

Notes and Reflections

CITIES AND REGIONS: PARADIPLMACY IN PORTUGAL

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1. An Ongoing Research Project

The research unit, OBSERVARE, has formulated a working group for the research project designated **Cities and Regions: paradiplomacy in Portugal**. This project is linked to one of the three major lines of inquiry by the Scientific Council of OBSERVARE entitled **Peoples and States: Constructs and Interactions**, envisioning a contribution to understanding the role of international actors seen in its genesis, dynamic and evolutionary dimension, and manifold relationships.

From the outset, the concept of "paradiplomacy" refers to the study of the relationship of external social actors on international relations distinctive from the central powers of national states. The contemporary global setting facilitates the emergence of numerous agents of internationalization. The monopoly of central governments over foreign policy or "foreign affairs" has abated while the world observes a dispersion or dissemination of this activity by centers endowed with relative autonomy. It is a phenomenon with reasonably innovative contours, deserving attention in the scientific area of international relations, enabling improvement in the interpretation of the facts and a deepening comprehension of the mechanisms created by these new practices.

This study highlights the role of cities, specifically, noting the intensity of the urbanization process in modern societies. Likewise, cities are growing increasingly important as the "we" in the web of globalization. Today, they are the fundamental site of internationalization and a relevant agent of the new non-state "diplomacy", or more precisely, paradiplomacy. In the domains of transport and communications networks, or socio-cultural spheres on the economic terrain, and in action already properly termed "politics", the interactions between the large conurbations constitute a topology with impact on international life. Hence, the interest in ascertaining the respective strategies, the internationalized forms of action, as well as understanding those institutional environments where the referred interactions are structured.

Besides the cities, regions also play important roles today as agents of internationalization. It is true that the term "region" embodies different meanings, and these are used to designate portions or fractions of traditional national territory. It can signify subsets of states or redefinitions of new spaces that are organized independently of national borders as in the institutionalized case, euroregion or non-institutional informal macro-regions that are multiplying in geopolitics and geoeconomics globally. In any event, the regions also conduct paradiplomacy, meriting specific analysis.

Thus, this study recognizes the utility of these processes for the scientific advancement of international relations. The multiplicity of protagonist social actors of internationalization is emphasized, surpassing the supposed state monopoly of external action. New agents of paradiplomacy trying to discover the strategies and the institutional holders at the local or regional level are identified. New ways emerge for understanding the networked systems that progressively structure the international setting.

This research project - **Cities and regions: paradiplomacy in Portugal** - originates with these observations and conjectures, logically focusing on the Portuguese



experience and favoring empirical studies and measurable data that capture transnational local and regional dynamics.

2. Objectives

The overall project objective focuses on the analysis and evaluation of the role of non-state actors in networks of internationalization, including Portuguese cities and regions, taking into account the adopted intervention methodologies, instruments of internalization, active partnerships and the resulting products in order to pursue the following specific aims:

- To deepen the theoretical framework concerning the concept of paradiplomacy
- To study the level of internationalization of the Portuguese public-private actors, with the exception of the central powers;
- Investigate the roles of some urban municipalities and autonomous regions as actors in international relations;
- Identify levels of actor intervention with international partners based on the identification of pursued methodologies: town twinning, initiatives of subnational "foreign policy", signing protocols for sectorial collaboration, developmental cooperation, attracting investment and tourism, socio-cultural projection, etc.
- Identify the institutional instruments of paradiplomacy: foreign relation offices, institutional visits, organizing events, among others.

3. Project Justification

The present study falls within the field, relatively recent in international relations, of paradiplomacy, which is identified as the capacity held by non-state actors to establish international cooperation agreements, from exclusive interests, regardless of state actions.

It is a growing discipline, since the logic of economic globalization and the need to enhance the competitiveness and dynamism of the processes of cultural globalization leads to the proliferation of international partnerships and the spread of networks.

It is within this context that three lead actors emerge, whose performance is driven by specific objectives, resulting in structured practices: municipalities, the Euroregions, and Eurocities. The first appears on the global scene as conventional cooperation, intervening through protocols and establishing partnerships with counterparts. The Euroregions and the Eurocities, resulting from cooperation agreements between local governments of cross-border territorial areas, seek to intervene geographically in sectorial areas, and are potentially confluent in promoting development and diminishing socio-spatial disparities. Given that these zones are characterized by independence in relation to central governments, following principles of territorial identity, they are of particular interest for the study.

