



PARADIPLMACY LAB  
CENTRE FOR STUDIES  
ON PARADIPLMACY  
AND CITY DIPLOMACY  
University of Lodz



Institute for Regional Studies

# Geopolitical Challenges and Urban Diplomacy

Online conference

Date: **20 March 2026** (Friday)

## Program of the conference

**Link:** <https://teams.microsoft.com/meet/38859341850291?p=pSjDIU0Ubh3qOfdeHB>

Brussels  
time:  
8.30 CET

**Welcome address: Joanna Ciesielska-Klikowska** (University of Lodz)

8.30-9.45  
CET

### Panel 1: Municipalism Without Borders.

#### How Cities and Local Institutions Act Globally

(moderator: Joanna Ciesielska-Klikowska, University of Lodz)

1. **Agnieszka Szpak** (Nicolaus Copernicus University), Internationalization of the Progressive Municipalism – Barcelona International Relations Strategies
2. **Zsuzsanna Zsibók** (ELTE CERS Institute for Regional Studies), National Patterns of Town Twinning in Europe: Geographical Orientation and Municipal Activity
3. **Kim Noach Blumenthal** (Ben-Gurion University of the Negev), How cities' engagement in environmental urban diplomacy reshapes, and is in turn shaped by, city-state relations: A typology drawn from three C40 member cities
4. **Juan Pablo Pinto Bernal** (Universidad del Quindío), Beyond the State: regional universities as actors of territorial diplomacy in fragmented geopolitical contexts. The case of the University of Quindío (Colombia)

## Panel 2: Cities at War. Urban Diplomacy and Solidarity in Response to Russia's Invasion of Ukraine

(moderator: Agnieszka Szpak (Nicolaus Copernicus University))

1. **Jacopo Viti** (Université Libre de Bruxelles), Urban autonomy in geopolitical crisis: How cities generate distinct strategies in the Russia-Ukrainian Conflict
2. **Balázs Brucker** (ELTE CERS Institute for Regional Studies), When Local Meets Global: Budapest's City Diplomacy in Support of Ukraine
3. **Fedor Zolotarev** (University of Pecs), Fractures in Eurasia: Geopolitics of City Diplomacy Networks of Ukraine and Russia after 2022 and implications for China and EU
4. **Réka Horeczki, Nóra Baranyai** (ELTE CERS Institute for Regional Studies), A friend in need? Solidarity between Hungary and Ukraine as reflected in twinning relations during wartime
5. **Joanna Modrzyńska** (Nicolaus Copernicus University), The concept of 'building back better' and the process of reconstructing Ukrainian cities

10.00-  
11.30 CET

## Panel 3: Urban Gateways in Asia and the Middle East. Cities Navigating Global Politics

(moderator: Natalia Matiaszczyk, University of Lodz)

1. **Seven Eredogan, Emrah Atar** (Recep Tayyip Erdoğan University), Sustaining EU Accession through Local Action: The Role of Turkish Cities in the Covenant of Mayors
2. **Andrea Éltető, Miklós Sebők** (ELTE CERS Institute of World Economics), Illiberal Gateway Cities: The Case of Chinese EV Investments in Hungarian Municipalities
3. **Ario Bimo Utomo** (Universitas Pembangunan Nasional Veteran Jawa Timur), Education as Paradiplomacy: The Surabaya-Busan Sister City Partnership and Capacity-Building (2015-2025)
4. **Cheng-Hao Pao, Anna Rudakowska, Malas Takisdahuan** (Tamkang University), Recalibrating Austronesian Narratives through Paradiplomacy: A Case Study of Hualien County's Trans-Oceanic Outreach and Engagement
5. **Dominik Lebioda** (University of Lodz), Building Bridges Across Borders: The Role of the Armenian Diaspora in France in City Partnerships with Armenia
6. **Ron Amittai** (Hebrew University of Jerusalem), Urban Diplomacy in the Middle East – the Local CBC Eilat-Aqaba and Jenin-Gilboa Regional Council

11.45-  
13.30 CET

13.45-  
15.15 CET

#### **Panel 4: Urban and Subnational Strategies in European Geopolitics**

(moderator: Balázs Brucker, ELTE CERS Institute for Regional Studies)

1. **Andrej Chochoski** (University of Pécs), Subnational Politics in North Macedonia: a way out of the EU deadlock?
2. **Jordan Jorgji** (Fan S. Noli University, Korçë), Urban Diplomacy beyond the Nation-State: Korçë as a Geopolitical Actor in Albania
3. **Yuxiang Lin** (University of Birmingham), Informal and Everyday Subnational International Engagement in Bulgaria
4. **Krisztina Kurdi** (ELTE BTK – Central European Studies), „To the Sea Hungarians!” – The Geopolitical Role of Trieste regarding of the 3SI and the Hungarian Port Access Project
5. **Nóra Baranyai, Petra Kinga Kézai** (ELTE CERS Institute for Regional Studies), Minority Heritage and Paradiplomacy: Bulgarian–Hungarian Twinning Relations

15.15 CET

**Closing remarks: Balázs Brucker** (ELTE CERS Institute for Regional Studies)