Local Governments as Foreign Policy Actors and Global Cities Network-Makers: The Cases of Barcelona and Porto Alegre∗

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Abstract
This paper aims to contribute to the growing interdisciplinary literature on World Cities and (World) City Networks. It draws on two different sets of academic production and attempts to make a connection between them. The first set comes from the research of political geographers on World Cities, particularly the group on Globalization and World Cities led by Peter Taylor, of Loughborough University (UK). The second set are the more varied and trans-disciplinary contributions (originating mainly from sociology, political science and international relations/foreign policy analysis) focused on the transnational activities of local governments.

The point of departure is the examination of Taylor’s attempt to identify the “skeletal structures of global governance and global civil society” through two different city networks, a supra-state city network with UN agencies as network-makers (global governance network) and a trans-state city network with NGOs as network-makers (civil society network). According to Taylor, the nodes (“World Cities”) of the global governance network are the cities which host the biggest number of United Nations agencies, and the nodes of the civil society network are the cities which host the biggest number of NGOs.

Local governments are explicitly banned as network-makers in Taylor’s model. I argue that this model would improve considerably if instead they were taken into account. In fact, the transnational networking activities led by local governments have been repeatedly highlighted as essential elements of global governance and to a lesser extent, of global civil society. I therefore propose the consideration of an alternative global governance city network. Its nodes or World Cities would be cities whose local governments are particularly active in the transnational diffusion of successful urban administration practices.

I illustrate this with the examples of two cities that qualify, according to this criterion, as nodes of the global governance network: Barcelona (Spain) and Porto Alegre (Brazil). The local government of Barcelona has been a successful propagator of its own model of urban management, mainly to Latin American cities. Porto Alegre, for its part, is widely known through the diffusion of its Participative Budgeting (a mechanism of municipal resource allocation based on the broad participation of civil society representatives) all over the world, including some European cities.

The global governance network made up of cities with active local governments in the ways described above would probably be much less hierarchical than Taylor’s, a result

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that would be more consistent with the idea (defended by James Rosenau, among others) that global governance operates through rather horizontal power structures.

1. Introduction

The use of the network metaphor to denote the different modalities of economic, political and social articulations is widespread in the social sciences (McLachlan, 1961; Granovetter, 1983; Powell, 1990; Thompson, 2003). However, when speaking of networks, it is clearly not always the same concept that is being referred to. Most notably, the network metaphor embraces both organized (agent-driven) and self-organizing (process-driven) varieties. This is the case with the concept of city networks, which denotes very different modes of articulation in two different sets of academic literature: on one hand, that of urban studies (which includes subjects such as political geography and urban sociology) and on the other, that of political studies (political science, political sociology and international relations).

In the field of urban studies, the conceptualizations of city networks focus on the (mostly economic) flows that connect world cities (or global cities, to use Sassen’s terminology (1991; 2002)). The main interest is, through the study of these flows, to establish a political geography of globalisation centred on the cities, specifying the hierarchy and power relations between them. In these studies, the actors responsible for the generation of flows (network-makers) receive less attention than the flows themselves (whether economic, informational, or of knowledge). Therefore, the network exists if the connectivity between the nodes is significant. Whether or not the network-makers are interested in forming a network is of little interest.

In political studies, on the other hand, what is normally understood by city networks are voluntary cooperation schemes with varying degrees of institutionalization and constituted by local governments. These cooperation schemes can range from not very institutionalized policy-networks (Börzel, 1998) devoted above all to the exchange of information, to permanent local government organizations, or to other types of cooperation mechanisms,
such as transnational advocacy networks (Keck and Sikkink, 1998) that can on occasion be formed by local governments (Betsill and Bulkeley, 2004). The scope of the networks also varies, ranging from specific themes to networks geared towards cooperation in several areas at the same time. Differently from what happens in the field of urban studies, in political studies the agents are the focus of the study of city networks, more specifically the local governments, which cooperate with one another on their own initiative or in response to demands from other economic/business or social actors. What is of interest for those who study the area, is precisely to understand the reasons for which the actors involved (i.e. local governments) create and keep these networks going.

