

Subnational Diplomacy Shaping Global Affairs

PARTICIPANTS

OVERVIEW PARTICIPANTS

Al-Harbi	Jehad Mohammed	Third Secretary	Royal embassy of Saudi Arabia, Berlin
Altamimi	Aisha	Third Secretary	East Europe Section of the European Affairs Department, United Arab Emirates
Austin	John	Fellow	Academy of International Affairs NRW, Germany
Banda	Chisomo	Monitoring and Evaluation Coordinator	Youth Wave
Becker	Manuel	Head of Scientific Programme	Academy of International Affairs NRW, Germany
Braun	Rebecca	Vice-Consul and Trade Commissioner	Consulate of Canada in Düsseldorf, Germany
Brown	Stuart	Chief Executive	Scotland Malawi Partnership (SMP), Scotland
Cabrera García	Florentino	Second Secretary	Consulates of Mexico in Little Rock and Atlanta, USA
Charrier	Landry	Scientific Officer	Project Management Agency of the German Aerospace Centre, Germany
Ciesielska-Klikowska	Joanna	Political Scientist and Assistant Professor	Center for Studies on Paradiplomacy and City Diplomacy, University of Lodz, Poland
Costello	Paul	Senior Program Manager	German Marshall Fund (GMF), Berlin, Germany
Dermine	Thomas	Mayor of Charleroi	Belgium
Ehs	Tamara	Researcher and Consultant	Ehs & Fils Democracy Consulting, Vienna, Austria
Fortunoff	Willow	UNFCCC Engagement Division	Bonn, Germany
Freistein	Katja	Academic Coordinator of the Fellowship Program	Academy of International Affairs NRW, Germany
Frenzel	Andrea	Freelance Writer and Researcher	Germany
Frigerio	Steven	Consultant	Hive Ventures, Malta
Gehrke	Charlotte	Researcher	German Institute of Development and Sustainability (IDOS), Germany
Codehardt	Nadine	Senior Associate of the Research Division Asia	German Institute for International and Security Affairs (Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, SWP), Germany
Guzmán	Martina	Founder of VERDAD	Wayne State University Law School, Detroit, USA

Hegewisch	Nils	Head of the China desk in the Asia and Pacific department	Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, Berlin, Germany
Hein	Jürgen	Managing Director	Research Alliance Ruhr, Germany
Huang	Chiung-Chiu	Fellow	Academy of International Affairs NRW, Germany
Hurný	Juraj	Participation and Urban Studies Section	Metropolitan Institute of Bratislava, Slovakia
Iacobuță	Gabriela I.	Researcher, Consultant	Global Environment Facility (GEF)/ Associate Researcher IDOS, Germany
Isani	Mujtaba	DAAD Long-term Guest-Professor of Political Science	Quaid-e-Azam University, Pakistan
Kamiński	Tomasz	Political Scientist	Center for Studies on Paradiplomacy and City Diplomacy, University of Lodz, Poland
Kluczevska	Karolina	Fellow	Academy of International Affairs NRW, Germany
Kostadinova	Tonka	Postdoctoral Fellow, Associate Fellow AIA NRW	University of Cyprus, Greece
Książek	Bartłomiej	Vice Consul	Consulate General of the Republic of Poland, Cologne, Germany
MacDonald	Stuart	Founder Director	ICR Research, UK
Malachi	Ifedayo Grace	Postdoctoral Researcher	Bamidele Olumilua University of Education, Science and Technology, Nigeria
Mervenne	Anne	President and Founder	Mervenne & Company, Michigan, USA
Booi-Mokoena	Patiwe	First Secretary	Embassy of the Republic of South Africa in Berlin, Germany
Oginni	Oyewole	Senior Researcher	Bonn International Centre for Conflict Studies (bicc), Germany
Osei Dapaah	Kelvina	Assistant Director	Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Ghana
Patterson	Steve	Mayor	Athens, Ohio
Pilz	Oliver	Policy Secretary to the Mayor of Budapest	Cabinet of the Mayor of Budapest

