

Strategic International Engagement at the Local & Regional Level

The Case of Northern Virginia

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The Northern Virginia Regional Commission (NVRC) is a regional council of governments representing 13 localities and approximately 2.5 million people of the northern Virginia suburbs of Washington DC. According to Virginia Code, NVRC is a political subdivision (government agency) of the Commonwealth. NVRC's 24-member board is composed of elected officials of member local governments. Chief functions are providing information and professional and technical services for members, and serving as a mechanism for regional coordination. A statutory purpose is to "promote the orderly and efficient development of the physical, social and economic elements of the district by planning, and encouraging and assisting localities to plan, for the future."



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Executive Summary

Strategic International Engagement at the Local & Regional Level

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Like no other period before, the U.S. Federal Government alone cannot address the sheer scale and urgency of global challenges. These include climate change, public health pandemics, social inclusion, public safety, economic development, immigration, infrastructure revitalization, and education. Global engagement by local governments is now a necessity, not an option.

However, international engagement by U.S. local governments is frequently unstructured, non-strategic, and passive. Currently, international work by local governments is short on formal and transparent planning, deficient in comprehensive inter-departmental coordination, and lacks staff and financial support. More fundamentally, local governments work internationally in ways that are seldom applicable to Main Street's priorities. U.S. cities, counties, or towns create international programs that are irrelevant to the jobs of a U.S. city manager, school superintendent, wastewater treatment engineer, renewable energy technician, watershed restoration NGO, nurse, or social worker.

Consequently, global activities by U.S. local governments tend to be stigmatized as marginal or disparaged as wasteful. The lack of strategic planning to guide international work at the local level has resulted in fleeting, event-based activities lacking outcomes. Such international work generally serves broad and ill-defined national foreign policy objectives, often labeled "cultural diplomacy." Rarely do foreign policy and global engagement by cities converge to support domestic renewal at home.

The Northern Virginia Regional Commission (NVRC) is a regional council of governments representing the 2.5 million people, 13 cities, counties, and towns of Northern Virginia. For over 20 years, NVRC has pioneered a unique model of global engagement for local governments. This model has potential lessons for the rest of the United States. NVRC's international programs emphasize the transfer and application of policy and technical innovations from overseas to Northern Virginia, creating economic, environmental, and social outcomes. NVRC's global programs prioritize engagement with international policy and technological pioneers connected to Northern Virginia through investment, trade, and tourism. NVRC strategically partners, whenever possible, with Northern Virginia's commercial, academic, scientific, research, and civil society institutions to support the purposeful transfer and practical application of innovations from abroad.

NVRC's global engagement model has benefitted the economy, environment, and communities of Northern Virginia. The transfer of lessons from cities and regions such as Stuttgart, Hamburg, and Berlin, has informed and strengthened energy and climate mitigation plans, watershed restoration strategies, and mobility improvements across the region. NVRC's emphasis on transfers of innovations from abroad to Northern Virginia has helped create a strong focus on outcome-oriented international work that can be replicated across Virginia and the United States.

This paper summarizes the challenges with international work by U.S. local governments. We describe how NVRC's international programs evolved in response to these challenges by prioritizing programs and countries on which to focus. We assess NVRC's work to strategically partner with regional institutions in global affairs and how NVRC's model might apply elsewhere. The paper focuses on the unique 21-year history of engagement between the NVRC and metropolitan regions from Germany, notably the Stuttgart region.

Introduction

For over 20 years, the Northern Virginia Regional Commission (NVRC), a regional council of governments representing the 2.5 million people, 13 cities, counties and towns of Northern Virginia, has pioneered a unique model of global engagement for local governments. NVRC's international programs are special because they emphasize the transfer and application of policy and technical innovations from overseas to Northern Virginia and economic, environmental and social outcomes. NVRC's global programs prioritize the engagement with other countries based on their dual status as global policy and technical pioneers and their economic connections to Northern Virginia through investment, trade and tourism. Finally, when possible, NVRC strategically partners with the region's commercial, academic, scientific, research and civil society institutions in the purposeful transfer and application of innovations from abroad.

It is an understatement that the economy and environment of Northern Virginia have been positively transformed through NVRC's international programs. For over twenty years, energy and climate mitigation plans, watershed restoration strategies and mobility improvements in Northern Virginia have been informed and strengthened through

NVRC's cooperation with cities and regions such as Stuttgart, Bottrop, Hamburg and Berlin. Moreover, NVRC's emphasis on the transfer of innovations from abroad that benefit Northern Virginia has led to a stronger appreciation for international work at the local level with potential for replication across the Commonwealth and the United States.

**Global engagement by local governments
is now a necessity, not an option.**

The evolution of NVRC's international programs is timely. Like no other period before, the sheer scale and urgency of global challenges such as climate change, public health pandemics, social inclusion, public safety, economic development, immigration, infrastructure revitalization and education can no longer be addressed alone just by the U.S. federal government. Global engagement by local governments is now a necessity, not an option.

But even today, large portions of international engagement by U.S. local governments is conducted in diffuse, reactionary and unstructured contexts. More fundamentally, vast amounts of international work at the local level is carried out in settings that lack outcomes for addressing the day-to-day priorities of Main Street. Cities, counties, or towns too often struggle with creating international programs that are relevant to the jobs of a U.S. city manager, school superintendent, wastewater treatment engineer, renewable energy technician, watershed restoration NGO, nurse or social worker. Generally speaking, international work by U.S. local governments is short on formal and transparent planning, deficient in comprehensive inter-departmental coordination, and usually lacks adequate staff and financial support. These problems are compounded by the struggle U.S. local governments face with clearly identifying and ranking the countries with which to work - or avoid, defining the issues with which to engage or clarifying measures of success through international engagement.¹

In this planning vacuum, international work by U.S. local governments tends too often to be stigmatized as marginal or irrelevant. There also is the challenge that global engagement by U.S. local governments is too locked into ephemeral, event-based activities that mimic the dynamic of “cultural diplomacy”. In other words, local governments too often engage globally into contexts in which they serve only very broad U.S. national foreign policy objectives rather than looking at ways in which U.S. foreign policy is directed to meet the needs of Main Street in the U.S.² Former Deputy Secretary of State William J. Burns pointed out this issue by emphasizing a foreign policy focused on “domestic renewal at home” and the alignment of domestic and foreign policy objectives.³

In this paper, we will summarize past and current challenges with international work by local governments in the United States. We will describe the evolution of NVRC’s international programs in response to these challenges and the efforts to prioritize programs and countries on which to focus. We also will assess the evolution of NVRC’s work to strategically partner with regional institutions in global affairs, and how NVRC’s model might apply to other parts of the Commonwealth of Virginia and the United States. Special attention will be given to the unique 21-year history of engagement between the NVRC and metropolitan regions from Germany, particularly the Stuttgart region.

1 Dolowitz, D., Medearis, D. (2009) “Considerations of the Obstacles and Opportunities to Formalizing Cross-National Policy Transfer to the United States: A Case Study of the Transfer of Urban Environmental and Planning Policies from Germany,” *Environment and Planning*, vol. 27 pp. 684-69

2 Hachigian, Nina. “Why U.S. Cities and States Should Play a Bigger Role in Foreign Policy.” *Foreign Policy*. April 21, 2021. <https://foreignpolicy.com/2021/04/19/american-cities-states-local-foreign-policy-role-domestic-biden-sullivan/>. Accessed May 6, 2021

3 Burns, William, “The United States Needs a New Foreign Policy”, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, July 20, 2020. <https://carnegieendowment.org/2020/07/14/united-states-needs-new-foreign-policy-pub-82295>. Accessed May 1, 2021

SECTION #1

Obstacles Restricting International Engagement By U.S. Local Governments: Lack of Strategic & Outcome-Oriented Planning

Despite substantial progress to institutionalize international work by U.S. local governments over the past decade, the reality is that “international engagement of cities is still in its infancy.”⁴ A handful of large U.S. cities staff and operate international economic development activities, oversee or aid with the coordination of global operations for trade centers, airports or seaports. These (typically very large) city governments also help administer diplomatic affairs of foreign consulates and program joint international events through local colleges, universities, businesses and civil society organizations.

But even among these larger local governments, it is uncommon to find systemic, formal, coordinated and comprehensive plans for their international work that connect directly to their domestic programs and priorities. There is a prevailing notion that international work by local governments progresses as “an immutable force of nature,” rather than a structured process and context made purposeful through the creation of intentional policies and institutions.⁵

The lack of strategic programming to guide international affairs is often rooted in the lack of means or will to rank countries and programs with which to work – or those to bypass. In the U.S., it is often the case that local governments might have as many as 20 or more formal partnerships with counterparts abroad. The union of so many countries and vast number of programmatic priorities such as climate, health or culture, easily dilutes the potential for substantive, problem-focused international work.

