

Paradiplomacy, soft power and municipal international cooperation: the case of Guanajuato

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Abstract: Soft power has a prominent role in international relations. Power is usually understood from a relational logic. Soft power presents two problems: its conversion and its measurement at the national level. The goal is to analyze the relation between soft power and the para-diplomatic activity of municipalities. The methodology is based on the confrontation between our understanding of municipal soft power with the understanding developed by Joseph Nye. Certain socioeconomic and geographic conditions may increase the power of subnational governments to act, with or independently from other actors. Results suggest that Guanajuato Capital holds a significant cultural and educational/scientific stock, a foundation for its potential soft power. It is concluded that para-diplomatic activity, anchored in a significant soft power stock, strengthens the possibilities for the conduction of horizontal cooperation between subnational governments. The advantage is that cooperation is not rivalry-prone nor does it need to exercise power over other actors.

Key words: subnational governments, para-diplomacy, soft power, international cooperation, culture.

Resumen: El poder suave tiene un lugar preponderante dentro de las relaciones internacionales. El poder suele entenderse desde una lógica relacional. El poder suave presenta dos problemas: la conversión y su medición intra-Estatal. El objetivo es analizar la relación entre poder suave y la actividad paradiplomática de los municipios. La metodología parte de una contrastación entre nuestro entendimiento del poder suave municipal con el entendimiento desarrollado por Joseph Nye. Ciertas condiciones socioeconómicas y geográficas pueden aumentar el poder de un gobierno subnacional de actuar, con o independientemente de otros actores. Los resultados sugieren que Guanajuato Capital goza de un stock cultural y educativo/científico significativo, fundamento de su poder suave potencial. Se concluye que la actividad paradiplomática anclada en un stock significativo de poder suave permite una cooperación horizontal entre gobiernos subnacionales. La ventaja es que la cooperación puede ser no rivalizable y sin necesidad de ejercer poder sobre otro actor.

Palabras clave: gobiernos subnacionales, paradiplomacia, poder suave, cooperación internacional, cultura.

Introduction

After the end of the Cold War and the increasing erosion of the hegemonic role of the Nation-State as a locus for political and ideological struggles that characterized the XX century, new topics appeared in the international agenda. Concepts such as power and diplomacy have been reconfigured. There is considerable academic literature around two concepts in vogue: soft power and paradiplomacy. Both concepts are useful because they reflect undiscussable sociopolitical changes: the erosion of the Nation-State, increasing or deepening federalism. Hard power, dominant for centuries, presently has limited effectiveness to contain global problems such as environmental issues and pandemics, among others.

Criekemans (2010) identifies three waves in the development of sub-state diplomacy, mainly in Europe: 1) as of the eighties, a growing number of noncentral governmental actors tries to attract Foreign Direct Investment (FDI); 2) in the nineties, with the creation of a series of juridical instruments for diplomatic activities (parallel and complementary to federal diplomacy); and, 3) presently, among foreign affairs, a strategic reorientation of the geopolitical and functional priorities and attempts to integrate external instruments and accomplish a sub-state international policy within a whole with good performance.

Even though there is abundant literature on soft power and paradiplomacy, each one separate from the other, existing studies that deal with them together (Neves, 2010; Lawrie, 2016; Mesa and González, 2016; Dallanegra, 2018) make them from the State standpoint, not from the viewpoint, interests and needs of subnational actors. The proposal is to jointly analyze these concepts, as well as the implications, possibilities and restrictions offered by its analysis as an instrument of action in service of municipal administrations.

This work is composed of four sections. The first presents a brief typology of power, pointing at some problems regarding soft power analysis. The second shows problems and limits of the calculation, but mainly the limited usefulness of the national power measurement, which forces to adjectivize power in more specific territorialities. The third analyzes the relationship between paradiplomacy and power in the international activity of subnational governments, particularly for municipalities. The fourth section elucidates the sort of soft power (potential) that the municipality of Guanajuato has, the specificity of the agreement with the socioeconomic, cultural and geographic conditions of this municipality and the possibilities for its conversion.

The main goal is to theoretically analyze the relationship between soft power and paradiplomatic activities of municipal administrations on the basis of geographic and sociocultural analyses that allow identifying strengths and difficulties to successfully perform paradiplomatic activities.

The methodology is qualitative; in table 1, Nye's (2004 and 2011) dominant understanding of soft power is contrasted with our own proposal.¹ Table 2 breaks down the stock of cultural and educational/scientific resources which Guanajuato City has, that is, the capital city proper not the State. It is argued that, adding to an adequate sampling, they can become effective soft power (capacity to attract other subnational actors to act *with* them) for such municipality. Finally, the survey applied to six demographic segments that live or visit the city allows noticing that Guanajuato may become an international actor that shares its expertise, and also emulates the best international practices to solve more pressing problems.

The questions that guide this research are: how can paradiplomacy help attain the interests and needs of municipal administrations? What is the composition of the soft power stock of Guanajuato City? What geographic and socioeconomic characteristics of the municipality of Guanajuato make successful paradiplomacy easy / difficult?

The central hypothesis is that in the face of difficulties posed by complicated negotiations between States, their agendas do not always match with the needs and interests of the municipalities, the latent resource of hard power in interstate relationships, paradiplomacy is a less ambiguous, more expedite mechanism to help meet the needs and interests in municipal agendas than traditional diplomacy; though, not every municipality has a geographic location and / or socioeconomic and/or cultural characteristics that facilitate successful diplomacy. The analysis of the stock of soft power (potential) of particular territorialities may be useful to predict the feasibility of paradiplomacy.

Brief review of power and its typology; some problems in the analysis of soft power

Few concepts are as crucial in social sciences as power. Nohlen and Schultze (2006: 1048) notice that even though it is a basic concept of various disciplines in Political Sciences, as a concept "it escapes from univocal apprehension, since not only is it valued in a controversial manner, but also analytically and descriptively developed from the most diverse general perspectives".