In this sense, the purpose of this research team is to analyze networks and partnerships in relation to specific situations, shared strategies, and expected results. Given the thematic scope of analysis, a comparative approach is applied between two



Euroregions, a set of Eurocities, a sample of urban municipalities, and two autonomous regions, according to the systematization that is specified below.

A. Euroregions are cross-border cooperation structures that result from agreements between local governments of adjacent areas:

- A.1. Euroregions AAA (Algarve-Alentejo-Andalucia);
- A.2. Atlantic Axis (Galicia and Northern Portugal).

B. Eurocities are new models of relationship and international cooperation:

- B.1. Chaves and Verin;
- B.2. Valença and Tui;
- B.3. Elvas and Badajoz;
- B.4. Vila Real de Santo António-Ayamonte and Castro Marim.

C. Municipalities, in the role of decentralized cooperation entities of the State, acquiring increasing importance, are large urban centers and the intermediate urban centers according to the criterion of role recognition in this context:

- C.1. Lisbon, a capital city;
- C.2. Porto, north central axis;
- C.3. Guimarães, European capital of culture and sport;
- C.4. Braga, European youth capital;
- C.5. Aveiro, for investment in network technology development, based largely on the "Aveiro Digital City" concept.

D. Autonomous regions, which are geographically separated in relation to continental territory and central power, adopting differentiated strategies and cooperation models:

- D.1. The autonomous region of Madeira;
- D.2. The autonomous region of the Azores.

The networks and international partnerships of cities allow deeper concurrent methodologies and experience sharing with the aim of sustainable development. Networks of cities, since the 1980's, have assumed various settings and feature a greater global or regional character. They also vary as to goals. *The International Association of Educating Cities* associative movement numbering more than 400 local organizations and *the Organization of World Heritage Cities*, exclusive to cities included on the UNESCO World Heritage List, highlights this trend. In these cases, the networks are aimed at the optimization of territorial management, in a world where the boundaries between territories become increasingly fluid while exhibiting a transnational character (Simões (2010).

4. Theoretical foundation



The present work assumes paradiplomacy as a multidimensional phenomenon, the aim being to identify and analyze methods of paradiplomatic cooperation, taking into account various axes and identified dimensions.

The diplomatic paradigm in the international relations underwent a gradual but significant shift, conceivably as early as the end of World War I. Beginning in the 1970's, and notably after the fall of the Berlin wall (1989) and the disintegration of the Soviet Empire (1991), instruments of diplomatic power transformed significantly.

"In the post-cold war world, for the first time in history, global politics has become multipolar and multicivilizational" (Huntington, 1996: 21).

Nowadays, diplomacy no longer refers to the pursuit of national interests and to the practice of persuasion alone, but also to the management of global issues. Thinking on a planetary scale creates new needs, additional requirements of geographical differentiation, and drives local expertise. Likewise, the relevant actors are not only states, but also cities and strategic regions with specific foreign policies, in which increasingly relevant actors operate and face challenges that relate to changes experienced by the people in these areas. In this regard, classical diplomacy is no longer adequate to respond to the challenges of the present time (Burt, 1998: 25).

Thus, in contemporary society, the concept of "paradiplomacy" arises from globalization where networks constitute a central element of competitiveness. In this context, non-state actors emerge on the world stage with a growing importance, largely by the ability to form transnational networks and partnerships in order to enhance their action through the identification of common interests and potential synergies. In this sense, Santos Neves (2010: 28) explicates:

"Paradiplomacy demonstrates that external action will be increasingly a multidimensional process with several actors, where the public and private sectors, as well as the third sector, have to participate and coordinate their different skills in the context of long-lasting partnerships. The existence of knowledge networks involving the coordination and collaboration between governments, companies, NGOs, universities and trade unions is, therefore, an essential factor for ensuring effective external action, not only for the purposes of implementation as planned."