⁴ German Marshall Fund, “City Directors of International Affairs Network: Weaving Local Ingenuity into Global Issues”. Received March 4, 2021

⁵ Hurlbut, Heather, “The World is Helping Americans Who Don’t Always See It.” New York Times, May 4, 2020. Accessed May 1, 2021” – <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/05/04/opinion/coronavirus-global-cooperation-cities.html>. Accessed May 1, 2021

International work carried out in such diffuse geographic and programmatic contexts makes it vulnerable to perceptions that it is boutique, or easily reduced simply to meet-and-greet events, photo-ops with few or no outcomes. Moreover, the lack of strategic planning to guide international work too easily brands vital activities such as international travel as junkets and boondoggles.⁶ The attached stories reflect a familiar, unfortunate and negative stereotype about global travel by local officials.^{7,8}

Ironically, international engagement without purpose, strategy or goals has had the consequence of moving many U.S. local governments to focus on development assistance of aid-related international programs. The inclusion of development assistance into international work by local governments further complicates the struggle with framing priority countries, priority issues, defining outcomes, budgeting and staffing.

The diffuse and complex nature of global engagement by local authorities has also fostered concerns about the utility of global urban networks. The rise of cities as global actors over the last decade has contributed to a rapid proliferation of global cities associations such as C-40, Cities Alliance and the International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI). But duplication, geographic and thematic diversity has fueled the rise of network fatigue and a loss of confidence about whether these networks can meaningfully address “the most pressing problems cities face.”⁹

U.S. Lags Behind Other Pioneering Countries

Another complication limiting purposeful global engagement by U.S. local governments has been the lack of awareness that the U.S. actually lags behind other countries in multiple and important technical and policy arenas. There is a cultural filter at work in the U.S. based on the notion that there is little to be learned from other countries or cities abroad. This notion of exceptionalism can cloud understanding about and appreciation for ways that U.S. local governments and their citizens might actually benefit through working with and learning from others overseas.¹⁰

Multiple quantitative indicators from environmental, social, health, education policy and technical arenas clearly point out that the U.S. trails behind many other countries. For example, among OECD countries, the U.S. ranks 33 (of 36) in infant mortality, 30th in math and 19th in science.^{11,12} The Petersen Institute and the Global Economic

6 Medearis, D., & Dolowitz, D. (2012) “Cross-national urban sustainability learning: A case study on ‘continuous interaction’ in green infrastructure policies”. Edited by Harald Mieg and Klaus Toepfer. *Institutional and Social Innovation for Sustainable Urban Development*. London: Routledge pp.233-244

7 Bradshaw, Kate. “Questions Raised Over Councilmember’s Expense-paid Travel, The Almanac, June 12, 2018. <https://www.almanacnews.com/news/2018/06/12/questions-raised-over-council-members-expense-paid-travel>. Accessed May 1, 2021

8 Inland Daily Bulletin “Mayor’s Questionable Travel Plans” June 1, 2008. <https://www.dailybulletin.com/2008/06/01/mayors-questionable-travel-plans/amp/> Accessed May 1, 2021

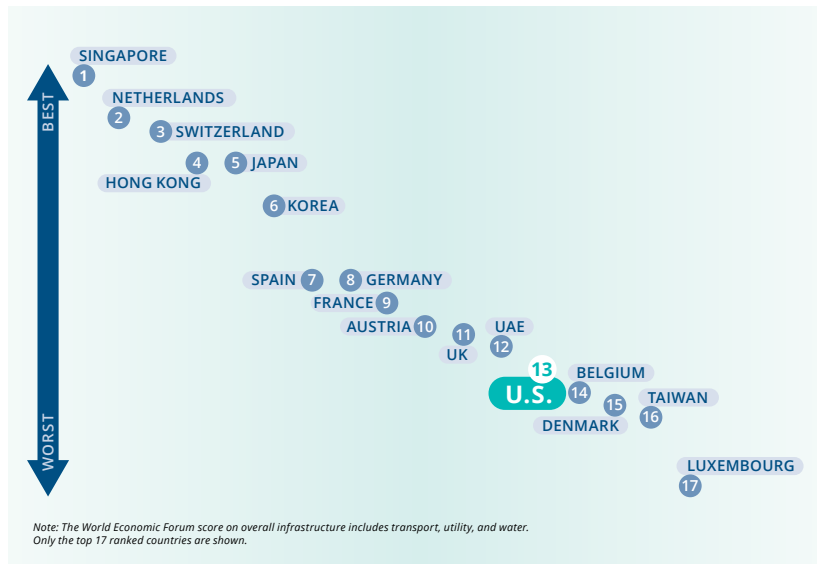
9 Losada, A. (2019) “Towards a Cooperative Ecosystem of City Networks” Edited by Losada A. and Abdullah A. Rethinking the Ecosystem of International City Networks: Challenges and opportunities. Barcelona Centre for International Affairs. https://www.cidob.org/en/publications/publication_series/monographs/monographs/rethinking_the_ecosystem_of_international_city_networks_challenges_and_opportunities. Accessed May 1, 2021

10 Dolowitz, D., Medearis, D. (2009) “Considerations of the Obstacles and Opportunities to Formalizing Cross-National Policy Transfer to the United States: A Case Study of the Transfer of Urban Environmental and Planning Policies from Germany.” *Environment and Planning*, vol. 27 pp. 684-697

11 United Health Foundation (2018) America’s Health Rankings. <https://www.america'shealthrankings.org/learn/reports/2018-annual-report/findings-international-comparison>. Accessed May 1, 2021

12 Pew Research Center (2017) “U.S. Students’ Academic Achievement Still Lags That of Their Peers in Many Other Countries.” <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/02/15/u-s-students-internationally-math-science/>. Accessed May 1, 2021

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The U.S. ranks 13th in quality of overall infrastructure according to the World Economic Forum Global Infrastructure

Forum respectively rank the U.S. 13th in global infrastructure.^{13,14} Bicyclists and pedestrians in German and Dutch cities are three times safer than their U.S. counterparts. In cities such as Berlin, Freiburg and Hamburg public transportation, biking and walking make up nearly 60% of all trips.¹⁵

Dominance of Macro-geopolitical Foreign Policy Issues

Purposeful global engagement at the local level in the U.S. also tends to be impeded by the view that local governments should serve national-

level foreign policy objectives primarily through “cultural diplomacy” channels. There is lots of serious consideration about ways in which the U.S. government could leverage the political leadership of cities and counties towards foreign policy objectives.¹⁶ But it is unusual to find examples in which U.S. national-level foreign policy programs are used to serve the domestic priorities of U.S. local governments or Main Street.

The prevalence of macro-geopolitical issues over global engagement by cities, especially with Europe, has historical roots that extend to the end of the Second World War. Cold War politics and security issues, about NATO or OSCE eclipsed local-level issues of public transportation, renewable energy, wastewater treatment or public health. City-level relations were fused into the contexts that drew from the “soft power” vocabulary of people-to-people, cultural or “jazz diplomacy” exchanges in which U.S. cities were used to positively portray U.S. democracy. In countries such as Germany during the Cold War, this was relatively easy when the moral authority of the U.S. possessed a special gravitas amidst the ashes of the Third Reich or the shadows of Soviet tyranny.

Incomplete Data, Metrics and Performance Benchmarking

Strategic international engagement at the local level also is apt to be slowed by a lack of means to assess and quantitatively benchmark how and the circumstances in

¹³ World Economic Forum (2019) “The Global Competitiveness Report”. http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_TheGlobalCompetitivenessReport2019.pdf. Accessed May 1, 2021

¹⁴ Petersen Foundation. (2021) “U.S. Ranks 13th in Infrastructure Quality”. https://www.pgpf.org/chart-archive/0215_infrastructure-ranking-by-country-world-economic-forum. Accessed May 1, 2021

¹⁵ Pucher, J., Buehler, R. 2008. “Making Cycling Irresistible: Lessons from the Netherlands, Denmark, and Germany,” *Transport Reviews*, Vol. 28, No. 4, pp. 495-528.

¹⁶ Bipa, A. and Bouchet, M. (February 17, 2021) “Partnerships Among Cities, States and the Federal Government Creating and Office of Subnational Diplomacy at the U.S. State Department” The Brookings Institution. <https://www.brookings.edu/research/partnership-among-cities-states-and-the-federal-government-creating-an-office-of-subnational-diplomacy-at-the-us-department-of-state/>. Accessed May 1, 2021

which complex technical and policy innovations can be suitably applied to the U.S. Like all countries, the United States has unique legal, regulatory and cultural conditions. It takes time and effort to understand and permeate the technical, economic, legal, regulatory and cultural obstacles when trying to apply innovations or lessons from overseas. Lesson learning is not as easy as add-water-and-stir or accomplished simply by relying only on Powerpoint slides, one-off meetings or site visits.

