded interviews, and the ensuing coding was done systematically. These efforts should make it possible for an external researcher to replicate the study in its methods. However, the study's conclusions are based on data collected at a specific time and from specific subjective experiences. Even if an external researcher asked the same questions to the same respondents, the data would likely look somewhat different. That is, however, to be expected from this type of study.

The confirmability of a study is concerned with neutrality or 'un-biasedness'. Bryman (2016, p. 386) explains that "it should be apparent that [the researcher] has not overtly allowed personal values or theoretical inclinations to swat the conduct of the research and the findings deriving from it". While it is not possible to entirely escape one's own positionality and perform in a completely neutral manner, I have sought to limit the impact of this by

thoroughly questioning my reactions to, and understanding of, the material I have been working with. Furthermore, in an effort to remain as transparent as possible to the reader, I have strived to clarify the distinction between the raw findings presented, and my own reflections and interpretation of it. While it is not considered possible, nor an aim, to present an 'objective truth' regarding the international dimension of Oslo through this research, I have aimed to illuminate and understand a partial reality attained through the analysis of data collected. It should further be noted that when conducting snowball sampling, I rely on someone else's subjective opinion of who else might be a relevant participant, which may create a skewed sample. However, the participants are key informants whom I recruited based on their positions, and who are likely to guide me in the direction of other persons they deem to occupy other key positions. Their recommendations also largely corresponded to my own mapping of potentially relevant candidates. This bias may further be countered through critical reading of the document data, and the triangulation of methods and sources.

The last criteria included in this assessment is transferability, and it deals with the study's applicability beyond the studied sample (Bryman, 2016, p. 384). This point was touched upon in the beginning of the sample regarding the characteristics of a case study. While the sample included in this study is small and purposefully selected, the findings of this study are therefore not generalizable as such. Instead, theoretical and analytical insights arrived upon through this study may potentially be transferable to other contexts, and it could be used for comparison. In order to ensure the highest level of transferability possible for this kind of study, I have attempted to provide the reader with 'thick descriptions'. This entails providing sufficient context and detail to enable the reader to interpret the findings, and therethrough enabling the potential linkage of the study to other settings (Bryman, 2016, p. 384).

As described in this section, utmost effort has been given to ensure a high degree of trustworthiness of the study. This section is aimed at pointing out aspects of decisions made throughout the research that the reader should be mindful of, and to explain the rationales behind these. The disclosure of these considerations is intended to further increase the transparency of this study, and thereby positively affecting its credibility.

### 3.5. Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations should be given high priority in any research, and this study strives for complete transparency around this matter. Prior to the commencement of data collection, the study and its plan for ensuring informed consent and processing personal data were approved

by the Norwegian centre for research data (NSD). In ensuring ethical conduct with the research participant, I adhered to the four main points for consideration listed by Bryman (2016, p. 125): "whether there is harm to participants; Whether there is a lack of informed consent; Whether there is an invasion of privacy; Whether deception is involved". While the topic in question and the potential participants would not be considered sensitive in nature, the respondents are ensured anonymity. However, upon consent, a general description of the respondents' place of work has been included to give the reader more context for statements. Informed consent to this, as well as their participation in its totality, was collected prior to the interviews.

The information and consent form (see appendix 8.3.) specifies the nature of the study, the rights of the participants, as well as how their personal information were to be stored and otherwise handled. Through this form, which all participants read and agreed to, all four of Bryman's (2016) main points regarding ethical considerations were addressed. However, due to the governmental recommendations of home office due to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic during the entirety of the data collection period, several of the participants did not have access to a printer. Because of this, consent from four interview participants had to be collected orally. This was done at the time of the interview with a hand-held voice recording device over Zoom, but prior to starting the in-Zoom recording.

In addition to the above, I have strived for accurate representation of the information and perspectives shared by the participants. As mentioned, the interviews were conducted in Norwegian, and utmost effort has been given to ensure that meaning or intention of statements were not distorted in translation. Furthermore, I make clear distinctions between 'raw material' and interpreted findings. While these may be obvious considerations, it is important to emphasize as they are highly important to the integrity of both the research and the participants.

## 4. Introducing the Case – the City of Oslo

In this section I will briefly introduce the chosen case of this study to give the reader context for the findings. Whereas the larger part of the literature on cities' international engagement has focused on so-called 'global cities,' Oslo presents an interesting case of a more ordinary, but globalizing city. With its 697 010 inhabitants, Oslo is the largest city in Norway, but would be considered relatively small on the global stage (Oslo Kommune, n.d., Folkemengde og endringer). Despite this, the city shows high ambitions for its international engagement,

and the city has gained considerable attention, particularly for its climate agenda consisting of an ambitious climate strategy, and its use of a climate budget as a governance tool. Further examples in this area include its 2019 European Green Capital award, its role as an innovator city within the C40 network, as well as the attention is has gained for its climate budget. This sparks curiosity regarding the international agency that a city of this kind is developing.

A few considerations regarding the structure and governance of Oslo are worth describing to illustrate the framework within which Oslo engages internationally. The City of Oslo is governed through a parliamentary system, which includes the City Council (comparable to the national parliament) elected every four years, and the City Government (comparable to the national government) (Oslo Kommune, n.d., City Governance). This means that the former, headed by Mayor Marianne Borgen (Socialist Left Party), decides the budget and develops the overall policy direction of the city, whereas the latter acts as the executive body implementing the decisions made by the City Council, and it is headed by the Governing Mayor, Raymond Johansen (Labour Party) (Oslo Kommune, n.d., City Governance). The current City Government consists of a coalition between the Labour Party, the Green Party and the Socialist Left Party (Oslo Kommune, n.d., City Governance).

Both Mayor and Governing Mayor have been in their positions since 2015, which is important to consider for Oslo's international engagement. Governing Mayor Johansen has long international experience, including as State Secretary in the Norwegian MFA and with international development work (Oslo Kommune, n.d., The Governing Mayor). This experience implies both international interests, as well as an international network, something one may see in connection to the international ambitions of Oslo. Mayor Borgen has also been vocal on international issues during her time in office, including her plea alongside other Norwegian mayors for the government to allow more refugees in Lesvos, Greece to come to Norway, as well as her involvement in Mayors for Peace and the ICAN Cities Appeal working to abolish nuclear weapons (Borgen, September 2020; Borgen, December 2020). The personal engagement by these two city leaders is something to keep in mind when exploring Oslo's international activities. Additionally, the election of the Green Party to the City Government has implied heightened climate ambitions for the city, which also figures prominently in its international engagement.

A few notes regarding the governance structure of Norway are useful to better understanding the capacities and limitations on Oslo's ability to engage internationally. The first guideline on the division of responsibilities between the local, regional, and national levels dictates that tasks should be performed at the lowest, effective level (KMD, 2000, p.

90). This means that there is a certain degree of local self-governance, wherein services geared toward the individual citizen may be performed at the municipal level, whereas the regional level conducts tasks that span larger groups, and the national level holds responsibility over tasks that span regions or the whole state (KMD, 2000, p. 91-92). Because Oslo holds both municipal and county (i.e. regional) functions, this implies a wider range of issue-areas to be handled than for other Norwegian cities. Examples of tasks on the two lower levels include transportation, cultural initiatives, public health care services (excluding hospitals), lower education, and water and waste management (KMD, 2000, p. 510). The municipal and county levels fund these tasks through a combination of municipal and county taxes and fees, and funding from the state (Stortinget, 2019). Whereas the local levels may develop their own policies within their areas of responsibility, this takes place within a framework set by the state, particularly as it comes to required levels of expenditure on certain tasks (Stortinget, 2019).

The general observation of the division of tasks between the levels of governance, is that international engagement is not a requirement of the local levels. At the same time, these responsibilities speak to the minimum requirements for local government activities, and there is no legally defined 'upper' limit for activities that may be undertaken locally. As mentioned above, the extent to which local governments are able to develop their own policies in areas they are responsible for, also opens the possibility for international engagement to be used as a tool to achieve local objectives. An outlier here is foreign policy. Another guideline regarding the division of tasks between the governance level states that "tasks that for various reasons should not be influenced by local political perceptions and local political conditions" belong to the state level, wherein foreign policy is specifically mentioned (KMD, 2000, p. 94, own translation). However, the same document offers an exception to this regarding the increasing involvement of local governments in the EU, stating that "it could be argued that the regions have been assigned a foreign policy role in the EU's development and peace project," and questions whether the tendencies of increasing inter-regional cooperation in Europe may impact the future division of roles in Norway as well (KMD, 2000, p. 105, own translation). It should be noted that this document was written in the year 2000, and one may consider the extent to which the division of roles between governance levels may have already begun changing, or at the least become more diffuse in light of the international engagement of local governments, particularly activities that may be of foreign policy nature.

# 5. Findings and Discussion

In this chapter, I will present and discuss the findings derived from the documents and interviews with the aim of nearing an answer to this thesis' research questions. Throughout this chapter, I will also draw on the theoretical framework from chapter 2 to tie the findings to the broader theoretical discussion. The analysis will begin with an exploration of the main rationales identified for why Oslo engages internationally, drawing on statements in the city's official documents and the interview participants' reflections. This will include illustrative examples of how this is done by noting different channels and arenas Oslo uses in its international engagement. Thereafter I will explore the second part of the research question by discussing how Oslo interacts with the Norwegian government in its international engagement, i.e. exploring the city-state relationship on international matters. It should be kept in mind throughout this chapter, that the findings are based upon documents by the current political coalition governing Oslo, as well as interview participants who interact with this composition. This implies that the motivations for international engagement, and the thematic areas the city engages in are largely based on the current governing coalition's interests and objectives. An exception is the international strategy, which was adopted under a different governing coalition.

## 5.1. International Trends

Before discussing the more specific aspects of how the need for Oslo's international engagement is articulated, I will set the stage by outlining certain international trends that were pointed out during the interviews and in several documents occurring alongside Oslo's emergence as an international actor. To a degree, these reflect the picture drawn in the beginning of chapter 2 for the emergence of cities as international actors more generally and are worth reiterating.

Oslo's municipal master plan lists globalization, urbanization and climate change as some of the major global changes laying important premises for how the city can operate (Oslo City Government, 2019c, p.5). Oslo and the metropolitan region will continue to experience population growth, a changing climate necessitates emission cuts and appropriate urban design, and globalization implies that developments far away can impact Oslo more quickly (Oslo City Government, 2019c, p.5). IP1 also emphasized how "urbanization is a mega-trend […] And this also means that power shifts downwards, i.e. to the local authorities, to the city authorities" (Interview 1, formerly MFA). In discussing the increasing

importance of local authorities, IP4 pointed to the emerging talks of "a Europe of Regions" as an important backdrop for the emergence of the Oslo region internationally (Interview 4, Oslo Region Alliance). He explains that this concept "continued to grow from the 90s into the 2000s because one could see that it was, to a greater and greater extent, large cities that were the engines of economic development, urban areas and their surrounding regions" (Interview 4, Oslo Region Alliance). These developments may be seen as impacting the emergence of cities, wherein globalization and accelerating urban economies may allow more space for cities to assert themselves, climate change urges city action, and urbanization may increase the relative 'weight' of cities.

Oslo's international strategy specifically discusses how a globalized world and increased international interdependence presents Oslo with new possibilities and challenges, and how the frameworks shaped by supranational political processes and international trends may impact Oslo's ability to reach its municipal and regional goals (Oslo City Government, 2009, p. 2). Because of this, the strategy posits, Oslo's international engagement is not only seen as legitimate, but absolutely necessary, in a globalized world (Oslo City Government, 2009, p. 4). Oslo's strategy for its work connected to the European Green Capital award also discusses how major cities are emerging as key players in dealing with global challenges, noting how "cities are not caught up in global diplomacy and can implement comprehensive measures, in a flexible way and at a rapid pace" (Oslo City Government, 2018, p. 3, own translation). It is interesting that an official document recognizes this dimension, and it could be seen as implying a view that cities may have access to preferential channels in certain areas (here climate) for cooperation. The inclusion of cities being able to implement measures at a 'rapid pace', may further point to a perceived urgency, or even an impatience over the slow global implementation of climate measures. This could imply that Oslo aligns with the view presented in chapter 2 that cities may be able to circumvent statist diplomatic gridlocks, and that cities may be able to take the lead on issues where states are unable to reach agreements. (see ex. Bassens et al.,2019, p. 3; Van der Plujim & Melissen, 2007, p. 27).