Although important authors such as Manuel Castells have made significant contributions to the conceptualisation of city networks in both senses and in the two academic fields mentioned (Castells, 1996, in urban sociology; Borja and Castells, 1997, with regard to local governments as political actors), as far as we know neither he nor any others have attempted to establish a connection between the two. This is precisely the aim of this paper. What has led us to undertake this now is the incentive of an article by eminent geographer Peter Taylor, in which he employs the concept of city networks as used in political geography and urban studies to identify, from a city-centred focus, “the skeletal structures of global governance and global civil society” (Taylor, 2005b: 707), thus entering into a discussion central to political (international) studies nowadays. Furthermore, the idea that international cooperation between local governments (constituting, precisely, city networks in the political-institutional sense) is an important element in global governance – both from the empirical point of view and in the normative sense – is widespread among academics who study local government networks and, more generally, local governments as foreign policy actors from the perspective of political studies (Alger, 1988; 1990; 1999; Soldatos, 1990; Kincaid, 1999; Aldecoa and Keating, 1999). It is also widespread within the very organizations of which local governments are members (such as United Cities and Local Governments), or have an important role in (such as the UN-Habitat programme).
The question from which this paper arose was: To what extent does Taylor’s approach to city networks as flows help us to better understand global governance and global civil society phenomena? What I will argue is that Taylor’s attempt was unsuccessful. His representation of the global governance structure through flows that connect the cities is of little use for an understanding of the phenomenon. Among other reasons, I believe so because when speaking of global governance from a cities perspective, the role of local governments as agents or network-makers must be necessarily taken into consideration, and in Taylor’s model it is not.

This paper’s structure is as follows: In section 2 I consider the concept of city networks from a general urban studies perspective. In section 3 I examine Peter Taylor’s proposal, which attempts to go beyond the economic dimension of globalization and approach the political dimension from a city-centred point of view. In section 4, drawing on city networks literature in political studies I argue that, to deal with cities as diffusers of governance practices and institutions, it is essential to take the role of local governments into account. In sections 5 and 6 I present the examples of Barcelona and Porto Alegre, two diffusers of urban management practices. Section 7 contains my final considerations.

2. The transnational world cities network in urban studies

In current urban studies, cities are considered from two dimensions: “Cities have both existence in Cartesian space (bounded territoriality) and as an imagined construct of flows” (Stanley, 2005: 190). While the traditional view emphasized territoriality, cities as autonomous entities limited by walls, as geographical spaces or “spaces of places”, more recent views give more importance to cities as “spaces of flows” (Castells, 1996). The networks terminology is related to this perspective, with the image of cities as nodes connected by flows through space (Castells, 1996), a city as a “network-city”.

Even if the concept of network as synonymous with “urban system”, especially when referring to connections between cities within a limited space (nation-state or region), has
been used at least since the 1960s, the attempt to establish the characteristics of a single world (transnational) network of cities is related to two more recent concepts linked to the current process of globalization: the concept of world city and that of global city.

Although the concept of world city was coined by Patrick Geddes in 1915, the recent “world city hypothesis”, considered the point of departure of today’s concern with the phenomenon, was developed by John Friedmann in the 1980s (Friedmann and Wolff, 1982; Friedmann, 1986). According to the hypothesis, world cities are centres of production and pivots that articulate national economies to the world economy, and constitute base points in the spatial organisation and articulation of production and markets. Friedmann (1986, 1995) also postulated a hierarchical classification of world cities in which New York, London and Tokyo occupy the highest rank, as principal world cities.

In turn, the concept of “global city” developed by Saskia Sassen (1991) alludes to the participation of cities in the global economy as spaces where international service companies (law firms, telecommunication etc) are located. Although New York, London and Tokyo are again considered principal global cities and although many authors use both concepts without distinction, Friedmann’s world city concept and Sassen’s global city concept are not interchangeable. As well as the aforementioned fact that world cities are so due to their nature as producers of goods and that global cities are global service bases, the geographical space of a world city is wider (as it can include the entire metropolitan area, the “city-region”) than the space of the global city, which is reduced to those districts that actually contain global service providers.

If the essence of the world/global city phenomenon is its connectivity, the fact that research on relations between world cities was relatively neglected for years is quite curious. Towards the end of the 1990s, however, studies about the “transnational city network” started to appear. Geographer Peter Taylor, creator of a centre for world city studies (GaWC: Globalization and World Cities, of Loughborough University), was one of the first to point out the relative lack of attention given to relations between world cities (Taylor,
1997) and also one of the main proponents of globalization models based on the world city network.

Since then, studies aiming to establish a cartography of economic globalization based on the identification of flows between cities, and attempting to establish what the nodes of this world network are and how power is distributed among them, have flourished. (Taylor, 2000; Taylor, 2001; Taylor, 2005a; Taylor 2005b; Taylor e.a. 2002; Beaverstock e.a. 2002). But, as Derudder (2006: 2028) pointed out, there is still a certain conceptual confusion in these attempts. One of the main reasons seems to be that, while some studies (such as those of GaWC) start from the principle that the relations between the key cities are created mainly by the location strategies of multinational advanced producer service firms (through intra-firm communication), other analyses start from the assumption that the key to connectivity is the telecommunication and transport infrastructures and it is on them that the classifications are based. This explains the lack of consensus amongst scholars on the cartography of globalization that the transnational city network should provide.

