

La diplomatie citoyenne de la vallée de Roanoke:

Un examen des partenariats de Sister City

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Abstrait

Après la Seconde Guerre mondiale, des villes sœurs ont commencé à surgir dans tout le pays pour être utilisées comme une stratégie diplomatique saine qui aiderait le monde à développer des liens positifs dirigés par des diplomates citoyens. Ces liens, connus sous le nom de ville «d'amitié», de «sœur» ou de «jumelage», sont maintenant prolifiques; plus de 2 000 villes se sont jumelées. Roanoke, en Virginie, ne fait pas exception avec sept villes sœurs représentant cinq continents. Ce projet explore l'impact et la portée de trois villes sœurs: St-Lô, Roanoke et Opole, en déterminant comment et pourquoi les participants de l'organisation RVSCI se sont impliqués et leur impression du succès de l'institution ces derniers temps. Pour chacune des trois villes, j'analyse le fonctionnement interne du fonctionnement du chapitre, tout en utilisant également des entretiens qualitatifs avec les participants au chapitre pour mieux comprendre l'impact personnel ressenti en fonction du chapitre.

Introduction

Décrivant un événement passé dans les villes sœurs, une personne interrogée a déclaré: «J'ai été très impressionnée. Il y avait des jeunes là-bas, beaucoup d'énergie, beaucoup de performances, et comme je faisais partie du conseil d'administration et que j'ai entendu différents rapports sur différentes choses, vous savez que l'impact est réel en termes de personnes qui sont simplement présentées à différents types de événements culturels ... je pense que l'impact est là et qu'il est constant.»¹ Ce type de partenariat entre des villes du monde entier a commencé à naître à la suite de la Seconde Guerre mondiale. Une période prolongée de guérison et de réparations est entrée en vigueur, l'un des éléments étant la création de Sister City International en 1956 par le président Eisenhower. Même avant cet établissement officiel, c'est en fait grâce aux villes britanniques, qui ont aidé les villes pillées à travers l'Europe après la Seconde Guerre mondiale, que ces partenariats de villes ont commencé.² Le président Dwight D. Eisenhower a simplement donné un nom formel à cette pratique des villes qui développent des liens formels dans un effort pour se construire les unes les autres.

³Le mouvement de la «ville sœur» est en plein effet depuis plus de soixante ans maintenant. Il a été conçu à l'origine comme une stratégie diplomatique saine qui aiderait le monde à guérir tout en développant des liens positifs dirigés par des diplomates citoyens. Au départ, des villes sœurs ont été fondées principalement en Allemagne et au Japon dans le but de soulager les anciennes tensions et d'avancer vers la paix. Ces liens sont devenus des villes «d'amitié», «sœurs» et «jumelées». Il y en a plus de 2 000 qui ont des partenaires dans plus de 140 pays à travers le monde, et ce sont simplement ceux qui sont impliqués avec Sister Cities

¹ Participant C (appendice: pp. 51).

² Rolf D. Cremer, Anne De Bruin, and Ann Dupuis, *International Sister-Cities: Bridging the Global-Local Divide* (The American Journal of Economics and Sociology, 2001), 380.

³ Ibid.

International. Le grand nombre de communautés impliquées conduit beaucoup à supposer que l'impact des villes sœurs est énorme, et pourtant la réalité demeure que de nombreuses personnes ne connaissent pas la sœur internationale, l'amitié ou la ville jumelle de leur ville à l'étranger.

La vallée de Roanoke, bien qu'étant une petite ville du sud, a la chance d'avoir sept villes sœurs couvrant cinq continents. Il s'agit notamment de Florianópolis (Brésil, créée en 1995), Kisumu (Kenya, créée en 1976), Lijiang (Chine, créée en 1996), Opole (Pologne, créée en 1995), Pskov (Russie, créée en 1992), Saint-Lô (France, créée en 1998) et Wonju (Corée du Sud, créée en 1964).⁴ Le partenariat avec chaque ville a été formé à un moment différent, comme chacune avec un pays unique et ses diplomates uniques. L'énoncé de mission de l'organisation est:

The Mission Statement of Roanoke Valley Sister Cities, Inc., (RVSCI) is: “Roanoke Valley Sister Cities is committed to fostering and encouraging mutual understanding, friendship and peace through cultural, medical, economic, educational and professional exchanges among the people of the Roanoke Valley and the citizens of our seven sister cities on four continents.”

RVSCI is an affiliate member of Sister Cities International, Inc., (SCI) located in Washington, D.C. The SCI Mission Statement is: “To promote peace through mutual respect, understanding and cooperation – one individual, one community at a time.”⁵

Les trois partenariats sur lesquels je me concentrerai sont Opole, Saint-Lô et Roanoke. Celles-ci fourniront un aperçu utile de l'état des partenariats européens avec Roanoke. Ils ont été

⁴ “Home,” Roanoke Valley Sister Cities (Roanoke Valley Sister Cities, Inc. , 2020), <https://www.rvsci.us/>.

⁵ RVSCI, “BYLAWS ROANOKE VALLEY SISTER CITIES, INC.,” Roanoke Valley Sister Cities (RVSCI), accessed May 4, 2021, https://www.rvsci.us/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/RVSCI_ByLaws_20190530.pdf.

fondés à seulement trois ans d'intervalle à la fin des années 1990, et Opole et Saint-Lô sont tous deux situés en Europe. Ils présentent donc de nombreuses similitudes et sont donc comparables pour être étudiés les uns à côté des autres. La relation avec Saint-Lô a été fondée sur leur histoire commune pendant la Seconde Guerre mondiale. La 29^e division d'armée, principalement composée de Virginiens, a libéré cette ville française le 19 juillet 1944. Aujourd'hui, plus de soixante-quinze ans plus tard, les habitants de Saint-Lô lui en sont toujours reconnaissants. Les échanges entre Saint-Lô et Roanoke ont lieu souvent. Parfois, cela inclut des étudiants, des stagiaires ou des médecins.

Quant à Opole, la relation n'est pas fondée sur une histoire commune, pourtant l'histoire de cette ville polonaise est toujours très pertinente. C'était une ville en Allemagne avant que les frontières ne soient redessinées après la Seconde Guerre mondiale. Les échanges avec cette ville n'ont pas toujours été possibles. À divers moments, la relation a été suspendue si des dirigeants politiques communistes étaient élus qui ne sont pas intéressés par un partenariat impliqué. Afin de rester actifs au moins à Roanoke, cependant, les membres d'Opole ont mis en place des ventes annuelles de pâtisseries polonaises au Festival des couleurs locales afin de collecter des fonds. Ils ont fait don d'une partie de ces fonds à une école de musique en Pologne, et plus récemment pour parrainer un jeune musicien polonais afin qu'il participe à un concours.

Quelques exemples d'activités spécifiques que RVSCI met en place sont: les échanges d'étudiants, de stagiaires, de travailleurs et de visiteurs. Ces échanges ont parfois pour but de célébrer des événements marquants comme le 75^e anniversaire du Débarquement en Normandie ou le 20^e anniversaire du jumelage entre Saint-Lô et Roanoke. Ils peuvent également servir à soutenir l'expérience éducative des étudiants, que ce soit simplement en leur donnant la possibilité d'améliorer leurs compétences linguistiques, leurs compétences en commerce

international ou simplement en rendant possible des sorties scolaires à l'étranger. Des activités supplémentaires sont le soutien et la participation à des événements culturels tels que le festival annuel des couleurs locales de Roanoke, des événements promouvant l'éducation interculturelle comme le Festival international du film de Roanoke College ou la célébration coréenne au musée Taubman et la vitrine des jeunes artistes. Bien sûr, les villes sœurs organisent régulièrement des webinaires et des conférences qui promeuvent la mission en éduquant les gens sur d'autres cultures et sur la manière de promouvoir la paix.

En fin de compte, j'espère faire un examen détaillé de ces partenariats de villes sœurs pour déterminer le succès de leurs efforts. Accomplissent-ils ce qu'ils avaient prévu de faire dans l'énoncé de mission? Sinon, que peuvent-ils éventuellement faire pour s'améliorer? Leurs efforts sont-ils axés sur les relations, les avantages économiques ou autre chose? J'explorerai cette question de l'impact avec un regard spécial pendant la crise du COVID-19. Ce qui ressort clairement de mes entretiens qualitatifs, c'est que RVSCI fait beaucoup au profit des communautés de Roanoke, Saint-Lô et Opole. Pourtant, il y a toujours place à l'amélioration et c'est le moment idéal pour faire quelques ajustements afin de capitaliser sur la fin de la pandémie et profiter de cette période où les gens sont plus intéressés par les voyages.

Recherche précédente

La recherche se concentre sur le rôle des villes sœurs d'un point de vue économique, des relations internationales et d'une perspective régionale. Ces trois domaines ont dominé une grande partie des études qui ont été faites, et il est donc avantageux de les catégoriser de cette manière. Ce qui manque, cependant, c'est une focalisation sur la recherche interpersonnelle pour examiner l'efficacité des villes sœurs qui construisent des relations internationales, comme

indiqué dans l'énoncé de mission: «Promouvoir la paix par le respect mutuel, la compréhension et la coopération - un individu, une communauté à la fois temps.»⁶ Pour commencer, au XXIe siècle, les chercheurs ont émis l'hypothèse que l'économie de plus en plus mondiale nécessiterait l'adoption du commerce international, des investissements et des alliances transfrontalières pour que les villes restent compétitives.⁷ Ce qu'ils ne savaient peut-être pas, cependant, c'est que (a) les villes sœurs seraient adoptées comme moyen à cette fin et que (b) les villes sœurs existantes pourraient être adaptées pour répondre à ce besoin de réussite économique.

Les chercheurs Cremer, De Bruin et DuPuis réfléchissent à l'impact économique dans l'*American Journal of Economics and Sociology*. Tout en donnant un aperçu de la relation des villes sœurs à l'économie, dont la majeure partie des recherches antérieures sur ce sujet consiste, ces auteurs soulignent l'importance de «l'entrepreneuriat municipal-communautaire», que les relations entre les villes sœurs contribuent à encourager au niveau international.⁸ En fin de compte, cette recherche essaie de clarifier le fossé entre le mondial et le local, en montrant clairement comment les relations entre les villes sœurs, dont beaucoup ont des composantes économiques, s'inscrivent dans cette image. Ces chercheurs font valoir que les villes sœurs «représentent un catalyseur crucial dans la facilitation du bien-être urbain au XXIe siècle».⁹

Certaines villes comptent sur les avantages économiques qui découlent d'un partenariat avec la ville. C'est grâce au succès économique qu'ils peuvent apporter; Les chercheurs turcs affirment que les opportunités d'investissement et d'affaires qui viennent des villes sœurs “sont

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Dennis A. Rondinelli, James H. Johnson, and John D. Kasarda, "The Changing Forces of Urban Economic Development: Globalization and City Competitiveness in the 21st Century," *Cityscape* 3, no. 3 (1998): 71-105, Accessed April 3, 2021, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20868460>.

⁸ Cremer, De Bruin, and Dupuis, *International Sister-Cities: Bridging the Global-Local Divide* (The American Journal of Economics and Sociology, 2001), 377.

⁹ Ibid., 397.

devenues les facteurs les plus importants dans les relations avec les villes sœurs.”¹⁰ En ce qui concerne également l'impact économique, une étude de cas a été menée en Nouvelle-Zélande qui montre que les villes sœurs peuvent prospérer ensemble économiquement lorsque le fossé culturel est comblé. Heureusement, les villes sœurs sont considérées comme «un instrument efficace pour favoriser des liens culturels et économiques plus étroits entre les pays», de sorte qu'elles peuvent être le pont pour faire réussir deux économies d'apparence complètement différentes grâce à des avantages mutuels.¹¹

Un autre aspect de la recherche provient du domaine des relations internationales, qui analyse les villes sœurs à travers un cadre largement théorique. L'éminent chercheur Simon Curtis émet l'hypothèse dans *Le pouvoir des villes dans les relations internationales* que, depuis trop longtemps, une grande partie de la recherche en IR s'est exclusivement concentrée sur les interactions interétatiques.¹² Cependant, avec le début du XXIe siècle, nous avons commencé à voir des interactions de plus en plus remarquables entre les villes elles-mêmes. Plus de discours sur les relations internationales doit se concentrer sur ce changement, y compris pourquoi il s'est produit, comment il façonne le domaine, etc. Curtis met en évidence ce reconsidération avec de grandes villes comme Londres et New York qu'il décrit comme ayant été «renaître en tant que nœuds étincelants. dans un réseau mondial de villes.»¹³ En d'autres termes, Curtis dit que certaines villes sont une partie tellement critique de notre web mondial qu'elles sont tout aussi

¹⁰ Tüzün Baycan-Levent, Aliye Ahu Gülümser Akgün & Seda Kundak (2010) Success Conditions for Urban Networks: Eurocities and Sister Cities, *European Planning Studies*, 18:8, 1187-1206, DOI: 10.1080/09654311003791259.

¹¹ B Ramasamy, and Cremer, R. D, "Cities, Commerce and Culture: The Economic Role of International Sister-city Relationships between New Zealand and Asia," *Journal of the Asia Pacific Economy* 3, no. 3 (1998): 446-61.

¹² Simon Curtis, *The Power of Cities in International Relations* (New York, New York: Routledge, 2014).

¹³ Ibid.

importantes que tout un pays, même si elles ne sont qu'une seule ville. Cependant, la «ville mondiale» est peut-être allée trop loin à ce stade, car elle est devenue un mot à la mode utilisé par les villes pour les aider à rivaliser.

Le domaine des relations internationales a très récemment repensé l'histoire des villes sœurs, réalisant qu'elles avaient en fait commencé à apparaître avant même la Seconde Guerre mondiale, contrairement à la croyance populaire.¹⁴ Les chercheurs Alexander Sergunin et Pertti Joenniemi expliquent également comment les villes sœurs doivent recevoir plus d'attention de la part du domaine des relations internationales, car elles continuent de croître et de passer du domaine national à l'international. En d'autres termes, leur impact et leurs implications sont devenus tellement plus complexes qu'une simple rencontre locale entre expatriés passionnés ou amateurs de voyages. Sergunin et Joenniemi expliquent comment «le jumelage de villes est apparu... en réaction à des guerres expérimentées, de nature assez politique, bien qu'il se soit également développé principalement parallèlement à d'autres efforts de renforcement de la coopération».¹⁵ Cependant, les auteurs expliquent également comment les villes jumelles ont évolué au fil des ans, notamment en raison de la fin de la guerre froide, en un moyen d'améliorer le profil international d'une ville. Comme ils l'expliquent, le raisonnement derrière les villes jumelles a évolué vers l'autonomisation, la fierté et les avantages économiques des villes, tout en s'éloignant de sa mission initiale de promotion de la paix par la compréhension mutuelle. L'accent est mis davantage sur le développement mutuel de nature économique et entrepreneuriale.¹⁶

¹⁴ Alexander Sergunin and Pertti Joenniemi, "City-Twinning in IR Theory: Escaping the Confines of the Ordinary," *Journal of Borderlands Studies* 32, no. 4 (October 2017): pp. 445, <https://doi.org/10.1080/08865655.2016.1257361>.

¹⁵ Ibid., 446.

¹⁶ Ibid., 452.

Dans la publication récente, «Theorizing Town Twinning - Towards a Global Perspective», Jaroslow et Joenniemi expliquent les différents types de villes jumelles et en quoi elles sont similaires et différentes. Ils aident à clarifier comment ce terme général de «ville jumelle» décrit parfois des villes frontalières proches et partageant une histoire commune, mais d'autres fois, il décrit des villes sœurs. Autrement dit, deux villes séparées par des frontières internationales qui utilisent une relation formellement convenue pour les relier. Dans les publications précédentes, les frontières se sont estompées entre les nombreux termes utilisés pour décrire ce genre de jumelage: ville sœur, ville frontière, ville jumelle, ville de l'amitié... La liste est longue. Chaque terme a une définition légèrement nuancée et pointe vers un attribut unique, mais en gros, beaucoup d'entre eux se réfèrent à des villes qui partagent une base similaire pour fonder derrière eux. Cependant, mes recherches se concentrent sur les villes sœurs, car c'est le type de jumelage qui est formellement établi avec les gouvernements locaux. Aussi, «villes sœurs» est le terme utilisé par l'organisation sur laquelle je me concentre: Roanoke Valley Sister Cities International, ainsi que l'organisation mère de RVSCI, Sister Cities International.

De plus, Jaroslow et Joenniemi ont effectué l'une des premières comparaisons approfondies entre différents partenariats dans différentes parties du monde.¹⁷ Ils ont analysé les villes du monde entier pour voir les différences dans la façon dont diverses régions, continents ou cultures ont mené leurs partenariats avec les villes sœurs. Cette érudition s'avère particulièrement utile pour visualiser et comparer des villes sœurs, aidant ces organisations à voir ce qui a fonctionné, fonctionne et pourrait fonctionner à l'avenir.