Similar to the broader literary debate, IP2 observed that "one sees that the role of cities in international politics has changed quite a bit in recent years. Perhaps in connection with the fact that more and more people live in cities […] They [cities] also become more significant because many of the problems the world is struggling with originate in cities, climate change for example. Cities are terrible polluters, but cities also think they can be part of the solution" (Interview 2, Oslo Municipality). IP3 shares a similar understanding of cities' new positions, particularly relating to environmental governance, and explains how "this

[cities] is where a lot of the emissions come from, so this is also where a lot of the low-emission solutions have to be implemented […] In a way, national authorities are unable to achieve the climate goals they have set without significant efforts being made in the cities (Interview 3, Oslo Municipality). These statements reflect the international strategy's notion that international engagement is 'absolutely necessary' in today's world, in that cities contribute to global challenges such as climate change, but that national governments would have a difficult time successfully implementing solutions without cities.

More recent international developments were also brought up regarding the need for Oslo's international engagement. IP5 expresses that as we are seeing increased protectionism and/or nationalism that "an important message even now during the pandemic is that we need international cooperation more than ever […] Because while one closes borders and thinks one has to protect oneself from things that happen 'out there', we are all still part of the larger whole" (interview 5, Oslo Region European Office). IP7 also highlights the need for continued international cooperation in light of increased nationalist tendencies, noting how "if there is unrest, closed borders and the like, it will also affect and/or increase the cost of doing business […] Therefore, in an overall vision, one must consider our role in creating a good collaborative environment for us to be able to do the things we want to do" (Interview 7, Eastern Norway County Network). These statements not only show how embedded Oslo is in the international political environment, but how this environment contributes to shaping the city's space for action. As an actor holding more or less exclusively soft powers, the city's space for international action largely depends on a stable and cooperative international environment. While the city itself might not hold the powers to create or ensure a favourable political environment, it seems motivated to contribute to working to uphold stable relations through cooperation and interaction.

Keeping these international trends in mind, and how they may contribute to shaping the perceived need and space for Oslo to engage internationally, I will now turn to more specific argumentations behind Oslo's international activities.

### 5.2. Motivations for International Engagement

As discussed in chapter 2, there are several theoretical rationales behind the acceleration of cities' international emergence. Cities have begun taking active roles in combatting global issues, especially those related to climate change, and they may be seen as complementing state action or filling governance gaps created by statist gridlocks. Additionally, cities are affected by decisions taken at international and supranational levels, and we see cities seeking

to influence the processes that affect them directly (Blank, 2006, p. 265-266). These rationales may be grounded in both pragmatic self-interest to further a local agenda, as well as a sense of responsibility to further international agendas. The findings derived from my research regarding the case of Oslo reveals similar tendencies.

As the leading framework for Oslo's international activities, the main goal of Oslo's international strategy should be kept in mind throughout the following section. It states that "Oslo Municipality's international work shall be goal-oriented. It shall contribute to improving the services for the city's population and make the city attractive to visitors and to the business community. Through international work, the City of Oslo will profile and promote Oslo's interests as both city and capital" (Oslo City Government, 2009, p. 4, own translation). This shows largely a pragmatic orientation towards international engagement, wherein the city's international work contributes to improving services at home, as well as to strengthen the city's image as an attractive destination. However, an amendment was made to this goal, which resulted in the inclusion of "contributing to the fight against poverty, the safeguarding of human rights, democracy, social justice and sustainable development shall be part of Oslo's international commitment" (Oslo City Government, 2010, p. 4, own translation). This amendment shows a more idealistic side of Oslo's international ambitions. The below discussion will engage with the different dimensions of this goal in separate sections, while including further objectives found in other documents and the interview participants' reflections around these. Through this, the following sections will reveal several motives and rationales behind Oslo's international engagement.

### 5.2.1. Local Leaders as Drivers

Because international engagement is not a legally mandated task for Oslo, nor a mandated tool to achieve municipal objectives, it is interesting to consider Oslo's decision to engage internationally in light of this. While the below sections will show that Oslo has strong arguments for engaging internationally, there are no clear national guidelines on using international engagement as a municipal tool.

IP7 and IP4 both identify potential issues of prioritization connected to the voluntary nature of international engagement. IP7 states that "the case is that international engagement is not part of what is required of the regions or municipalities by law. It is more of a voluntary thing. We would, however, have liked it to more clearly be a statutory task, because then you could not give it lower priority or dismiss it if something happens, budget

cuts for example" (Interview 7, Eastern Norway County Network). Adding to this, IP4 notes regarding the international focus of the Oslo Region Alliance that "we see that this task, which for us is about international profiling, is probably the one that has the weakest foothold among our members. This means that if we have to reduce activity […] then the work related to international profiling is probably one of the things that is most at risk of being down-prioritized" (Interview 4, Oslo Region Alliance).

Reflecting upon the issue of prioritizing international activity, several interview participants point to the significance of local leaders who are motivated and interested in it. IP9 explains that "since it [international work] is not a statutory task, it becomes a question of prioritization, and therefore you need someone who drives it forward," further suggesting that "with all tasks that are not required by law, it is at the very least necessary that there is no opposition from political leaders, but in order for there to be any drive in it, I think it is necessary that the local politicians are somewhat engaged" (Interview 9, KS). As discussed in chapter 2, several authors point to the rising prominence of city leaders in connection with the international engagement of cities (see ex. Curtis, 2016, p. 464 ; Acuto, 2013a). Van der Plujim and Melissen (2007, p. 14-15) observed that the personal engagement of local leaders appeared to be crucial for cities' decision to engage in international activities. Several of the interview participants seemed to concur with this observation. For instance, IP7 suggests that "it is a bit dependent on passionate individuals, or someone who takes the lead, who are particularly active and are able to see that.. that they do not simply think this [international work] is additional work, but that it is in fact quite integrated into what we already do, and that it can add value to that" (Interview 7, Eastern Norway County Network).

There seems to be a shared view among the interview participants that the motivation for international work is relatively strong among Oslo's local leaders. Both IP2 and IP3 brought up Raymond Johansen when expressing the significance of city leaders' commitment to international issues. IP2 explained that in addition to brining his interest for the international into his role as Governing Mayor, Johansen has built a large international network through his previous positions that contributes to increasing Oslo's visibility (Interview 2, Oslo Municipality). IP3 further noted how active Johansen is in city networks, that he "frequently attends meetings and is keen to be involved and ensure that Oslo delivers and contributes" (Interview 3, Oslo Municipality). In exemplifying his commitment, one might here also add that Johansen currently is a member of Eurocities' executive committee (Eurocities, n.d.).

While personal interest for international processes among city leaders seems significant in the case of Oslo, IP5 suggests that "I think that it has become clear that Oslo, regardless of the composition of the city council, will see an added value in having an international focus, and then also in having an international office in Brussels" (Interview 5, Oslo Region European Office). This may imply that while international engagement is not a mandated nor defined activity, it has become an established part of Oslo's work, which is also evident in the international focus in many of the city's official strategy and planning documents. At the same time, it seems like local leaders in Oslo continue to be a driving force of the city's international work, particularly in expanding the use of international work as a tool in a broad number of issue areas, perhaps especially important when it comes to more politically controversial topics.

### 5.2.2. Pragmatism

From the interviews and documents analysed for this thesis, one may extract that pragmatism seems to be the leading motive behind Oslo's international engagement. This finding is in line with Van der Plujim and Melissen's (2007, p. 15) assertion that most cities engage in diplomatic activities to serve and improve the services for its citizens. The city's international strategy reflects this line of thinking in that the main rationale guiding Oslo's international work is presented as ensuring efficient execution of the municipality's tasks and development (Oslo City Government, 2009, p. 4). Referring to the strategy, IP2 emphasizes that this orientation towards international engagement is politically uncontroversial, "one compares oneself to other cities, one learns from one another, and one participates in EU projects to ensure that one can offer the best possible services to one's citizens. That is the main goal" (interview 2, Oslo Municipality). This is also evident in Oslo's municipal master plan, which states that it is important for Oslo to take advantage of the opportunities that lie in international cooperation to ensure the best possible services to its population (Oslo City Government, 2019c, p. 11).

IP2 states that a starting point in reflecting upon the international engagement of Oslo is that "it is not a goal in itself, but it is aimed at contributing to reaching municipal targets, meaning that Oslo's international work is a tool" (interview 2, Oslo Municipality). IP9 supports this line of reasoning in stating that "for Oslo, it [working internationally] may largely be about solving certain challenges. And this [working internationally] may simply be the most practical, or best way, to solve the challenges they want to solve. It's in fact quite pragmatic" (Interview 9, KS). This may be seen in a slight contrast to Van der Plujim and

Melissen (2007, p. 28) who found that for cities it may be a goal in itself to organize regionally and internationally, whereas in the traditional conceptualization of state diplomacy, cooperation is typically seen as a means to achieve larger goals. From IP2's statement, one may abstract that Oslo's approach to international cooperation seems more aligned with the ways states use diplomacy as a tool. However, if one expands the understanding of the word "tool" beyond achieving concrete results locally, one may also see international cooperation being used as a tool to create a favourable international environment in which the city's interests are better served, as touched upon earlier.

Building on the pragmatic approach to international engagement, IP1 explains how "cities are facing certain identical challenges that may be better solved by cities than state governments" (Interview 1, formerly MFA). Oslo's municipal master plan states that "as the capital and the country's largest city, Oslo must look to international partners in a number of areas to find relevant basis for comparison and new solutions" (Oslo City Government, 2019c, p. 11, own translation). Several interview participants also pointed to the need to look abroad to find cities and regions that are more comparable to Oslo, which may be summarized with IP2's notion that "an important argument for Oslo to engage internationally is that for many of the challenges we face, we need to look beyond Norway's borders to find suitable cities to compare ourselves to. Other Norwegian cities are often too small, although we look to them as well" (Interview 2, Oslo Municipality).

Oslo is, however, not only looking abroad for comparison and knowledge sharing, but its international engagement is also concerned with attracting talent, businesses and capital to the region. This is illustrative of what one may identify as pull diplomatic activities (Van der Plujim & Melissen, 2007, p. 25). IP2 states that "an important goal is that we work internationally to contribute to Oslo's businesses being competitive […] Therein lies the fact that we must profile Oslo internationally, highlight what Oslo is good at, attract talent, attract capital, and attract competence to the universities" (Interview 2, Oslo Municipality). Expanding on the need to attract talent, IP4 asserts that it is particularly important since Oslo's businesses are largely based on highly skilled workers, and that despite a good education system, Norway is unable to recruit enough experts domestically (Interview 4, Oslo Region Alliance). He explains that "this is also linked to the fact that we have a high cost-level, and since we cannot compete on price, we are completely dependent on competing on quality within certain niches. Then it becomes very important for our businesses to hold the world's best competency" (Interview 4, Oslo Region Alliance).

Oslo's climate strategy presents another pragmatic rationale behind the city's international engagement. It states that international work will give Oslo access to necessary technology faster and cheaper in that it contributes to creating larger markets for the solutions and technologies that Oslo requires, something that may also unlock opportunities for Oslo's business community to export solutions (Oslo City Government, 2020b, p. 65). Creating larger markets was also identified in the literature as an important dimension of why cities convene in international city networks. Acuto and Rayner (2016, p. 1163) noted how city networks can act as gateways for businesses to access pools of cities instead of connecting with individual cities, thereby "offering networked windows into market opportunities". This implies that Oslo may benefit from both exporting and importing solutions to and from a marked expanded through network affiliation. This may be illustrated by IP3's example of Oslo's ambitions for an emission free construction industry, explaining that "Oslo cannot do this alone, so we took the initiative in C40 to establish what is called 'Clean Construction Forum'[1] […] in order to create a much larger market for these solutions than Oslo could manage alone" (Interview 3, Oslo Municipality).

These points may be illustrative of push diplomatic activities, which involves seeking growth by exporting solutions and services (Van der Plujim & Melissen, 2007, p. 26). This growth may both be monetary and in recognition, where the latter may be exemplified by how international engagement also enables Oslo to export governance solutions. In emphasis here is Oslo's climate budget, which is an emissions budget that is used as a governance tool to ensure the implementation of effective measures to reach the city's climate targets. The use of this budget as a governance tool has received extensive international attention, and it states that "we see that more and more cities and municipalities have been inspired by Oslo to introduce their own climate budgets. Several major international cities have either prepared or are in the process of developing their own climate budgets" (Oslo City Government, 2020a, ch.2, p. 3, own translation). While gaining international recognition is important, the example of the climate budget also speaks to Oslo's strategic role in testing out solutions that may later be scaled up elsewhere, thereby contributing to global climate ambitions.

[1] "The Clean Construction Forum supports cities in the transition to resource-efficient, zero-emission construction, which will also deliver healthier buildings and better air quality to millions of residents in cities around the world." – "Clean Construction Forum." *C40*; www.c40.org/networks/clean-construction-forum.

