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Diaspora and City Diplomacy: A Case Study of the Cooperation Between the Italian-Polish Association of the City and Province of Salerno and Bolesławiec¹

Abstract: In recent years, both diasporas and cities have become important non-state actors in international relations. This development has spurred new subcategories of diplomacy, i.e. “diaspora diplomacy” and “city diplomacy.” However, there is a lack of research and publications linking the diplomatic activity of these two actors. The article presents a case study of international cooperation developed between various sub-state actors from Poland and Italy. This collaboration was initiated and jointly implemented by a Polish diaspora organization, with the support of the Polish diplomatic corps. The study aims to show the dynamic interactions and benefits arising from collaboration between different actors operating at the intersection of public, cultural, and economic diplomacy. The article consists of three main sections. In section one, we define the concepts of “diaspora diplomacy” and “city diplomacy.” The second section presents a description of activities undertaken as part of the analyzed project. In the third section, we present the role and importance of the key stakeholders involved in this initiative, highlighting the outcomes and benefits of cross-sector collaboration.

Key words: diaspora diplomacy, city diplomacy, diaspora policy, paradiplomacy, Polish migrant organizations

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Introduction

In recent years, both diasporas and cities have emerged as significant non-state actors in international relations. This shift has led to the development of new subcategories of diplomacy, specifically diaspora diplomacy and city diplomacy. While research in these areas has gained traction over the past two decades, it remains relatively limited in scope.

Diaspora diplomacy is often viewed through the lens of influencing state foreign policy and diplomatic activities. In this context, diasporas are primarily seen as partners of states or international organizations (Rana, 2013; Ho, McConnell, 2017; Raczyński, 2021; Kennedy, 2022). In some cases, they are even regarded as instruments for advancing national interests on the global stage. As Jasmin Hasić (2020, p. 1) observes, “many governments around the world have deliberately begun to use their migrant and diaspora communities to achieve economic and other benefits.” Regardless of the cooperation’s motives or nature, an increasing number of states are actively pursuing relationships with diasporas, reflected in the rise of “diaspora engagement policies” (Gamlen, 2014).

City diplomacy is generally examined from two primary perspectives. The first focuses on relationships that urban centers establish and maintain with counterparts in other countries. This view, focused at the sub-state level, is descriptive and explores the bilateral and multilateral relationships of cities within the international arena. The second perspective analyzes the interaction between cities’ diplomatic activities and the foreign policy of their respective states. Here, the emphasis is on the alignment or divergence between actions taken by cities and national governments on the global stage. This approach is well captured by Weiji Chen (2022, p. 173), who states, “where cities are studied as important non-state actors in the international system, their diplomatic values are almost exclusively recognized in relation to the functions and interests of state actors in traditional diplomacy.”

In this context, there is a notable gap in research and publications connecting the diplomatic activities of cities and diasporas, positioning themselves at the intersection of city and diaspora diplomacy. This perspective is particularly compelling as it addresses international cooperation driven by both subnational (cities) and transnational (diasporas) actors.

Only a limited number of studies examine the interactions between cities and diasporas in the international sphere. Notable examples include Antonio Alejo (2022), who argues that diaspora organizations are signifi-

cant actors in shaping and implementing cities' "foreign policies" within inclusive city diplomacy; Weiji Chen (2022), who analyzes the role of the Chinese diaspora in establishing a partnership between Wenzhou, China, and Prato, Italy; and Jasmin Hasić (2020), who explores how Shanghai has sought to manage its relations with the Chinese diaspora effectively.

This article focuses on city and diaspora diplomacy, but presents these issues in the broader context of interactions taking place between a heterogeneous group of actors. It provides a case study of an exceptionally interesting international cooperation developed between diverse sub-state actors from Poland and Italy, initiated and co-implemented by a Polish diaspora organization, with the support of the Polish diplomatic corps. The purpose of this paper is to show the dynamics of activities and benefits resulting from the interaction of various entities (Polish diasporic organization, local government units from Poland and Italy, cultural institutions, associations and the diplomatic post) in an area located at the interface of public, cultural and economic diplomacy, i.e. the commemoration of the influence of Polish emigrants on the development of Italian ceramics (emergence of *Naiif Vietrese* style) and the promotion of Polish ceramics in Italy and Italian ceramics in Poland. Diverse in subject matter and multidimensional in subject matter, the nature of the analyzed case represents a novel and unique approach in the literature, which describes and analyzes the interactions taking place between the actors of diaspora diplomacy and city diplomacy. Accordingly, the following research questions are formulated: What role can individual actors (state, sub-state and transnational) play in the cross-sectoral cooperation implemented at the interface of diaspora diplomacy and city diplomacy? What potential benefits does this type of cooperation offer to individual actors? What barriers and deficits limiting the capacity for international action of sub- and transnational actors does it potentially allow to neutralize? Can the combination of sub-national (operation of local government institutions) and transnational (operation of diaspora organizations) perspectives be an important element in shaping and developing theories of diaspora and city diplomacy?

This article, in addition to an introduction and conclusion, consists of three sections. In the first section, we define the concepts of "diaspora diplomacy" and "city diplomacy," establishing the key theoretical framework for the presented case study. We highlight the complexity and multidimensionality of both concepts and the associated definitional challenges. The second section describes the activities undertaken in the analyzed project in chronological and cause-and-effect terms, providing a concise overview of

the origins and progression of Polish-Italian cooperation. The third section, central to this article, examines the roles and significance of the primary actors involved in the initiative. This section also outlines the main effects and benefits of cross-sector cooperation. The article concludes with a summary, offering generalizations drawn from the case study.