Avant la recherche plus globale de Jaroslow et Joenniemi, ce qui était axé sur des régions spécifiques et des études de cas, Sergunin et Anischenko ont mené une étude de cas pertinente

¹⁷ Jaroslaw Jańczak and Pretti Joenniemi, "Theorizing Town Twinning—Towards a Global Perspective," *Journal of Borderlands Studies* 32, no. 4 (2017): pp. 425.

sur la région de la mer Baltique, en se concentrant sur des villes de Finlande, de Suède, d'Estonie, de Lettonie et de Russie.¹⁸ Anischenko et Sergunin analysent les succès et les échecs de ces partenariats de villes sœurs et comment ils sont capables de travailler dans le contexte culturel de cette région. Fait intéressant, ils soutiennent que ces villes sœurs ont joué un rôle essentiel pour aider ces pays à sortir avec succès des années 80 lorsque l'Union soviétique s'est effondrée et dans les années 90. C'était un moyen pour les pays d'expérimenter une fois de plus la coopération transfrontalière, une entreprise pacifique qui avait longtemps été impossible en raison de l'emprise de l'URSS sur la région. Cette étude de cas reconnaît comment même les pays en proie à des conflits et des tensions peuvent s'en éloigner pour adopter une méthode de paix grâce à la coopération de ville à ville. Opole est un parfait exemple d'un partenariat avec une ville sœur balte qui accomplit cela. Opole et Roanoke ont officialisé leur partenariat en 1995, six ans seulement après l'effondrement de la République populaire communiste de Pologne.¹⁹ C'était un moyen de guérison entre les deux pays et cultures. Cependant, au fil des ans, alors que certains politiciens communistes ont pris des positions politiques locales à Opole, les relations ont de nouveau été coupées. Les membres d'Opole ont donc dû essayer d'autres moyens d'accomplir les fonctions de la ville sœur autres que l'échange en personne.

Quelques années plus tard, Aaron Fishbone a réalisé «Une étude des bureaux des affaires internationales en Europe et aux États-Unis», décrivant les villes modernes mondiales émergentes comme une nouvelle sorte d'État-nation semi-autonome. Il explique qu'ils sont régulièrement ceux qui «font le travail quotidien pour maintenir les connexions internationales

¹⁸ Sergunin A. Alexander, and A. G. Anischenko. "Twin Cities: A New Form of Cross-Border Cooperation in the Baltic Sea Region," December 2011, 1–9. <https://doi.org/10.5922/2079-8555-2012-1-3>.

¹⁹ Kazimierz Z Sowa, "The People's Republic of Poland as a Stage on the Way to Freedom," *Canadian Slavonic Papers / Revue Canadienne Des Slavistes* 43, no. 2/3 (2001): 235-48, Accessed May 5, 2021. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40870321>, 1.

de leur ville», tout comme les citoyens ordinaires qui participent aux villes sœurs sont les Américains, les Français ou les Polonais qui effectuent l'entretien régulier de amitiés à l'étranger.²⁰ En outre, Fishbone clarifie exactement quels sont les rôles des professionnels des affaires internationales municipales dont le travail chevauche notablement ce que font également les bénévoles des organisations de villes sœurs. Il inclut une justification de la nécessité de ce type de recherche basée sur les villes, compte tenu de la vague d'urbanisation et de la façon dont elle modifie radicalement nos économies.²¹ Cette recherche fournit des recommandations sur la façon de tirer le meilleur parti des affaires étrangères municipales, touchant spécifiquement le problème commun auquel les villes sœurs du pays sont toutes confrontées: un bon nombre des membres fortement impliqués qui ont fait prospérer ces organisations deviennent trop vieux pour continuer à aider aux efforts des villes sœurs.²²

En 2016, une autre étude de cas de villes jumelles a été publiée, qui ne concernait qu'une seule ville sœur, Innsbruck, en Autriche et la Nouvelle-Orléans, en Louisiane.²³ L'accent a été mis sur le fait que les deux villes sont comparables bien qu'elles paraissent très différentes à première vue. De plus, un bon nombre des échanges effectués entre ces villes sont de nature éducative, qu'il s'agisse d'étudiants de niveau universitaire, de médecine ou de lycée. Les auteurs évoquent également l'art comme moyen d'échange, car il joue un rôle dans «l'échange de cadeaux symboliques» entre les pays.²⁴

²⁰ Aaron Fishbone, "Municipal Foreign Affairs: A Study of the Offices of International Affairs in Europe and the USA," *Robert Bosch Foundation*, September 2015, page 4.

²¹ Ibid., 7.

²² Ibid., 24.

²³ Christina Antenhofer et al., *Cities as Multiple Landscapes: Investigating the Sister Cities Innsbruck and New Orleans*, vol. 21 (Frankfurt/New York, NY: Campus Verlag, 2016), page 61.

²⁴ Ibid., 347.

Alors que de plus en plus de chercheurs voient la valeur de la recherche sur les villes sœurs pour faire avancer la diplomatie et les relations internationales, mon objectif est de contribuer à cette tendance croissante avec une étude de cas dans la vallée de Roanoke avec ses villes respectives. Je conduirai la première analyse d'impact par l'organisation internationale Roanoke Valley Sister Cities. Pour ce faire, je m'appuierai sur la érudition d'études globale la plus récente ainsi que sur les études de cas plus anciennes afin de mener les miennes. Il y a une vague de recherche en cours dans ce domaine, et on espère que cela se poursuivra puisque nos économies et nos communautés changent radicalement à mesure que nous devenons de plus en plus connectés à l'échelle mondiale. Au fur et à mesure que ces changements se produisent, il est essentiel que nous comprenions pleinement ce que les villes sœurs peuvent faire pour nous afin de profiter de tout ce qu'elles ont à offrir.

Méthodologie

Je me concentrerai sur trois villes qui correspondent à deux partenariats de villes sœurs. Ce sont entre St-Lô, France, Roanoke, États-Unis, et Opole, Pologne. J'interviewerai des participants très engagés afin d'en savoir plus sur leur expérience spécifique avec chacune de ces villes, ainsi que sur l'expérience générale de la ville sœur. Après, j'effectuerai une analyse croisée de mes observations afin de comparer différents aspects de chaque organisation. Les données que j'ai collectées seront utilisées pour évaluer la portée des partenariats de villes sœurs, les différences entre les différents modèles et la manière dont ces différences façonnent l'impact de l'organisation. En fin de compte, cette recherche vise à expliquer et à mettre en valeur de manière catégorique l'impact de la diplomatie citoyenne à travers les yeux de trois villes uniques

mais liées, puis à plaider pour sa poursuite au niveau communautaire ici même dans la vallée de Roanoke.

Les entretiens ont été menés sur un support virtuel, généralement via des outils de conférence Web visioconférence ou par téléphone. Certaines des personnes interrogées ont préféré taper leurs réponses au lieu de passer un appel, mais finalement, tous les sujets se sont vus poser les mêmes questions dans à peu près le même ordre. Les questions d'entrevue, qui étaient au nombre de trente et une, étaient organisées en quatre sections (données démographiques de base, relations, communauté / fierté et regard tourné vers l'avenir). La plupart des entretiens duraient entre vingt et quarante minutes. Les questions sont énumérées ainsi:

Données démographiques

1. Quel est ton nom?
2. Où habitez-vous?
3. Quelle est / était votre profession?
4. Lorsque vous entendez le terme «villes sœurs», qu'est-ce qui vous vient à l'esprit?
5. Êtes-vous actuellement membre de votre programme de villes sœurs?
6. Dans quelles villes sœurs avez-vous été impliqué?
7. Quand avez-vous commencé votre participation avec des villes sœurs? Depuis combien de temps êtes-vous impliqué?
8. Comment avez-vous découvert au départ les villes sœurs de votre ville?
9. Qu'est-ce qui vous a poussé à participer à des villes sœurs au début?
10. Avez-vous continué à participer à des villes sœurs? Si oui, pourquoi avez-vous choisi de le faire?
11. Quelles langues parlez-vous?

12. Si vous parlez la langue d'une ou plusieurs autre(s) ville(s) sœur(s), quel impact cela a-t-il eu sur votre expérience? Cela a-t-il été positif ou négatif? Pourquoi?
13. Si vous ne parlez pas la langue d'une ou de plusieurs autres villes sœurs, comment cela a-t-il eu un impact sur votre expérience et vos interactions avec les gens de là-bas?
Combien de temps investissez-vous chaque mois dans les villes sœurs?

Des relations

1. Votre expérience avec les villes sœurs vous a-t-elle fait découvrir de nouvelles personnes? Si oui, combien de personnes avez-vous rencontrées?
2. Avec combien de personnes de votre ville sœur maintenez-vous des contacts réguliers?
3. Comment restez-vous en contact avec ces personnes? Quelles méthodes utilisez-vous? E-mail, réseaux sociaux, rédaction de lettres, etc.?
4. Depuis combien de temps entretenez-vous ce contact?
5. Décrivez la nature de ces relations basées sur les villes sœurs.
6. Quel est le parcours des personnes que vous avez rencontrées dans les villes sœurs?
S'agit-il du genre de personnes vers lesquelles vous seriez attirée normalement?
7. Quel impact avez-vous constaté au sein de votre communauté élargie en raison des villes sœurs? Cela a-t-il rassemblé les gens d'une manière ou d'une autre? Si c'est le cas, comment?

Communauté / fierté

1. Votre implication dans les villes sœurs a-t-elle façonné votre vision de votre propre ville d'une manière ou d'une autre? Si c'est le cas, comment?
2. Comment le fait d'être impliqué dans des villes sœurs vous fait-il ressentir votre propre ville / culture par rapport aux autres?

3. Le fait d'avoir une ville sœur vous donne-t-il l'impression d'être plus impliqué dans le monde? Si oui, comment et pourquoi?
4. Votre implication dans des villes sœurs vous donne-t-elle envie de voyager davantage? Les villes sœurs vous ont-elles donné une vision globale plus large? Élaborer.
5. Avez-vous été la cible de personnes d'autres villes sœurs qui vous ont contacté? Dans l'affirmative, à quoi ressemblait cette expérience? Qu'avez-vous ressenti?

Au futur

1. Quels grands impacts avez-vous constatés dans votre vie en raison des villes sœurs? Cela a-t-il façonné votre carrière / vos relations / etc.?
2. Quelles ont été vos expériences préférées avec les villes sœurs? Un événement ou un souvenir particulier sur lequel vous pouvez élaborer?
3. Souhaitez-vous continuer à vous engager avec des villes sœurs? Si oui, pourquoi?
4. Avez-vous des projets ou des désirs pour augmenter votre engagement futur? Si oui, comment comptez-vous faire cela?

Les sujets de cette étude sont tous des membres adultes du RVSCI âgés de 40 à 70 ans.

Ils sont tous membres de l'organisation depuis dix ans ou plus et siègent actuellement au conseil d'administration de la communauté de Roanoke en investissant leur temps dans la gestion de RVSCI. Cela comprend tout, de l'organisation de réunions semestrielles du conseil d'administration aux voyages dirigés d'élèves du secondaire à l'étranger. L'avantage d'interroger les membres du conseil est qu'ils étaient les personnes les plus compétentes avec lesquelles j'aurais pu parler, car ils ont l'expérience la plus longue et la plus approfondie de l'organisation et de son fonctionnement. D'un autre côté, un inconvénient de ce pool d'entrevues est que mes résultats sont limités et ne peuvent pas être généralisés. Certes, il aurait été difficile de

généraliser même un plus grand groupe d'entrevues de non-membres du conseil, car le groupe d'échantillons aurait dû être très grand.

Résultats

Certaines tendances particulièrement notables sont l'âge et la profession des sujets: la majorité des sujets sont des retraités, dont beaucoup ont occupé un emploi dans le même domaine ou dans des domaines similaires : par exemple, du travail social, de l'éducation et de la médecine. En outre, tous les sujets font partie de villes sœurs depuis au moins une dizaine d'années et beaucoup ont des expériences plus longues qui remontent encore plus loin. Les langues communes sont bien sûr l'anglais et le français. Pour ceux qui peuvent parler une langue commune en tant que ville sœur dans laquelle ils sont impliqués, cette communauté linguistique a contribué à leur expérience positive. Fait intéressant, cependant, pour ceux qui ne parlent pas la langue de leur ville sœur respective, beaucoup ont quand même apprécié leurs échanges et ont même réussi à communiquer avec un effort supplémentaire.

Un autre point commun notable est qu'aucun des sujets n'a mentionné d'avantages spécifiques pour les villes sœurs ayant à voir avec l'économie, même lorsqu'il est interrogé avec la question quatre. Au lieu de cela, l'accent a été mis sur la relation personnelle. Ce qui les a motivés à rejoindre RVSCI était généralement soit un amour du voyage, une rencontre avec une personne internationale qu'ils appréciaient vraiment, soit une forte croyance en l'énoncé de mission. Au sujet des relations, la majorité des participants ont déclaré avoir rencontré tellement de personnes dans des villes sœurs qu'ils ne pouvaient même pas se souvenir du nombre exact. Pourtant, malgré ce nombre élevé, ils semblent tous entretenir des contacts réguliers

(principalement par courrier électronique) avec un nombre beaucoup plus faible entre un ou vingt amis à l'étranger.

Pour être plus précis à propos de ces amitiés, la majorité des participants ont déclaré que les personnes rencontrées dans le cadre des échanges et des activités des villes sœurs étaient le genre de personnes vers lesquelles elles graviteraient normalement, que ce soit parce qu'elles partagent les mêmes intérêts, les mêmes antécédents, etc. que leur vision de Roanoke a été façonnée par leur expérience avec les villes sœurs, accordées de différentes manières. En fin de compte, cependant, tous les participants sont fiers de vivre à Roanoke, une ville qui embrasse tant de cultures grâce aux efforts de sa ville sœur.

Les différences notables incluent la manière dont ils ont pris connaissance des villes sœurs: certains l'ont appris auprès d'amis communs, ou grâce à leur travail, ou simplement en voyant au hasard une publicité. Une autre différence est le temps qu'ils passent et investissent dans les tâches des villes sœurs sur une base mensuelle. Ces tâches comprennent la communication avec les gens des villes sœurs à l'étranger, l'organisation de réunions virtuelles, la participation à des conférences, la planification d'événements, la participation à des événements, etc. Bien que tous ces sujets soient membres du conseil, certains passent beaucoup plus de temps que d'autres, allant de deux à trente heures. La nature des relations établies à l'étranger semble avoir beaucoup à voir avec quel pays. Certains pays, comme la Pologne, ont une culture beaucoup plus formelle, où les relations professionnelles sont préférées, tandis que d'autres sont plus informelles et peuvent faciliter les amitiés personnelles plus facilement.

Analyse

La question de la tranche d'âge plus âgée qui est impliquée dans les villes sœurs s'explique facilement du fait que beaucoup d'entre eux sont des retraités ou sur le point de l'être. Par conséquent, ils ont probablement plus de temps à consacrer à l'organisation ainsi qu'une expérience de toute une vie qui correspond aux valeurs de paix, de diplomatie et de relations qui sont au cœur du RVSCI. Bien sûr, mon échantillon se compose des membres du conseil d'administration, qui sont également plus susceptibles d'être un peu plus âgés car ils sont les dirigeants de l'organisation. Pourtant, il est clair que cette tendance n'est pas exclusive aux seuls membres du conseil. Tout au long de mon stage au RVSCI, il est devenu clair lors de conférences, webinaires, etc. que la population de participants vieillit. En fait, il y a même eu un webinaire organisé par l'organisation nationale Sister Cities International qui portait exclusivement sur ce sujet afin d'aider les sections à gagner un plus jeune public. Le problème avec une génération plus âgée de participants, cependant, est que les types d'échanges et les moyens de mener à bien le chapitre peuvent stagner. Le problème avec une génération plus âgée de participants, cependant, est que les types d'échanges peuvent rester les mêmes lorsqu'ils pourraient être révolutionnés afin de les améliorer.

Au début de la pandémie de COVID-19, notre section a dû s'adapter et apprendre à continuer à mener des activités RVSCI dans le monde virtuel. De nombreux membres plus âgés ont dû apprendre à utiliser des outils numériques comme le zoom. Il convient de mentionner, cependant, qu'après un démarrage un peu lent, les participants ont réussi à se rattraper et à organiser des événements virtuels comme la célébration du Nouvel An lunaire avec le Taubman et des tables rondes virtuelles French Connection pour n'en nommer que quelques-uns. Il y a

d'autres problèmes liés au COVID-19 qui seront discutés dans une section ultérieure distincte de ce document.