Moreover, the demands on the day jobs of a local government's staff are enormous. Their work can be made more complicated if the staff are distracted by trying to interpret how technical lessons from abroad can be applied to their work. Suitable transfers of lessons can be strengthened when there is a steady and continuous exchange of data, benchmarking, and comparative statistical assessments between the proper technical and policy experts – and elected officials. This takes time, effort and resources and often external support.¹⁷

Little Available Local-Level Data About Global Economic Engagement

Among the more formal institutions supporting international work at the local level are economic development offices promoting trade and investment. There is ubiquitous national-level and state-level data and metrics to assess and map the effects of trade, investment, job creation and tourism. But it is uncommon for this data to be assessed and mapped to the level of granularity of a city, county or town – or made publicly available. As a result, important economic metrics about global economic ties and their benefits go overlooked, under-appreciated or un-used. The Brookings Institute pointed out this vacuum and how “international relations’ decisions are frequently separated from those stewarding the regional economic development agenda, and thus misaligned with broader efforts to grow business and job opportunities.”¹⁸

The under-utilization of local-level geocoded trade, investment and tourism metrics and related data about global economic engagement is relevant. Public display and access of locally geocoded international economic interconnectedness helps justify the utility and value of global programs and engagement by U.S. local authorities. Public access to and understanding about foreign investment, trade and job creation at the local level validates international engagement at one of the most fundamental levels.

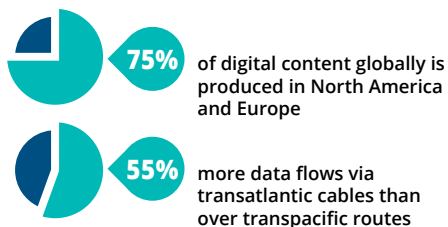
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¹⁷ Dolowitz, D., Medearis, D. (2009) “Considerations of the Obstacles and Opportunities to Formalizing Cross-National Policy Transfer to the United States: A Case Study of the Transfer of Urban Environmental and Planning Policies from Germany.” *Environment and Planning*, vol. 27 pp. 684-697

¹⁸ Brookings Institution. “Global Cities Initiative Toolkit” <https://www.brookings.edu/global-cities-initiative-the-exchange/>. Accessed May 1, 2021

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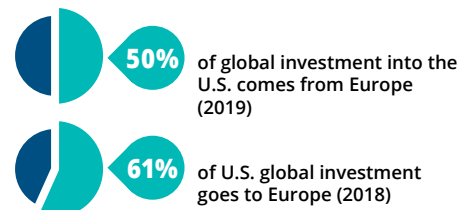
DIGITAL



INNOVATION



INVESTMENT



JOB



TRADE IN GOODS



TRADE IN SERVICES



DATA SOURCE: CENTER FOR TRANSATLANTIC RELATIONS, *THE TRANSATLANTIC ECONOMY*, 2020

Statistics on aspects of the transatlantic economy

According to the Global Business Alliance, international companies employ over 7.8 million U.S. workers and pay wages that are on average approximately \$82,000 and approximately 22 percent higher than the average worker in the U.S. International businesses also account for approximately 19% of all corporate R&D in the United States.¹⁹ There is a similar picture emerging with global tourism. Prior to the pandemic, global tourism spending in the U.S. was \$195.1 billion, accounting for 16% of the total tourism sector spending.²⁰

¹⁹ Global Business Alliance. "Foreign Direct Investment". <https://www.globalbusiness.org/about-us/foreign-direct-investment>. Accessed May 1, 2021

²⁰ Baratti, L. "The U.S. Looks to Lose \$155 Billion Without International Tourism in 2020". World Tourism and Travel Council. September 2, 2020. [https://www.travelpulse.com/news/impacting-travel/the-us-looks-to-lose-155-billion-without-international-tourism-in-2020.html#:~:text=The%20US%20Looks%20to%20Lose%20\\$24155%20Billion%20Without%20International%20Tourism%20in%202020](https://www.travelpulse.com/news/impacting-travel/the-us-looks-to-lose-155-billion-without-international-tourism-in-2020.html#:~:text=The%20US%20Looks%20to%20Lose%20$24155%20Billion%20Without%20International%20Tourism%20in%202020). Accessed May 1, 2021

Overlooking these dynamics in the case of Transatlantic relations can be significant. According to Dan Hamilton and Joseph Quinlan at the Center for Transatlantic Relations, the transatlantic economy remains the largest, wealthiest and most integrated market in the world that generates over \$5.6 trillion in total commercial sales each year and employs 16 million workers in mutually “on-shored” jobs on both sides of the Atlantic. Hamilton and Quinlan add that Europe accounted for half (\$125 billion) of the \$251 billion in global foreign direct investment that flowed into the U.S. in 2019. America’s asset base in Germany (\$860 billion in 2017) was about 20% larger than its asset base in all of South America and double that of its assets in China. German companies are the leading source of foreign direct investment in the U.S. energy economy, accounting for one in five greenfield projects in the U.S. energy sector. In Virginia, European companies account for 73% of foreign affiliate jobs.²¹

Few Formal Partnerships with Local-Level Commercial, Scientific, Academic and Civil Society Partners

A diffuse, reactionary and non-strategic approach to international programming by local governments weakens the potential to involve academic, educational, scientific, commercial, and civil society partners. However, the development by local governments of a strategic plan for international engagement has the potential to pool together the technical, financial and policy expertise from local or regional colleges, universities, businesses, research institutes or NGOs. Purposeful global programming by local governments also opens opportunities for overcoming time and resource constraints faced by local governmental staff through sustained communication and exchange with counterparts overseas.²² Formal planning and partnerships also have the potential to confer gravitas and strengthen synergies in the context of fundraising and grant solicitations.

²¹ Hamilton, D. and Quinlan J. “The Transatlantic Economy 2020: Annual Survey of Jobs Trade and Investment Between Europe and the United States.” https://transatlanticrelations.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/TE2020_Report_FINAL.pdf. Accessed May 1, 2021

²² Dolowitz, D., Medearis, D. (2009) “Considerations of the Obstacles and Opportunities to Formalizing Cross-National Policy Transfer to the United States: A Case Study of the Transfer of Urban Environmental and Planning Policies from Germany,” *Environment and Planning*, vol. 27 pp. 684-697

SECTION #2

An Emerging Model of Global Engagement for Local Governments in the United States: The Case of Northern Virginia

Since 1999, the NVRC has developed a unique model of global engagement for the region and its local governmental members. *It is important to stress that NVRC's approach to global engagement is imperfect and evolving.* But generally, for the past 20 years, NVRC's work internationally has been premised on unilateral transfers of policy and technical innovations from pioneering countries to Northern Virginia towards economic, environmental and social outcomes. NVRC also has tried to prioritize and steer relations with other countries through the filter of economic interconnectedness – primarily by drawing from state-level economic data concerning trade, investment or tourism. NVRC also has engaged primarily with countries such as Germany, which is considered a policy and technical pioneer and offers lessons about sustainability

for the region. Moreover, for the past 21 years, NVRC has endeavored to partner with the region's scientific, research, commercial, civil society institutions whose international programs and priorities converged with NVRC's.



ISTOCK, HROE

Weeknight traffic in Northern Virginia

Land-use and Environmental Concerns Driving NVRC Search for Lessons Overseas

A key catalyst in the late 1990s that drove NVRC to search and apply lessons from abroad was the degradation of the environment and quality

of life arising from the region's rapid urbanization. For decades, Northern Virginia was one of the fastest growing regions in the U.S. But the pace of urbanization had

eroded the region's open spaces, forests, natural habitats and contributed to some of the most severe traffic congestion in the United States. Watersheds were degraded from non-point stormwater run-off, air quality regularly violated federal air quality laws – particularly from mobile source emissions. Urban sprawl physically isolated neighborhoods and compromised pedestrian and bike access and safety.

In early 1998, the NVRC board agreed to look overseas for lessons about sustainable regional planning, environmental protection and governance. The NVRC looked first to metropolitan regions in Germany because of that country's status as a global leader in many environmental issues. Germany has had a long-term history with urban sustainability policies guiding regional-level integrated land-use and transportation planning, solid waste recycling, renewable energy, and "green" building design. The NVRC board also recognized that German metropolitan regions such as Stuttgart, Hamburg and Berlin had inspired past urban infrastructure projects of Northern Virginia in the late 1970s and early 1980s, especially the redevelopment of the Alexandria Torpedo Factory and the Washington, DC Metro rail system.^{23,24} The NVRC board also decided to work internationally with the motive of learning and applying sustainability lessons from abroad, as opposed to undertaking development assistance or aid-related initiatives.