This may be particularly visible through Oslo's membership in the C40, which IP2 identifies as "perhaps the most important network right now" (Interview 2, Oslo Municipality). Oslo's climate strategy states that "Oslo has been included in this network as an 'innovator city' and influences other large cities to raise their ambition level and implement climate measures more quickly," and that the C40 is "an important tool for influencing global market solutions and policy formulation" (Oslo City Government, 2020b, p. 65, own translation). As mentioned, Oslo's role as innovator city speaks to the city's capacity to test out innovative solutions that may then be adopted and scaled up by larger cities.

As Van der Plujim and Melissen's (2007, p. 29) observed, there is a high degree of pragmatism in the way cities use networks, where their engagement is often related to solving municipal challenges. Much of Oslo's network affiliation centres around its climate ambitions, and the city's climate strategy specifically states that the City Government wants to "seek maximum learning outcomes through participation in the city networks C40, CNCA, ICLEI and Eurocities," and that international cooperation is important to "acquire knowledge about measures that can contribute to achieving climate goals faster, cheaper, and easier (Oslo City Government, 2020b, p. 65, own translation). This speaks to concrete outcomes the city seeks through network engagement, and it is illustrative of the observation discussed in chapter 2 that cities' international activities often centre around the idea of 'network power,' meaning the "the ability to convene and lead coalitions of actors towards specific governance outcomes" (Curtis & Acuto, 2018, p. 8-9). Wherein here the desired outcome would be reaching Oslo's climate goals 'faster, cheaper, and easier' by convening coalitions of actors with shared interests. In this way, network membership can be seen as a tool for achieving the city's objectives.

While the above discussion shows a clear pragmatic dimension to Oslo's international engagement, another dimension has become increasingly important for Oslo in achieving its municipal goals. This includes more political activities to secure a favourable international, legal framework that may widen the city's space for action.

### 5.2.3. Influencing Supranational Decision-making

Another essential part of why Oslo perceives a need to engage internationally is rooted in supranational decision-making affecting the city's space for action, which is particularly related to Norway's EEA agreement with the EU. As discussed in chapter 2, this dimension is an important rationale behind many cities' quest for international influence, wherein Blank

(2006, p. 265-266) explained how local authorities must often comply with international commitments made at the national level, resulting in a situation where "the more international law extends its reach over non-state actors, the more they become involved in international relations".

Oslo's international strategy discusses how regulations that originate in the EU, and which are incorporated into Norwegian law through the EEA agreement, impose extensive requirements on the municipalities (Oslo City Government, 2009, p. 3). This means that Oslo is affected through the internal market, by environmental and social policies, which affects the municipality's role as developer, purchaser, service provider, and employer (Oslo City Government, 2009, p. 3). IP8 explains that "the EEA agreement has a large influence on the regulatory environment in Oslo, for what it can do in different situations" (Interview 8, KMD). IP7 further notes that "a lot of what the EU decides also affects what happens in Norwegian regions and municipalities. Thus it cannot be left only to the national authorities to make their input" (Interview 7, Eastern Norway County Network). One must be attentive to this, she says, "otherwise you will only be the recipient of laws, rules, and frameworks without having been involved in making any decisions" (Interview 7, Eastern Norway County Network).

This recognition highlights the embeddedness of Oslo in the international, and particularly continental, political framework. As discussed in chapter 2, Oslo, like other international actors face structural constraints to their space for action. At the same time, several of Oslo's strategy documents show that the city takes an active approach in trying to shape these structures to widen its room for manoeuvre. The second sub-goal of Oslo's international strategy states that "Oslo Municipality shall participate internationally to contribute to decisions and initiatives at the supranational level being made as much as possible in line with Oslo Municipality's interests" (Oslo City Government, 2009, p. 6, own translation). Oslo's municipal master plan also emphasizes this in stating that "it is crucial that the municipality finds, and makes active use of, good arenas for cooperation and participation in Europe" (Oslo City Government, 2019c, p. 11, own translation). These documents point to Oslo's understanding of itself as an international actor capable and willing to influence international processes. Oslo's view of its own international agency reflects Acuto's (2013b, p. 11) characterization of an actor, which "considers influence as capacity to purposefully impact the state of affairs". Both official documents and interview participants reveal that Oslo is purposefully uses its capacity for influence to try to impact the state of international affairs in its favour.

IP2 explains how this element of Oslo's international work is more political in that "we work internationally to help ensure that decisions made at supranational level, for example in the EU, are in accordance with the interests that Oslo has. So then we have a kind of a lobby element in our international work, that we should try to influence the European Commission, for example, to make decisions that are in our interests" (Interview 2, Oslo Municipality). This is particularly emphasized in relation to climate, with Oslo's climate strategy stating that "Oslo should influence international regulatory conditions to make it easier to achieve Oslo's climate goals" (Oslo City Government, 2020b, p. 65, own translation). IP2 notes that the lobbying dimension was not as prominent when the international strategy was adopted, but that it has become increasingly important, saying that "it is now not just about improving municipal services, but about working internationally to achieve political goals (Interview 2, Oslo Municipality). Recognizing the city as an actor capable of asserting influence abroad through increased lobbying activity is a political exercise, which may be further indicative of changing power relations in the international order (Acuto, 2013b, p. 42).

One of the ways Oslo seeks to influence at EU level is trough network affiliation. Oslo's international strategy posits that "the most important arenas for partaking in policy-making in the EU / EEA are through membership and participation in professional networks" (Oslo City Government, 2009, p. 6, own translation). The strategy further stipulates that "a main priority is broad professional participation in Eurocities" (Oslo City Government, 2009, p. 4, own translation). IP2 also identifies Eurocities as the most important in this context, explaining that "they work within all areas, all sectors, and we are particularly engaged in the environmental dimension, as well as business development" (Interview 2, Oslo Municipality). Expanding on how Oslo utilizes Eurocities from a climate perspective, IP3 notes that it is "about lobbying for the EU regulations to be changed in a way that benefits the cities. And that is based on what the common EU regulations should look like in order to provide a boost for us to be able to achieve our climate goals" (Interview 3, Oslo Municipality). This is also emphasized by IP5 who notes that "as a member one is able to influence politically. An organization like Eurocities, they get meetings with Von der Leyen [president of the European Commission] outside the ministries of foreign affairs, outside their national states. So they can go straight to the industry and discuss. That is an important way of influencing" (Interview 5, Oslo Region European Office). This notion points to Oslo having different channels for influence than the state, something that could also be illustrated by Oslo membership in the Oslo Region European Office. IP5 explains that by virtue of being

located in Brussels, the Oslo Region European Office has a more direct access to other European actors, and that since office is located in the same building as several other regions, the threshold for both informal and formal interaction with these is low (Interview 5, Oslo Region European Office). The European Office thereby provides Oslo with an important channel to a variety of actors with whom the city can seek to establish and maintain relations. Oslo's presence in Brussel may further be seen as embodying the representative dimension of city diplomacy as discussed in chapter 2, wherein the most prominent example of this dimension includes cities being represented at the EU-level, including their presence through dedicated offices in Brussels (Van der Plujim & Melissen, 2007, p. 30).

However, one should keep in mind that influencing supranational political processes such as in the EU is not separate from the pragmatic approach discussed above. IP7 asserts that there has to be a balance in influencing abroad for larger political goals and the more tangible results such as improved municipal services. She explains that "it is challenging to just work politically. That is, you are not re-elected just because you have done a great deal of lobbying in Europe, that is not where the voters are. The voters will instead rather look at the practical outcomes. So it kind of has to be a bit balanced" (Interview 7, Eastern Norway County Network). Both serve the interest of the city, and achieving political goals through lobbying is also closely connected to pragmatic outcomes. If lobbying helps Oslo achieve its climate ambitions, its citizens will also reap the benefits of an improved environment. While Oslo's motivation to shape the international regulatory conditions in its favour speaks to the city's ambition to assert itself as an international actor, and a recognition that it holds capacity to do so, it may imply that the city has certain interests that are not covered by the national government's efforts towards the EU. This may be an indicator of why Oslo engages at this level, as Van der Plujim and Melissen (2007, p. 16) observed that local governments displayed less of a need to develop their own diplomatic capabilities when their interests were sufficiently represented by the state. At the same time, the next section will show that Oslo engages internationally both where its interests align and deviate from that of Norway, which indicates an interest in furthering shared objectives, as well as ambition to assert itself where they diverge.

### 5.2.4. Furthering International Agendas

While the above two sections present key rationales for Oslo's international engagement, the findings further suggest that Oslo has both an interest in, and sense of responsibility towards,

furthering international agendas and norms. The Paris Agreement and various UN frameworks, not least the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), were brought up by several interview participants, and figured prominently in several documents in guiding the direction of the city's work. The municipal plan of 2019 states that the government has committed Norway to the SDGs, wherein "local authorities play an important role in this work, and Oslo is committed to following up on this" (Oslo City Government, 2019c, p. 11, own translation). The city government in Oslo has also produced a separate document on how the city will follow up the SDG, which states that "nationally, there is an expectation that municipalities and county municipalities use the instruments they have to include the 17 sustainability goals as a basis in all planning" (Oslo City Government, 2019a, p. 1, own translation). This commitment is also evident in the city's climate strategy, which specifically states that it supports and contributes directly to 12 of the SDGs (Oslo City Government, 2020b, p. 8). It has been increasingly common to see cities incorporated the SDGs into their operative framework, which is a central aspect of how cities promote international norms (Blank 2006, p. 268).

Building upon Oslo's engagement with the UN framework, Oslo's climate strategy explains that membership in the network Local Governments for Sustainability (ICLEI) gives Oslo the opportunity to influence conditions set by the UN and other global actors, wherein Oslo "contributes to spreading knowledge about a range of environmental topics, which is particularly relevant for cities in the global south" (Oslo City Government, 2020b, p. 65, own translation). Oslo's engagement in the networks also illustrates the city's support for a larger global agenda by seeking to influence UN frameworks, in addition to its concern for the development of climate adaption outside of Norway. This is another indicator of the city's alignment with certain international norms, as well as its ambition to work through global frameworks.

Several documents also illustrate the importance Oslo gives to collective, international ambitions. This may be illustrated by the vow in Oslo's Platform for City Government Cooperation: "We will work together with other cities to devise new solutions that will help the world to attain the climate targets in the Paris Agreement, and create better cities for people to live in" (Oslo City Government, 2019b, p. 15). Oslo's Climate Strategy also shows clear ambition in contributing to a global green shift, and it is stated that "Oslo's climate work should be carried out and designed so that it can, as far as possible, and as quickly as possible, be copied and scaled up by others to contribute to emission reductions elsewhere" (Oslo City Government, 2020b, p. 65, own translation). By stating its willingness

to contributing to reaching global ambitions on global issues, here in the case of climate, Oslo signals an ambition of being a driver of international agendas. This also plays into the recognition that global developments matter locally, and that Oslo cannot excuse itself from developments abroad. The city's interest in the development in other places is, however, not limited to the environment, and there are several examples of Oslo taking other clear normative positions.

The city's international strategy states that Oslo engages in the development in other parts of the world, and that "the municipality shall contribute in solidarity to the development and improvement of the service offer in our partner cities" (Oslo City Government, 2009, p. 5, own translation). The 2019 Platform for City Government Cooperation makes clear references to norms and ethics, with an example being their vow to "ensure that investments in OPF [Oslo Pensjonsforsikring] continue to maintain as high as possible an ethical profile for the environment, human rights and international law" (Oslo City Government, 2019b, p. 7).The platform further posits that Oslo will "show solidarity with people elsewhere in the world who produce goods and services for us" which includes holding suppliers of products containing batteries accountable to ensure the respect for human rights in production (Oslo City Government, 2019b, p. 21-22). At the same time, one could argue that values and interests could serve similar purposes, which could be illustrated by IP7's statement presented in the beginning of this chapter, wherein she noted the importance of a good collaborative environment, wherein solidarity with other parts of the world may very well serve Oslo's own interests. By seeking to contribute to the development and upholding of human rights in other parts of the world, Oslo may play a small part in creating a more stable international environment, and therethrough increase the possibility of reaching its own ambitions. This is in line with Van der Plujim and Melissen's (2007, p. 15) observation that cities' solidaric or idealistic motives need not be separated from self-interest.

