

Paradiplomacia y biodiplomacia: formas plurales de negociar la vida

Paradiplomacy and biodiplomacy: Pluralistic forms of negotiating life

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Resumen

El COVID-19 ha condicionado nuestras formas de ser y vivir. La diplomacia, como mediación del extrañamiento y como forma plural de negociar la vida, tampoco ha sido ajena a los cambios generados por la pandemia. Este artículo amplía el alcance de la diplomacia y la paradiplomacia para introducir en el debate el concepto de biodiplomacia y exponer las posibilidades de análisis que hace emerger. Es así como mediante el análisis de este concepto surgen múltiples intersecciones y espacios intermedios a partir de técnicas de gobierno, formas de negociar la vida y prácticas diplomáticas. Se recurre a la biodiplomacia para analizar las formas plurales de mediación del extrañamiento y la negociación de la vida que se manifiestan en los espacios liminales. La línea argumental de este texto apunta a que la biodiplomacia puede servir para examinar la forma en que los sujetos “negocian su vida” y su “vida es negociada” junto y en relación con otros múltiples organismos y seres.

Palabras clave: paradiplomacia, biodiplomacia, negociación de formas de ser y vivir.

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Abstract

The COVID-19 disease has conditioned our ways of being and living. Diplomacy, as a mediation of estrangement and as a pluralistic way of negotiating life, has not been immune to the changes generated by the pandemic. This article broadens the scope of diplomacy and paradiplomacy to introduce the concept of biodiplomacy and reveal the possibilities for analysis that it raises. The analysis of this concept generates multiple intersections and intermediate spaces from government techniques, ways of negotiating life and diplomatic practices. Biodiplomacy is subsequently used to analyze the pluralistic forms of mediation of estrangement and the negotiation of life that are manifested in liminal spaces. The author argues that biodiplomacy can serve to examine the way in which subjects "negotiate their life" and their "life is negotiated" together and in relation to other multiple organisms and beings.

Keywords: Paradiplomacy, biodiplomacy, negotiation of ways of being and living.

Introduction

Human beings, in the face of the multiple crises generated by the COVID-19 pandemic, are searching for new ideas to give meaning to our lives. Lives that, in recent months, have shown themselves to be extremely fragile, both because of our vulnerability to unforeseeable contingencies and because of the volatility of the political and social constructions that frame and order our ways of being and living. We are thus faced with the need to rethink life and ways of existence.

In this article we will not propose a new theory. Nor will we provide certainties. On the contrary, we will try to blur the conceptual boundaries of diplomacy and paradiplomacy in order to introduce the concept of biodiplomacy into the debate. It is by broadening, extending and, at the same time, bending the limits of concepts that it becomes possible to think the complex and the uncertain. Moreover, it is in these creases where concepts and phenomena that nest in the liminal emerge. That is, in the margins, in the in-between spaces and thresholds where established structures are dislocated and the uncertainties of being and the instability of meaning emerge (Malksoo, 2012; Rumelili, 2012; Sorondo, 2019). Diplomacy(s), for example, understood as the mediation of estrangement or separation between entities, groups of people or individuals, only becomes visible when there is a separation or estrangement between actors.

The same is true of biodiplomacy. Constantinou and Opondo (2019) argue that through this concept they seek to overcome the conceptual limitations of traditional statocentric views of diplomacy, to bring to the surface multiple diplomatic forms that were hitherto considered "private", "marginal", or "liminal" (2019, p. 3). In this way, and recognizing

that biodiplomacy operates in and across multiple epistemic spaces and communities, they argue that the “new ‘reality’ often requires the recognition and/or constitution of new diplomatic subjects, new interlocutors, new ways of formulating an issue and methods of addressing it” (2019, p. 4)

Although it is still too early to analyze the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic, many experts agree that the virus has acted as a catalyst, accelerating pre-existing economic, (geo)political and social trends (Riordan, 2020). The pandemic, therefore, adds further complexity to an already complex system (Innerarity, April 19, 2020). In this regard, we consider it pertinent to recall the first lines of the book *Diplomatic Theory of International Relations* by Paul Sharp (2009): “When something complicated needs to be done, or when an agreement or a general improvement in international relations is envisaged, more and better diplomacy is often required” (p. 1). To the expression “more and better”, the idea of “another way” should be added. In other words, the new political, economic and social realities not only require more and better diplomacy, but also other diplomatic forms, less rigid and more plural (Cornago, 2013a).