1 All tables are at the end of the article in Annex (Editor's note).

Bobbio *et al.* (2002: 1190) consider that “in its most general meaning, the word power designates the capability or possibility to act, produce effects and may be referred to individuals and human groups such as objects or natural phenomena”. Portinário (2000: 549) notices: “As a very general term, power is the capability of a force to produce effects in an environment” and adds “in a sociological sense, power is always the power of man upon man, that is to say, capability to produce important effects on another man’s behavior” (Stoppino, 1995; Portinário, 2000: 549).

From a strictly social standpoint, for Bobbio *et al.* (2002: 1190) “[...] power needs and arises from the capability to act, turned into a man’s capability to define the behavior of another”. Relational power may resort to persuasion, influence, manipulation or even brute force (Piñón, 2000: 543).

Among scholars of interstate relations, it is common to interiorize and naturalize the definitions and meanings of the sorts of relational power. It is assumed that power, either soft, hard or intelligent, has domination, control, submission, alignment, and complicity as a goal, or in the best of cases, the acceptance of what a State wants from another State. Then, among the three theories of power referred by Portinário (2000) –substantialism, subjectivist, and relational– at least in studies on interstate politics, relational theories seem to predominate, maybe the result of the central place realism has historically had in the discipline.

In this regard, Dunne and Schmidt (2011) point at two realist considerations about power: 1) it is a relational concept, it is not exercised alone, but in relation with another entity. 2) It is a relative concept; not only calculations about our own power have to be made, but also about the power that other State actors possess.

For the specific case of international politics, Hernández-Vela (1999: 604) defines power as: “the capability international society subjects have to accomplish their internal and external goals, and the faculty to impose their will upon the others so that they facilitate and contribute to their fulfilling”. In relational connotations, what seems to be dominating is not the debate on what is accepted as a “given” reality –power is a relationship between a state or transnational actor v. another state or transnational actor– but on the adjectivization of the relational situation. The central debate revolves around Nye’s (2011) typology of relational power: soft, hard and intelligent power.

The preferred way to understand power in international relations, at least up to the end of the XX century had been that of hard power. For Nye (2011: 20), hard power may resemble a “push”, whereas soft powers may resemble “attraction”. By and large, resources associated to hard power are tangible

and include strategies focused on military interventions, coercive diplomacy and economic sanctions (Wilson, 2008: 114). Realistic approaches stress the value of hard power. Soft power includes intangible factors such as institutions, ideas, values, culture and the legitimacy perceived in policies. The approaches of liberal institutionalism tend to emphasize soft power (Wilson, 2008).

Nye (2011) developed the concept of intelligent power to balance the false perception that soft power on its own may produce effective foreign policy. Nye (2011: 22-23) defines intelligent power as “the capacity to combine hard and soft power resources into effective strategies”. The author recognizes that neither one nor the other solve all the problems. Intelligent power, for Nye, may address the heart of the problem, *i.e.*, the conversion of power.

Boulding (1989: 1) underscores the three faces of power: 1) destructive or threatening power; 2) production or interchange power; and, 3) integrative power. For the study of paradiplomacy, the first one is not useful, despite Boulding recognizes that the three faces usually exist in different social groups.

Soft power starts from the persuasion to adhere to regulations and aspirations. Instead of forcing, it coopts and starts from attraction, not coercion (Nye, 2004). Instead of thinking of power “upon”, thinking of “with”, when it is intended that others adhere to values and/or to a culture. Soft power implies the capacity to obtain the result desired by coopting measures at the moment of defining the agenda, persuasion and positive attraction.

The problem with the concept of soft power is that its overextension and lax and acritical use tend to virtually refer everything: sports, gastronomy, communication media, literature, architecture, etc. Nye (2011) invites to avoid the confusion of soft power as a synonym to everything different from military force.

The issue of conversion, the process by means of which state resources and capabilities express and produce results, is present in Nye as well as in Treverton and Jones (2005), who consider States, previous to the crucial conversion level, “capability containers”. The various capabilities are potential resources as long as they do not become instruments useful for the States. Without conversion, we would be speaking of simple potential resources of soft power; that is to say, resources are contextual and need objectives, strategies and assessment of results.

The problem of national power: the darkening of differences and asymmetries in pursuit of the power of the “whole”

Common understanding between realists is that power is the exchange currency of interstate relationships; as such, within the international system, they consider there is a constant competence for power. Nye (2011) speaks of the three faces of power: 1) first: threats or rewards to change the behavior of other State against its preferences and initial strategies; the submitted State is aware and feels power (distinguishable is power of command). 2) Second: control of the agenda, which limits the election of the strategies for the submitted State, which may or not be aware of the power employed. 3) Third: the weak State wants the same as the powerful State, with which it would not be necessary to change the initial desires of the weak State.

The powerful states help create and model basic beliefs, perceptions and preferences of weak States, which are not aware of the power exercised by the powerful (power to coopt). In the second and third faces, power is subtle and less visible. The problem with the three faces is that the final understanding is still relational, regardless whether it is a product of open domination or (subtle) manipulation.

There are various methodologies to measure the power of the States. One reductionist measurement of hard power usually measures resources of tangible capabilities –population, technology, and military power– (Treverton and Jones, 2005: 1). Most of the methodologies are nowadays more sophisticated. The tendency points at complex formulas (Treverton and Jones, 2005) which end up in one way or another in what Nye (2011) calls “intelligent power”. A form of measuring power, widely disseminated, is the one by Strategic Assessment Group (SAG) (Treverton and Jones, 2005). State power is calculated as the percentage of the total global power. Under such methodology there are 14 States with at least 1% of global power (Treverton and Jones, 2015: 3).