Une autre similitude concerne les domaines de travail des participants et leurs relations, souvent constitués du travail social, de l'éducation et de la médecine. Par coïncidence, il se trouve que ce sont les mêmes domaines sur lesquels se concentre une grande partie de la diplomatie interurbaine. Le travail social se fait par le biais de dons pour soutenir les crises dans le monde, comme ce fut le cas pour le don destiné à soutenir l'école de musique d'Opole après son inondation.²⁵ Mais cela peut aussi se faire grâce à d'autres dons comme le récent parrainage de Yehvenia Slipko pour participer au Concours Chopin de la Fondation Kosciuszko pour jeunes pianistes.²⁶ En ce qui concerne l'éducation, de nombreux échanges se font par le biais de cours de lycée, de stages universitaires ou d'échanges médicaux. Mon stage à Saint-Lô, par exemple, était pour un stage universitaire dans le but d'aider mon éducation en français et de mieux parler et comprendre la langue.²⁷ De nombreux médecins Carilion partent à l'étranger pour travailler dans les hôpitaux de nos villes sœurs, et vice versa pour les médecins venant à Roanoke.

Pour la plupart des personnes interrogées, leurs relations avec la ville sœur commencent au niveau professionnel, en particulier au début de la relation. Les participants ont décrit avoir trouvé des points communs avec les personnes qu'ils ont principalement rencontrées à travers des expériences de travail similaires. Certaines relations restent dans ce contexte exclusivement

²⁵ Roanoke Valley Sister Cities, "Floods Devastate Our Sister City - Opole, Poland -," *Around Our World* 1, no. 3 (August 1997): p. 1.

²⁶ Yehvenia Slipko, "Opole Pianist Rises to Challenge of Virtual Competition," *Around Our World* (Roanoke Valley Sister Cities, Inc. , December 2020), <https://www.rvsci.us/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/LOW-RES-Dec-2020-RVSC-Newsletter.pdf>.

²⁷ Liesl Marie Greider, "Multifaceted St-Lô Internship Results in Opportunities, Friendships," *Around Our World* (Roanoke Valley Sister Cities International, December 2019), https://www.rvsci.us/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/RVSC-Newsletter_December_2019_LOW_RES_2-1.pdf.

professionnel, mais pour les participants qui ont participé à des échanges à l'étranger, souvent les personnes avec lesquelles ils ont voyagé ou séjourné à l'étranger sont également devenus des amis personnels.

Lorsque les professions sont contre-interrogées avec la question de savoir si les participants passeraient généralement du temps avec les types de personnes qu'ils ont rencontrés dans les villes sœurs, il devient clair que la réponse commune est oui. Fait intéressant, même dans différentes cultures et pays, les personnes interrogées ont vu qu'elles interagissaient avec des personnes vers lesquelles elles graviteraient normalement. Cela semble être dû en grande partie au fait que le concept de ville sœur attire des types similaires de personnes ayant des valeurs similaires. Ensuite, bien sûr, ces valeurs sont souvent exposées à travers le travail qu'ils font et le travail qu'ils occupent. Ainsi vient une partie de la raison pour laquelle il y a une si forte probabilité que les activités des villes sœurs rassemblent des personnes similaires.

Un commentaire particulièrement intéressant soulevé par le participant C est la composition démographique générale des membres. Cette personne a noté: «Je sais que, principalement, le Conseil des villes sœurs de Roanoke semble être entièrement blanc, bien éduqué, ayant fait des études collégiales. Je sais qu'il y a un Chinois et je pense un Afro-Américain au Conseil, mais je n'ai pas autant de contacts avec eux parce qu'ils ne sont pas impliqués dans Wonju.»²⁸ Ce consensus général autour de la race et du niveau d'éducation s'est également reflété dans les webinaires et conférences virtuels auxquels j'ai participé pendant mon stage. Je me suis souvent retrouvé comme la seule personne de moins de quarante ans. De plus, les gens là-bas étaient presque toujours des Blancs de la classe supérieure formés à l'université.

²⁸ Participant C (appendice: pp. 51).

Parfois, il y avait des présentateurs d'Afrique qui étaient bien éduqués, mais c'était une exception spéciale et certainement pas la norme.

Que dit cette question de race et de formation sur l'approche des villes sœurs? Bien sûr, puisqu'il s'agit d'un groupe de bénévoles au sein de la section de Roanoke, cela attirera des gens qui ont le temps de faire du bénévolat et qui s'intéressent à la cause. Pourtant, ce dessin de personnes similaires est également un inconvénient pour de nombreuses raisons. Certaines des raisons évidentes sont parce que la perspective majoritairement blanche de la classe moyenne supérieure devient le point de vue dominant et que l'organisation manque alors de diversité d'idées. Les opinions sont homogénéisées et les réunions des chapitres n'apportent pas autant d'avantages qu'elles le pourraient si des opinions différentes étaient présentées.

Lors de la réunion régionale avec la Caroline du Nord, la Caroline du Sud et la Virginie, j'étais le seul jeune. En conséquence, tout le monde était très intéressé par mes opinions car ils ont réalisé que j'avais une perspective différente sur certaines choses. De plus, j'avais souvent de nouvelles idées qu'ils n'avaient pas entendues auparavant compte tenu de mon expérience de grandir dans notre monde axé sur la technologie. Cependant, si je n'avais pas été présent du tout, la réunion aurait été comme leurs autres réunions en termes de démographie.

Une partie de la mission des villes sœurs est de partager et de s'engager dans différentes cultures afin que nous puissions avoir un monde plus unifié. Cette mission d'inclusion de toutes les cultures afin d'avoir une meilleure compréhension du monde et de son fonctionnement est fondamentale pour la réussite du programme. Pourtant, s'il y a une représentation limitée des cultures au sein des membres, alors représentons-nous vraiment le pays, l'état ou la ville dans lequel nous vivons? Nous accomplissons peut-être notre mission à l'étranger en nous renseignant sur ces cultures, mais le fait de savoir si nous incluons également activement des personnes

appartenant à des minorités raciales et culturelles pourrait déterminer si l'organisation est capable d'évoluer et de prospérer à l'avenir. Nous ne voulons pas que l'organisation vieillisse et disparaisse avec les personnes qui y ont participé; il doit plutôt changer et évoluer constamment avec le temps, la démographie, etc.

Une autre question intéressante est de savoir si les villes sœurs promeuvent une sorte de colonialisme anglosaxon blanc dans le monde. En voyageant et en faisant des échanges dans d'autres pays, est-ce que les participants des villes sœurs envoient des personnes qui pousseront leur propre culture et leurs idées vers un nouvel endroit? Idéalement, ils envoient des personnes qui favoriseront la paix et la compréhension selon la mission, car le colonialisme moderne des idées n'est pas bénéfique pour vraiment encourager une paix durable. Au lieu de cela, les bons types de personnes doivent faire les échanges afin qu'ils puissent apporter leur point de vue unique et le partager sans l'imposer aux autres.

Il convient de noter que ces données démographiques sont basées sur les participants aux entretiens et leurs expériences, qui se limitent au chapitre de la ville sœur de Roanoke. Le chapitre de Roanoke est peut-être le reflet de sa communauté d'il y a trente ou quarante ans, mais des immigrants sont venus à Roanoke et il est devenu de plus en plus diversifié. Un participant A déclaré: «J'ai dit à de nombreuses personnes que ce que j'ai fait à Roanoke, je ne pourrais jamais le faire d'où je viens, qui est juste à côté de Manhattan. Je pense que Roanoke est une petite ville du sud très sympathique. Lorsque nous sommes arrivés ici il y a trente ans, ce n'était pas très diversifié sur le plan ethnique. Depuis lors, le nombre de minorités ou d'ethnies a augmenté à pas de géant en ville.»²⁹

²⁹ Participant A (appendice: pp. 37).

Cette croissance est prometteuse car elle offre à Roanoke l'opportunité d'apporter sa mission à plus de communautés. Cet objectif n'a pas été atteint dans son intégralité, comme le montrent les données démographiques des membres actuels, mais l'intention et le désir sont là. Le désir trouve son écho dans les sentiments du participant H: «Je suis fier que la vallée de Roanoke possède une communauté de cultures aussi diversifiée.»³⁰ Il y a de la fierté dans la composition ethnique de Roanoke, donc cette fierté doit simplement être convertie en action. En d'autres termes, il peut simplement s'agir de savoir comment impliquer différents groupes de personnes et les attirer dans l'organisation.

Le participant H a également noté comment les villes sœurs «m'ont fait prendre conscience des nombreuses cultures et immigrés vivant dans la vallée et m'ont permis de rencontrer un certain nombre de personnes dans notre vallée qui sont d'origine chinoise, coréenne, brésilienne, polonaise et française ou qui sont intéressés par ces cultures ainsi que par ceux qui ont des relations ou des expériences avec le Kenya et la Russie.»³¹ L'expérience de cette personne reflète un contraste, à savoir que la diversité est représentée au sein du RVSCI. Cependant, cela peut être une différence entre les données démographiques générales des villes sœurs et les données démographiques du conseil, dont la plupart ont été interviewées dans le cadre de mon étude. Pourtant, le problème demeure que les différentes cultures et races ne sont pas représentées à la table du conseil, où les décisions sont prises.

Concernant les questions d'entrevue basées sur la relation, certaines des personnes interrogées avaient des relations via des villes sœurs, ce qui les a aidées professionnellement ou économiquement. Mais aussi, certains avaient des relations entièrement centrées sur la personne. Il s'agit d'une tendance surprenante étant donné la prévalence du problème économique dans la

³⁰ Participant H (appendice: pp. 74).

³¹ Ibid.

littérature sur les relations internationales. Pourtant, dans un petit chapitre local de villes sœurs, il semble que les grandes entreprises économiques comme l'exportation d'usines ne soient pas présentes. Dépourvus de ce puissant moteur économique, les personnes qui y participent sont plutôt plus intéressées par l'impact personnel que cela peut avoir sur elles.

Pour avoir ces relations, la langue est essentielle. Les participants qui parlent la langue de leurs villes sœurs sont principalement impliqués à Saint-Lô ou Opole. Ainsi, parler français ou polonais est une compétence utile qui profite considérablement à ces participants. Bien sûr, parler coréen ou chinois aiderait également pour les villes de ces pays, mais les participants ont eu moins de problème à connaître uniquement l'anglais pour ces pays puisque leurs villes sœurs parlent anglais dans l'ensemble. Tout cela pour dire que la compréhension et les compétences linguistiques peuvent faire ou défaire l'expérience de la ville sœur de quelqu'un. La raison pour laquelle tant d'Américains ne connaissent que l'anglais est simplement parce que les représentants d'autres pays sont plus susceptibles de connaître l'anglais. Donc, ils ont encore besoin d'une langue de communication commune, cela aide simplement nos participants américains à avoir l'avantage de connaître l'anglais, ce qui a été décrit comme la langue mondiale des affaires.

Les participants aux entrevues ne se souvenaient souvent pas de tout le monde qu'ils avaient rencontré dans les villes sœurs, ce qui suggère un nombre assez élevé. Le participant A a expliqué: «Honnêtement, je ne peux pas vous donner de numéro; ce serait impossible... Je pense que les constantes seraient dans les relations privilégiées avec l'école de musique, par exemple, les jeunes adultes qui sont venus à Roanoke pour se produire. Cela fait quatorze ans que le premier groupe est arrivé et je suis leur carrière.»³² Tant de personnes sont rencontrées qu'il n'est

³² Participant A (appendice: pp. 37).

pas humainement possible de maintenir un contact régulier avec tout le monde. Au lieu de cela, les participants restent généralement en contact avec ceux avec qui ils mènent régulièrement des échanges, comme c'est le cas avec l'école de musique d'Opole mentionnée ci-dessus. Puisqu'il s'agit d'un échange permanent qui amène régulièrement des personnes transatlantiques pour des spectacles, il est plus facile de maintenir le contact.

Bien que la plupart des participants aient déclaré avoir rencontré des dizaines, des centaines de personnes ou, de manière générale, beaucoup de personnes par le biais de villes sœurs, personne n'a déclaré rester en contact régulier avec plus de 10 à 15 personnes. En fait, le nombre moyen est de 10 personnes, et la plupart de ce contact se fait par des moyens virtuels comme le courrier électronique ou des réunions en ligne. Le taux élevé de correspondance continue est prometteur car il souligne le fait que les membres ne se contentent pas de rencontrer des gens du monde entier pour ensuite disparaître de leur vie. Au contraire, les relations qui se nouent sont durables, à tel point qu'ils trouvent utile et épanouissant de continuer leur amitié même si cela doit se faire par des moyens numériques à l'autre bout du globe, ou même pendant une pandémie mondiale!

Obstacles

Chaque ville sœur a son propre ensemble de obstacles qui reflètent le contexte géographique et culturel de son emplacement. Roanoke, pour commencer, a du mal à impliquer diverses communautés minoritaires dans les événements réguliers de l'organisation. De plus, il a un conseil vieillissant qui aura éventuellement besoin d'un leadership plus jeune pour intervenir et contribuer également.

Quant aux obstacles auxquels Opole est confronté, ils sont un peu plus importants. En ce qui concerne les personnes intéressées à s'impliquer dans la ville sœur d'Opole ici à Roanoke, presque aucune de ces personnes n'est polonaise qui vit réellement dans la région. Le participant A a parlé de notre communauté polonaise de réfugiés à Roanoke qui n'est pas intéressée à s'impliquer dans des villes sœurs de peur qu'il y ait une sorte de «retombées politiques».³³ Ces personnes ont fui la Pologne à l'époque communiste, lorsque la loi du martial était en vigueur.³⁴ Par conséquent, ils n'étaient pas en bons termes avec leur pays d'origine pour des raisons politiques et ils ont peu d'intérêt à s'impliquer à nouveau. Pourquoi s'impliquer quand un pays a laissé des cicatrices et de mauvais souvenirs? Leur processus de pensée semble logique à première vue.

Cependant, la triste réalité est que cette petite communauté polonaise est en fait exactement le genre de communauté qui pourrait bénéficier de la mission de la ville sœur parce que le désir est d'être en bons termes pacifiques avec tous les pays. De toute évidence, cela est particulièrement nécessaire avec le gouvernement polonais, qui alterne entre être en bons termes avec Roanoke et en mauvais termes selon qui est au pouvoir. Parfois, les politiciens communistes sont en fonction et ils sont hostiles aux relations diplomatiques avec l'Amérique, mais d'autres fois, les fonctionnaires les plus démocratiques ont le contrôle et ils sont plus intéressés par la diplomatie. En 1998, le comité Opole tentait de relancer le programme Manager-to-Manager pour promouvoir des relations positives entre les villes polonaises et virginienne.³⁵ C'était après une longue période pendant laquelle le comité Opole était incapable d'avoir des échanges ou des relations personnelles positives avec le gouvernement polonais à Opole. Ainsi, ils promouvaient

³³ Participant A (appendice: pp. 37).

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ RVSCI, "Opole Report," *Around Our World* 2, no. 3 (August 1998): p. 3.

la paix et les échanges culturels par d'autres moyens ici à Roanoke, en promouvant une vente de produits de boulangerie polonais lors du Festival annuel des couleurs locales, par exemple, qui a en fait été extrêmement efficace pour sensibiliser et collecter des fonds.³⁶

Malheureusement, malgré les efforts, la communauté polonaise continue de garder ses distances avec la ville sœur d'Opole. Il y a d'autres raisons pour lesquelles, l'une d'entre elles est le sentiment commun que «S'ils ne venaient pas d'Opole, pourquoi devraient-ils être impliqués?»³⁷ Donc, au lieu de penser que c'était une ville polonaise et de s'intéresser à un lien parce qu'ils sont polonais, ils n'étaient pas intéressés car ce n'était pas leur ville polonaise. Le comité Opole a réussi à rassembler cette communauté pour les couleurs locales, «mais pour m'intéresser activement à Opole, je dirais non parce qu'Opole, d'intérêt, est une ville qui a changé de frontières à plusieurs reprises. Donc, avant la Seconde Guerre mondiale, c'était allemand. Et le commentaire de la communauté était: Je ne suis pas intéressé par Opole parce que c'est une ville allemande.» Ainsi, l'histoire passée joue toujours un rôle important dans les relations internationales, et elle a un effet d'entraînement. Les répercussions de la Seconde Guerre mondiale et les changements de frontières qui ont eu lieu avec l'Allemagne et la Pologne font encore leur apparition. Non seulement ils font une apparition, mais ils apparaissent remarquablement ici dans notre petite ville du sud-ouest de Roanoke. Aucune ville ne peut s'échapper des effets de l'histoire.

Un autre obstacle pour Opole qui a été décrit comme le plus grand est la confusion concernant ce qu'est RVSCI. Opole a désigné des fonctionnaires dont le travail est de s'engager dans les relations internationales. Parce qu'ils occupent cette position au sein de leur propre

³⁶ Kris Slowikowski, "Opole Sister City Committee," *Around Our World* 2, no. 2 (May 1998): p. 7.