This article begins by analyzing the impact of the pandemic on diplomatic practice. Despite accelerating recentralizing and homogenizing trends, we argue that paradiplomatic or unofficial practices remain relevant. In the second point we approach the concept of paradiplomacy. Once this is related to the concepts of government and governmentality, the third point attempts to tighten it up. We thus seek to show that paradiplomacy is not something that is found on the margins or beyond the States, but that it is found disintegrated wherever ambiguous identities are found.

The fourth point, on the other hand, introduces the concept of biodiplomacy. With this transition, we do not claim that one will replace the other. On the contrary, paradiplomacy remains the key concept for understanding the international policy of subnational entities. Moreover, by revealing the possibilities of analysis that biodiplomacy uncovers, it is clear that the two phenomena expose the same reality; i.e., the pluralization and increasingly complex nature of diplomacy. Then, before moving on to final considerations, an attempt is made to illustrate what has been analyzed by means of a concrete example. In the last point, some analytical options are presented that open up the concept of biodiplomacy.

The impact of COVID-19 on diplomacy

The COVID-19 pandemic has shaken all social and political structures. Faced with a virus that knows no borders or national territories, States, plunged into chaos and uncertainty, and ignoring the multiple interdependencies and interrelationships that characterize today’s social, economic and political systems, began to reactivate protectionist and nationalist policies.

The closing of borders or disputes over medical equipment are two examples of policies and attitudes that were thought to have been forgotten.

However, this is not a new development. We know that “crises accelerate history and existing trends” (Heine, 2020, p. 29). In this sense, some thinkers have even dared to assert, perhaps hastily, that we are facing new forms of population control. For Agamben (2020), for example, these policies would be nothing more than the result of the use of the “state of exception as a normal paradigm of government” (p. 18). We are, in any case, faced with the re-emergence, acceleration and invigoration of policies of control and management of the complex relations of force that emerge in the social sphere.

In the internal sphere of the States, for example, the concentration of powers and responsibilities in the hands of central governments, to the detriment of the autonomy and capacity for action of non-central governments, revives centralizing policies. However, as we have previously commented, it is still too early to draw conclusions. Moreover, although states and central governments are once again claiming to be the depositaries of all sovereignty, there are many examples that show that public-private actors of all kinds continue to maintain their spheres of action, their decision-making spaces and their relationship opportunities.

Although these alternative political forms are overshadowed by discourses and practices that emphasize the one-dimensional nature of states, reality is extremely heterogeneous and complex (REPIT, 2020, October 29). In this regard, the decentralized and pluralistic vision of diplomacy has the virtue of bringing to the surface both the heterogeneous and complex nature of reality and the multiple ways in which the sovereignty of states is being perforated (Cornago, 2010).

Although diplomacy has traditionally been defined as “the conduct of organized relations between states” (Adler-Nissen, 2016), today many diplomatic actions are taking place in informal spaces where the state is either absent or indirectly represented. This is not a recent phenomenon. In short, as Cornago (2016) points out.

the origin of diplomacy is to be found in the will – and surely the need – of human groups to relate to each other, in a stable and peaceful manner, in order to overcome the strangeness and the original amazement that the discovery of difference and otherness arouses. (p. 17).

Two examples illustrate the multiple forms of diplomatic relations and intervention that have taken place in recent months.

The European project S4D4C (Using Science for/in Diplomacy for Addressing Global Challenges) is an initiative formed by private individuals, but supported by universities and state institutions. This platform seeks to strengthen European science diplomacy and the foreign policy objectives of the European Union and its Member States through science and scientific cooperation to address the global challenges of the future. We would find ourselves, therefore, facing “diplomatic” relations that are generated with the objective of mediating an estrangement with respect to unknown facts through knowledge.

Another example, although not as virtuous or exemplary, can be found in the process of buying five hundred respirators that the Confederation of Production and Commerce of Chile (CPC), as promoter, and the Chilean ambassador in China, Luis Schmidt, as coordinator, carried out in Chinese lands to “resellers and speculators”. Although the participation of the Chilean ambassador in China would seem to give a certain formality to this buying and selling relationship, the legal and juridical conditions in which it took place say otherwise (Toro, May 18, 2020).