For the purpose of this study, there are two large problems with the existing measurements of power: the first is intelligent power, regardless of authors and methodologies, it entails the art of combining hard and soft power in a contextual manner. This is, indeed, is an option for central governments, however it is not a viable approach for subnational governments, even in the case of superpowers. Subnational governments cannot make use of hard power resources central governments control (army, navy, air force, coast guard, treaties, economic policy, monetary policy, embargoes, etc.).

This restriction in the access to resources of hard power, for example, in Sydney, Australia, is recognized by Lawrie (2016), who points that the absence of control and access to such resources does not prevent the use of soft power to configure regional networks for governance to protect or increase the power of subnational actors. Then, hard and intelligent power are discarded in paradiplomacy.

The second problem has to do with soft power. Even though there is an important number of indexes and measurements that exhibit soft power, on occasion to speak of prestige, public diplomacy, of the brands of the country or stock of soft power per se, the common problem is that results and measurements refer to the State's soft power.

Some soft power measurements, gross or thematically, include: Country Brand Index, East West Global Index, Anholt-GfK Roper Nation Brands Index, *Índice Elcano de Presencia Global*, Soft Power 30 (Villanueva, 2012: 28-30). Among the indices above, Mexico holds the following positions: Country Brand Index 2014-2015 (Future Brand, 2015: 53), 55th place at global level, and 55th out of 75 countries included in this study.

A paradox that distinguishes such index, and that is in line with our argument in the present text, is that a high coincidence in the existence of a country (gastronomy, culture, architecture, etc.) result of the stock of resources, it is not the same as a popular or appreciated country brand. Italy and Mexico are pointed out as instances of this. In East West Global Index 2011 (East-West Communications, undated), Mexico holds the place 192 out of 200, being the worst classified country in Latin America.

Once more, a clear proof that having considerable potential or stock of soft power is not the same as its conversion, owing to which, in absence of conversion, neither muralism, mariachis, tequila, Nobel prizes, beaches, pyramids or gastronomy are synonyms to soft power. In Anholt-GfK Roper Nation Brands Index (GfK, 2016), Mexico holds the 33rd place in 2015, worsening its position in previous years (2013 and 2014). In *Índice Elcano de Presencia Global*, Mexico locates in the 23rd place out of 110 countries. In the dimension of our interest, soft power, Mexico holds the 27th place. The above gives Mexico only 0.9% of the total global presence. Finally, in The Soft Power 30 (McClory, 2018: 43), Mexico does not appear. Brazil and Argentina locate in places, 29 and 30, respectively.

There are at least two difficulties with soft power: results take place at national level, homogenizing a country, with which results, good or bad, hardly tell us anything about differenced territorialities, not only intrastate,

but intra-entity. For example, what the following fact expresses: following McClory (2010: 5), Mexico would be at the 22nd place out of 26 countries.

Does this reflect a homogeneous reality? Does it equally impact all the states? Unfortunately, in the 2018 listing of the most insecure cities in the world, Guanajuato, as a federated state, has two of the 50 most insecure cities at international level (*Periódico Correo*, 2019); However, reality is far from being homogeneous inside the state. San Miguel de Allende (Gordoa, 2018) was the best city to visit in the world in 2017 and 2018. Indeed, the perception and reality of San Miguel de Allende is not that of the state of Guanajuato. This is the case of Guanajuato City.

The second problem is there are indicators of the sub-indexes of soft power that cannot be measured in the case of states and provinces, much less in the case of municipalities, counties or districts; but such difficulty shall not prevent the analysis of soft power at subnational level, on the contrary, it poses the challenge of devising forms to measure it.

A reason not to study paradiplomatic relationships as a natural deviation and/or automatic derivation of interstate relationships is because of the nonunitary nature of subnational governments (as compared with the seemingly unitary nature of Nation-States as rational unitary actors). The diversity in the partisan composition of subnational governments, the possible divergence in the governors' visions, the goals and interests of State and municipal development plans v. National Development Plan (NDP) has been studied in Mexico by Velázquez and León (2016) and Schiavon (2010 and 2015).

In the case of Schiavon (2010 and 2015), in spite of certainly observing the degree of paradiplomatic activities of state governments may vary in states governed by parties with different affiliations, it is also noticed that when there is a juxtaposition between the federal government and the state with international activity (being from different parties), there is a tendency to start or increase paradiplomatic activities.

For their part, for Velázquez and León (2016), partisanship does not seem to be as important as the personality, political ambitions and preferences of the incumbent governor. They contrast, for instance, two Mexico City mayors of the same party (Andrés Manuel López Obrador, nowadays Mexican president and Marcelo Ebrard, presently his chancellor) had very different approaches. López Obrador, as pointed out by Velázquez and León (2016: 182), has constantly considered that "the best foreign policy is domestic policy". For his part, Ebrard promoted a rather dynamical foreign policy, which is noticed in the advance Mexico City had in international

participation, from a low level in 2004 to very high in 2009 (Schiavon, 2015: 111). A relevant result of the democratic transition in Mexico and the existence of many parties in the composition of the various government levels. Out of the 32 Mexican states, after the elections on June 1st, 2018, PAN governs 11; PRI: 12; Morena: 5; PRD: 2; MC: 1, while Nuevo León is governed by an independent.

For Guanajuato, out of the 46 municipalities, the allotment was as follows: 25 for PAN; 11, PRI; 5, the coalition Morena-PT-PES; 2, Partido Verde; 2, PRD; and 1, Nueva Alianza. This dominance of PAN in Guanajuato does not reflect the distribution of governments in the country.

For its part, far from PAN and PRI in state governments and in the state of Guanajuato, Morena had an overwhelming majority in the presidential election, in addition to being a majority in the senator and federal representative chambers. Given the effective complex party system in Mexico, it seems complicated there is single vision, interests and objectives among the various national, state and municipal governments, including their vision of foreign policy.

Lecours (2008: 12) considers that paradiplomacy is able to strengthen democracy by drawing near certain elements of affairs alien to people, and adds: “in any country, particularly large and diverse, public policy is the aggregate of many diverse interests, values and identities. This is the case of domestic and foreign policy”.