At the methodological level, this article draws on key theoretical insights from the relevant literature and incorporates empirical research through two individual in-depth interviews (IDIs). These interviews were conducted with individuals central to the initiation and development of Polish-Italian cooperation: Ewa Widak, president of the Italian-Polish Association of the City and Province of Salerno, and Anna Bober-Tubaj, director of the Ceramics Museum in Bolesławiec.

The individual in-depth interview (IDI) is a fundamental tool in qualitative social research, conducted in a relaxed, one-on-one setting. Its primary goal is to gather detailed information and deepen understanding directly related to the research topic. This method enables the collection of personal and candid opinions and insights. For this study, the interviews were conducted via telephone and an online meeting, each lasting 45–60 minutes. The sessions were recorded, transcribed, and then coded to enable a structured analysis of the collected data.

Diaspora diplomacy and city diplomacy

Diplomacy has seen rapid evolution in recent years (Surmacz, 2015). The list of actors participating in diplomatic activities, as well as the scope of areas and topics addressed, has broadened considerably. In analyzing diplomatic practices, Cooper, Heine, and Thakur (2013, p. 49) identify five major trends currently dominating the field of diplomacy. These are:

1. an increase in the number and categories of actors involved in diplomacy, including transnational corporations, NGOs, as well as regional and intergovernmental organizations;
2. expanding the domain and scope of diplomacy, by incorporating new sectors of public policies and government activities into diplomacy;
3. the separation of several levels of diplomatic activities (local, intra-national and national, bilateral, regional, global);
4. changes in the apparatus and mechanisms for maintaining external relations and diplomacy; and
5. changes in modes, types and techniques of conducting diplomacy.

One manifestation of these changes is the emergence of new categories within diplomacy, including diaspora diplomacy and city diplomacy.

The term “diaspora diplomacy” refers to the complex and often ambiguous category of diasporas. As Eytan Gilboa (2022, p. 381) aptly notes, “there is greater agreement on what diplomacy is, but much less agreement on what diaspora is.” Without delving into definitional specifics beyond this article’s scope, we adopt a broad definition of “diaspora,” encompassing emigrants (both voluntary and forced), their descendants (who retain awareness of their heritage), and national minorities formed due to changes in national borders (Lesińska, 2019, p. 24). A defining feature of diasporic communities is that members preserve a connection to their country of origin, maintaining certain cultural or social ties with it.

Many definitions of diaspora diplomacy are state-centric, viewing the diplomatic activities of diasporic communities as tools leveraged by home states to achieve national goals in host countries. For instance, Gonzalez (2014) defines diaspora diplomacy as processes in which diasporic communities residing in a host country are instrumentally used by their home country’s government to achieve foreign policy objectives, such as economic or political cooperation with other nations. Similarly, Kishana S. Rana (2013) regards diaspora diplomacy as a subfield where states engage their diaspora communities to build relations with other states.

In contrast, Ho and McConnell (2017) note, however, that diasporas can function as independent (from states) diplomatic actors, pursuing autonomous policies oriented toward the pursuit of their own interests. Accordingly, they distinguish between: *diplomacy through* the diaspora, or conducting *diplomacy through diaspora* and *diplomacy of diaspora*, or conducting *diplomacy by diaspora*. Diplomacy through diaspora can furthermore be considered from the point of view of the *home-state diplomacy through diaspora* as well as *host-state diplomacy through diaspora* (Ho, McConnell, 2017).

Accordingly, the authors adopt a much broader perspective of defining diaspora diplomacy according to which diaspora diplomacy is conceptualized as sets of diasporas composed of states, non-state actors, and other international actors that function as components connected by networks and flows of people, information, and resources (Ho, McConnell, 2017). This approach seems appropriate considering the formation of modern international reality. Indeed, as Eytan Gilboa (2022, p. 381), mentioned earlier, the assumption that “diaspora diplomacy is used exclusively by

home states as a tool to advance their interests in host states can be too narrow and even misleading.

The diaspora should be seen as an actor, not merely a tool; it is both an addressee and a participant in foreign policy and international relations.” Diasporas are an example of liminal actors, functioning both “within” and “between” national and international boundaries (Ho, McConnell, 2017). From the perspective of countries of origin, the unique status of these groups stems from their positioning, as Ramakrushna Pradhan and Atanu Mohapatra (2020) point out: expatriates and their descendants exist “outside the state, but inside the nation.”

Although city diplomacy, like diaspora diplomacy, is a relatively new concept, the diplomatic activities of urban centers have a longstanding history. Historically, cities have played a crucial role in institutionalizing diplomacy (Surmacz, 2015, p. 450). Today, an increasing number of cities of all sizes emphasize international engagement, crafting strategies and establishing professional structures to support these efforts. The objectives of city diplomacy are varied and include asserting a presence on the international stage, fostering cooperation with various entities (such as states, governmental and non-governmental organizations, transnational corporations, and other local governments), branding, attracting investors and tourists, sharing best practices, and enhancing residents’ quality of life.

