

Sergunin, Alexander

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Russian sub-national actors: paradiplomacies in the Arctic region

Alexander Sergunin

St. Petersburg State University, Russia

The paper examines how the Russian northern subnational units use paradiplomacy as a resource for problem-solving and ensuring their sustainable development. Particularly, this study focuses on three specific questions: First, the basic motives laying behind the subnational actors' international activities are examined. Second, the main paradiplomatic strategies, instruments and institutions are identified. Third, the negative and positive implications of paradiplomacy for the center-periphery relations and Russia's foreign policy are explored. Particularly, the paper focuses on the following paradiplomatic strategies: making direct agreements with international partners; attracting foreign investment; creating regions' positive image; cooperation with international organizations; establishing representative offices in foreign countries; city-twinning; participation in Euroregions and other sub-regional arrangements; capitalizing on national diplomacy and federal infrastructures, etc. The institutional framework available for the sub-state actors in the Arctic region is examined. The authors believe that paradiplomacy will remain an important resource for the Russian northern subnational actors in terms of capacity-building and positioning domestically and internationally.

Introduction

Similar to the sport terminology (e.g. Olympic and Paralympic games) the concept of paradiplomacy is used to distinguish international activities of subnational and non-state actors that have limited capabilities and legal powers in the foreign policy sphere as compared to national governments.

This type of external policies is seen by Russian regional and local actors as an adequate and preferable response to numerous challenges that they face in their day-to-day life. It is viewed by them not only as an efficient instrument for solving local problems but also for ensuring their sustainable development.

It should be noted that the Russian Arctic regions and municipalities are especially active in developing external contacts – both in quantitative (number of international partners and projects) and qualitative (diversity of methods and forms of international cooperation as well as its intensity). This is explained by their economic status (they are seen by their foreign neighbors as relatively advanced and promising international partners) and geographic proximity to the EU which generally favors the cross- and transborder cooperation (CBC-TBC) in its 'new neighborhood' (Commission of the European Communities 2011).

The purpose of this study is to examine how the Russian northern subnational actors use paradiplomacy as a resource for problem-solving and ensuring their sustainable development. Particularly, the discussion below focuses on three specific questions: What are the basic motives laying behind the subnational actors' international activities? What strategies, instruments and institutions are available for them to implement their foreign policies? What are the implications – negative and positive – of paradiplomacy for Russia's domestic and international positions?

Past Research

Paradiplomacy of Russian subnational units is a relatively well-researched theme. The literature on paradiplomacy of the Yeltsin period is especially abundant because in the

1990s Russian subnational units enjoyed significant autonomy and – for this reason - were especially active on the international arena (Fedorov and Zverev 2002; Gel'man 2002; Makarychev 2000 and 2002; Roll 2001; Romanova 1999; Sergunin 2000; Sharafutdinova 2003; Vardomsky and Skatershikova 2002).

Given the recentralization trend under the Putin and Medvedev administrations and the significant decrease in subnational actors' international activities, paradiplomacy of this period received much less attention from the academic community than those of the Yeltsin era (Gutnik and Klemeshev 2006; Kim 2008; Kurilla 2007; Lankina and Getachew 2006; Reddaway and Orttung 2005; Vardomsky 2009).

Clearly, with the start of the recentralization process under the Putin-Medvedev regimes paradiplomacies of Russian regions have lost their attractiveness as a subject for research for many scholars and were viewed by them as some marginal phenomenon. However, this study argues that even under the Putin regime paradiplomacy is still important both for subnational units and Moscow's foreign policies albeit it became more routine and less publicized. Moreover, the 2000s eye-witnessed some interesting forms of the CBC-TBC, such as the Euroregions and city-twinning that were not left unnoticed by the scholarly literature (Figenschou 2011; Foss and Henningsen 2011; Joenniemi and Sergunin 2011; 2012; 2013a and 2013b; Kurilla 2007; Mikhailova 2013; Nyseth and Viken 2009; Reut 2004; Sergunin 2006).

It should be noted that paradiplomacies of Russia's subnational actors is a disputable question in the research literature. One group of authors prefers to focus on the "dark side" of paradiplomacy (Blum 1994; Herd 1999; Kirkow 1998; Lapidus 1995; Melvin 1995; Nicholson 1999). For them, the paradiplomatic activities of subnational actors are synonymous to the further disintegration of the Russian Federation and/or the rise of cleptocratic and authoritarian regimes in the Russian regions (especially in the Yeltsin period). The gloomy prognoses regarding the future of the country were especially popular in the periods of financial and political crises (such as the crises of 1998 and 2008-2010). Paradiplomatic activities are described as uncoordinated with central authorities, chaotic, unsustainable, ill-advised and short-sighted.

On the other hand, there are experts who believe that subnational units' paradiplomacies is a good evidence of the fact that democracy and federalism are still alive in the country and that these activities can serve as a proper check on the growing authoritarianism in Russia's domestic and foreign policies under the Putin regime (Joenniemi 1999; Kuznetsov 2009; Sharafutdinova 2003). These authors tend to focus mostly on the positive implications of paradiplomacy for Russia's both domestic and international positions.

There is also a (relatively small) group of political analysts who tend to interpret paradiplomacy in 'objective terms': for them, this phenomenon in Russia is not different from the global trend of subnational units' growing international activities (Joenniemi and Sergunin 2012 and 2013a; Kurilla 2007; Kuznetsov 2009; Makarychev 2000 and 2002; Romanova 1999; Sergunin 2000). These authors examined the interplay of domestic and international factors that affected subnational actors' paradiplomacies as well as specific cases of Russian regions and municipalities. These works, however, paid a little attention to the systemic analysis of methods and instruments of paradiplomacy as well as to the institutional dimensions of the sub-state actors' external policies. Most of these works are of purely empirical rather than analytical/theoretical nature. The ambition of this study is to fill in the existing lacunae by suggesting a complex multidisciplinary approach to the problem and focusing on the three above-mentioned research questions.