The Stuttgart region in Germany was studied closely for multiple reasons. The regional council (*Verband Region Stuttgart*) had a global reputation for inventive approaches for regional land-use, governance, public transportation, green infrastructure, and climate resiliency planning. The "Verband" was a regionally elected council with oversight for coordinating and regulating land-uses and transportation for a geographic area equivalent in size and population to Northern Virginia. A substantial portion of the Verband Region Stuttgart's portfolio has included the development and oversight of the 1,500 square mile regional "Landscape Plan". A unique feature of Stuttgart's regional landscape plan has been the focus on planning and managing urban forests, parks, open spaces and protected landscapes into "green corridors".²⁵ The open spaces, parks and agricultural lands protected within the green corridors of the Stuttgart region (and others across Germany) help reduce temperatures and improve air quality by dispersing particulates, ozone and other pollutants. 80-years of geocoding these phenomena has evolved into a world-class and groundbreaking "Stuttgart Climate Atlas" that now frames substantial portions of the region's climate resiliency and urban heat island mitigation programs.

In early 1998, the NVRC board agreed to look overseas for lessons about sustainable regional planning, environmental protection and governance. The NVRC looked first to metropolitan regions in Germany because of that country's status as a global leader in many environmental issues.

23 Meyers, Robert "A Touch of the Old World for Alexandria's Waterfront?" *Washington Post*, September 18, 1980

24 Rayasam, R. (June 1, 2012) "The End of an Era at the German Marshall Fund." *Der Spiegel*. <https://www.spiegel.de/international/europe/founder-of-german-marshall-fund-guido-goldman-retires-a-834696.html>. Accessed May 1, 2021

25 Spiess, A.(1985) *Granite Garden: Urban Nature and Human Design*, New York: Basic Books

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*Examples of
Stuttgart-area
green infrastructure*

Formalizing Lesson-Learning With Stuttgart

The first peer-to-peer exchanges between Stuttgart and Northern Virginia took place in 1998. The initial exchanges consisted of individual technical experts and later evolved to include larger-scale delegations of elected officials from the boards, local staffs and partners from the region's businesses, colleges and NGOs. The first formal board-to-board agreement of cooperation between the two regions was signed in Stuttgart in 1999. Renewed every five years since, the agreement has focused on the issues of green infrastructure, green buildings, energy, recycling, low-impact development, biking and pedestrian-friendly urban planning and regional light rail planning.

The success of the initial exchanges to Germany awakened greater appreciation by the NVRC board about the value of expanding lesson learning from abroad on the subject of sustainability. NVRCs work to introduce the sustainability innovations from Stuttgart and other German and European drew heavily from the use of design charrettes, workshops and conferences and the involvement of planning experts and urban design specialists. The inclusion of the German and European experts and their designs and data informed equivalent "green" infrastructure, stormwater, transportation and

design programs issues across Northern Virginia. To complement the partnership with European regions such as Stuttgart, NVRC also formally partnered with George Mason University, the Northern Virginia Community College, George C. Marshall International Center and the Northern Virginia Technology Council to aid with NVRC's global programs.

NVRC's work to draw sustainability lessons from Germany helped contribute to the region's green rooftop initiative and the construction of green roofs at the Arlington County government center and the city of Alexandria's TC Williams High School. NVRC's work overseas also informed the City of Alexandria's stormwater programs and the evolution of the City's impermeable surface fees. Green infrastructure stormwater design concepts such as bioswales and rain gardens from Berlin, Eckernförde and Stuttgart also contributed to the evolution of the "Four Mile Run Watershed" revitalization plan. Pedestrian bridge and trail concepts from other urban region's in Germany and art designs from the Netherlands also were ensconced in the Four Mile Run restoration project.



NVRC

*Four Mile Run,
Arlington, Virginia*

Case Study of Climate Mitigation and Energy Planning

A specific demonstration of NVRC's global engagement model has been the evolution of the Northern Virginia's sustainable energy and climate mitigation programs and cooperation with counterparts in Germany.

In 2007, across much of the United States, but especially in Northern Virginia, local-level climate mitigation planning was under-developed. Federal energy, climate and environmental policies were inconsistent and insufficient for dealing with the scale, complexity and urgency of the region's local governments. But the prevailing science of climate compelled the need for action and pushed many local governments to act unilaterally. An immediate first-step by many local governments, including several in Northern Virginia, was to subscribe to aspirational declarations such as the "Global Covenant of Mayors" or "Cool Counties" (co-launched by Fairfax County).

However, the initial greenhouse gas inventories pointed out the sizeable gaps between the aspirational goals of the local governments and the deficiencies of the existing policy toolbox for dealing with the huge dimensions of the climate and energy challenge. It was soon apparent to the local governments of the region that reliance on governmental operations such as the purchase of hybrid car fleets or retrofitting local libraries would be insufficient. There was a clear need for long-term and comprehensive climate and energy planning.

The search for sustainable energy and climate planning lessons turned again to Stuttgart and other European regions. In April 2008, in Alexandria, Virginia, NVRC and its partners in Stuttgart initiated the first gathering of the 40 largest metropolitan regions of Europe and North America for a discussion on climate. The "2008 METREX" regional climate conference introduced to the region's climate experts and elected officials the utility of long-term climate and energy plans and the need for more and sustained cooperation with counterparts in Europe such as Stuttgart, Copenhagen and Amsterdam.

The climate and energy plans of regions such as Stuttgart are often defined by quantitatively benchmarked performance measures, large-scale residential and commercial energy efficient retrofit programs, integrated land-use and transportation plans, heat recovery and conveyance through district energy, residential and commercial renewable energy programs as well as creatively integrated the business models of local utilities. These integrated, holistic and long-term energy plans are often referred to as "Community Energy Planning" (CEP).²⁶



*Program from the
2008 METREX Regional
Climate Conference*

²⁶ Medearis, D., Garforth, P., Blum, S. "Promoting Energy Innovation and Investment Through Transatlantic Transfer of Community Energy Policies." (2011) American Institute of Contemporary Germany Studies Policy Report #43. <https://www.aicgs.org/publication/promoting-energy-innovation-and-investment-through-transatlantic-transfer-of-community-energy-policies/>. Accessed May 1, 2021

■ An Emerging Model of Global Engagement for Local Governments in the United States: The Case of Northern Virginia

To deepen the understanding about how CEPs could be developed for Northern Virginia and informed by the work across the Atlantic, the NVRC partnered with the German Embassy in Washington DC, and organized a facilitated workshop in March 2009. The 2009 workshop introduced the region's elected officials and technical staffs to the mechanics, functionality and operations of CEPs. The 2009 CEP workshop at the German Embassy coincided with the approximate launch of the American Recovery Act's "Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grants" (EECBG) and funding sources that were available for planning and operationalizing CEPs in Northern Virginia.



*Ambassador Ischinger
and Governor Kaine at
the Trans-Atlantic Climate
Bridge Signing Ceremony*

Through funding from the EECBG program, in 2009, Loudoun County developed and approved the first CEP in Virginia. Arlington County followed in 2011. NVRC coordinated the multi-year process with both jurisdictions. NVRC's role with the development of the plans included consultants from Germany who were experienced in the technical and policy processes of global benchmarking, greenhouse gas inventory development, data analysis and policy development.

Drawing from the expertise of energy technical and policy consultants from Europe was matched by group and individual peer-to-peer visits to Stuttgart, Mannheim, Berlin and other European cities with model CEPs. The individual and group peer-to-peer exchanges were supported by follow-up workshops and consultations that included the region's commercial, academic and civil society partners to help guide the lesson learning processes. In 2009, NVRC helped facilitate the inclusion of the Commonwealth of Virginia into the "Transatlantic Climate Bridge" – a bilateral initiative by the German government to foster support between the U.S. and Germany on climate and energy policy. In March 2010, the National Association of Counties recognized the Loudoun County CEP as a national leader for sustainable local-level energy planning.²⁷



*Promotion for the
"Solarize NOVA" program
and the Solar Map*

Benefits and Outcomes to Northern Virginia's Climate Programs Through International Lesson Learning

Over the past decade, NVRC's work to find and apply energy lessons, especially through the CEP's, has reaped dividends for Northern Virginia. This has especially been the case with solar energy. The CEPs of Northern Virginia prioritized renewables, especially solar photovoltaic. NVRC led the development of a "Solarize NOVA" program and "Solarize Map". Both initiatives were informed by equivalent programs from the Stuttgart region and the City of Bottrop. The "Solarize NOVA" homepage presents users with a map to calculate prospective installation costs, performance potential and return on investment for residential solar. The evolution of the "Solarize NOVA" program drew from multiple peer-to-peer exchanges and workshops with counterparts in Germany, especially Stuttgart. The "Solarize Map", evolved through a partnership with the faculty and staff

²⁷ National Association of Counties March 31, 2010 Press Release "NACO, Loudoun County to Promote County-wide Energy Management Concepts."

of George Mason University in which NVRC merged its land-use and housing data with George Mason University's computing capacities to create the unique on-line mapping tool.