Paradiplomacy – soft power in municipal international activity

In spite of the directions, regulations, and minimal expectations of national alignment in federal competences, a product of the political, juridical, and administrative decentralization process, the realities of the Mexican political-partisan map already pointed out create: 1) competition for power; 2) divergent or conflicting visions, objectives, and interests; 3) specific competences, in some cases concurring, while others excluding, that force and enable at once to have private local agendas, which contests the usefulness of feasibly linking municipalities and states by means of traditional (federal) diplomatic channels.

Sub-state governments are considered emerging or established actors in domestic policy. In a broader international context, they may be international actors as well, nevertheless as prompted by Sarquís (2016: 17-18) the State, as a main actor at the international stage, is an international legal subject, which is not the case of the other emerging government actors (federated

states, provinces, municipalities, etc.) for despite they are administrative structures in charge of resources, the State is still the international actor privileged by the legal personality it enjoys as a sovereign state. To deepen into the differences, Lecours (2008: 14) notices that sub-state units:

escape any simple categorization as international actors, since they are neither sovereign states nor non-state agents in the sense of social movements, or non-governmental organizations; however, their conceptualization as organizations not only in domestic policy, but in the international political agenda seems increasingly necessary.

In Mexico, the paradiplomacy of subnational governments is ruled by the Law on the Celebration of Treaties of 1992, which recognizes and allows the international activity of subnational governments with “one or various agencies of international governments or international organizations, regardless of their denomination, either it comes from a previously approved treaty or not” (Cámara de Diputados, 1992: 1).

Although the law allows paradiplomatic activity, it clearly defines that it will become Interinstitutional agreements (IIA), which shall “exclusively circumscribe to the attributions proper to the offices and decentralized agencies of the subscribing government levels” (Cámara de Diputados, 1992: 1); additional to the actors’ dissemination of such IIA, they must report *Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores*, SRE [Secretariat of Foreign Affairs] and receive a ruling, which, in case of being an approval, shall be registered at the secretariat above.

The phenomenon of regional governments fostering international relationships is frequently known as paradiplomacy (Lecours, 2008). Paradiplomacy, as pointed out by Lecours, has been more visible in liberal democracies in industrialized occidental countries; some clear examples are: Quebec, the Basque country, the Flemish and Wallonia regions, and a number of French and German regions. Paradiplomacy, which by virtue of the sovereign aspirations of a subnational government which guides international relationships, has made States reluctant to allow a higher degree of international activity of subnational governments; perhaps the most studied case would be Catalonia (Tavares, 2016).

Even though Lecours (2008) recognizes that each State and its subnational actors have various arrangements regarding scope, faculties, conduction and restrictions for paradiplomatic activities, *grosso modo* the author recognizes three activity layers in paradiplomacy: 1) economic aspects (typically attraction of FDI, international firms, identification of new markets for exportation); 2) cooperation, which may be multidimensional (cultural, educational, technical, technological, etc.) does not usually focus

on economic gains (not immediate at least), but a part of decentralized international cooperation is commonly materialized as educational interchanges, cultural assistance, developmental assistance, and scientific and/or technical cooperation; 3) political considerations (a different political-cultural identity than the one promoted by the central State; by and large, it characterizes by the search of political autonomy or intention to influence on the behavior of neighboring foreign regions.

Lecours (2008: 4) expresses that more than one layer, even all of them, might overlap. However, more emphasis is made on some of them. For the first, distinguishable is the US and Canadian paradiplomacy, not Quebecois though. For the second type, there are several regions, particularly France and Germany; whereas for the third, two cases are noticeable, Quebec, the Flemish region, Catalonia, and the Basque Country. In the case of the present study, while the state of Guanajuato, because of its characteristics, has ideal conditions to decide on the second layer of paradiplomacy. Even if it is true that in the long term, Guanajuato might explore a combination with the first layer.

The problem (and solution at once), from the approach of the present work, starts from assumptions on the link between paradiplomacy and power. Power, as commented in the first section, tends to be seen as a vying, excluding, relational, and ultimately a means to exert open coercion, bribery, influence (with various degrees of subtlety) upon another actor.

Under the logic of paradiplomacy, it would be naïve to believe there is no power involved in paradiplomatic activity. Even if power does not entail the unfolding of hard-power resources, certainly subnational international actors have interests and needs that have to be addressed, and in some cases require decentralized international cooperation. Nevertheless, desire or will to cooperate with other subnational actors belonging to other jurisdictions are not enough.

As suggested by the neoliberal vision of cooperation (Prado, 2009), the States (in this case, subnational governments) are driven by their own interests to cooperate; hardly ever, a State (a federated entity), province or municipality that cannot offer any sort of expertise or advantage to its counterpart might incentivize cooperation, as decentralized as it may be.

Power, for the purposes of this study, is understood as: 1) action capacity (non-rivaling, non-excluding, and nonrelational capability; much less coercion or domination upon the other); 2) available resource(s) for the actor who seeks available paradiplomatic relationships that may be attractive and/or interesting for other actors.

What is interesting is there is no competence for the available resources; instead, paradiplomatic relationships established between actors will coexist with the undeniable power relationships among States that contain the entities involved in paradiplomatic relationships and activities, without the total consequences affecting the whole of subnational government relationships.

The issue of rivalry is not a minor issue; in point of fact, Villanueva (2012) considers a possible explanation for the image very deteriorated in Mexico during Felipe Calderón's administration, adding to undeniable domestic problems, regional and cultural competence with Brazil, Argentina and even Spain, which as competitors might be benefitted by Mexico's misfortune and negative image. In this way, the image of a "violent country" or "threatening country" might impact on investments, tourism, multilateral diplomacy, and symbolic leadership (Villanueva, 2012).