City diplomacy is defined in various ways in the literature. The Committee of the Regions describes it as “a tool through which local authorities and their bodies can promote social cohesion, environmental sustainability, conflict prevention, conflict resolution, and post-conflict reconstruction and rehabilitation at the global level to create a stable environment in which people can live together in a climate of democracy, progress, and prosperity” (Opinia Komitetu Regionów...).

In Polish literature, Beata Surmacz (2015, p. 451) offers an insightful definition, describing city diplomacy as “a process of representation and communication through which cities establish and deepen mutual relations, pursue their own interests, seek influence on the behavior of other international actors (states, international institutions, other cities, and non-state actors, such as corporations), and opportunities to solve problems of an international nature.”

A widely referenced definition comes from Rogier Van Der Pluijm and Jan Melissen (2007), who view city diplomacy as “the institutions and processes through which cities engage with actors in the international political arena to represent themselves and their interests.” They further

suggest that city diplomacy can operate across six primary dimensions: security, development assistance, economic, cultural, networking, and representation.

Referring to the impact of cities in international relations, Ray Lara (2020) proposes a typology based on their actual significance within the international system. According to Lara, urban centers can assume one of three roles:

- cities as places of interaction and/or as locations of certain actors;
- cities as entities with a causal role in the international system; and
- cities with the capacity to influence other practitioners and decision-makers.

In this context, the scale and scope of a city's diplomatic activities largely depend on its political, economic, or cultural potential. Smaller cities typically focus on specific projects, such as youth exchanges or cultural and sports events. In contrast, larger urban centers are able to undertake more extensive and comprehensive diplomatic initiatives.

A crucial factor in the international activities of urban centers is the presence of suitable structures and the degree of personnel professionalization. Increasingly, cities have specialized units – such as offices or departments – dedicated to managing and implementing international initiatives. Executive authorities, particularly presidents, mayors, and their deputies, play a significant role in this regard, often serving as the city's "ambassadors" in the international arena.

The literature highlights that urban centers engage in diplomatic activities through both bilateral and multilateral diplomacy. Bilateral diplomacy involves two actors, at least one of which is a city, and typically takes place through partnerships between twin, sister, or partner cities (Surmacz, 2015, p. 458).

Although comprehensive theories for diaspora diplomacy (Kennedy, 2022) and city diplomacy (Marchetti, 2021) are still lacking, both areas have attracted a growing body of research in recent years, evident in the increasing number of related publications. However, as noted, studies that integrate these two fields are scarce, revealing a distinct cognitive gap. Weijia Chen (2022) highlights this in observing that the diplomatic role of diasporas in city-to-city cooperation remains underestimated and under-researched.

The overview of general approaches and theoretical concepts on diaspora and city diplomacy outlined above provides a framework for analyzing the case study in this article. In examining the cooperation initiated by the Italian-Polish Association of the City and Province of Salerno and

Bolesławiec, we adopt the theoretical perspectives on diaspora diplomacy from scholars like Ho, McConnell, and Gilboa, and on city diplomacy from Surmacz, Van Der Pluijm, and Melissen. These perspectives view both diasporas and cities as independent actors in international relations and diplomacy, pursuing their own goals and interests while interacting with other actors, including states. According to Lara's typology, such actors possess both causality and the capacity to influence other practitioners and decision-makers within the international system.

Cooperation process

The initiative to establish intersectoral cooperation between Italian and Polish entities originated with a Polish organization, specifically through Ewa Widak, president of the Italian-Polish Association of the City and Province of Salerno. The inspiration stemmed from a desire to honor Irene Kowalska, an artist of Polish descent who settled in Vietri sul Mare in the 1930s and significantly influenced the region's ceramics industry. Kowalska arrived on the Amalfi Coast in 1934, drawn to Vietri sul Mare, a locality with an almost 1,000-year-old tradition of majolica production. Initially employed as a decorator in a ceramics factory, Kowalska established her own business in 1937 and began working as an independent artist. Her designs quickly gained recognition, influencing all pottery manufacturers in Salerno and leading to the emergence of the unique *Naif Vietrese* style, an internationally recognized trend in Italian ceramics (Bober-Tubaj, Glinkowska, 2017a). However, Kowalska's influence on local ceramics was largely forgotten over time. Ewa Widak discovered her story by chance, as her husband comes from Vietri sul Mare. Reflecting on the project's beginnings, Widak recalls how it eventually evolved into a cross-sector and international collaboration:

“... someone would find out that I was Polish and say ‘and there used to be such an Irene Kowalska here.’ I heard the name a couple of dozen times, but spoken that way by Italians it didn't seem quite Polish to me. [Until I saw this name written down. I saw this surname written with our Polish ‘k’ and our Polish ‘w’ and I said to my husband ‘you know, I think it was actually Polish.’ And so I started to get interested in it, I was going around these different ceramics, talking to these ceramists. Everyone was talking

about her. Most of them were older people who even knew Irena personally, and so it was on my mind all the time that I had to do something about it.”

Interview with Ewa Widak

The initiative began with President Ewa Widak reaching out to Francesco Benincasa, the mayor of Vietri sul Mare, which sparked the idea of organizing an exhibition of Irene Kowaliska’s works, stored in a local warehouse. Ewa Widak then decided to broaden the project to include Polish ceramics from Bolesławiec in Italy. In August 2015, while visiting Poland, she contacted Krzysztof Hewak, head of the Department of Development and Promotion of the City of Bolesławiec, who happened to be at the Museum of Ceramics in Bolesławiec at the time (Interview with Ewa Widak).