³⁷ Participant A (appendice: pp. 37).

gouvernement, ils supposent que les représentants des villes sœurs américaines sont également des diplomates officiels, alors qu'en réalité, ce ne sont que des citoyens privés qui n'ont aucun lien direct avec le gouvernement local ou national.³⁸ Roanoke Valley Sister Cities International, et plus largement Sister Cities International, sont toutes deux des organisations non gouvernementales (ONG), mais en raison de la nature de leurs missions et du fait qu'elles s'engagent régulièrement dans des échanges, ces organisations semblent parfois être des gouvernements parrainés à l'œil extérieur. C'est un exemple de la façon dont nous essayons tous de comprendre les systèmes d'autres pays, mais nous essayons de le comprendre dans le cadre du fonctionnement de notre propre pays et de notre gouvernement. Par conséquent, l'un des défis principaux des villes sœurs est d'aider les gens à sortir de leur propre domaine culturel afin qu'ils puissent mieux comprendre le reste du monde.

Un problème qui découle de ce problème de confusion des ONG est la nature formelle d'Opole. Ce n'est pas nécessairement un problème, mais cela empêche les personnes qui font un échange de développer des relations personnelles, qui sont essentielles au succès des villes sœurs. Selon le participant A, les visites à Opole sont tout à fait uniques en ce sens qu'elles déroulent le tapis rouge pour les Américains qui viennent.³⁹ En conséquence, ils s'attendent à ce que Roanoke fasse la même chose pour eux lorsqu'ils viennent ici; ils refusent de rester dans la maison de quelqu'un mais s'attendent plutôt à être hébergés dans un hôtel, etc. avoir un échange plus personnel avec Roanoke et vice versa. Pourtant, les différences culturelles doivent être parcourues, et parfois, comme dans le cas d'Opole, ces différences entraînent la perte de certains avantages comme une amitié très personnelle.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid.

Le dernier défi auquel Opole a été confronté récemment est la difficulté de mettre en place et de faire fonctionner ses échanges médicaux. Décrit par le sujet A, «En tant qu'ambassadeur de Roanoke, ce n'est pas seulement une petite ville des Appalaches dans le sud-ouest de la Virginie, mais nous cherchons à élargir nos horizons et à collaborer avec nos villes partenaires de la meilleure façon possible. Nous essayons de le faire par le biais de partenariats médicaux, espérons-le bientôt.»⁴⁰ Ils ont eu quelques problèmes pour sélectionner les bonnes personnes pour faire l'échange puisque leur premier essai en 2011 a entraîné des problèmes. Heureusement, quand ils ont réessayé en 2017, ce fut un bien meilleur succès.⁴¹ Grâce à cette expérience, ils ont découvert que la personne qui dirige l'échange est d'une importance cruciale. Cela ne peut pas être n'importe qui, d'autant plus qu'ils représenteront le chapitre entier, la communauté, la ville, la culture et le pays. Ils doivent prendre cette responsabilité au sérieux.

Quant à Saint-Lô, il se débat avec certains stéréotypes qui font craindre aux stagiaires français de venir en Amérique. Selon le sujet B, on craint toujours que les Américains soient racistes, et les stagiaires sont avertis avant de venir. C'est peut-être en partie parce que Roanoke est une ville du sud située en Virginie. Heureusement, après avoir vécu à Roanoke, «invariablement, ils partent d'ici en se disant agréablement surpris par l'absence de racisme, du moins à Roanoke ou dans leur famille d'accueil ou sur leur lieu de travail».⁴² Pour ce problème, Saint-Lô lutte contre les stéréotypes qui ont traversé l'océan Atlantique à travers les anecdotes et les médias.

Ces stéréotypes sont combattus avec des interactions en personne qui montrent à quoi ressemblent vraiment les Virginiens, prouvant aux personnes qui font des échanges que les

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Participant D (appendice: pp. 59).

Américains ne sont pas tout ce qu'ils sont censés être dans les médias ou dans diverses autres sources. En outre, le sujet B a également décrit des conversations engageantes avec des stagiaires d'échange sur la religion, un problème souvent considéré puisque la Virginie est considérée comme faisant partie de la «ceinture biblique» dévotement religieuse.⁴³ Certains stagiaires viennent en pensant rencontrer des chrétiens pieusement religieux qui suivent une forme de christianisme qui peut parfois sembler dure ou haineuse. Dans ces dialogues, les stagiaires sont exposés à différentes façons de penser. De plus, ils voient que la généralisation de l'idée de la ceinture biblique est une généralisation trop large. Tout le monde n'est pas pieusement chrétien ou même pieusement religieux que ce soit.

Aucun autre obstacle important n'a été signalé pour la ville sœur de Saint-Lô en dehors des problèmes courants de COVID-19, bien sûr. Saint-Lô semble être l'une des villes sœurs les plus prospères qui prospère avec le plus d'échanges. Cela découle du fait que la France est un pays plus fréquenté par les gens à visiter, mais c'est également intéressant en raison de la nature jeune de ce partenariat de ville sœur.

COVID-19

L'année dernière a introduit des défis en raison de la pandémie de COVID-19 qui ont atteint le monde entier. Bien sûr, les quarantaines et les restrictions de voyage ont rendu difficile, voire impossible, pour une ville sœur de continuer à fonctionner normalement. Les échanges réguliers ont été interrompus, les réunions du conseil d'administration ont été déplacées en ligne et presque toutes les personnes interrogées ont exprimé un fort désir pour le vaccin afin que les

⁴³ Ibid.

voyages internationaux soient à nouveau possibles. Après tout, c'est ce type de libre circulation à l'étranger qui permet les expériences, les échanges les plus marquants.

Une tendance commune au milieu de l'épreuve de cette pandémie est l'engagement remarquable que Roanoke, Saint-Lô et Opole ont tous maintenu l'un envers l'autre. Bien qu'il aurait été facile d'utiliser cette période de quarantaines et de verrouillages pour arrêter de poursuivre la mission de paix internationale puisque le climat mondial actuel rend plus difficile de le faire, toutes les villes ont trouvé des moyens de continuer la mission. Il a fallu repenser les modalités d'échanges et de communication. En d'autres termes, il a fallu l'adaptabilité. L'article du président dans le dernier bulletin d'information Around Our World s'intitule «En 2020, nous avons montré que nous pouvions pratiquement tout faire.»⁴⁴ Le président explique comment RVSCI a réussi à continuer à organiser des conférences régionales, des réunions de zoom pour maintenir le contact avec nos villes sœurs à l'étranger et des événements locaux comme l'événement de célébration de la Journée de l'alphabet coréen au Taubman Museum of Art. Cette journée marque la commémoration de l'alphabet coréen unique.

Essentiellement, tout a dû être mis en ligne, comme ce que les entreprises, les gouvernements et les écoles ont dû faire également. Ce qui est remarquable, cependant, c'est la résilience de chaque ville pendant cette période de déplacements limités. Sur la base de ces entretiens, il est clair que nous sortirons de cette pandémie avec un intérêt considérablement accru pour les relations internationales et les voyages. Par conséquent, à mesure que les vaccins deviennent plus disponibles en Amérique et dans d'autres pays, il semble que nous approchons d'un moment unique où l'intérêt pour les villes sœurs pourrait être à un niveau record. J'espère

⁴⁴ Mary Jo Fassié, “In 2020, We've Shown We Can Do Virtually Anything,” Around Our World (Roanoke Valley Sister Cities, Inc. , December 2020), <https://www.rvsci.us/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/LOW-RES-Dec-2020-RVSC-Newsletter.pdf>.

qu'avec les recommandations ci-dessous, RVSCI sera en mesure de capitaliser sur cette opportunité unique qui ne se présente littéralement qu'une fois par siècle, si c'est le cas.

Discussion

Sur la base de la recherche menée sur les villes sœurs en général en conjonction avec mon étude des villes sœurs de Roanoke, Saint-Lô et Opole, il existe quelques recommandations qui, si elles sont suivies, pourraient bénéficier au RVSCI.

- Continuer à utiliser les outils numériques qui sont devenus si répandus pendant la pandémie COVID-19, tels que les logiciels de visioconférence, afin de maintenir le contact avec les villes sœurs à l'étranger. Ils rendent le contact téléphonique plus agréable et accessible. De plus, étant donné que de nombreuses personnes savent comment utiliser ces outils maintenant, la barrière de l'accessibilité a été en grande partie brisée.
- Encouragez davantage de personnes à profiter des opportunités virtuelles pour des webinaires, des conférences, etc., car cette façon de se réunir a rendu le travail des villes sœurs plus accessible que jamais. Cependant, selon la façon dont nous sortons de la pandémie, ce type d'échange virtuel peut ne pas être autant utilisé. Par conséquent, profitez-en tant qu'il est encore possible de le faire!
- Faire un effort intentionnel pour impliquer davantage de communautés minoritaires au sein du RVSCI, allant même jusqu'à encourager leur implication active dans les comités et la planification des échanges. Sans voix différentes présentes à la table de décision, l'organisation des villes sœurs ne pourra pas évoluer avec son temps.
- Contribuez plus que simplement économiquement ou financièrement lorsque cela est possible à la poursuite de la mission d'échange international. Faites équipe avec d'autres

organisations lorsque cela est possible pour travailler à leurs côtés dans la poursuite de cette mission. Par exemple, le Festival international du film de Roanoke pourrait voir un certain changement dans les années à venir, ce qui pourrait fournir une opportunité pour RVSCI de jouer un rôle plus impliqué plutôt que de simplement sponsoriser financièrement. Le soutien financier est essentiel et certainement très apprécié, mais pour éviter de s'orienter vers une orientation économique et de s'éloigner de la mission fondatrice originelle de compréhension mutuelle, il faut faire davantage sur le plan relationnel.

- Abordez les différences culturelles grâce à des programmes éducatifs, comme l'organisation d'une conférence publique sur Opole et l'histoire de la Pologne. Une autre option consiste à organiser une conférence virtuelle sur les problèmes raciaux en Amérique avec une invitation spéciale aux villes sœurs. Cela peut aider à combattre les stéréotypes tout en permettant à d'autres pays de s'engager dans le dialogue important auquel notre pays est confronté à nos côtés.

Contraintes

En raison de la pandémie de COVID-19, la nature de ce projet a été considérablement modifiée. À l'origine, il était prévu que je me rende en Pologne pour pouvoir mener des recherches en personne sur le fonctionnement interne de leur chapitre là-bas. Cependant, comme cela n'était pas possible, il a fallu que je change mon entretien pour être virtuel et en ligne. Bien que l'on puisse s'attendre à ce que cela me permette d'élargir mon champ de recherche à un public plus large, j'ai constaté que cela s'est produit alors que la pandémie se poursuit pendant des mois et des mois. Par conséquent, mes participants à la recherche se sont limités

principalement aux membres du conseil d'administration dont l'expérience avec RVSCI est vaste. Cela présente un avantage dans la mesure où ils comprennent le fonctionnement interne de leurs comités et de leurs villes, dont j'avais besoin d'apprendre à travers les entretiens car je ne pouvais pas suivre en personne comme prévu à l'origine.

Pour cette raison, la limite principale de cette étude concerne les participants aux entrevues qui ont tous des antécédents similaires, et donc peut-être une expérience similaire avec l'organisation. Une autre limite était que certains membres à l'étranger ne répondaient pas aux courriels et je n'ai donc pas pu mener un entretien avec eux. En raison du nombre limité de participants à cette étude, les généralisations qui sont faites ne sont pas radicales.

Conclusion

Après avoir vu de visu les types de liens que les villes sœurs peuvent nouer sur la base de mon expérience de stage à Saint-Lô, j'étais curieuse de connaître la portée et l'impact des villes sœurs. Ce projet visait à analyser trois villes du réseau international de Roanoke Valley Sister Cities: Opole, Saint-Lô et Roanoke. Grâce à des entretiens approfondis avec des participants actifs, il est devenu clair que ces partenariats de villes sœurs sont relativement fructueux et ont un impact positif sur leurs communautés. En d'autres termes, ils accomplissent leur énoncé de mission de favoriser la compréhension mutuelle, l'amitié et la paix. Ces partenariats le font principalement par le biais d'échanges en personne et d'activités culturelles à des fins éducatives. Roanoke, Opole et Saint-Lô mettent un accent particulier sur les relations personnelles lorsque cela est possible. Bien sûr, il y a eu quelques obstacles à cela, y compris des répercussions historiques comme dans le cas de la Pologne, des stéréotypes pour la France et la pandémie du COVID-19 pour tout le monde. Pourtant, avec la poursuite des approches virtuelles et l'inclusion

de communautés variées, RVSCI a une rare opportunité d'utiliser ce temps pour augmenter encore plus sa portée.

Une personne interrogée a décrit succinctement des villes sœurs en disant que cela leur rappelait «la diplomatie, l'amélioration des relations internationales, les échanges interculturels et, fondamentalement, vivre ce que Mark Twain a dit il y a si longtemps que« les voyages sont fatals aux préjugés, au sectarisme et à l'étroitesse d'esprit... ». ⁴⁵ Dans l'ensemble, il semble que Roanoke Valley Sister Cities Inc. accomplisse cette mission, même en dépit des récents défis présentés par COVID-19.

Ce qui est particulièrement encourageant, c'est la façon dont RVSCI met l'accent sur les relations de personne à personne, car ce type d'échange a, comme on a vu, un impact profond et c'est aussi le moyen le plus réaliste pour une petite ville de faire sa marque à l'échelle mondiale. En fin de compte, Roanoke peut être étudié comme un microcosme pour les villes sœurs à travers le pays; c'est un exemple de petite ville qui permet de voir de près et personnellement ce que font les villes sœurs, comment elles fonctionnent et si elles réussissent. Sur la base des entretiens et des recherches menées, il est clair que RVSCI réussit, mais plus important encore, ils ont maintenant la possibilité d'avoir un impact plus grand que jamais.

⁴⁵ Participant C (appendice: pp. 51).

Appendice

Entrevue Participant A

Background Demographics

- 1) What is your name?

Redacted for participant's privacy and IRB approval

- 2) Where do you live?

Roanoke County

- 3) What is/was your occupation?

Physician

- 4) When you hear the term "sister cities," what comes to your mind?

Well, since I've been in it a long time, I know what it means. It means for someone who's not involved with sister city, they wouldn't know what it meant. But it's a partnership between I think like similar cities hopefully to learn from each other and communicate on the basis culturally, socially, economically, artistically.

- 5) Are you currently a member of your sister cities program?

Yes, she is the chair of the Polish, Opole sister city group

- 6) What sister cities have you been involved in?

Opole, Poland + as a member of the RVSC group, she's aware of what the other sister cities participate in and work with. They share ideas because the leadership role of the partnership is huge it's difficult to be an active participant or leader in other cities and do a good job but, yes I am a member of all the other sister city groups

- 7) When did you begin your involvement with sister cities? How long have you been involved?

Since prior to its inception actually. I heard a radio audition on NPR, an interview with the Roanoke county administrator at the time, Elmer Hodge, who was discussing the possibility of forming a partnership or liaison with Opole and they were looking for interest within the community. I heard that and I almost fell over because we'd been in Roanoke about two years only and I immediately picked up the phone and called him. And I said I want to be part of this. And I've been ever since. It was fortuitous.

8) How did you initially become aware of the sister cities for your town?

It was through an interview by the Roanoke County Administrator on NPR. At least I think it was NPR, it was either NPR or FIR. It was on the radio but I believe it was local news. And I'd never heard of sister cities prior to that.

9) What made you interested in taking part in sister cities at first?

We had just moved to Roanoke, like I said two years prior, this was '94. We moved to Roanoke in '92. My husband is a Polish citizen, born there, I studied in Poland, my parents are immigrants (refugees) from that area, from Poland, after WWII. So to be involved with something Polish in a completely new environment was amazing. Important for me, for my family, for my children to continue experiencing something Polish and see how we could give back to Poland through partnership as well as educate the community about Poland.

10) Have you continued to take part in sister cities? If so, why have you chosen to do so?

What has kept me it's because I'm here. I'm part of Roanoke, it's the sister city of Roanoke and as long as I'm here I'm going to invest time and effort. It's not that it's just personal, but maybe it is somewhat personal now because of the amazing relationships and experiences that I had had with Opole. And I knew nothing about Opole before this. That was not where my family was from. So my father was more from the Warsaw area and now part of what's Belarus. So more north of there. My husband's family, however, is close to Opole, but I had never been to Opole. Except for one time because they have amazingly beautiful porcelain that they paint there. And I went specifically to Opole to purchase some. But other than that I knew nothing of Opole.

11) What languages do you speak?

Polish, some Russian, French, some French, some Spanish, English

12) If you speak the language of another sister city(s), how has this impacted your experience? Has it been positive or negative? Why?

Oh absolutely. I'm able to converse easily with partners in Poland. I think because of that, it helps break the ice and helped, I guess, make special relationships. So I have to say what have I gained from working with sister cities? I've made lifelong friends.

13) If you do not speak the language of another sister city(s), then how has this impacted your experience and interactions with people from there?