SUMMER ACADEMY

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Plé	Alexander	Scientific Consultant	IQIB - Institut für qualifizierende Innovationsforschung und -beratung GmbH, Germany
do Prado	Débora Figueiredo Mendonça	Associate Professor	Federal University of Uberlândia (UFU), Brazil
Prashant	Kumar	Research Analyst	Circle Economy Foundation, Amsterdam, Netherlands
Rohde	Oliver	Head of Department for Policy Issues in European and International Cooperation	Project Management Agency of the German Aerospace Centre, Germany
Rudroff	Felix	Scientific Officer	Project Management Agency of the German Aerospace Centre, Germany
Rydzewska	Agata	PhD Candidate at the Faculty of Political Science and International Studies	University of Warsaw, Poland
Schulze	David	PhD Candidate	Ruhr Graduate School in Economics, Germany
Shpakovskaya	Anna	Fellow	Academy of International Affairs NRW, Germany
Smith	Kent	State Senator	Ohio Senate
Stürner-Siovitz	Janina	Postdoctoral Researcher, Visiting Fellow of the German Marshall Fund and an Associate Fellow of the City Diplomacy Lab	European Philanthropic Initiative for Migration, Brussels
Sorenson	Ryan	Mayor	Sheboygan Wisconsin, USA
White	Tim	Alexander von Humboldt Research Fellow in Sociology	Free University of Berlin, Germany
Yu	Helen	City Practice Lead at the Mayors Migration Council	New York, USA
Zein Al Din	Mayssoun	Executive Director	Academy of International Affairs NRW

ALHARBI, Jehad Mohammed

Jehad Mohammed Alharbi is Attaché at the Royal embassy of Saudi Arabia in Berlin. He holds a bachelor's degree in business administration from the Saudi Electronic University and has held positions in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and later the Ministry of Education. In his career, he worked in the Human Resources Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Riyadh, focusing on employee development and work quality improvement.

ALTAMIMI, Aisha

Aisha Altamimi currently serves as a Third Secretary in the East Europe Section of the European Affairs Department. She began her diplomatic career in 2021 at the American Affairs Department, where she was responsible for Central and South American countries. Aisha holds a Bachelor's degree in International Relations from Royal Holloway, University of London, and a Postgraduate Diploma in Diplomacy and International Affairs from the Anwar Gargash Diplomatic Academy. She most recently served as a COP28 lead, playing a key role in advancing the UAE's international climate diplomacy agenda.

AUSTIN, John

John Austin is a Fellow at AIA NRW and a Senior Fellow with the Eisenhower Institute at Gettysburg College (EI), leading EI's work promoting ideas and network-building to spread economic opportunity and strengthen democracies across the globe. He also serves as a Non-Resident Senior Fellow with the Brookings Institution where for over twenty years he has led efforts to support economic transformation in the American Midwest and in the industrial heartlands of Western democracies.

BANDA, Chisomo

Chisomo Banda is a Fellow at AIA NRW and serves as the Monitoring and Evaluation Coordinator at Youth Wave, a youth-led organization dedicated to promoting meaningful and inclusive youth participation in policy and development processes. She is also a co-founder of InspireLearn, an ed-tech startup aimed at expanding access to quality education and information through basic technology. Chisomo works with young people and stakeholders to address pressing youth issues by generating evidence and providing recommendations for action.

BECKER, Manuel

Manuel Becker is Senior Researcher and Head of the Scientific Program at the Academy of International Affairs NRW. From 2018 to 2023, he was the Managing Director of the Institute for Political Science and Sociology at the University of Bonn. He studied Political Science, Medieval and Current History as well as Philosophy at the University of Bonn and the Institut d'Etudes Politiques de Paris (Sciences Po). He teaches Political Science at the University of Bonn and at the Hochschule Bonn/Rhein-Sieg.

