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How Oslo Engages the World Globally:

A study of Oslo's involvement in
transnational city networks on climate
and environment

Tuva Kristin Jansen

MSc International Relations

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© Tuva Kristin Jansen, February 2021 jansentuva@gmail.com
Noragric Department of International Environment and Development Studies P.O. Box 5003
N-1432 Ås Norway

Tel.: +47 64 96 52 00 Fax: +47 64 96 52 01 Internet: <http://www.nmbu.no/noragric>

Declaration

I, Tuva Kristin Jansen, 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..........Date.....10.02.2021.....

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Abstract

Cities are increasingly gaining interest as an object of study within the field of International Relations. While cities are not new, they have for long been overlooked within the field of international relations. However, cities are currently gaining prominence as international actors. Whether it is issues related to economic growth, migration or climate change, cities are gradually cooperating with each other through multilateral platforms.

This thesis is concerned with providing a comprehensive understanding of Oslo's role in contemporary transnational city networks. As part of transnational city networks such as Eurocities and Local Governments for Sustainability (ICLEI), Oslo has gained international recognition on its work concerning climate change and green innovation. By incorporating the concept city diplomacy to encapsulate the activities of cities on the international arena, this thesis asks the following research question: How does Oslo do diplomacy? Six Norwegian experts currently working on a municipal, ministerial, and academic level are interviewed in order to examine Oslo's network participation. The findings of this study argue that Oslo's international involvement in city networks root in specific purposes, which in turn reflects how Oslo engages in different city networks. As such, Oslo utilizes different networks for different purposes, whereof experience and knowledge-sharing concerning green policies play an important role. Moreover, suggestion are made that Oslo utilizes international cooperation for gaining increased legitimacy domestically.

Keywords: *city networks; city diplomacy, municipalities, climate; environment*

Acronyms and Abbreviations

C40	C40 Cities Climate Leadership Group
CCS	Carbon Capture Storage
CNCA	Carbon Neutral Cities Alliance
ICLEI	Local Governments for Sustainability
LO	Norwegian Confederation of Trade Unions
MFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
NHO	Confederation of Norwegian Enterprise
NOK	Norwegian Krone
PPP	Purchasing Power Parity
SSB	Statistics Norway
UN	United Nation

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1. Introduction

Cities have become increasingly important in generating initiatives towards environmental sustainability (Bouteligier, 2013). Cities today house more than half the world's population and have increasingly been taking leadership in solving global challenges (Acuto, Morissette & Tsouros, 2017). One example of such global challenges is climate change, (Acuto, 2010), and one such example of a city generating initiatives towards environmental sustainability is Oslo. As part of transnational city networks such as Eurocities and Local Governments for Sustainability (ICLEI), Oslo has gained international recognition on its work concerning climate change and green innovation (Green Capital 2019, n.d.). Moreover, Oslo enjoys the status as an Innovator City in the global city network C40 Cities Climate Leadership Group (C40). In order to become an Innovator City in C40, cities must have shown an ability to conduct barrier-breaking climate work, as well as show leadership in terms of environmental sustainability (C40, 2012)¹.

This puts Oslo in the midst of a global trend in which cities increasingly have become global actors. Whether it is issues related to economic growth, migration or climate change, cities are gradually cooperating with each other through multilateral platforms (Acuto et al., 2018). These multilateral platforms represent the institutionalization of city-to-city cooperation, namely city networks. Through practical forms of inter-municipal cooperation, city networks have attained an increasing presence on the international stage (Acuto, Morissette & Tsouros, 2017, p. 14). Emerging issues such as climate change, migration and human rights have in turn spurred these city networks to actively respond to many of the same challenges as states and supranational institutions (Acuto, 2010, p. 435). Today, a very essential part of city networking activities can be justly described as city diplomacy (Acuto & Rayner, 2016, p. 1148).

These contemporary global cities, as well as city networks, challenge the traditional state-centric framework of mainstream International Relations² (IR), thereby also the Westphalian system of sovereignty (Acuto, 2010, p. 429). Nevertheless, IR is equipped with a set of theoretical frameworks that can contribute to the mapping of wider implications that follow when introducing global cities (Curtis, 2008, p. 211).

¹ For cities with a population under three million.

² International Relations (IR) is in this thesis referred to as an academic discipline, whilst international relations ascribe to the global web of relations between political actors.

This thesis is concerned with providing a comprehensive understanding of Oslo's role in contemporary transnational city networks. With this aim, the empirical phenomenon of interest in this thesis is the study of the local city government of Oslo, and how it in various ways takes part in the conduct of international relations through transnational city networks. Drawing on concepts such as sovereignty, power and autonomy, this thesis highlights central issues defining IR in the 21st century. What enhances the relevance of this study is not only the increasing prominence of city diplomacy in IR, but also the unexplored role of Oslo's participation in city networks. This is identified as a gap in literature. Although there has been undertaken comprehensive studies of contemporary cities and their networking activities, Oslo is, to my knowledge, still awaiting its inclusion.

In this thesis, I analyze how experts on a municipal, ministerial, and academic level understands and experiences Oslo's involvement in transnational city networks on the thematic area climate and environment. By incorporating the concept city diplomacy to encapsulate the activities of cities on the international arena, this thesis asks the following research question: *How does Oslo do diplomacy?*

To answer this research question, this thesis draws upon six Norwegian experts' experiences and understandings concerning Oslo's participation in transnational city networks. The scope of this thesis is set to focus on Oslo's work on climate and environment through transnational city networks. The experts interviewed in this research contribute with special expertise from a municipal, ministerial, and academic level. The purpose of this thesis is to provide a contribution to the increasing body of literature on cities and transnational networks in International Relations by highlighting in-depth perspectives.

1.1. Structure of thesis

Following this introductory chapter, **chapter two** outlines the theoretical framework of this thesis. This chapter addresses the role of cities as global actors. I devote a central part of this chapter to examine the mechanisms that have empowered cities during the last few decades, thus contextualizing the city's role as an international actor on the international arena. **In chapter three**, I discuss the research strategy employed for this thesis. The chapter addresses the case study and the use of semi-structured interviews. **In chapter four**, I defend and contextualize the research question guiding this thesis by highlighting Oslo's broad

involvement in transnational city networks, and the strategies that guide Oslo's international cooperation. **Chapter five** is devoted to present and analyze the findings that derive from the interviews conducted with Norwegian experts concerning Oslo's involvement in transnational city networks. As such, this chapter combines analysis and discussion. The final chapter, **chapter six**, will conclude this thesis by highlighting the discussion included in the previous chapter.

2. The city as a global actor

In this thesis, I seek to explore how Oslo does diplomacy. This is investigated by emphasizing Norwegian practitioners' understandings and experiences concerning Oslo and its participation in transnational city networks. The purpose of this chapter is to present and situate the city within the broader debate of actors in international relations. As such, this literature review seeks to serve as a basis for how Oslo and its participation in transnational city networks can be approached as a case of examination.

The structure of this chapter will follow a chronological development of cities with. This chapter is initiated with the advent of global cities. Here, Sassen (1991) and her seminal book *Global Cities* is an important contribution. The structure is set to follow the theoretical development of global cities, moving from a node of flows in the global economy to a global actor, acquiring political capabilities. This is an important development in light of this thesis' study, as it enables the city to be regarded an actor on the international arena. The work of Curtis (2016) will be particularly relevant when discussing this development. Turning over to city diplomacy as a concept for encapsulating the international activities of cities, van der Pluijm and Melissen (2007) will be particularly emphasized.

2.1. Turning the focus to cities

Simon Curtis wrote in his Doctoral Dissertation in 2008 that twenty-three cities were estimated to house more than ten million people in 2020 (p. 10). In 2018, the United Nations (UN) reported that thirty-three cities were currently housing ten million people (United Nations, 2018, p. 2). The twentieth century represented an exceptional urbanisation, where large numbers of people left rural areas and moved to cities (Curtis, 2008, p. 10).

Cities in general, and more particularly the growing literature on global cities, has until recent decades attracted little attention from IR scholars. Instead, IR has for long concentrated its perspective on a world where cities are viewed as a part of national urban systems, and where

the states are the only legitimate players on the international stage (Curtis, 2008, p. 16). I now turn to theoretical contributions and analytical foundations that highlight the increasing political, social and economic activities of cities. The body of literature that focuses on the global city in international relations draws upon urban studies.

2.2. Introducing Global Cities

The purpose of this thesis is to explore Oslo's involvement in transnational city networks. This involves studying the city (Oslo) as an actor *in*, and not just a place *of*, city networking. Therefore, this theoretical framework will emphasize the capabilities and functions of cities that make it possible for cities to be actors in/through city networks. In order to do this, I initiate this chapter by drawing on important theoretical contributions that transpired during the 1980s and onwards. This is because examining the mechanisms that have empowered cities during the last few decades can make us understand the significance of these new capabilities and function for global politics (Curtis, 2014, p. 2).

Cities worldwide experienced an increased role in the global economy, following its restructuring during the 1970s. The fall of the post-war "Bretton Woods" system led to the growing roots of a broad neoliberal system. This in turn generated a new economic environment, spurring larger private firms to operate from central business districts such as in New York, London or Hong Kong (Curtis & Acuto, 2018, pp. 9-10). As a response to these structural changes that took place in the 1970s, the literature on global cities emerged (Curtis, 2008, p. 9).

It was John Friedman who first linked urban change to the emergence of the global economy. In his book on the *World City Hypothesis*, Friedman attempts to organize the study of world cities by investigating how cities can be hierarchically arranged according to their position in the spatialisation of the global economy (Kangas, 2017, p. 539). What this means, is that those cities that were deemed operational as nodes of global capital would receive a higher ranking in Friedman's dynamic hierarchy. In this sense, Friedman's theory situated a very competitive milieu. While Friedman's theory was criticised for prompting a competitive anxiety amongst cities (Kangas, 2017, p. 539), he nonetheless contributed to bring the international into the analysis of world cities in urban studies (Curtis, 2016b, pp. 63-64).

This would lay the groundwork for the theorization of "global cities". Saskia Sassen made the term famous in her seminal book *Global Cities* from 1991. Some scholars argue that global cities have always been a feature of the international system (Curtis, 2016a, p. 456). However,

the point of Sassen's terming was to name a difference. This difference is by Sassen construed as "the specificity of the global as it gets structured in the contemporary period" (Sassen, 2005, p. 28). In other words, the term denotes the restructuring of the global economy and the changes it brought upon the urban fabric. As such, it distinguished itself from the term "world city" that was employed by Friedman, which referred to a city that had been existent for centuries. Sassen (1991) argues that the neoliberal economic structure has played a vital role in creating a scattered and decentralized global economic system. A such system requires central command nodes that can systemize the increased capital flows, thus introducing global cities. Sassen's analysis is a way of making sense of the emergence of the city as an actor in global politics. But the focus in her argument was dominantly on the rise of the particular global city. This city was a node in the global political economy, serving the state within the globalizing economy. Brenner (1998) points out that the argument of Sassen (1991) presupposes the state as relatively statist, remaining an unchanged background structure. For Brenner, the formation of the global city is construed within a state rescaling and can be read as "dialectically intertwined moments of a single dynamic of global capitalist restructuring" (1998, p. 1). The point of Brenner's argument here, is the paradox where the state is partly involved in the territorial rescaling, while simultaneously restrained by it. As such, globalization and the globalizing economy that Sassen speaks of, is argued to reterritorialize the state scale as well. Global cities are thus not to be conceived as urban nodes within stagnant systems of state power and cities, according to Brenner (1998).

The contributions made by Sassen (1991) and Brenner (1998) yield useful theoretical insight as to how global cities came to be. Nevertheless, this thesis seeks to move beyond the global economy and explore the political role that cities have encountered in international relations. Thus, I turn to Curtis (2016a).

Curtis applauds the fields of Urban Studies and Political Geography for their extensive studies on the dynamics of urban transformation, in turn developing theoretical frameworks of the changes to the material form of cities. However, such literature is argued to be lacking central geo-political and geo-historical perspectives. By applying an IR perspective to global cities, the lack of political analysis can be revealed. Curtis argues that only then one can "fully understand the implications of global cities for global politics" (Curtis, 2016a, p. 467). Curtis points to three historic developments that have caused a transformational shift in the international political order. This shift has contributed to significant change, moving from a global order rooted in a society of states, to a diffuse global order where non-state actors operate

at different scales. It is in this global order that global cities become key nodal points in global city networks and acquire capabilities as actors within the politics of global governance (2016a, p. 467). In order to substantiate his point of argument, Curtis illuminates three specific examples for the transformation of urban form and international order: the rise of the US as a hegemon; technological change; and the crises of statism. The American victory in the Cold War spurred an extension of the liberal order, which Curtis argues as vital in providing the conditions for global cities to emerge as actors. Additionally, technological developments during the latter 20th century have provided global cities with characteristics that jump scales, linking fragments of the global space in new ways. Lastly, the emergence of global cities may be seen as a response to the substantially centralized control over economic and political activities by states during the past two centuries (pp. 468-472).