N/A

14) How much time do you invest in sister cities on a monthly basis?

It really depends on the project we're working on. So for example in September, I found out about the piano competition, a week before the deadline ended, made multiple phone calls between Poland and the competition organizing committee actually asking them if it was possible for foreign competitors to participate. And then communicating that to Poland, working with them to find if they had a candidate, listening to the entire competition when it was broadcast. So I would say that particular month the number of hours spent was huge. I would say majority of times other months, maybe none. So it is dependent upon the project. Yeah, basically that.

About relationships

1) Has your experience with sister cities introduced you to new people? If so, how many people have you met?

Yes.

2) With how many people from your sister city do you maintain regular contact?

Well honestly I can't give you a number, that would be impossible. And the numbers of individuals have changed over the years because as folks change here in government, they've changed over there. So I think the constants would be in the special relationships with the music school, for example, the young adults that came to Roanoke to perform. It's fourteen years since the first group came and I follow their careers. We're friends on Facebook and I see them perform now internationally. Some are now teachers at the music school that we have a partnership with, that we support. So it's, I would say now it's a generational thing. It went from one generation to another.

3) How do you keep in touch with these people? What methods do you use? E-mail, social media, letter writing, etc.?

Everyone seems to be using Facebook, so it's easiest that way, through e-mail. There's a more formal route through letter. We have the three main, I think, groups that we've developed partnerships with are music, art, and medicine, in addition to the more formal administrative mayoral contacts, which do change. And we've gone through a number of changes there and different mayors and so on. The mayor changes every six years. The current mayor is a young mayor, was reelected recently, very energetic, well-liked by these towns. The prior mayor was very supportive of our efforts, as well. We had a mayor prior to the last, the one I just mentioned that was unpleasant. So it's really dependent upon, I guess, the interest of the government at the time and what agenda they may have. What they

expect, perhaps their expectations were not what we could provide to them. I think the biggest hurdle for sister cities is to understand by the partnership city is that, you do not represent the government of the city, you are an NGO. And that's what they get confused with, because Opole, for example has designated officials in charge of international relations. And they are selected by the government in place. So they are officials representing the city. Whereas, we, as Roanoke Valley Sister Cities, are citizens, not related to the local government, although we cooperate with the local government. And that is the hardest aspect for Opole to grasp. They just cannot understand why we are not part of the government. It's an important part of their local governmental functions.

- 4) How long have you maintained this contact?

Since joining sister cities.

- 5) Describe the nature of these sister cities based relationships.

Well each of these relationships begins as a professional relationship. The exchanges we've had with the students visiting with their chaperones, because you're spending personal time with them have evolved into more personal relationships. So that I can just message folks on Facebook and say "hey, what ya up to? What are you doin? What's new?" Whereas you can't do that with an official official. Which is absolutely fine. Which is normal, so unless I spent personal time, or I had someone living at my home, I think you're not going to be expected to develop that personal relationship. And on initial contact, Poland in particular is very formal. So when we invited, which is different from the French, the French had this whole big network here in Roanoke, oh you're gonna stay in my house. Poland said no. We're coming official visit, we expect to be put up in a hotel. Because when I travel there, when I went to Opole, that's what they did. I wasn't staying in someone's home; they rolled out the red carpet, put me in the best hotel in town, and that's how it was. If you're there on official business, that's what they expect.

- 6) What is the background of the people you have met through sister cities? Are these the kinds of people that you would gravitate to normally?

Well I'm a pianist myself, so I like music, I play music. I play classical music. So that was a easy yes, so they're people I would easily gravitate to. Our artist exchanges same; I'm maybe not artistic, but I do have a good eye for art, and I love art, so I have good communication with many Polish artists, not just from Opole, but quite a few, because I like art. And I collect art, so that's a yes. Our medicine exchange it's easy because I'm a physician. And the exchange between universities, again was very formal. I can't say it was immediately we love you.

It's like why do you wanna do this? Is this gonna be a good idea for us? Are we gonna explore this? And just of interest both the dean, dean Lehrmann and I received a thank you letter in September from an outgoing official in Broslov where we have the medical exchange, just thanking us for interest in wanting to do this as he was leaving his post.

- 7) What impact have you seen within your broader community as a result of sister cities? Has it brought people together in any way? If so, how?

That's unusual question. We have a small Polish community in town, which has actually kept distance from the Opole sister city. And reasons, not sure primarily all of them. But one in particular was, it was not their city. If they didn't come from Opole, why should they be involved? Yeah, so it wasn't because it's Polish we should be involved. And this is from a group that came to Roanoke as refugees running away from Poland during communist times and martial law. So they were afraid of why this was happening, would there be any political fallout from it? Would, you know just a non-questions in their heads. And despite many efforts, we could bring them together for the Local Colors, but to take an active interest in Opole? I would say no because Opole, of interest, is a town that changed borders many times. So before WWII it was German. And the comment from the community was I'm not interested in Opole because that's a German town. Yeah, so history is very important. And if you go to Opole, the street signs are in German and Polish.

Community/Pride

- 1) Has your involvement with sister cities shaped your view of your own city in any way? If so, how?

I've told many individuals that what I've done in Roanoke I would never be able to do where I came from, which is right by Manhattan. I think Roanoke is a smaller, very friendly southern town. When we came here thirty years ago, it was not very ethnically diverse. Since then, the number of minorities or ethnicities has grown by leaps and bounds in town. It was an opportunity to work with officials, work with the community, showcase the good parts of Poland. Even though I knew nothing of Opole, I wanted to learn. It was important to me. And I've found that I took great pride in working with our county leadership as well as formulating a path with our connection with the music school which occurred after a 500 year flood in Poland, which decimated the town. And the entire music school was under water. So it was at that time we took the music school under our thumb and decided we would support them financially, send them some money, to help rebuild. I think they lost like twenty grand pianos. It was huge. They were

unsure as to whether they would rebuild in that spot, but they did. And they have a beautiful concert hall now, and beautiful classrooms, and so forth. We've sent them sheet music. I collect music CD's for them, classical music, and other things, which when I go to Poland I deliver to them, which they put in their library.

- 2) How does being involved in sister cities make you feel about your own city/culture in relation to others?

Well, you want to I guess emphasize the good things, right? So it's easy to talk about food, it's easy to talk about music, and folklore, culture. Because when people think about Poland, there's a lot of misinformation in the media about Poland. So you want to, at least in my mind, emphasize the good things that are Polish. And every culture has good and bad. You know, culture is the best thing since sliced bread. Although Polish bread is the best. Yeah, so you wanna show the good things, and I think going through the music, our food, having folks visit, dance, those are good ways of promoting nice things. And yet when you talk about bad things, I guess what comes to mind about Poland are concentration camps and WWII and persecution and Jews. And when you address that, there is pushback sometimes. And there is misinformation in the media and you want to correct that, try to work with I guess embassy officials to address things that the media promotes that are incorrect, such as the phrase Polish death camps. You say that and you're gonna get smacked I think by someone from the other side. Because that's a completely incorrect statement.

- 3) Does having a sister city make you feel like you are more globally involved? If so, how and why?

N/A

- 4) Does your involvement with sister cities make you want to travel more?

We're great travelers. We always travel. So that's just part of our fabric, that wouldn't change anything.

- 5) Has sister cities given you a broader global view? Elaborate.

N/A

- 6) Have you been on the receiving end of people from other sister cities reaching out to you? If so, what was that experience like? How did it feel?

The only I guess experience I can mention would be last year's D-Day celebration. It was when the French reached out to us asking if we would participate in the 75th anniversary. So the 75th anniversary of D-Day. So we were

asked to participate and we mobilized Polish military folks, or NATO folks, NATO officers, to march with us. And we were able to represent Poland on that day in Bedford. But I would say that's the only opportunity that we had to reach out by another sister city, and basically because France was involved.

Looking forward

- 1) What broad impacts have you seen within your life as a result of sister cities? Has it shaped your career/relationships/etc.?

Well, I think as being an ambassador for Roanoke, that we are not just a small little Appalachian town in Southwest Virginia, but we are looking to expand our horizons and to collaborate with our partner cities in the best way we can and we're trying to do that through our medical partnerships hopefully soon with virtual roundtables. This virtual piano competition would be an example. It was the first time, I think, I know the Cushushco Foundation had attempted that and I thought it was a rousing success. So I think it just made us go beyond what we thought we could do and still have a wonderful experience.

Concerning the medical exchanges: Yeah, so, I've been working on that project for many years, and we tried it back in 2011, ran into some issues. Had to put it away for awhile to find the right people to try again. And we tried it again in 2017 and it was a success. So sometimes you have to back away for awhile because there are other folks who may have other agendas that didn't meld with your agenda. So that's what happened.

- 2) What have been your favorite experiences with sister cities? Any particular event or memory that you can elaborate on?

I think it was with the visiting young adults who came from the music school who performed, and performed beautifully here in Roanoke as well as in Washington D.C. And have people in tears after their performances. I guess with the audience not expecting them to be as accomplished as they were, but that was very moving.

- 3) Do you wish to continue engaging with sister cities? If so, why?

Well it's second nature now, I've been doing it so long. It's just not an effort. There is effort when it's necessary. Again it's just a no brainer for me. But for where I've been disappointed is where I've been unable to have that same energy transmitted from the Polish community into sister cities. And maybe it's more, I've thought about this quite a while, that it's probably not important to them, because they're Polish, but it's important to me because I'm first-generation Polish-American. So it's I think it's a generational thing of where you came from, what your origins are. So for me being born here, having just being able to

promote like I said what is the good of being Polish to others. Vs. if you're Polish, you know that's, yeah it's fun, we can go party, we can do this. But, you know the other part is just work. And that I've not been able to translate into a better form for those emigrés, the refugees, who are basically in the Polish community here in town. They're just not interested. So I think it's more for first, second, generation, third generation. You know my father came on a boat way back in 1910. Do I wanna know a little bit more? What can I learn from this? Vs. well I'm from Opole right now and what can I do to help you? Yeah, that's probably the best I can do with that.

- 4) Do you have any plans or desires to increase your future engagement? If so, how do you plan to do this?

It's hard to do it without other folks being just as invested in it as I am. I mean I can get some folks to help with larger projects, but I wouldn't say it's consistent. So I have to pick and choose what my projects are, and how much auxiliary help I will need. So it is a bit limitational and I don't wanna say that it's a one-person show, but it almost is.

Entrevue Participant B

Background Demographics

- 1) What is your name?

Redacted for participant's privacy and IRB approval

- 2) Where do you live?

Downtown Salem

- 3) What is/was your occupation?

I am the president of a non-profit organization called the Council of Community Services. It's in downtown Roanoke, and it's 60 years old. The organization was formed to identify problems in the Roanoke Valley and to bring the stakeholders together in order to solve those problems. There's a lot of non-profit organizations here in the valley that have grown out of the council of community services. But we also now provide some direct services. We have the drop-in center, which provides HEP-C and HIV testing, and a syringe exchange for people with addiction issues. We have the community housing resource center which helps people preventing homelessness or rapidly rehousing them. And we also have a contract with the state of Virginia to run 211 Virginia which is an information and referral line for the entire state. Great organization.

- 4) When you hear the term “sister cities,” what comes to your mind?

Well, the very first time I ever heard that term, I was in grade school a very long time ago. I grew up in Alexandria, Virginia. And they had a Swedish sister city. I'm trying to remember the name of it and I can't. They later added a Scottish sister city, but in any event there's in Sweden at Christmas time there's the Saint Chia festival, and I remember that's how they had a picture in the newspaper of a girl, high school girl who had won the contest to be Saint Luchian. And it's almost like they had an advent wreath on their head with candles. So apparently that was part of the deal. So that was the first time I ever heard about sister cities, is Alexandria had one back, that would be the late 1960s. And then as I said we got one from Dundee, Scotland in Alexandria because Alexandria was actually founded by a lot of Scotch Americans. So that actually made more sense than Sweden. And that was a big deal too. I worked for the city of Alexandria and I actually was on that sister city committee briefly representing the city manager. I had forgotten that until just this second, that's funny.

- 5) Are you currently a member of your sister cities program?

Yes.

- 6) What sister cities have you been involved in?

Opole, and the way that happened, I worked for Roanoke County for 30 years and we were put together with the city of Opole as part of a program by the U.S. Information Agency when Poland achieved democracy. And the Virginia local government management association was tasked with partnering cities in Poland with cities or counties here in Virginia so we would have these exchange programs so they could learn more about democracy and how it worked. So we got Opole and I was very involved with having, making the arrangements. I was the informational officer at the time for the county. And so I was very involved in making the arrangements for having the people from Opole come over and visit us. And then I was lucky enough to get to go over the mayor with the county administrator and a representative from our school. And we spent two weeks, a little over two weeks, in Opole, 25 years ago. 26 years ago. 26 years ago right now because we were there over Thanksgiving. And so we got to see their version of democracy and, you know, talk to them about how it works here.

- 7) When did you begin your involvement with sister cities? How long have you been involved?

N/A

8) How did you initially become aware of the sister cities for your town?

N/A

9) What made you interested in taking part in sister cities at first?

Well, and so, yeah, so then the end to that story was Opole is after several years we wanted to maintain this relationship with them and so the county administrator approached the person who was in charge of the sister city program at the time. And, you know the Roanoke program has been around a really long time too, with Wonju being the first sister city and so it was very well known in the community. So he approached them and asked if they would take on Opole as the sister city. And we had gotten, when we were over in Poland, the city officials there had agreed to it also. So that's how we got into it to begin with. For Opole, yes, I was a founding member.

10) Have you continued to take part in sister cities? If so, why have you chosen to do so?

Yes. Well, I think there's more diversity in Roanoke than appears to be at first. And I've always been really interested in meeting the people who come here from other countries or hearing the stories of the people who have gone to the other countries, I've heard vice-mayor Joe Cobb talk about his trip to... I'm trying to remember if it was China? Might have been... And he had pictures and it was just really interesting to me because, you know, people around the world are different, but we're also the same. And to see the way that people welcomed people from other countries or welcome us when we go there, it's just really heartwarming. And I also like to see the diversity and hear the stories here in the Roanoke valley. I've always loved like going to Local Colors and seeing how many different nations are represented here... it's really amazing to me.

11) What languages do you speak?

English.

12) If you speak the language of another sister city(s), how has this impacted your experience? Has it been positive or negative? Why?

N/A

13) If you do not speak the language of another sister city(s), then how has this impacted your experience and interactions with people from there?

When I was in Poland by the end of ten days, somebody walked into the room and said in Polish, she was talking to our translator, but the question was, would they like some coffee? And I was like, yes! Yeah! Because I understood what she said. I wouldn't have been able to say it, but I at least understood it. I've never been

very good at languages. So I'm, I'm very good at English and that's where it'll stay.

14) How much time do you invest in sister cities on a monthly basis?

Yeah, probably not that much, particularly obviously since COVID. I attend the board meetings so that's like a couple hours. I was, I did a booth like at Olde Salem Days one year... They had a big event at the Taubman center last, I bet it was right before COVID, and we had a booth there and I participated in that. But no more than a couple hours a month. I haven't had the opportunity to be as involved as I'd like to be.

About relationships

1) Has your experience with sister cities introduced you to new people? If so, how many people have you met?

Yes... I'm trying to think... Particularly, the board, I didn't know most of the people on the board. And some of them are from the countries that they represent. The place I think I've had the most interesting experiences have been things like the Christmas party or the Annual dinner where you get to meet this huge group of people, so it's the people from the different separate committees too. And there's thousands. And that's just really fascinating to hear, you know, where they came from originally, or the visits. You know I'd like to visit all of our sister cities, they all just look like beautiful places. But I've met people, since I've worked for local government for thirty years and I know a lot of people in the valley, but I don't know as many people in the private sector. And so sister cities has given me the opportunity to meet people like from the Carilion Medical school and the hospital, people from Roanoke College, because they're a college that's been very involved... some of the banks. You know just more people from the private sector. So it broadened my group of people that I know here in the valley.

2) With how many people from your sister city do you maintain regular contact?

Probably fifteen to twenty, maybe... of people that I didn't already know.

3) How do you keep in touch with these people? What methods do you use? E-mail, social media, letter writing, etc.?

It's mainly either the meetings or the parties, the events. And I will say you're right about the virtual meetings—it is a lot easier than having to get in your car and go some place. You know, there is something to be said for the interaction is different, but...

- 4) How long have you maintained this contact?

N/A

- 5) Describe the nature of these sister cities based relationships.

I think they've all been professional. I don't think I've had any with the people that I didn't already know, they're all still professional. But I see them at other, I see people at other events, for other organizations. One of the members, Bill Bestpitch, was on Roanoke City Council, and I knew him before that, because he was in local government. But you know, it strengthened the relationship, in fact he reached out to ask me to be part of something, of a committee or something for the city, I'm trying to remember which one it was. And that actually helped in my professional career to be asked to do something like that.

