

Diplomatic Capitals.

Transformations, (De)localizations, Legitimations since 1945

Workshop at the German Historical Institute Paris

6–7 June 2023

Deadline: 15 January 2023

Scientific Committee: Laurence Badel (Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne), Nicolas Badalassi (Sciences-Po Aix), Anne-Sophie Gijs (UCLouvain), Jürgen Finger (German Historical Institute Paris)

Research on capital cities in the last three decades has been guided largely by a constructivist reading that regards them from a symbolic perspective, and not as sites of actual power. Without detracting from the importance of perceptions and concepts, this workshop will explore the distinctive features of the diplomatic capital with respect to the 'international capital (city)' and the 'global city'.

The diplomatic capital is an analytical concept that was developed on the basis of European experiences (cf. Badel, [Revue historique 2022-3, no. 703](#)), and research is needed on its applications and relevance in the context of the restructuring of international relations since 1945. It is defined on the basis of four functions: representation, negotiation, codification and deliberation. As the site of international recognition, the diplomatic capital houses not only representative institutions such as embassies, permanent representations and international organizations, but also often less widely known trade or cultural missions, the expressions of a para- or proto-diplomacy, and potentially the precursors of legations or embassies. As a place of negotiations, the diplomatic capital specializes in the codification of the rules of the international game. Finally, since the nineteenth century it has developed a fourth, deliberative function. The diplomatic capital can also be defined as a city that hosts not only regular conferences of non-governmental organizations or congresses of activists demanding changes to the international rules, but other 'fora' where diplomatic exchanges may take place. The associated functions have had impacts on both the municipal and national fabric. In this context, even cities with no diplomatic tradition have been able to develop a new role on the international stage. This workshop will explore the logics underlying these processes.

In the last decade, Abu Dhabi became the seat of the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA) in 2011, and in 2016 the city hosted an international conference on endangered cultural heritage. And when the headquarters of the International Solar Alliance (ISA) were established in Gwal Pahari, Haryana state, India, it became the country's first diplomatic capital.

While before 1945 such diplomatic capitals were concentrated in the Atlantic world, they have since spread to all continents, not least because this allows decolonized states to participate in the functioning of international relations. The priority of the workshop will be to shed light on how new diplomatic capitals outside Europe, in Africa, Asia and Latin America, established and asserted themselves during and after the Cold War – including in comparison to, and in competition with, European diplomatic capitals both old and new. In addition, we will seek to examine this concept's analytical potential and suitability to capture the transformations of multilateralism as well as both regional and local spaces after 1945.

Contributions are invited in five thematic areas:

The city and its transformations: For a city to establish itself as a diplomatic capital, sites must be built or repurposed for new diplomatic activities. We will look both at informal sites of negotiation (hotels, hospitals, private homes) and buildings that were constructed for international organizations, often following architectural competitions. We will also explore the effects of these new diplomatic sites and uses on existing districts, and the formation of new districts.

Diplomatic (de)localization – (dis)placements and (dis)locations: Contributions in this area will deal with spatial reconfigurations at the national and continental levels as cities take on diplomatic functions. While embassies and international organizations are concentrated in administrative capitals, some cities perform diplomatic functions without being the seat of government agencies: Geneva and Bern represent an archetypal example. The political forms of states – centralized, decentralized or federal – influence the localization of diplomatic functions. We will examine not only the centralization of negotiations, but the role of peripheral sites and the strategies used to re- or delocalize diplomatic activity.

Diplomatic professions: The establishment and consolidation of a diplomatic capital goes hand in hand with the development of specific occupations: interpreters and translators, security guards, encryption specialists, etc. We will pay particular attention to these socio-professional groups. Did the meeting of practices from abroad with local conditions lead to noteworthy changes, cultural hybridizations that altered the rules, habits, protocols or methods of the “diplomatic professions”? Diplomatic capitals are also the sites of education and training in the diplomatic professions, as evidenced by the diplomatic academies in the former socialist states of Europe or in Africa, Latin America and Asia.

Transfer of practices between diplomatic capitals: Has the establishment of diplomatic capitals around the world reproduced or transformed practices that began as commonly accepted customs, and were later codified by international conventions? Were experiences shared between cities, and what were the consequences at either end? Were networks of cities formed in order to facilitate these transfers?

Political representations and legitimacy: To what extent does a city's status as a diplomatic capital contribute to the construction of its brand image, particularly with respect to new subjects of negotiation (the environment, women's rights, etc.), and with what impacts both nationally and internationally? What communications and promotional strategies have municipalities, regions/provinces and states developed to boost the image of the host city? What resources and instruments have been used to this end? To what extent have economic and political actors in these cities participated in these promotional efforts?

To encourage new research, contributions focusing on the second half of the 20th century will be given priority. Contributions centred on African and Asian cities are particularly welcome. Proposals are requested from both historians and geographers. The following list of diplomatic capitals identified by the scientific committee is not an exhaustive one: Addis Abeba, Bandung, Bangkok, Barcelona, Belgrade, Berlin, Bonn, Copenhagen, Frankfurt, Havana, Helsinki, London, Mexico City, Montpellier, Munich, Nairobi, Naples, Oslo, Rio de Janeiro, Shanghai, Singapore, Stockholm.

Costs for transport, accommodation in Paris, and meals will be covered by the organizers.

We welcome proposals for presentations (ca. 20 minutes) in German, French or English that explore a case study or discuss an epistemological question. In addition to the abstract of the proposed presentation, proposals should include a review of the source material in order to structure a research network. We expect the submission of a draft presentation about a week before the conference.

Please send your proposal (max. 1000 words) and a short CV by 15 January 2023 to capdiplo2023@gmail.com.