For the case of paradiplomacy of Guanajuato City, the success or failure of *Festival Internacional Cervantino*, Guanajuato International Film Festival, to mention some events, will entail larger assistance to festivals in Guanajuato's sister cities, in places as distant as Valparaíso, Umeå, Ashland or Avignon; more so, as it is not an industrial sector, Guanajuato will not compete with industrial investments that intend to attract sister cities with noticeable industrial activities.

Paradiplomacy, understood as the "phenomenon of regional governments developing international relationships" (Lecours, 2008: 1), does not necessarily has to start from a relational understanding of power, at least not one in which the actor (A) expects to modify the behavior of (B). The possibility of transcending the relational understanding of power does not mean power is absent. It just means that the relational understanding of power may be replaced with substantial understanding, in which power is understood as the capability to act or produce effects (Bobbio *et al.*, 2002).

Even if power involves contact, interaction with other actors, and as a consequence of the absence of hard-power tools available to other subnational governments, it considers the structural possibility of much more horizontal relationships among subnational governments. To sum up: 1) it does not eradicate power in relationships and/or contacts among subnational governments, simply decreases (or disappears) the possibility to resort to hard power, even if the possibility of resorting to it remains as a constant and actual possibility; and, 2) an understanding of "substantial" power becomes more viable, made explicit as the simple capability to act and produce effects

(not necessarily *upon* the others), by transcending the dominating logic in interstate relationships, that of relational power.

There is the possibility that in a contact-relation among subnational governments exists a situation of positive power, where all the involved actors increase their power, not *versus* the others as indicated by relational logic, but understood as the capacity of acting or producing effects without affecting their counterparts. This is the fundamental difference between this work and Nye (2011), for whom what is important seems to be who predominates or *prevails*.

The present article suggests that soft power involved in subnational relationships is different from national soft power due to the following reasons:

1. Soft power is necessary, it is logic to think there should be an attraction capacity to establish relationships with partners or counterparts.
2. The stock of soft power is much more focalized. The soft power available for subnational governments is limited by geographic, cultural, linguistic, demographic, commercial realities that will hardly be national conditions as a set.
3. It is possible to think that power is understood as the authors' complementary action and nondependent on involved actors; that is to say, the subnational government that seeks cooperation with other subnational actors is capable of performing its functions and actions independently; however, it can be done at a lower cost, more independently, effectively, with more agility and/or enriched if it has the collaboration of other subnational actors.
4. In the case there is an interdependence, this may be much more symmetric than it seems to be when two States have an interdependence situation. More so, the simplicity and costs of undertaking and/or suspending collaborative actions may be lower in a context of paradiplomatic relationships than by means of internstate relationships.

It is considered that it is suitable to analyze soft power in municipal paradiplomacy by means of three components and/or moments of it. The first is the stock of potential soft power. The second is the attraction of offering an advantage, expertise or resource for the counterparts with which it is intended to cooperate. The third, which by the way, addresses the issue of conversion of power already approached, is the generation of specific results and/or legacy useful for all the cooperating parts, a product of paradiplomatic activity.

Indeed, as soon as one of these forms in which we consider soft power is “packed”, by means of what Anholt coined in 1996 as a Nation Brand. This way, Anholt (2011) refers to this brand, Calvento and Colombo (2009) put forward City Brand as one of the options available for subnational governments their national and/or international stance to potentiate their capabilities and develop competitive advantages.

Calvento and Colombo (2009), for Argentina, consider city brand as an answer to the difficulties experienced by nation brand, motivated by the 2001-2002 crisis. Even if owing to different reasons, Mexico faces a security crisis for more than a decade, which forces particular territories to search for a differentiation regarding the Mexico brand.

As Anholt, Calvento and Colombo (2009) underscore, the city brand must go beyond the approach of mere marketing and/or development of a logotype, owing to which it is necessary to provide the brand with content, substantiation and continuity. According to Colomé (regarding country brand), the strategy is to define the identity, where the global context is, both in terms of perception, where it is intended to go and how it is thought to reach such place. Substance refers to the setting into motion of the strategy by means of economic, political and cultural actions that link with the established goals; while symbolic actions serve to communicate the idea intended to project.

The challenge, as stated by Colomé (2014: 9), is that the actor is deemed useful, relevant, even though it is only an aspect of international agenda. Guanajuato City has various options, as it will be noticed in the stock of potential soft power (culture, tourism, education/science). Certainly, the cultural and educational/scientific stock overcomes what may be expectable for a city that, according to 2015 inter-census data (INEGI, 2015), does not surpass 200,000 inhabitants.

In order to prevent the misuse of the city “brand”, Zeraoui and Castillo (2016) bring to mind two conditions that Gutiérrez-Camps (2013) establishes that in order for the city activities to be considered paradiplomacy: the actor that starts the activity must be minimally institutionalized and have political goals: the general interests of the cities have to be represented.

Zeraoui and Castillo (2016) warn about the risks of adopting an urban and entrepreneurial management paradigm; this was also noticed by Calvento and Colombo (2009). For the case of Guanajuato City, as suggested by the theoretical argumentation, its paradiplomatic possibilities largely start from the fact their strengths and potential to offer something to the world are not

anchored to a vision of competence *against* other cities; that is to say, there is no risk of zero-sum games with sister cities.

The above is product of geographic reasons, non-border status and its non-industrial expertise. Guanajuato, owing to its historic and cultural characteristics and its geographic location, may have a broader city project. A product of its cultural and educational/scientific stock might opt for giving centrality to cultural diplomacy, international urban cooperation and the inclusion of various sectors of society (including noneconomic).

As exposed by Añorve and Díaz (2018), a grave problem with IIA –specifically sister cities– is that up to date these instruments have been taken this paradiplomatic instruments as North-South unilateral handouts, expecting to find out the donation that is received year after year from sister cities in the United States.