“The impetus came from Ewa Widak – president of the Italian-Polish Association of the City and Province of Salerno. [...] She called us in August 2015 during the Bolesławiec Ceramics Festival. She called the Promotion Department of the City Hall to Mr. Krzysztof Hewak. By a lucky coincidence, Mr. Krzysztof Hewak [...], happened to be at the Museum and answered this phone call in my presence. Since [...] the proposal, [...], seemed very interesting to us, so we agreed that I would call back after the Ceramics Festival and this conversation took place.”

Interview with Anna Bober-Tubaj

Following these discussions, a delegation from Bolesławiec traveled to Vietri sul Mare in October 2015. Representing the Polish side were Krzysztof Hewak and Beata Sulska from Bolesławiec City Hall, along with Anna Bober-Tubaj, director of the Museum of Ceramics in Bolesławiec, and museum assistant Krzysztof Rajczakowski. The Italian delegation included Francesco Benincasa, mayor of Vietri sul Mare; Giovanni De Simone, head of the Cultural Department; consultants Mario Mosella and Pietro Amos; and Ewa Widak. During this meeting, the Italian side proposed an exhibition titled “Irene Kowaliska in Mediterranean Myth” and suggested naming a square in the town after Kowaliska. The Polish representatives proposed an exhibition showcasing Bolesławiec ceramics in Vietri sul Mare (Bober-Tubaj, Glinkowska, 2017b, p. 33).

By the following year, these plans had begun to take shape. In December 2016, a series of Polish-Italian events were held in Vietri sul Mare. These included the opening of “Dall’argilla di Bolesławiec. Mostra

dell'Associazione dei Comuni della Ceramica della Repubblica di Polonia” at the Polo Museale del Palazzo della Guardia, and “Irene Kowalska. Nel mito del Mediterraneo/Irene Kowalska in Mediterranean Myth” at the Museo della Ceramica in Villa Guariglia. As previously agreed, a square in Vietri sul Mare was also named in honor of Irene Kowalska.

The festivities gathered representatives from the various entities involved in the project. Among those present were officials from Bolesławiec (including Piotr Roman, president of the city of Bolesławiec) and Vietri sul Mare (mayor Francesco Benincasa), representatives of Bolesławiec ceramic plants, Polish and Italian cultural institutions, associations, and members of the diplomatic community, including Ewa Mamaj, consul of the Republic of Poland and head of the Consular Department at the Polish Embassy in Rome, and Dario dal Verme, honorary consul of the Republic of Poland in the Campania region. The event was coordinated by Ewa Widak, along with the Municipality of Vietri sul Mare and the Bolesławiec Museum of Ceramics. Notably, the Irene Kowalska project, developed by Widak and her association, was funded by the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Bober-Tubaj, Glinkowska, 2017b, p. 34).

Thanks to Ewa Mamaj, head of the Consular Department at the Polish Embassy in Rome, and Prof. Agnieszka Bender, director of the Polish Institute in Rome, an exhibition of Bolesławiec ceramics was showcased in Rome at the Polish Institute in March 2017. The vernissage on March 8 attracted numerous distinguished guests from the diplomatic and political spheres, local government, cultural institutions, ceramic manufacturers, and the Italian-Polish community. From Rome, the “Dall’argilla di Bolesławiec...” exhibition, facilitated by Cristina Gorajski Visconti, honorary consul of Poland in the Marche region, traveled to Ancona. There, it was presented in two venues: Museo della Città and Showroom Contemporaneo. The exhibition opening coincided with celebrations commemorating the liberation of Ancona and Loreto by the 2nd Polish Corps. Finally, in October 2017, Bolesławiec ceramics were displayed in Faenza, the “Italian capital of ceramics,” marking a significant event, particularly for the Bolesławiec Museum of Ceramics, as will be discussed further.

The events described above were organized by the Association of Ceramic Communities of the Republic of Poland, the Museum of Ceramics in Bolesławiec, and the Italian-Polish Association of the City and Province of Salerno, with support from the Polish diplomatic corps in Italy.

In the summer of 2017, a presentation of ceramics from Vietri sul Mare took place in Poland, as previously planned. The “Stoviglie Vietri sul Mare” exhibition was held in the Bolesławiec Museum of Ceramics.

tresi” exhibition was initially showcased at the Institute of Italian Culture in Cracow in July, and subsequently opened to the public in August during the 23rd Bolesławiec Ceramics Festival. The exhibition was organized by the Ceramics Museum in Bolesławiec in collaboration with the Association of Ceramic Communities of the Republic of Poland, the Municipality of Bolesławiec, the Municipality of Vietri sul Mare, the Institute of Italian Culture in Cracow, and the Italian-Polish Association of the City and Province of Salerno. Support for the exhibition also came from Ewa Mamaj, head of the Consular Department of the Polish Embassy in Rome, and Professor Agnieszka Bender, director of the Polish Institute in Rome (Bober-Tubaj, Glinkowska, 2017b, pp. 35–36).