Also, Aldecoa et al., (1999) point out two fundamental factors for the increasing importance of this phenomenon: the rise of NGOs and the increase in international activities of non-state actors, which are, among others, cities and regions.

Additionally, the sub-national paradiplomacy allows different public and private actors to participate in the increasingly sophisticated multi-dimensional dynamics of external action. This dynamic of networks – global, multidimensional, and interdependent systems of economic liberalism or capitalism – also generates specific localization



phenomena and micro centrifugal processes of decentralization where multinational companies participate, and, correspondingly, cities and global regions.

“The explicit inclusion of cities in international relations through networks or direct negotiations with multilateral and regional organizations, transnational corporations and other cities or regions is generating significant transformations under the point of view of economic and political autonomy of localities. This phenomenon of international action of cities has created reticular spaces of cooperation that transcend the classic landforms of political-administrative division and territorial continuity” (Senhoras, Moreira and Vitte, 2008: 5).

In the European Union (EU), a regional bloc that is passing through a stage of advanced integration between countries, subnational paradiplomacy assumes a prominent role, developing direct negotiations of maximum strategic interest with multinational companies. In this context, cross-border regions and cities further a special relationship between the two countries, particularly between neighboring peoples. Based on proximity, the potential mutual benefit from common interest and the tangible need of interaction spurs paradiplomacy. The founders of the European project identified this tendency early on.

“Currently, the borders of the European Union assumed, fortunately, a permeable space between the markets, realizing an old ambition of the founding fathers of the European project” (Mendonça e Moura, 2010: 9).

Based on profound change evidenced in relations between Portugal and Spain after accession to the European regional bloc (both in 1986), neighboring markets opened their doors to trade flows never before realized and the cross-border regions (Galicia, Castile/Leon, Andalusia, and Extremadura) gained special importance for Portugal. In fact,

“(…) cross-border regions of Portugal and Spain (our main trading partner), assume major importance as a natural market for both countries, particularly as platforms for the development of their regional and international business” (Horta, 2010: 4).

As a result, broadening the relationships between the principle locations (district capitals, towns, and villages) along the border, promoted the interactions between national companies who welcomed the opportunity to expand their businesses.



5. Methodologies

The project envisions establishing privileged partnerships with other research centers and embedding into reputable national or international universities with scientific studies in the area of international relations. Likewise, integrating with associations and other entities motivated by common interest in the study of paradiplomatic networks is planned.

The following methodology is framed by empirical studies using primary data collection, through surveys and interviews with identified actors, in particular, representatives of the identified Euroregions, Eurocities, municipalities, and the Madeira and the Azores autonomous regions.

Complementarily, and following a systematic principle, documentary analysis and assessment of online resources, such as organizational web pages and established networks will be conducted. In order to better understand the whole process of globalization led by non-state actors, further research will be derived from sources that enable a theoretical and conceptual foundation of the problem under study. To carry out the activities inherent to the fieldwork, a team of Bachelor and Master's assistant researchers will be recruited and trained.

6. Expected results

In terms of expected results, with the development of this project, the following deliverables are highlighted:

- Publication of scientific articles and dissemination, estimating twelve articles following the research period; six scientific and six for propagation, with a biennial of four articles;
- Creating a project page on the *internet* of interactive character, which allows viewing through cartography, other appropriate info graphics (charts, photographs), and data analysis of the main, intermediate, and final results of the investigation;
- Participation in twelve national and international conferences, one every six months;
- Organization of two workshops at intermediate stages of the development of the activities planned in conjunction with international partners;
- Book publication, in Portuguese, English or French, according to the geographical location of stakeholder participation in the project;
- International conference organization in the project's final phase with dissemination of results and a public presentation of the book, which provides for the participation of the different types of actors studied;
- Production of annual activity reports, five in the interim and a final.



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How to cite this article:

Curto, H. S.; Moita, L.; Brito, B. R.; Quintas, C.; Galito, M. S. (2014). "Cities and Regions: paradiplomacy in Portugal." Notes and Reflections, *JANUS.NET e-journal of International Relations*, Vol. 5, N. 2, November 2014-Abril 2015. Consulted [online] on the date last consulted, observare.ual.pt/janus.net/pt_vol5_n2_not1