These examples show that diplomacy is expressed and represented “in the most diverse expressions of social life” (Cornago, 2010, p. 126). In this regard, Adler- Nissen (2016) argues that “the rise of non-state actors ranging from transnational companies to global media, from non-governmental organizations to multilateral organizations, challenges the image of national diplomats as the ‘custodians of the idea of international society’” (p. 100). In the current context, however, it has been the States themselves and their representatives who have shown themselves to be both guarantors and, at the same time, disruptive elements to the order and normative structures that would have given life to what Bull (2002) called international society. The theft of medical equipment, the closing of borders and accusations of incompetence between States were the general dynamics during the first months of the pandemic. Today, however, the race for vaccines and economic recovery has reactivated the spaces for cooperation and collaboration between nations, and between these and private actors.

We are thus faced with a pluralization that reflects the transition of diplomacy from a non-controversial functional and symbolic architecture limited to the institutional and territorial sphere of States to a diplomatic terrain that is increasingly contentious and subject to new deterritorializing and reterritorializing forces (Hardt and Negri, 2000). In this way, the traditional vision of diplomatic representation -which is limited exclusively to the representation of the State, excluding multiple alternative forms of representation in process- would be giving way to a more pluralistic vision of it.

Theoretical responses to this broadening of agendas and actors differ in terms of approach and object of study. Constantinou, Cornago and McConnel (2016), for example, put the focus on the process of transprofessionalization of diplomacy. Adler-Nissen (2016), on the other hand, points to the phenomenon of personalization to thus expose the informal relationships that occur between diplomats or between diplomats and the foreign public. Each of these approaches, in an attempt to capture a specific particularity, has assigned a name to the phenomenon of diplomacy. Hence, we speak of “poly-lateral diplomacy” (Wiseman, 2004), of “catalytic diplomacy” (Hocking, 1996), of “network diplomacy” (Metzl, 2001), of “transformational diplomacy” (Vaisse, 2007), of “multi-stakeholder diplomacy” (Susskind, Fuller and Fairman, 2003); of “guerrilla diplomacy” (Copeland,

2009), of “megadiplomacy” (Khanna, 2011), of “integrative diplomacy” (Hocking, Melissen, Riordan and Sharp, 2012) and, finally, of “hard diplomacy” (Sherr, 2013) or “heavy-metal” (Galeotti, 2016).

In this article, we will focus on the phenomenon of paradiplomacy and then move on to biodiplomacy. Both concepts are elusive. In the case of paradiplomacy, although it is present in many publications, it is not fully defined (Zeraoui, 2016). It is worthwhile, therefore, to recover the classic formulation of Butler (cit. in Kuznetsov, 2015), who in the first known mention of the concept used it to refer to parallel diplomacies and individuals that complement or compete with the regular forms of foreign action of central governments.

Although in the following sections we argue, as Amilhat (2016) does, for the need to “considerably open up the field of people likely to fall into the category of ‘paradiplomatic actors’” (p. 57), we will first briefly outline the debates that have taken place around the concept of paradiplomacy.

An approach to paradiplomacy

Paradiplomacy is a relatively recent concept. It was in the 1980s that it began to be used to reflect the increased activity of non-central governments. During those years, as Keating (2013) highlights, globalization and the rise of transnational regimes abolished the traditional distinction between internal and external state policies, allowing subnational governments to assume greater responsibilities.

It was Duchacek (1990) and Soldatos (1990) who developed the first typologies around the concept of paradiplomacy. Since then, many terms have been used to refer to the same phenomenon. Gely (2016) draws up a list of different denominations, in which he includes from the most generic, “paradiplomacy”, which would be used as an umbrella concept (Zeraoui, 2016), to “diplomacy of non-central governments”, “multilevel diplomacy”, “city diplomacy”, “internationalization of cities”, “decentralized cooperation”, or “international action of local governments”. Zeraoui (2011) adds to this list the concepts of “parallel diplomacy”, “micro-diplomacy”, “local diplomacy” or “constitutive diplomacy” (pp. 62-63).

In this regard, although there is a certain consensus on the causes that made the emergence of paradiplomacy possible, there is also a major debate on what should be the object of study. The wide variety of cases also increases the scope of analysis. Thus, there are those who focus on analyzing the causes behind the emergence of the phenomenon (Duchacek, 1990; Kuznetsov, 2015; Lecours, 2002); some who examine the objectives to be achieved through its practice (Bernal Meza, 1990; Tussie, 2004); another author who broadens its scope to include within paradiplomacy not only non-central governments, but also cultural, national or individual groups

(Senhoras, 2009); and there are also those who directly deny the validity of the concept as a theoretical and analytical tool and prefer to use other concepts (Hocking, 1993a, 1993b).

