Brazilian cities and Mercosur: The Paradiplomatical Influence on integration agenda

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This paper aims to analyze the role of local Brazilian subnational governments in influencing the agenda expansion of Mercosur and promoting the inclusion of new actors in Mercosur's regional integration process. Are local Brazilian subnational governments able to promote such changes? In order to answer this question, this work suggests three major types of international activities carried out by local governments in the realm of regional integration: city networks, partnership with the federal government and also initiatives promoted by local government without the federal government. The contribution of Brazilian local governments to the agenda and the inclusion of new actors is identified in the three dimensions. This approach was successful in defining the extent to which local governments have contributed to the expansion of the integration agenda and was also helpful in providing better understanding of the challenge of incorporating new actors into the Mercosur framework. This paper is a result of a long-term research on Brazilian cities paradiplomacy.

Key words: integration, international cooperation, Brazil, cities, Mercosur/Mercosul
INTRODUCTION

A phenomenon commonly called paradiplomacy came to emerge as an important research topic in International Relations field over the past two decades, as a result of a search process for understanding those called new actors at the time. In the Brazilian case, we highlight two important characteristics that motivate the choices of theme and even methodological approach of the research: the relevance of the regional integration process as space and motivation to the international activities of subnational governments; and the fact that in international activities undertaken by subnational Brazilian governments there is a special emphasis on activism and initiative of local governments.

A great importance is given by the Brazilian local governments international at activities around the promotion of regional integration. Therefore, their activities have generated relevant changes in the institutionalized regional integration process in order to accommodate themselves as recognized actors.

A relevant effort by the main brasilian subnational governments explains the interest in understanding how this process took place in the last twenty years and their implications for deepening the regional integration process. Thus, these ideas lead us to question whether the international activities of local governments had an impact on the process of regional integration.

Local governments can already be considered as non-central actors, and therefore seem obvious in contribution to include this kind of actor. However, in addition to comply with non-central actors themselves, local
governments are admittedly more permeable elements actors and non-state institutions of society, and possibly aggregators their interests. Therefore, they open the doors to their own participation and inclusion, local governments have the ability to carry other interests and actors, hitherto excluded from the regional integration process.

Regarding the Mercosul regional integration agenda, local governments, and other actors that they can aggregate, have interest, ability and willing to influence this agenda. By this regional integration agenda we understand the topics that come to be the target of official and parallel policies on regional integration. Local governments, in claiming their inclusion as actors of Mercosul integration, bring with them their interests locally formulated. These interests are guided in matters of interest to the local public administration, or not being coincident with the topics covered in inter-state level.

International activities of the Brazilian subnational governments have an important action recognized under the regional integration process of Mercosur. This relevance is one of the motivations on developing this research.

Mercosur in two decades of existence has been touted as a case of relative success. Comercial incomplete integration and advances on social and political agendas are always reminded on ponting out Mercosur success or failure. Contemporary investigations about the integration process evolution got to the same conclusion as well as the analyzes made at the time of its firsts steps, as one conducted by Ricardo Seintenfus (1992): there was an evident concern of its operators to avoid the mistakes made by another Latin American projects regional integration, which amid the coveted ideal of regional integration, ended up producing lots of institutional arrengments that ended for
not achieving your goals daring, as was, for example, the cases of the Latin American Integration Association (LAIA) and the Andean Community of Nations (or Andean Pact).

BRAZILIAN PARADIPLOMACY TRANSVERSALITY

A considerable increase in international activities of Brazilian local governments since the 1990s came with at the same time as mercosul's development, based on the heavy investment that social actors, the business community, the political class and the state on this regional integration process. Both processes of economic regionalization and strengthening of so-called "new actors" are part of a set of structural transformations in international relations at the end of the last century.

These structural transformations have happened at the same decade of an intense process of decentralization in Brazilian public administration and the rebuilding of democratic institutions in the country, as in its neighbours. Therefore, local governmens grown stronger and more capable on 1980s and 1990s. The preconditions for the development of paradiplomatic activities in the field of regional integration were set.

We divide the international activities of Brazilian local governments in three dimensions: a) the associations and networks of cities, such as Mercocidades and Urb-AL; b) national and regional policies for inclusion of subnational actors in foreign affairs and regional integration, for exemple the International Federative Cooperation created by brazilian national government;
c) unrelated parallel international activities. However, what we did not expect at first, is the intrinsic link between them and the mainstreaming initiatives of subnational governments in these dimensions.

An international policy developed by a subnational government, often contains elements of all three dimensions. Despite this observed transversality, the proposed division has not lost its main function, which was to give intelligibility to the different strategies that may be used by the Brazilian subnational governments in their activities related to regional integration.

These non-central actors in international relations have the purpose to seek outside national borders inputs and the necessary conditions for local development. Imbued with a sense of opportunity, attracted by the geographical (and sometimes cultural) proximity and by the perception that economic integration with neighboring countries would be the engine of growth, the Brazilian subnational governments launched themselves in the endeavor to deepen integration of Mercosul area.

These subnational governments, graced by the 1988 constitution with a good deal of autonomy and imbued with greater responsibilities in the formulation and implementation of public policies, had other interests beyond economic development. Their interests are locally defined by a manifoldness of motivations, sort of cultural, political, social, ideological and pragmatic ones. These interests go beyond the economic agenda of which are held by many theorists and political actors, as new players. Local economic development pursued by economic and trade promotion programs in order to attract investments, tourists, business clients and events does not cover all of the interests of local subnational governments.
Brazilian local governments seek more than economic development opportunities, and resources to fund projects and public policies, these governments seek experience, technical cooperation projects, projection and political influence, new opportunities and partnerships. The space created by regional integration processes seem conducive to the realization of these interests, even before the recognition of the successful European experience in promoting paradiplomacy as a dimension of regional integration, and even the embryo of the bloc's foreign policy. The local governments integration agenda is by its nature much more extend and plural than economic growth and trade.