Analysis of cooperation

The case of Polish-Italian cooperation, initially focusing on commemorating Irene Kowaliska’s impact on the Naif Vietrese style and later on promoting contemporary Polish ceramics in Italy and Italian ceramics in Poland, is fascinating from multiple perspectives. First, in terms of actors, it highlights the cooperation of diverse participants in modern, broadly defined diplomacy across various levels. Notably, a range of non-state actors played key roles, including a Polish organization (the Italian-Polish Association of the City and Province of Salerno), local government units (Bolesławiec City Hall and the Municipality of Vietri sul Mare), a cultural institution (the Museum of Ceramics in Bolesławiec), and associations (the Association of Ceramic Municipalities of the Republic of Poland and the Italian Association of Ceramic Cities). The Polish diplomatic corps in Italy, comprising the Polish Embassy in Rome (primarily its Consular Department), Polish honorary consuls in Italy, and the Polish Institute in Rome, also quickly engaged in these paradiplomatic activities. This collaboration exemplifies “polylateral diplomacy,” which involves relations between official actors (like a state or intergovernmental organization) and at least one non-state actor (Ho, McConnell, 2017, p. 245).

Second, in terms of subject matter, this case study intersects various categories of modern diplomacy, including diaspora diplomacy, city diplomacy, public diplomacy, cultural diplomacy, economic diplomacy, and polylateral diplomacy. The initiative brings together multiple forms of diplomatic activity within a single, multidimensional international effort.

Finally, from the perspective of diaspora diplomacy, it is notable that a Polish organization initiated the entire endeavor. According to Ho and McConnell's typology, this represents a relatively rare example of diplomacy by diasporas at the level of paradiplomacy – where the diaspora conducts diplomatic activities to further its own interests.

As the initiative progressed, however, the Polish organization increasingly adopted the model of diplomacy through diaspora, meaning diplomacy conducted through the diaspora. In this sense, the Italian-Polish Association of the City and Province of Salerno has evolved into a crucial facilitator, enabling and supporting the (para)diplomatic activities of other entities.

In the initial phase of the project, the Italian-Polish Association of the City and Province of Salerno played a pivotal role in initiating activities. The association's president, Ewa Widak, proposed the idea to commemorate Irene Kowalska and promote contemporary ceramics, establishing cooperation with various Polish and Italian entities to bring this vision to life.

As the director of the Ceramics Museum in Bolesławiec mentioned in an interview:

“Ewa had the idea to organize an exhibition dedicated to Irene Kowalska, publish a catalog, and name a square after her – and these three tasks were accomplished.”

Interview with Anna Bober-Tubaj

An important part of these activities was also the presentation of Bolesławiec ceramics in Italy. From the very beginning, this was very important to Ewa Widak.

“[...] I wanted to take this opportunity to introduce our Polish Bolesławiec ceramics, which, by the way, I have always been in love with. And that's how this idea to contact Bolesławiec and do some kind of joint project was born.”

Interview with Ewa Widak

This activity follows the traditional pattern of “life between” experienced by migrants, particularly migrant women, who often act as dual ambassadors – representing their country of origin in the host country and vice versa. In this case, however, the transnational relations extend beyond symbolic gestures; they become a tangible reality, progressively involving institutional actors from both countries at each stage of the initiative.

The original project partner, the Museum of Ceramics in Bolesławiec, was gradually joined by other entities, including the Polish Consular Department of the Embassy in Rome, which is responsible for engaging with the Polish community. This involvement allowed an initiative, initially driven by non-state actors, to become part of the official public and cultural diplomacy agenda of the Polish state. This transition was evident in the collaborative organization of subsequent exhibitions.

“The presence in the project of representatives of the diplomatic corps and, above all, Consul Ewa Mamaj decided that already at the end of [...] December there was a signal that it would be nice to show the exhibition also in the Polish Institute in Rome.”

“[...] diplomatic missions – I was, to be honest, very surprised, because both the interest on the part of Consul Mamaj or on the part of the then management of the Polish Institute, but also Mrs. Consul Gorajski – in general I will say [...] so frankly that we were defensive about this exhibition in Ancona, we were already tired with Ewa and we wanted to take a break – she did not give, did not allow, did not let go. [...]. But also the interest of the ambassador himself also, translating this into cooperation with the Institute of Italian Culture in Cracow.”

Interview with Anna Bober-Tubaj

The statement highlights that, over time, the project has evolved into a flagship initiative for Polish diplomatic missions in Italy. Importantly, it has become a model of best practices, offering a replicable framework that can be implemented in various locations.

It should be emphasized that, at every stage of the project, the role of the Polish organization was indispensable. The Italian-Polish Association of the City and Province of Salerno, particularly through the efforts of Ewa Widak, carried out numerous essential functions and tasks. Without this involvement, implementing the project would have been significantly more challenging – and perhaps even impossible in certain areas – due, for instance, to a lack of existing contacts with local administration on the Apennine Peninsula.

Here’s how the role of the Polish organization is described by the director of the Ceramics Museum in Bolesławiec:

“[...] we were very pleasantly surprised, [...] that simply these associations are active and dynamic. We didn’t expect that Polish associations abroad could also be so dynamic.”

Interview with Anna Bober-Tubaj

At the same time, the activity of the Italian-Polish Association of Cities and Provinces of Salerno was not limited to fulfilling the function of a liaison between Polish and Italian entities and lobbying activities, but included a much broader scope in the form of:

- logistical support:

“I organized everything for them, I was in contact with all Italian institutions [...]. Or even some hotels there, when they came, it was all from my side. So I am for them, I was such a support for them.”