BRAUN, Rebecca

Rebecca Braun is Vice-Consul and Trade Commissioner at the Consulate of Canada in Düsseldorf, Germany. Her focus lies on assisting Canadian companies in the aerospace, space and defence sectors doing business in Germany. She also manages the consular team, and from 2016-2021 she was posted to the Embassy of Canada in Russia, with accreditation in Uzbekistan and Armenia. She joined the Department of Global Affairs Canada in 2009 and worked in various roles at department's headquarters, including as Trade Commissioner in the Northeast Asia division managing trade issues between Canada and Korea, Japan and Mongolia.

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BROWN, Stuart

Stuart Brown is the Chief Executive of the Scotland Malawi Partnership (SMP). Stuart has a background in teaching, communications, and journalism. Before joining the SMP, he worked with GALVmed (Global Alliance for Livestock Veterinary Medicines) where he had the privilege of listening to many small-holder farmers and pastoralists in parts of sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia. Prior to this, Stuart led Communications at Scotland's national Academy, the Royal Society of Edinburgh (RSE). He has also worked as a BBC Radio journalist and as a high school English teacher.

CABRERA GARCÍA, Florentino

Florentino Cabrera García is a Mexican diplomat with the rank of a Second Secretary. He holds a bachelor's degree in economics from the IPN and has completed postgraduate studies at Norwich University. He has been assigned to the Consulates of Mexico in Little Rock and Atlanta, USA, and served as the officer in charge of political and consular affairs at the Embassy of Mexico in Ethiopia. He is currently posted at the Embassy of Mexico in Germany.

CHARRIER, Landry

Landry Charrier is a scientific officer at the Project Management Agency of the German Aerospace Centre (Bonn). Among other responsibilities, he coordinates bilateral cooperation with France (in particular with the Centre Marc Bloch), the UK, Ukraine, and Central Asia. Landry Charrier has also conducted multiple evaluations of political foundations in Africa. From 2017 to 2022, he worked on behalf of the French Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs (MEAE) within the French cultural network abroad. In this role, he operated at the intersection of diplomacy and politics, gaining deep insights into local, regional, national, and European politics.

CIESIELSKA-KLIKOWSKA, Joanna

Joanna Ciesielska-Klikowska is a political scientist and assistant professor at the Department of Asian Studies, and Paradiplomacy Lab – Centre for Studies on Paradiplomacy and City Diplomacy at the University of Lodz, Poland. Her research focuses on European and Asian affairs, with a particular emphasis on the evolving relationship between the People's Republic of China and the European Union. Her work also extends to city diplomacy, analyzing its significance in EU–U.S. relations as well as German–Chinese relations. She collaborates with the Centre for Asian Affairs at the University of Lodz and co-organizes the international scientific conference Lodz East Asia Meeting (LEAM).

COSTELLO, Paul

Paul Costello is a senior program manager in the Cities program of the German Marshall Fund (GMF), based in the organization's Berlin office. He leads the team's work on city international engagement, democracy, and disinformation. He has background in public policy and prior work experience in sustainability and public diplomacy initiatives. He holds a Master's degree in public policy from the Hertie School of Governance in Berlin and a Bachelor of Arts from McGill University in Montreal.

DERMINE, Thomas

Thomas Dermine is a Belgian politician from the Parti Socialiste (PS). He has been Mayor of Charleroi since December 2024. Dermine grew up in Charleroi and spent part of his school years at a school in Dendermonde. He studied industrial engineering at the Solvay Brussels School in Brussels, supplemented by a master's degree in political science at the Université Libre de Bruxelles and a master's degree in public policy at Harvard University in Boston. From 2009 to 2016, Dermine worked as a consultant in various countries. After working abroad for several years, he returned to Charleroi at the beginning of 2017.

EHS, Tamara

Tamara Ehs is a researcher and a consultant for democratic innovations. She founded 'Ehs & Fils Democracy Consulting', advising the Baden-Württemberg state government and the European Association for Local Democracy in Brussels, among others. As her consultancy is based on scientific research, she engages in academic co-operations; soon she will start her fellowship at the AIA. Tamara holds a doctorate in political science from the University of Vienna and has studied political science and law there and at Sciences Po Lille as well as at the European Academy of Legal Theory in Brussels.