INTERGOVERNAMENTAL MERCOSUR AND THE ROLE OF NON-CENTRAL ACTORS

Mercosul has not yet lead to an integration process deep enough that promote the creation of a common market. Therefore, its structure is tied to the intergovernmental paradigm dominance, featuring the experiences of Latin American regional integration. However, increased movement of goods and people, as well as the development of an incipient productive integration, especially in the vital auto industry (Machado, 2006), leads us to believe in the success of Mercosur.

Intergovernmental structure delegates a secondary role to other actors in the regional integration process, and might be seen as a challenge to subnational governments in the path of gaining more influence. This intergovernmentalism can also be seen as an limitation to deepen regional integration, and consequently promote a greater role of subnational governments as "this state of affairs puts domestic actors to the process - and
among these subnational governments - in a state of permanent uncertainty, all can go back anytime. "(Mariano and Barreto, 2004 pg 29).

The Mercosul strategy to promote a slow institutionalization of integration as a way to reflect the model of decision-making and parsimony in creating new institutional instruments is identified as a major impediment to the participation of subnational governments. According to Mariano and Barreto (2004) low Mercosur institutionalization limits the scope of action of subnational governments and relevant actors in the construction of regional integration and its decision-making process. Even in a markedly intergovernmental process, the existence of community institutions could increase permeability to other actors than States.

With the deepening of trade relations, and the creation of the characteristic institutions of Mercosur, a slow but important development of a non-trade agenda began to manifest significantly by the work of social and state actors interested in transposing idea of regional integration in areas other than trade. This movement began with further integration and dialogue between unions, and was continued through the approach by local governments, nongovernmental organizations, and state bureaucracies, state enterprises and ministries agencies.

Another factor is the example of the actors of civil society, who participated in the integration process from its conception, in particular, the unions (Wanderley, 2007), and obtained similar space through the Economic and Social Consultative Forum (FCES).

Subnational governments, mostly chose to prioritize their activities with international partners from Mercosul during the 90s. Reasons for this range
from the physical proximity, a less problematic legal framework in developing international partnerships for greater contact through pre-established international networks and even the belief in the design of Mercosul integration by leaders and public administrators.

If we take as an example the case of the participation of organized social actors such as trade unions and employers' associations and the subsequent creation of FCES, the initiative to seek greater role and influence in the regional integration process may result in the incorporation of these actors in the institutional sphere of the block. This thesis is supported by the initiative to create a network Mercocities the seminar "Mercosur: Opportunities and Challenges for Cities" organized by the Union of Ibero-American Capital Cities - Subregion Southern Cone, 1995, the final text advocated the creation of a network Town of Mercosur countries, called Mercocrates. In the same year, steadied the "Commitment of Porto Alegre" in which mayors and mayors firmed the commitment to further the role of localities in the regional integration process of Mercosur. These initiatives would be subsequently recognized by the creation of the Specialized Meeting of MERCOSUR Municipalities and intendancies, and later the Advisory Forum of Municipalities, Provinces and Departments of Mercosur (FCCR).

Therefore, the initiative of local governments to seek greater involvement in the Mercosur regional integration and increase their influence on the process was manifested by the appearance of Mercocrates network, inspired by the example of the European network Eurocities before that participation was provided by the Brazilian government and the institutions of
Mercosur, and in tandem with the consolidation of paradiplomatic activities in most countries of South America, especially Brazil and Argentina.

**PARADIPLOMACY IN MERCOSUR: IMPROVING THE INTEGRATION AGENDA**

Subnational governments could have a major contribution. They would be able to contribute to the integration through its recent momentum and leadership in promoting local economic development, having to fetch the elements needed for such development outside their region or country. Economic integration would not only be an objective of national governments, but one purpose of these local governments interested in attracting investment, promoting exports, generate business and income.

Thus, through its performance in networks of cities, and especially in Mercocieties Network, subnational governments in the region deal with issues not seen as central to regional integration, environment, culture, education, tourism, public administration. Importantly, most of these issues are addressed in general marginally, by other places for regional integration by means of intergovernmental coordination forums. However, in Mercocieties Network is that these issues ultimately become areas of contact and convergence between corporate actors of the members of the bloc.

In the case of inclusion of other actors, there is the involvement of these in partnership with subnational governments in projects of cooperation and exchange of experiences developed within the networks of cities. I.e., subsidiary way there are other institutions - such as non-governmental
organizations, universities and unions (employers or employees) - involved in the projects developed by local governments from contacts established programs and networks. Thus, the projects developed within the networks have a tendency to include other actors as partners in projects as a way to add skills and capabilities. Nevertheless, networks of cities are not able to offer a larger space to these other in promoting regional integration than the paper developed as partners in projects of cooperation and exchange developed.

The dimension represented by subnational governments in the Mercosur’s FCCR, is important mainly by dialogue between local governments, associations of municipalities and mayors and representatives of the Brazilian government with the other parts of the Mercosul institutional structure. These players lead the Brazilian bench to meet the demands of common municipalities in Mercosur. There are elements that make us believe we can say that this space facilitates the insertion of actors other than the local governments themselves, their representative associations and the federal government.

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