For our purposes, however, it is of little use to ponder the problems of the conceptualization of economic globalization based on the connections between cities. What interests us, instead, is to account for another enterprise of Peter Taylor’s (Taylor, 2005b): the adaptation of the world city network model that describes the global economy to other world city networks that describe, respectively, the global governance and the global civil society structures.

3. Global governance and global civil society through cities networks: Peter Taylor’s proposal

The starting point of Taylor’s proposal is the realisation that globalization is not only economic, but also political. To debate global governance and global civil society from a “city-centric” perspective presupposes considering world cities not only “global service centres”, but also political centres, places “from which emerge global social practices”, in
other words, the “organizational nodes of global governance and of global civil society” (Taylor, 2005b: 706). These organizational nodes then permit the postulation of other world city networks that represent different dimensions of globalization: The global governance network and the global civil society network. A third network is also proposed: The interstate “Westphalian” network, which is of no interest to the author in itself, but serves as a measuring device to compare the other two and to demonstrate how the globalization process is altering the equilibriums between the three networks.

As well as the networks and cities themselves, which are the networks’ nodes (especially those cities considered to be command-and-control-centres), Taylor is concerned with the identification of the agents or network-makers (sub-nodes) for each one of them. This is because, in Taylor’s “interlocking model” (Taylor, 2001), cities are connected indirectly, through constituent subcomponents. If in the global economy network the network-makers are the global service enterprises, for the interstate Westphalian network it is the foreign affairs ministries and diplomatic representations; for the global governance network, the United Nations agencies; and for the global civil society network, the international NGOs’ offices. Each of these network-makers (sub-nodes) is in charge of reproducing institutions and practices using the cities and, in the process, interconnecting the cities by means of network-making practices.

With the Westphalian state as a reference, the agents that create the three networks are positioned on three different levels: The transnational for the global civil society, the interstate for the inter-diplomatic network, and the supranational for the international global governance.

Due to the difficulty of measuring the fluxes themselves, the connectivity between the nodes is measured indirectly, attributing different values to the presence and functions of offices belonging to the institutions considered. Thus, those cities in which foreign affairs ministries and embassies are located (capital cities) are ranked more highly than cities that host just consulates, and these in turn score higher than cities hosting no diplomatic representations at all. Therefore, the main nodes in the Westphalian network are all capital
cities. The global governance network nodes are identified according to the number and importance of United Nations agencies they host (headquarter cities scoring higher than regional offices and these scoring higher than field offices). The nodes of the global civil society network are the cities that receive the highest scores in view of the number of NGOs located in their territory according to a similar criterion of office’s responsibility (Taylor, 2005b: 710).

Once the highest scoring nodes have been identified, Taylor is able to characterize each network and to compare them with each other. The results are, at the very least, curious, especially if considered from the perspective of the discipline of International Relations.

Of the three networks, the Westphalian inter-diplomatic one turns out to be the least hierarchical. This is due to the fact that all states possess capital cities, which are indeed privileged by the model (Taylor, 2005b: 711). The global governance network is, for its part, very concentrated and hierarchical, with three command-and-control-centres or main nodes: Geneva, Washington and New York, the cities hosting the greatest number of international organizations headquarters. Slightly less concentrated but also quite hierarchical is the network that represents global civil society, with London, Washington, Geneva, Brussels, Tokyo and New York as dominant nodes, also due to the presence of NGO’s headquarters.

Taylor himself points out some puzzling aspects of his results, beginning with the low hierarchical level in the Westphalian network. This is a counterintuitive result, given the seemingly imperial structure of today’s world system, with the United States as a pole (Hardt and Negri, 2000; Colás, 2007; Mann, 2003; Bacevich, 2002). Taylor justifies this with the argument that, more than diplomatic practice, it is military power that is hierarchical, something not measured by the study (Taylor, 2005b: 719). The concentration and hierarchy of the other two networks also seems counterintuitive, especially in the case of the global governance network. Taylor defends his result by pointing out that, despite the

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1 However, if military power were measured with similar methods, the results could not be too different, considering that there are virtually no states without a Defence Ministry.
fact that the more accepted global government characterizations (such as that of James Rosenau (Rosenau, 1995) ) point to much varied and not very hierarchical governance structures, his results show that the governance power structures are not as horizontal as in Rosenau’s description (Taylor, 2005b: 722).

For my part, as already mentioned, I do not believe that the networks that Taylor identifies are particularly useful as global governance and global civil society characterizations.