Without going into the different approaches, it could be said in a general way that paradiplomacy, understood as the “international activity or foreign policy of sub-state political entities” (Grydehoj, 2014, p. 12), has been interpreted in two different ways. While some conceive the phenomenon as an innocent (Duran, 2016) and functional by-product of multilevel governance or the federal political system, others conceive it as an expression of national antagonism and as a space of collision between sub-state entities and the Central State.

As highlighted by Zeraoui (2016), the first trend “refers to a complementary international policy between the Central State and intermediate governments” (p. 20). We would thus be faced with a multilayered or multilevel diplomacy (Hocking, 1993a), in which the various national, subnational or other types and levels of government entities share foreign policy competencies. Within this trend we would find, for example, works that speak of local diplomacy (Dávila, Schiavon and Velázquez, 2008), federative (Schiavon, 2010) or constitutive diplomacy (Kincard, 2009).

The second trend, on the other hand, highlights the jurisdictional and symbolic disputes that are generated between different governments when it comes to issues such as political and diplomatic representation. Paradiplomacy would thus reflect “the foreign policy capacity of sub-national, regional or local governments” (McConnell, Moreau and Dittmer, 2012, p. 805). These capacities, in turn, are linked to the power to do and not to do. Or, a quote from Aristotle says, “where it is in our power to do them, it is also in our power to stop doing them” (Simón, 2001, p. 61). It is coherent to think, therefore, that sometimes the interests of the different entities will coincide and the capacities will converge, while at other times the interests will be opposed and the different entities will use their capabilities to achieve their own particular interests, thus giving rise to multiple conflicts. In these cases, the concepts of identity paradiplomacy or protodiplomacy are often used (Paquin, 2004).

On the contrary, many other approaches navigate between these two trends and move between opposing concepts, reflecting the complexity of politics. Whatever the interpretation, paradiplomacy shows, above all, the existence of new diplomatic forms and, consequently, of new forms of estrangement. New forms of estrangement that have little to do with the old forms of estrangement between states that traditional diplomacy claimed to mediate. We now speak of estrangements that emerge within States, but which respond to processes that occur both within and outside the territorial limits of the State. These are dynamics that, by questioning the homogeneity of the States, call into question, in turn, the entire intra-State system. This does not mean, however, that we are facing the dismemberment of the State, or the disappearance of the traditional forms of diplomacy. In any case, we would be facing what McConnell, Moreau and Dittmer

(2012) call “diplomatic assemblage” (p. 812). In other words, a complex bundle of relationships in which, paradoxically, these paradiplomatic or “unofficial” forms reinforce, in many cases, the hegemony of the “official forms” of diplomacy.

This paradox is visible, for example, in the dual desire expressed by paradiplomatic discourses. On the one hand, these “unofficial” forms express the desire to be recognized as full actors in the international area. On the other hand, the desire to be recognized as equals is often accompanied by a “distinctive desire for political autonomy” (Cornago, 2013b, November, p. 3). This dual desire shows that, even today, the traditional statocentric “diplomatic framework” is the “gold standard” to which most new or unofficial forms of diplomacy aspire. There is, of course, the odd exception, some motions that resist imitating that “gold standard” are: the theoretical-methodological tool of *transdiplomacy* proposed by Arévalo (2017), which seeks “to investigate diplomatic phenomena from a holistic, dynamic, flexible, open, critical, provocative and hypothetical perspective of history” (2017, p. 144); or the theoretical practice of *diplomacy from below* of Ghilarducci (2020), which “allows to experience a reappropriation among certain margins, of a direct protagonism in the field of international relations by non-state collective political subjects” (p. 121).

In the end, when we speak of paradiplomacy we are dealing with an ambivalent phenomenon. To further clarify its multiple interpretations and meanings and, at the same time, begin to introduce the concept of biodiplomacy, we will try to answer a question posed by Aguirre (2013) in his attempt to understand paradiplomacy. After stating that the idea of government is key to understanding paradiplomacy, he poses the following question: what do we really mean when we talk about government in contemporary politics, both domestic and foreign?