Another central notion emerging in literature to explain the increasing capabilities of cities is the recognition of how states and the inter-state system has struggled to deal with transnational challenges. This has led to the saying “while nations talk, cities act”, iterated by several federal state mayors (Curtis & Acuto, 2018, p. 12). The current inter-state system, Chan states, is facing challenges in combatting today’s global issues (Chan, 2016, p. 134). These issues range from climate change, migration, pollution, economic well-being to safety (Acuto et al., 2018, p. 2). State-to-state dialogues thereby often fall into what Chan terms as “gridlocks”, meaning that little outcome is yielded from global cooperation between states. Without the sovereign obligations that states face, cities have the ability to focus on own specific projects. By setting aside socio-political constraints, municipal offices can together create effective means towards solving common problems (Chan, 2016, p. 141). What we can draw from this then, is that when cities embark on solving problems in urban areas through international cooperation, they engage in global politics in a path separate from the sovereign state.

Ylönen (2016, p. 3) argues that a pool of comparative research has emerged in the attempt of building upon Sassen’s terming of the concept. For instance, Calder and de Freytas introduce the “global political city” (2009, p. 80). According to Calder and de Freytas (2009), global political cities can be illustrated through three key elements: 1) Being a policy hub, which involves exercising disparate influence on debates of global policy, 2) encompassing a political diplomatic community, where official and non-official actors shape global affairs through dense networks, and 3) being a strategic information complex, encompassing important information concerning political, military as security affairs (Calder & de Freytas, 2009, p. 81). However, their concept has received criticism for doing little to theorize the city’s agency.

Acuto points to limitations in Calder and de Freytas' (2009) term. Rather than illustrating the exertion of political influence, he argues that the scholars describe the global city as a milieu where political influence is compiled (Acuto, 2009, p. 175).

Curtis formulates that "one of the key tensions that remains in this formulation is the question of whether global cities refer to a particular class or set of cities, or whether globalising processes effect all cities in similar ways: whether, in effect, all cities are globalising cities" (Curtis, 2011, p. 1932). Curtis here points to Taylor (2007) in order to reflect upon this ontological issue. Taylor (2007) recognizes that during the process of globalization, all cities and urban regions respond to similar pressures. A central belief that is entrenched in Taylor's work is that cities should not simply be recognized as bounded places. As they are comprised by various ongoing flows, these flows being driven by globalization, they should also be viewed as ongoing places.

Drawing inspiration from Taylor (2007) and Curtis (2011), I find that the term *globalizing* reflects a general characteristic of contemporary urban centres, in line with Bouteligier (2013, p. 149). As such, I approach cities in this thesis as globalizing cities. By conceptualizing Oslo as a globalizing city in this thesis, I approach globalization idiosyncratically. This means that I pay attention to other globalization processes than the economic dimension, such as social and political. I also then acknowledge that cities may experience a different intensity of globalization.

As such, this framework has so far illustrated how Sassen's (1991) framing of the global city has been crucial for the further literary expansion of the city as an actor independently of the state. However, as noted, this thesis seeks to move beyond the economic dimensions. Calder and de Freytas point out that while "the comparative assessment of the social and economic dimension of global cities" conducted by Sassen (1991) as well as her followers have provided crucial contributions, the systematic analysis of global cities' political functions have remained underdeveloped (Calder & de Freytas, 2009, p. 80).

2.3. City diplomacy as a concept for encapsulating the international activity of cities

The literary contributions that have been included so far in this chapter have emphasized how a restructuring of the global economic system due to contemporary globalization has led to cities acquiring new social, economic and political capacities. The concept of city diplomacy has been developed as a way of understanding and referring to the increased activity by cities on the international arena and will also serve as the analytical concept for this thesis' study. In

this sub-chapter, city networks are included as a part of the city diplomacy framework. Towards the end of the sub-chapter, limitations to city diplomacy and city networks will be illuminated.

The rise of city diplomacy is not merely about sub-state politics alone. Rather, it is an indication of a structural shift in the fundamentals of the international city, powered by those factors that in sub-chapter 2.2. have been identified as drivers for the formation of the global city (Curtis & Acuto, 2018). The term “city diplomacy” has been applied to different forms for international action conducted by local city governments. For instance, Musch, van der Valk, Sizoo and Tajbakhsh term city diplomacy as “the involvement of local governments in peacebuilding” (2008, p. 8). A different conceptualization is provided by Van der Pluijm and Melissen (2007). The two scholars conducted a pilot study during the latter 2006 with the aim of finding a theoretical basis for the diplomatic developments that were taking place at a city and local governmental level. On the basis of their pilot study, city diplomacy was conceptualized as “the institutions and processes by which cities engage in relations with actors on an international political stage with the aim of representing themselves and their interests to one another” (van der Pluijm & Melissen, 2007, p. 11). Through this definition, van der Pluijm and Melissen (2007) allow for the inclusion of interests and representation, thus moving the focus beyond the focus of peacebuilding, as termed by Musch et al. (2008). Therefore, this thesis will follow the definition provided by van der Pluijm & Melissen (2007). Van der Pluijm and Melissen’s (2007) study is largely based on interviews with actors involved in what they define as city diplomacy. The study presents the experiences and understandings of actors with either direct relations to, or great knowledge of Dutch municipalities and their international involvement. As this thesis’ study seeks to explain how Oslo does diplomacy through transnational city networks by highlighting experts’ experiences and understandings, van der Pluijm and Melissen’s (2007) study serves as a valuable contribution for this thesis in terms of methodology.

The definition presented by Van der Pluijm and Melissen (2007) regards city diplomacy as a decentralized form of the management of international relations, where cities are key actors. For the purpose of this thesis, I follow cities as sub-national governments. This will reflect the study of Oslo, where I recognize Oslo as a globalizing city, governed by a sub-national government. On behalf of their city, the local government engages in international relations through city networks.

Van der Pluijm and Melissen (2007) emphasize that cities can engage on the international stage in two different ways: through two-sided city diplomacy, or multiple-sided city diplomacy. Two-sided diplomatic processes involve two parties, where at least one is a city representative, while multi-sided diplomacy however involves three or more parties, representing various cities. Larger city networks such as Eurocities and C40 often represent one such party in multi-sided diplomatic processes (2007, p. 12). As such, the relational aspect is central to city diplomacy. The scholars illuminate six different dimensions of city diplomacy. These dimensions represent a) culture, b) development, c) economy, d) representation, e) networks, and f) security. The scholars do however urge that these dimensions are not exclusive, and that a city's diplomacy in practice will not be confined within solely one dimension.

Today, a very essential part of city networking activities can be justly described as city diplomacy (Acuto & Rayner, 2016, p. 1148). This thesis seeks to highlight the "actor" dimension of the city by examining Oslo's involvement in transnational city networks. This is done by highlighting Oslo as an actor *in*, and not just a place *of*, city networking, as I mentioned in sub-chapter 2.2. Thus, city networks are an important aspect to study. This thesis will thus particularly emphasize the networking dimension of city diplomacy.

From existing literature on city networks, I identify that a key driver for the increasing influence of cities on the global stage is linked to urgent issues such as transnational terrorism, financial regulation and climate change. This is because the international community of states have been struggling to efficiently govern this complexity, as argued by Chan (2016) in sub-chapter 2.2. Martinez-Diaz and Woods (2009) illustrate such a link by arguing that city networks "mainly emerge as a reaction to (perceived) shortcomings of other governance structures" (as cited in Bouteligier, 2013a, p. 2). Similarly, Curtis and Acuto (2018, p. 10) argue that cities offer new possibilities for the 21st century. By coming together in transnational networks, cities have extended a political assemblage that can partake in the work against transnational issues. This notion made by Curtis and Acuto (2018) contributes to substantiate cities as actors in contemporary global affairs. In similar fashion, Acuto and Rayner state the following: "the extent and persistence over the past two decades of the development of city networks give a clear sign that cities are indeed participants in the architecture of world politics" (2016, p. 1147). Cities are present in world politics, taking on roles in form of lobbying, cooperating, and connecting. This is increasingly being done through city networks (Acuto & Rayner, 2016). Acuto argues that assemblages of cities can equally "become capable of exercising influence

on world affairs like many other international organizations more commonly investigated in IR” (2013, p. 838).

There are currently more than 200 active city networks, and approximately 50 per cent of them are international (Klaus, 2020, p. 2). A marked growth in city-to-city diplomatic initiatives is identified during the last two decades, where the number of active networks grew from 65 in 1985, to nearly the double within the 21st century. This number reached 200 by 2009 (Curtis & Acuto, 2018, p. 11). As such, city networks have experienced a rapid increase during the last two decades. What I draw from this, is that cities see a clear value of participating in city networks. This notion spurs the question of *why* cities recognize city networks as important. Thus, I turn to the functions of city networks.

A key function of city networks is their role as a platform for sharing information, aimed at strengthening local initiatives of member cities (Bouteligier, 2013; Acuto, Morissette & Tsouros, 2017). City networks also provide an arena where cities can share best practices (Gordon & Johnson, 2018, p. 35). Moreover, there is identified a shared understanding amongst scholars in interdisciplinary literature, recognizing city networks as a primary function for bringing cities and international actors together (Kern & Bulkeley, 2009; Curtis, 2016b; Curtis & Acuto, 2018). For instance, Curtis and Acuto (2018, p. 11) highlight how cities extend their impact on the global stage through global networks by creating direct links with transnational corporations, NGOs and also the UN system. The C40 network is particularly highlighted in this setting. In this way, cities increasingly extend their impact from economic to political governance (Curtis & Acuto, 2018).

Curtis and Acuto (2018) identify city networks as political assemblages where cities’ political objectives come to show. These political objectives are argued to represent the foreign policy of cities. However, the scholars underscore that cities’ foreign policies are distinguished from sovereign forms of power. Instead, the foreign policy of cities relies largely on what they define as network power (Curtis & Acuto, 2018, p. 8). This involves the ability to assemble and guide coalitions of actors towards particular governance outcomes.

Van der Pluijm and Melissen (2007) also bring up the notion of cities’ foreign policies. They present the foreign policy of cities and states in a common context, thus leading to a “vertical disintegration” (p. 13). This means that foreign policy is neither created nor executed on one single level. Central to van der Pluijm and Melissen’s argument then, is that even though the city acquires political capabilities and is internationally involved, it’s exertion of foreign policy

would still be regarded on a vertical level below the foreign policy of the state. In their study, they do however find that the municipality of Amsterdam amongst other cities, comply with the understanding that local international policy should be in line with international policies of embassies and ministries (2007, p. 13).

More recent developments within city diplomacy literature have been the increased recognition of mayoral characteristics, and their central role in city diplomacy. Kangas (2017) argues that to speak of cities as actors, thereby referring to their political pursuits and their strategic positioning internationally, is a figure of speech. This contributes to obscure those who govern in the name of the city. Klaus (2020) concurs with focusing on cities' mayors. He argues that the mayor is the greatest driver for city diplomacy, and thereby crucial for engaging in city networking.

It should be noted that city networks do not solely exist in form of transnational characters. For instance, the Key Cities group has gathered 26 municipalities, and work alongside other subnational groupings of British cities within national boundaries (Acuto & Rayner, 2016, p. 1151). In this thesis, the focus will lie on city networks that transcend national borders, as the purpose is to explore Oslo's international involvement in city networks. As such, I follow Gordon & Johnson's use of the term transnational city networks, highlighting them as networks "operating at the interstices of urban and global governance, building bridges across national borders between city governments and a variety of other actors, and aiming to engender coordinated actions that produce meaningful collective effects" (2018, p. 39). I employ this terminology as it enables me to focus on Oslo's involvement in city networks that are not confined within national borders.

Van der Pluijm and Melissen (2007) argue on the basis of their findings that cities are increasingly moving away from idealism and towards pragmatism, where local governments increasingly are reasoning from a practical and economic point of view. For instance, they find that cities are increasingly moving away from twinning-projects, and towards multi-sided diplomacy. Another interesting aspect they note within the diplomatic game is the practice of city branding. This, they explain, is seen as "the notion of applying business marketing models to cities and positioning cities as a brand that sparks various positive associations" (Parkerson & Saunders, 2005, p. 242-244, as cited in van der Pluijm & Melissen, 2007, p. 25). However, despite cities turning towards a pragmatic nature, the scholars emphasized that city diplomacy at this point was still in its infancy (van der Pluijm & Melissen, 2007, p. 34). There were

identified struggles as to establishing an effective way of cooperation between the city, state, and international organizations in areas where interests overlapped. Moreover, it was found that city diplomacy was still largely concentrated towards short term projects, which the scholars regard as a limitation.