In the first place, the very distinction that Taylor makes between global governance and global civil society as two different networks seems questionable. It is problematic, in effect, the idea that the two concepts represent two dimensions different from and parallel to globalization. This is so because if global governance refers to processes, in fact to management processes that include but reach far beyond strictly governmental management (hence the well-known distinction between governance and government (Rosenau, 1992: 4-5), global civil society is a concept that denotes agents, some of them non-governmental agents (given that global civil society is a concept created in opposition to that of the state and, at times, to that of the market as well) but who can contribute nonetheless to global governance processes. This, in fact, fits Taylor’s suggestion that NGO’s are possibly “the key integrating institutions between global governance and global civil society” (Taylor, 2005b: 722; Taylor, 1999: 92-93)

This leads us onto a second major limitation in Taylor’s model: Taylor’s identification of the supra-state level as the one at which global governance is managed. He does that based on a restrictive concept of global governance, referred exclusively or mainly to the actions of international organisations or global regulation agencies (Scholte 2000; 2004). Though it is not uncommon to define global governance in such a restrictive way, there is also a much broader use. It is expressed, for instance, in the definition by UN’s Commission on Global Governance (1995, 2-3) according to which global governance involves, besides intergovernmental relationships, “non-governmental organizations, citizen’s movements, multinational corporations, and the global capital market”. Then, in its broader version, global governance consists in a set of mechanisms of management and order, by a very
diverse set of actors, which includes both non-official actors (civil society) and different levels of state actors up to the supra-national level. This is consistent with Rosenau’s notion, quoted by Taylor (Taylor, 2005b: 714), according to which “global governance is the sum of myriad – literally millions – control mechanisms driven by different histories, goals, structures, and processes” (Rosenau, 1995: 182). The network of agencies of the United Nations system would rather be just a representation of the United Nations system itself, not of global governance.²

Amongst the agents not taken into account by Taylor as contributors to global governance are some that, from other perspectives, have been identified, sometimes very emphatically (Alger, 1999), as particularly relevant agents, especially from a city-centred perspective. I am referring precisely to local governments, city governments.

It is interesting to highlight the fact that Taylor not only disregards the role of local governments in global governance, but also explicitly discards any role for local governments as city network-makers (of city networks in general):

Cities do not create city-networks. City governments may and do build, or support the building of, infrastructure networks (airports, smart buildings) but these do not constitute city networks: it is the people, commodities and information that flow through the infrastructures that define the inter-city networks” (Taylor, 2005b: 706).

Really? Is it acceptable to state that, in the creation of city networks, local governments only have a role as facilitators, as builders of infrastructures that would enable other agents to build the networks? I do not agree. The role of city governments in the creation of city networks in the sense accorded to them by Taylor, that is, as “flows that reproduce institutions”, flows constituted by people, goods and information, seems to be much more important than that, especially in the case of the global governance city network. The

² It would not even be a representation of the supra-state level, as it does not take into consideration other important supra-state processes, like European integration.
information flows that local governments exchange through more or less institutionalized cooperation structures (city networks in the political studies sense) are an important contribution to global governance. In fact, I believe that they are the most important contribution by cities as cities to global governance.

In fact, the urban management practices disseminated internationally by the structures and mechanisms of cooperation between local governments are created and developed in the cities (“spaces of places”) which are the origin of the flows. They are therefore an undeniable contribution by cities themselves to global governance, much more than the practices disseminated by the United Nations agencies, which bear little or no relation to life in the cities from which the flows come. What I definitely believe is that, to be able to speak of a city-centric perspective of global governance (as Taylor indeed aims), one has to necessarily consider cities not only as a “space of flows” but also and at the same time, as a “space of places”. The problem with Taylor’s proposal is precisely that, when defining the global governance network (and that of the global civil society as well), he does not pay attention to the necessary connection between the city as a space of places and the city as a space of flows.

However, the connection between space of places and space of flows is indeed present in the global economy network at which the efforts of geographers interested in designing the cartography of economic globalization (most prominently Taylor and GaWC) have been directed. As Sassen persistently highlighted, the global cities phenomenon shows the importance of territoriality in the globalization process (Sassen, 2000; 2006). It is only certain territories that develop the resources (infrastructure, workers with specific training etc.) that make these cities “global cities”. Then, in order to be a “space of flows” relevant in the global economy, the global city must also have specific characteristics as a “space of places”. The same reasoning is applicable to the political dimension of globalization: To be relevant as a “space of flows”, a city must also have certain specificities as a “space of places”. 
However, in Taylor’s global governance/global civil society networks, the connection either does not exist or is very weak. Let us take the case of Geneva as an example, a city that appears as a main node in both global governance and civil society networks. The reason for this is, of course, that Geneva is the main seat of the United Nations, and therefore hosts a considerable number of IGOs headquarters. Because of this, the main international NGOs are also present there, so as to lobby United Nations agencies. But does this make Geneva, as a city, an important contributor to global governance? What do Geneva’s civil society, Geneva’s local government and Geneva’s business fabric have to do with these flows related to development, human rights, humanitarian questions etc, which, in Taylor’s version, come from the city of Geneva? If the United Nations agencies decided to leave Geneva and establish themselves for some reason in another city, would that make any difference to the contents of these flows? Not much, I believe.