Expanding the scope of paradiplomacy through the idea of governmentality

Although Aguirre’s question is pertinent and he is right in stating that today “the classic anthropomorphic ‘monism’ of the state has been replaced, definitively, by a much more sophisticated understanding of the complex, continuously overlapping and essentially ‘pluralist’ nature of contemporary political systems” (2013, p. 199, my translation), his answer fails to grasp the enormous potential of a concept he himself uses in the article. I am talking about governmentality. Aguirre uses this concept to argue two things: on the one hand, that autonomous non-central international governmental actors “are territorialized and ‘localized’ representations of a constitutionally ‘plurinational state’”; and, on the other hand, on a purely factual and political level “that ‘governmentality’ means that these non-central governments are in charge of public administration in a very broad scope of ‘exclusive’ constitutional legislative competencies” (Aguirre, 2013, pp. 203-204; my translation).

The governmentality, however, is not only relevant for understanding the distribution of competencies or the level of representation of the different governments in the international arena. Aguirre (2013) himself argues that the governmentality of autonomous non-central actors is relevant for understanding paradiplomacy.

He further adds that

the lack of a sound theoretical understanding of the various forms of 'governmentality' today may serve to explain the numerous semantic, ideological and constitutional contradictions that pervade the literature on the international involvement of non-central governments. (2013, p.198, my translation).

Reversing his phrase, one could argue that a greater understanding of the complex nature of governmentality could serve to explain the multiple forms of diplomacy or mediation of estrangement.

In this regard, despite the fact that when we talk about government or forms of governing, most of the time we establish a relationship of continuity with the State, Foucault (2016) issued a warning by noticing that government is something more than a prerogative of the State. From this first clarification, governmentality came to be conceived as a specific rationality that had appeared in Western Europe during early modernity, as a result of a particular statecraft in which techniques and knowledge from the social and human sciences were incorporated into the task of government (Dean, 2010). Governmentality, therefore, is something more than mere competencies in the field of public administration and something more than a mere representation of a plurinational State.

Governmentality exposes the multiple forms of power constituted by a "variety of tactics, strategies, spaces of truth and rationalization" (Makarychev and Yatsyk, 2016, p. 45). Forms of power and art of government that are employed to "rationalize the problems posed to governmental practice by the phenomena characteristic of a set of living beings constituted as a population" (Foucault, 2016, p. 311). Foucault gave the name biopolitics to these forms of power and to this art of government. Biopolitics is thus about perfecting the art of government through the "administration, orchestration, production and reproduction of populations and life – where the promotion of life, rather than the power to give death, becomes the central object and purpose of power" (Selby, 2007, p. 333). An art that is used to control the relationships "between the human race, or human beings insofar as they are living beings, and their environment, the sphere in which they live" (Foucault, 2003, p. 247). It seems clear, therefore, that the art of governing, at present, cannot be conceived as an exclusive attribution of the State.

One of the main characteristics of biopolitics is that it disarticulates itself into a “set of administrative powers that are somehow outside the apparatuses of the State itself” (Butler, 2004, p. 55). However, this loss of sovereignty is, in turn, compensated for “through the re-emergence of sovereignty within the space of governmentality” (2004, p. 56).

This disarticulation of government and power strongly influences how we understand the nature of paradiplomacy. Constantinou and Opondo (2019) argue, for example, that “the broader implications of the diplomatic phenomenon become apparent when one considers how this interacts with and influences our understanding of biopolitics” (p. 3). The same is true if we reverse the equation. That is, a greater understanding of current forms of governmentality will make it easier for us to interpret the new diplomatic forms.

In this sense, paradiplomacy, as Duran (2016) highlights, “by virtue of its political and governmental weight, as well as by the place it occupies in the complex multi-level diplomatic environment characteristic of our current international landscape” (p. 5) can be a useful tool or concept to analyze current estrangements. Still today, as a consequence of the wide range of possibilities it opens to expand international studies and incorporate the sub-state actor (Álvarez, 2017), paradiplomacy remains a key concept in understanding international dynamics.

At the beginning of this article, we have argued that diplomacy emerges in the in-between or liminal spaces, when it becomes necessary to mediate diverse forms of estrangement. Stengers (2011) states, in this regard, that diplomacy, as a kind of disidentification, becomes an “experience of passage”; a “technique that navigates ‘the tension between territoriality and deterritorialization’” (2011, pp. 376- 377). Duran (2016), on the other hand, states that paradiplomacy can be conceived “as a specific space of diplomatic mediation, situated in a middle ground between the ‘realistic’ power play and the humanistic need to concretize and engage with others” (p. 5).