Due to rapid urbanization, cities have become central components of urging climate issues, as they contribute with high levels of emissions (Gordon & Johnson, 2018). Bouteligier (2013, p. 2) argues that cities have become increasingly important in generating initiatives towards environmental sustainability through city networks. As such, cities do not remain solely a source for environmental degradation. I argue that Bouteligier through her argument highlights a self-awareness amongst cities, realizing own capabilities for global action. Curtis also highlights that cities do not need permission from states to take action on climate change or security (2016b, p. 170). As such, he concurs with Bouteligier, highlighting the agency of cities.

However, Sam Tabory (2017) would most likely concur to this notion, as he identifies a tendency for city diplomacy to overlook urban differences, also in terms of a city's own agency within the frames of the sovereign state. Tabory identifies three broad areas that remain under-discussed in city diplomacy literature. These areas are a) differences in mayoral attitudes concerning the city's role on the international arena, b) differences in political influence and resources, and c) differences in nationally established norms of governance and political principles (Tabory, 2017). Central to Tabory's critique is the notion of urban differences. Not all cities have access to the same resources, not all cities are represented by the same political clout, and not all cities are focusing their international engagement based on the same needs (2017, p. 15). Moreover, the discussions of such differences matter because the increased urban engagement and city diplomacy require local governments to make the conscious decision to mobilize resources for international engagement. For a city leader to mobilize such resources, he or she must recognize a value in such an engagement.

Acuto & Leffel (2017, p. 9) emphasize that a common mistake is to think of the phenomenon of city diplomacy as a force trying to undermine or replace the nation-state. Instead, they argue that city diplomacy is utilised to fill the gaps left by state failure. Examples are This is concurred by Klaus (2020). While city networks eagerly attempt to acquire a stronger position internationally, thereby being able to influence governing processes, he emphasizes that a fundamental aspect of city diplomacy can be summed up in one sentence: "it seeks to improve

and evolve the international system rather than to radically reshape it” (Klaus, 2020, p. 5). Turning more specifically to city networks, Bulkeley and Betsill (2003) argue that city networks have for long depended on motivations and self-pervasiveness of cities in order to generate active engagement. This means that city networks are vulnerable for political fluctuations as an example.

Curtis and Acuto (2018) distinguish between the power cities acquire through city networks with the form of power in the traditional model of the sovereign state. They emphasize that in practise, the city’s influence is shared with other actors and peers, and therefore never stabilized. However, in the view of Curtis and Acuto, this is not a bad thing. They point to Mikael Román and his notion of how cities now are governing “from the middle” (2018, p. 13). Central to Román’s (2010) term is that cities are not inherently bound by higher politics between states. Neither are they “bottom-up or NGO-like actors contra some often misleading accounts that equate cities to private entities” (as cited in Curtis & Acuto, 2018, p. 13). As such, cities are empowered by this position.

Moreover, “city networks for global environmental governance seem to perform well in terms of output, but less in terms of outcome and impact” (Bouteligier, 2013, p. 155). Bouteligier finds that while city networks, particularly on environmental governance, may produce substantial initiatives on environmental governance, they fall short in terms of results. Moreover, she emphasizes how some networks produce unequal power hierarchies as discrepancies between the Global North and Global South (Bouteligier, 2013, p. 128),

In this sub-chapter, I have provided an overview over contemporary debates concerning city networks, and discussed weaknesses identified within the framework of city diplomacy. In order to contextualize city networks further, I draw on two examples of networks that have become prominent on climate and environment. I include these two as they are relevant for the thematic area that is the focus of this thesis.

2.5.1. Examples of city networks

One of the most evident examples of the increasing prominence of cities in global policy agendas may be the Cities Climate Leadership Group, also referred to as C40 (Acuto & Rayner, 2016, p. 1147). C40 represents a thematic city network, which involves municipal action on one specific sector, in this case climate and environment (Grandi, 2020, p. 13). The C40 was created on initiative from current mayor at the time Ken Livingstone together with his deputy Nicky Gavron in 2005. Livingstone argued during a two-day World Cities Leadership and

Climate Summit for cities' practical action on the ground as a way to effectively deliver on urban-focused climate initiatives. During this summit, the original banner of "C20" cities was first commenced, focusing on urban governance through coordinated effort and exchanging expertise. The network would further develop to what we now know as C40 (Acuto, 2013, p. 840). Acuto identifies a two-folded rationale behind the creation of the network: the positioning of cities as central agents of climate politics as well as the role of the network to become a catalyst for innovative initiatives (2013, p. 840). Furthermore, he emphasizes that the global cities of C40 have a very influential positioning concerning environmental governance, if not global (p. 849). By being recognized as an active component of the collective effort in fighting climate change, the network offers a change for the involved cities to enhance their international legitimacy (p. 850). As such, Acuto understands the network as important not only as an arena the city is an actor *in*, but it also provides legitimacy to the city internationally.

However, C40 and its prominence as a global network on climate and environment has also led scholars to recognize limitations. Curtis (2016b) has directed criticism towards their upholding of what he identifies as a neoliberal discourse. Central to his argument is that C40's goals and activities "remain well within the discursive space of the neoliberal discourse; they frame their solutions in the language and philosophy of markets, offering technocratic agendas, partnering with private foundations and multinational corporations" (Curtis, 2016b, p. 118). In other words, Curtis regards the agendas of C40 as only relevant for an "elite of experts" on climate and environment. In this way, an unbalance is created where the policies may be relevant for some metropolises than others. Bulkeley et al. (2009) shares this critique. While the network promotes leading efforts for mitigating climate change amongst cities, the network also focuses on "on the development of specific 'clubs' of cities which can gain privileged access to information, funding and project implementation, in return for specific actions" (p. 26)

While C40 represents a thematic city network, as previously mentioned, there also exists multipurpose networks. One such network is Eurocities. A multipurpose network does not have a specific sector. Rather, it focuses on several sectors, often through different working groups (Grandi, 2020, p. 13). Eurocities was founded in 1989, and started out as a group of only six cities. These were referred to as second cities, which meant that they were second in the hierarchy of a country's cities after the capital (Niederhafner, 2013). Today, the network consists of 190 cities (Eurocities, n.d.), and has thus rapidly increased. The main policy goals of Eurocities is addressed through three major fields; climate, inclusion and economy. In terms of structure, Eurocities seeks to promote the international cooperation of cities by providing

forums and working groups. As such, the network offers cities a platform for knowledge-sharing and the exchange of ideas. Additionally, a goal is to “shape the opinions of Brussels stakeholders and ultimately shift the focus of EU legislation in a way which allows city governments to tackle strategic challenges at local level” (Niederhafner, 2013, p. 10).

As this thesis’ focus of study is how Oslo does diplomacy through city networks, this sub-chapter contributes to map the strengths of international city networks, as well as limitations. These aspects provide contextual significance for analyzing how Norwegian experts experience and understand Oslo’s role in city networks.

2.4. Renegotiating the relationship between states and cities in international relations

With the increasing impact cities are attaining on the global stage, alone as well through formalized city networks, the relationship between the state and city is problematized. The new role of cities has offered a renegotiation of this relationship, in turn spurring academic discussions. For the sum of this thesis, two central paths of discussions are highlighted in order to contextualize the relationship between the city (as a diplomatic actor on the global stage) and the state (as a traditional diplomatic party). By engaging in existing literature on the subject, the state/sub-state dichotomy can be mainly summarized to follow two different developments: a) a zero-sum outset of spatial scales that lead to the declining power of the territorial state, and b) a historical evolvment of transformative changes for both the territorial state and the sub-nation character.

Rooted within the first perspective we find scholars such as Sassen (1991) and Barber (2013). Sassen (1991) argues that the loss of state power creates opportunities for other types of power to emerge, namely sub-national power. In her opinion then, the city does not forcibly claim power. Instead, it replaces the state as the main power holder when given the opportunity. (mer her). Barber similarly identifies the failed state as a reason for cities’ increasing role. By introducing new democratic bodies in the form of municipal units, local participation is accelerated, filling the existent gap between citizens and the state. Thus, Barber encourages the renaissance of urban life, advocating for a “parliament of mayors” (kilde). Se Curtisa p. 456 Although acquiring the city as a new and needed actor, it is argued that the state will not stand by and watch the city “escape the gravitational pull of their sovereign mother ship” (Barber, 2013, p. 11). By this, Barber then implies that even though the nation-state and city may find

ways of collaboration with one another, the city will always be viewed as the subsidiaries of national sovereignty by the state.

Opposing the notion of the state and city in a zero-sum relationship, we find scholarly contributions by Sending and Neumann (2006), and Curtis (2016a). Sending and Neumann incorporate their argument as a critique towards studies of global governance. They emphasize that a typical claim in such studies is that “the state has lost power to nonstate actors and that political authority is increasingly institutionalized in spheres not controlled by states” (Sending & Neumann, 2006, p. 651). The scholars argue that global governance studies highlight the power of nonstate actors at the expense of the state’s power. In sum, this creates a “zero-sum conception of power where an increase in the power and influence of nonstate actors is ipso facto defined as a simultaneous reduction in state power” (Sending & Neumann, 2006, p. 652). In order to grasp the role of nonstate actors, Neumann and Sending call for an approach where specific relations between nonstate and state actors, as well as the processes of governance, are accounted for. By incorporating the Foucauldian concept of governmentality, the scholars offer a different perspective. Thus, by studying global governance through the lens of “governmentality”, this enables government rationalities to be studied in light of power as a changing logic or rationality of government.

Curtis contributes to this dichotomy by rooting the discussion in the context of __. As cities acquire new autonomy and abilities, these are not substituting, neither challenging the agency of states. Rather, both are supported as well as limited by state power (Curtis, 2016a, p. 466). In other words, the rise of cities does not necessarily entail the fall of the state. Rather, the transformation in which cities are becoming actively involved in international affairs must be regarded as the state adapting to a milieu where a bygone reiteration of the state is taking new form (Curtis, 2016a, p. 456). In this sense, the empowerment that cities increasingly experience forms as a result of state rescaling strategies. While Curtis (2016a) views the city and state as historically bound actors, he does however not exclude the possibility of serious tensions arising between cities and states. As cities increase their authority, power and legitimacy, the state as a traditional possessor of such qualities may find such alterations difficult to retrain (p. 457). Having reviewed these two conceptualisations of the state/non-state dichotomy, it provides a useful overview of how the discourse between state and non-state actors has evolved.

Cities are actively engaging in international relations, largely represented through city networks. This chapter has reviewed relevant literature on cities' increasing political involvement in international relations and outlined the theoretical perspectives underpinning this thesis.

3. Methodology

This chapter seeks to justify the methodological choices made in the study of Oslo's involvement in international city networks. The chapter will first outline and defend the choice of the qualitative case study approach. Following this, sampling methods, data collection and interview methods will be accounted for. Lastly, own reflections upon the chosen research approach are included, bringing about topics such as ethical considerations and limitations of the study.

3.1. The qualitative case study

This thesis aims to empirically examine the phenomenon of city participation in transnational city networks. This is done by highlighting and analyzing the experiences and understandings of Norwegian experts concerning Oslo's involvement in transnational city networks on climate and environment. I made the choice of interviewing experts as I believed they could offer unique insights and nuances concerning Oslo's involvement in transnational city networks. Therefore, this thesis applies a qualitative research method. The qualitative method is desirable when the research seeks to understand subjective experiences, meanings, opinions and perspectives linked to a phenomenon from a small group of individuals (Brockington & Sullivan, 2003).

This research question guiding this thesis, as first presented in Chapter 1, asks how Oslo does diplomacy. As such, this thesis focuses on answering a "how" question. This makes the case study an appropriate research method. As Yin (2018, pp. 43-44) argues, the case study is most suitable when asking "why" and "how" questions about events taking place in a contemporary context. In this study, the phenomenon studied is Oslo's involvement in transnational city networks. This phenomenon is studied in the context of Oslo. I chose to focus on Oslo and its involvement in transnational city networks because of its prominent work on climate and environment. This also led to the choice of focusing solely on this thematic area. This allowed me to go into depth on an issue that is very relevant in contemporary global politics, and that has spurred cities to actively engage on the global stage, amongst other reasons. Moreover, this research employs an interpretive approach. The reason I employ the interpretive approach is

connected to the aim of understanding Oslo's involvement in transnational city networks through the understandings and experiences of Norwegian experts. As such, interviews are employed as a method for collecting data.

In order to identify informants for this study, I mainly applied purposive sampling. Snowball sampling occurred as well as a result of one of the six interviews, where I was directly referred to another expert. Five of the six interviewees were sampled through purposive sampling, which involves "particular settings, persons, or activities are selected deliberately to provide information that is particularly relevant to your questions and goals, and that can't be gotten as well from other choices" (Maxwell, 2013, p. 97). This was useful for identifying informants in reference to the research question guiding this thesis. The experts interviewed were eager to assist in identifying other possible informants for this study. However, in both of the cases, the informants would refer me to an expert that I had already been in touch with or attempted to come in touch with.