The logic proposed in this work is that of having a more horizontal, two-way cooperation, not North-South anymore, but from a sister city to Guanajuato, with no hierarchy. In this regard, there are cities that have intended to become sisters with Guanajuato out of practical reasons, by perceiving areas of expertise and/or strength in Guanajuato. The Southern Oregon University considers “vital” its relationship with Universidad de Guanajuato, since in less than half a century after the cities becoming sisters, the latter has received almost 2,000 students from the former (Segura, 2016).

Despite that originally, it was the mining expertise of Universidad de Guanajuato, which was attractive for West Virginia University, at present, for its College of Law, Universidad de Guanajuato is one of its key international partners. In Guanajuato, every two years there is a summer college for law students. As in the case of Southern Oregon University, AH Morgantown-Guanajuato had a strong relationship between the prestigious Notre Dame University and Universidad de Guanajuato as a background. South Bend also recognizes the expertise of Guanajuato City:

Guanajuato goes a long way regarding the promotion of its tourist attractions, in addition to being part of the World Heritage Cities Programme of UNESCO [...] Tourist activities in South Bend concentrate to a large extent in the University of Notre Dame, so the interchange of strategies with Guanajuato may be of great interest for South Bend (City of South Bend, 2010).

Salinas Valley, another sister city, is also interested in establishing cooperation with Guanajuato. The trigger is the “the excess of nurses in Guanajuato is something badly needed in Salinas” (Zamudio, undated). The idea stated in linking the cities is that Hartnell and Universidad de Guanajuato might be able to create a bridge program to allow nurses from Guanajuato

to work in Salinas. Hartnell would offer language courses and training on various topics. Even though, at present, having quality higher education institutions is not a prerogative of large cities, not every population with them can be considered an actual university town. In 2018, a statue called “*Univerciudad*” [Univercity] at the city gates is an example of the university nature of Guanajuato City (Álvarez, 2018).

Considering that the inventory of resources of cultural and educational/scientific soft power (see table 2) is very wide, Guanajuato must not identify and promote itself as a passive junior associate. In this regard, Anholt explains that the best an international actor can do is to take a leadership role in any topic of the international agenda and try to solve it (Trejo and Camhaji, 2014).

Guanajuato’s stock of soft power

Derived from the cultural potentiality of Guanajuato City, it may be considered that, regardless whether the most effective action mechanism for its paradiplomatic activity may be city brand (Zeraoui and Castillo, 2016; Calvento and Colombo, 2009), or else, if it is preferable to take as an axis its long list of Sistering Agreements² in North America, Latin America and the Caribbean, and occidental Europe (Añorve and Díaz, 2018), what is discussable is that cultural diplomacy is the strength of Guanajuato City.

Kang (2013: 4) expresses that cultural diplomacy has two primary dimensions: 1) emphasizes the role of culture by means of soft power; 2) it deals with competitiveness in the global creative economy. The author explains that cultural diplomacy, from its regulatory vision, promotes mutual understanding and cultural cooperation by means of intercultural dialogue and cultural interchange.

Kang (2013) underscores that cultural diplomacy is one with various layers, which struggles for cooperation on the basis of the logic of the pool of common resources to address global concerns, more so, the author considers cultural diplomacy is something more than mere idealism, since it addresses particular objectives of the governments’ foreign policy. By seeing culture as a resource, capital and power, Kang (2013: 10) argues that “culture is a merchandise and a social transformation means”. Guanajuato, then, can

2 The 23 international SA of Guanajuato City are: in North America: Quebec, Ashland, Morgantown, South Bend, Tyler, Salinas Valley and Laredo. In Latin America and the Caribbean: Antigua, La Habana, Cuenca, Arequipa and Valparaíso. In Europe: Alcázar de San Juan, Alcalá de Henares, San Fernando de Cádiz, Toledo, Segovia, Sevilla, Santa Fe de Granada, Spoleto, Avignon, Strasbourg and Umeå.

transform its own reality by means of its cultural strength. Kang suggests combining soft power and cultural diplomacy.

The reader may be wondering what the foundations of the potential soft power stock of Guanajuato City are. Resorting to McClory index (2010), though adapted to a municipality (geographic considerations are added), the possibility of building a stock of cultural and educational/scientific resources for Guanajuato City (see table 2). Since the non-rivalry in the conception of power is emphasized, it is irrelevant to compare it with other municipalities in the country.

For the purpose of this work, it is sufficient to identify the desirability of the city for the world, and the expertise that might turn it into a non-junior partner, to establish international horizontal cooperation, non-subordinated, city to city. The analysis of the culture sub-index allows identifying the stock of cultural power Guanajuato has.

For reasons of simplicity, only the stock of cultural and cultural/scientific resources is analyzed, leaving aside other resources. This seems sensible, it is clear that Guanajuato City does not have significant expertise in other areas. The stock presented in Table 2 must be considered within the demographic reality of Guanajuato City, which by 2015 had 184,239 inhabitants (INEGI, 2015). The municipality does not have much demographic weight at national level as it holds the 123rd place.³ Even within the federated State (of Guanajuato), it holds the sixth place (INEGI, 2015).

Certainly, the cultural and educational/scientific stock proposed in the present work provides the municipality with desirability and reinforces its paradiplomatic activity. Official data from *Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores* [Secretariat of Foreign Affairs] (Schiavon, 2015)⁴ do not reflect the reality of SA which Guanajuato City celebrated; more so, most of these agreements have been concreted after the request of cities abroad, which verifies the attraction power of Guanajuato City.

By October 2018, adding to the 23 international sistering agreements, a number of minutes in the Town Council confirm a long list of cities and countries that want to link to Guanajuato City: Schiedam, Holland; Rosh Ha Ayin, Israel; Fuzhou, China; Ibagué, Colombia; Sheki, Azerbaijan;

3 To have an idea of the light demographic weight of Guanajuato City, considering the 2015 inter-census count by INEGI, it is possible to verify that 31 out of 32 states comprised in Mexico have at least one municipality more populated than Guanajuato City (being the state of Tlaxcala the only exception).