It is precisely to understand and illuminate the multiple intersections and in-between spaces that are generated between techniques of governance, ways of negotiating life and diplomatic practices, that Constantinou and Opondo (2019) employ the concept of biodiplomacy. A concept and a task that, as they argue, “can be productive for imagining life and modes of co-existence within and beyond the governmental environment” (Constantinou and Opondo, 2019, p. 2).

It would seem, therefore, that when we speak of paradiplomacy and biodiplomacy we are talking about the same thing. However, there is a relevant difference between the two concepts. While paradiplomacy makes it possible to analyze both the form of mediation or extension of the estrangements that emerge between actors and subjects, and the way in which these same actors and subjects act and develop relationships in the internal and/or external spheres of States, biodiplomacy makes visible the way in which the lives of these actors and subjects are negotiated.

Both have, however, one thing in common: they are the result of the plural and complex

nature of diplomacy.

On diplomacy and ways of being and living

Constantinou and Opondo (2019) define biodiplomacy as “the continuous negotiation of the meanings and materiality of certain ways of life vis-à-vis other ways of being” (p. 1). That is, in the face of the processes and practices of conduct, governance, and optimization activated by governmental regimes of all kinds that operate in networks, and act between and across borders and territorial populations, biodiplomacy would expose other ways of living, being, and negotiating life; specifically, those ways that would oppose the expansion of biopolitical forms.

However, the concept of biodiplomacy is not new. Despite this, there is no consensus about its meaning, nor about the objectives it should pursue or the challenges it should respond to (Aguilar and Paterman, 2020). As a result of this lack of definition, the concept has been used to analyze the processes of management and protection of the environment or biodiversity; negotiations on the conservation and responsible use of manual resources (Sánchez and Juma, 1994); or new technologies for the production, reproduction and management of life in fields such as biotechnology or bioethics (Calestous, 2005), among other issues. As Aguilar and Paterman (2020) point out, although there is no unified meaning, these approaches consider that “biodiplomacy is part of classic diplomacy, but the need to adopt a global and integrated approach to manage global challenges affecting the biosphere is considered” (pp. 23-24).

Without detracting from the relevance of environmental policies or the “art of preserving and promoting lives through all forms of international cooperation between states” (Vlavianos-Arvanitis, 2005), Constantinou and Opondo (2019) seek to broaden the scope of the concept to overcome the limitations generated by conventional interpretations of diplomacy. Previously, however, it was Konrad (2007) who had proposed an ethical and anthropological approach to the concept of biodiplomacy, marking the path that would be followed years later by Constantinou and Opondo. Konrad (2007) uses biodiplomacy to analyze biodiplomatic relations in the international sciences: the modalities of intervention, forms of action and disconnection in the biodiplomatic sphere, and the functioning of “spaces of transaction” between practices of intergovernance and interdisciplinarity. In this way, it moves away from the “Foucault-inspired ‘biopower’ analyses” (Konrad, 2007, p. 329) and brings to the surface practices termed as biodiplomatic.

Following Konrad’s path, Constantinou and Opondo (2016) argue that biodiplomacy allows us to analyze the processes of negotiation of life that accompany the global expansion of “strategies of control, discourses of legitimation, and forms of cooptation and cohabitation beyond governance” (p. 309). That is, it allows us to explore the processes that go hand in hand with biopolitical forms and to argue that lives are no longer simply governed, but are also negotiated, making some admissible and others inadmissible.

Although Constantinou and Opondo's (2016) approach has the virtue of exposing counter-behaviors and alternative ways of living that operate beyond governmental practices and beyond the conduct of behaviors, the ontological rupture they establish between biopolitics and biodiplomacy is not so clear; or, at least, it can be problematized. In problematizing it, however, we see that the concept does not lose relevance. On the contrary, it takes on a new dimension, as it allows us to analyze both biopolitical practices and the practices and ways of negotiating life that oppose or are exercised on the margins of biopolitics. Moreover, in the current context, issues such as the protection of ecosystems, the protection of "vulnerable communities whose lives may be affected by certain health, environmental or scientific risks" or, in general, the care of "certain practices involving transnational movements across borders" (Konrad, 2007, p. 342) demand our attention more than ever.

In this sense, biodiplomacy can be employed in three interrelated ways. On the one hand, as Constantinou and Opondo (2016, 2019) do by analyzing the way in which subjects "negotiate their lives". But it can also be employed in the opposite sense; that is, to understand the way in which biopolitics, nowadays, extends into broad social spaces and into the private sphere of the individual. In this way, the lives of the subjects become negotiated. Biodiplomacy, therefore, is a concept that makes the two sides of the same coin visible. As Goikoetxea (2017) points out, often the capacities and techniques of power that "modulate and domesticate our individual and collective bodies, and those that make us equal and free" (p. 17) are of the same typology.