Further demonstrations of benefits to Northern Virginia's renewable energy programs through transatlantic learning have emerged in recent months. For example, in 2007, the Commonwealth of Virginia commissioned a study that indicated that less than 100kW of installed solar PV existed *in the entire Commonwealth*.²⁸ However, by 2020, Virginia ranked fourth behind California, Texas and Florida for the total number of solar installations mounted that year. The Solar Energy Industries Association and energy consultancy Wood Mackenzie assessed that more than 1.4 gigawatts of solar were installed in Virginia in 2020 and that Virginia's ranking jumped 15 places in the Wood Mackenzie/SEIA analysis between 2019 and 2020.²⁹ For the period 2009-2019 Northern Virginia progressed from 277 kW of installed solar PV to over 22 MW. In 2019, the NVRC became the second region in the United States to "SolSmart Gold" status through the National League of Cities' SolSmart program.³⁰

Further demonstrations of the success of Northern Virginia's climate mitigation and energy programs is found in the data concerning the region's energy efficiency. Together with Community Housing Partners and the Local Energy Alliance Program (LEAP), two non-profits providing energy services and training for low-income families of the region, 8,753 households were served and over 5,530,917 kWh of savings were realized between 2014 and 2020.

Prospectively Evaluating Legal and Regulatory Obstacles in the Transfer of Lessons From Abroad


The concern about applying innovative energy technologies and policies from overseas into Virginia's unique regulatory, legal, environmental and social culture affected the case of the evolution of the CEPs in Loudoun and Arlington counties. This was especially the case with questions over whether or not existing laws and regulations in the Commonwealth would allow the adoption of district energy systems. The energy and climate plans of cities such as Mannheim, Stuttgart or Copenhagen rely heavily on the production, maintenance and movement of heat and electricity through a carefully orchestrated infrastructure of pipes, wires and service utilities. District energy was once common in many U.S. cities, but devolved and were almost totally eliminated from the U.S urban fabric in the 1960s and 1970s.³¹

28 Sherwood, Larry "U.S. Solar Market Trends 2008". July 2009. Interstate Renewable Energy Council. https://web.archive.org/web/20091123030109/http://www.irecusa.org/fileadmin/user_upload/NationalOutreachDocs/SolarTrendsReports/IREC_Solar_Market_Trends_Report_2008.pdf. Accessed May 3, 2021.

29 Vogelsong, S. "Virginia Ranks Fourth Among States for 2020 Solar Installations". Virginia Mercury, March 16, 2021. <https://www.virginiamercury.com/blog-va/report-ranks-virginia-fourth-among-states-for-2020-solar-installations/>. Accessed May 1, 2021

30 Solarize NOVA - <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/6e546adad3724183920f525f700820eb>. Accessed May 6, 2021

31 Medearis, D., Garforth, P., Blum, S. "Promoting Energy Innovation and Investment Through Transatlantic Transfer of Community Energy Policies." (2011) American Institute of Contemporary Germany Studies Policy Report #43. <https://www.aicgs.org/publication/promoting-energy-innovation-and-investment-through-transatlantic-transfer-of-community-energy-policies/>. Accessed May 1, 2021



■ An Emerging Model of Global Engagement for Local Governments in the United States: The Case of Northern Virginia

The technical, legal, operational and financial complexities about European district energy management raised many legitimate questions by U.S. local energy managers, elected officials and attorneys. To address the legal and regulatory barriers and deployment of European-style district energy systems, NVRC raised funds to commission a legal analysis to study the potential application of district energy under existing U.S. federal, state and local legal and regulatory circumstances. The analysis indicated that enough legal space existed for the adoption of many of the European systems. This included some of the more problematic concerns in Northern Virginia such as applying “four-pipe” water circulation systems, the rules for selling heat and electricity – individually or collectively, or the formation of municipal utilities.³²

³² McGuire Woods Consulting (August 2011) “District Energy Systems: An Analysis of Virginia Law: Prepared for the Northern Virginia Commission”

SECTION #3

The Road Ahead to Strengthen Local Level International Engagement in NOVA

NVRC's international work is imperfect and evolving. Looking ahead to the next 5-10 years, NVRC aspires to sustain the prioritization of unilateral transfers of policy and technical innovations to Northern Virginia. This will involve focusing on collaboration with nations considered policy and technical innovators that offer lessons potentially benefitting Northern Virginia. NVRC looks to expand its programmatic focus beyond the environment to other broader sustainability themes such as education, housing, public health, economic development, social justice and inclusion. NVRC also intends to strengthen collaboration through the region's colleges, universities, businesses, chambers of commerce, NGOs and research institutions to accelerate the transfer and applications of lessons from overseas. NVRC also will assist its individual local governmental members in the development and implementation of their own independent international plans and strategies.

Supporting Additional Cross-National Applied Climate Science and Research

Northern Virginia's utilities, science, research and college communities possess a rich constellation of globally-focused faculty, staff and students through which cross-national applied science research initiatives can flow. The partnership between NVRC, George Mason University and the American Geophysical Union's Thriving Earth Exchange (TEX) on regional climate resilient planning offers an example of how international science and research partnerships can support local sustainability. AGU has formed an inter-disciplinary team of faculty and staff from GMU with NVRC to address local-level stormwater modeling and geocoding in the contexts of low, medium and high greenhouse gas emissions scenarios. When finished, the models developed by GMU faculty and



MRS. GEMSTONE FROM USA, CC BY-SA 2.0, VIA WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

Flooded trail along Four Mile Run after Hurricane Sandy, Arlington, Virginia (October 29, 2012)

researchers will help local planners in Northern Virginia assess potential applications of gray and green infrastructures to mitigate flooding from storm events. NVRC has started to bring together counterpart technical faculty, researchers and staff from the University of Stuttgart to explore applications of equivalent models and policy responses from that region.

NVRC currently works with Virginia Tech University and the Technical University of Darmstadt to study potential applications of sustainable “green” building designs and technologies for data centers of the region. Northern Virginia hosts the largest data center market in the world which use large amounts of energy and water.³³ Frankfurt, one of Germany’s largest data center markets, has local energy and climate plans that involve applications of micro-co-generation, battery storage, renewable energies, “green” building designs, or heat conveyance via district energy. NVRC looks to support the progression of energy efficiency at data centers in Northern Virginia by drawing lessons from partners in Frankfurt through more formal applied science and research collaboration between Virginia Tech and the Technical University of Darmstadt.

NVRC currently works with Virginia Tech University and the Technical University of Darmstadt to study potential applications of sustainable “green” building designs and technologies for data centers of the region.

NVRC also looks to use cross-national science and research exchanges to further the applications of energy efficient planning from wastewater treatment plants in Austria and Germany. For over a decade the City of Alexandria’s utility Alexandria Renew has collaborated with counterparts in Innsbruck to apply a high-performing and low-cost means of removing nitrogen from wastewater. Holistic climate-mitigation

planning in Bottrop, Germany, also is starting to inform the evolution of energy plans for counterparts in Northern Virginia. NVRC looks to strengthen and grow these exchanges – and venture into other urban infrastructure sectors – through George Mason University and Virginia Tech University’s existing collaboration with counterparts in Germany.

33 Northern Virginia Technology Council (January 2020) “The Impact of Data Centers on the State and Local Economies of Virginia.” Prepared by Magnum Economics. https://www.nvtc.org/NVTC/Insights/Resource_Library_Docs/2020_NVTC_Data_Center_Report.aspx#:~:text=We%20estimate%20that%20in%202018%2C%20data%20centers%20were%20directly%20and,demand%20in%20local%20government%20services. Accessed May 2, 2021

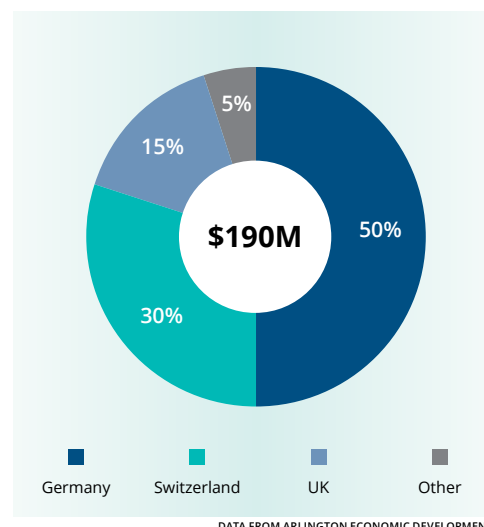
Adopting Workforce Training Lessons Through Regional Businesses and Chambers

The Northern Virginia region has approximately 40 German-based companies, the 4th largest community college system in the United States, multiple chambers of commerce, and high schools in the region with AP-level German language classes. These are ideal attributes from which to draw and apply elements of Germany's workforce training model – especially for the IT and service sectors. Germany's vocational training programs are recognized as a gold-standard. NVRC aspires to bring together Northern Virginia schools, chambers of commerce and Germany-based firms such as VW, Lidl or Rehau to explore small (1-2 students) applications of joint paid-apprenticeships and class credit on topics such as electric vehicle infrastructure maintenance, geothermal heating and cooling technical development or marketing per year.