This reflection may be particularly relevant regarding the last two examples of Oslo engaging with international agendas to be included here. Both examples involve issue-specific engagement, but unlike Van der Plujim and Melissen's (2007, p. 15) observation that this type of engagement tends to be the result of citizen pressure or movement, the citizen dimension was not emphasized by either interview participants or documents for the case of Oslo. The first example has been at the forefront of recent controversies and is found in the Platform for City Government Cooperation. It states that Oslo will "investigate the leeway in the procurement regulations so as not to purchase products and services manufactured in areas occupied in violation of international law by companies operating with the permission

of the occupying power" (Oslo City Government, 2019b, p. 22). This sends a clear signal of what Oslo deems acceptable and not, and that it is ready to engage in topics that cities may have been more reluctant to address previously. This reflects Ljungkvist's (2014, p. 39-40) notion of cities pursuing international norms in a more autonomous matter than previously, which increasingly involves issues within the traditional area of International Relations (IR), and Oslo seems to currently be joining the ranks of cities seeking this type of role in the global order. One should accentuate currently here, as this type of engagement is not necessarily tied to the city itself, but rather to the current City Government configuration. To illustrate this, one may look to former Governing Mayor from the Conservative Party, Stian Berger Røsland statements when several districts announced similar 'boycotts' of Israeli goods in 2010. He firmly asserted that neither the municipality nor city districts should pursue any independent foreign policy and emphasized that any decision to boycott another other state should be made by the Norwegian state (Slettholm, 2010). The inclusion of the above example in the City Government Platform is in stark contrast to Røsland's statement, and shows a political dimension of how the city chooses to engage, wherein it is not necessarily about a continuous urban interest.

The stance Oslo has taken on nuclear weapons is another relevant example of this type of engagement. Oslo's position is clearly stated in its Platform for City Government Cooperation, which confirms Oslo's continued commitment to the work of Mayors for Peace, and the city's ambition of working to ensure that Norway ratifies the UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (Oslo City Government, 2019b, p. 51). This implies a rather confident city that is willing to challenge the national political majority, and it is in line with Acuto and Rayner's (2019, p. 1154) dismay with the commonly held assumption that cities international activities is less relevant to typical IR concerns, including security. While Oslo's membership in this organization is a clear indication of their position on this topic, it cannot be said to be a tool for achieving municipal goals in the same way as the networks discussed above. For these two last examples, one should keep in mind that cities' engagement on these types of issues may be more oriented towards advocacy work than policymaking.

The way Oslo engages with various international agendas, and the way it furthers certain norms embedded in them, is particularly interesting from a constructivist perspective, wherein norms are seen as not only shaping the behaviour of actors, but that they are also constitutive of their identities (Fierke, 2013, p. 190). In this way, Oslo's furthering of these frameworks as part of its own municipal objectives may be seen as reflecting how it wants to be perceived internationally.

### 5.2.5. Image

The findings derived from the interviews and documents point towards the significance of articulating 'who' Oslo is internationally. This entails how the city signals its identity internationally in a way that highlights its values and make it recognizable to other actors. Through building a defined 'personhood', the city can be seen as seeking to claim political authority "on the basis of a locally developed collective identity" (Bassens et al., 2019, p. 7). Furthermore, the findings imply that Oslo is concerned with being perceived as an attractive and legitimate partner, and that increased status and visibility is important for its space for action. The below discussion will therefore explore how Oslo profiles itself internationally.

*Status-seeking*

Several of Oslo's official documents show that the city is concerned with taking certain positions in the global hierarchy, indicating status-seeking efforts. This may be exemplified by the third subgoal in Oslo's international strategy, which states that "Oslo shall be among the most innovative and competitive cities in Europe" (Oslo City Government, 2009, p. 6, own translation). This is indicative of Oslo seeing a value in seeking a place in the European hierarchy of cities. However, the city's ambitions are also global, exemplified by a goal in the Platform for City Government Cooperation being "Oslo will be the world's first zero emissions major city by 2030" (Oslo City Government, 2019b, p. 3). The city also has ambitions to secure roles beyond the environmental area, an example being that "as the host municipality for the Nobel Peace Prize, Oslo has a unique opportunity to reinforce the position of Oslo as a city of peace" (Oslo City Government, 2019b, p. 50). Whereas the others speak to a position to be achieved, this last example implies an understanding of a position the city already holds and seeks to secure.

These examples point to an understanding of a hierarchy in which Oslo seeks to compete for leading positions, wherein the city compares itself to each other. Securing a leading position within a hierarchy, i.e. elevating one's status, is ultimately tied to one's "place on the map of global politics," which is important for securing space to partake in various governance processes (De Carvalho & Neumann, 2015, p. 5). In order to compete for a desired position, the city must be recognized for its efforts and increase its visibility. Although the city is small in an international context, it seems to have found certain ways in which it is being heard and recognized for its efforts. As stated in Oslo's international strategy, "Oslo Municipality shall be an active and visible capital at meetings and general assemblies of the organizations of which we are a member" (Oslo City Government, 2009, p.

8, own translation). In a network setting, relative power or material power might become less relevant, providing an opportunity for smaller actors to be acknowledged. This can be illustrated by Oslo role in initiating the C40 Clean Construction Forum, where one of IP3's take-aways was that, "it does not matter as much whether you are a big city, you do not have to be London or New York as long as you show up with good ideas, make an effort, and contribute professionally" (Interview 3, Oslo Municipality). Operating through networks may therefore be particularly relevant for Oslo as a way to counter challenges related 'smallness' internationally, and where it is acknowledged by other actors based on its expertise and reputation for valuable contributions. Oslo can also point to a number of specific achievements that can be seen as contributing to elevated international acknowledgment. The Platform for City Government Cooperation exemplifies this by optimistically stating that: "Oslo is in the process of establishing a strong position on an international level. Oslo has the world's most ambitious climate strategy and launched the world's first climate budget in 2016. Oslo was the European Green Capital in 2019 and is one of the world capitals for electric car use. A number of major cities are looking at Oslo's initiatives for fossil-free construction sites and carbon capture and storage" (Oslo City Government, 2019b, p. 50).

Whereas Oslo has received considerable attention for its climate achievements, and that it has found arenas where it is being heard, other accounts suggest that the city is far less visible overall. The Brand Management Strategy for the Oslo region states that "Oslo is currently only half as visible as Stockholm and Copenhagen in European or global comparative measures of city performance and perception. This in itself is indicative of the city's limited presence and perceived importance among creators of global city assessments" (Oslo Region Alliance, Oslo Business Region, Visit Oslo, 2015, p. 19). IP4 shares a similar understanding, suggesting that "it is still the case that we are doing so well in Norway that we have been lacking a sense of urgency, we have lacked a critical understanding of the need to take an international position," further suggesting that we may have been resting on an overestimated understanding of how well-known Oslo is internationally (Interview 4, Oslo Region Alliance). The Brand Management Strategy asserts that "more people would consider us if they knew we existed" (Oslo Region Alliance, Oslo Business Region, Visit Oslo, 2015, p. 8). In ensuring this, city branding is important.

*City Branding*

Recognizing the need for visibility and becoming more recognizable abroad, the Oslo Region Alliance, Oslo Business Region and Visit Oslo jointly created a Brand Management Strategy

in 2015 that set the direction for how Oslo is to profile itself internationally. While Oslo as the capital is the natural gateway to Norway seen from an international perspective, the Brand Management Strategy emphasizes the importance of building an Oslo-specific visibility. It is stated that "Oslo both benefits and suffers from being associated with the national brand of Norway. There is a need to distinguish Oslo from the Norwegian tourist brand of trolls, nature and fjords, and to take the more deserved role as an international city with great urban qualities" (Oslo Region Alliance, Oslo Business Region, Visit Oslo, 2015, p. 19). Through this, Oslo seems eager to gain visibility for its climate solutions on a more technical level beyond recognition for beautiful nature, although the two are linked through preservation.

The need to distinguish itself from the state here differs from the cities discussed in chapter 2. The emphasis was on cities' interests and values that directly oppose those of the state, perhaps most notably several US cities' reactions to the US' withdrawal from the Paris Agreement resulting in the image of open and global cities pitted against "reactionary national governments" (Curtis & Acuto, 2018, p. 15). The way in which Oslo seeks to separate its image from the state is much more subtle as the two levels largely share ideas about how they want to be perceived internationally, especially their 'green' image. Oslo's distinct identity may therefore be thought of more as seeking to expand this image, and to take it further than the national. The above example of Oslo asserting itself as a city of peace is also interesting in this regard, and it presents another perspective on the city vs. state identity-building as it seems purposefully tied to Norway's understanding of itself as a peace nation. This may therefore be seen as a position Oslo seeks by virtue of being the capital of Norway, and thereby more actively tying itself to the national brand and values, instead of seeking to distinguish itself.

The branding of Oslo can in short be explained as "building our identity and finding our own voice; deliberately developing and demonstrating Oslo´s values through appropriate and aligned actions" (Oslo Region Alliance, Oslo Business Region, Visit Oslo, 2015, p. 2). Through this, the city highlights its unique experience and expertise, which makes the city appears as a legitimate and reliable actor and partner. Several interview participants brought up the European Green Capital award as having been particularly valuable in both confirming and strengthening this perception of Oslo.

*European Green Capital*

The impact of Oslo being awarded European Green Capital in 2019 on the city's international visibility was emphasized by several interview participants. IP8 asserts that "it is clear that

the award was a huge 'feather in the cap' for Oslo's international work, but also for its reputation. I find the significance of reputation to be a bit understated, because a city's reputation is very important in an international and global context" (Interview 8, KMD). As discussed in chapter 2, reputation is an important element in interacting with other actors, as it "may inform the actions of other" (De Carvalho & Neumann, 2015, p. 4). This implies that the city's reputation, or the way it is perceived by others, may both further or limit other actors' willingness to interact and collaborate with it. IP8 highlights the increased interest by different actors in Brussel and other European cities in the work Oslo was doing stemming from the award, asserting that "Oslo became a huge player in Europe, a very promoted player that year. So, when Raymond [governing mayor] now speaks, when he goes to meetings and is invited to Brussels, or in other European and global contexts, people listen to him. And that is because he actually has something to show for it" (Interview 8, KMD).

IP2 explained that while the award was a great prestige, it can "at the same time also quite clearly be used as a kind of tool for the city council to further accelerate its work on climate" (Interview 2, Oslo Municipality). This is also recognized in Oslo's strategy on the European Green Capital, which clearly states that "Oslo Municipality shall use the position and access to the EU system that the title European Environmental Capital gives in a strategic way to set the agenda in relevant EU matters" (Oslo City Government, 2018, p. 4, own translation). The award is also drawn on in Oslo's Platform for City Government Cooperation which states that the city government will "use the city's international network and role as European environmental capital to ensure support for CCS as a technology and the Norwegian capture and storage project" (Oslo City Government 2019b, p. 24). This is an example of a specific outcome the city seeks through this, wherein the attention from the award and its network participation can be used to create interest in, and larger markets for, the city's climate solutions.

The findings discussed in these sections point out several motivations and rationales behind why Oslo is engaging internationally. One sees that personal engagement in international issues by local leaders may be a driving force of Oslo's international engagement, although this may begin to be balanced out by international work becoming a more established and integrated part of the city's tasks. Pragmatic self-interest appeared to be a leading motive, in addition to influencing supranational decision making that directly impacts the city's ability to reach its goals. Additionally, there are clear tendencies of Oslo seeking to further

international agendas and norms that are in line with the city's interests and which signals its values, herein a willingness to take certain controversial stances. One also sees Oslo seeking to secure certain positions in the global hierarchy, and it actively signals its interests and values internationally, wherein increased attractiveness may be seen as strengthening the city's international agency. The examples presented point to how Oslo perceives its need and will to engage internationally, establishing the broader vision for why the city engages internationally.

## 5.3 Oslo and the Norwegian State

This part will address the second part of this thesis' research question, namely how Oslo's international agency may be understood in relation to the state. As Blank (2006, p. 264) noted, when the global order is reorganized following the rise to prominence of local level governance actors, questions arise about their role and relationship with the state, including the division of power and the relative autonomy of the local level vis-à-vis the state. In exploring this regarding Oslo, the following sections will discuss how the city and state interact on international matters, including how the levels cooperate and coordinate, as well as how diverging or competing interests may be handled. This also entails an exploration of the foreign policy dimension of Oslo's international relations and activities. One may here consider whether, or to what extent, Oslo's international engagement could or should be characterized as foreign policy or city diplomacy. Additionally, one may consider whether, or to what extent, Oslo's international engagement matters to Norway's foreign policy. By exploring different aspects of the relationship between Oslo and the Norwegian state, one may begin to understand the nature of the relationship, whether Oslo's international endeavours are deemed competitive or complementary, and the extent to which there is an interest and possibility of creating synergies between the levels.

### 5.3.1. Foreign Policy Implications

Keeping the literature discussed in chapter 2 in mind, one may consider what, if any, foreign policy implications Oslo's international engagement has. When it comes to cities' formal relation to Norwegian foreign policy, IP6 asserts that "overall, I would say that cities and municipalities play a very marginal role in the formulation and implementation of Norwegian foreign policy," further explaining how foreign policy is formally and legally speaking the domain of the government, and the local level has no defined role in it (Interview 6, MFA).

Here, foreign policy is clearly portrayed as still belonging to the state, and Oslo is not recognized as a significant actor. However, while Oslo may not be seen as being in a position to directly shape Norwegian foreign policy, one may consider the extent that the city's international engagement still matters from a foreign policy perspective.