Interview with Ewa Widak

- breaking down cultural differences:

“Organizing an exhibition in Italy is really a very big challenge. [...] So Ewa not only mitigated here all these mental differences, but also solved many such disputes arising from the fact that we had a slightly different approach to certain issues, the Italians had a different one. And here it is very important, because I think it combined not only her great organizational and logistical talent, but also such diplomatic skills to overcome all these problems, to solve them in such a way that both sides – so that everyone properly involved in the project – would be satisfied.”

Interview with Anna Bober-Tubaj

- social activation:

“[...] We had numerous enthusiastic volunteers from the Bolesławiec side. For instance, some people arranged transportation at no cost, practically renting a car for free. They simply got involved – I believe much of this was thanks to the initial visit of Ewa Widak and representatives of Vietri sul Mare with us in Bolesławiec during the Ceramics Festival in 2016. That experience seemed to spread a lot of positive energy, enthusiasm, and optimism among many Bolesławiec residents and festival attendees. Afterward, they felt a genuine pleasure in participating, joining the project, and offering help without any expectation of profit. Similarly, a supportive network developed on the Italian side as well. From what I understand, it wasn't only members of the Association who were involved – Ewa also engaged many Italian friends who supported us at different times and in various ways.”

Interview with Anna Bober-Tubaj

The initial goal of the Italian-Polish Association of Cities and Provinces of Salerno was to honor Irene Kowaliska and her contribution to Italian ceramics. At the same time, the Polish organization recognized the importance of showcasing Polish achievements in artistic ceramics. These efforts contributed to building a positive image of Poland and promoting the “Poland” brand in Italy – a country renowned for its “Made in Italy” excellence. This initiative also positively impacted the Polish diaspora in Italy, enhancing its image and highlighting the community’s cultural awareness and expertise.

“[...] The moment I tell the story that this was a Polish woman, who moved here in the 1930s, well it’s so touching, because really everyone is [...] very positively surprised that she left such an imprint, or a piece of history. This, by all means, unifies also the Polish community.”

Interview with Ewa Widak

The collaboration between non-state actors from various countries and the Polish diplomatic corps, as detailed in this article, has yielded specific benefits for all involved entities, albeit to varying extents. The most tangible advantages were realized by the Museum of Ceramics in Bolesławiec and the municipality of Bolesławiec. These included the development of new skills and competencies, the expansion of international cooperation, the acquisition of substantial financial resources, and, eventually, the establishment of a new headquarters.

Thanks to the project initiated by Ewa Widak, organizations from Bolesławiec reached a new level of international cooperation and networking within the ceramics industry. This advancement was particularly significant, as it coincided with Bolesławiec’s founding of the first association in Poland uniting cities with ceramic traditions – the Association of Ceramic Communities of the Republic of Poland (Bober-Tubaj, Glinkowska, 2017b, p. 33). Later, during the pandemic in late 2019, the idea emerged to include Bolesławiec in the European Ceramics Route, led by the Italian city of Faenza.

According to the director of the Ceramics Museum in Bolesławiec, the exhibition held in Faenza in October 2017 was of great importance for this decision and its realization:

“In Faenza, we had the presentation of the exhibition in three places, so each time the degree of complexity was higher and higher, but I think this presentation in Faenza was a turning point to con-

vince the partners in Italy – I’m talking about the Association of Ceramic Cities first of all, but also the European Ceramics Route – that it’s worth working with us, because in general we are able to take on such challenges.”

Interview with Anna Bober-Tubaj

The Municipality of Bolesławiec, in partnership with the Norwegian Telemark Museum and the European Ceramics Route, developed a project titled “Poland and Norway on the European Ceramics Route: Inclusion of Bolesławiec and Porsgrunn in an International Network of Cooperation between Cities with Ceramic Traditions.” This project applied for funding from the Financial Mechanism of the European Economic Area under the “Culture” Program, administered by the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage. Out of 224 applications submitted, only 20 were selected for funding, with the Bolesławiec project among the winners.

“This idea really appealed to Faenza – they thought we were a worthy partner – we applied and succeeded as we were accepted.”

Interview with Anna Bober-Tubaj

As part of the project, alongside joining the European Ceramics Route, Bolesławiec secured over 15 million zlotys. This funding facilitated the previously mentioned relocation of the Museum of Ceramics to a new, more suitable venue.

Collaboration with Italian partners provided an opportunity to observe their approach and gain insights into Italian know-how, particularly in organization, promotion, and fostering cooperation with various stakeholders in the ceramics industry.

“[...] We saw the wealth of knowledge and resources the Italian side had to offer, and we incorporated this insight extensively into our project. It wasn’t just about presenting or promoting ourselves; it was also about enhancing our professional competencies. We placed a strong emphasis on this... including effective collaboration with ceramic plants and fostering reciprocal networking for international cooperation.”