Theoretical framework

A number of social science theories were helpful for this study, with the *paradiplomacy theory* as the most important one among them. According to Soldatos (1990) and Duchacek (1986, 1990) who introduced the term into the academic debate and theoretically substantiated it, paradiplomacy is an aspect of the world-wide processes of globalization and regionalization, under which sub- and non-state actors play an increasingly influential role in world politics. Regions, members of federations, cities, companies, NGOs, etc., seek their way to promote trade, investments, cooperation and partnership on the international scene and account for a significant part of contemporary cross- and transborder contacts. The phenomenon of paradiplomacy raises new theoretical questions concerning the role of the state, sub-state and non-state actors in international affairs as well as challenges the existing state system and international law that have provided the grounds for the international political order in the Westphalian era (Hobbs 1994; Hocking 1993).

In the post-Cold war era, the paradiplomacy theory has dynamically evolved in several directions. One group of sub-theories aimed at explaining factors that caused the rise of subnational units as international actors: decentralization of the nation-state and coming of a 'post-sovereign' state, crisis of the 'classic' models of federalism, spread of network-type relations, replacement of the international relations system by the paradigm of global governance, emergence of the glocalization/fragmentation phenomenon, etc. (Aldecoa and Keating 1999; Brenner 1999; Castells 2000; Habegger 2002; Risse-Kappen 1995; Rosenau 1997; Smith 2001; Watts 1999).

Another sub-group, which was based on the *geographic diffusion theory*, tried to explain the successful democratic transformation of some post-Communist countries and regions within them by Europe's spatial proximity which is conducive to the diffusion of Western resources, values and norms to the transitional countries and subnational units (Kopstein and Reilly 2000). The literature on leverages and linkages develops this argumentation by describing methods and instruments which were used by the West to influence the democratic transformation of the post-Communist countries (Way and Levitsky 2007). These sub-theories suggested that the intensive CBC-TBC and Western aid have contributed to more profound and successful market and democratic reforms as well as Europeanization of Russia's north-western regions as compared to other, inner-located, provinces (Lankina and Getachew 2006). These sub-theories, however, have been criticized for making too strong emphasis on the role of external factors and representing post-Communist countries and their sub-national units as passive objects of Western manipulations rather than decision-makers with subjectivity of their own. In contrast with this view, the 'classical' paradiplomacy theories underline that in reality there is always an interplay of external and domestic factors that generate and affect subnational units' international activities.

Other sub-theories tried to develop a *typology of paradiplomacy*. For example, following Duchacek (1990, 16-18), Kaiser (2005) differentiated between three types of paradiplomacy:

- Transborder regional paradiplomacy which includes cooperation between neighboring regions across national borders (in other words, cross-border cooperation).
- Transregional paradiplomacy which comprises cooperation with regions in foreign countries (transborder cooperation).
- Global paradiplomacy which is defined as international contacts with foreign central governments, international organizations, business, interest groups, NGOs, etc.

José Magone (2006, 8) suggests one more type or level of paradiplomacy – transnational one which is framed by national governments but within this context different local and regional governments, companies, universities, mass media, etc. play a key role in implementing common projects. The most recent examples include the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, Northern Dimension, Eastern Partnership, etc.

Our study demonstrates that the Russian northern units are involved in all the above-mentioned types of paradiplomacy.

Duchacek (1990:14-15) identified six major *methods/instruments of paradiplomacy*: (1) establishment of permanent offices in foreign capitals or centers of commerce and industry to represent regional government abroad; (2) regional leaders' foreign trips that are widely covered by the local and international mass media; (3) short-term, professional fact-finding missions sponsored by subnational units; (4) trade and investment exhibitions that feature technological, touristic, investments and other advantages of a region or city; (5) establishment of free trade zones; (6) participation of the representatives of regional/local governments in the international conferences or in the official delegations sponsored by national government. This typology is further developed and elaborated in this chapter.

The *marginality theory*, first developed by Parker (2000), and later applied to border subnational units by Browning and Joenniemi (2003) is relevant for our study as well. We try to argue that marginally/peripherally-located actors can successfully play with its unique position both domestically (in relation to the center) and internationally (with similar marginal and/or central actors). The marginal actors can make use of their geographic location acquiring, for instance, the roles of mediator or 'bridge' between different countries. They also can turn the marginality from disadvantage to a resource and transform themselves from remote and provincial territories to attractive places hosting intense international flows of goods, services, capital, technologies and people. On a more general plane, paradiplomacy contributes to the processes of de-bordering and de-sovereignization in a globalizing world.

The *familiarity/unfamiliarity theory* which was developed in the context of the historical/cultural studies is also helpful for our research. This theory is based on the assumption that paradiplomatic actors differ by their history and current status. Their difference can impact the outcome of interaction either by contributing to an intensification of the relationship or by problematizing the encounter. Differences may create curiosity, fascination and nostalgia thereby prompting the CBS-TBC but they can be seen as being too outstanding and hence bring about aversion, resentment and avoidance. These differences can be conducive to feelings of familiarity or unfamiliarity. The very success or failure of the CBS-TBC depends to a larger extent on the interplay of familiarity and unfamiliarity of actors (Spierings and van der Velde 2008 and 2013; Scott 2013). Familiarity rests on the utilization of a common cultural heritage with the cooperative experiences as well as a downplaying of negative historical memories related to conflicts, although familiarity may also entail an upgrading of negativities located in the past. Unfamiliarity, in turn, relates to a reading of cooperation as something entirely new and previously unexplored. It may hamper the construction of commonality straddling borders as fear and worries about the unknown, albeit it may also bring about fascination and seductive attraction of the relatively unknown. We argue that the most important question here is how the past is interpreted and what figures as the prevailing reading of the current encounter on the two sides of a border now changing significantly in meaning.

To sum up, such a multidisciplinary approach provides us with a reliable theoretical/methodological basis to study a complex and multifaceted problem represented by the paradiplomacy of the Russian Arctic subnational actors.