Here it becomes interesting to briefly revisit what Ljungkvist (2014) refers to as a 'mission creep' by cities, and how this could apply to the case of Oslo. She argues that cities increasingly seem to be entertaining the idea of their own foreign policies by engaging with topics previously reserved for the national level (Ljungkvist, 2014, p. 32). By gradually expanding the topical range of issues they engage with, Oslo may also gradually be venturing into matters previously (or still) outside their area of legitimate authority as seen from a national perspective. Interestingly, Oslo's international strategy recognizes that "the distinction between foreign and domestic policy is continually being erased" (Oslo City Government, 2009, p. 2, own translation). IP2 elaborates on this by stating that "there has been a very clear tradition in Norwegian politics, both at national and local level, that foreign policy lies with the nation state and local authorities do their work in the cities. There has been quite a broad agreement on this, but at the same time I think you can see a development where the local level has been more willing to get involved in issues that at least border what one has traditionally perceived as the responsibility of the national state" (Interview 2, Oslo Municipality). While IP2 here recognizes the position presented by IP6 above, he also points to a potential change in the city's practices. As the divide between domestic and foreign policy may become increasingly blurred, one may also consider the extent to which a 'mission creep' on Oslo's part into the foreign policy domain is an active consideration, or rather a natural development.

While Oslo may be increasingly engaging with 'traditional' foreign policy topics such as nuclear weapons and migrations, there seems to be reluctance in using the terms foreign policy or (city) diplomacy to describe these activities. I was not able to find the terms used in any of the documents analysed, and none of the interview participants used these terms consistently. Whether actively or subconsciously, Oslo does seem to refrain from characterizing their own international engagement as diplomacy or foreign policy. This perceived reluctance by practitioners to use these terms is quite interesting, and one should perhaps keep in mind the strong state-connotations of these terms. This may also be indicative of how Brütsch (2013, p. 314) observed that cities' often show prudence in their wording of international strategies as a way of showing that they recognize the pre-eminence of national interests. Whereas some of Oslo's external relations and practices may mimic that

of states' foreign policy and diplomatic activities, the city's documents are more conservatively worded in terms of the city asserting itself as an autonomous international actor.

When asked to consider the use of the terms in relation to the international engagement of Oslo, there was great variation between the interview participants with how comfortable they seemed with it. Their concern seemed to be less about the actual practices of the city, and more about using foreign policy as a label, perhaps because it is still widely understood as a state-prerogative. Whereas IP1 asserted that he thinks it would be beneficial for a wide range of actors, including Oslo, to develop their own foreign policy, IP3 noted that while some of Oslo's practices may fall within the category of foreign policy, it is ultimately a question of how one defines it (IP1, formerly MFA; IP3, Oslo Municipality). IP3 elaborate by explaining that "an international collaboration with regular, and in a way strategic, contact between cities in different countries, may flow a little into the contact that is made at the national level, which in a way is their formal foreign policy. In that way, it will also affect how national governments relate to climate, that is in the national foreign policy" (Interview 3, Oslo Municipality). Here IP3 suggests that Oslo may also have the potential to influence Norway's foreign policy, but it should be emphasized that she here speaks of climate specifically, an area where Norway and Oslo's interests already largely align.

The permanent presence by many cities or regions, including the Oslo region, in Brussels is exemplified in the literature as an example of cities engaging in diplomacy (Van der Plujim & Melissen, 2007, p. 30). However, IP5 clearly asserted that "what we are doing here is not really so-called foreign policy. What we help our members with is to make their daily operations better at home by working internationally, by collaborating internationally" (Interview 5, Oslo Region European Office). IP5 emphasized that the Oslo Region European Office does not have its own political mandate and thereby does not pursue foreign policy, while also adding that "but it is in the cards that our members, and perhaps especially large players like Oslo, have their own interest in being able to influence processes that Norway may have to follow in the long run" (Interview 5, Oslo Region European Office). Whereas the office itself does not pursue foreign policy, one might extract that the office could act as a foreign policy tool for Oslo. The office helps Oslo create and maintain relations with other international actors through regular and strategic interaction, something one may describe as a form of diplomacy. However, the reluctance to characterize this as foreign policy by the practitioner should be made a note of and is yet another indicator of foreign policy of cities not holding a secure, or even truly recognized, position. Instead, this type of presence and

engagement is largely presented as pragmatic, which as noted in the first part of this chapter is viewed as uncontroversial.

Interestingly, the Oslo's European presence and engagement seems to be a dimension of Oslo's international activities that is recognized as holding potential for tangible impact. As IP5 also noted, Oslo may seek to influence processes that may also impact Norway, in particular the policy framework which Norway is bound to through the EEA agreement. This is also recognized by IP6 who notes that one of the exceptions to Oslo's marginal role in Norway's foreign policy is its "contact at European level with the EU system both directly and via regional and urban networks at European level. In this there is substance, resources, and real policy development with consequences both for the city and potentially for policy development in the EU," adding that formal cooperation structures have been established here between the MFA and the regional and municipal levels (Interview 6, MFA). This recognition is important, and the establishment of cooperation structures between the levels may imply that the state level is eager to engage with Oslo on matters where they deem the city's international agency to be impactful. It is also interesting to consider that despite the state level recognizing Oslo's potential to impact the state of affairs in a European context, IP6's statement does not paint a picture of tension, simply as a matter of the fact.

Whereas Oslo does not inhabit a defined or formal space in Norwegian foreign policy practice, the city's increasing engagement with topics previously reserved for the national level implies a changing relationship between the city and state on international matters. The following sections will therefore explore this relationship more closely, including how the city and state formally interact, how diverging interests are handled, and what the findings indicate for the outlook on a symbiotic relationship between the levels.

### 5.3.2. Interaction

An important dimension of the city-state relation to be discussed is their interaction on international matters. There are certain permanent channels wherein the local and national levels interact, and where internationally oriented efforts are coordinated to a degree. The international dimension of regional development is perhaps the most prominent example of this, wherein the city's participation in various EU programs is central, and in particular Interreg which is one of the EU's key tools for fostering cross-border cooperation. Oslo's international strategy specifies that "Oslo municipality is part of the geography of the EU's program for regional development, Interreg IV. The City of Oslo will participate actively with projects through Interreg" (Oslo City Government, 2009, p. 5, own translation).

IP2 explains that "through the EEA agreement, which is a national level matter, Norway has access to many of the same EU and EEA programs as other European cities" (Interview 2, Oslo Municipality). This is an important aspect of international engagement, because it ties the international agendas of both state and city together. IP8 emphasizes that because Norway is not a member of the EU, "the ministries come up with the Norwegian money at the program level. There is also co-financing, or a deductible you could say, for example if Oslo wants a project they then have to co-finance the part of the project they are to participate in. It might seem like a technicality, but it is important to point out that it is Norwegian money we use, and not EU money that comes back to Norway through participation" (Interview 8, KMD). The willingness of the state to co-sponsor local engagement in EU programs may indicate an understanding of the value of local international engagement. A 2006 report on Norwegian regions as international actors found that information and funding were the most important areas in which the regions engaged with central authorities in their international work, making the Ministry of Local Government and Modernisation (KMD) a primary national level partner due to their role in facilitating and financing the Norwegian participation in Interreg programs (Asplan Analyse, Eurofutures, KS, 2006, p. 39, own translation). IP8 explains that there is a great deal of communication taking place between the national and local level in relation to Interreg participation, adding that program participation "must be in in line with the goals of Norwegian regional policy. We want to use these funds to create regionally balanced growth" (Interview 8, KMD). This implies that while Oslo would have to anchor program participation in their own strategies, they must at same time adhere to certain agreed-upon goals with the national level.

In coordinating and communicating on European matters, certain formal mechanisms for exchange are also in place. IP8 highlighted that "we have something called the European Policy Forum [Europapolitisk forum], primarily between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, KMD and the counties, of which Oslo is a part, and also KS" (Interview 8, KMD). IP10 asserts that this forum is "the basis for cooperation when it comes to regional work where regular meetings take place between the levels" (Interview 10, MFA). IP2 also draws on the forum when saying that "there is an interest from the national level to have a good dialogue with Oslo and other municipalities and counties in Norway," and that the reason behind the European Policy Forum "is that is that national authorities want to have a channel to inform the local level, but also to get input, a place to ask 'what is important to you now'" (Interview 2, Oslo Municipality). The establishment of a permanent channel for mutual exchange indicates an understanding of the value of upholding a dialogue on European matters between

the levels, while also enabling better coordination when one is aware of the others' current positions and priorities. There is also regular dialogue taking place between the different governance levels in Brussels. IP5 explains that "we have monthly meetings with the EU delegation, meaning the Norwegian embassy in the EU in Brussels. We have that meeting to provide information, but also to get information, it is a mutual exchange" (Interview 5, Oslo Region European Office). The emphasis on mutual exchange is important, as it indicates that the different levels benefit from keeping each other informed.

In addition to these more permanent platforms for exchange, IP3 and IP9 brought up the practice of responding to hearings, reports, and proposals by the Storting and various ministries as another channel for communicating one's interest to the national level (Interview 3, Oslo Municipality; Interview 9, KS). IP7 explains how it is about finding the best way to influence, which at times can be done in Norway, for example by "influencing our national input to the EU" (Interview 7, Eastern Norway County Network). This shows that there is also a dialogue going on nationally where the local level can seek to assert influence, and it provides an avenue for Oslo to influence directives dealing with Norway's European or otherwise international agendas. Whereas the emphasis on the importance of ongoing dialogue between the different governance levels was consistent throughout the interviews, several interview participants also noted that this does not mean that the different actors have to agree. As IP7 noted, "it is more about knowing about one another. It is okay to disagree" (Interview 7, Eastern Norway County Network). It therefore becomes interesting to explore how such disagreement may manifest, and how diverging interests are handled.

### 5.3.3. Divergences

While the above discussion illustrates certain ways in which the local and national level interact and coordinate efforts, it is interesting to look at what may happen when diverging interests appear. As mentioned, the Interreg programs may imply a certain level of subordination to the national interest because it is partially state funded. However, Oslo's international engagement largely happens through the city's own initiatives and in organizations outside the area of national authority. Here, one finds Oslo engaging in topics and areas that are less coordinated with the state, which prompts questions about how potentially diverging interests here may impact the relationship between the city and the state.

These questions also figured in the literature discussed in chapter 2. As cities become increasingly recognized as legitimate international actors, situations will likely arise where city and state representatives have diverging views or ambitions, for example within the UN

framework (Acuto et al., 2021, pg. 15). The potential for frictions was also recognized by Van der Plujim and Melissen (2007, p. 12), who suggested the potential for "adversarial relationship between cities and state actors" if the city's activities are seen as infringing upon the latter's previously exclusive domain. In the case of Oslo, there are several international topics where the city's position or agenda do not align with the state, and where the line between domestic and foreign policy seems blurred.

*Diverging Objectives*

The city's Platform for City Government states several international ambitions that may not align with the national interest, and where it addresses the national level in seeking changes in the city's interest. The city's stance on nuclear weapons mentioned earlier is a prominent example, wherein the Platform states that the City Government will "work to ensure that Norway ratifies the UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons and continues its efforts with Mayors for Peace" (Oslo City Government, 2019b, p. 51). Here one sees Oslo directly calling upon the national level to engage in a matter the city deems important. IP2 explains how when Oslo joined this campaign "there was a clear distinction between the political majority at the national level, and what Oslo municipality argued for. And Oslo's governing mayor is from the Labour Party, but he then had a different opinion than the Labour Party at the national level" (Interview 2, Oslo Municipality). That is an interesting point, because it indicates that the city's stance on nuclear weapons is not necessarily tied to party politics, and may instead represent an urban agenda, considering that cities may be likely targets of potential nuclear attacks. IP2 further adds that Oslo's stance on this issue, is illustrative of "another area where cities have taken a greater role than before" and their willingness to take on bigger roles on internationally controversial topics (Interview 2, Oslo Municipality). It should be highlighted that Oslo did not simply join Mayors for Peace and the ICAN Cities Appeal, but that it actively addresses the national level through the inclusion of it in the city government platform.

The direct addressing of the national level is also evident when it comes to migration, where it is stated in the Platform that "the City Government will work to ensure that the government takes greater responsibility for undocumented migrants and newly arrived EEA citizens" (Oslo City Government, 2019b, p. 35). The inclusion of this request to the national level may be indicative of the city seeing itself as an actor that should be considered, and that the city is claiming a voice on matters of foreign policy which hold urban importance. IP1 explains how "there is an interplay there [between the governance levels], also with regard to

immigration issues, refugees, migrants. There is no doubt that there are influencing processes from the cities in relation to Norwegian foreign policy. Norwegian cities are much more progressive and want more immigration because they need, among other things, labour" (Interview 1, formerly MFA). It is here implied that Oslo's engagement in migration is tied to pragmatism, in that the city requires immigration. However, Oslo is also engaging in the topic on different grounds. Oslo's Mayor, Marianne Borgen, has on several occasions called upon the Norwegian authorities to take greater responsibility for evacuating more refugees from the refugee camps at Lesvos (see ex. Borgen, April 2020, Borgen, September 2020).