3.2. Conducting the interviews

Qualitative interviews have the "purpose of obtaining descriptions of the life world of the interviewee in order to interpret the meaning of the described phenomena" (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015, p. 6). The experts I interviewed for this thesis' study are the main units of this analysis. This means that the answers provided by these experts are the primary data of study. I have interviewed five individuals who have special expertise connected to a municipal or ministerial level. Two of these five experts had affiliations in one way or another to both a municipal as well as a ministerial level. I assessed this to be a strength, as they could provide reflections from two perspectives. In addition to these five experts, I interviewed one expert working within a research institution. Prior to the interviews and sampling, I identified that a central challenge would be to get in touch with experts. I experienced however, that the experts interviewed for this study generously offered their time to contribute. For this, I am very grateful.

For this study, semi-structured interviews were undertaken. Semi-structured interviews can be conducted in different ways, depending on the level of formality. One can conduct the interview as a survey where open-ended questions are used, often found effective for interviews with government officials as an example. However, for more ethnographic interviews, this can be found too distant, reducing the dialogue (Gallagher, 2013, p. 193). Even though my

interviews were not ethnographic of nature, I attempted to create an atmosphere where the interview would proceed as a conversation. The interviews followed an interview guide, which had been developed prior to initiating the interviews. This guide was developed based on the literature I had reviewed, and in dialogue with my supervisor. While the interview guide followed a similar structure in all six interviews, small adjustments were made along the way. I would attempt to adapt some of the questions to the specific context of the informant's area of expertise. The purpose of this was to create a concrete context for the interview, where the informants would be able to share their experiences and understanding in light of their different backgrounds. Small changes were also made due to new topics highlighted by the experts.

The interview guide, regardless of the small alterations made along the way, focused mainly on three topics. The first topic sought to function as an introductory stage. I found it most helpful initiating the interview with a simple question such as "What are your experiences with Oslo's international work" or "What do you know about Oslo's international involvement in city networks?" depending on the interviewee's background. This allowed the interviewee to set the nature of the interview. Thus, the respondents' experiences were illuminated through their own words. The second part of the interview was concentrated towards how the informant perceived the city as an international actor. In this part, questions concerning the relationship between the state and city would also be illuminated. The latter part of the interview guide would inquire how the informant either imagined Oslo's way forward and its role in city networks, or if the informant was aware of any specific plans for Oslo in the near future.

I would also ask follow-up questions based on the informants' reflections. Gallagher (2013, p. 193) argues that if the interviewee is very professional and distant, this needs to be respected by gathering the data as efficient as possible. I did not experience any of the interviewees being distant. However, I was aware that some of the interviewees had a tight time schedule. This may have affected the nature of the interview somewhat, as I did not wish to prolong the interview and may have remained more attached to the interview guide.

The interviews were conducted in August and September of 2020. While all the experts I reached out to work in Oslo, only two of the interviews were conducted in person. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, I respected as well as anticipated that some of the interviewees might want to avoid meeting in person. Therefore, I informed the informants when reaching out to them that an online interview would also be possible. Three of the six interviews were therefore conducted through the video meeting platform Microsoft Teams, whilst one was

completed as a phone call. Jacobsen (2015, p. 243) notes that the context in which the interview is conducted can affect the results that derive from it. Looking back at the interviews, I understand the interviews conducted in person as more relaxed, opposed to those conducted by phone or video calls. I also noted that these interviews lasted longer than the four others and acknowledge that the setting might have been a contributing factor.

3.3. Analyzing the interviews

All the interviews were recorded, following an oral consent from the experts. This gave me the opportunity to gather greater amounts of information compared to solely taking notes. However, some notes were also taken during the interviews. This was done as a precaution in case there would be malfunctions with the recorder, as Bryman recognizes as a possible risk (2016, p. 481). The recordings were later transcribed manually, and not through an online transcription program. I wanted to be sure that the interviews were transcribed in detail. I do not have any experience with such programs, and therefore I felt safe transcribing the interviews manually. The transcriptions allowed me to systemically analyze the interviews. The interviews were conducted and transcribed in Norwegian. This means that when quotes from the informants have been included in this thesis, they are translated to English.

Prior to conducting the interviews, I feared that the interviews conducted by phone and Microsoft Teams would provide poor audio recordings, as I recorded from my phone, which again recorded the audio from either the phone I was speaking through or through the computer speakers. However, the recordings were surprisingly clear, and this was therefore not a problem. The audio recordings were transferred right away as the interview was ended to a USB-drive. I deleted the recordings immediately from my phone. I did this to protect the rights of the informants.

The interviews lasted from approximately 40 to 90 minutes. The transcriptions generated a great amount of data material, on average 20-30 pages per interview. In terms of analyzing the transcriptions, I found that the semi-structured interviews made it challenging to compare the findings. This is because many different themes emerged, based on the experts' reflections and understandings. As such, the process of analyzing the findings was very time consuming. I acknowledge that my lack of experience as a researcher, and therefore also with analyzing qualitative semi-structured interviews, might have made this a greater challenge for me. However, I will also argue that semi-structured interviews represent a strength for the thesis, as this type of interview method allows for contestations, nuances and underlying dynamics to emerge.

In order to identify the emerging themes, I would print out the transcriptions of the interview, and coded the themes according to different colors. I found it challenging to know what I was looking for, as different understandings of cities' involvements in city networks emerged. I initiated the process by noting which themes would recur. As such, I sought these to be of importance to the experts. Following this, I would note which emerging themes or notions that would stand in contrast, in order to identify whether there were any contestations present. This process resulted in many different codes, where some would merge into each other, and others would be dismissed as I found them to be less significant for this study. This led me to develop codes that in great similarity reflect the structure of Chapter 5.

As mentioned, I would tailor the interview slightly according to the expert being interviewed. This also led to differences emerging from the interviews, which possibly also made the analyzation process more challenging. Again, I also regard this as a strength regardless of the challenges, as the aim of this study has been to highlight nuances.

3.4. Reflections concerning own research

This thesis does not aim to have external validity. This is because the conclusions that derive from this study are based on own experiences and understandings of the experts interviewed for this research, as well as my interpretations of these statements (Gerring, 2006). This thesis seeks to provide a contribution to the growing literature on city diplomacy by providing in-depth understandings and experiences.

When searching for rich data, as one attempts through conducting in-depth interviews, the emergence of ethical challenges surfaces. Thus, there are certain ethical principles that must be taken into consideration. Within the field of social research, one can locate a certain range of issues that revolve in literature (Silverman, 2017; Yin, 2018). Following Diener and Crandall (1978), as included in Bryman (2016), the principles have usefully been broken down to those of harm, lack of informed consent, invasion of privacy and deception.

Harm towards informants can involve different scenarios, such as physical harm; loss of self-esteem; stress; as well as harm to a participant's development (Diener & Crandall, 1978, p. 19). When reaching out to informants for this thesis' research, I was aware that this was done during a time where most people returned to work after the summer holidays. Additionally, I was aware that due to the Covid-19 pandemic, this could mean that the experts especially on a municipal and ministerial level might have a very hectic schedule with a lot of unexpected turns. Thus, I had to keep in mind that the informants would be facing busy time schedules. In

order to avoid creating stress, I reached out to the informants by mail, asking if they would be willing to contribute to my research through an interview, instead of calling them and possibly coming off as too persistent.

Invasion of privacy can be linked to the previous one as well, namely informed consent. The notion of informed consent is given on the basis of the respondent being given detailed information about the research. Thus, he or she acknowledges that the right to privacy has been yielded for the domain in mention (Bryman, 2016, p. 131). Putting this into practise; a respondent can refuse to answer certain questions during an interview if he or she would feel that the question involves inquiring their own private matters. Such issues may involve religion, sexual preferences and income (Bryman, 2016, p. 132). I did not experience any such issues. However, two informants wished to receive the questionnaire prior to the interview. I identified this in terms that I had possibly had not provided the experts with enough information, as they did not know what to expect. Additionally, many of the questions asked during the interviews for this thesis' research are based on the informant's experiences with a certain issue. With this in mind, I sought to not create the interview to be too specific on the experts themselves, but to focus on their area of expertise and their understandings and experiences that came from this.

4 Oslo and the international

In this chapter, I present the strategies that underpin and guide Oslo Municipality's international involvement. The purpose of this chapter is to further highlight the case study's relevance in relation to the research question guiding this thesis. This chapter will additionally contextualize the research question in light of theoretical contributions within the framework of city diplomacy, as included in sub-chapter 2.3.

4.1. The international relations of Oslo

Oslo Municipality is structured following a parliamentarian system. In practice, the implementation of a parliamentary system involves the strengthening of political autonomy at the expense of the administrative. The administrative body of the municipality can nevertheless have substantial impact on the Municipality's politics. However, the parliamentarian model involves strengthening the city's political latitude (Norwegian Government, 2015). This means

that the political influence in theory is greater in Oslo than suggestively municipalities who follow a structure of chairmanship.

Oslo Municipality's contemporary international work is embedded in Oslo Municipality's international strategy. This strategy was adopted by the City Council³ on 17th February 2010 (Oslo Municipality, n.d.a). The international strategy applies to all the city council departments, agencies, districts, and businesses located in Oslo. The International Office, integrated within the Governing Mayor's office, holds responsibility for the coordination of Oslo's international cooperation. This includes coordinating the city departments' work, as well as agencies and districts. Further activities include the management of relations with the many consulates, embassies, and international organisations located in Oslo (Oslo Municipality, n.d.a).

This international strategy, adopted in 2010, emphasizes that Oslo seeks to participate broadly in international cooperation with the purpose of experience-sharing, to acquire new knowledge and inspiration for developing local services to the citizens of Oslo, and to influence initiatives and decisions made on a supranational level in line with Oslo Municipality's interests. Lastly, the strategy shall also contribute that Oslo, as the capital of Norway, asserts itself in competition with other European cities, and that Oslo's international position, also in terms of competition for tourism and visibility, is strengthened through international profiling (City Government, 2019a, p. 220). The strategy is featured on Oslo Municipality's website (Oslo Municipality, n.d.a). The strategy is also underscored in the City Government's annual report for 2019. This, I argue, shows that the City Government is still continuously working in terms of the strategy.

While the international strategy adopted in 2010 has remained unchanged despite political differences, the international work of Oslo Municipality additionally roots in the Platform for City Government cooperation. This document serves as the political platform for City Government cooperation between the Labour Party, the Green Party and the Socialist Left Party in Oslo from 2019-2023 (City Government, 2019b). The central objectives guiding this cooperation are "employment for everyone, social equality and the battle against climate change" (City Government, 2019b, p. 3). These are outlined as the most important priorities.

Oslo engages actively in international cooperation, as made evident by their participation in city networks and international organisations that together collaborate on sustainable

³ The highest decision-making body in Oslo (Oslo Municipality, n.d.d).

developments. Oslo currently holds status as an innovator city in the leading network on climate, C40. This means that Oslo does not qualify as a Megacity⁴ according to C40's scale, but is nevertheless internationally recognized for its work on climate and has shown clear leadership in the field of environmental sustainability (C40, 2012). Oslo Municipality also serves as a member of the city networks ICLEI, Carbon Neutral Cities Alliance (CNCA), Eurocities, The Covenant of Mayors, and CatchMR⁵.

Based on the very active involvement of Oslo in international cooperation with other cities, I argue that Oslo is applicable to be studied through the framework of city diplomacy. As presented in sub-chapter 2.3, van der Pluijm and Melissen define city diplomacy as “the institutions and processes by which cities engage in relations with actors on an international political stage with the aim of representing themselves and their interests to one another” (2007, p. 11). Moreover, a central dimension of city networks is illustrated through the literature review (see sub-chapter 2.3) to function as a platform for information-sharing in order to strengthen local initiatives and developments (Bouteligier, 2013; Acuto, Morissette & Tsouros, 2017). A very essential part of city networking activities can be justly described as city diplomacy (Acuto & Rayner, 2016, p. 1148).

The purpose of this thesis is to highlight and examine experts' experiences and understandings concerning Oslo's participation in transnational networks. It is with this purpose in mind that the thesis now turns to the interviews conducted with Norwegian experts. The following chapter will put individuals enacting everyday practices of international engagement at the centre of the analysis.

5. Oslo's involvement in transnational city networks

In order to understand how experts in Oslo make sense of Oslo's involvement in city networks, and thereby also how Oslo does diplomacy, I will now direct attention towards their own stories. In Chapter 4, Oslo's participation in, and strategies for international cooperation on climate and environment was presented. Here, it was illustrated how Oslo engages in a broad

⁴ Qualifying as a Megacity by C40 requires a city population of 3 million or more, and/or metropolitan area population of 10 million, and rank by current GDP output as top 25 global cities at purchasing power parity (PPP). (C40 Cities, 2012).

⁵ Short descriptions of city networks provided in Appendix 8.3.

collaboration with other cities on climate and environment through different city networks. This broad engagement shall in this chapter be discussed in light of practitioners' own words and descriptions. In the following analysis I portray how the informants view transnational city networks, and Oslo's participation in them.