Regions and cities as new international actors

In the Cold War era, when the principles of the Westphalian prevailed, there was a little space for other actors other than states in the sphere of international relations. Subnational entities (such as regions and municipalities) were expected to remain exclusively within the sphere of the 'domestic'. However, the prerogative of states to insert divisive borders has gradually eroded and consequently various sub-state actors have been able to establish relations of their own and to do so even without any decisive supervision exercised by their respective states. Subnational actors could thereby contribute to the emergence of transnational spaces.

As to the European regions and municipalities, their motivations in the 1990s were in the first place idealistic and aimed at de-polarization, the bolstering of mutual understanding and the creation of ties of friendship between people across the East-West barrier. Cooperation itself was in the first place symbolic in character and rarely driven by any pragmatic concerns and interests. In remaining primarily symbolic in essence, the contacts established amounting to meetings between regional and local leaders, the shaking of hands, cultural events and organizing festivals but they could, in a few cases, also consist of deliveries of aid to partners from the post-Socialist countries and the establishment of somewhat more permanent ties.

As far as the Russian northern subnational actors are concerned the initial thrust for their external activities can be also explained by the harsh realities of the 1990s. In the Yeltsin era many Russian Arctic territories felt themselves as almost abandoned by the federal government; they had to seek for survival strategies of their own. Foreign aid and investment were seen as one of the most efficient instruments for keeping afloat the local economies. Given a broad autonomy of the members of the Russian Federation in the Yeltsin period the north-western regions managed to develop rather diverse international contacts.

However, with time, when the socio-economic situation in Russia under the Putin regime has improved, subnational entities were tend to see international cooperation as an integral part of their sustainability strategy rather than an emergency tool or survival strategy. This paradigmatic shift in subnational units' motivation has entailed the radical change in their attitudes to paradiplomacy. The romanticism of the earlier phase has waned; subnational actors became more pragmatic and rational. Given the scarcity of resources available and the changes in financial conditions surrounding the EU CBC programs (Brussels introduced the 50:50 matching funds rule) collaborative projects became less ambitious and more realistic: now they aimed at practical needs of the partners.

Regions and municipalities now coalesce across borders in order to solve concrete and shared problems and this is done for reasons of their own and by employing the competence that they themselves harbor. They aim at adding to their strength by transgressing various borders – be they conceptual, identity-related or spatial – and do so by joining forces in the context of various regional endeavors, or for that matter, through lobbying in various broader contexts. What used to be in the 1990s idealistically motivated and mainly citizen-driven endeavors with issues such as peace, friendship and mutual understanding high on the agenda has more recently turned into something far more mundane and elite-oriented. In essence, the driving

force, one spurred by various economic, social, cultural as well as environmental concerns, amounts increasingly to that of self-interest.

The paradiplomatic activities have become less chaotic and more prioritized, subordinated to the long-term developmental strategies of subnational actors. The latter had also to take into account the restrictive measures taken by the Putin administration with the aim to establish a more efficient federal control over the regional and local government's external policies. In some cases Moscow's restrictive policies led to the failure of promising international projects such as, for example, the creation of an industrial park on the Finnish-Russian border between Imatra and Svetogorsk or establishment of the Pomor Special Economic Zone on the border between the Sør Varanger community (Norway) and Murmansk Region (Russia).

As far as other motives of paradiplomacy are concerned some Russian regions were interested in being involved in the federal decision-making before the final decision has been reached or the international treaty signed. For example, the Murmansk region wanted to be involved in preparing international agreements where its status has been affected (visa regime, delimitation of maritime spaces, establishment of special economic zones and customs regimes, etc.).

Furthermore, the logic has turned EU-related (i.e. transnational) rather than remained state-oriented (bi-national). Here we tend to agree with the geographic diffusion theory that proximity to the EU was a decisive factor that shaped paradiplomacies of some Russian northern subnational units. With some of the financial means available for the Euroregions, twinning and other forms of cooperation coming from the EU and related funds, the profile of the subnational actors involved has become quite Europe-oriented. Previously closed and barred spaces of the Russian High North – with regions/cities at the edge of statist space being unavoidably seen as peripheral – are opened up as these border entities aim at benefiting from cross-border networking. It may also be observed that subnational actors have, for a variety of reasons, become part of an increasingly competitive logic, and they have been compelled to devise active strategies of their own. What is important, they seem to have the self-confidence required to do so and act in this context according to their own self-understanding and specific needs.

On a more general note, although the networking of subnational actors is in the first place underpinned by the logic of competition and carried by an interest in conducting a kind of local 'foreign economic policies' (Wellmann 1998, 11) the consequences of such moves reach far beyond the economic sphere. The currently ongoing "economization" of inter-regional and inter-city relations implies that these actors now basically follow a rationale of their own in linking in and networking with each other. They seem, in fact, less state-oriented and aim instead, through new forms of signification and imagining space, at bolstering their own subjectivity also in the sphere of transnational relations.

In sum, both practitioners and experts identify – in quite a pragmatic way - the following benefits from paradiplomacy:

- Bolstering economic and business development
- Improving service delivery and problem solving
- Improving transport infrastructure
- Promoting freedom of movement of people, goods, services and capital
- Accessing EU and other financial institutions in search for funding
- Promoting community well-being
- Promoting stronger community partnerships
- Increasing global and European awareness

- Yielding more intense regional/local government staff development and training
- Providing resources for developing education and culture
- Promoting tolerance and increasing understanding
- Enhancing youth/women's activities (Handley 2006, 6–8).

These obvious benefits provide subnational units with serious stimuli to further develop their paradiplomatic activities.

Paradiplomacy: strategies and methods

In contrast with previous typologies (Duchacek 1990; Kuznetsov 2009), we suggest a different categorization of paradiplomatic methods. Two main types of paradiplomatic strategies – direct (i.e., developing external relations of their own) and indirect (influencing Russian federal foreign policies) can be identified.