This does not mean, of course, that the United Nations system does not reflect a geography of power, with the permanent members of the Security Council or the main financial contributors as the most obvious candidates to the role of nodes or sub-nodes. However, the resultant network of power can hardly be considered, in our view, a “cities network”. It would also be possible to establish a political geography of the NGOs, though perhaps it would be more meaningful if, instead of taking the NGOs’ host cities into account, the nationality (or city of origin) of their members was considered.

Would it be possible to draw the cartography of a global governance city network taking into consideration those flows emanating from cities themselves, as in the case of the global economy city network? I believe so. This leads as, of course, to the role of local governments as agents in the network-making process. In the next section I will show how local governments contribute, through international cooperation, to the international reproduction of their own practices and institutions, thus making a city-specific contribution to global governance.
4. Local governments as foreign policy actors and cities network agents: The Political Studies/International Relations perspective

In the academic fields of Political Studies and International Relations there already exists a vast literature dealing with the foreign action of local governments, which is sometimes called “paradiplomacy” (Aldecoa and Keating, 1999) or “diplomacy of constituent units” (Kincaid, 1990), among other denominations. In this literature, local government is presented as an international actor or agent that reacts to new problems and incentives brought about by the globalization process, increasingly searching in the external environment for the resources necessary to its development. And it does this both on its own initiative and to respond to the demands of its citizens’ social and economic interests.

In the international arena, local governments develop competitive strategies (to attract multinational companies and foreign investment, for example) as well as cooperative strategies. In its turn, the cooperation developed by local governments with several partners can be bilateral or multilateral, and with several degrees of institutionalization. These range from informal contacts to the creation of structures similar to international intergovernmental organizations.

It is into this framework that fit the different modalities of cities networks, now understood as multilateral links voluntarily established by local governments with other local governments for many purposes: exchanging information and knowledge, giving or receiving material aid, lobbying central governments or international organizations, defending local interests or proposing common urban policies in processes of regional integration (Borja and Castells, 1997).

As already pointed out, in more than a few cases these city networks serve to reproduce their own urban management practices and local institutions. In fact, the exchange of “best practices” has become one of the main cooperation activities developed by local governments, often with the collaboration and/or intermediation of several international institutions (the World Bank, the UNDP, UN-Habitat or the European Commission) or of
their own central governments) (UN-Habitat, 2002). Therefore, in promoting this exchange of practices, local governments intervene in global governance and act, to use Taylor’s terms, as network-makers or sub-nodes of the global governance network.

Some local governments are particularly active in the diffusion of their urban management practices (urban governance flows) through cooperation. If those were the flows considered, then the cities where they originate should be identified as the nodes in the global governance city network, instead of those cities hosting IGOs or NGOs, as in Taylor’s proposal. In that case, both Barcelona and Porto Alegre would be good candidates to be ranked among global cities.

As we shall see, the local governments of both cities have developed successful urban management experiences and have succeeded in diffusing them internationally and in making them, in a certain way, the city’s “brand”. In the case of Barcelona, its main internationally-diffused successful experience is its strategic planning methodology (Strategic Urban Planning), adopted by numerous cities in the world, especially Latin American ones. Porto Alegre, in its turn, has become internationally renowned by means of the dissemination of its Participative Budgeting, a practice of allocation of public resources based on a process of discussions with its citizens, which has been much diffused and reproduced, even in some European cities.

Moreover, the respective municipal authorities have shown themselves to be very active in the institutional structures – city-networks – of international municipal cooperation, on a regional, as well as on a global level. On a regional level, the fact that both are part of integration processes has very much favoured the search for alliances with other local governments to build cooperation spaces. This also favours alliances with pressure groups that can facilitate the insertion of local governments into the decision-making processes on a supra-national scale. On a global level, Barcelona’s municipal government has been one of the main promoters (on the basis of the merger of two existing international organizations of cities and local authorities) of the constitution of United Cities and Local Governments, the first local government organization of universal reach (Salomon and
Sanchez, 2008), whose seat was established precisely in Barcelona. Although on a lesser scale, Porto Alegre is also an active participant in international city politics, having facilitated the creation of a cooperation network (the FAL, the Mayors for Social Inclusion network), in which it externalizes its own municipalist set of ideas.