This double meaning of biodiplomacy can be illustrated by analyzing the term diplomacy. Etymologically, diplomacy is composed of the word δίπλο (diplo), to fold in two, and the suffix μα (ma), which alludes to an object. Changing the object for the subject, we could argue that diplomacy "folds the subject" in two; either because it folds the consciousness of the subjects (in two), or because it frames the conditions of possibility, the episteme or the framework of the knowledge of the world (in two). As Foucault (2003) argues, biopolitics is the politics that is responsible for the administration of life, controlling the relationships between human beings "insofar as they are living beings, and their environment, the sphere in which they live" (2003, p. 247).

In this sense, although the interrelation between diplomacy and governmentality is not explicit, it is relevant to highlight that it operates in the imaginary, the symbolic and the functional. Regarding the level of the imaginary, Death (2011), referring to the representations that take place in diplomatic summits, states that these can be understood "from a governmental perspective, as a form of power at a distance, through which patterns of behavior are directed by horizons of discursive intelligibility (p. 6).

Constantinou (1996), for his part, highlights the imaginaries generated by diplomacy as a framing process. Similarly, Banai (2014) states that diplomacy prescribes in a normative way the public imaginary. Imaginaries that are thought, become visible and make the world look a certain way.

Regarding the symbolic and functional level, when relating both levels, Stetter (2016) argues that while in the past diplomacy was sustained on its symbolic role or strength, which was erected on the aesthetics of the sublime, nowadays it is sustained on its practical functionality, which is to endlessly promote global goods. Thus, today, its aesthetics of the sublime depends on its irremediable character, since the world emerges as a space to be governed and diplomacy is represented as “the cornerstone of governmentality” (2016, p. 394).

The word diplomacy, however, can also acquire another meaning using the same etymological letter. Making use of the double meaning of the concept of “doubling”, Constantinou (1996) exposes the double forms and economies of diplomacy. Unofficial double forms that, as in the case of the reign of Louis XV, were carried out in parallel with the official ones. Dual diplomacies that were “officially unofficial and unofficially official” (Constantinou, 1996, p. 85). An unofficial double that, precisely because of its unofficial character, can operate outside or at the margins of the legal and normative limits defined by the traditional statocentric “diplomatic framework”. Unofficial forms that, in many cases, can transcend official forms and modes; and unofficial double forms that can be employed, often, more times and in more ways than those official forms that double.

In certain way, according to Constantinou and Opondo (2019), the concept of biodiplomacy is nothing more than the materialization of these double diplomatic forms. That is, forms of negotiation of life and plural forms of existence that allows us to glimpse the “limits of biopolitics, while generating other domains of relation” (p. 11) that transcend the territorial limits of the state. In the face of the processes of conduct, governance and optimization activated by governmental regimes of all kinds that operate in networks, and that act between and across territorial borders and populations, biodiplomacy points to forms of negotiation of life that oppose, as far as possible, these national and transnational forms of biopolitics. This conceptualization resembles Hardt and Negri’s (2000) idea of multitude, a concept of multitude that, as Lemke (2017) notes, designates “the heterogeneous and creative totality of actors who move in the immanence of power relations without reference to an instance of greater importance or an underlying identity” (p. 93).

We see, therefore, that biodiplomacy allows us to analyze the way in which subjects “negotiate their lives” and, at the same time, allows us to understand the way in which biopolitics is disarticulated in multiple social and individual spaces, making the life and behavior of these subjects “negotiated” and conducted.

Finally, we are left with the third way of understanding biodiplomacy. That which, placing life at the center of political discourses and practices, highlights the multiple relationships and forms of coexistence and conflict that are generated on planet Earth. That is, in the global ecosystem of planet Earth where human beings are nothing more than organisms, beings or living subjects who must negotiate our life, or our life can be negotiated together and in relation to other multiple organisms and beings that make up the global ecosystem. Today, in what is being called the Anthropocene era, we humans

cannot turn our backs on the environment in which we live, nor on the other living and non-living beings with whom we cohabit. We cannot be oblivious to the profoundly interdependent biosphere.