Direct strategies/methods include:

- *Creating a legislative basis for paradiplomacy.* This was particularly important for subnational units in the Yeltsin era when paradiplomacy was in infancy and needed some sort of legitimacy. The regional and city constitutions/charters and normative acts of the 1990s aimed at legitimizing foreign policy activities of sub-state entities. Some regional/local legislation came into collision with the federal law (e.g. the Karelian constitution). However, in some cases the local legislation forestalled the federal one: for instance, in areas such as encouraging foreign investment and land ownership. By developing the legislative base of their own the regional elites carved out their own policies in a hope to become more independent from Moscow.

In the early Putin period, however, the regional and local legislation was streamlined and put in accordance with the federal one.

- *The use of the 'treaty-making power'.* Over the two past decades, this strategy was at the center of the heated debate on the treaty-making powers of the federal center, regions (members of the Russian Federation) and municipalities. Despite Moscow's resistance, since the early 1990s many Russian border sub-state actors have concluded direct agreements with the same-type international partners. Since some agreements were signed bypassing Moscow this led to conflicts between the federal center and regions. As a compromise between the center and local actors it was decided that such agreements should not have a status of full-fledged international treaties (this is still considered as a federal center's prerogative), they should be concluded with the same-level partners (not with foreign governments) and should be prepared in consultation with the Foreign Ministry.

In the post-Soviet period, the Russian northern regions and municipalities concluded hundreds international agreements. Depending on the size, socio-economic and cultural potential the intensity of the treaty-making policies greatly varied between the subnational actors.

For example, the Arkhangelsk and Murmansk regions, which are considered as relatively large (by the Arctic standards) subnational actors, pursue rather intensive treaty-making policies. The Arkhangelsk region has concluded cooperative agreements with two Norwegian, two Finnish, one Belorussian and one Armenian provinces. This region has been also allowed to have agreements not only with foreign subnational units of the same status but also with foreign governments – on sectoral cooperation. The Arkhangelsk region has an agreement on trade, research and humanitarian cooperation with Armenia and another one with Norway (on children and families at risk) (<http://apparat.gov-murman.ru/intercoop/direction/index.html>). The city of Arkhangelsk has 12 foreign twin partners throughout the world, including four Nordic cities - Ljusdal

and Kiruna (Sweden), Oulu (Finland) and Vardø, Norway. The Murmansk region has bilateral agreements with three Norwegian, three Finnish and one Swedish provinces. Moreover, this region is a part of the Finnish-Russian intergovernmental agreement on the multilateral cooperation in the north-western Russia (<http://apparat.gov-murman.ru/intercoop/direction/index.html>). The city of Murmansk has eight foreign twin partners, including five Nordic cities - Akureyri (Iceland), Luleå (Sweden), Rovaniemi (Finland), Tromsø and Vadsø (Norway).

To give another example, the Pechenga district (Murmansk region) which is seen as a relatively small-scale actor has the only international agreement - with the Sør-Varanger community (Norway). The document (signed in 2008) includes the pilot project on twinning between two mining towns of Nikel and Kirkenes that are located on the Russian-Norwegian border.

Despite periodical collisions with Moscow, many regions and municipalities continue to see the quasi 'treaty-making' strategy as an effective instrument both to build their capacities and enhance domestic and international prestige.

- *Establishing representative offices in foreign countries.* To facilitate direct co-operation with foreign countries some Russian regions set up trade and cultural missions abroad. However, since the federal law on foreign trade of 1995 has stipulated that representative offices should be funded by the regions and municipalities themselves, it appeared that few regions could afford having missions abroad. For these (financial) reasons, the vast majority of subnational actors prefer to rely on the federal structures – Russian embassies, consulates and trade missions – to pursue their international policies.
- *Accommodating foreign consular offices and trade missions.* To maintain sustainable relations with neighboring foreign countries and facilitate travel for its citizens some Russian regions and municipalities favor establishing foreign consulates and representative offices. For example, Arkhangelsk and Murmansk are the homes to the Norwegian consulates while Petrozavodsk accommodates the Finnish consulate.
- *Attracting foreign investment, promoting joint projects.* A number of the Russian northern regions and municipalities succeeded in creating favorable conditions for foreign investment. For example, the Canadian companies invest or plan to invest to the mining industries (gold and silver) in Chukotka and Yakutia and oil fields and renewable energy sector in the Nenets Autonomous District (<http://pda.www.minregion.ru/Arctic/552/650/1693.html>). Another example is the plan to create a U.S.-Russian natural park for the protection of biodiversity in the Bering Strait region with a provisional name of *Beringia*. This project is crucial for the local economy which is heavily dependent on the fishery. It is planned that such a park could be based on the experiences of the existing ethno-natural park with the same name on the Russian side of the Bering Strait (est. in 1993) (see the *Beringia* park's web-site: <http://beringiapark.ru/>).
- *Creating a region's positive image abroad.* To attract foreign investors and provide the regional/local reformist projects with national and international support the Russian north-western subnational actors launched a rather aggressive PR campaign. For example, they arrange exhibitions, hold the so-called 'cooperation days' or festivals together with sister towns, take part in international fairs and advertize themselves in the partners' media. Regional and municipal leaders undertake regular foreign trips with the PR purposes. Some regions and towns run bilingual periodicals and web-sites oriented to foreign audiences. The main goal of such PR

campaigns is to change the marginality image and present regional/local actors as creative and innovative platforms rather than remote and depressive areas.

- *Co-operation with international organizations.* To confirm their status of global actors many regions and cities try to develop relations with international organizations. For example, they cooperate with UNESCO, UNIDO, EU, European Congress of Municipal and Regional Governments, Council of Europe, Barents Euro-Arctic Council (BEAC) and Nordic institutions.

For some Russian Arctic subnational units (the Arkhangelsk and Murmansk regions, Republic of Karelia and Nenets Autonomous District) it was particularly important to cooperate with the EU in the framework of the Kolarctic program (2007-2013) where the northern provinces of Finland, Sweden and Norway have been engaged (Obshee prostranstvo sosedstva 2012).

It should be noted that co-operation with international organizations is important for subnational units not only in terms of getting an additional leverage in the power struggle with Moscow but also in terms of opening up them for the world-wide processes of globalization and regionalization.