4 Actually, problem is that only two SA subscribed by Guanajuato City are registered at *Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores*, which makes the researchers' work difficult.

and, Mesa, United States (Añorve and Díaz, 2018). Among the countries, one finds Colombia and India⁵, both after their participations in Festival Internacional Cervantino (FIC).

Nevertheless, by having a strong first component, the potential soft power stock and of a second component, willingness to cooperate with other subnational governments, as expressed by the SA, it is relevant, bearing in mind the third component or moment, the strategies for conversion to reflect on results to satisfy the interests and needs of the municipality; likewise, bearing in mind the considerations of Schiavon (2010 and 2015), and Velázquez and León (2016) about the partisan juxtaposition and the incumbent governors' preferences.

Early in 2019, given the juxtaposition between municipal and state governments, regarding the federal one, greater dynamism might be expected from municipal paradiplomatic activities. However, Alejandro Navarro's administration (municipal president of Guanajuato City from PAN) seemed to have diluted the commission on excellence, in charge of paradiplomatic activities, i.e., *Comisión de Patrimonio de la Humanidad y Ciudades Hermanas* [Commission for World Heritage Sites and Sister Cities], which existed in the previous PRI administration (2015-2018). Such commission was replaced by a multithemed one, *Comisión de Cultura y Relaciones Internacionales, Educación, Recreación y Deporte* [Commission for Culture, International Relationships, Education, Leisure, and Sports]; in this way, previous endeavors may be wasted.

The geographic context that conditions and/or potentializes the paradiplomatic activity of Guanajuato City, as it is neither a border nor industrial city, the location in the geographic center of Mexico is a factor in favor of the municipality. Its location, 400 kilometers away from two of the largest cities in Mexico (Mexico City and Guadalajara) opens wide roads to link with the large economic and political poles of the country.

A nonindustrial city, it is 15 minutes away from the industrial corridor of the state of Guanajuato, which comprises the largest automotive cluster in Mexico. It is less than 30 km away from the domestic port of Silao. The annual average temperature, 17.6°C, makes it the ideal place to live; as well, being a non-seismic city adds to livability. If we consider that one of the greatest well-founded fears of the governments as regards paradiplomacy is secessionist intentions (Lecours, 2008) present in this activity (Tavares, 2016), Guanajuato is far from the north and south boundaries.

5 India has shown interest in becoming sister with Guanajuato City after its participation in the most recent edition of FIC (Ochoa, 2018).

After reviewing the important stock of potential cultural soft power of Guanajuato City, it is necessary to address the issue of conversion. Nye (2011) warns that despite the potential components of soft power, it does not exist *per se*. Villanueva (2012: 31) brings to mind that “the topic of Mexico’s reputation and image abroad concerns to the public functionaries with SRE as decreed by the law”. One might think that among the competencies, scope, strategies and assessment of the SA which the Municipality of Guanajuato celebrated, the municipal government agents, on behalf of the government, and *ad hoc* citizen committees, on behalf of the citizens, would be in charge of keeping the image and reputation of Guanajuato city before their partners abroad.

Even if it is true that Guanajuato City, by virtue of its important cultural and educational/scientific stock is an international partner desirable for other cities, it also has its own problems, which have to be dealt with urgently.

In this sense, a four-student team helped carry out a survey from mid-August to mid-December, 2017. A total of 1775 surveys were applied to merchants, students, citizens, national and international tourists, and restauranteurs. It was considered that the six surveyed segments are local or visitant population groups who live or experience the city in a differenced manner, with a view to having a broader idea of the urban problems the city faces.

The number of surveys was to statistically meet a 95-percent confidence level and also a 5-percent error margin. The global perception of the three main problems of Guanajuato City are: insecurity, solid waste, and mobility (transport, traffic, and parking spaces).

For the usual residents of the city (citizens, restauranteurs, merchants and students) problems are: 1) insecurity; 2) solid waste; and, 3) mobility (traffic in particular). For nonresidents (national and foreign tourists), the three problems are frequently the same for residents; though there are differences in the order of importance, depending on the nationality of tourists, domestic or international.

For national tourists, the order was: parking spaces, insecurity, and solid waste; whereas for foreigners: solid waste, traffic and insecurity. At least, solid waste and transport are areas clearly in charge of the municipality, not the state or federal governments, which justifies resorting to paradiplomatic activities. Guanajuato City may harness the numerous SA it has celebrated to emulate the best practices that help overcome its most pressing needs by means of international cooperation.

As previously mentioned, such cooperation is not susceptible to produce rivalry with and/or exercise power *upon* another actor. Higher security, more cleanliness, and better mobility in Guanajuato do not compromise security, cleanliness and, mobility in sister cities.

Neves (2010: 17), whom we paraphrase, considers that one of the key factors behind the success of emergent economic and cultural powers is the gradual consolidation of cultural cutting-edge regions in the country, which have had roles as main drivers of economic, innovation centers and fundamental links with the global society.

Neves refers state actors: China, Brazil, and India. Indeed, not only geographic, demographic, historic, economic and sociocultural characteristics of Guanajuato are very different from those studied by the author above; this does not prevent us from adapting his findings to the potential Guanajuato has for Mexico and as an essential door of the country to the world. The spirit of Neves' work (2010: 26) and ours are the same: "paradiplomacy is a strategic channel to create and consolidate the States' soft power".

Conclusions

Unlike the relational conception, which dominates in international relationships, this work supports a substantialist conception, in which power, in the paradiplomatic activity of subnational governments, is understood as the capability to act of a political commonwealth without affecting and/or rivaling with other international actors. Furthermore, at present, despite the existence of various and diverse methodologies to measure the State's soft and intelligent powers, the unitary conception, indebted with realism, obscures, hides and suppresses territorial differences and particularities inside the States, building unitary problem images in what usually are realities of pluripartisan agendas and interests, nonhomogeneous, with programmatic diversity, both inside the States and inside the federated entities themselves.