FORTUNOFF, Willow

Willow Fortunoff is a Master in Public Policy candidate at the Harvard Kennedy School of Government. She is currently working for the UNFCCC Engagement Division's subnational strategy team. In 2024, she studied city diplomacy and migration in Ecuador as part of a Fulbright research scholarship. Previously, she served as assistant director at the Atlantic Council in Washington DC. Willow holds a BA in Political Science and International Studies from Macalester College.

FREISTEIN, Katja

Katja Freistein is Senior Researcher and Academic Coordinator of the Fellowship Program at the Academy of International Affairs NRW. Her research has focused on international organisations, global inequalities and development. She has published extensively on narratives and visuality, particularly in the context of rightwing populism, in journals including *Review of International Studies* and *International Political Sociology*, among others. She was a Fellow and Visiting Professor at institutions in Aarhus, Saint Petersburg, Hamburg and Münster.

FRENZEL, Andrea

Andrea Frenzel is a freelance writer and researcher. She holds a Master in Chinese Studies from the Free University of Berlin (FUB) and has contributed to projects for MERICS, the Association of Chinese Teachers in German-Speaking Countries (Fachverband Chinesisch), the China Education Network (Bildungsnetzwerk China) and the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, focusing on the topic of expertise on China ('China-Kompetenz') in education and local politics. She was a research assistant in the Asia division at the German Institute for International and Security Affairs (SWP) and a research associate at Free University Berlin.

FRIGERIO, Steven

Steven Frigerio is an international development, sustainability and innovation expert, having worked for major donors including the European Commission with expertise in scaling startups and fostering entrepreneurial growth. As a national expert, he has developed and managed entrepreneurship and innovation support programmes. Frigerio has also advised organisations on Voluntary Carbon Market practices, including nature-based solutions under UNFCCC regulations. He is currently consulting on multiple projects focused on driving innovation and sustainability worldwide.

GEHRKE, Charlotte

Charlotte Gehrke is a researcher at the German Institute of Development and Sustainability (IDOS) in Bonn. Her work examines the intersection of science communication, policy, and diplomacy, with an empirical focus on polar and ocean governance. Her research has been published in a wide range of academic journals and edited volumes, including *Marine Policy*, *Science & Diplomacy*, *Global Society*, the *Routledge Handbook of Arctic Governance*, and more.

CODEHARDT, Nadine

Dr. Nadine Codehardt is Senior Associate of the Research Division Asia at the German Institute for International and Security Affairs (Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, SWP) in Berlin – since September 2024 based at SWP Brussels office. In her capacity at SWP, she advises the German government and Bundestag in questions regarding China's domestic and foreign policy. In her academic work, Codehardt has focused extensively on China's foreign policy discourses and the nexus between global connectivity and geopolitics.

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GUZMÁN, Martina

Martina Guzmán is the founder of VERDAD, an AI tool monitoring radio misinformation, and directs the Race & Justice Reporting Initiative at Wayne State University Law School. A 2023 John S. Knight Fellow at Stanford, she has over 20 years of experience covering race, justice, and inequality. Her award-winning work has appeared on NPR, PBS, Slate, and The Guardian. Guzmán is committed to reporting with communities, not just about them. Her investigations include The Detroit-Berlin Connection and water shut-offs affecting women of color. A Columbia Journalism School alumna and daughter of Mexican immigrants, she has received support from the MacArthur and Ford Foundations.

HEIN, Jürgen

Jürgen Hein is the Managing Director of the Research Alliance Ruhr, a joint initiative of Ruhr University Bochum, TU Dortmund University, and the University of Duisburg-Essen. Since 2022, the Alliance has been developing four research centres focused on health, sustainability, digitalisation, and energy, along with a college promoting international collaboration in the humanities and social sciences. Supported by the North Rhine-Westphalia state government's Ruhr Conference, the Alliance aims to create up to 50 new professorships by 2025. Previously, Hein led the Ruhr Conference and worked as a journalist for dpa, including as Chief South Asia Correspondent in New Delhi.related fields.