- *Increasing familiarity.* While Murmansk and Arkhangelsk have enjoyed some international contacts even in the Soviet time, and the era of openness was not particular frustrating for their inhabitants, many other regions and towns of the Russian North were virtually behind the 'Iron Curtain' in the Cold War period and needed some time to familiarize itself with its neighborhood. In some cases, the process of familiarization was so fast and deep that resulted in emergence of really transnational places.

For example, the town of Kirkenes (northern Norway), consisting of some 7.000 inhabitants but growing, has in fact been a major meeting-point for Russian-Norwegian contacts since the 1990s on a variety of levels. It is multicultural in the sense that in addition to a Norwegian majority, there is a Sami population in the region, a considerable number of Finnish-speakers around as well as an increasing number of Russians in the city and its vicinity. The latter group amounts to some ten per cent of the city's population (Rogova 2008, 29).

As noted by Rogova (2009), also a considerable number of Russians living in the Murmansk region nowadays view the Norwegian-Russian border in terms of a shared borderland. The border has turned far less divisive not just politically and in administrative terms, but also culturally and identity-wise. Rogova (2009: 31) claims that a borderland has emerged "which is neither Russia, nor Norway to the full extent". Russians visiting Kirkenes do not have the feeling of being abroad, as also indicated by Kirkenes being named 'Kirsanovka' or 'Kirik' with connotations of a small local and nearby entity/village in the language used in the Murmansk region. Visits have become frequent for reasons of shopping or, for that matter, using the Kirkenes airport for flights abroad.

In one of its aspects, the Norwegian-Russian cross-border cooperation can draw upon the somewhat idealized legacy of the so-called Pomor trade. These coastal trade contacts, which lasted for nearly three centuries before dwindling out after the Russian revolution in 1917, were quite important for the development of the northern areas. The legacy is frequently referred to and activated with the current-day cooperation and border-crossing seen as a return to traditional constellations.

Still another memory impacting in particular the local attitudes consists of that a considerable number of German troops were stationed in the region, pursuing quite repressive policies, and it was freed by the Soviet Army in 1944. For sure, the Cold War period, with perceptions of enmity as the prevalent approach, impacted the views on

Russians. The negative views have, however, gradually changed and normalized. For instance, it became a common tradition to jointly celebrate the date of the liberation of the Murmansk region and East Finnmark from the Nazi occupants in October 1944.

- *City-twinning* became one of the most successful and interesting forms of the CBC-TBC. Twinning stands for shared citiness and figures as a manifestation of new urban forms. It testifies, as an aspect of regionalization, with considerable clarity that the order-producing impact of national borders is waning. Northern Europe is particularly distinct in regard to successful experimenting with twinning. In this region, twinning is one of the departures used by cities in aspiring for a distinct, visible, and favorable profile, and it is, in this sense, part and parcel of their policies of place-marketing and branding in the context of the increasingly intense and transnational regionalization.

To coordinate and institutionalize twinning activities the City Twins Association (CTA) was established in December 2006. Altogether 14 cities were associated with the CTA, including four pairs located in Northern Europe: Valka-Valga (Latvia-Estonia), Imatra-Svetogorsk (Finland-Russia), Narva-Ivangorod (Estonia-Russia) and Tornio-Haparanda (Finland-Sweden) (City Twins Association, 2010).

These pairs differ by their experiences and effectiveness. While Tornio-Haparanda can be seen as a success story; Valka-Valga and Imatra-Svetogorsk can be viewed as relatively successful pairs; Narva-Ivangorod exemplify - if not a complete failure – but very close to such an assessment (Joenniemi & Sergunin, 2012).

With the outbreak of the world economic crisis (2008), subsequent crisis of the Eurozone and the new round of the Schengen zone's expansion (2007) the whole twinning project in Northern Europe has seemingly stalled (with a rare exception of the Tornio-Haparanda pair). Against this background the joint Kirkenes-Nikel initiative to launch a twinning project (2008) and plans to join the CTA look as a bold attempt to revive the very idea and spirit of twinning.

Twinning is perhaps still in its infancy and often oriented towards the short- rather than the long-term perspectives but will probably get more established and stronger over time thus also calling for added theoretical insight as well as further empirical enquiry as local experimenting in testing the fixity of identities and questioning the divisive effects of borders may potentially have some quite far-reaching consequences.

- *Euroregions*. A number of the Russian border regions and municipalities were involved into the Euroregion projects in the 1990s and 2000s. Euroregions are in essence administrative-territorial entities. They have been coined in order to promote cross-border cooperation between neighboring local or regional authorities of different countries located along shared land or maritime borders. In fact, they constitute widely known mechanisms of cooperation between regions. For example, Karelia has participated in the Euroregion Karelen together with regional councils of Finland - Kainuu, Northern Karelia and Northern Ostrobothnia..

It should be noted that despite some successful projects implemented within the Euroregions framework their overall results remain rather modest. Moreover, quite often the Euroregions are basically reduced to what common Russians call 'bureaucratic tourism', i.e. exchanges between regional and municipal officials. With rare exceptions, the Euroregion do not promote cooperation and horizontal links at the people-to-people, company-to-company or NGO levels. In other words, the Euroregions concept – being a potentially important tool for sub-regional cooperation - does not work properly.

To improve Euroregions' performance the Russian and international experts recommend to (1) to clarify the legal status of Euroregions both in the Russian national legislation and European law; (2) to provide Euroregions with a sustainable financial

basis through EU and national long-term funding schemes; (3) to receive funding to the local/regional budgets, activities of Euroregions should be highlighted and visualized, so that lobbying for recognizable projects in national and international bodies becomes much easier (Lepik 2009; Perkmann 2003; Sergunin 2006).