- 6) What is the background of the people you have met through sister cities? Are these the kinds of people that you would gravitate to normally?

N/A

- 7) What impact have you seen within your broader community as a result of sister cities? Has it brought people together in any way? If so, how?

Yes, yeah... I think it, I think when people get involved or get touched by it, it broadens their experience, it broadens their opinion about people of other races... People from other countries. I think they're a little more adventuresome in the food that they're willing to eat. Roanoke is kind of a white-bred kind of town. And I think having that experience of being exposed to other cultures, you know it just broadens people's perspective.

Community/Pride

- 1) Has your involvement with sister cities shaped your view of your own city in any way? If so, how?

Yeah... I think I'm proud of Roanoke because it is kind of, or at least in the past it's a little white-bred kind of place... I'm proud of the city for reaching out the way that they've done. I think that the broadness of the sister cities that they have is very interesting. I mean they almost have one on every continent, well not Australia. But, you know, they've got Asia, they've got Africa, they've got South America, they've got Europe, I mean it's just, yeah, it makes me proud of them, and proud that they're invested in that.

- 2) How does being involved in sister cities make you feel about your own city/culture in relation to others?

I don't know... You know, I'm, I guess it's just that they're different. The food is different, the art is different, the architecture is different, but not, you know not so different that there isn't also commonality. I think, particularly like going to Poland, it was very interesting to me to see that the communist left over influence; the buildings that had been built during that era were just so, I mean the original buildings in Opole are very colorful, very pretty. But the stuff from the Soviet era was just like this ugly grey block buildings, that you're just like really? That's the best that you could do? It was just interesting to have it brought to life like that. And then I got to go to Krakow, which is a beautiful city, and very old. That's the other thing when you go to some of these sister cities. And here in the United States we're like, oh this house is 200 years old. And they're like well that's nothing. It's a different way of looking at things. It reminds you how very young the United States is compared to places in Europe.

- 3) Does having a sister city make you feel like you are more globally involved? If so, how and why?

Yeah, absolutely! You know, this was funny, I'm trying to remember who told me this story. And it wasn't necessarily a sister city; it was a city in Japan, and we had, Roanoke County had a relationship, an exchange relationship with Japan also, god I cannot remember why. But we had people that came from Japan and they were people from local government. And somebody from here in Roanoke came back from the visit to Japan and told the story about going over there and visiting this city, where we had had an exchange program. But this person, this guy, didn't know that. So he introduced himself. And they said where are you from and he's like oh I'm from Roanoke, Virginia. And they said do you know Elmer Hodge, that was the county administrator. And he's like woah! Here I am in the middle of Japan and as it turns out that that person had been to Virginia. So yeah it does. It makes you feel like the world is somehow connected, which of course we are.

- 4) Does your involvement with sister cities make you want to travel more?

Yes.

- 5) Has sister cities given you a broader global view? Elaborate.

Yes.

- 6) Have you been on the receiving end of people from other sister cities reaching out to you? If so, what was that experience like? How did it feel?

You mean of sister cities reaching out? So you mean like maybe when they came to visit? Is that what you're talking about, or? Okay! Well when we had the delegations here from Opole, we usually had like, we didn't have that many people. Not like the sister cities program where you'd have more people going. We would have maybe three or four people, including the translator would come here. But we had the mayor, couple different times, there were two different mayors. We had that relationship. So it was great to see our country through their eyes. And, you know, we took them places... we took them to Williamsburg; we usually picked them up in D.C., at Dulles, so we maybe would have some time up there. We'd take them up the Blue Ridge Parkway. And it was really cool to see, as I said, to see it through their eyes. And you know, it was also interesting because, you know, here in the United States we have so much of everything. And they could not get over the grocery stores. You know... one, the guy, the translator was fascinated by the honey that comes in the little jar that looks like a bear. He thought that was so cool. He bought some to take home to Poland. I think of him every time I buy honey in that container; his name was Zabignuf and I just think of him every single time. And we were like really? It's not that big a deal! But, you know the variety of stuff that we're so used to here, and take for granted and particularly for people from Poland who were just a few years out of communism where there wasn't a whole bunch of choice about anything. In some ways it was overwhelming to them, but you know it makes you appreciate what you got when you see it through somebody else's eyes for once.

Looking forward

- 1) What broad impacts have you seen within your life as a result of sister cities? Has it shaped your career/relationships/etc.?

Okay... well I think it affected my career in that it gave me the opportunity to go visit our sister city. And I think that gave me... I think it broadened my outlook and I think it helped me maybe in some of my professional relationships, you know it was an interesting thing to talk about, people were interested in hearing about my experience. Personally it definitely did... being able to go to Poland to see the country, to, we went to Warsaw, Krakow, Cjestehova, and just to, and to see how people live there, man just, it so broadens your outlook on life in general. So yeah it's affected me in a lot of ways. I still think about that trip to Poland a lot. I would love to have, as I've just said, the opportunity to visit the rest of the sister cities.

- 2) What have been your favorite experiences with sister cities? Any particular event or memory that you can elaborate on?

Yeah, I do... As I said, I've been to several of the annual meetings or the Christmas Parties, and they've always had some kind of a program that has touched me, it's usually a presentation on a visit to one of our cities or somebody from one of those cities. Yeah, I have really good memories. I remember one in particular up at Roanoke College in the student center and it just, I think that's where Joe Cobb had talked about his trip to the sister city. And, so yeah, I, it just, you know, meeting all the people in the Roanoke valley that are connected to the sister city committee is memorable for me. But yeah the actual trip to Opole was... it was great. A long time ago.

3) Do you wish to continue engaging with sister cities? If so, why?

Yes, I do. I wanna become more engaged in it. I've kind of, I didn't, I missed the last meeting, and I don't know why. I kept getting the, Mary Jo is good at sending out the emails, so I don't know what my problem was. But I feel like if you're on something like that, you need to participate. You know? It's one or the other, don't just say I'm on the committee and not do anything. I would love to go back to doing the actual events and participating in those, you know, after we have a COVID vaccine, or whatever. So, yes, I do plan to continue and maybe to do more than I've done. Again, I'd love to go on one of the trips, which I hadn't been able to do up until now, but I would think, you know when I retire from this job, that'll be my second retirement, I'll probably, that's probably when I'll have the opportunity to do some things like that.

4) Do you have any plans or desires to increase your future engagement? If so, how do you plan to do this?

Yes.

Entrevue Participant C

Background Demographics

1) What is your name?

Redacted for participant's privacy and IRB approval

2) Where do you live?

Currently I live in Roanoke, Virginia. I know it's interesting, when people ask me where I'm from, you know, that's a hard one. My mother immigrated to Eden, Oklahoma, so I was born in Eden, Oklahoma. But then I've lived in Florida three times in my life, most recently the past fifteen years; I just moved here a year ago. And then I've lived in San Francisco, Boston, and Kansas City here in the United

States. And then of course I lived abroad for a while as well. I grew up in an immigrant single-parent home, so I was always around people who spoke different languages. So always when people ask me, you know, when did I get interested in international education as a profession I was like when I was born. Because I knew I was always going to be travelling abroad, living abroad, and doing stuff with people from other countries.

3) What is/was your occupation?

Right, I'm an international educator. And I've been in this field since, officially, about 1996 or 1997. My first position, professional position, was a study abroad advisor. But I had done research and travel abroad before that. I am an administrator, so I do not teach even though I do my position is faculty and I'm in academic affairs. I have taught before, religious studies and history is my field. I have a doctorate of education and a masters of history. A PhD ABD religious studies in history, so I've taught in two different universities, religious studies and history and liberal arts. Currently I am an administrator. So I'm not teaching, although I'm putting together a class for us to begin teaching next year called Global Learning 101 and 102. So I'll be teaching those next year. And I've never taught languages but I've studied Latin, German, Hebrew, and Spanish. And I do have enough of German at the graduate level if anyone wanted to push me to teach German. But I would never do that, because teaching languages is not an easy task. It's hard. But I love to keep up with them.

4) When you hear the term "sister cities," what comes to your mind?

You know, diplomacy, bettering international relationships, intercultural exchange, and basically living out what Mark Twain said so long ago, that travel is fatal to prejudice, bigotry, and narrow-mindedness. And that's why I'm in the field that I am. And I think sister cities does that on the city to city basis, but then the people to people basis within those sister cities I think is just really allowing people from around the world to see how much we are all more similar than dissimilar.

5) Are you currently a member of your sister cities program?

Right, I'm on the board for the Roanoke Valley Sister Cities, and then I'm the co-chair for the Wonju, South Korea sister city.

6) What sister cities have you been involved in?

I was living in the Tampa Bay area before I moved here and in my capacity I was also an international educator administrator at an institution of higher education. And I was involved in two sister cities: one with St. Petersburg, Florida and I

can't remember it was a Japanese city... Takamatsu, Japan. And the other one was in Turpin Springs, Florida and that was Kalumnos, Greece. So I was involved in relationships with my institution and developed a study abroad program to Kalumnos in Greece.

- 7) When did you begin your involvement with sister cities? How long have you been involved?

Right, it would have been in those two and I know I had a few inklings of it before but I'm going to count those. I had some in Kansas City but I can't even remember. And that was in 2000, let's see when did I start? I started in 2012 at the institution or so, that's when I started the relationship with the sister cities there.

- 8) How did you initially become aware of the sister cities for your town?

I think I might have, I can't remember the first time I heard about it. But it was long ago in the 90s; long before I got involved at the, you know, granular level. I think it might have been in Kansas City, Missouri, and that was in the 90s, just because I was involved with some things at the local government level, and I just immediately thought it was a great program, perfectly in line with what my values were. It's one of those, you know, my mother, coming from Germany, my family, and my husband's family, and some of my extended family are caught up in the Holocaust. So I really believed and I'm a Fulbright alum, and of course William Fulbright started the Fulbright program after WWII because of the atrocities of the Holocaust saying we have to get to know people so this won't happen again, although of course there's been genocide since. So it's just, you know that one-on-one, if you know, I mean research fares out, if you know someone, and have a personal relationship with someone, you're less likely to exterminate them. And to think that they're not valuable. And so that's the values I hold.

- 9) What made you interested in taking part in sister cities at first?

N/A

- 10) Have you continued to take part in sister cities? If so, why have you chosen to do so?

N/A

- 11) What languages do you speak?

German

- 12) If you speak the language of another sister city(s), how has this impacted your experience? Has it been positive or negative? Why?

You know, my German has helped me in a variety of ways. I was an ETA in Vienna but then I got a Fulbright research grant for a year to do graduate research, so of course I had to have German at that point. And before I went on my Fulbright years I spent three different summers consecutively in southern Austria at a language school for six weeks each summer. So I not only had it from my family and my, you know, growing up, but I wanted it at the academic level as well. And it helped me with those things and it helped me, you know, move forward in that way. Sister cities, I've not ever, and I would love to, love to be involved with sister cities with Germany, but it's just happened that there's not been a place where I've been where that's occurred. As you know Roanoke Valley Sister Cities has seven and none of which are in Germany, just the one in France is in Europe, so...

- 13) If you do not speak the language of another sister city(s), then how has this impacted your experience and interactions with people from there?

Korea for about a five year period I had this wonderful position as a director of international education where I would travel abroad about once a month. And we went to Asia a lot, and you know, Japan, Taiwan, China, Vietnam, South Korea, and I really fell in love with Korea. And so actually I got to, I started this job September 2019 and I saw the advertisement for the Wonju alphabet days celebration at the Taubman museum, so I went to that because I just, you know, it was a month I'd been here and I was like oh Korea. And that's where I met Mary-Jo. And I started talking with her about things and she'd tap me to be on the board. My interest in being part of the Korea co-chair was part of my love for South Korean travel there, and it also dovetailed with some needs that the chair Brian, he wanted somebody to be a co-chair with him, so... You know, I wish I could learn more Korean. Like Japanese I started learning, and a little Chinese... But Korean for some reason. And I'm pretty good at learning languages, but I haven't been able to as much. We just had our, on Saturday night, Mary-Jo, Brian, and I had a zoom meeting with the sister cities person and it's all in English. South Koreans speak English, on the whole. And so unfortunately, you know, that's it. I do know our sister cities pays for a Korean language instructor, and because of COVID, it's been stopped, but once it's been revived, I'm hoping to partake in that learning of the language. So I can speak a little bit better Korean than I do now.

- 14) How much time do you invest in sister cities on a monthly basis?

That's a good question—monthly basis... I'm gonna say, right now, three hours? It's kinda... I know it's gonna get more. We're planning an event in March, and

then again in October, so I know it's gonna get more busy, but right now I would say average three hours.

About relationships

- 1) Has your experience with sister cities introduced you to new people? If so, how many people have you met?

Yes!

- 2) With how many people from your sister city do you maintain regular contact?

Let's say with Roanoke, I've probably got twelve new, you know, what I would consider colleagues in the area. And then not to mention those, you know, that are in Korea and in the other areas. So, yeah. I would say twelve is a good number. Regular contact is with about three or four, well I'm on the board, so you know the board members are all on those email scrolls. But I think on a regular basis like Mary-Jo, the president, and then Brian my co-chair for Wonju... And then Kevin's not on the board, but I'd say three or four.

- 3) How do you keep in touch with these people? What methods do you use? E-mail, social media, letter writing, etc.?

Right now email and zoom. There's not a lot of phoning right now. Before it would be, you know, a phone call here and there. Text messaging every now and then, but primarily email and zoom.

- 4) How long have you maintained this contact?

Since joining RVSCI.

- 5) Describe the nature of these sister cities based relationships.

Right now they're professional, you know, but I know a little bit about their background, like when Mary-Jo had a new grand-daughter, her twins, you know. And Brian's daughter was on our zoom meeting with Korea, so you know, and then he's an artist, so I think it's more collegial, you know I haven't had a party at my house because of COVID, but would I invite them over? Yeah! So it's more collegial, but you know it's like anything, you have conversations about what's going on in your private life too.

- 6) What is the background of the people you have met through sister cities? Are these the kinds of people that you would gravitate to normally?

I mean I know that primarily the sister cities Roanoke sister cities board, seem to be all white well-educated, college-educated. I know there's a Chinese and I think

an African-American on the board, but I don't have as much contact with them because they're not involved in Wonju. And yeah, well-educated people I gravitate to. And, you know, because of my field and my work, I have a lot of diversity in terms of ethnic background that I'm typically around. And as I mentioned it just so happened that, I mean, Brian is from Ireland, that's true, he's Irish, but, he's been in America for a long time. But primarily, you know, what you would call white Anglo-Saxon, caucasian is what I've been around so far.

- 7) What impact have you seen within your broader community as a result of sister cities? Has it brought people together in any way? If so, how?

Well I think that first Taubman event that I went to with Mary Jo, I was just very impressed; it had young people there, and lots of energy, lots of performances, and as I've been on the board, her reports of different things, the impact is real in terms of people just being introduced, you know, to different kinds of cultural events. Our Kisumu partner, too, I went to a photography exhibit that they had put up in the mayor's in the city hall and that drew some people. So I think the impact is there and I think it's constant' there's a sister cities, you probably know this, in city hall, there's a sister cities set up, so people walk by there every day and see it. I know that we have, for our sister cities, here, we have a relationship with the Carilion medical center. And there are medical interns, you know that go to Saint Lo, and there are Koreans who have come here so I know the impact of our medical internship that we have in sister cities is very high too, especially now. And I'm hoping that this first zoom meeting and I've reached out and then the person in Korea helped me to reach out to the major university in Wonju. And I'm hoping that we get a university collaboration going on with that. So I see the impact has been good. What's good is that I think it's a staff member of the mayor's office is on our board. And so that's really great, because then you have the ear of the mayor. That's a really good question... I know Bill who reaches out to them for membership and writes them would be a better gauge. But I do know that there's mechanisms in place whenever we have an event that whoever signed, you know, signed up and said I'm here will get an interview to say hey thank you for coming and this. So I know that there's a good process in place to reach out to them. And it seems like there's, I mean, I know for some sister cities where I've been before, like in Florida, where it didn't seem it was as active in terms of the breadth of people. There were always just a few people doing everything. And it seems like this one here in the Roanoke valley, with seven different cities, with seven different chairs, there's a broader base of people doing things and community members who are interested.

Community/Pride

- 1) Has your involvement with sister cities shaped your view of your own city in any way? If so, how?

Yeah, you know the one thing my husband and I, when they offered me the job, and we flew here to find housing. Because we've lived in major cities, like my husband lived, you know, born in New York, grew up in Miami, lived in LA. You know, I've lived in San Francisco, Boston, you know, Indiana, you know I've lived in large cities. And it was funny when we got to Roanoke, which was completely new to both of us, one of his comments was this is the smallest big city I've ever seen. It's a very small city...

- 2) How does being involved in sister cities make you feel about your own city/culture in relation to others?

It makes me feel very proud to be a part of it; it's a small city with lots of cultural engagements and I'm very impressed with that.