In this way, a product of democratization, decentralization and resurging federalism, national "interests" are not shared by subnational governments; a noticeable instance is that of Guanajuato City and the state of Guanajuato, both subnational actors that come from a party different from the federal at present. The substantiation of soft national power does not necessarily reflect the particular stock of soft power resources the municipalities have. Mexico's industrial vocation over the last two decades is not the vocation of the Municipality of Guanajuato City, even if it is so for the State of Guanajuato.

The municipality of Guanajuato City, a product of its geographic location, close to large cities in Mexico, though distant from the border, linked to its important stock of cultural, educational/scientific resources and expertise, mainly being a municipality with fewer than 200,000 inhabitants, produce tangible resources for cities abroad as reflected in 23 SA and other cities looking for a SA.

At once, Guanajuato has three large problems that have to be resolved, partly by means of international cooperation; however, as suggested by Nye, soft power needs conversion to become “power”. An imperious task of municipal authorities is to ensure that geographic location and the stock of cultural and educational/scientific resources may turn into soft power, non-rivaling and into capability to establish international horizontal cooperation, in which Guanajuato is not a mere help recipient, but be able to share its expertise with its sister cities abroad and/or else, it may become an interesting city brand.

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Annex

Table 1

Implications of power

	Power in Nye	Our proposal
Sort of power	Intelligent (soft and hard)	Soft
Exclusions	No sort of power is discarded	Hard and intelligent powers are discarded
How is it used?	“Upon” and “with” another actor (contextual decision)	“independent from” or “with” another actor (never upon another actor)
Why can it be used in the way proposed?	The asymmetries of power between states are evident	The asymmetries of power between cities and/or municipalities are less evident for there is no hard power
Understanding power	Relational (versus)	Substantialist (power as a capability to act)
Approach	Power generates interdependence	Power is independently used (the participation of the other is desirable, but not indispensable)
Is there rivalry in cooperation?	It is possible to compete	Cooperation is not rivaling (in the absence of border vicinity)

Source: own elaboration based on Nye (2004 and 2011).

Table 2

Stock of potential soft power resources for Guanajuato City

Stock of cultural resources	
Number of tourists/ no. visitors	861,000 tourists / 2.6 million visitors
Local and national cultural events annually held	Festival de la Cerveza Artesanal, Vocho Fiesta, Festival Internacional de Órgano “Guillermo Pinto Reyes”, Festival Nacional de Tunas y Estudiantinas, Feria del Libro y Festival Universitario, Festival Mandonnari, Semana de Música Sacra, Temporada de la Orquesta Sinfónica de Guanajuato, Muestra Estatal de Teatro, Festival de Teatro Áureo, Festival Medieval, Noche Porfirista, Expo Cerveza Artesanal and Catando México.
International events held annually	Festival Internacional Cervantino (FIC), Guanajuato International Film Festival (GIFF), Rally-FIA.
Historic buildings, monuments and streets	Teatro Juárez, Mercado Hidalgo, Alhóndiga de Granaditas, monumento a El Pípila, Universidad de Guanajuato, Plaza de la Paz, Benemérita y Centenaria Escuela Normal Oficial de Guanajuato, Calle Subterránea Presa de la Olla, Casa de Moneda, Ex Hacienda de San Gabriel de Barrera, plus the Basílica Colegiata de nuestra Señora de Guanajuato, and numberless churches, temples and chapels.
Museums	Museum of Mummies in Guanajuato, House of Legends, Iconographic Museum of Quixote. Diego Rivera Museum House, Purgatory Museum House (Inquisition), Museum of Alhóndiga de Granaditas (Regional Museum of Guanajuato), Gene Byron Museum House, Museum of the Peoples of Guanajuato, La Valenciana Museum Mine, Primer Depósito Contemporary Art Museum, Tía Aura Museum House, Former Hacienda San Gabriel de Barrera Museum, Olga Costa-José Chávez Morado Museum House (Art), Alfredo Dugés Natural History Museum, Former Hacienda del Cochero Museum (historic dungeon), Wax museum, Count Rul Museum House (art), and Palace of Powers Museum.
Theaters	Juárez theater, Main Theater, and Cervantes theater.

Historic characters with international projection	Diego Rivera (muralist), Jorge Ibargüengoitia (writer), Jorge Negrete (singer/songwriter), Emma Godoy (philosopher, psychologist, educator, writer and presenter), Juan Silveti Reynoso (bullfighter), Ponciano Aguilar (mine engineer).
	Stock of educational/scientific resources
Foreign students in research summer	137 students
Foreign students in mobility programs	380 students (17 countries)
Foreign students learning Spanish language	121 students (January – June and August – December 2018)
International cooperation agreements	172 foreign institutions (29 countries)
International mobility national ranking	Third national place
Ranking of Universidad de Guanajuato	12 th national place
Researchers in Sistema Nacional de Investigadores, SNI [National System of Researchers]	249 members in the campus (543 in UG)
National ranking of SNI researchers	Eighth national place (fifth among the states)

Source: own elaboration based on various sources.⁶

⁶ The number of tourists corresponds to 2016 (Secretaría de Turismo, 2017). The number of visitors is for 2017 (Enlace Digital, 2017). For multiannual events, it was verified they were not one-time events. Buildings, monuments and historic streets are based on the 125 building in INAH catalogue. Educational/scientific data were taken from the 2017-2018 annual report of Universidad de Guanajuato (Guerrero, 2018). Data on foreign students learning Spanish were provided by the Department of Languages of Universidad de Guanajuato. The ranking of national universities is the one published by *El Economista* together with *American Economic Intelligence* (Universidad de Guanajuato, 2017), the same for student mobility. In student mobility, distinguishable are the 380 alien students in mobility who come from seven countries. As regards, SNI members, data were taken from *Zócalo* (2017).

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