Indirect methods boil down to:

- *Influencing the federal legislation.* The local legislation not only legitimizes the external relations of the regions and municipalities but also affects the federal legislation. For example, the Novgorod law on protection of foreign investment (1994) was later has been used by the federal parliament to draft a similar legislation. The Kaliningrad's experiences with the special economic zone *Amber* were helpful in developing the federal legislation on SEZ.
- *Capitalizing on national diplomacy.* Since the national law envisages Russian regional and local governments' participation in international activities that concern them, subnational actors tried to make their impact on federal diplomacies. For example, the Murmansk authorities assisted the Russian Foreign Ministry in negotiating the Russian–Norwegian agreement on delimitation of maritime territories in the Barents Sea (2010). The Murmansk regional government helped the Russian diplomats and border guards to prepare the 2010 Russian-Norwegian agreement on the visa-free regime for the border residents.

It should be noted that subnational units' international cooperation projects do not stand out as something isolated but is instead part and parcel of a broader Russian strategy of cooperation with Europe. To sum up, in reality, the national diplomacy and paradiplomacy mutually reinforce and compliment rather than contradict each other.

- *Conflict prevention and resolution.* With time, Moscow has realized that regionalization can serve as an instrument for problem-solving with respect to Russia's relations with neighboring countries. For example, cooperation between Finland and Karelia was conducive to the eventual solution of the Karelia issue. Murmansk-Norwegian cooperative links were helpful in striking a compromise between Moscow and Oslo on the demarcation of the Barents Sea. The Alaska-Chukotka cooperation has eased the U.S.-Russian tensions on the delimitation of the Bering Sea.
- *Exploiting the parliament.* The Russian regions use the Federal Assembly to lobby their foreign policy interests at the federal level. The Council of the Federation (the upper chamber) made up of regional representatives is the most popular vehicle for the regional lobbying. The senators quite often use their official foreign trips to find new partners for their home regions and promote them on the international arena.
- *Capitalizing upon the federal infrastructure.* To influence federal foreign policy the regions use the institutional structure created by Moscow in the periphery. For example, the Russian Foreign Ministry has established a special unit on inter-regional affairs. Along with the diplomatic agency, other ministries and federal bodies such as Ministry of Industry & Commerce, Customs Committee, Federal Border Service, etc., have established offices in the regions engaged in intensive international economic and cultural co-operation. Theoretically, these agencies should co-ordinate and control regions' international contacts. However, in reality, they often serve as additional regions' leverages to put pressure on Moscow rather than federal centre's instruments. The problem is that they are dependent on local authorities in terms of housing, salaries, professional career and so on. Moreover, these agencies are usually staffed by the locals with close connections to the regional elites.

The growing dependence of the so-called ‘power structures’ (armed forces, police, special services) on the subnational authorities - even under the Putin regime - cast doubts on their loyalty to the center.

- *Exploiting international organizations.* To put pressure on Moscow the regions managed to use not only federal institutions but also international organizations. For instance, the northern areas of Russia represented at the Barents Regional Council (BRC) use this forum to develop direct ties with the neighboring regions of Finland, Norway and Sweden as well as to get a more privileged status inside the country (visa-free regime for border areas’ residents, more liberal customs regime, federal funding for the development of international academic cooperation, etc.)

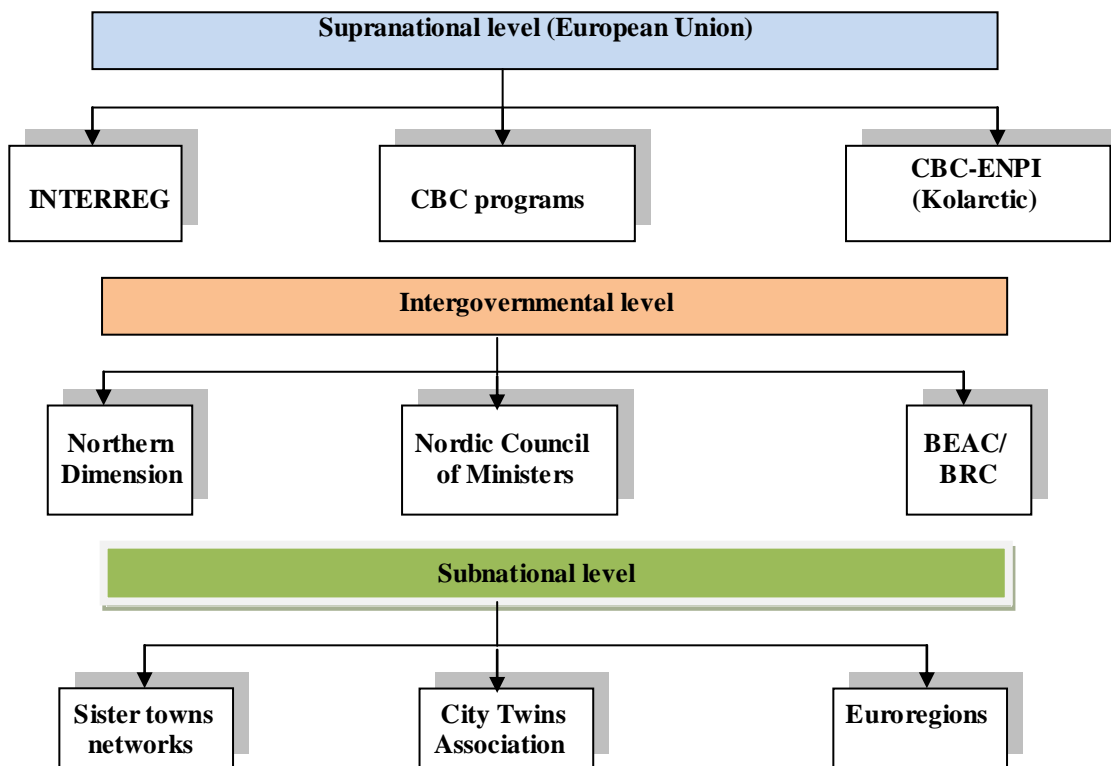
It should be noted that in the real life subnational units usually combine both direct and indirect methods because they are of complimentary rather than mutually exclusive nature.