Interview with Anna Bober-Tubaj

Drawing on the expertise of Italian partners in areas such as organization, logistics, promotion, and know-how transfer was just one aspect of the collaboration’s benefits. A significant dimension of this cooperation was the practical exchange that fostered skill development, exemplified

by visits and workshops involving artists and ceramic designers from both countries. For instance, in August 2017, during the 23rd Bolesławiec Ceramics Festival, designers from Vietri sul Mare, Lucio Liguori and Francesco Raimondi, visited Bolesławiec (Bober-Tubaj, Glinkowska, 2017b, p. 36). Polish designers also traveled to Italy, gaining fresh inspiration that later influenced new design concepts. Overall, the project contributed to developing the human capital of those engaged in its activities.

“[...] one of our best designers of contemporary Bolesławiec ceramics, inspired by his stay in Vietri sul Mare, designed a series of dishes that later won the title of ‘Good Design’ awarded by the Institute of Industrial Design in Warsaw.”

Interview with Anna Bober-Tubaj

The inspiration drawn from time spent in southern Italy was palpable for the award-winning designer, yielding real benefits in the development of a new design, as well as in increased recognition and promotion.

It is important to highlight the excellent cooperation between the Bolesławiec entities involved in the project and their Italian counterparts, especially the Bolesławiec City Hall and related entities, such as the Museum of Ceramics and the Association of Ceramic Communities of the Republic of Poland. Without the right approach, commitment, support, and collaboration, this initiative would not have expanded on such a large scale. The strong cooperation among Bolesławiec entities created a synergy effect, adding significant value to the venture and elevating it to a new level by joining a network of partner diplomatic posts.

“[...] The collaboration between officials and cultural institution staff enables much more to be accomplished. An official alone cannot organize an exhibition, while we, as museum professionals, cannot establish certain contacts, sign cooperation agreements, or negotiate arrangements at the mayoral level. From the beginning, City Hall has been supportive, and it’s important to acknowledge that none of this – certainly not the numerous exhibitions and publications within such a short timeframe – would have been possible without the green light from our organizer, the Municipality of Bolesławiec.”

Interview with Anna Bober-Tubaj

In the context of this case study, it is important to highlight the exceptional involvement of the Polish diplomatic corps in Italy, which played a crucial role in the initiative’s development. The support of the Polish

diplomatic mission was instrumental in facilitating the presentation of Bolesławiec ceramics in various Italian locations, significantly elevating the project's status and impact.

The support of the Polish Embassy in Rome, as well as Polish honorary consuls in Italy, can be divided into three basic forms:

- image related, which was also translated into attracting support from other entities:

“[...] the role of diplomatic missions is, first of all, it increases the credibility of the venture. If we can use in contact with the media or co-organizers, or convince to co-finance – if we say that there is support of diplomatic missions, it simply opens the way. It's often the case that even the question of mere cooperation ennobles the endeavor, raises the prestige, so it really facilitates a lot of things.”

Interview with Anna Bober-Tubaj

- organization and logistics:

“Moreover, it is essential to remember that the diplomatic service provided unexpected organizational and logistical support. For instance, the Embassy helped with transporting the exhibition at a critical point. While some of these contributions – such as transporting guests or bringing in specific individuals – might seem minor, they were invaluable. In a project where every euro and zloty mattered, this support made a significant difference.”

Interview with Anna Bober-Tubaj

“Institutions, of the type, for example, the Polish Institute in Rome or Consul Gorajski – they, on their part, supposedly suggested places where to expose [exhibition – KK and RR]. In this respect, too, there was no problem.”

Interview with Ewa Widak

- finance, provided from the very beginning of the project:

“[...] then [in 2016 – KK and RR] I also contacted our consulate, even a little earlier, because we even received some funding for this project.”

Interview with Ewa Widak

Both the local government and the Polish partner highlighted the crucial role of diplomatic support in the project's success. From the diplomatic post's perspective, there was clear recognition of the substantial benefits of this cooperation, evidenced by the engagement of additional

entities, such as the Polish Institute and Poland's honorary consulates. This suggests that such collaboration can serve as a best practice for conducting public and cultural diplomacy at multiple levels.

Conclusion

Modern diplomacy is undergoing significant transformation, particularly in terms of the types of actors involved. The literature identifies four main groups of diplomatic actors. States remain the primary and most influential participants. The second group includes international organizations. The third group comprises sub-state actors, such as regions or cities, while the fourth consists of non-state actors, operating at a transnational level. Consequently, modern diplomacy now includes not only states but also sub-state, supra-state (e.g., the EU), and non-state actors (Surma, 2015, pp. 122–123). An analysis of diplomatic practice, especially in public and cultural diplomacy, reveals a growing role for the so-called “citizen ambassador.” These are often Polish organizations or representatives of the Polish diaspora who initiate cross-border projects and, over time, engage both sub-state and state actors in their transnational efforts.

The case study presented in this article exemplifies successful, effective, and mutually beneficial cooperation within the sphere of diplomacy, involving representatives from nearly all major groups of modern diplomatic actors (except international organizations). This collaboration brought together diverse actors operating at different levels, covering multiple areas and aspects of diplomatic activity. The case demonstrates that diaspora diplomacy and city diplomacy should not be viewed solely through their relations with specific diplomatic actors – primarily states for diasporas, and states and cities for city diplomacy.

In light of the complexity and multidimensionality of modern diplomacy, a more holistic approach is needed, incorporating both sub- and non-state actors. This perspective opens a new, relatively underexplored research area. Our findings align with Weiji Chen (2022, p. 169), who observes that “both city diplomacy and diaspora diplomacy are multidimensional and can be interrelated.” Integrating subnational (local government) and transnational (diaspora organizations) perspectives is therefore essential in the development of theories of diaspora and city diplomacy.