In a debate entry in Aftenposten, Borgen criticizes how several countries are handling the situation by writing that "children are strongly affected by the paralysis of political action," implying ineffective or unsatisfactory state responses (Borgen, April 2020, own translation). She further directs her attention to Oslo's stance vis-a-vis the Norwegian government by stating that "I am glad that the majority-parties in the city council feel strongly about international solidarity, even in times of crisis. Unfortunately, the same cannot be said of the majority in the Storting" (Borgen, April 2020, own translation). In a largely pathos-driven manner, her statements indicate that Oslo is engaging with migration from a point of solidarity as well. That is an interesting point, because the city does then not appeal to the state for practical reasons tied to migration, but it is also showing a moral dissatisfaction with the state's policies. This may be indicative of the city becoming more comfortable with speaking against the state on idealistic, and not merely pragmatic, grounds.

Another example of a topic that could spur disagreement is a point already mentioned briefly in the first part of this chapter. It is written in Oslo's Platform for City Government that the City Government will "investigate the leeway in the procurement regulations so as not to purchase products and services manufactured in areas occupied in violation of international law by companies operating with the permission of the occupying power" (Oslo City Government, 2019b, p. 22). This statement garnered a lot of media attention, and IP2 notes how with a statement like this "it is also quite clear that you get right into the high politics of international politics here, and the Israel and Palestine conflict although it does not say that explicitly. So it is an example of Oslo international work also having clear political dimensions" (Interview 2, Oslo Municipality). Here, Oslo has clearly ventured into a traditional foreign policy domain, although as mentioned earlier, it displays caution in how this is worded.

Whereas the above are examples of topics that Oslo engages in that do not align with the national foreign policy objectives, it should be reiterated that the climate dimension seems

to be the predominant focus of the city's international engagement. Although Oslo may have higher ambitions than the national level in certain areas, this does not seem to hold much potential for tension. IP3 explains how on climate "Norway wants to be a driving force internationally, and I think that is the backdrop for having no interest in trying to limit Oslo's international involvement" adding that "I think that having the same goal is a reason for why it is largely unproblematic for Oslo to be internationally active on climate" (Interview 3, Oslo Municipality). Whereas one increasingly recognizes the security dimension of climate as well, IP3 notes that this has for a long time "in a way not been incorporated into Norwegian foreign policy as something that is also security policy relevant, but that is about to change. Now I am just thinking out loud, but I think Norway is lagging behind in their thinking on that" (Interview 3, Oslo Municipality). This is an interesting point, which may also reflect how climate is positioned within Norwegian foreign policy. Despite undoubtedly being a matter of international concern and high on Norway's international agenda, Sending and Hornburg (2019) at the Norwegian Institute of International Affairs (NUPI) note how the climate issue is not centrally positioned within Norwegian foreign policy. Instead, they describe it as being "treated in the same way as investments in schools, health and poverty reduction in developing countries, and not as a decisive factor in the assessment of Norwegian interests and foreign policy choices" (Sending & Hornburg, 2019, own translation). This may be indicative of why despite a large part of Oslo's international engagement is centred around climate, it seems not to be perceived as the city meddling in foreign policy matters.

*Overstepping*

While the above examples illustrate thematic areas where the city seems to be engaging in areas previously reserved for the national level, the relationship between the city and state was overall not found to be conflictual, nor particularly competitive. Despite Oslo's move into certain more controversial foreign policy topics, IP2 notes that Oslo has not received any reprimands from the national level, or any formal reactions from the Norwegian MFA, adding that "that would be perceived as very strange" (Interview 2, Oslo Municipality). He further explains that a major reason for the lack of formal reactions may be that "Oslo and other cities have traditionally been very reluctant to get involved in issues that traditionally have been perceived as belonging to the national level, but when one does, it is done in a way that it becomes very clear that this is what the city means, so the distinction between the levels is clearly implied" (Interview 2, Oslo Municipality). Because Oslo makes it clear that

their objectives belong to the city, and that they are not trying to assert these on behalf of Norway, it may seem like the divergences exemplified above do not matter as much to the state.

As mentioned earlier, it seems like disagreement in itself is not necessarily something that needs to be avoided, which might contribute to making the relationship between city and state less prone to conflict. IP3 makes an interesting observation regarding this, wherein she reflects upon the difference in disagreeing internally and externally. She explains that if Oslo were to "go out internationally with a clear critique of the national climate policy, or that Oslo politicians would argue internationally against Norway's petroleum policy specifically, then I think there would be reactions in Norway," noting that this would go beyond using the international arena to further cooperation and find climate solutions, and to simply criticize the Norwegian state in an international context (Interview 3, Oslo Municipality). She asserts that "Oslo does not do that […] When Oslo engages in the debate on national climate reports, it is a debate that is taking place in Norway, and that is perfectly fine. It is a democracy after all. But I think there's a limit there, and Oslo has stayed inside that" (Interview 3, Oslo Municipality). The above example on Oslo's engagement on migration might also be illustrated by this, where the dissatisfaction with the state's policy took place domestically. This may also imply that while Oslo engages in discussions domestically, the city and state may share an interest in appearing in a more cohesive manner externally, perhaps because foreign policy is an area in which coherence and continuity is deemed particularly important for legitimacy (Van der Plujim & Melissen, 2007, p. 13).

There does not seem to be an agreed upon limit to how far Oslo can go in its international engagement, but rather a shared understanding that Oslo so far has not crossed such a hypothetical limit. IP9 asserts that "there is certainly a limit, but I do not think there is anyone who is close to crossing it" (Interview 9, KS). She further notes that she does not have the impression that one actively avoids overstepping, saying that "I simply think it is more about interest. There are some things that are obviously a national matter that will not be as interesting for the municipal sector to engage in, but I definitely think there are national matters that are also municipal matters" (Interview 9, KS).

From the statements presented, one may extract that while Oslo is wary of not overstepping, it does enjoy a level of autonomy in its international engagement. Its activities do not have to be approved by, nor coordinated by, the state, though a dialogue remains in place. However, there seems to exist an undefined line that the city is expected not to cross,

implying that the role of the city and its relationship with the state on international matters also remains largely undefined.

*Competition?*

Keeping the relative absence of tension in mind, one might still consider whether Oslo's international engagement could be perceived as competition to the national level. Interestingly, the interview participants were quite unanimous in their responses in that the international dimension of Oslo's work does not generate a competitive, nor conflictual, environment with the state. IP1 asserts that diplomatic activities by the city "does not represent competition, but it is complimentary. But, at the same time, it reflects in a way that the power of states is being limited by processes of globalization, demographic changes and technological advancement, and where local authorities and cities gain a larger and more prominent role. And there is clearly a competitive element there in terms of who should do what" (Interview 1, formerly MFA). While he does recognize the potential of a 'competitive element' regarding the definition and division of roles between the levels, he does not perceive Oslo's international assertions to represent a challenge. He further explains that "I believe that our foreign policy, although there of course are some purists in the bureaucracy who do not want to deal with local authorities, I think the vast majority see it as an enrichment. They see the importance of having an international dimension locally" (Interview 1, formerly MFA).

Through this, he paints the picture of a complimentary relationship. This is also recognized by IP8 who says that "we think it is very positive [...] in the ministry we are very happy with it, and it is very nice and encouraging that they [cities] are part of international networks and organizations that support their international strategic work" (Interview 8, KMD). Similarly, IP10 asserts that "I would say that there is room for everyone. From my experience from the EFTA Secretariat in Brussels and the EU delegation, is there any competition? Not really. Also because the different levels' work tends to be directed towards different environments […] It is simply that it is important to see what the others do so that we can draw synergies from it" (Interview 10, MFA). Similarly, IP9 asserts that "I do not have the impression that there is any strong competition, rather a desire for cooperation, although it varies to what extent one is able to achieve it" (Interview 9, KS). Through these statements, it appears as though Oslo's international engagement is largely viewed as an enrichment, where actors from different levels of governance are able to cover more ground than single level engagement could.

Furthermore, it may seem as though the potential for conflict, even on the more controversial topics, is low due to the minimal impact Oslo's engagement on those matters is perceived to have for the national level. Regarding Oslo's commitment to Mayors for Peace and ICAN, IP2 notes that "it was perhaps first and foremost a symbolic, but it did reach national authorities. However, it was not the case that national authorities in Norway then said 'oh, now Oslo says that, then we must hurry to do it '. [...] So I do not think one should attribute to Oslo that it could really sway something at the national level, but it is a voice" (Interview 2, Oslo Municipality). From a national level perspective, IP6 holds a similar view on the symbolism versus impact of Oslo's engagement on the slightly more controversial topics. When Oslo engages in topics such as nuclear weapons, boycotts, or dissatisfaction with other states' policies, IP6 asserts that these generally centre around domestic or party-political symbolic issues. He explains that "such local political markings have no material significance for Norwegian foreign policy as such, but they can of course generate attention and reputational challenges for Norway and Norwegian politics both domestically and with foreign actors" (Interview 6, MFA). He illustrates this by noting how foreign ambassadors in Norway may take notice of this and bring it up in conversation with Norwegian authorities, adding that they do this "of course knowing that this is not about the government's policy, but based on reputational considerations or the like" (Interview 6, MFA). Whereas Oslo's positions may not cause grand concern at the national level, it is still interesting to note that the city's voice is loud enough to be addressed.

IP2 seems to share the understanding of the limitations to the impact of the city's actions on issues of this sort. He explains that while it might create a lot of noise if Oslo were to actually implement a boycott of goods and services from occupied territories, that "it might affect the tone of the dialogue, but I do not think it would really have a big impact […] Because while cities may act as a sort of driving force, formally speaking many of these issues and topics are decided on a national or multilateral state level" (Interview 2, Oslo Municipality). This is an important distinction, and while Oslo may seek to push a certain agenda, it ultimately seems to still be the case that it largely comes down to decisions made at state level. IP2 further explains that while there has been a development over time where the local level seeks to be heard, "it is again the case that you do not really make any decisions that go against what one does at the national level. [...] It probably means that, to the extent that one could somehow irritate national authorities, it would then be more of symbolic nature" (Interview 2, Oslo Municipality). From this, one may also understand Oslo's engagement on topics where they diverge from the national objectives to perhaps be more

about sending a certain signal about who Oslo wants to be. That is, they uphold their engagement on certain topics seemingly knowing that they do not hold the capability to sway the national level. The symbolic nature of some of the city's international engagement may also be indicative of why its activities are not perceived as a threat or challenge to the national level, and perhaps why their engagement is largely unproblematic despite certain objectives diverging from the national ones. One may therefore turn one's attention to how the city and state may instead create synergies at the international level.

### 5.3.4. Symbiosis?

The overall picture painted by the interview participants, as illustrated by the above discussion, is that the relationship between the city and state on international matters is relatively unproblematic. This also opens for considerations on the possible complementarity of Oslo's international engagement, which may be illustrated by how different actors perceive the value of multi-level international engagement. As discussed in chapter 2, some states are seen supporting the empowerment of local governments for mutually beneficial outcomes (Pinson, 2019, p. 80), and that one may explore the potential that lies in making more active use of cities to overcome "state-centric gridlocks" (Curtis & Acuto, 2018, p. 15). As will be evident in the below discussion, these notions largely apply to the case of Oslo and Norway in the areas of climate and EU/EEA, while the more controversial topics discussed above seem largely side-lined in this context.

Several of the documents and interview participants speak of the potential benefits that lie in communicating and coordinating international efforts between the different governance levels. Oslo's engagement at EU level is one area that was brought up wherein the city and state can coordinate their efforts for more effective outcomes. A report by the MFA on Norwegian counties' European work states that "in order to get the best out of European co-operation, the regions will have much to gain from systematizing their co-operation with key state policy actors" (MFA, 2016, p. 63, own translation). At the same time, the interview participants indicated that this goes both ways, and that the state has a lot to gain from interacting with the local level as well. Because Norway is not a member of the EU, Oslo may have access to different channels and arenas than the state. IP10 explains that through network affiliation, cities and regions "often meet more central politicians than we [state level] do in the ongoing work since the EEA agreement means that we are involved at working group level, and not the political processes", adding that this makes it particularly

important to have an ongoing dialogue and to try to coordinate efforts (Interview 10, MFA). IP5 from the Oslo Region European Office also notes that "the Norwegian state in Brussels is very aware that we as a region know perhaps more, or different things, than they do. They have more formal channels that they have to follow, and more etiquette and things like that, whereas we also have more informal channels […] so we get a completely different insight into what is going on in the EU, and it is clear that the Norwegian EU delegation is interested in hearing about that" (Interview 5, Oslo Region European Office). From these statements, it seems like Oslo's European engagement is less limited by lack of membership in the EU than Norway, which highlights the benefits to Norway in working closely with the regional level.