HEGEWISCH, Nils

Niels Hegewisch is head of the China desk in the Asia and Pacific department at the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung's Berlin headquarters. Prior to that, he was Resident Director of the FES offices in Pakistan and Mongolia. Before joining FES, Niels Hegewisch worked at the University of Greifswald as a research assistant at the Faculty of Law and Political Science, the Institute of History and the Institute of Political Science and Communication Studies. He studied history, political science and philosophy in Bonn, Vilnius and Greifswald and received his doctorate in political science and history from the University of Greifswald with a thesis on the role of administration in the practice and theory of the separation of powers.

HUANG, Chiung-Chiu

Chiung-Chiu Huang is a Professor at the Graduate Institute of East Asian Studies and Researcher at the Institute of International Relations at the National Chengchi University (NCCU), Taiwan. Huang was Vice Director of CSCAP Taiwan and the Issues & Studies (Scopus/ESSCI journal) Executive Editor (till December 2024). Her main research focus includes Chinese foreign policy, Southeast Asian international politics, Sino-Mongolia relations, and relational turn in IR.

HURNÝ, Juraj

Juraj Hurný leads the Participation and Urban Studies Section at the Metropolitan Institute of Bratislava. His team's flagship "City for Kids" project exemplifies his citizen-centered philosophy, creating safer, more inclusive environments around Bratislava's schools while meaningfully involving children in the design process. Beyond physical transformations his work promotes active mobility and temporary space activation, demonstrating how thoughtful urban interventions can foster vibrant community life across generations.

IACOBUȚĂ, Gabriela I.

Gabriela I. Iacobuță is a researcher with expertise in climate and sustainable development policy, just transitions, and policy coherence between the Paris Agreement and 2030 Agenda. She contributed to international research and policy advice, including on EU development cooperation. She is currently an independent consultant with the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and an associate researcher of the Stockholm Environment Institute (SEI) and the German Institute of Development and Sustainability (IDOS). She holds a PhD from Wageningen University.

ISANI, Mujtaba

Mujtaba Isani is currently the DAAD Long-term Guest-Professor of Political Science at the Quaid-e-Azam University. He was previously a Professor for Empirical Political Science at the University of Muenster, an Assistant Professor at the King Fahd University in Saudi Arabia, an Assistant Professor at Habib University and a Post-Doctoral Fellow at the University of Mannheim. Prof. Isani completed his doctorate in Political Science at the University of Muenster, holds a Master's degree in Political Science at The Ohio State University, and in International Affairs at Marquette University.

KAMIŃSKI, Tomasz

Tomasz Kamiński is a political scientist, Chair of the ParadiplomacyLab – Centre for Studies on Paradiplomacy and City Diplomacy and associate professor at the Faculty of International and Political Studies at the University of Lodz. His research activities are concentrated on paradiplomacy and city diplomacy, particularly in the context of EU foreign policy. He has worked on numerous research projects funded by the European Commission (Horizon 2020, Jean Monnet Module) and the Polish National Science Centre. He is Co-editor of the Routledge Studies on Paradiplomacy and City Diplomacy and author of more than 70 academic works published in journals such as "JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies", "Energy Policy", "Contemporary Politics", and "Asia-Europe Journal".

KLUCZEWSKA, Karolina

Karolina Kluczevska is a research fellow at the Academy for International Affairs NRW in Germany and a visiting scholar at the United Nations University-Institute on Comparative Regional Integration Studies in Belgium. She also remains affiliated with the University of St Andrews in the UK, where she completed her PhD in International Relations. Her research focuses on development policy and aid in Central Asia, critical geopolitics in Eurasia, knowledge production and post-socialist welfare systems.

KOSTADINOVA, Tonka

Tonka Kostadinova is a distinguished diplomat and researcher with expertise in both traditional and subnational diplomacy, having served at Bulgaria's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Municipality of Burgas. She has extensive academic experience at various institutions such as the University of Cambridge, the University of Münster, Charles University–Prague, and the Academy of International Affairs NRW. A multi-award-winning educator, she actively promotes youth awareness of gender equality in foreign policy and diplomacy.