The example of cooperation described in this article, which integrates inter-, sub-, and transnational perspectives, enables several general conclusions. First, the partnership initiated by the Italian-Polish Association of the City and Province of Salerno and Bolesławiec illustrates the significant yet often underestimated potential of such collaborations. Both the Polish state and local governments could better leverage the diplomatic opportunities provided by cooperation with the Polish diaspora. Diaspora policy, in this regard, should place greater emphasis on diaspora diplomacy as a component of public diplomacy, conducted at both national and sub-state levels.

Second, interaction within such initiatives helps address potential deficits in finances, knowledge, information, contacts, and even language and cultural barriers. This observation is particularly relevant for local governments and diaspora organizations, which often have limited resources (whether human, financial, or substantive), constraining their capacity for international engagement.

Third, collaboration among diverse entities can not only help overcome these deficits but also foster synergies. In the case outlined here, none of the actors could have achieved such extensive success alone. The synergy resulted from each partner effectively sharing and utilizing the resources of others, significantly expanding their capacity for international engagement.

Fourth, this case underscores the diaspora's role as a "connector" or "bridge," facilitating contacts, fostering relationships, and dismantling barriers. It also highlights the critical importance of the personal factor – the commitment and dedication of key individuals representing each entity (acting as "social ambassadors") often determine the success and impact of such collaborations. In this context, educating, mobilizing, and sensitizing Polish leaders, local government officials, cultural institution staff, and diplomatic representatives to the potential of state, sub-state, and transnational cooperation would be invaluable.

In the theoretical realm of diaspora diplomacy, this case highlights a fascinating dynamic within the analyzed project. It illustrates the Polish diaspora organization's transition from "diplomacy by diasporas" – where the diaspora itself conducts diplomacy to pursue its own goals – toward "diplomacy through diaspora," where other entities conduct diplomacy through the diaspora, all while the Polish diaspora organization retains its autonomy. This example demonstrates the fluid and evolving role of diaspora organizations, showing how such flexibility can enhance their

potential and amplify the effectiveness of collaborative results as the initiative progresses.

Finally, it is essential to emphasize the need for systemic support to foster collaboration and networking between sub-state actors (such as cities and regions) and the diaspora. As illustrated by the case in this article, such interaction can yield tangible outcomes and multilateral benefits. State institutions should play a key role in this regard. Although the most recent document related to diaspora cooperation, the Government Program for Cooperation with the Polish Community and Poles Abroad (2015–2020), lists one of its strategic goals as “Development of contacts – youth, scientific, cultural, economic, sports, and **local government cooperation – with Poland**” [emphasis by RR and KK], this goal has yet to translate into concrete actions or initiatives.

A useful reference is Ireland’s approach: in 2015, the Irish government commissioned a step-by-step guide for local authorities on developing local strategies for engagement with the Irish diaspora. The Local Diaspora Toolkit, commissioned by the Ministry of Diaspora Affairs and authored by Prof. Liam Kennedy and Dr. Madeleine Lyes, serves as a practical resource for local governments. Developing a similar guide in Poland, along with supporting networking initiatives, could significantly enhance cooperation between Polish local governments and the diaspora.

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Interviews:

- Interview with Anna Bober-Tubaj, Director of Ceramic Museum in Bolesławiec (authors' collection).
- Interview with Ewa Widak, president of Italian-Polish Association of Salerno City and Province (authors' collection).

Dyplomacja diaspor i miast. Studium przypadku współpracy zainicjowanej przez Włosko-Polskie Stowarzyszenie Miasta i Prowincji Salerno oraz Bolesławiec

Streszczenie

W ostatnich latach zarówno diaspora, jak i miasta zyskały miano ważnych niepaństwowych aktorów stosunków międzynarodowych. Jednym z wyrazów takiego stanu rzeczy stało się powstanie nowych subkategorii dyplomacji tj. dyplomacji diaspor oraz dyplomacji miast. Brakuje jednak badań i publikacji, które łączyłyby działania dyplomatyczne tych dwóch aktorów. Artykuł stanowi studium przypadku współpracy międzynarodowej rozwiniętej pomiędzy różnorodnymi podmiotami subpaństwowymi z Polski i Włoch, zainicjowanej i współrealizowanej przez polską organizację diasporyczną, przy wsparciu polskiego korpusu dyplomatycznego. Celem pracy jest ukazanie dynamiki działań i korzyści wynikających ze współdziałania różnych podmiotów w obszarze lokującym się na styku dyplomacji publicznej, kulturalnej i ekonomicznej. Artykuł składa się z trzech zasadniczych sekcji. W części pierwszej definiujemy pojęcia dyplomacji diaspor i dyplomacji miast. Sekcja druga stanowi opis działań podejmowanych w ramach analizowanego przedsięwzięcia. W sekcji trzeciej prezentujemy rolę i znaczenie najważniejszych podmiotów zaangażowanych w re-

alizację inicjatywy. W tej części przedstawiamy również kluczowe efekty i korzyści wynikające z międzysektorowej współpracy.

Słowa kluczowe: dyplomacja diaspor, dyplomacja miast, polityka diasporyczna, paradyplomacja, organizacje polonijne