Climate is another area that was emphasized as important in the context of creating synergies between the city and state. It is stated in Oslo's climate strategy that "Oslo Municipality shall cooperate more closely with the state, region and other major cities to ensure that the municipality becomes a zero-emission city that is equipped to cope with the coming climate changes" (Oslo City Government, 2020b, p. 7, own translation). Another goal directly addresses Norway's foreign policy, stating that "Oslo will work to strengthen awareness of climate and environmental challenges related to cities and urbanization in Norway's foreign policy work. This should also be emphasized in development and foreign policy work" (Oslo City Government, 2020b, p. 65, own translation). These example show how closely linked the two levels are, and that Oslo not only seeks cooperation with the national level, but it also seeks to influence Norway's foreign policy on a matter that holds high priority for the city's international objectives.

On this topic, several of the interview participants also brought up the benefits that Oslo's international engagement may bring for Norway. IP2 brought up the European Green Capital award when noting that Oslo "has gained a fairly clear profile internationally as a forward-looking city in terms of the environment and climate, and I think that corresponds very well with what Norway as a nation is trying to do internationally as well. You can therefore somehow bring out the best in one another" (Interview 2, Oslo Municipality). There lies a clear mutual benefit in the city excelling in an area of interest to the state. The same line of thinking is present in Oslo's strategy on the European Green Capital, where it is stated that "Oslo will also be able to use the title as European Green Capital to profile Norway as a future-oriented, innovative country with pure nature and an urban environment that promotes quality of life and creativity. The state and Oslo can promote a number of common interests and benefit from mutual coordination and cooperation" (Oslo City Government, 2018, p. 3, own translation). The complimentary nature of Oslo's climate engagement is recognized by

IP8 as well, who asserts that "when Norway's capital is doing well, then Norway is doing well, right?" adding that regarding the award "of course the ministries cheered them on, the state cheered them on" (Interview 8, KMD). IP1 also identified climate as an area of positive interaction by noting that "in my view, there is a rather significant profit potential for Norway, not necessarily monetarily, but in status, and in terms of marketing local, Norwegian solutions. And I think the work Oslo does on climate is a good example of solutions that are important in a larger context" (Interview 1, formerly MFA). This multi-level interaction is largely portrayed as a great strength, and Oslo's strategy on the European Green Capital further states that "in a European and global context, it is also very important to show that many of the good climate and environmental results in Oslo have emerged through extensive and regular cooperation between national and local authorities. This model of cooperation between state and municipality can be a clear Norwegian example of inspiration for other countries and regions" (Oslo City Government, 2018, p. 3, own translation). Here, the symbiotic relationship between the city and state is portrayed as a great strength in an international context, particularly as it encourages others to follow the same governance model. This is a pointer to when and how multi-level interaction can create synergies, and the mutual benefit of cooperation.

*(Lack of) Recognition*

Whereas communication and coordination where interests align seems to be the overall goal, and something both Oslo and the state seek, perceptions vary on how this is implemented in practice. IP9 explains that she finds it positive that there are many actors from different levels engaged in this field, but that "there is also something about being able to organize efficiently, to be able to see where one can help one another and perhaps be a little more efficient in the way one works. I think there is still a long way to go on that" (Interview 9, KS). Whereas efficient communication and coordination between the levels presents a natural challenge, the above section shows mutual will to further enhance a collaborative environment.

At the same time, other interview participants expressed that there remains a lack of recognition by the state of the value of engaging the local level, while noting that this has been improving over time. IP1 asserts that "I believe that a major trend in Norwegian foreign policy and Norwegian aid for almost all years, is that there is very little understanding of the importance of cities, and urban challenges, and the opportunities that lie in Norwegian foreign policy in general with regard to prioritizing cities" (Interview 1, formerly MFA). He

here speaks to urban challenges more broadly, but one may here also consider the potential that lies in using Norwegian urban competency more actively abroad. On this, IP1 further suggests that "I think the way Norwegian foreign policy and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs have taken Norwegian cities' considerations into account is disappointingly weak. And in reality, you do not really market Norwegian urban competence and capacity […] In a way, I am waiting for a kind of shift, that one will begin to understand the importance of this" (Interview 1, formerly MFA). In a similar vein, IP4 notes that "I still miss a strategy in Norway to implement, and somehow utilize cities in a good way […] we are not really addressing how the metropolitan regions can be a resource. So this is a topic that is quite absent in the Norwegian context and that may be a little neglected" (Interview 4, Oslo Region Alliance). Both IP1 and IP4 here touch upon a perceived lack of understanding by the Norwegian authorities in how one can efficiently make use of the competency and resources found in cities.

This also speaks to the idea of state more actively engaging cities for their foreign policy objectives, and the recognition that cities have different channels than the state in fostering international relationship (Peyroux, 2019, p. 203). IP7 notes that it is "actually written in national strategies on Europe that the state can also use the regions to present or further Norway's interests" (Interview 7, Eastern Norway County Network). As one of the main goals of Norwegian foreign policy is so promote and safeguard Norwegian interests, one might expect the local level to be actively engaged for this purpose. However, when asked whether Oslo is being utilized as a tool in Norwegian foreign policy, IP2 explains that "I might be inclined to say that you are not quite there yet today. That somehow in Norwegian foreign policy you are aware that Oslo could be used as a foreign policy tool. No, I do not see that. But I think that at the national level, both in Norway and elsewhere, you see that cities can play a certain role, more of a driving role" (Interview 2, Oslo Municipality).

This seems in line with the findings in a 2006 report made on behalf of KS, which found that the local level sought to be more actively engaged internationally by actors on the state level, and it is further suggested that the MFA "should actively engage counties and municipalities in European policy. For example, in connection with the development of democracy, the counties and the municipalities could have played an active role in partnerships with counties and municipalities in e.g. Eastern and Central Europe" (Asplan Analyse, Eurofutures, KS, 2006, p. 40, own translation). While this is just one topical example from the report, it may be illustrative for a broader context. One may assert that both Oslo and Norway benefit from a stable international environment that allows space for

smaller, less materially powerful actors. In this sense, facilitating the use of local competency and the strengthening of Oslo's relations with cities deemed important for a favourable international environment, could simultaneously further both the local and national agendas.

While there seems to be an interest from both levels to ensure a symbiotic relationship, it may seem like one is not quite there yet with regards to efficiently make use of both levels' capacities. It is of course no minor task to systematize all international engagement in a strategic way, and the dialogue that is already in place should be emphasized as positive. However, from the statements presented above, there seems to be improvement potential when it comes to the state's understanding and appreciation of how Oslo's international engagement could be utilized more actively. Oslo's strategy documents do address the national level on various international matter, but there is less evidence of national strategies describing how one may utilize local competency internationally. While the relationship between these levels of governance is not perceived conflictual, nor particularly competitive, it may perhaps appear slightly insignificant.

Though one still might have a way to go in ensuring efficient coordination and cooperation between the different governance levels, this is a field in continuous development. IP7 reflects upon this development by bringing up the example of when the Olympic Games were hosted in Lillehammer in 1994 when local politicians protested against nuclear weapons tests in France, saying that "then there were many in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs who thought that local politicians were meddling and not acting in good custom, that they had no clue about diplomacy and things like that […] it was very poorly received by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs at the time, but this has changed completely. I experience that now from the 2000s and beyond, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has to a much greater extent seen regions and their international involvement as a resource" (Interview 7, Eastern Norway County Network). IP1 ties this to a broader international agenda by noting that "I think what has happened is that our foreign policy authorities now, and perhaps especially in connection with the work with the UN's sustainability goals, are trying to stimulate and engage the local level to actively engage in these international frameworks" (Interview 1, formerly MFA). There seems to be a strong national interest in ensuring that all levels engage in this agenda which the state actively promotes. While there seems to be trend of increasing recognition of local, international involvement, an increasing interest in creating synergies between the levels where their interests align, this has yet to be systematized efficiently. However, there seems to be different understandings of how and when this is possible. As the city's international role remains largely undefined and changing, the status of the relationship

between city and state on international matters also remains largely inconclusive. While there seems to be an ongoing process of negotiating these roles, this is perhaps not being done very actively, and one may instead have to wait for a naturally developing manifestation of this relationship in the future.

Although the city has extensive international engagement and relations as discussed throughout this chapter, it remains unclear how this activity impacts its relationship with the state. The relationship may primarily be viewed from a positive-sum perspective, wherein the city's international engagement holds complimentary potential. There is permanent dialogue taking place between the levels, particularly related to European engagement, and there seems to be an interest in coordinating where interests align. Whereas Oslo's is expanding its international role and shows capacity and agency to conduct its own external affairs, it does not seem to seek, nor be capable of, interfering with the Norwegian state. From the above discussion, one sees that Oslo has begun venturing in issue-areas previously reserved for the state, while remaining wary of overstepping.

It is also interesting to note that engagement in more controversial foreign policy topics does not seem to cause any significant tension with the state, and that they are largely treated as non-issues. By not entertaining the city's objectives in this area, one could perhaps also see this as a way of delegitimizing Oslo's authority on more thorny foreign policy topics, wherein the city's agency is deemed symbolic. At the same time, Oslo also seems to recognize the symbolic nature of these kinds of engagements. Through this, the city's international engagement is largely not perceived as challenging the supremacy of the state on foreign policy matters, although it claims a voice.

However, as some of the interview participants noted, there is room for improvement in making active use of the city's competency, and for the city to be recognized as an impactful actor. Whereas some of Oslo's official documents address the national level on international matters, it is largely done to seek support for a position the city has, or to encourage further cooperation on matters where both levels' objectives align. However, the documents are relatively silent on the matter of Oslo seemingly taking on a larger international role, and they do not seem to engage with defining or clarifying the different levels' role in this changing relationship.

# 6. Conclusion

By exploring the motivations behind Oslo's international engagement, and how the city and state relate to one another on international matters, this thesis has sought to provide an insight into the international agency of Oslo. The research question, 'Why does Oslo engage internationally, and how can Oslo's international agency be understood in relation to the Norwegian state?' was addressed through the analysis of documents and interviews with key informants. By engaging with the literary framework of chapter 2, one could also identify tendencies of Oslo both aligning with and deviating from the broader trends of cities participation in international processes.

As evident from chapter 5, there are several drivers behind Oslo's international engagement, wherein one could identify both pragmatic and idealistic motives. Pragmatic self-interest and influencing supranational decision-making seem to be leading motives for the city seeking to engage with other international actors, often through networks. Additionally, one sees Oslo engaging with international agendas and norms, perhaps most prominently the UN SDGs, as well as showing solidarity with actors in other parts of the world. In strengthening its own international agency, Oslo shows regard for its position in the global hierarchy and seems to actively build its own 'brand'. Interestingly, Oslo's international engagement seems less driven by dissatisfaction with state policies than more reactionary accounts from other cities discussed earlier. Instead, Oslo seems to engage internationally to further its own interests and objectives, which may or may not align with those of the state.

Several dimensions of the city's relationship with the state on international matters were uncovered to answer the second part of the research question. Overall, Oslo's international engagement does not seem to negatively impact its relationship with the state. Where city and state interests overlap, Oslo's international engagement was deemed complimentary to that of the state. On more controversial foreign policy topics where Oslo's position does not align with the state, this was perceived as largely symbolic, or perhaps insignificant to the state. The interview participants further highlighted the mutual dialogue taking place between the two governance levels as particularly positive. Whereas some sought greater recognition by the state of the potential that lies in engaging the city more in international matters, others emphasized the good collaborative environment. While Oslo seems comfortable with taking stances that differ from the national, it simultaneously seems to take certain precaution not to overstep. In this way, Oslo's international engagement was

not perceived in a confrontational, nor particularly competitive, manner, and the tension between city and state found in other countries, ex. the US, seems rather far removed from a Norwegian context.

Oslo has clear motives for its international engagement and well-defined objectives, and its international agency seems not to create an adversarial national environment. However, neither the city nor the state seems to actively engage in formalizing the roles each level plays in a changing governance environment. Whereas there is dialogue and a degree of coordination between the levels in some areas, the city's sphere of international authority remains ambiguous. This largely echoes the global status of cities, wherein they increasingly engage in governance processes without having a legally defined space for action. The degree of autonomy cities enjoy in their foreign endeavours naturally depends on the national context they inhabit, which makes it important to explore the international agency of differently situated cities. This case study of Oslo offers one such contribution.