This chapter will first introduce how the practitioners view city networks. I then direct attention towards more concrete initiatives and networks, following the practitioners' explanations. Next, I turn to a discussion of how the practitioners reflect upon Oslo's international involvement for domestic purposes. Two distinct contestations emerged during the interviews with the six practitioners. I present these in an own sub-chapter. This brings the discussion to reflect upon the relationship between Oslo as an international actor and the state as a traditional sovereign authority, which will be central throughout the remaining part of this chapter. There are several themes that continuously are discussed through all four sub-chapters, such as the political will for international involvement through city networks, and concrete initiatives developed by Oslo Municipality.

The practitioners' explanations and reflections are discussed and analysed in light of the contemporary scholarly debates surrounding city diplomacy. This enables the analysis to view cities as actors in global affairs. Following the practitioners' understandings concerning Oslo's involvement in city networks on climate and environment, the analysis reveals an understanding that Oslo works very concretely on climate measures and initiatives. It is recognized that Oslo utilizes city networks to legitimize their own policies and agendas. This provides an emerging issue that has to date not been largely studied within the framework of city diplomacy to my knowledge.

5.1. What does Oslo do?

Local and ministerial experts expressed clearly how city networks provide important opportunities for Oslo. These perspectives were most prevalent in the perspectives of local practitioners directly linked to Oslo Municipality. An informant with many years of experience working with Oslo's international work – hereafter called Karen – expressed the importance of city networks by comparing them to bilateral city-to-city cooperation:

“They [city networks] are very important for us, and for us it is very useful to cooperate in networks opposed to cooperating with one and one city, because ... Well, in the earlier days you had these friendship cities and stuff, but they are very person-

dependent, there aren't any common structures that pick up and keep things in a continuity". (Karen, 24/08).

With city networks, Karen explains, the personal relationships that were essential to friendship cities are replaced with more systemic, planned and coordinated collaborations. This makes city networks more stable. Moreover, city networks are more efficient and provide greater flexibility for cities. This was reasoned by the following:

«Working in city networks is very effective, you can reach out to many at once, and it is easy to identify those who have the same challenges as you right now, but in two years it could be someone else, and then it is natural that yes you, that you can cooperate with all these within these organizations, opposed to *having to* cooperate with someone just because you have some form of a deal from twenty years back" (Karen, 24/08).

Karen's statement suggests that Oslo anticipates a dynamic international engagement, where collaborations might change continuously depending on current challenges and goals. The informant told me that she experienced it as difficult to end such agreements when they no longer yield results, in fear of creating bad relations. Through city networks, one avoids such concerns. When the collaboration has met its purpose between cities in city networks, the cities naturally end their collaboration on the specific issue but remain members of the city network and can re-enter into new specific collaborations at any given time.

Similarly, an informant with both municipal and ministerial working experience – hereafter called Robert – emphasized that city networks function as important tools for detecting cities with technical knowledge that is relevant for Oslo. Such knowledge can benefit Oslo's local efforts, services, and developments. This is concurred by Helen, a second practitioner who also enjoys many years' experience with Oslo's international work. She highlighted how city networks enable representatives to locate those cities currently prominent on certain areas:

“Oslo will not progress if they do not cooperate with other cities, because all cities are digitalizing their services. You don't have to reinvent the wheel, there are many other cities who have come further than us on certain areas, even though we acknowledge that we have come far as well. We learn from each other, and we shall teach others” (Helen, Interview, 27/08).

Oslo can gain a lot from city networks in the form of attaining knowledge from other cities, and in return Oslo can contribute with own expertise on specific issues. Cities utilizing

cooperation with other cities for practical knowledge sharing is broadly identified in city diplomacy literature (van der Pluijm & Melissen, 2007; Acuto, Morisette & Tsouros, 2017; Acuto, Decramer, Kerr, Klaus, Tabory & Toly, 2018; Curtis & Acuto, 2018). Karen, Robert and Helen provide similar understandings, recognizing the benefits city networks provide in terms of locating knowledge that Oslo seeks to employ for developing their own climate initiatives as well as for improving local services. Moreover, Karen's statement suggests that Oslo no longer engages in cooperation based on mere courtesy. Rather, it indicates a strategic choice of whom one shall cooperate with, aimed at achieving a certain objective at any given time.

As such, city networks are recognized as information-sharing platforms benefiting local initiatives by the practitioners. City networks have so far in this sub-chapter been referred to in a general term, and not specified to any particular network. From the interviews, I did however learn that Oslo's international work on climate and environment stem from very specific purposes, goals and challenges. This reflects Oslo's participation in city networks as well. From interviews with practitioners speaking from the City's point of view, I learned that different networks are utilized for different purposes. As such, I will now direct attention towards more concrete initiatives and networks, following the practitioners' explanations. In the next sub-chapter, understandings and experiences of local practitioners linked to Oslo Municipality are most prevalent.

5.1.1. Different networks for different purposes

From the interviews, I learned that all city networks Oslo is a member of serves a certain purpose. Despite Oslo being a member of several city networks on climate and environment (see Chapter 4)(see Appendix 8.3.), there were particularly two networks that were highlighted by the practitioners. These two networks were Eurocities and C40 Cities. I interpret these networks to currently be the most relevant for Oslo's international work, based on the frequency of referral in the interviews. I now turn to more concrete explanations of Oslo's international involvement made by the practitioners. C40 and Eurocities will be frequently included as examples when quoting the informants.

Oslo has been a member of C40 Cities since 2012 (Oslo Municipality, 2012). However, Robert emphasized that the level of activity by Oslo in C40 changed with the election of Governing Mayor Raymond Johansen and the appointed City Government in 2015:

“Then the City Government of Raymond Johansen came in 2015. New City Government, new political profile, new political priorities, of course largely influenced by the presence of the Green Party, with a clear climate profile, and this also had consequences for the international [work]”. (Robert, 24/09).

Robert identifies that the City Government that was elected and inaugurated in 2015 led to a new political profile, and thereby also a new climate profile. Although the previous city government was also involved in international cooperation, its main focus was on business collaborations. Robert recognizes that the presence of the Green Party might have contributed to the enhanced focus on climate in 2015. It was further explained that the City Government formed in 2015 was deliberate on making the city a part of the solution for fighting climate change, recognizing that cities generate great amounts of emissions. As a way of doing this, concrete measures and initiatives were developed, such as the climate budget:

“And then suddenly many wanted to cooperate with Oslo, because Oslo was suddenly developing innovative solutions, like when we developed a climate budget, and we started to calculate emissions in the city, and in that way, you could calculate which measures to implement in order to reduce emissions in the city. And then there’s especially one large city network called C40 [...] They started to show interest in Oslo, and we had been a member of the network for many years, but never really emancipated our work with them. So, we started to partake more in international conferences and fora, and then they [C40] activated some areas where we could contribute, and where we also could include others [cities] into this work” (Robert, 24/09).

The emphasis is here on a nexus between the city government led by Raymond Johansen and an enhanced focus on climate and environment. Robert highlights a rationale within Oslo Municipality’s City Government where the development of concrete measures and initiatives is recognized as means to mitigate climate change. This has led to increased attention internationally, particularly by the city network C40. In Robert’s view, the membership in C40 prior to Raymond Johansen and the City Government appointed in 2015 had been inactive.

The climate budget that Robert refers to is an initiative that Oslo has developed. Here, calculations are derived based on statistics from Statistics Norway (SSB), where an upper limit for the amount of greenhouse gases that can be released during a year is made account for. The limit is developed in accord with Oslo’s climate targets, entrenched in Oslo Municipality’s climate strategy (Oslo Municipality, 2016) As it is states in the climate strategy that Oslo

adopted in 2016, “The City of Oslo will strengthen the strategic climate work by integrating climate budgets in the municipal budget process (Oslo Municipality, 2016, p. 27).

This strategy was developed in accordance with the Paris Agreement. The strategy sets out to reduce Oslo’s CO₂ emissions by 50 per cent by 2020. By 2030, the CO₂ emissions are set to be reduced by 95 per cent compared to the levels measured in 1990 (Oslo Municipality, 2016). Compared to other cities, especially in Europe, the targets are not necessarily ground-breaking, as many cities established similar goals more than ten years ago. However, Oslo’s emissions at the end of 2015 were measured to be roughly the same as in 1990 (C40 Cities, 2018). This implies a strong focus of largely mitigating emissions.

In order for Oslo to reach these targets, the limits set in the climate budget must be obtained (Oslo Municipality, 2016). The climate budget has indeed harnessed great attention internationally. Mark Watts, Executive Director of C40, has declared the climate budget is “one the most impressive example of the genre anywhere in the world, and which deserves to be shared far and wide” (C40 Cities, 2018).

Turid, a practitioner that also shares experience from both a municipal as well as a ministerial level, underscored that climate is a priority for the current City Government:

“The three main priorities that guides the City Government’s work is, as it says here, three things. This sentence here; employment for everyone, social equality and the battle against climate change are our most important priorities. That’s it. And these three, they shall also be reflected in the international [work]». (Turid, Interview, 18/09).

I noticed that Turid would often emphasize Raymond Johansen as a central initiator when speaking of Oslo’s climate strategies internationally, as portrayed in the excerpt below:

“And Raymond has amongst other things taken initiative through C40 to, just to be concrete on what we can assist globally with, there’s the case of zero-emission construction sites, right. It’s great that Olavs gate 50 over there is an emission-free construction site, right. But it doesn’t make a difference beyond this, we have to increase in volume [...] So he [Raymond Johansen] took action and had an international press conference about a collaboration [through C40]. And that’s when we, when we can overcome .. This is where the international work goes from talk to action, it’s when we can operationalize it. There’s a lot of talk and no action on the international arena.

[...] So I think that the forces that now exist in city politics in, in Europe and also globally for that matter ..” (Turid, 18/09).

Turid identifies a lack of action on the international arena. I interpret this as a critique of absent action undertaken by states on the international arena regarding climate issues. The conversation was also suddenly interrupted by an alarm, and the excerpt ends quite abruptly. Based on the context however, I interpret the informant to imply that city politics in Europe, and also globally, can contribute with concrete measures, thereby turning commitments into action. One example Turid highlights are zero-emission construction sites. The initiative of developing zero-emission construction sites is a part of a procurement strategy initiated by Oslo Municipality. The City Council has adopted fossil free construction sites in all of its public procurement procedures from 2017 as a minimum criterion (Oslo Municipality, n.d.c). Turid exemplifies how Raymond Johansen has taken initiative through C40 to realize such an incentive internationally. It seems Oslo has an extensive political focus on extending their policies to other cities, thereby extending their initiatives to matter other places than solely on construction sites in Oslo. This can create a bigger impact in terms of mitigating emissions. C40 is thus employed as an arena for facilitating such initiatives to other cities. In this sense, I identify that Oslo takes on a very active role within the C40 network.

Curtis (2016a) has criticized the C40 network for facilitating a continuation of the neoliberal discourse. He explains: “[The] goals and activities remain well within the discursive space of the neoliberal discourse; they frame their solutions in the language and philosophy of markets, offering technocratic agendas, partnering with private foundations and multinational corporations” (Curtis, 2016a, p. 118). In the view of the practitioners interviewed for this thesis, there seems to be a general perception that there is a fruitful collaboration between C40 and Oslo. Moreover, C40 provides an arena where cities can develop initiatives on specific areas they wish to expand on. As Helen explained, “after vi became a member of C40, we have seen that C40 is a network where you can take initiative on an area where you have come far already, but you also need to bring in other cities with you on these initiatives in order to prove .. to make it work” (Helen, 27/08). In this sense, there seems to be a rationale where “the more the merrier” is driving Oslo’s active role in C40.

However, Birthe – a practitioner with great experience as a researcher - does acknowledge that there has been an unequal balance geographically amongst member cities. This spurs the question of how relevant the policies that are developed are globally. “It’s one thing that they

[policies] are very ambitious, but, they are to a small extent anchored outside of this European, North-American understanding, which again reflects the agendas” (Birthe, 27/08). Birthe recognizes that the agendas set forth by C40, as well as the initiatives developed by cities within the C40, do not necessarily represent an equal distribution of cities geographically. As included in the literature review (see sub-chapter 2.3.), Bouteligier argues that such varying degrees of representation amongst cities in C40 replicate prevailing power structures between the Global North and Global South (2013a, p. 128). Birthe provides C40 with some justification, explaining that the unequal geographical balance of cities has been revised:

“But C40 has also become concerned with expanding its business base, and has a much stronger Global South presence now than before, but there something in it, some of the criticism is about how radical .. This is a classic criticism, how the agenda is pushed through cooperation between pretty strong cities, actors and private industry and especially the American side [...] So there’s some political-democratic questions there that remain unresolved in terms of representation, and what kind of forces that plant these agendas” (Birthe, 27/08).

In the excerpt, there is nonetheless recognized a certain degree of technocratic agendas, as there are some political-democratic questions that still remain unresolved regarding the balance of member cities in C40.

