

Towards Good Governance in the 21st Century: The Role of Place-Branding in Building Global Civil Society.

Political and Economic Context

The global economic system is moving into a new order. Not only is there a geographical shift taking place in the world economy as the economic and demographic power of Asia is untethered, but within the emerging economies, as elsewhere in the world, people are increasingly following jobs towards urban centres.

New cities are being built every day as the economic power of Asia, Africa and the Middle East gathers pace. In ten or twenty years, entirely new cultural and economic centres - still emerging today - such as Doha, Jakarta, or Moscow might play a more important role as hubs in a global system of cities.

Cities have become world centres of commerce, culture and capital. Cities are the homes of advanced business services, with McKinsey estimating that 600 of them account for 60% of world GDP. Just 100 cities currently account for 30% of the world's economy, and almost all of its innovation. They are home to the most cosmopolitan and diverse populations, as witnessed in London - now with a foreign-born workforce of over 40%, or New York with 36%.

The profound challenge is that governance models are out-of-cycle with this economic dynamism. Political structures are out-of-date, designed for imperialism and the nation-state; all too often, they are often operating despite, rather than because of their national government.

Identity-Crisis and the Emergence of Good Governance

One of the most challenging features of the current political trend, is that the need for good governance cannot be swiftly met by the nation-state. The global economic challenge which every state now faces cannot be met by the state alone, as an identity vacuum is created - at best unlocking new optimism amongst fast-growing economies and at worst generating crises of confidence amongst transitional or fragile economies - generating further economic insecurity and feeding fear about the future. Many of these changes have taken place within one or two generations, meaning that for citizens of, for instance, post-Soviet or post-imperial states, there is a lack of trust in the apparatus of the state but worsened by the lack of immediate experience of democratic process and institutions in living memory.

Identity emerges at local, regional, civic, ethnic and religious levels - it is a complex interwoven mix of cosmopolitanism which, with the right nurturing conditions can enable stability as well as growth.

The Catalytic Opportunity Presented by Place-Branding

Many nations, regions and cities across east-Europe and Asia are increasingly looking towards place-branding activities to help them form an economic identity and to promote their region as a place to visit, study and invest. Place-branding is a relatively new phenomenon but is also a discipline with a clear set of processes and stages designed to generate success in helping places to determine their vision, their competitive identity and

secure their economic competitive advantage. Place-branding can be an important initial step towards achieving these aims but it can also create a series of important incidental and secondary outcomes which help to achieve strong governance and political stability. Place-branding is a pre-political activity which sets out to establish a set of shared norms, a compass which can help to determine consensus on shared values and aims around which political dissonance can be enabled and, more importantly, structured.

If the citizens and institutions of a given society cannot first agree on common narratives, similar interpretations of history, a shared vision of economic purpose, or complex cultural practices then establishing robust governance systems will inevitably lead to undisciplined battles for control of power in public life, rent-seeking in the economic sphere, and fragmented cultural identities based more on difference than similarities.

Place-branding begins with an exploration of these conditions and characteristics built upon dialogue and exchange; not creating homogeneity but setting our governance process to generate mutual understanding based upon internal differences as well as setting global differentiation and commonality of purpose.

21st Century Public Diplomacy: a Soft Diplomacy Initiative for Global Civil Society

A new cosmopolitan order first requires that the global citizenship test must be passed. Cross-border challenges of climate change, terrorism, war and famine are rooted in multiple economic geographies which rarely correspond to nation-state boundaries.

Public diplomacy in the 21st century will not be led by nation-states. It will not be defined by states engaging with each other to promote their own versions of economic nationalism.

A multiplicity of actors will be required to help achieve a new cosmopolitan order. Leaders from cities, supra-national bodies, independent philanthropic foundations and business as well as nation-states, will have to work together to push the universal civic tradition existent in every society's traditions in order to create an initiative promoting global civil society.

Cultural exchange, international trade, and economic ambition (at its core the basic human desire to provide for our futures) are fundamental characteristics of human activity. We reach to each other to learn from each other's technological successes, to experience each other's cultural variety and to build economic partnerships which can sustain our way of life.

The 21st century will see humanity achieve considerable technological advances and develop multiple new trading opportunities. Place-branding has the potential to play an important and significant role in that process. At its best place-branding can nurture economic interdependency when founded upon strong cultural exchange. Just as trade has played a significant role throughout history in building economic interdependence, safeguarding against war and nationalist aggression, so too is there a role for cultural exchange to help define a safer and better future: place-branding might play such a global public diplomacy role - in the 21st Century this new discipline may just have come of age.

We at Global Cities are establishing an initiative to pursue this approach over the course of 2014 and would love to talk to anyone who wants to get involved. Please get in touch if you want to help define 21st century public diplomacy.

About the Author

David Adam is Founder & Principal of Global Cities. Global Cities provides thought-leadership on Cities and Globalisation. Examining future economic, demographic, and technological trends and their interplay with urbanisation, Global Cities supports organisations and places to maximise their opportunities for economic development and business growth created through globalisation.

In 2012, through Global Cities and its sister organisation, Global Cities Foundation, David worked with the Chinese Government to establish a major cultural exchange between Beijing and London - which culminated in a visual arts exhibition at the Barbican Centre in August 2012. The Creative Cities Collection now has a permanent base in Beijing and is on its way to becoming established as a major international cultural exchange initiative and proposed to take place in Nanjing 2014 and Rio in 2016.

David was the intellectual architect and curator of the Mayor of London's Global Futures Debate Series which took place in City Hall during the 2012 Games - using the worldwide attention generated by the Olympics to set out London's role in the world economy. Filmed and broadcast around the world by CNBC, the debates saw leading thinkers such as Jimmy Wales, Saskia Sassen, Richard Sennett and Jim O'Neill congregate in London to debate its future. The debates trended on Twitter at the height of the Games.

About his organisation he says "We're passionate about working with places to help them achieve their goals and ambitions on the global stage and to ensure that cities can win from globalisation".