The Northern Virginia region has approximately 40 German-based companies, the 4th largest community college system in the United States, multiple chambers of commerce, and high schools in the region with AP-level German language classes. These are ideal attributes from which to draw and apply elements of Germany's workforce training model.

Mapping Global Economic Metrics

NVRC also looks to build on Arlington County's current work to map foreign investment and trade. Arlington County is among a handful of U.S. local governments that have gathered, assessed and publicly displayed data about the flow of dollars and jobs emanating from foreign direct investment. The data gathered and analyzed to date is revealing. For the period 2015-2020, over 80% of all FDI in Arlington County has emanated from Germany and Switzerland – approximately \$190,000,000.³⁴ There is confidence that replicating this for the other major local governments of the region with existing international economic development operations would substantially assist international branding and “marketing missions” for Northern Virginia.



Capital investment in Arlington County by Foreign-owned firms, 2015-2020

³⁴ Arlington County Economic Development. International Business. <https://www.arlingtoneconomicdevelopment.com/business-services/international-business/>. Accessed May 2, 2021

The health and economic fallout from the COVID-19 pandemic revealed the importance of purposeful global engagement at the local level.

Transfer Public Health & Social Inclusion Lessons

The health and economic fallout from the COVID-19 pandemic revealed the importance of purposeful global engagement at the local level. NVRC intends to further harvest public health lessons of the COVID pandemic and apply it to other priority public health and

social work programs such as the opiate crisis, mental health care, homelessness, affordable housing and hunger. Countries such as Germany or the Netherlands have comprehensive national health and social welfare programs which have found innovative implementation measures at the local level that offer lessons for Northern Virginia. Cities such as Hamburg, Stuttgart and Berlin have worked to link mental health care to planning and access of parks, open-space and urban forests. For example, local governments in Northern Virginia stand to learn from the German concepts of “Freibad” and the holistic approach to planning public pools that balance open-space, leisure, shade (urban heat island mitigation) and other aspects of sustainable park planning.

NVRC also plans to pursue lessons from overseas that touch on the work of first responders, such as firemen and policewomen. This will build on the success by Arlington County to apply lessons from Aachen, Germany about tactical and operational programming for fire departments.³⁵ The success of these efforts offers a unique opportunity to park local-level security issues along-side traditional macro-security issues in the foreign policy arena.




The National Memorial for Peace and Justice, Montgomery, Alabama

Interpreting Racial Injustice

The events of 2020 also opened new opportunities on which NVRC will build concerning social and racial justice. In tandem with the region's local governments' “Community Remembrance” initiatives – which are formally part of the national “Equal Justice Initiative”, NVRC and Virginia Tech University will look to apply potential designs, interpretations and plans for sites and events that memorialize Northern Virginia's history with slavery, racially-motivated terror and injustice. This work will be informed by parallel efforts in Berlin, Germany and other cities to memorialize the Holocaust in urban design contexts. The EJl

³⁵ Arlington County Newsroom, “Meet Arlington's Feuerwehrman” (November 21, 2019) <https://newsroom.arlingtonva.us/release/meet-arlingtonsfuerwehrmann/>. Accessed May 2, 2021



“National Memorial for Peace and Justice” in Montgomery, Alabama was informed by the work of the Holocaust Memorial and urban design programs such as the “Stolpersteine” project in Berlin, Germany.

Formalizing International Engagement with Local Governmental Members

NVRC looks to support more purposeful and strategic global engagement among its five largest local governments through the development of individual international plans. NVRC aspires to aid with a purposeful plan for the 25 “twin” international partnerships of the region. NVRC proposes to assess the strengths and weaknesses, outcomes, resources for support and utility of more formal strategic engagement. NVRC looks to draw from the region’s special demographics, economic and infrastructure attributes. These include the rich demographic diversity of the region (three out of ten residents are immigrants who contribute over \$57 billion to the region’s economy).³⁶ NVRC also looks to draw from global assets such as Dulles International Airport (the 25th largest airport in the United States) and the global economic operations of Loudoun, Arlington and Fairfax County (which has official representation in five countries).

³⁶ Northern Virginia Regional Commission. “One Region: Welcoming New Americans to Northern Virginia.” (March, 2020) <https://www.novaregion.org/DocumentCenter/View/12373/One-Region---Immigration-Northern-Virginia-Report#:~:text=The%20number%20of%20immigrants%20grew,percent%20of%20the%20overall%20population>. Accessed May 2, 2021

SECTION #4

Applying NVRC International Model to Other Regions in Virginia

The NVRC model of strategic global engagement suits the current and evolving international programs in other metropolitan regions across the Commonwealth of Virginia. Richmond, Charlottesville, Roanoke, the Tidewater and other regions have many international qualities that mirror Northern Virginia. These regions actively pursue foreign trade and investment, possess globally-connected research, commercial, science, and civil society partners. These regions of Virginia also have set precedents for applying technical and policy innovations from abroad. For example, the Richmond region has actively pursued investment from German firms for decades and in that context, explored applying coordinated regional economic development policies from the Nuremberg-Erlangen-Fuerth, Germany region. The town of Cape Charles, Virginia, worked with the University of Virginia and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to assimilate industrial ecology concepts from Denmark in the revitalization of the town's old derelict properties.³⁷ Tazewell County has applied fish-farming lessons from Israel in the development and operations of the Commonwealth's largest fully integrated indoor salmon aquaculture facility.³⁸ The City of Hampton worked with the Netherlands to apply designs for climate resilient neighborhoods.³⁹

Applying Workforce Training Lessons to Support Wind and Solar Energy

The recent evolution of Virginia's climate and energy policies place it on the track to be climate neutral by 2050. Parts of the Commonwealth's climate program involve

³⁷ Zhou, Y., Lihon, L., (2019) "A Summary of the Practice of Ecological Industrial Parks" 2019 International Conference on Educational Reform, Management Science and Sociology. ERMSS 2019 <https://www.clausiuspress.com/conferences/AETP/ERMSS%202019/ERMSS060.pdf> Accessed May 2, 2021

³⁸ Booth, Charles. "Fishfarm on the Horizon: Tazewell County's 'Project Jonah' Finally Coming to Fruition." October 15, 2020. Bluefield Daily Telegraph. https://www.bdtonline.com/news/fish-farm-on-the-horizon-tazewell-county-s-project-jonah-finally-coming-to-fruition/article_ce145a6c-0e83-11eb-ad07-e7c6ed884e84.html. Accessed May 2, 2021

³⁹ Hampton Community Development. "Dutch Dialogues – What Happened to the Dutch Dialogues?" <https://hampton.gov/3466/Dutch-Dialogues>. Accessed May 2, 2021

the construction of the largest offshore wind farm near the coast of Virginia Beach. A Danish-German consortium of Orested/Siemens will lead the planning and construction of a 2.6 gigawatt wind farm that could create as many as 5,200 jobs and \$8 billion in economic activity.⁴⁰ Meeting the workforce training requirements for this effort can draw from the very successful application of the German workforce model in Virginia Beach by Stihl.⁴¹ The Virginia Community College System is an ideal multiplier through which the exchange of workforce training lessons from Germany to Virginia might work equally well in all parts of the Commonwealth. This might also encourage community colleges in states such as Virginia to make available resources that could expand study abroad programs for their students. It might also lead to the resuscitation and more formal operationalization of the MOU between the Commonwealth of Virginia and German Ministry of Education and Research that expired in 2017.



DOMINION ENERGY

Virginia offshore windfarm

Pedagogical Innovations to Strengthen Global Education

The transfer of workforce training lessons from Germany to Virginia also could apply to the Commonwealth's current global language, education and exchange programs. "Global Virginia", a consortium of state- and local-level educators, teachers, professors, government officials and local and international businesses leaders, is trying to create a "globally ready Virginia" with strong multilingual, inter-culturally competent workforce."⁴² A program of action is emerging from the Global Virginia initiative that could include formal applications of pedagogical innovations like the German workforce model, but also others such as "forest schools" from countries such as Denmark and Finland.