KSIĄŻEK, Bartłomiej

Bartłomiej Książek holds a law degree from Silesian University in Katowice. During and after his studies he worked in a notary's office and in a solicitors' office. After that he worked for PwC in tax sector. He started his career in the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs over five years ago by joining a diplomatic academy. In the MFA, he was active, among others, in consular and law departments. He has been working in Lviv, London and Istanbul. Since July last year he is responsible in the Consulate General in Köln for economic and cultural diplomacy.

MACDONALD, Stuart

Stuart MacDonald is an incoming Fellow of AIA NRW and Founder Director of ICR Research, the UK's leading consultancy in International Cultural Relations and Public Diplomacy. A former senior civil servant with more than 25 years' experience in advising Ministers, he founded the Centre for Cultural Relations at Edinburgh University (2012-16). He advises governments worldwide on soft power strategy, authored "Soft Power Today," and holds academic posts at SOAS and University of London.

MALACHI, Ifedayo Grace

Ifedayo Malachi is an incoming Fellow of AIA NRW a Doctor of Governance and Inter-relations in the Department of Political Science at Bamidele Olumilua University of Education, Science and Technology. She is a scholar specializing in diversity management, social cohesion, identity construction, and conflict transformation. She earned her PhD in Governance and Regional Integration from the Pan African University, Institute of Governance, Humanities and Social Sciences (Affiliated to the University of Yaoundé II) in Yaoundé, Cameroon.

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MERVENNE, Anne

Anne is President of Mervenne & Co., a public affairs consulting firm. Anne served for 20 years as the Republican Co-Director of the bi-partisan Michigan Political Leadership Program at Michigan State University. She is on the Board of Directors of the Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Michigan and the national board of directors for the Private Directors Association. She has been appointed by the last four Governors to serve on state boards including her appointment by Governor Whitmer to the State Board of Ethics.

BOOI-MOKOENA, Patiwe

Booi-Mokoena is an official of the Department of International Relations and Cooperation (DIRCO) and is currently serving as a first Secretary at the embassy of the Republic of South Africa in Berlin. At Head office she served at various sections in the Foreign Ministry, such as the Asia and Middle East Branch serving on the IBSA and BRICS desks. In working both at Head Office and abroad she gained experience in promoting national interests of South Africa and working together with several stakeholders such as government departments, private sector companies as well as Think Tanks, NGOs and Academia at an international level.

OGINNI, Oyewole

Oyewole Oginni is a Senior Researcher at the Bonn International Centre for Conflict Studies (bicc) in Germany. His current research focuses on regional approaches to dealing with armed groups in the Sahel, in collaboration with the UN DPO, African Union, and local research institutions. Previously, he served as Africa Lead/Director at World Peace, a Canadian INGO, for a decade, coordinating conflict reports and contributing to development of conflict index. Between 2022 and 2024, he served as a technical migration expert at UNOPS on forced migration in East/Horn of Africa and advisor expert on Africa-EU partnership projects on peace and security in the Sahel region. Oginni holds a doctorate in Political Sociology from the University of Bonn.

OSEI DAPAAH, Kelvina

Kelvina Osei Dapaah is currently Assistant Director at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Ghana. She holds a Bachelor's degree in Information Technology from Bluecrest College and worked as an Administrative Assistant at HFS Installation Systems Limited. She has an interest in how digital diplomacy can be used to tackle critical global issues such as cybersecurity, climate change, and social justice. Additionally, she is invested in exploring how digital, economic, and cultural diplomacy can be harnessed to foster mutual understanding and bridge divides between nations. In her work as Foreign service Officer she focuses on public service, international collaboration, and global problem solving.

PATTERSON, Steve

Mayor Steve Patterson has lived in Athens since 1998 and served as an Associate Professor at Ohio University until becoming Mayor in 2016. A retired Major in the U.S. Air Force and Air National Guard, he served over 20 years in both enlisted and commissioned ranks. He is active on numerous boards, including as President of the National League of Cities and Chair of both SOPEC and the Outdoor Recreation Council of Appalachia. Mayor Patterson and his wife, Dr. Connie Patterson, are proud parents of twin daughters, Adelia and Alana.