Then, a positive correlation between the involvement in (organisational) city-networks and the diffusion of best practices can be detected. This makes sense, since city-networks are an important vehicle for the diffusion of urban management practices. If so, a possible way of indirectly measuring those flows would be through the ranking of cities according to the organisational city networks they belong to. In fact, Taylor himself considered, in one previous attempt to identify political globalisation processes from a city-centred perspective (Taylor 2005a), the presence in cities of international local governments’ organisations as a relevant indicator, along with the presence of UN’s agencies and representation of states. In so doing, he was (rightly) considering the “three separate political datasets that represent the scales at which governance primarily operates” (Taylor, 2005a: 1597). But subsequently he discarded the subnational scale.

5. The “Barcelona model” and its international diffusion

To all of those concerned with urban planning, it is an inarguable fact that a “Barcelona model” exists (Kirby, 2004), mainly in the field of re-urbanization, where Barcelona local authorities and planners have earned many prizes and recognitions. Barcelona has, in effect, undergone a process of re-urbanization that began with the arrival of the Catalan Socialist Party (PSC) at the city council in 1979. It gathered momentum with the nomination of the city for the 1992 Olympic Games, which was very useful for the improvement of the urban infrastructure and continues until today, after thirty years of uninterrupted socialist government. The city, which had suffered a grave deterioration process during the Francoist regime, with a rapid and uncontrolled urbanization dominated by speculators, loss of public spaces, running down of suburbs etc, reversed this process in a few years, gained green
spaces, regenerated its central areas, created new centralities and the life of its dwellers was greatly improved.

As well as an urbanism model, Barcelona is also a political model, in particular a reference for European social democracy. In fact, for some, Barcelona’s importance as a model lies in the ability of its managers (urban planners, architects, economists, political leaders) to merge political transformation with urban transformation (McNeill, 2003, p.79).

The Barcelona model, however, is not fixed: the discourse and practices on which it is based have evolved over time. The socialists have remained in power, but socialism (whether Catalan, Spanish or European) has changed, and this is reflected in the municipal government’s discourse and in the city’s administration. The change was notable, and it took place mainly during Mayor Pasquall Maragall’s administration (1982-1997), the city’s seminal transformation period. In only a few years, the old class-based discourse was substituted by one based on the notions of “municipal citizenship” and “entrepreneurial city”; it changed from opposition to market forces to cooperation with the market through the creation, among other mechanisms, of public-private partnerships. In keeping with the trajectory of European socialism and in the manner of Tony Blair’s “third way”, Barcelona city council tried (probably with more success than the Blairites) to make social concerns and economic competitiveness compatible.

An important instrument in Barcelona’s urban regeneration programme has been its Strategic Plan. A strategic plan is “the definition of a city project that unifies diagnoses, specifies public and private actions and establishes a coherent mobilization framework for the cooperation of urban social actors.” (Borja and Castells, 1997:165). Although the first strategic plans originated in the United States (such as the pioneering 1981 San Francisco plan), the proponents of Barcelona’s Strategic Plan claim that it has unique characteristics and that the main one is the emphasis on the “collaboration of social agents and citizen participation” (Pascual, 1999: 238). They in effect participate both in the development of strategies and in the commitment to, funding and implementation of the actions.
Barcelona’s first Strategic Plan, the “Barcelona 2000 Strategic Plan” (Ayuntamiento de Barcelona, 1990) began to be implemented in July 1988, when the city had already won the bid to host the Olympic Games. It drove the city’s urban transformation, which reached maximum intensity between 1988 and 1992. New centralities were created, the maritime area was regenerated, new fast routes were built, as were important infrastructures, such as telecommunication towers, the airport, digital networks, as well as sporting infrastructures and the Olympic Village in a completely re-urbanized area.

As early as 1993, Barcelona started to systematically export the “Barcelona model” to Latin America through the diffusion of its Strategic Urban Planning methodology (also adopted by some other Spanish (Bilbao, Valencia…) and European (Lisbon, among others) cities. With this purpose in mind, Barcelona’s municipal authorities created the CIDEU (Centro Iberoamericano para el Desarrollo Estratégico Urbano, Iberian-American Centre for Urban Strategic Development), a network of Iberian-American cities whose objective is to “promote and apply Urban Strategic Planning processes to organize sustainable development” (CIDEU, 2007). The CIDEU is governed by an Assembly of Mayors and is presided each year by the mayor of a city belonging to the network. CIDEU’s Secretariat is always directed by a Barcelona city councillor and the permanent headquarters are also located in Barcelona.