I identified an awareness amongst practitioners that Oslo’s policies on climate and environment have a greater implementation capacity in cities with similar structures. This view was also most prevalent amongst municipal practitioners. Oslo’s cooperation with other cities through city networks concerning local interests is largely concentrated towards European cities. Karen informed that the European cooperation is very central for Oslo. Due to similar structures and regulations in European cities, collaborations become operative and concrete:

“In that way Europe is very central, and thereby EU projects, it’s very concrete and operational, so there’s a larger collaboration on areas such knowledge sharing, experience sharing, and also working up towards the EU system so that we have our own structure to work with. So, to the degree that we try to influence the EU system, we usually do it through Eurocities to mention an example, where you go together with the large cities in Europe, with positions on different subjects” (Karen, 24/08).

Here, Karen explains that the city network Eurocities is an important arena and steppingstone towards gaining influence into the EU system. It is informed that Oslo works together with

large cities in Europe with the purpose of proposing positions on different subjects. I understand Karen's use of "large" as a reference to geographical size. In Karen's view, it's a strength working with large cities. Moreover, I was told that while Oslo is not necessarily legally bound by all EU jurisdictions, they still find interest in cooperating on areas they identify as relevant for Oslo. Following Karen then, Oslo utilizes the collaboration with what is regarded "larger" cities in Europe as a tool for positioning themselves on certain areas. Air quality, water quality, noise, and toxic free environment were mentioned as examples.

In regard to Eurocities, Helen explained that:

"The funny thing about Eurocities is that they have working groups for every single communal service that we have. There's a group on housing, there's a group on homelessness, there's a group on drugs, there's a group on waste, there's a group on air quality, there's a group on water quality, ergo all the things we work with. During meetings in these working groups, practitioners meet to discuss how to work, well, with EU's new directive on air quality right, how do you work, is there anything we can collaborate on? Or should we have had a project on this and so on, you create a network" (Helen, 27/08).

The city network Eurocities works on projects similar to those of Oslo. This highlights how Helen views the network's importance, as well as its capability to provide pathways for Oslo to conduct work on areas significant for the City. As such, there is a sense of utility value regarding Eurocities. I identify in the statement made by Helen above that Oslo seeks to be proactive in Eurocities and takes on a similar role as they do in C40. Oslo continuously seeks new opportunities in form of collaboration on policy areas relevant for improving local services.

Oslo's role in Eurocities seems to be less political, and more technical, based on how I understand the municipal practitioners. Helen explained that there was a greater concentration of administrative and technical work related to Eurocities, and that the City Government was less involved in such planning. Birthe shares this understanding. She explained that C40 represents a political network, because of their strong commitment to the activity of mayors or other political representatives from the city. Moreover, she explained that "Eurocities does also have political representation, but it's experienced from the city's perspective more as an administrative network" (Birthe, 27/08).

Based on Helen and Karen's understandings, I recognize that the EU emerges as a central actor on climate and environment. During my interview with Karl, a practitioner with many years of experience within the Norwegian foreign ministry, it was discussed who currently sets the global-political agendas on climate and environment internationally. Without hesitation, Karl pointed to the EU as leading on this issue: "Today, it's the EU that's most prominent. [...] Without a doubt. They are in the front seat and currently the most ambitious actor on this arena" (Karl, 09/09).

Moreover, Karen and Helen's statements indicate that Oslo Municipality actively is responding to a similar understandings as Karl presents in the excerpt above, employing the city network Eurocities as a steppingstone in terms of acquiring knowledge as well as participating in working groups that can offer connections to EU legislature. This is, by Karen, recognized as a way for Oslo Municipality to position themselves concerning EU policies. I argue here that these findings again underscore Oslo as a strategic actor, seeking to achieve certain objectives. Thus, it would seem that Oslo is turning to more pragmatic forms of inter-municipal cooperation, such as van der Pluijm and Melissen (2007) highlight in their study on Dutch municipalities.

Acuto, Morissette and Tsouros spur the question of whether cities do better focusing solely on large networks, or in smaller, regional networks with a more narrow focus, potentially creating a greater impact locally (2017, 19). The findings that have been presented in this sub-chapter suggest that Oslo seems to benefit from a middle way, engaging globally through C40, while also reaching local goals in terms of improving local policies through Eurocities.

From this sub-chapter, I observe that the practitioners recognize a clear value of participating in city networks. These perceptions are most prevalent in the perspectives of local practitioners directly linked to Oslo Municipality. Moreover, Oslo works from specific purposes and goals. In previous literature, Curtis & Acuto (2018) have argued that cities as political actors have the capability to influence global governance processes through participating in transnational city networks⁶. A direct connection has been made by Acuto & Rayner, 2016, linking those activities conducted in transnational city networks to city diplomacy. The interviews conducted for this thesis suggest that the informants view the city networks Eurocities and C40 as steppingstones towards influencing governance processes on a regional and a global level. In particular, Oslo seeks to influence EU policies through Eurocities. The participation in

⁶ Included in Chapter 2.

Eurocities is described as more relevant in terms of developing Oslo's local services, as cities in Europe are similarly structured. In this sense, I identify that there is a strong will to utilize international cooperation through city networks to improve domestic services. This comes to show in different ways. I therefore turn to a more detailed discussion on this matter.

5.2. Utilizing international networks for domestic purposes

Acuto, Morissette and Tsouros identified in a study on WHO Healthy Cities that city officers found it challenging to justify allocating resources to international activities when the direct benefits of international involvement are not evident to constituents (2017, p. 19). Similarly, Robert identifies a certain scepticism amongst local citizens towards Oslo's use of resources for international purposes:

“It's a perception amongst people, they think that oh well, you can't even provide enough kindergarten capacity, and then you're going to travel to Shanghai and Beijing, can't you stick with what's important, right, so it's about those things that are close” (Robert, 24/09).

I was told that international politics do not have the same standing amongst Oslo's citizens. He recognizes that there is a dissatisfaction concerning local services by some. Kindergarten capacity was exemplified in the excerpt, but I was also told that health and education are regarded as important areas for the citizens of Oslo. As such, Robert identifies a scepticism towards the use of financial resources for international involvement. It was further explained that despite this scepticism, the City Government has nevertheless wished to continue its international involvement. This supports earlier findings, suggesting a political will from the City Government concerning Oslo's international involvement. Robert's explanation suggests that Oslo's international involvement is not dependent upon the support from local citizens. This aspect can help us understand the degree of independence Oslo's involvement experiences. Robert's statement indicates that Oslo does not have to show for public support in order to defend their international work.

There is nevertheless a desire to enhance the concern international involvement amongst citizens. One way Oslo has chosen to do this, is by bringing the international into the local. In November of 2020, a C40 office opened in Oslo. Helen told me that this was linked to C40 identifying that Oslo has a political will to engage in progressive work on climate and environment, and that this is a clear priority. Moreover, she explained that:

“the thought behind this, with the C40 office in Oslo is to show off those things what we are good at, such as the climate budget and zero-emission construction sites, but also that there is a will to go ahead as, with global governance, which involves learning other cities environmental governance” (Helen, 27/08).

By bringing the international into the local, Oslo wishes to show off what they are good at. This involves the climate budget and zero-emission construction sites. Additionally, Helen argues that this is utilized as a tool to convert their own actions into environmental governance. However, one could possibly wonder if a possible aim is also to be able to prove Oslo’s central role in the C40 network to national authorities. The reason I pose such a possibility, is defended through the following sections.

In terms of Oslo’s role internationally, Birthe provided some reflections in relation to the national government. She emphasized that whether a city can act independently on the global stage, as well as to what degree, is very dependent upon the national political context and structure. As such, even cities in Norway, Sweden, and Denmark who one would imagine experience the same independence should be examined idiosyncratically. Birthe also recognizes that cities have different ways of utilizing the international agenda. It is explained that Oslo enjoys a certain amount of leeway in relation to the state, without being specific upon what exactly. She added that “Oslo has worked quite strategically up against ministries and others in order to create room for manoeuvre for several of the measures they wish to implement” (Birthe, 27/08). One specific measure she mentioned was the utilization of a procurement system. This has been mentioned earlier in relation to zero-emission construction sites, but it utilized in terms of transport systems as well. These requirements are a part of a procurement system to be set into force 01.01.2025 (Oslo Municipality, n.d.c). In this way, Oslo outsources its policies by using market mechanisms. Helen provided further context to this issue:

“We represent an actor that buy a lot of commodities in Norway, we purchase commodities for 27 billion Norwegian Kroners (NOK) annually, and, in our purchases we make requirements [...] In this way, we can influence the larger actors in the city, the large firms, to say that we now make these demands, and for them then, they will realize that many others will then pose the same requirements. The state is now operating with such requirements as well, and we are trying to get other cities on board as well, not only in Europe, but also globally” (Helen, 27/08).

I learned that this is regarded a means for creating ripple effects to other parts of not only Norway, but also internationally. Ylönen (2016) identifies that procurement has increasingly become an important function for municipalities globally. The case of Oslo becomes one of such examples. Additionally, Helen notes that the state has also implemented this initiative.

From a ministerial point of view, Karl expressed that: “It’s clear that the strength that lies within many of these internationally, international networks for cooperation between cities or with other regional authorities or municipalities and so on, they can work as a kind of pressure group towards states” (Karl, 09/09). Karl acknowledges the influence that cities can acquire by working together. This power can according to Karl be used to influence states.

Curtis argues that the legitimacy and power of cities grows in the gaps of governance failure by the state at the transnational level (2016b, p. 170). This draws attention to the relevance of the relationship between the state and the city in order to understand and analyze Oslo’s involvement in city networks. In this sub-chapter, and also the remaining part of this chapter, my focus turns to the relationship between the Norwegian government and Oslo’s local government, particularly with regards to collaboration on climate and environment. This is identified as an emerging aspect in most of the interviews, and I therefore include this to be a central part of the discussion.

In the previous section, I observed that several practitioners perceived Oslo’s activity in city networks as a way to position themselves on regional/global policies. Eurocities and EU policies were especially highlighted. As EU policies on particularly water and air quality affect Oslo, Oslo also seeks to be able to influence the decision-making processes, thereby influencing such policies. However, I learned that several of the practitioners perceived Oslo to utilize city networks as a tool to also position themselves domestically. As such, new aspects emerge of how Oslo can benefit domestically from international cooperation through city networks. For instance, Birthe explained that she found it very interesting how several Nordic cities, amongst them Oslo, uses the international work very strategically to position themselves in relation to own national authorities:

“In this way, Oslo’s engagement concerning matters in C40 are also contributing to legitimize that they have such ambitious climate goals right, it gives a legitimacy to say that we and all of the world’s cities are willing to go even further, so you legitimize your own climate agenda by showing to that this is done in collaboration with many others [cities]” (Birthe, 27/08).

By showing to practical examples done in collaboration with global cities through C40, Oslo can gain legitimacy concerning their own initiatives on climate and environment. This can provide Oslo some extra “weight” in negotiations and discussion with ministries. Birthe emphasized that she understood such negotiations and discussions to be very constructive, and that there was not any great tensions concerning this issue.

Acuto, Morissette and Tsouros (2017) highlight that institutionalized city networks are key in providing market opportunities as well as legitimacy-building. However, as I understand their argument, legitimacy-building in this sense is conveyed as a branding opportunity. I do not interpret the legitimacy-building in this context to concern city branding. In order to substantiate this identification, I highlight a different statement provided by Helen, where city branding is identified:

“We realize that there is a strong competition between cities today in regard to attracting students, business, tourism right, attracting highly qualified, educated people, or people who seek an education at a university, but we also need to make sure people want to stay here, because everybody needs brains right in order to develop society [...] We have to make sure people choose Oslo. And that’s why we cannot have municipal services that are outdated [...] We have to make sure that we can handle the competition” (Helen, 27/08).

I was told that Oslo seeks to be identified as a green, innovative city where people want to live, and business wants to invest. I argue, having also briefly discussed van der Pluijm and Melissen’s (2007) notion of branding in the literature review, that this reflects to a greater extent the notion of legitimacy-building that Acuto, Morissette and Tsouros (2016) speak of. While this is also a very important part of Oslo’s work, following Helen’s statement, this is not necessarily conveyed in context of national authorities.

Thus, I turn to Karen’s statement, where she states that:

“I think one can become a bit more observant as a citizen, if one is informed that oh wow, New York is copying Oslo for example, and I think that in regards to national authorities, it gives a bit more cred maybe, or they become more aware of what Oslo is capable of when we can be compared to these eh, big cities, that have mayors who are already known globally, so that would help us [Oslo]. That we are in the good company and that we can participate and contribute with something, I think it can make a difference” (Karen, 24/08).

Karen argues that Oslo can receive more credibility from national authorities if they were to know that New York was copying Oslo's initiatives. In this way, the statements provided by Karen and Birthe suggest that Oslo wishes to assert themselves in relation to national authorities, showing for an ambitious commitment internationally. By engaging in international cooperation through city networks, these arguments suggest that Oslo can create a certain legitimacy surrounding the ability to develop concrete initiatives that are recognized worldwide. This legitimacy can be showed for in relation to national authorities.