Institutional framework

The above-mentioned theories suggest that to be efficient paradiplomacy should be placed in a favorable institutional setting. Without a proper institutional support, paradiplomacy is nearly doomed to failure. On the contrary, if there is a supportive institutional framework in place, subnational units tend to be both more active and successful in their paradiplomatic initiatives. It should be noted that, for example Northern Europe (NE) has one of the densest institutional networks in the world and this can explain why the Russian northern sub-state actors were inclined to international cooperation and relatively successful (as compared to other regions).

The NE institutional network includes several layers (see figure one).

Figure 1. Institutional network in Northern Europe



On the top, *supranational*, level, there are institutions set up by the EU, the largest regional actor. For example, **European Territorial Cooperation** (ETC), previously known as INTERREG Community Initiatives, has been part of the EU policy since 1990 providing a framework for the implementation of joint actions and policy exchanges between national, regional and local actors from different member states and neighboring countries. The ETC has grown from a relatively small INTERREG program to a fully-fledged strand of the EU regional policy with its separate regulatory framework envisaged for the period 2014–2020.

In 2007-2013 the Kolarctic program was run by the CBC program of the European Neighborhood Partnership Instrument. The Kolarctic program area has included the Norwegian provinces of Nordland, Troms and Finnmark, the Swedish Norrbotten, the Finnish Lapland and three Russian subnational units – the Arkhangelsk and Murmansk regions and the Nenets Autonomous District. The Republic of Karelia and Leningrad region were eligible for some Kolarctic-related projects as well. The Finnish province of Lapland was responsible for the administration of the program. About 50 projects related to the development of economic and transport infrastructures, logistics, small and medium-size business, innovative entrepreneurship, preservation of the indigenous peoples' economies and cultures, research and education were supported and implemented by the Kolarctic program in northern Russia (<http://www.kolarcticenpi.info/ru>).

As for the ETC future the three strands (cross-border, transnational and interregional) will be maintained in the financial period of 2014-2020. Hopefully, this will facilitate its implementation and the use of the already gained experience.

To avoid unnecessary inter-institutional duplication it is important that in the future ETC stronger emphasis will be given to the thematic concentration and strengthened links to other EU programs. However, it should be guaranteed that the themes to be presented by the European Commission as priority ones are sufficient to cover the differing needs of CBC-TBC. A delicate balance between a greater regional flexibility and the need to achieve results with scarce resources at hand has to be found. Balance, however, can be achieved only if all the parties to the negotiations are treating each other as partners.

As Hübner (2012) emphasizes, ETC should be encouraged, not only with words, but also with money. This is why the European Parliament (where various regional interests are better represented) consistently pushed for the 7% target in the ETC spending in all its three strands and all its dimensions, internal and external, in the multiannual financial programming period for the years 2014–2010.

The *intergovernmental* level is represented by several institutions. The **Northern Dimension** (ND) which has been transformed from the EU BSR/NE-oriented project to a system of equally-funded partnerships between the EU and three neighboring countries (Iceland, Norway and Russia) is the most important one. Currently, ND includes four partnerships (on environment; transport and logistics; public health and social well-being; culture) which are seen as promising venues for CBC-TBC with Russia. Since 2007 (when the transformed ND has been launched) dozens projects in the above areas were implemented in the regions of Kaliningrad, Karelia, Murmansk, etc. These projects were supported by the international financial institutions such as European Bank of Reconstruction and Development, Nordic Investment Bank and Nordic Environment Finance Corporation.

The **Nordic Council of Ministers** is one more important regional actor of the intergovernmental type. According to the Guidelines for the NCM's cooperation with North-West Russia 2009-2013, Council's priority areas include: (a) education, research

and innovation, including creative industries; (b) the environment, climate and energy; (c) promotion of conditions for economic co-operation and trade, including legislative co-operation, anti-corruption measures and the protection of intellectual rights and patents; (d) the ND's partnerships – especially for public health and environment; (e) promotion of democracy and civic society through co-operation on local government and good governance, co-operation between parliamentarians, co-operation between the media and journalists, and co-operation between NGOs (Nordic Council of Ministers 2009, 2-3). The NCM has several information offices in north-western Russia.

The problem with the ND partnerships and NCM is that they have a multi-focused agenda as their activities cover not only the BSR but also the Barents and Arctic regions. Both institutions should avoid duplications and need to establish a more efficient division of labor between them. This is especially important in view of the scarcity of resources available to the regional actors.

In institutional terms, the NE 'flank' is covered by the Barents Euro-Arctic cooperation. Along with the inter-ministerial **BEAC** there is the **BRC** which includes 13 counties from Finland, Norway, Sweden and Russia (five of them belong to the Russian North). For example, at its Kirkenes meeting (June 3, 2013) the BRC adopted a new *Barents Program 2014-2018* with the aim to promote creative businesses and fast growing enterprises in the region; increase CBC to achieve economies of scale and quality of life; support joint management and preservation of natural resources; implement a joint climate change adaptation; enhance innovation and research cooperation by increasing critical mass; focus on missing cross-border links in the transport infrastructure; foster mobility across the borders for workers, enterprises, tourists and students; focus on cultural cooperation in order to develop mutual understanding and regional development (The Barents Euro-Arctic Council 2013). Given the numerous overlaps with the 'sister' institutions involved at cooperation at the subnational level (ND, NCM, Arctic Council) BEAC and BRC are seeking synergy with them. These councils managed to establish the cooperation on project level with the above bodies in areas, such as climate change research and the Barents environmental hot spots elimination.

In addition to supranational and intergovernmental levels, there is also a purely *subnational* layer represented by the City Twins Association, networks of sister towns and Euroregions. These organizations and arrangements are extremely important in encouraging paradiplomacy in the NE as they operate at the subregional and municipal levels. The problem with the upper institutional levels is that they are run by the supranational bodies and/or national governments, not by subnational units themselves and, for this reason, mostly aim at the macro- rather than mezo- and micro-regional levels neglecting cooperation between sub-state units. In contrast with the governmentally-sponsored institutions the above fora were created by subnational units themselves, in the bottom-up way.