- 3) Does having a sister city make you feel like you are more globally involved? If so, how and why?

Yes, definitely, it's again that people to people, I mean just that simple zoom meeting that we had Saturday. You know, emails are one thing, reading about things is another. But actually planning a collaborative event is a commitment to a relationship. It's more concrete. Instead of wishing for a more peaceful world, it's just one step I can take. Maybe that can bring a little peace!

- 4) Does your involvement with sister cities make you want to travel more?

Oh, always, yes, yes, yes. Absolutely. I think of all the sister cities, I've been to most of the countries that we have sister cities with, Russia, Poland, I've not been to Kenya, I've not been to Africa. But most of the other sister cities, or other countries I've been to. So, it makes me want to travel to those cities I've never been to within those countries, but also countries that I've never been to such as Kenya.

- 5) Has sister cities given you a broader global view? Elaborate.

Yes.

- 6) Have you been on the receiving end of people from other sister cities reaching out to you? If so, what was that experience like? How did it feel?

Let me think about that... did anybody? You know, I was just part of a regional roundtable event that was great, in this region, a lot of other people from sister cities. And they weren't reaching out to me directly, but just to be invited to that

was a reach out. And it was a really great, I think it was a full day of different, you know, conversations, so and actually I've got one of the women who was in that regional roundtable reaching out directly. Because she was doing something that I want to try to mimic here. There were so many great things happening, and they sent everybody the email lists of all the others that were there. So it's nice, yeah.

Looking forward

- 1) What broad impacts have you seen within your life as a result of sister cities? Has it shaped your career/relationships/etc.?

I think it's definitely assisted in my career as a part of my, you know, resume building, definitely. I know in the last institution, it assisted us in creating a new study abroad program that included Kalumnos, Greece. Here, I'm hoping to do the same to kind of get actual partners, university to university partners in our sister cities. So, yeah I would say it's beefing up the resume.

- 2) What have been your favorite experiences with sister cities? Any particular event or memory that you can elaborate on?

I'll say one of the first that was really cool was in St. Petersburg, Florida, with Takamatsu. And they had a handful of, I want to say 7-10 students that came over. And we spent a day with them doing different programming things. And that was just delightful, just wonderful fun to you know see that interaction. And then we had U.S. students as well, so it was that, you know, middle age/high school age of students thinking well this is really great because sister cities is about forming those relationships early on with middle aged school students. So that was, that's kind of a good memory because it's also the one that I was initially active in.

- 3) Do you wish to continue engaging with sister cities? If so, why?

Yes! Absolutely!

- 4) Do you have any plans or desires to increase your future engagement? If so, how do you plan to do this?

Yeah, I, as mentioned I really would like to increase it so that we have more institution to institution, meaning universities engaged and with universities in our sister cities. I think it would be a great, great thing. So because that's you know I'm wearing my university administrator's hat. So I would love to do that. Once COVID is over, I mean we're planning a lot of virtual events right now... but once COVID is over, I'm hoping that we can revive that person to person

exchange annually. Not just with Wonju, but with all of our sister cities. And I would love to be a part of a contingent that goes there, as well.

Entrevue Participant D

Background Demographics

1) What is your name?

Redacted for participant's privacy and IRB approval

2) Where do you live?

Roanoke (city)

3) What is/was your occupation?

Retired newspaper journalist

4) When you hear the term “sister cities,” what comes to your mind?

Our own thriving Roanoke Valley Sister Cities, which has connected me – in varying degrees – to cities and people in 7 other countries. The sister cities term “citizen diplomacy” is especially meaningful to me because it describes exactly what we and our Norman counterparts do regularly with our visits and internships. We share our cultures and bridge divides – linguistic and otherwise – as ordinary citizens.

5) Are you currently a member of your sister cities program?

Yes. St-Lo.

6) What sister cities have you been involved in?

I've been a longtime member of St-Lo, and for a short while, Pskov. Over the years, I've attended lots of events from all of RVSC's groups.

7) When did you begin your involvement with sister cities? How long have you been involved?

I am a founding member of Roanoke/St-Lo, which began forming in 1994.

8) How did you initially become aware of the sister cities for your town?

Roanoke D-Day veteran (and founder of the D-Day Memorial in Bedford) Bob Slaughter worked at The Roanoke Times, as did I. When he returned from the 50th anniversary commemoration in Normandy, he asked me to be a part of the group

that would go on to found Roanoke/St-Lo. He knew I had a background in French.

9) What made you interested in taking part in sister cities at first?

I would never have said no to Bob Slaughter!

10) Have you continued to take part in sister cities? If so, why have you chosen to do so?

I have been a member of both the Roanoke/St-Lo executive committee and Roanoke/St-Lo sister cities continuously since 1994. I've made precious friendships and am very proud of our decades of exchanges.

11) What languages do you speak?

English (well). French (moderately). Spanish (poorly).

12) If you speak the language of another sister city(s), how has this impacted your experience? Has it been positive or negative? Why?

Although I was in over my head, I was able to be an intern at the Norman daily newspaper Ouest-France in 2000. It wasn't a professional development step, but it was a tremendous personal challenge, enhanced by the amazing opportunity of being with Norman friends and meeting new ones, exploring the wonderful region both as a (quasi) professional and as a citizen diplomat.

13) If you do not speak the language of another sister city(s), then how has this impacted your experience and interactions with people from there?

N/A

14) How much time do you invest in sister cities on a monthly basis?

It varies. I edit the RVSC semi-annual newsletter, Around Our World. Each newsletter probably takes 10-12 hours. We used to hold regular meetings of our executive committee, especially when we were expecting a visit or planning for an internship, Local Colors or our annual picnic or Christmas gathering. So, it's hard to guesstimate. In usual circumstances, several hours per month.

About relationships

1) Has your experience with sister cities introduced you to new people? If so, how many people have you met?

I've been involved with Roanoke/St-Lo for over 25 years, so I've lost count.
Dozens?

- 2) With how many people from your sister city do you maintain regular contact?
6.
- 3) How do you keep in touch with these people? What methods do you use? E-mail, social media, letter writing, etc.?
Email and Facebook. Some Christmas cards.
- 4) How long have you maintained this contact?
The longest-standing friendships were made in 1999.
- 5) Describe the nature of these sister cities based relationships.
Jeanine Verove is our counterpart in Normandy, the head of the Roanoke-44 committee in St-Lo. We are in regular contact with her about exchanges and internships, and she is a dear friend to many of us. The others are strictly personal friendships.
- 6) What is the background of the people you have met through sister cities? Are these the kinds of people that you would gravitate to normally?
Their professional backgrounds vary, though now most -- like me -- are retired. But because they are curious about other parts of the world and have enjoyed or still enjoy most aspects of travel -- like me -- yes, I would have gravitated to them normally.
- 7) What impact have you seen within your broader community as a result of sister cities? Has it brought people together in any way? If so, how?
I've worked with most of the people on our executive committee for at least 20 years and think of them all as good friends with a common mission. I've gotten to know people in the city's government and the Taubman Museum of Art because they have provided internships for our Norman students.

Community/Pride

- 1) Has your involvement with sister cities shaped your view of your own city in any way? If so, how?
It's always interesting to hear our French friends' views of our city. I wish I could think of an example at this moment, but I know I've had to re-think my assumptions of our city or country because of their questions. Maybe an example is when they've asked about the outlandish cost of a college education or medical care in the US. Many of our young French interns invariably tell us that they are warned ahead of time about how racist we are. Maybe it's because we're in the

South. Invariably, they leave here saying they were pleasantly surprised at the lack of racism, at least in Roanoke or in their host families or work places. I've also had conversations with at least a couple of interns who were skeptical but still curious about how religious Americans are. As a humanist/doubter of sorts, I've enjoyed those discussions.

- 2) How does being involved in sister cities make you feel about your own city/culture in relation to others?

We have a lot to be proud of in Roanoke, but travel is broadening. Each visit abroad – no matter where – is proof that we can always improve.

- 3) Does having a sister city make you feel like you are more globally involved? If so, how and why?

Certainly! It's hard to imagine how you could understand the 21st-century world without having traveled and connected with people from another country. I keep up with events in France on a regular, if not truly deep, basis. But having personal, friendly connections in France has often given me a personal connection beneath the headlines. In June 2019, when my husband and I were walking our way to city hall in St-Lo with our Norman host Richard, we ran into a *gilets jaunes* demonstration near our destination. Of course we had read all kinds of scary reports about this populist group causing havoc and destruction in Paris and the larger French cities. Our friend Richard dismissed this local group as a bunch of mildly irritating noisemakers. A useful lesson in local politics.

- 4) Does your involvement with sister cities make you want to travel more?

Always! I'm extra eager for the pandemic to end so that we can travel again.

- 5) Has sister cities given you a broader global view?

Elaborate.

- 6) Have you been on the receiving end of people from other sister cities reaching out to you? If so, what was that experience like? How did it feel?

Do you mean sister cities other than St-Lo? If so, no.

Looking forward

- 1) What broad impacts have you seen within your life as a result of sister cities? Has it shaped your career/relationships/etc.?

N/A

- 2) What have been your favorite experiences with sister cities? Any particular event or memory that you can elaborate on?

I've been to St-Lo four times. Each of these visits has been special, and each is my favorite experience with RVSC! The first was as a member of the Roanoke delegation to formalize our sister city relationship in 1999. We had a huge celebration that introduced me to the famously welcoming and generous St-Lois. My second visit, in 2000, was when I was an underprepared and nervous intern at the newspaper Ouest-France. My boss and co-workers couldn't have been more patient with me. On my third visit, around 2002, I introduced my Norman friends to my new husband, Bill. My fourth visit, in 2019, was to celebrate the 20th anniversary of our sister city relationship. Each visit is indelibly printed in my memory.

- 3) Do you wish to continue engaging with sister cities? If so, why?

Yes. It's been a part of my life for 25+ years, and I still enjoy it.

- 4) Do you have any plans or desires to increase your future engagement? If so, how do you plan to do this?

When we are not in pandemic mode, Roanoke/St-Lo has a full plate of activities, so I intend to continue to help manage those.

Entrevue Participant E

Background Demographics

- 1) What is your name?

Redacted for participant's privacy and IRB approval

- 2) Where do you live?

City of Roanoke

- 3) What is/was your occupation?

Retired social worker (MSW)

Currently member of Roanoke City Council

- 4) When you hear the term "sister cities," what comes to your mind?

International friendships and cultural exchanges

- 5) Are you currently a member of your sister cities program?

Yes

6) What sister cities have you been involved in?

As treasurer of RVSCI, I am involved with all the committees. The only one I have been able to visit thus far is St.-Lô. I have met with delegations from Wonju and Lijiang when they have visited Roanoke and arranged for city council to welcome them during one of our meetings.

7) When did you begin your involvement with sister cities? How long have you been involved?

While I had attended several events for many years, I became much more involved four years ago when the former executive director asked me to join the board. I became treasurer in October 2019.

8) How did you initially become aware of the sister cities for your town?

Through advertised fundraising events and Local Colors.

9) What made you interested in taking part in sister cities at first?

My prior experience living in and visiting other countries had given me an appreciation for learning about the people and cultures of other nations.

10) Have you continued to take part in sister cities? If so, why have you chosen to do so?

I am continuing to take part because I have found it to be enjoyable, informative, and conducive to forming relationships with people in some of our Sister Cities.

11) What languages do you speak?

English and some German

12) If you speak the language of another sister city(s), how has this impacted your experience? Has it been positive or negative? Why?

I do not speak the language of any of our Sister Cities except Kisumu, where English is widely spoken. This has helped me to communicate with contacts there by email when the Kisumu Committee made a donation to their efforts to respond to the current pandemic.

13) If you do not speak the language of another sister city(s), then how has this impacted your experience and interactions with people from there?

It has been difficult at times to communicate with visitors from Wonju and Lijiang. We visited St.-Lô last year, and we were fortunate to be hosted by a

woman who spoke English fairly well, although her husband did not. I would have been more comfortable if I knew French.

14) How much time do you invest in sister cities on a monthly basis?

Average of 12-15 hours.

About relationships

1) Has your experience with sister cities introduced you to new people? If so, how many people have you met?

As stated earlier, I have met visitors to Roanoke from Wonju and Lijiang, but I have not stayed in touch with any of them. My wife and I have corresponded several times with the couple in St.-Lô who provided home hospitality for us.

2) With how many people from your sister city do you maintain regular contact?

Four – the couple already mentioned, the now-former mayor, and the head of their Roanoke-St. Lô committee.

3) How do you keep in touch with these people? What methods do you use? E-mail, social media, letter writing, etc.?

Email, letters and postcards, Facebook, and Facebook Messenger

4) How long have you maintained this contact?

16 months

5) Describe the nature of these sister cities based relationships.

We hosted the Mayor of St.-Lô in our home when their delegation visited Roanoke in 2018. During our group's visit to St.-Lô in 2019, the head of their committee did an outstanding job of organizing excursions to other cities and points of interest for us. She sends me news items and other information that she knows would interest me. Our friendship with the couple who hosted us in St.-Lô has become much closer.

6) What is the background of the people you have met through sister cities? Are these the kinds of people that you would gravitate to normally?

Most of the people from Wonju and Lijiang that I have met have been teachers, students, and local government officials, which are the kinds of people I have frequent contact with here. The range of backgrounds and professions of the people from St.-Lô has been broader, but still the sort of middle-class people with whom I have frequent contact.

- 7) What impact have you seen within your broader community as a result of sister cities?

Has it brought people together in any way? If so, how?

It has brought together people in the Roanoke Valley who have particular interests in one or more of our Sister Cities. It has helped us to develop an image as a welcoming community that values diversity and inclusion.

Community/Pride

- 1) Has your involvement with sister cities shaped your view of your own city in any way? If so, how?

Only to the extent that I have developed connections with other RVSCI members, which has reinforced my view of our hospitality and appreciation of other countries and cultures.

- 2) How does being involved in sister cities make you feel about your own city/culture in relation to others?

Sister Cities allows us to have contacts and develop relationships that people who live in areas without Sister City connections are not fortunate enough to enjoy, which makes me glad to be a resident of the Roanoke Valley.

- 3) Does having a sister city make you feel like you are more globally involved? If so, how and why?

Yes, for all the reasons I have given above.

- 4) Does your involvement with sister cities make you want to travel more?

My wife and I love to travel and have been able to visit several countries. I would say that it does not make me want to travel more but encourage me to visit places that I might not have considered otherwise.

- 5) Has sister cities given you a broader global view? Elaborate.

Somewhat, although I had a broader global view than others who have not had the opportunities to live in or visit other countries. I was stationed at the US Army installation in Worms, Germany, from March 1976 – November 1980, and I was able to visit France, Switzerland, and Italy during that time, as well as to visit many places in Germany and learn enough of the language to travel without a translator. Those experiences helped me to develop my view of other countries and cultures long before I became involved with RVSCI.

- 6) Have you been on the receiving end of people from other sister cities reaching out to you? If so, what was that experience like? How did it feel?

As described above, which always make me happy about my good fortune.

Looking forward

- 1) What broad impacts have you seen within your life as a result of sister cities? Has it shaped your career/relationships/etc.?

It may be a cliché, but I like the admonition to, “Think globally, act locally.” I derive a sense of satisfaction that my participation in Sister Cities is one way that I can take action and not just wish for better international relations.

- 2) What have been your favorite experiences with sister cities? Any particular event or memory that you can elaborate on?

Far and away, the connection with St.-Lô established through their visit to us in 2018 and our reciprocating visit to them in 2019. I hope that some of the people I met will return to Roanoke someday and bring new people with them, and I am sure I will go back there when I can.

- 3) Do you wish to continue engaging with sister cities? If so, why?

Yes, for all the reasons stated above.

- 4) Do you have any plans or desires to increase your future engagement? If so, how do you plan to do this?

I hope to be able to visit more of our Sister Cities in the future.

Entrevue Participant F

Background Demographics

- 1) What is your name?

Redacted for participant’s privacy and IRB approval

- 2) Where do you live?

Roanoke County, VA

- 3) What is/was your occupation?

Retired RN

- 4) When you hear the term “sister cities,” what comes to your mind?

A relationship with a city, in or out of the US.

- 5) Are you currently a member of your sister cities program?

Yes

- 6) What sister cities have you been involved in?

Primarily Wonju but because on the Board, all of them.

- 7) When did you begin your involvement with sister cities? How long have you been involved?

Since 1980s.

- 8) How did you initially become aware of the sister cities for your town?

I worked with Dr Robert Roth who was one of the founders.

- 9) What made you interested in taking part in sister cities at first?

I love to travel and Dr Roth invited me to join a group going to Wonju and I did go.

- 10) Have you continued to take part in sister cities? If so, why have you chosen to do so?

I have continued to take part, first on Board and then as Secretary when Mrs. Roth gave up the position.

- 11) What languages do you speak?