In this sub-chapter, the findings suggest that Oslo utilizes city networks for several domestic purposes. During previous discussions in this chapter, the interviews indicate that Oslo regards city networks as important for knowledge-sharing and best practices. This coincides with central diplomacy thinking. However, the statements made by Birthe and Karen also suggest that Oslo wishes to gain legitimacy in negotiations with national authorities. By being able to show for concrete developments that receive international recognition, Oslo seeks to be acknowledged by own national authorities. Curtis has argued that cities are increasingly becoming "norm-entrepreneur" in setting global agendas (2016a, p. 466). This is reasoned by cities' increasing ability to develop climate initiatives. Suggestively, Oslo could possibly be regarded as a norm-entrepreneur in line with Curtis' definition, as Oslo shows abilities to develop concrete initiatives, in this sub-chapter exemplified through a procurement system. By legitimizing own policies and gaining momentum through international cooperation, Oslo could possibly enjoy internationally established legitimacy for domesticated relations.

Birthe notes that we need to examine cities idiosyncratically. This is a great strength of these interviews, as they allow me to acquire knowledge about Oslo's international involvement in depth.

5.3. What does Oslo not do?

While exploring how local and ministerial experts experience and understand Oslo Municipality's international engagement, certain contestations emerged. These contestations were concentrated towards two thematic areas: the exercise of foreign policy; and the exercise of city diplomacy. These two contestations emerged in different contexts, and I will therefore present the discussions separately before proceeding to an overarching discussion.

During my first interview of this thesis' research, the informant – Karen - initiated the interview by clarifying that Oslo does not conduct international city diplomacy. Karen explained that this was a concept that was not used by cities themselves, and that she felt the concept did not

resemble the Municipality's work. Moreover, Karen stated that: "Well, I feel that diplomacy is .. It's something different. [...] I feel it's more like a kind of positioning, bargaining, more that kind of stuff" (Karen, 24/08).

Similarly, Helen stated that "the cities we cooperate with, most of the cities we cooperate with are Nordic and European, and we don't call it eh, city diplomacy at all, we call it international relations or .. There is a distinction between cities, and what they do internationally" (Helen, 27/08).

This aspect portrays the significance of highlighting systematic interpretations made by practitioners, as this issue has to my knowledge not been examined in previous literature. Looking at the concept from the municipal practitioners' point of view, new understandings as well as questions surface. Helen states that cities themselves refrain from defining their international activities as city diplomacy. It is emphasized that there is a distinction between cities and what they do internationally. This might indicate that city diplomacy is regarded as a blending definition by Helen. Karen coincides with Helen's notion that Oslo does not conduct city diplomacy. Moreover, Karen responded to a notion concerning city diplomacy by only referring to diplomacy. Based on this response, it would seem connotations are drawn towards traditional state-based diplomacy. This contention was mainly evident in the interviews with Karen and Helen. However, Birthe also reflected upon the matter:

"One thing is that the cities alone wish to position themselves internationally, that's how I often understand it, and how I read it based on those cities I have worked with, is that it primarily is about strengthening one's own, one's own reputation and visibility, that being international visibility, especially for European cities and these up and coming cities, like, the whole idea that you're competing with other cities for attracting business, labour, those kind of things. It really has little to do with a city diplomacy rationale, it's more of a build your own city rationale," (Birthe, 27/08).

When speaking of cities positioning themselves internationally, Birthe understands this as a positioning in relation to other cities. Especially amongst European cities, she identifies a competition for tourism and business as two examples that engage cities internationally. As such, she does not identify a strategic thinking in form of city diplomacy. Instead, this issue seems to be reflected upon in line with a branding of the city, rather than necessarily experience-sharing and best practises. However, despite having discussed the meaning of city diplomacy for further inquiry, I sensed that connotations were drawn to larger power tensions,

and towards the city defining itself as an actor in line with traditional state-based diplomacy. Such notions were dismissed.

The other contestation is the exercise of foreign policy. I identified this contestation to be a recurring theme that emerged during the six interviews with both local and ministerial experts. I noticed that this subject was especially emphasized by the informants who are working in Oslo Municipality. For example, when discussing the current dialogue between Oslo and the Norwegian MFA, Helen informed me that “we have a very good dialogue, but they [Norwegian MFA] know that we don’t do foreign cooperation with other countries, we don’t step onto their plate” (Helen, 27/9). In this statement, Helen underscores that Oslo does not engage in cooperative matters on climate and environment with other countries. As such, the informant understands cooperation between cities as something different than cooperation between cities and countries. Helen also said that the Norwegian Government and Erna Solberg⁷ cannot interfere with Oslo’s cooperation with other cities. Cooperation between cities is a matter that is preserved cities. As such, this is an area where Oslo enjoys autonomy. Another informant, Karen, similarly emphasized the following:

“It [international cooperation] is something that Oslo has encouraged, and it’s not something that has been coordinated with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, like, Norwegian foreign policy-wise and there hasn’t been any need for it either, as there hasn’t been any contradictions eh, towards like Norwegian priorities and Norwegian interests” (Karen, 24/08).

This quote underscores how the informant depicts Oslo’s international cooperation in relation to the Norwegian foreign ministry. International cooperation, here referred to by the informant in a general term and not directed to any specific network, is not encouraged by the MFA. It is encouraged by Oslo. This means that Oslo has the agency to initiate international cooperation without prior coordination with the MFA. More importantly, the informant does not see any *need* for a co-coordination with the MFA, as there are not any contradictions between Oslo’s international cooperation and Norwegian state interests and priorities. Much like Karen, Robert also explained that international cooperation through city networks is an engagement Oslo has initiated without interference from national authorities:

⁷ Current prime minister of Norway.

“This is something Oslo has developed, and it’s not something that has been coordinated with the Foreign Ministry, or, with Norwegian foreign policy for that matter. And there hasn’t really been any need for it either, there aren’t any contradictions towards Norwegian priorities or Norwegian interests” (Robert, 24/09).

Based on the interviews with Helen, Karen and Robert, it seems the informants experience the political consensus on climate and environment in Norway as coinciding, and not polarised. All three practitioners state that there is rarely any need to either inform or verify Oslo’s international involvement on climate and environment, because there are no contradictions. As long as there are no contradictions, this is not necessary.

Karl, who works within the Norwegian MFA, expressed similar reflections:

“I would think that also states, hereby represented by the government or, in this case a foreign service, a Ministry of Foreign Affairs, will urge to obtain the current role distribution, well, exercising and safeguarding foreign policy, it’s kind of a matter the national government stands for. So one would not open for cities taking over such tasks, but I don’t know if that is a real threat, or I experience it as more of a, a positive dimension related to cities’ engagement, and that it, say for example climate issues, which is something some would think is a case where climate and environmental cooperation has a great impact for cities, where the cities play a very, very central role in creating solutions, and there they possess a competency and knowledge which the states also need, on a state/intergovernmental level in order to negotiate substantial and good agreements” (Karl, 09/09).

The respondent, Karl, understands the national government as the main (and only) legitimate exerciser of foreign policy. Following Karl, the scenario of cities taking over such tasks seems highly unlikely, and not something the Norwegian MFA recognises as a threat. The statement can also imply that Oslo exercising foreign policy vis-à-vis the national government is not an alternative, as this is not articulated. Instead, Karl emphasises cities’ engagement concerning climate issues as a positive contribution towards creating solutions. This regards the state government as well. These excerpts from the interviews with Helen, Karen and Karl illustrate a relationship with set boundaries that are mutually understood between the Norwegian Government and Oslo regarding climate and environment internationally.

I would argue that both contestations that have been presented in this sub-chapter indicate a clear responsiveness towards what the practitioners understand as state-based activities; that is

diplomatic activities and the conduct of foreign policy. It is evident that Oslo is involved in a great deal of practical work. This is verified by the experts interviewed in this study; Oslo Municipality has an extensive focus on developing concrete practical initiatives for mitigating emissions, and further showcasing initiatives to other cities. However, this sub-chapter illustrates how Oslo delineates themselves from working within a field they understand as state preserved. Karl and Robert, who also speak from a ministerial level, concur with Oslo not conducting foreign policy. In this case, I find it relevant to point to van der Pluijm and Melissen's (2007) study. Here, they found that the municipalities themselves would also restrain from identifying their international activities as a foreign policy.

It was included in the literary review by Klaus (2020) that cities do not wish to revolt the international system. Rather, they wish to improve it. The findings of this sub-chapter imply that the experts share this understanding.

My observation from this subchapter is that the informants are very concerned with emphasizing that Oslo does not conduct and exert foreign policy. The same accounts for city diplomacy. The conduct of foreign policy has for long remained an unchallenged state preserve, meaning that the state is the only authority legitimate in pursuing foreign policies (Curtis & Acuto, 2018). Curtis and Acuto (2018, p. 8) support the idea that cities, too, can pursue a foreign policy. The scholars consider the foreign policy of cities to be represented through a formal strategy. However, such strategies rely on a different form of power, as discussed in sub-chapter 2.2. The scholars thus distinguish between sovereign foreign policy and the foreign policy of cities, where of the power, and thereby also foreign policy of cities, lies within the ability to lead actors on governance outcomes.

Despite Oslo increasingly participating in transnational city networks on climate and environmental issues, several of the informants were eager to emphasize that this was not in opposition with the Norwegian Government's foreign policies. I identify that this is also present when speaking of city diplomacy. This sub-chapter illustrates how practitioners with direct links to Oslo Municipality and its international work delineate themselves from a field which seems to be conceived as preserved the state. While city diplomacy is becoming an increasingly establishing concept within the frames of IR, the empirical evidence suggests that there still exist established and distinct roles in terms of international involvement that both Oslo and the national government agree upon and follow. This subchapter provides insight into how the experts make sense of Oslo's agency in relation to the state on this thematic area. I

argue that this is an important contribution concerning the theoretical debates surrounding the city/state dichotomy. Melissen and Van der Pluijm (2007) state that “it can be argued that states have lost their monopoly over social, economic and political activity in their territory” (2007, p. 8). This is because national and international political spheres are increasingly becoming blurred. The case of Oslo suggests that there remain clearly defined boundaries, despite the international and national becoming blurred. This notion is drawn based on the findings that are presented in this sub-chapter. In the next section, the focus remains on the city/state dichotomy in order to include all aspects of the findings derived from the interviews with the practitioners.

5.4. Making sense of the city/state dichotomy

The relationship between city and state (subnational and national) has been discussed amongst scholars. From viewing the relationship as a zero-sum game, such as portrayed by Sassen (1991) and Barber (2013)⁸, the discourse has evolved. The most recent discussions concentrate themselves around the possibility for cooperation between two entities (state and city) as coherent actors, supplementing each other’s agendas. Still, there are identified remaining tensions between the traditional state-based logics of the global order that once belonged to a different age, and the increasing global interconnectedness of cities (Curtis & Acuto, 2018). Mainly, such tensions have been concentrated within the state, retaining an ambivalent relationship towards the new role for cities (Curtis, 2016). Karl’s statement provided in the previous sub-chapter illustrates a positive dimension of this discussion, demonstrated in the relationship between Oslo and the Norwegian Government. Here, the Norwegian Government, hereby represented by the foreign ministry, assesses Oslo as a valuable influence. Karl experiences and acknowledges that Oslo obtains bottom-up knowledge. This is recognized as valuable for governmental-intergovernmental negotiations. Throughout the sub-chapters presented so far in this chapter, the relationship between national authorities and Oslo has been presented as a corresponding understanding where defined roles regarding international involvement seemed to be equally understood. Moreover, Birthe has emphasized that she does identify tensions, but that the negotiations and conversation overall are perceived as constructive. I did however identify some tensions between Oslo and the Norwegian Government in particular. These notions will be included as a final section, before turning to concluding remarks, and will draw on specific examples illuminated by the practitioners.

⁸ For detailed elaboration, see sub-chapter 2.4.

During the fall of 2020, the Norwegian Government was to announce which facility that would be granted financial support for an upcoming project concerning carbon capture storage (CCS). The two facilities that stood as final contenders were a cement factory in Brevik, Porsgrunn, and a waste facility in Klemetsrud, Oslo. Prior to the announcement, organisations such as the Confederation of Norwegian Enterprise (NHO) and the Norwegian Confederation of Trade Unions (LO) called for both facilities to receive financial support. However, the Norwegian Government announced in September 2020 that the project would initially focus solely on the facility in Brevik (Kallelid, Sørenes & Ask, 2020). However, three billion NOK would be reserved by the Government for the facility in Klemetsrud, on the premise that Oslo Municipality either covers the remaining 3.8 billion NOK itself or receives EU funding. In response, Governing Mayor Raymond Johansen stated that *“They are asking us to acquire funds via the EU. It won’t be easy”* (Kallelid, Sørenes & Ask, 2020).