PILZ, Oliver

Oliver Pilz serves as Policy Secretary to the Mayor of Budapest at Budapest City Hall. Previously, he worked at Budapest's City Diplomacy Unit, where he played a key role in expanding the Pact of Free Cities mayoral network, launching the Budapest Academy of City Diplomacy, and organizing the annual Budapest Forum on Building Sustainable Democracies.

PLÉ, Alexander

Alexander Plé is a Scientific Consultant at the IQIB Institute for Qualifying Innovation Research and Consulting, a subsidiary of the German Aerospace Center (DLR). His main areas of work include knowledge and technology transfer, strategic foresight, futures literacy, smart cities, international cooperations and urban diplomacy. Plé has an academic background in International Relations. Previous work experiences include the China-Italy Innovation Forum, the representative office of the Autonomous Province of Bolzano in Rome, the German International Cooperation Society (GIZ) in Nepal, the German Federal Foreign Office in Taipei and the consultancy MSX International.

DO PRADO, Débora Figueiredo Mendonça

Débora Prado holds a PhD in Political Science from the State University of Campinas (UNICAMP). She is an associate professor in the undergraduate and graduate International Relations programs at the Federal University of Uberlândia (PPGRI-UFU). She is a researcher at the National Institute of Science and Technology for United States Studies (INCT-INEU) and the Coordinator of the Research Group on Subnational Diplomacy.

PRASHANT, Kumar

Kumar Prashant is a researcher specialising in global cooperation for sustainability and circularity. He has worked on these aspects with the Government of India and Government of New Delhi, and in leading think tanks in Delhi, Geneva, London and presently, Amsterdam. His research and policy insights have been recognised and adopted by the G20, BRICS and at WTO.

ROHDE, Oliver

Oliver Rohde is Head of Department for Policy Issues in European and International Cooperation at the Project Management Agency of the German Aerospace Centre. His main fields of activity comprise innovation cooperation on regional and international level, the evaluation of STI programmes and smart cities. As a trained economist (University of Hamburg and Charles University Prague), he has participated in several EU-funded projects focussing on innovation and cluster cooperation since 2011. Before joining DLR, he worked at PricewaterhouseCoopers as part of a team advising state governments in Germany on the evaluation of regional economic and innovation funding programmes and ERDF Operational Programmes.

RUDROFF, Felix

Felix Rudroff is scientific officer at the Project Management Agency of the German Aerospace Centre since October 2021. He works at the Coordination and Transfer Office Model Projects Smart Cities (KTS). Prior to this, he gained several years of professional experience in the field of interdisciplinary urban and metropolitan research, including as a research associate at the Ruhr University Bochum and coordinator of the Competence Field Metropolitan Research (KoMet) of the University Alliance Ruhr (UA Ruhr). He studied political science and sociology in Kiel, Bonn and Zagreb and completed his studies in 2017 with a Master's degree in "Societies, Globalisation and Development".

RYDZEWSKA, Agata

PhD Candidate at the Faculty of Political Science and International Studies, University of Warsaw, Poland, and the Principal Investigator of the project entitled 'Descriptive and Substantive Representation of Women in Paradiplomacy. The Case of Autonomous Communities of Spain'. Her research focuses on gender representation in sub-state diplomacy and the relationship between feminist foreign policy and paradiplomacy.

SCHULZE, David

David Schulze is a PhD candidate at the Ruhr Graduate School in Economics and a researcher at the Chair of Environmental/Resource Economics and Sustainability at Ruhr-University Bochum. He works on current issues of sustainable firm and household behavior, digital innovation and China-EU relations with experimental and applied quantitative methods. He has worked on economic, security and foreign policy issues of Chinese digitization at SWP Berlin.