The research on cities' international engagement remains far from saturated, and in addition to diversifying the field through including a wider range of different types of cities, there is a lot to gain from looking more closely at various dimensions of city agency in an international context. An example of a dimension that could be further explored in the case of Oslo, is the symbolic nature of some of the city's international activities. Recognized as symbolic by the city itself, and somewhat dismissed as symbolic by the state, it would be interesting to look further into why the city still chooses to engage internationally on such topics. While I did not uncover that citizen activism was a significant driver for Oslo's international engagement, one may consider whether engagement of more symbolic nature is a way for city governments to pander to their constituencies, or whether the city sees potential for substantive impact in the longer run. Regardless of this specific example, further research on the nature of cities' international engagement is warranted considering the increasing participation of cities on the global scene, and their potential to positively contribute to counteracting increasingly pressing global issues.

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# 8. Appendix

## 8.1. List of Interview Participants

| | Participant | Date of Interview |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | MFA (formerly) | 01.12.20 |
| 2 | Oslo Municipality | 02.12.20 |
| 3 | Oslo Municipality | 04.02.21 |
| 4 | Oslo Region Alliance | 08.02.21 |
| 5 | Oslo Region European Office | 10.02.21 |
| 6 | MFA (in writing) | 05.03.21 |
| 7 | Eastern Norway County Network | 18.03.21 |
| 8 | Ministry of Local Government and Modernisation (KMD) | 08.04.21 |
| 9 | Norwegian Association of Local and Regional Authorities (KS) | 19.04.21 |
| 10 | MFA | 26.04.21 |

## 8.2. List of Documents for Analysis

| | By: | Title: |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Oslo City Government, 2009 | Strategi for Oslo kommunes internasjonale arbeid |
| 2 | Oslo City Government, 2018 | Strategi for arbeidet med Oslo Europeisk Miljøhovedstad |
| 3 | Oslo City Government, 2019a | Oslo kommunes oppfølging av FNs bærekraftsmål |
| 4 | Oslo City Government, 2019b | Plattform for byrådssamarbeid mellom Arbeiderpartiet, Miljøpartiet De Grønne og Sosialistisk Venstreparti i Oslo 2019-2023 |
| 5 | Oslo City Government, 2019c | Vår by, vår framtid: Kommuneplan for Oslo 2018 |
| 6 | Oslo City Government, 2020a | Byrådets forslag til budsjett 2021 og økonomiplan 2021–2024 |
| 7 | Oslo City Government, 2020b | Klimastrategi for Oslo mot 2030 |
| 9 | MFA, 2016 | Fylkeskommunenes europeiske arbeid |
| 10 | Oslo Region Alliance, Oslo Business Region & Visit Oslo, 2015 | Internasjonal profileringsstrategi for Osloregionen |

### 8.3. Information and Consent Form

# Vil du delta i forskningsprosjektet

## "Oslo in the International" ?

(NB! foreløpig tittel som skal endres)

Dette er en forespørsel til deg om å delta i et forskningsintervju som skal gjennomføres i videoverktøyet Zoom i forbindelse med min masteroppgave i internasjonale relasjoner ved NMBU. Formålet er å undersøke internasjonaliseringen av Oslo by og byens internasjonale handlingsrom. I dette skrivet gir vi deg informasjon om målene for prosjektet og hva deltakelse vil innebære for deg. Det følger også med praktisk informasjon om gjennomføring av intervjuet.

Du må ha lest denne informasjonen før du samtykker til å delta i intervjuet og før du samtykker til et eventuelt opptak av intervjuet.

**Formål**

Dette prosjektet er en masteroppgave som inngår i masterstudiet 'internasjonale relasjoner' ved Norges miljø- og biovitenskapelige universitet (NMBU).

Det er et stadig økende fokus på byers rolle i internasjonale prosesser, og i lys av dette vil denne oppgaven ta for seg Oslos internasjonale rolle. Oppgaven vil fokusere på hvordan og hvorfor Oslo engasjerer seg internasjonalt, og hva byens internasjonale ambisjoner er. I tillegg til dette vil jeg undersøke byens internasjonale handlingsrom, og hvordan dette er knyttet til Norges utenrikspolitikk. Sentrale problemstillinger som vil bli diskutert er:

- 'Hvem' Oslo er som en internasjonal aktør, og hvordan ulike aktører er involvert i byens internasjonale beslutningsprosesser
- Hvordan Oslo beskriver sitt eget potensiale og motivasjon for å påvirke internasjonale styringsprosesser
- Hvordan Oslo identifiserer de tematiske områdene for sitt internasjonale engasjement, og hvordan engasjement på ulike fronter forholder seg til Norges offisielle utenrikspolitikk

Disse spørsmålene vil undersøke hvordan (representanter for) Oslo formulerer behovet for, og handlingsrommet i, sin internasjonale strategi; hvordan ulike aktører samarbeider på de tematiske områdene byen engasjerer seg i internasjonalt; samt hvordan dette posisjonerer byen i forhold til den nasjonale regjeringen og andre internasjonale aktører.

**Hvem er ansvarlig for forskningsprosjektet?**

Norges miljø- og biovitenskapelige universitet (NMBU) er ansvarlig for prosjektet. Prosjektet utføres av masterstudent Hege Guttormsen, under veiledning av Ingrid L. P. Nyborg (NMBU) og ekstern veileder Marianne Millstein (Oslo Met).

**Hvorfor får du spørsmål om å delta?**
Utvalget som får denne henvendelsen består av en variert gruppe individer som på ulike måter er involvert i Oslos internasjonale prosesser, og du tilhører en av følgende relevante kategorier. Den største kategorien består av personer tilknyttet Oslo kommune. Også personer tilknyttet nettverk eller organisasjoner som er involvert i internasjonaliseringen av Oslo kan få denne henvendelsen. I tillegg inkluderes personer tilknyttet Utenriksdepartementet for et nasjonalt perspektiv på byers internasjonale engasjement.

**Hva innebærer det for deg å delta?**
Hvis du velger å delta i prosjektet, innebærer det at du vil bli intervjuet om tematikken beskrevet ovenfor. Lengden på intervjuet vil avtales i samråd med hver enkelt deltaker. Under intervjuet kan deltakeren når som helst og uten forklaring velge å ikke svare på spørsmål.

Intervjuet vil foregå via Zoom, og det vil bli tatt lydopptak og notater fra intervjuet. Det vil bli gjort opptak av lyd og bilde i Zoom, men kun lyd vil bli lagret. Som en 'backup'/sikkerhetskopi vil det i tillegg bli gjort lydopptak med diktafon som ligger ved siden av datamaskinen under Zoom-intervjuet. Lydopptakene slettes etter transkripsjon.

**Det er frivillig å delta**
Det er frivillig å delta i prosjektet. Hvis du velger å delta, kan du når som helst trekke samtykket tilbake uten å oppgi noen grunn. Alle dine personopplysninger vil da bli slettet. Det vil ikke ha noen negative konsekvenser for deg hvis du ikke vil delta eller senere velger å trekke deg.

**Ditt personvern – hvordan vi oppbevarer og bruker dine opplysninger**
Vi vil bare bruke opplysningene om deg til formålene vi har fortalt om i dette skrivet. Vi behandler opplysningene konfidensielt og i samsvar med personvernregelverket.

- Det er kun jeg (Hege Louise Guttormsen, masterstudent) og veiledere (Marianne Millstein (Oslo Met) og Ingrid L. P. Nyborg (NMBU)) som vil ha tilgang på opplysninger om deg.
- For å sikre at ingen uvedkommende får tilgang til personopplysningene dine, vil jeg erstatte ditt navn og kontaktopplysninger med en kode som lagres på egen navneliste adskilt fra øvrige data.
- I hovedsak vil dine personopplysninger ikke bli publisert, og som deltaker skal du ikke kunne gjenkjennes i publikasjonen. Dersom du samtykker til dette, er det derimot ønskelig å inkludere din arbeidsplass for å kunne redegjøre for hvor ulike perspektiver komme fra.

**Hva skjer med opplysningene dine når vi avslutter forskningsprosjektet?**
Opplysningene anonymiseres når prosjektet avsluttes/oppgaven er godkjent, noe som etter planen er sommeren 2021. Personopplysninger og opptak slettes så i sin helhet.

**Dine rettigheter**
Så lenge du kan identifiseres i datamaterialet, har du rett til:
- innsyn i hvilke personopplysninger som er registrert om deg, og å få utlevert en kopi av opplysningene,
- å få rettet personopplysninger om deg,

- å få slettet personopplysninger om deg, og
- å sende klage til Datatilsynet om behandlingen av dine personopplysninger.

**Hva gir oss rett til å behandle personopplysninger om deg?**
Vi behandler opplysninger om deg basert på ditt samtykke.

På oppdrag fra Norges miljø- og biovitenskapelige universitet (NMBU) har NSD – Norsk senter for forskningsdata AS vurdert at behandlingen av personopplysninger i dette prosjektet er i samsvar med personvernregelverket.

**Hvor kan jeg finne ut mer?**
Hvis du har spørsmål til studien, eller ønsker å benytte deg av dine rettigheter, ta kontakt med:

- Norges miljø- og biovitenskapelige universitet (NMBU) ved:
  - Veileder:
    - Ingrid L.P. Nyborg
    - E-post: ingrid.nyborg@nmbu.no
  - Kontaktperson i forskningsavdeling:
    - Jan Olav Aarflot
    - E-post: jan.olav.aarflot@nmbu.no
  - Vårt personvernombud:
    - Hanne Pernille Gulbrandsen
    - Mobil: 402 81 558
    - E-post: personvernombud@nmbu.no
  - Student:
    - Hege Louise Guttormsen
    - E-post: hege.louise.guttormsen@nmbu.no
- OsloMet ved:
  - Ekstern veileder:
    - Marianne Millstein
    - E-post: marianne.millstein@oslomet.no

Hvis du har spørsmål knyttet til NSD sin vurdering av prosjektet, kan du ta kontakt med:

- NSD – Norsk senter for forskningsdata AS på epost (personverntjenester@nsd.no) eller på telefon: 55 58 21 17.

Med vennlig hilsen

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Ingrid L. P. Nyborg | Marianne Millstein | Hege Louise Guttormsen |
| (intern veileder) | (ekstern veileder) | (student) |

---

# Samtykkeerklæring

Jeg har mottatt og forstått informasjon om prosjektet *«Oslo in the International»*, og har fått anledning til å stille spørsmål. Deltakelse i prosjektet er ønsket også dersom man kun samtykker til punkt nummer en og ikke til punkt nummer to. Jeg samtykker til:

- ☐ å delta i intervju via Zoom, som blir tatt opp som beskrevet ovenfor.

- ☐ at nedenfor spesifiserte opplysning om meg publiseres:
    - Opplysningen det gjelder er kun arbeidssted, ikke stilling/verv eller lignende. Dette forespørres kun for å kunne gi leseren en forståelse av hvor ulike perspektiver kommer fra.

Jeg samtykker til at mine opplysninger behandles frem til prosjektet er avsluttet

---

(Signert av prosjektdeltaker, dato)

### 8.4. Interview Guide

As mentioned in chapter 3, the interview guides were customized to each interview participant based on how they relate to the topic. The main guide included below consists of bullet points covering the core themes I wished to explore, from which the questions were organically formed during the interview and depending on the expertise of the interview participants.

General

- Introduction of my project, asking the interview participant to introduce what they work with

Oslo's international Approach

- Drivers of international engagement
    - Tools/instruments used for international engagement
        - Why city networks – national and international
            - Small city considerations?
    - Involvement of different Norwegian actors – state, non-state actors, regional organizations
    - Status and recognition, awards, international positioning and profiling, attractiveness
    - Oslo's competitive advantages
    - Space for international action, national guidelines on involvement?
    - Impact locally and internationally
        - Influencing global processes?
    - Citizen involvement
- Significance of political composition of City Council and City Government
    - Thematic areas of involvement (climate, security)
    - Limitations for thematic areas of involvement?
    - Personal engagement
- Advantages and disadvantages of international engagement, locally, nationally and/or internationally
- About international strategy, not updated since 2009, plans for a new one?
- Which areas of international involvement are perceived most and/or least impactful
- Motivations: political, economic, solidary?

City and state

- Dialogue
- Usage of terms: foreign policy and city diplomacy
- Level of autonomy, furthering own agenda or coordinated with state
- Impact on Norwegian foreign policy?
- Oslo's international activities and Norway's relationship with other countries
- How the state perceives Oslo's international engagement
    - Competition or synergies between governance levels
    - How diverging international objectives are handled
    - On different thematic areas (ex. climate, security, migration)
- Recognition of city's international potential by state
- Presence in Brussels
- Roles and authority of city and state


**Norges miljø- og biovitenskapelige universitet**
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