Applying Climate Resiliency/Coastal Planning Lessons From the Netherlands

The Commonwealth of Virginia is one of the most climate-threatened states in the U.S. The Tidewater region is especially vulnerable to flooding from sea-level rise and intense storm events. Governor Northam has launched the creation of a "Coastal Resiliency Plan" for improving coastal resilience. The "Coastal Resiliency Plan" for the Commonwealth has the potential to be informed by the earlier work of the "Dutch Dialogues" – a sustained planning exercise that linked together designers, architects,

40 Lake, Sydney. "Virginia Offshore Wind Project Could Create 5.2 Thousand Jobs, Study Finds". September 29, 2020. Virginia Business. <https://www.virginiabusiness.com/article/va-offshore-wind-industry-could-create-5-2k-jobs-study-finds/>. Accessed May 2, 2021

41 Dredes, Jan (November 2012) "Azubi in Amerika" Der Spiegel. <https://www.spiegel.de/politik/azubi-amerika-a-d9361183-0002-0001-0000-000091464883>. Accessed May 2, 2021

42 Global Virginia Homepage - <https://www.globalvirginia.org/about/>. Accessed May 2, 2021

planners and residents from the Netherlands and Louisiana together with counterparts from Hampton and Newport News. The Dutch Dialogues introduced basic concepts about climate resiliency planning in the Netherlands. A formal, more coordinated process of engagement between the Dutch and other Virginia coastal cities and research institutions such as Old Dominion University or the Virginia Institute of Marine Science offers the opportunity to apply more lessons into the Virginia Coastal Resiliency Master Plan.

Data-Driven Strategic Global Economic Engagement

NVRC's work to help fill data and metric gaps pertaining to global trade, investment and tourism at the local level easily extends to other regions of the Commonwealth of Virginia. Clarifying which countries are invested at the local level via trade, investment and tourism can help lead to more purposeful global engagement by other local governments. Coupling local-level maps of global economic engagement together can also lead to more strategic and effective state trade and marketing missions. This is relevant given Virginia's diverse demography, economy and geography.

Social Justice

NVRC's support of local social justice initiatives and drawing lessons from cities such as Berlin has the potential to encompass other Commonwealth-wide "Community Remembrance" and Equal Justice Initiatives" (EJI) initiatives. The workshop planned by NVRC, City of Alexandria, and Virginia Tech Alexandria campus to inspire new forms of design for interpreting public spaces wounded by racial injustice and involved experts in Holocaust memorialization, can extend to other parallel activities at other Virginia land-grant schools.

More Formal Global Engagement at Other Virginia Planning District Commissions

NVRC's global engagement model can inform other parallel work in the Commonwealth. Outside Northern Virginia, there are 22 other planning district commissions (regional councils of government) in Virginia. Many of these represent globally invested and asset-rich regions. NVRC's global engagement model can inform a parallel evolution of purposeful international engagement in most if not all of the other commissions.

SECTION #5

Institutionalizing Strategic Global Engagement for Local Governments Across the United States

The growth of global engagement by U.S. cities and the rise of multiple policy and legislative initiatives invites the potential applications of NVRC's model to other U.S. cities. NVRC's strategic model even stands to inform national-level governmental programs that work closely with international urban and sustainability policies. Small and medium-sized U.S. cities with more modest global attributes found in larger cities such as Chicago, Miami or Dallas, might especially benefit from adoption of the NVRC model.

The growth of global engagement by U.S. cities and the rise of multiple policy and legislative initiatives invites the potential applications of NVRC's model to other U.S. cities.

There is some national-level legislation where the NVRC model might be applied. Congressmen Ted Liu and Joe Wilson have proposed the "City and Diplomacy Act" (H.R. 3571) – legislation that is intended to boost cooperation between the U.S. Department of State and U.S. local governments.⁴³ The bulk of the "City and Diplomacy Act" is focused on ways that local-level engagement can support the objectives of the U.S. Department of State. But this legislative or future policy proposals like it might look to ways in which the domestic needs of U.S. cities could be supported through U.S. Department of State coordination. For example, the "City and Diplomacy" Act proposes stationing foreign service officers "between his eight and fifteenth years of service" to a U.S. local government.⁴⁴ The process of trying to determine where to station any foreign service officers might look first to whether a potential local host had created a formal global strategy with clear goals, function, strategies budgets and defined outcomes.

⁴³ Grossman, Ilene. (December 13, 2019) "Federal Legislation Would Boost Support for Diplomacy Efforts for State and Local Governments." Council of State Governments. <https://knowledgecenter.csg.org/kc/content/federal-legislation-would-boost-support-diplomacy-efforts-state-and-local-governments>. Accessed May 2, 2021

⁴⁴ Truman Center (March 2021) "Transforming State: Pathways to a More Just Equitable and Innovative Institution," page 48 <http://trumancenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Truman-Center-Report-Transforming-the-State-Department.pdf>. Accessed May 2, 2021

The U.S. federal government might further support this work through the international programs of U.S. federal agencies with core domestic or urban orientations. The majority of U.S. domestic-focused and urban-oriented departments or agencies such as the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) or U.S. Department of Education have international offices. A revised “City and Diplomacy Act” might call for increased budgets for the international programs of these U.S. domestic agencies that support and prioritized outcomes through global engagement to their domestic programs and obligations.⁴⁵

Securing support for this type of urban and foreign-policy re-purposing may be easier than in the past. Members of the U.S. Congress and counterparts from governmental bodies such as the German Bundestag are more strongly tied together through the domestic issues of public health, clean drinking water, education, renewable energy, climate resilient infrastructure, workforce training or economic development than the work of NATO or transatlantic cooperation regarding China. This also is the case of their constituents. The issues of Main Street are the issues on which voters vote – and seem more fundamentally universal than the narrow national-level, geopolitical foreign policy initiatives. In his role as Chair of House Committee for Infrastructure and Transportation, Congressman Oberstar often referenced the potential of the U.S. to learn from European rail and transportation innovations.⁴⁶ Congressman Beyer from Northern Virginia, is building on this through sustained engagement with federal legislative counterparts from the Stuttgart region. In the Senate, Senator Sanders has turned to Northern Europe for lessons about public health and Senator Warren to Germany for lessons about unemployment insurance policies.^{47,48} This work and that of the environmental, economic, health and education exchanges between Northern Virginia and counterparts in German regions might form the basis of future programming by the U.S. Congressional Study Group on Germany.

Turning to Historical Precedents

Framing strategic, outcome-oriented international engagement in the U.S. at the local level can draw lessons from and be informed by multiple several historic precedents. Generally speaking, between 1880 and 1910, U.S. universities, businesses and federal and local governments recognized that the U.S. lagged countries such as Germany, France and the UK in science, research, higher education, forestry management, health care, urban infrastructure and other areas. During the “Progressive” era, U.S. scientists, engineers, architects, doctors traveled to Berlin, Leipzig, London or Paris to learn about and apply lessons about promoting public health, building urban infrastructure or

45 Medearis, D. (June 2013) “A New Frontier for Government-Supported International Science and Technology Cooperation: Transferring Urban Innovations to the United States.” *Science and Diplomacy*, Vol. 2, No. 2

46 High-speed Rail in the United States: Opportunities and Challenges.” Hearings Before the Subcommittee on Railroads, Pipelines and Hazardous Materials of the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure. 111th Congress. (October 14, 2009). <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/CHRG-111hhrg52847/html/CHRG-111hhrg52847.htm> October 14, 2009 - <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/CHRG-111hhrg52847/html/CHRG-111hhrg52847.htm>

47 Zakaria, Fareed “Bernie Sanders’ Scandinavian Fantasy” *The Washington Post*. February 27, 2020. https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/bernie-sanders-scandinavian-fantasy/2020/02/27/ee894d6e-599f-11ea-9b35-def5a027d470_story.html. Accessed May 2, 2021

48 *The Economist*. (February 2020) “What’s American for Mitbestimmung?: Most of the World has Yet to Embrace Co-Determination”. <https://www.economist.com/business/2020/02/01/most-of-the-world-has-yet-to-embrace-co-determination>. Accessed May 2, 2021

developing stronger primary education and university research programs.⁴⁹ Like their Japanese counterparts during the Meiji Restoration, the exchanges between Americans and Europeans were done in mostly problem-focused and goal-oriented contexts and they transformed U.S. social security, forestry management, education and public health programs and policies.