English

- 12) If you speak the language of another sister city(s), how has this impacted your experience? Has it been positive or negative? Why?

N/A

- 13) If you do not speak the language of another sister city(s), then how has this impacted your experience and interactions with people from there?

It makes communicating difficult when visiting the Sister City or having visiting members.

- 14) How much time do you invest in sister cities on a monthly basis?

5 -10 hours.

About relationships

- 1) Has your experience with sister cities introduced you to new people? If so, how many people have you met?
Hundreds.
- 2) With how many people from your sister city do you maintain regular contact?
12
- 3) How do you keep in touch with these people? What methods do you use? E-mail, social media, letter writing, etc.?
Email
- 4) How long have you maintained this contact?
Since I became Secretary.
- 5) Describe the nature of these sister cities based relationships.
Close with one or two.
- 6) What is the background of the people you have met through sister cities? Are these the kinds of people that you would gravitate to normally?
City Council members, teachers, business people, artists, medical students, doctors. Probably not City Council members since I don't live in city, medical students.
- 7) What impact have you seen within your broader community as a result of sister cities? Has it brought people together in any way? If so, how?
N/A

Community/Pride

- 1) Has your involvement with sister cities shaped your view of your own city in any way? If so, how?
N/A
- 2) How does being involved in sister cities make you feel about your own city/culture in relation to others?
The involvement has made me more aware of the importance of diversity in our city.

- 3) Does having a sister city make you feel like you are more globally involved? If so, how and why?
Yes, because my “world” has enlarged with friends from other countries.
- 4) Does your involvement with sister cities make you want to travel more?
Yes.
- 5) Has sister cities given you a broader global view? Elaborate.
More aware of needs, i.e. Kenya where there is still much poverty.
- 6) Have you been on the receiving end of people from other sister cities reaching out to you? If so, what was that experience like? How did it feel?
One of the teachers from Wonju has communicated re: possible more exchanges for his students.

Looking forward

- 1) What broad impacts have you seen within your life as a result of sister cities? Has it shaped your career/relationships/etc.?
I think with knowing more about other countries I have been able to share with other friends and relatives. I am retired so it doesn't affect by career.
 - 2) What have been your favorite experiences with sister cities? Any particular event or memory that you can elaborate on?
On first trip to Korea, we went to the DMZ. I still remember standing on the line and in the building where negotiations were and maybe still are held. One of Dr Roths' friends then took us on a 2 day trip to Pusan and stopped along the way to tour special sites. Most impressive was a Buddhist temple that we visited and were there at night when they rang the “gong”?
 - 3) Do you wish to continue engaging with sister cities? If so, why?
Yes. I am Corresponding Secretary at this time until someone will assume position.
 - 4) Do you have any plans or desires to increase your future engagement? If so, how do you plan to do this?
No.
-

Entrevue Participant G

Background Demographics

1) What is your name?

Redacted for participant's privacy and IRB approval

2) Where do you live?

Roanoke, Virginia

3) What is/was your occupation?

Retired RN

4) When you hear the term "sister cities," what comes to your mind?

Relationships between international cities with varying categories of liaisons, but all involving exchanges of cultures and ideas

5) Are you currently a member of your sister cities program?

Yes

6) What sister cities have you been involved in?

Pskov, Lyiaing, St Lo

7) When did you begin your involvement with sister cities? How long have you been involved?

~1995-Pskov. ~1999-Lyiaing ~1995 St Lo

8) How did you initially become aware of the sister cities for your town?

A group came from Pskov to visit Roanoke Memorial, initiated a medical exchanges. My husband visited Pskov. We subsequently hosted doctors from Pskov.

9) What made you interested in taking part in sister cities at first?

Having the Russian physician stay in our home, getting to know him.

10) Have you continued to take part in sister cities? If so, why have you chosen to do so?

Absolutely. I enjoy the exchanges, have made many friends, and believe in the importance of people in different cultures getting to know each other.

11) What languages do you speak?

French, not fluently

12) If you speak the language of another sister city(s), how has this impacted your experience? Has it been positive or negative? Why?

Very positive. The first couple from St Lo I've hosted spoke no English. It has enabled me to converse with and get to know people much better.

13) If you do not speak the language of another sister city(s), then how has this impacted your experience and interactions with people from there?

I spoke only a few words of Russian, yet have found that with willingness and a bit of effort, you can communicate amazingly well with those who speak another language. Dictionaries, pictures, maps....

14) How much time do you invest in sister cities on a monthly basis?

Varies widely depending on the time of year and if we are planning exchanges. Could be only an hour or many times that. Since I am secretary, treasurer, and co-chair of the St Lo group, there are some busy stretches.

About relationships

1) Has your experience with sister cities introduced you to new people? If so, how many people have you met?

Absolutely! Dozens of people.

2) With how many people from your sister city do you maintain regular contact?

1 friend, email every few weeks

2 or 3 others occasionally

3) How do you keep in touch with these people? What methods do you use? E-mail, social media, letter writing, etc.?

Email, Christmas cards, written notes, occasional Skype

4) How long have you maintained this contact?

Since the 90s

5) Describe the nature of these sister cities based relationships.

I have some good friends

6) What is the background of the people you have met through sister cities? Are these the kinds of people that you would gravitate to normally?

Primarily people who are open to getting to know those of different cultures and eager to do so. Many Francophiles. Often folks who share common interests, some more than others.

- 7) What impact have you seen within your broader community as a result of sister cities?

Has it brought people together in any way? If so, how?

Not as much impact as I would have hoped. Except for those who have chosen to become involved, there's not a lot of interest. In spite of publicity, many people don't know about the programs.

Community/Pride

- 1) Has your involvement with sister cities shaped your view of your own city in any way? If so, how?

The city was initially more interested in relationships than it has been recently. The Carilion system, however, has become more interested.

- 2) How does being involved in sister cities make you feel about your own city/culture in relation to others?

There are many differences, some good, some bad; and differences are often due to wider influences, e.g. national.

- 3) Does having a sister city make you feel like you are more globally involved? If so, how and why?

Yes, but on personal levels. It also led us to be involved in Legacy International. We began by hosting a business-woman from Pskov, then hosted more from Russia, Ukraine, Georgia, Uzbekistan, and Egypt.

- 4) Does your involvement with sister cities make you want to travel more?

Love to travel anyway, but have now travelled to many parts of France, to Pskov, and China (not Lyiaing)

- 5) Has sister cities given you a broader global view? Elaborate.

Yes, I have learned much from people who come from other countries and cultures.

- 6) Have you been on the receiving end of people from other sister cities reaching out to you? If so, what was that experience like? How did it feel?

Absolutely. Correspondence with friends in St. Lo and Pskov. Always Good to stay in contact with others.

Looking forward

- 1) What broad impacts have you seen within your life as a result of sister cities? Has it shaped your career/relationships/etc.?
Has not shaped my career, but wouldn't have made so many friends in St. Lo and Pskov without sister cities.
- 2) What have been your favorite experiences with sister cities? Any particular event or memory that you can elaborate on?
Getting to know others, sharing so many experiences. Showing visitors around our city and Blue Ridge Mountains, D-Day Memorial. Visiting the D-Day beaches, Mont St Michel, many other places in Normandy and Russia.
- 3) Do you wish to continue engaging with sister cities? If so, why?
Of course. Want to continue the relationships on a personal level and to continue for other people and our future.
- 4) Do you have any plans or desires to increase your future engagement? If so, how do you plan to do this?
No plans to increase. Fairly involved already with St Lo (exchanges with Pskov became less possible. There never were active exchanges with Lijiang on a large scale).

Entrevue Participant H

Background Demographics

- 1) What is your name?
Redacted for participant's privacy and IRB approval
- 2) Where do you live?
Roanoke, VA
- 3) What is/was your occupation?
French teacher
- 4) When you hear the term "sister cities," what comes to your mind?
Cities that partner together as if they were sisters or families.
- 5) Are you currently a member of your sister cities program?
Yes

6) What sister cities have you been involved in?

All seven but especially Saint-Lô.

7) When did you begin your involvement with sister cities? How long have you been involved?

I have been a member since the beginning of the St-Lô/Roanoke sister city relationship was established, beginning in 1995 with the first visit by the St-Lô delegation.

8) How did you initially become aware of the sister cities for your town?

At the Local Colors festival.

9) What made you interested in taking part in sister cities at first?

To form a relationship with another French speaking city with which my students might communicate and visit.

10) Have you continued to take part in sister cities? If so, why have you chosen to do so?

Yes. It's a great opportunity to promote world understanding of different cultures.

11) What languages do you speak?

English and French.

12) If you speak the language of another sister city(s), how has this impacted your experience? Has it been positive or negative? Why?

It's been a positive experience to be able to communicate effectively with the people of St-Lô and to help translate for American visitors during our many exchanges.

13) If you do not speak the language of another sister city(s), then how has this impacted your experience and interactions with people from there?

Most visitors who come to Roanoke (China and South Korea, for example,) bring a translator if they do not speak English. Communication is therefore not a problem.

14) How much time do you invest in sister cities on a monthly basis?

Many hours. Before the pandemic, it was more because of the planning of activities. Maybe 20-30 hours a week or more.

About relationships

- 1) Has your experience with sister cities introduced you to new people? If so, how many people have you met?

Hundreds.

- 2) With how many people from your sister city do you maintain regular contact?

Thirty or more here and abroad.

- 3) How do you keep in touch with these people? What methods do you use? E-mail, social media, letter writing, etc.?

Mostly email or text.

- 4) How long have you maintained this contact?

Twenty years ++

- 5) Describe the nature of these sister cities based relationships.

Currently, many of my contacts are officers or board members of RVSCI or committee members as well as members abroad as we plan cultural activities and exchanges as well as personal updates.

- 6) What is the background of the people you have met through sister cities? Are these the kinds of people that you would gravitate to normally?

Many backgrounds: journalists, health care workers/physicians, retired teachers, retired social workers, artists, administrators, professors, ... Yes.

- 7) What impact have you seen within your broader community as a result of sister cities?

Has it brought people together in any way? If so, how?

Sister cities introduces community members to other cultures and experiences whether it be hosting travelers from our sister cities or traveling abroad. Lasting friendships have formed within the Roanoke Valley and with members of our cities abroad. In addition, cultural experiences here in Roanoke have provided citizens of the valley with a "taste" of other cultures. Artistic, educational and medical exchanges as well as internships have given many people unforgettable experiences. Yes, sister cities has brought people together whether personally or professionally by the above experiences.

Community/Pride

- 1) Has your involvement with sister cities shaped your view of your own city in any way? If so, how?

Yes. It has made me aware of the many cultures and immigrants living in the valley and has allowed me to meet a number of people in our valley who are of Chinese, Korean, Brazilian, Polish and French heritage or who are interested in these cultures as well as those who have connections or experiences with Kenya and Russia.

- 2) How does being involved in sister cities make you feel about your own city/culture in relation to others?

It makes me proud that the Roanoke Valley has such a diverse community of cultures.

- 3) Does having a sister city make you feel like you are more globally involved? If so, how and why?

Yes, of course! RVSC is an important organization which provides many opportunities to learn about other cultures whether locally or internationally.

- 4) Does your involvement with sister cities make you want to travel more?

Yes, but I have wanted to travel even before becoming a member. RVSC gives us an opportunity to meet residents of our cities which would not be possible otherwise.

- 5) Has sister cities given you a broader global view? Elaborate.

Definitely! It has allowed for municipal exchanges between mayors and city officials as we understand how each country governs. Medical exchanges have given an international experience to medical students, physicians and nurses as they compare the medical system in each country and learn new approaches. Personally, I have seen that people across the world have the same concerns and desire the same basic things in life as we do here in Roanoke.

- 6) Have you been on the receiving end of people from other sister cities reaching out to you? If so, what was that experience like? How did it feel?

Wonderful! It is great to communicate whether it be via email, phone or face to face.

Looking forward

- 1) What broad impacts have you seen within your life as a result of sister cities? Has it shaped your career/relationships/etc.?

I would say that it definitely had a positive impact on my students during the five trips abroad to St-Lô, by hosting visitors from our sister city and even by exchanging letters and emails during class time..

- 2) What have been your favorite experiences with sister cities? Any particular event or memory that you can elaborate on?

There are so many! Our very first group trip in 1999 to Saint-Lô when the city of St-Lô rolled out the red carpet to greet our delegation of over 40 people from Roanoke including the mayor. What an amazing experience! Our second trip to St-Lô when my students (dancers and musicians) and my daughter (who had choreographed the dance performances) performed during la Fête de la Musique in the Théâtre de St-Lô and some on the street as well.

- 3) Do you wish to continue engaging with sister cities? If so, why?

Of course! What a wonderful way to get to know so many people and their cultures from seven different countries on four continents!

- 4) Do you have any plans or desires to increase your future engagement? If so, how do you plan to do this?

I do hope to be able to visit more of our sister cities once travel becomes possible.

Entrevue Participant IBackground Demographics

- 1) What is your name?

Redacted for participant's privacy and IRB approval

- 2) Where do you live?

Roanoke, Virginia

- 3) What is/was your occupation?

Teacher of French (High School/Middle School) and Yoga Instructor

- 4) When you hear the term "sister cities," what comes to your mind?

Warm, global friendships.

5) Are you currently a member of your sister cities program?

Yes

6) What sister cities have you been involved in?

Roanoke/St. Lô

7) When did you begin your involvement with sister cities? How long have you been involved?

Since 2010

8) How did you initially become aware of the sister cities for your town?

Via Mary Jo Fassié

9) What made you interested in taking part in sister cities at first?

I believe in its mission.

10) Have you continued to take part in sister cities? If so, why have you chosen to do so?

Yes, although I will be moving in the coming year, I have been somewhat less involved.

11) What languages do you speak?

French, English

12) If you speak the language of another sister city(s), how has this impacted your experience? Has it been positive or negative? Why?

N/A

13) If you do not speak the language of another sister city(s), then how has this impacted your experience and interactions with people from there?

No negative impact. Respect and reverence for all.

14) How much time do you invest in sister cities on a monthly basis?

Personally, I correspond with my host family in Normandy, several times a week. Organizationally, I attend meetings and events when possible and have led three tours of students to Saint Lô.

About relationships

- 1) Has your experience with sister cities introduced you to new people? If so, how many people have you met?

Countless new acquaintances both in Roanoke and St. Lô.

- 2) With how many people from your sister city do you maintain regular contact?

8

- 3) How do you keep in touch with these people? What methods do you use? E-mail, social media, letter writing, etc.?

Email and social media.

- 4) How long have you maintained this contact?

8 years

- 5) Describe the nature of these sister cities based relationships.

I truly think of my host family as family. Several of the family members have come to visit me in the States apart from sister city functions. In addition, I enjoy keeping up with my counter parts at the L'institut St. Lô and on the Comité de St. Lô.

- 6) What is the background of the people you have met through sister cities? Are these the kinds of people that you would gravitate to normally?

Varied backgrounds with the common belief in the values and importance of international friendships.

- 7) What impact have you seen within your broader community as a result of sister cities?

Has it brought people together in any way? If so, how?

I recognize the importance of welcoming and hosting international visitors when the opportunity arises.

Community/Pride

- 1) Has your involvement with sister cities shaped your view of your own city in any way? If so, how?

As I am not a Roanoke native, Sister Cities has afforded me the opportunity learn so much about the city of Roanoke through the eyes of our sister city visitors.

- 2) How does being involved in sister cities make you feel about your own city/culture in relation to others?

It has made me very proud to be a part of the Roanoke community.

- 3) Does having a sister city make you feel like you are more globally involved? If so, how and why?

Most definitely!! Shared experiences with others from another country is enormously gratifying and critical for greater world understanding.

- 4) Does your involvement with sister cities make you want to travel more?

It certainly does!

- 5) Has sister cities given you a broader global view? Elaborate.

Indeed. One comes to recognize all that humans from around the globe have in common and that our differences are far fewer than one might have imagined.

- 6) Have you been on the receiving end of people from other sister cities reaching out to you? If so, what was that experience like? How did it feel?

Compassion from abroad both in times of personal and national distress has been both, comforting and gratifying.

Looking forward

- 1) What broad impacts have you seen within your life as a result of sister cities? Has it shaped your career/relationships/etc.?

I am now drawn to feeling a deep concern for those living far beyond the Roanoke Valley.

- 2) What have been your favorite experiences with sister cities? Any particular event or memory that you can elaborate on?

The 20th Anniversary celebrations of the twinning of Roanoke and St. Lô sister cities, both in Roanoke and in the city of St. Lô. Time spent with my host family and its extended family both in France and in the States.

- 3) Do you wish to continue engaging with sister cities? If so, why?

I do.....and after I move to South Carolina, I wish to take part in sister city activities there.

- 4) Do you have any plans or desires to increase your future engagement? If so, how do you plan to do this?

This will remain to be seen until after my move. However the bonds of friendship that I have made as a part of Roanoke/St. Lô sister cities will never be broken.

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