A proper division of labor between all these actors should be established. For example, the BRC and ETC could be especially useful in developing and implementing joint projects with Russian regions in areas such as environment protection; energy; development of local transportation, cross-border infrastructure, public-private partnerships and fund-raising for specific projects. In some spheres, such as regional transport systems; public health and quality of life; science, education and culture the ND and NCM could take a lead. The CTA is helpful in sharing best practices in urban development as well as solving common municipal problems.

To sum up, almost all the actors involved more or less clearly understand that their task is to ensure the rightful architectural and financial demands for further cooperation in the NE.

Implications of paradiplomacy

Paradiplomacies pursued by various Russian north-western sub-state actors had a quite mixed record as to its impact on the federal center's policies. On the one hand, the aspirations of sub-national actors and the center often overlapped. Their interests have been compatible in matters such as the promotion of cross-border trade, attracting foreign investment and know-how, development of cross- and trans-border transport infrastructures, facilitation of visa regime for the residents of border regions, environmental projects, tourism, youth cooperation, cultural and academic exchanges. A number of success stories as to center-periphery cooperation can be identified consisting of visa liberalization agreements with Poland and Norway, Euroregions Baltic, Saule and Karelia, city-twinning in the cases of Imatra-Svetogorsk and Nikel-Kirkenes.

On the other hand, the federal center was quite uneasy about Russian regions and municipalities going international. It breaks with the state-centric logic of constructing political space, deviates and breaks with such logic is unavoidably conducive to worries about separatism and unwarranted external influences separatism. The uneasiness has been particularly conspicuous in the case of Kaliningrad. At large, the reserved attitude has amounted to some distrust and, on a more concrete plane, lack of financial and administrative support to regions and cities aiming at bolstering their international contacts and cooperation. Some city-twinning projects (e.g., Narva-Ivangorod) and most of the Euroregions, have therewith remained mere promises. They are interesting as initiatives, but have not developed and matured as to the real contents. It may also be noted that the regional and local actors have, on a number of occasions, expressed their discontent with and mistrust in regard to the policies pursued by the center. These policies have been depicted by sub-state actors as being – at a minimum – inefficient. As evidenced by the mass protests in Kaliningrad against the regional and federal governments' crisis management policies in 2010-2011, the critique has contributed to Moscow's decision to re-install the old system of popular gubernatorial elections.

In general, there is a growing feeling among the subnational actors that the very philosophy of the center-periphery relations in the field of external relations should be radically changed as the current one has proved to be quite inefficient. There is an obvious need on the federal side to improve its record if it is to cope properly with the challenges that sub-state entities are facing in the context of glocalization and in their pursuance of paradiplomacy. The federal policies should undoubtedly be better in tune and compliment rather than conflict with the policies of the subnational actors. In short, the search for better coordination and an optimal combination of the international strategies of regional/local and central governments' international strategies is bound to continue.

Conclusions

There was a clear shift in the subnational units' motivation as regards paradiplomacy. While in the Yeltsin period paradiplomacy was a part and parcel of the survival strategy as well as an additional arm in the center-periphery tug-of-war, in the Putin and Medvedev eras it became a means to ensure units' sustainable development and

improve their international image and attractiveness. The paradiplomatic activities have become less anarchical and destructive, more pragmatic and skillful, better organized and coordinated with federal diplomacy. Although the clashes periodically take place, both sides – the centre and periphery – now tend to increasingly see paradiplomacy as a common resource rather than an area of contention.

The subnational actors managed to develop an arsenal of specific methods of paradiplomacy that fall into two categories – direct (e.g. seeking legitimacy and international recognition *via* the adoption of local normative acts; signing partnership agreements; establishing representative offices abroad; attracting foreign investment; improving international image; cooperating with international organizations; city-twinning; partaking Euroregions, etc.) and indirect (such as influencing the federal legislation, exploiting the national parliament, capitalizing on federal diplomacy and infrastructure in the regions, exploiting international organizations, etc.). It is considered that the combination of the direct and indirect strategies is the best guarantee of paradiplomacy's success.

The Russian sub-state units have managed – with Moscow's help and without it – to exploit the institutional network that was shaped by supranational (EU), intergovernmental (ND, NCM, CBSS, BEAC/BRC) and subnational actors and now is available at the BSR/NE. This rather dense network, however, needs better coordination, organization and division of labor to eliminate bottlenecks, bureaucratic procedures, parallelisms and duplications.

As for the paradiplomacy's implications for the Russian domestic and foreign policies it can have negative consequences: further disintegration of the single economic, financial, administrative and cultural space; the rise of interest group politics answering to parochial interests; emergence of self-willing and outward-oriented local elites; partial regionalization and privatization of security and military structures; inconsistency of the international strategy caused by the regional elites' intervening the decision-making process; and even – theoretically - the rise of separatism and secessionism, which could (hypothetically) result in disintegration of the country.

However, on the other hand, the gradually growing international activities of subnational actors also bring a number of positive changes. First and foremost, paradiplomacy encourages further democratization of the Russian administrative system, including managing the external relations of regions and municipalities. Paradiplomacy – being a part of the devolution process - has also helped to discredit the “top-down” model of the Russian federalism and encouraged to replace it with the “bottom-up” process with very lively grass-roots. Moreover, international cooperation has helped many regions-particularly remote and border regions-not only to survive the transition period but turn their marginality into the asset/advantage. Devolution of power in Russia boosted foreign relations of the subnational units and made them real international actors. Finally, paradiplomacy serves as an instrument for problem-solving with respect to Russia's relations with neighboring countries. In this regard, paradiplomacy also has a very important integrative function: it prevents Russia's marginalization or international isolation, and helps to bridge different civilizations.

This analysis not only demonstrates that paradiplomacy offers opportunities for developing the Russian democracy; it shows that paradiplomacy already has an infrastructure and positive results. This phenomenon will undoubtedly continue to play an important transformative role in Russia's future. Paradiplomacy does not cause the further disintegration of the country. Instead, it can serve as a catalyst for successful reforms and international integration.

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