Currently, more than seventy Iberian-American cities are CIDEU members (among them, Buenos Aires, Rio de Janeiro and Montevideo) and have applied the “Barcelona Strategic Urban Planning methodology”. The technicians of the Barcelona city council give assistance to all the network’s members in the implementation of the plans, and seminars and courses on Strategic Development are periodically held. CIDEU has been a programme of the Iberian-American Summits since 1995 and is therefore the main agent of local authorities in Iberian-American political cooperation. Strategic Urban Planning is also diffused in the Mercosul through the Mercocidades network.

The diffusion of the Barcelona model through the Strategic Plan, led by Barcelona City Council (but also accomplished through private consultants, particularly Jordi Borja’s team:
Jordi Borja Technology Consulting SL¹), has not been free from controversy. In Brazil, probably due to the lack of success of the Rio de Janeiro Strategic Plan (which, according to the Barcelonese advisors, was due to Strategic Planning directives not having been followed (Borja, 2000), it has met with harsh criticisms from those –mainly in the academia- who see in Strategic Planning a mere neoliberal strategy to “sell” the city to market interests (Vainer et al, 2000). However, many Latin American municipalities governed by the left do not consider the strategic planning incompatible with a more inclusive city model, with Montevideo as a paradigmatic case (Canel, 2001).

6. Porto Alegre’s Participative Democracy model and its international diffusion

Although it is not as consolidated as Barcelona’s, Porto Alegre also embodies a city model. In this case the model is based on the attempt to redefine democracy following left-wing parameters (favouring participative over representative democracy) and on the importance of the role of social movements in the city’s trajectory (Avritzer and Navarro, 2003).

The main governance practice diffused by the city of Porto Alegre is the mechanism known as Participative Budgeting, through which the municipality’s citizens discuss the allocation of part of the municipality’s public resources through assemblies in the different neighbourhoods and through negotiations between delegates chosen by the citizens, and the government (Sanchez, 2002).

The Participative Budgeting was established following the demands of the city’s social movements in the context of the re-democratization process that followed the military dictatorship. It came into being in 1989, during the administration of Olivio Dutra, the first mayor of the PT (Partido dos Trabalhadores, Workers’ Party) of the four who governed

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¹ It participated as advisor in the implementation of the strategic plans of Bogotá, Medellín and Rio de Janeiro, and also advised the municipal authorities of Salvador de Bahia, São Paulo, Brasilia, Buenos Aires, Santiago de Chile, Montevideo, Asuncion and Caracas, among others.
the city until 2005, and is still being applied today, even though Porto Alegre’s City Council is being now in the hands of a centre-right coalition government.

The establishment of the Participative Budgeting in Porto Alegre and its rapid diffusion to other Brazilian cities controlled by the PT (as well as its enthusiastic adoption in other cities abroad, especially in Latin America but also in Europe (Sintomer et al, 2005), was part of the efforts of Latin American left-wing parties (such as the PT in Brazil and the Frente Amplio in Uruguay). Such parties came to control the governments of important cities in the 1980s for having implemented new forms of governability that were at once examples of good administration (and therefore platforms of access to central government) and compatible with their political ideas, with social inclusion and participation as crucial elements (Goldfrank, 2007).

The PT itself applied the Participative Budgeting in the Brazilian cities it came to control and the Porto Alegre City Council actively collaborated with other municipalities in the country in order to implement it. But what is interesting is to stress the international diffusion of the Participative Budgeting as an international strategy in the creation of a city’s “brand” and as a city’s main contribution to decentralized international cooperation.

Porto Alegre’s image of “global solidarity city”, now considerably spread, largely results from a well thought out strategy developed by those responsible for the city’s “paradiplomatic structure”, the International Cooperation and Fundraising Department (SECAR), created in 1995 during the second term of the PT, with Tarso Genro as mayor (Salomon and Nunes, 2007:126).

It is interesting to point out that SECAR authorities attentively considered the example of Barcelona, as a city with an international image based on its own city model and urban management practices. In a similar manner, Porto Alegre’s image was built from a feature that would be at the same time its own, but also exportable – and the Participative Budgeting had both. Originally implemented in Porto Alegre by the PT, it was a good launch pad from which to present the city to the rest of the world as a “participative
democracy capital”. Moreover, the Participative Budgeting had already started to be replicated (with different degrees of success) in other cities in and outside of Brazil.

Differently from Barcelona, which created a specific organizational network for the diffusion of the Strategic Planning, Participative Budgeting’s diffusion took place through structures with more general purposes and not controlled by the city’s authorities.