At the local level, urban planners such as Daniel Burnham traveled to German cities such as Heidelberg to study and apply innovative urban designs and plans. The U.S. National Mall was transformed by the McMillan Commission's "Grand Tours" to European capitals for architectural design and park planning techniques. At the same time, New York City's zoning codes were informed by cholera-mitigation efforts of Frankfurt and sandboxes and "kindergartens" made their way from Berlin to Milwaukee. A German diaspora in the United States helped accelerate and apply these ideas. In the Washington DC region, Adolf Cluss, a German-born architect from Heilbronn, designed the Smithsonian Museum, multiple schools in the Washington DC region and even Alexandria City Hall.

This work at the local level was reinforced by other purposeful transfers of policy innovations such as Dr. Daniel Gilman's applications of German research university models when establishing the first research college in the United States at Johns Hopkins University.⁵⁰ Gifford Pinchot drew heavily from his experiences in Bavaria to create the modern U.S. forest system.⁵¹ W.E.B. Dubois credited the time he spent in Berlin studying sociology and economic development as personally and philosophically liberating.⁵²

George C. Marshall also called attention to the importance of Main Street in the United States through global engagement. In his 1947 speech at Harvard to launch the Marshall Plan (portions of which were crafted at Dodona Manor in Leesburg, Virginia) Marshall referred to the importance of "educating the man on the street" about global affairs.⁵³ Twenty-five years later, Guido Goldman deliberately introduced local-level and peer-to-peer learning across the Atlantic into the first programs of the German Marshall Fund of the United States. Mr. Goldman intended to create a focus on sub-national cooperation for the Fund's programming that matched the Fund's macro-geopolitical focus.⁵⁴ It is worth pointing out that among the first of the Fund's sub-national efforts involved the study of European city models to aid with the revitalization of the City of Alexandria's waterfront, and the development of the Washington D.C. metro system.

49 Dolowitz, D., Medearis, D. (2009) "Considerations of the Obstacles and Opportunities to Formalizing Cross-National Policy Transfer to the United States: A Case Study of the Transfer of Urban Environmental and Planning Policies from Germany." *Environment and Planning*, vol. 27 pp. 684-697

50 Brubacher, John and Willis Rudy (1997) *Higher Education in Transition: A History of American Colleges and Universities*. New Brunswick, New Jersey, Transaction Publishers.

51 Miller, Char (2001). *Gifford Pinchot and the Making of Modern Environmentalism*. London, Island Press.

52 Beck, H. (1996). W.E.B. Du Bois as a Study Abroad Student in Germany, 1892-1894. *Frontiers: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Study Abroad*, 2(1), 45-63. <https://doi.org/10.36366/frontiers.v2i1.25d>. Accessed May 2, 2021

53 The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). "The Marshall Plan Speech at Harvard University, 5 June 1947." <https://www.oecd.org/general/themarshallplanspeechatharvarduniversity5june1947.htm>. Accessed May 1, 2021

54 Dayasam, R. (June 1, 2012) "The End of an Era at the German Marshall Fund." *Der Spiegel*. <https://www.spiegel.de/international/europe/founder-of-german-marshall-fund-guido-goldman-retires-a-834696.html>. Accessed May 2, 2021

Re-purposing Existing International Local Government Networks

Strengthening relations between local governments in the U.S. and Germany through the NVRC model is imaginable through any of the approximately 180 partnerships of “Sister Cities International”. In the context of relations between the U.S. and German local governments, this work could be focused even further through the network of 21 Warburg chapters of the American Council on Germany (ACG). ACG Warburg Chapters in Pittsburgh, Charlotte and Atlanta have sister city counterparts in Dortmund, Krefeld and Nuremberg respectively.

Funding and other support for local governments that prioritize transfers of lessons from abroad to the U.S. also is growing. For example, in 2020, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation programmed approximately \$3 million to support the transfer and application of policy innovations from anywhere in the world to the U.S. that involved public health, climate change and social equity.⁵⁵ In 2021, the Carnegie Foundation made available programmatic funding for grants of up to \$500,000 to study ways in which alignment between domestic and foreign policy could lead to better outcomes for the United States.⁵⁶

The City of Los Angeles is among the early pioneers among local governments to institutionalize and staffed a “Mayor’s Office of International Affairs”. The Los Angeles County World Trade Center also is among the pioneers of local governments to collect, analyze and publicly display foreign direct investment within the county’s boundaries. The trend-setting report revealed the counter-intuitive fact that there is more foreign investment in Los Angeles from Europe than Asia. Los Angeles’ FDI report was developed with relatively modest financial costs and staff time – approximately 100 hours and under \$25,000 for the entire county.⁵⁷ The relatively low-cost of Los Angeles’ FDI report points to the strong potential for relatively easy replication among other local governments across the United States. This is especially the case for those seeking to rely on FDI to propel economic recovery in the aftermath of the pandemic.

Benefits to Partners

Out of the necessity to overcome the stigma that global work by local governments is marginal, NVRC’s international programs stress the unilateral transfers of lessons and innovations to Northern Virginia that benefit its communities. But there are precedents and opportunities that highlight the collateral benefits to the region’s partners overseas.

⁵⁵ Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. “Global Ideas for U.S. Solutions: Cities Taking Action to Address Health, Equity, and Climate Change: 2020 Call for Proposals.” <https://www.rwjf.org/en/library/funding-opportunities/2020/global-ideas-for-us-solutions-cities-taking-action-to-address-health-equity-and-climate-change.html>. Accessed May 2, 2021

⁵⁶ The Carnegie Corporation of New York. “Call for Proposals: The Domestic-International Connection New ideas and practical solutions for rethinking U.S. foreign and national security policies”. (January 29, 2021) <https://www.carnegie.org/news/articles/domestic-international-connection-new-ideas-and-practical-solutions-rethinking-us-foreign-and-national-security-policies/>. Accessed May 2, 2021

⁵⁷ World Trade Center Los Angeles County (May 25, 2020) “Foreign Direct Investment in California 2020” <https://laedc.org/event/wtcla-presents-2020-report-on-foreign-direct-investment-into-ca/>. Accessed May 2, 2021

The economic benefits are perhaps the most significant outcomes to foreign partners. Investment by Lidl, VW or Rehau in Northern Virginia profits Ludwigsburg, Wolfsburg and Erlangen as much as Arlington, Fairfax and Loudoun counties. Mapping the metrics of investment and job growth at the local level highlights the importance of this dynamic. Moreover, when German firms invest in Northern Virginia, they also bring with them their experiences with workforce training to the region. The union of these two meets the dual needs of creating a trained workforce for the firms investing from Germany and overcoming a high-priority workforce education gap in Northern Virginia.

Another modest collateral benefit to foreign partners through NVRC's global engagement model is the contributions to the global environment. Simply put, when communities of Northern Virginia adopt renewable energy, "green" building, transportation or energy efficiency innovations from the Stuttgart region, greenhouse gas emissions are reduced. This benefits equally the residents of Arlington County and region of Stuttgart – or Hamburg or Berlin.

NVRC's global engagement model helps avoid doubt that cooperation with the United States is ephemeral, diffuse or empty. NVRC's work to create purposeful international programs that is institutionalized, formal and coordinated among commercial, governmental, academic, scientific and civil society builds assurance at home and abroad. Strategic global engagement with outcomes instills confidence on Main Street that work with the U.S. is cooperative and not confrontational, serious and not frivolous.



Conclusion

Events, technology, pandemics, economics and inadequate federal policies have pushed U.S. cities into global roles that were unimaginable twenty years ago. And while there is more structure and institutional support for global engagement than ever before, international work by cities still tends to be carried out in diffuse, aimless contexts that lack goals, budgets funding and outcomes. The absence of problem-focused, goal-oriented strategic international engagement by U.S. local governments traps them in a vacuum that limits them when making connections about its relevance to the American public or Main Street.

This is especially the case with the Transatlantic relationship. A 2020 paper by the German Marshall Fund called for “More Ambition, Please” in the renewal to the relations between Germany and the United States. But the recommendations for more ambition focused almost entirely on NATO, China, trade and digital policy. The paper overlooked the evolving and vital role that cities and other sub-national governments stand to play in the repair of the relationship.⁵⁸

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NVRC’s 20-year experiment of strategic global engagement provides a helpful roadmap for local governments across the United States aspiring to navigate this dynamic age. This is especially the case with NVRC’s experiences in the ranking of countries, creation of partnerships with regional commercial, research and NGO

institutions and the prioritization of outcomes benefitting Main Street. NVRC’s model of international collaboration also points to a potentially stronger and more collaborative Transatlantic relationship.

⁵⁸ The German Marshall Fund of the United States. “More Ambition Please! Toward a New Agreement Between Germany and the United States” January 18, 2021. <https://www.gmfus.org/publications/more-ambition-please-toward-new-agreement-between-germany-and-united-states>. Accessed May 2, 2021

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Published by:

Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung USA
2005 Massachusetts Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20036
U.S.A.
Tel.: +1(202) 464-5840
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