SHPAKOVSKAYA, Anna

Anna Shpakovskaya is a Fellow of AIA NRW and an Associate Researcher at the Institute of East Asian Studies at the University of Duisburg-Essen, Germany. She is also a Visiting Professor at the International School of Political Studies, Université Paris Est Créteil, France and Visiting Scholar at the School of Governance, Shenzhen University, China. Anna Shpakovskaya holds a BA and MA from Shanghai University (2001-2008) and a Ph.D. in Political Science from the University of Duisburg-Essen (2017). She contributed to the "Economic and Socio-Political Implications of the New Silk Road for North Rhine-Westphalia" project, focusing on city diplomacy between China and NRW.

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SMITH, Kent

State Senator Kent Smith is a member of the Ohio Senate, representing the state's 21st district since 2023. He previously served in the Ohio House of Representatives (2015–2022), following over a decade of service on the Euclid Board of Education (2002–2013), where he earned the Ohio School Boards Association's "Award of Achievement" four times and never missed a meeting in twelve years. He holds a B.A. from Miami University and a Master's in Urban Studies from Cleveland State University, where his thesis focused on predatory lending. He later co-authored Policy Matters Ohio's first Predatory Lending Report and pursued PhD studies in Economic Development at Cleveland State University. In 2023, he earned a Public Leadership Credential from the Kennedy School at Harvard University. He has been the elected head of the Democratic Party in his hometown since 2006. In his spare time he is a roller derby announcer, apple farmer, cat dad and music fan.

SORENSEN, Ryan

Ryan Sorenson is the 59th and youngest-serving Mayor of Sheboygan, currently in his second term after previously serving on the City Council and as Council President. A lifelong Sheboygan resident, he earned a Bachelor's Degree in Political Science and History from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, where he also served as student body president. As Mayor, he acts as the city's CEO and leads initiatives focused on infrastructure, local business support, and housing advocacy. Sorenson is actively involved in regional and national leadership, serving on multiple boards and committees, including the U.S. Conference of Mayors and as the Co-Chair for the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative.

STÜRNER-SIOVITZ, Janina

As a postdoctoral researcher and former city planner, Janina Stürner-Siovitz has been co-creating action research with cities and city networks on city diplomacy in Africa, Europe and globally for over nine years. Her book "Curtain up! City diplomacy in global migration governance" spearheaded urban diplomacy research in the fields of migration and displacement. Janina is a peer reviewer for the Knowledge Platform of the UN Network on Migration, a Visiting Fellow of the German Marshall Fund and an Associate Fellow of the City Diplomacy Lab.

WHITE, Tim

Tim White is an Alexander von Humboldt Research Fellow in Sociology at the Free University of Berlin and a Visiting Fellow at the London School of Economics. His work focuses on housing, land, property and power. He is currently writing a book on how housing is being reshaped at the tech-finance nexus. White is also studying the political economy of land and is concerned with the role of property in broader questions of inequality and wealth distribution. His work has been published in journals including *EPA: Economy and Space and Economy and Society*, and in newspapers including *The Guardian*.

YU, Helen

As City Practice Lead, Yu leads the development and delivery of the Mayors Migration Council's City Practice portfolio, including the \$25M+ Global Cities Fund for Migrants and Refugees (GCF) and managing an active pipeline of projects across 25 cities. She has advised over 50 cities worldwide implementing programs focused on socio-economic inclusion, climate adaptation, nature-based solutions, and public space planning. Prior to joining the MMC, she worked as an urban planner with UN-Habitat in Nairobi and Douala and with UNHCR in Geneva. She holds a Master of Landscape Architecture and Regional Planning from the University of Pennsylvania and a Bachelor of Science in International Agriculture and Natural Resources from the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

ZEIN AL DIN, Mayssoun

Mayssoun Zein Al Din is Executive Director of the Academy of International Affairs NRW, Associate Fellow at the Center for Advanced Security, Strategic and Integration Studies (CASSIS) and lecturer at RWTH Aachen University and the University of Bonn. Her research focuses on international relations and the Arab world. She holds a PhD in Political Science, which she obtained at RWTH Aachen University. From 2012 to 2020, she was also responsible for international policy issues in the office of the former Minister President of North Rhine-Westphalia.