On an important channel for the Participative Budgeting diffusion was the best practice programme and competition (financed by Dubai) organized by UN-Habitat Programme since 1996, coinciding with Habitat II Intergovernmental Conference in Istanbul. The awards recognize the most noteworthy contributions to the improvement of the quality of life and sustainability of cities and communities, grouping all the other finalist practices – classed as “best” or “good” – in a database, so as to promote their spread. Porto Alegre’s participative Budgeting was one of the forty practices classified as “best” in the 1996 competition, a recognition that was renewed in the 2000 event.

Another, still more important channel, was the Urb-Al Programme, idealized and managed by EU (European Commission) since 1995. Urb-Al is a bi-regional programme which gives support to Latin American and European local governments horizontal cooperation through the constitution of thematic networks, each referred to an important urban policy domain (fight against urban poverty, urban recycling, conservation of historical city centres, etc). The projects implemented in each network are in part financed by the European Commission and in part by local governments themselves. Local governments are responsible for the management of the networks and for the implementation of the projects, supervised by the European Commission and helped by external partners such as Universities.

Porto Alegre City Council became the coordinator of Network 13, Local Financing and Participative Budgeting, since its creation in 2002, coinciding with the beginning of Urb-Al’s Second Phase. Almost 300 Latin American Municipal Governments and about 150 Europeans participated as partners in the network, and more than 20 common projects were
implemented. Some involved an exchange of experiences (A projects) and others the development of capacities by local governments through human resources qualification (B projects). A B project of especial relevancy for the international diffusion of the Participative Budgeting is the “Intercity System for Qualification in Planning and Participative Local Management”, being developed since 2007 by Porto Alegre and seven other cities (San Salvador, Belo Horizonte, Cuenca, Quito, Rosario, Barcelona, Córdoba), together with the Regione Toscana in Italy. The purpose is to idealize a qualification system to be applied in any other city in the world.

With the help of international institutions such as UN-Habitat and Urb-Al, Participative Budgeting spread out in the world. In 2005, hundreds of Latin American (among them Buenos Aires, El Salvador, Mexico City) cities and a bunch of Europeans (including mid-size cities such as Córdoba in Spain and Saint Denis in France) were applying some version of Participative Budgeting Porto Alegre style.

Indeed, Participative Budgeting has become not only Porto Alegre’s main sign of identity, but the most important asset that the city has to offer in terms of cooperation as well. Considering this, it is worth noting that the government that substituted the PT chose, as far as possible, to maintain not only the city’s image, but also the same strategy for the building of an international image. José Fogaça’s government’s promotion of Porto Alegre as a “democracy network city” came from the recognition of the achievements by the previous administration. Furthermore, in a manner similar to the diffusion of the Participative Budgeting outside Brazil undertaken by the PT, Porto Alegre’s current municipal administration takes all opportunities and channels available (from Urb-Al network to the Best Practices awards) to diffuse internationally the Local Solidarity Governance4, its newly adopted management practice based on the constitution of public-private partnerships5.

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4 Porto Alegre’s Local Solidarity Governance has been recently chosen as one of the 55 Best Practices which will be in display in the Best Practices Area of Shanghai World Expo in 2010.
5 As it has already pointed out (Ferreira, 2008), in spite of being jointly promoted, the two practices are dimensions of ideologically opposed political projects.
7. Final considerations

In this paper we have attempted to bring closer two sets of academic literature dealing with two different concepts of “city networks”. In principle, this approximation could seem rather contrived: The flows that connect the globalized economy nodes do not seem to have much in common with local government cooperation organizations.

However, my main argument is that, actually, the two concepts are complementary, at least with regard to the global governance network that Taylor tries to identify. The political flows that, in our view, form the global governance network from a city-centred perspective have their main means of diffusion in the city-networks (understood as institutional structures) created by local governments. The examples of CIDEU for Urban Strategic Planning and of Network 9 of the Urb-Al Programme for the Participative Budget are examples of local government networks geared towards conveying and reproducing successful urban management experiences, thus contributing to global governance.

Differently from the information and institutional flows spread by the United Nations agencies, the practices diffused internationally by local governments are practices originating in and rehearsed by the cities that they govern. Consequently, these practices (and not the others) are the ones that represent the contribution of the cities as cities to global governance. Therefore, more than Geneva or New York, cities such as Barcelona and Porto Alegre are the ones that would really deserve to be identified as nodes of the global governance network.

The global governance network made up of cities with active local governments in the international diffusion of their own urban management practices would probably be much less hierarchical than in Taylor’s model, a result that would be more consistent with James Rosenau’s assertion that global governance operates through rather horizontal power structures.
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