The issue concerning the Klemetsrud facility emerged during several interviews as well, and I noticed that different assessments were made by the informants. For instance, when speaking to Robert, his perception was twofold. First of all, Robert recognized the decision made by the Government to choose Brevik as a challenge for Oslo in reaching the goals formulated in the climate strategy. Nevertheless, Robert also recognized the decision as a leap of faith. In reference to the premise made by the Government concerning external funding by the EU, he said:

“It’s actually an interesting example, because traditionally it would be completely the opposite, it would be as such that the Government says that “EU is our contact” [...] “We are a country, its this, this is a union of countries”. But what the Government here says is that “you are Oslo, make contact with Europe and figure this out”. Eh, and this also shows, it shows in a way that the Government thinks its expensive enough to engage Brevik in this project, it, its enough with one facility. On the other hand, they’re saying that if you have as good as contacts as you have in Europe, then prove it.” So it is a vote of confidence in some way” (Karen, 24/09).

Here, Robert argues that a state would originally seek to maintain its monopoly regarding cooperation with other states through what is originally regarded a union between states. Instead, the case of the Klemetsrud facility proves that the Norwegian Government in fact has encouraged dialogue and economic collaboration between Oslo and the EU. In Robert’s view, this is a sign of trust from the Government regarding Oslo’s international connections.

Helen provides a different understanding concerning the CCS project. It should be noted that this interview took place before the decision was announced by the Government, and the statements therefore represent opinions prior to this announcement. Helen used the CCS project as an example of what she defined as a *necessary collaboration* between the national government and Oslo Municipality. For Oslo to operationalise climate measures, Oslo is dependent upon the national government's accordance. As such, she argued that:

“If Oslo is granted that money, we can develop a technology, it will be a boost for the business life in Norway if we succeed. We cannot do this without the Government. [...] It shouldn't be like the situation we have in Norway, that one sits and wonders, that you have to run for ehm, fight to receive those 15 billions that are a piece of cake for the Government, because they are two different facilities. If you read in the newspapers, you'll see that NHO has made an official statement together with Raymond Johansen, advocating the money to be granted both facilities” (Helen, 27/08).

Seeing as this interview was conducted prior to the announcement by the Government, reflections concerning the EU are not included. Helen depicts a relationship of dependency between Oslo and the national government. It was also noted earlier in the interview that Oslo is dependent upon a cooperation with national authorities in order to initiate certain projects. This statement portrays an awareness of the restraints Oslo faces, as well as the opportunities a collaborative relationship with the Norwegian government provides. This counts for both sides, as the national business life could benefit from such a collaboration.

“We used some time during our year as the European Green Capital trying to inform the government about what Oslo does, but we experienced that we often got into an unnecessary conflict with the government, on transport for example [...] We believed that what we did in Oslo contributed in mitigating emissions, the government believed that their central governing, tax policies concerning electric cars for example, contributed to mitigate emissions instead of being able to say that together we usually succeed”. (Robert, 24/09).

In this statement, Robert informs that he has experienced a tug of war between Oslo Municipality and the national government regarding climate friendly measures. Nevertheless, he chooses to refer to this as an “unnecessary” conflict. As such, I understand Robert to imply that he believes that this could be solved in other ways.

On a national level, Grandi (2020) finds that an increasing number of governments are welcoming city diplomacy. This is a result of national government recognizing cities as important actors in enhancing the country's international profile. Robert depicts an ambivalent picture of the dichotomy between Oslo and the Norwegian Government. On one side, Oslo is included in a sphere mainly concerned with states. This illustrates a will to lift Oslo's comprehensive engagement on climate and environment. However, it would seem the Government seeks to retain Oslo's attention as a city alone. This is an interesting point, as it might indicate the state's awareness of cities' increasing prominence on the global stage. If the state had not viewed the city as a threat, it would not have been necessary to underscore the dynamics of who they represent?

From these examples, the tensions or disagreements are concentrated on cases located in Norway, and legally speaking under the Government's jurisdictions. Nevertheless, they still play an important role in regards to Oslo being able to achieve its international goals. In this sense, I identify that there are several areas where national authorities and Oslo as well grapple with different areas of authority. In this sense, the findings might suggest that while Oslo and the Norwegian Government are mutually understanding on defined areas of foreign policy in example, the increasing role of Oslo has nevertheless led to certain areas domestically as yet unresolved in terms of authority.

Van der Pluijm and Melissen (2007) argue that in regard to how globalization processes affect cities in diplomacy, "it can be argued that states have lost their monopoly over social, economic and political activity in their territory" (2007, p. 8). A result of globalization is the increasingly blurred lines between the national and international sphere. Moreover, Curtis (2016a) states that global city networks can allow cities to by-pass the traditional hierarchies of the state system. In the case of Oslo, I believe it would be to exaggerate Oslo's role by saying that it by-passes the traditional state. Instead, the understandings and experiences of the experts interviewed for this research illustrates how lines between the national and international are being blurred, and thereby also between the local and the international. I interpret from the informants' understandings that there still remains some areas between city and state concerning the role distribution that has yet to resolved. Turning to the excerpt saying that Oslo seeks to find room for manoeuvre within existing frameworks of jurisdiction, indicates that Oslo does not seek to change structures. Rather, I identify that Oslo works within own jurisdictions, and seeks to expand on this. As such, Oslo does not by-pass its own authority,

but works within the structures it enjoys. By working with cities globally, Oslo can prove its competency without necessarily reaching beyond own legal frameworks.

8. Conclusion:

In this thesis, I have examined how experts on a municipal, ministerial, and academic level understands and experiences Oslo's involvement in transnational city networks on the thematic area climate and environment. By incorporating the concept city diplomacy to encapsulate the activities of cities on the international arena, I formulated the following research question: How does Oslo do diplomacy?

I have defended and contextualized the research question guiding this thesis by highlighting Oslo's broad involvement in transnational city networks, and the strategies that guide Oslo's international cooperation. The concept of city diplomacy has enabled me to study Oslo as an actor on the international arena, and the activities the City engages in.

City diplomacy has been employed as an analytical concept to this research. By employing city diplomacy to this thesis, this enables me to view cities as agents on the global stage. However, as cities have acquired political capabilities, the relationship between the sovereign state and the city has been problematized. The literature is identified to follow two different developments: a) a zero-sum outset of spatial scales that lead to the declining power of the territorial state, and b) a historical evolvement of transformative changes for both the territorial state and the sub-nation character. The theoretical framework illustrated that the most recent theoretical contributions argue that the rise of the city does not necessarily entail the loss of state power.

The findings of this study show that Oslo's involvement in transnational city networks comes to show through very specific examples. However, in the process of uncovering these concrete examples, the findings suggest that there are important aspects linked to Oslo's international involvement. The experts interviewed for this study recognize that transnational city networks provide an important platform for experience and knowledge-sharing in regard to Oslo's policies on climate and environment, thus reflecting the theoretical concept of city diplomacy.

The experts experience Oslo's international involvement to stem from very specific purposes, which in turn reflects how Oslo engages in different city networks. As such, Oslo utilizes different networks for different purposes. Through the interviews, two city networks were particularly evident. These two networks are C40 and Eurocities. The regional network

Eurocities is perceived as important for attracting business and tourism in competition with other European cities, but also as a platform where Oslo can work strategically to influence EU policies on areas such as improving water quality and air quality. Moreover, Eurocities is especially useful for Oslo for policy-sharing, as it is acknowledged that European cities share similar structures. C40 provides a fruitful platform for sharing best practices, and the practitioners identify that Oslo enjoys a very central role in the network. The political will of Oslo comes especially to show through C40. Moreover, the experts identify that Oslo's focus on climate and environment has been strengthened. Several of the respondents see this in correlation with Governing Mayor Raymond Johansen, who has led the City Government since 2015.

From the analysis, two contestations became evident. These contestations concern the notion of Oslo conducting city diplomacy, and Oslo conducting foreign policy. Reflections and reactions towards these two aspects revealed that there was a consensus amongst the experts interviewed, particularly assembling foreign policy as a state-based activity. By utilizing qualitative interviews for this study, one gets an insight into such demarcations that are taking place. The experts identify that while Oslo seeks to influence decision-making regionally and globally, there is still a restraint towards identifying with activities that can resemble state-based activities. The respondents' understandings imply that city diplomacy brings connotations towards traditional diplomacy. As such, two of the municipal experts delineate themselves from this. This is important in telling us how the relationship between the state and city has evolved, thus contributing to the body of literature on this area. This is important in telling us about the city and state dichotomy and serves as a contribution to the body of literature on this aspect.

The findings further indicate that Oslo utilizes city networks to showcase its developments and initiatives on climate. Further discussions concerning the relationship between the national government and the city implies that Oslo wishes to gain a greater degree of legitimacy in negotiations and discussions with national authorities. Through transnational city networks, Oslo can show for ambitious and globally recognized initiatives.

In concluding terms, Oslo engages the world globally by developing specific initiatives that are shared through transnational networks. Oslo engages in a pragmatic international cooperation, with clear thoughts concerning its international involvement. Suggestion are made that Oslo then utilizes international cooperation for domestic purposes.

Lastly, this thesis has sought to contribute to the increasing body of literature on cities and transnational networks in International Relations by highlighting in-depth perspectives.

7. Bibliography

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8. Appendix

8.1. List of informants/experts

Informant (pseudonym)	Date	Occupation/institution	Location of interview/medium
Birthe	27 th August 2020	Experienced researcher	Oslo, Microsoft Teams
Helen	27 th August 2020	Many years’ experience with Oslo’s international work, Oslo Municipality	Oslo, Microsoft Teams
Karl	09 th September 2020	Many years’ experience with Norway’s foreign relations, Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs	Oslo, Telephone
Karen	24 th August 2020	Many years’ experience with Oslo’s international work, Oslo Municipality	Oslo, Microsoft Teams

Robert	24 th September 2020	Many years' experience with Oslo's international work, Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs	Oslo
Turid	18 th September 2020	Many years' experience with Oslo's international work, Oslo Municipality	Oslo

8.2. Interview guide

Introductory questions:

1. Tell me about your background ...
2. What are your experiences with Oslo's international work, particularly on climate and environment?
3. Do you have any examples of projects you want to highlight as particularly interesting?

How Oslo engages the world globally:

4. How would you describe Oslo's role in international city networks?
5. Why do you think city networks have become increasingly important for cities?
6. What do you experience as particularly important with cooperation between cities?
7. What are your thoughts concerning cities as independent actors in international relations?
8. How would you describe the current relationship between Oslo as an international actor and the Norwegian foreign ministry as a traditional diplomatic actor?

The way forward:

9. How do you see Oslo's role in international city networks developing in the future?
10. What do you think will be particularly important for Oslo's international involvement moving forward?

8.3. City networks guide

Networks are ranked alphabetically and reflect neither degree of significance for Oslo nor size in this order.

*= Not explicitly defined as a city network. Included to illustrate the broad array of Oslo's cooperation.

City Network	Objectives and purposes	Reach (regional/global)
C40	An arena for, and provide support to cities to “collaborate effectively, share knowledge and drive meaningful, measurable and sustainable action on climate change.” ⁹	Global. 97 affiliated cities.
CatchMR	Seeks to increase competitiveness of cities as well as to increase quality of life in large cities. Particular focus on finding sustainable solutions for transport and mobility. ¹⁰	Regional. Seven (7) partner cities.
The Covenant of Mayors*	European Commission initiative. Pledging “action to support implementation of EU [...] greenhouse gas-reduction target by 2030.” ¹¹	Global ≈ 10 500 signatories.
CNCA – The Carbon Neutral Cities Alliance	“A collaboration of leading global cities achieving carbon neutrality before 2050”. ¹²	Global. 22 member cities ¹³
Eurocities	Platform working to influence EU policies and legislation as well as being a platform for knowledge- and ideasharing. Oslo participates in: Environment Forum, Mobility	Regional (Europe). 190 member cities. ¹⁵

⁹ (C40 Cities, n.d.)

¹⁰ (Oslo Municipality, n.d.a).

¹¹ (Covenant of Mayors, n.d.)

¹² (USDN, n.d.)

¹³ (Carbon Neutral Cities, n.d.)

¹⁵ (Eurocities, n.d.).

	Forum as well as working groups on “air quality, noise, waste, water management, green areas and biodiversity, Smart city logistics & fleet management and developing a new mobility culture” ¹⁴	
ICLEI – Local Governments for sustainability	A platform for local and regional governments to “influence sustainability policy and drive local action for low emission, nature-based, equitable, resilient and circular development” ¹⁶	Global. >1750 members.

¹⁴ Oslo Municipality. (n.d.b). .

¹⁶ (ICLEI, n.d.)



Norges miljø- og biovitenskapelige universitet
Noregs miljø- og biovitenskapelige universitet
Norwegian University of Life Sciences

Postboks 5003
NO-1432 Ås
Norway