In this sense, Constantinou and Opondo (2019) emphasize that the concept of biodiplomacy prompts us to “think about life/non-life relations in ways that exceed bio-ontologies” (p. 13). Moreover, they formulate, not without some qualms, a normative proposal with which they highlight the relevance of biodiplomacy as a “political practice that subscribes to and assists the ‘pluriversality’ of ontologies, modes of existence, lifeworlds, political projects, and cosmologies that Western universality is thought to have eradicated” (2019, p. 17). Political practices that promote “more inclusive, post-foundational cosmopolitan versions that expand the cosmos and better appreciate plural modes of existence” (2019, p. 17).

If the COVID-19 pandemic has shown us anything, it has been our own limits. Dussel (quoted in Pérez Pirela, August 7, 2020) affirms, in this regard, that nature has risen up against the human being to hack, in this way, the “project” of modernity. The promises of science and technology no longer mitigate the ontological insecurity and distrust that human beings feel in the face of an unstable self-identity and the constant changes in the social or material environments in which they must carry out their lives. The “Faustian attempt to submit the whole of life to the absolute control of man under the guidance of knowledge” (Castro-Gómez, 2000, p. 88) increasingly resembles the myth of Sisyphus. When we believe we are close to controlling nature, it revolts and shows us that the rational practices that have been bringing us closer to the top of the mountain did not take into consideration and even ignored that which made our ascent possible; *ergo*, the very existence of nature and of the mountain. If the idea of modernity promised us to overcome the estrangement produced by the unknown, the pandemic has shown us that human beings must not only mediate the multiple estrangements that emerge among us, but that our relationship with nature – and with other living/non-living beings – is also traversed by multiple other estrangements. Biodiplomacy, by placing the life act at the center and entering “into conversation with the negotiation of modes of existence” (Constantinou and Opondo, 2019, p. 13), links the multiple estrangements with the multiple mediations that can be carried out through plural forms of diplomacy.

Before moving on to final considerations, in the following point we will try to illustrate, by means of a concrete example, the multiple interrelationships that occur in real life between the three planes that we have been developing throughout the article.

That is, between the paradiplomatic or unofficial plural forms of diplomacy, the biodiplomatic forms of negotiating life and the forms of governmentality and biopolitics of control and management of life. All this, in the context of a pandemic that makes visible the fragility of our lives and our dependence on the natural environment in which we live.

An illustration: Venezuelans outside their embassy in Santiago, Chile

Border closures and restrictions on air and land transportation as a result of COVID-19 stranded many migrants and tourists around the world. This is the case, for example, of hundreds of Venezuelans who, living in Chile, were forced to return to Venezuela due to the economic consequences of the pandemic (Aravena, June 19, 2020). The health, social and economic crisis unleashed by the coronavirus, and the urgency to return, but the impossibility of doing so, forced many of them to camp outside the Venezuelan Embassy, located in the Providencia district of Santiago. This problem was not exclusive to Venezuelans. Colonies of Peruvians and Bolivians did the same in front of their respective diplomatic representations. On the other hand, many other colonies, those with greater resources, waited in their respective homes until they were able to return to their countries of origin by means of humanitarian flights, at first, and then regular flights.

We will present the case of Venezuelans, since it perfectly illustrates the official and unofficial plural practices of diplomacy that we have been highlighting throughout this paper, whether in the form of paradiplomacy and mediation of estrangement, or in the form of biodiplomacy and negotiation of life.

Although in August, 2018, the Government of Venezuela launched the Return to the Homeland Plan, which “establishes an air and land bridge for the voluntary return of all those migrants and their families who lack their own means for return” (Bolivarian Government of Venezuela, 2020), and although the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations introduced within international law the rights and responsibilities concerning the protection of nationals, the Embassy of Venezuela in Chile barely responded to the initial requests. While the Venezuelan government, like all other governments, was overwhelmed by the pandemic, for the central government of Chile this problem was minor. Paradoxically, the doors of the Venezuelan Embassy thus became an internal border. A border that placed the Venezuelans camped there between the Embassy, legally Venezuelan territory, and the street or the tent in which they slept at night, a space that, at the time, was illegal, since the curfew and the call to confinement were in force in the capital.

Faced with this situation, it was the districts of Santiago and individuals who mobilized to find solutions or to alleviate the situation of precariousness and vulnerability in which Venezuelan citizens found themselves.

While the districts, in collaboration with private institutions such as the Jesuit Migrant Service, set up or offered spaces so that these people could spend the night under a roof (Villarroel, May 27, 2020), other people, individually, approached the Embassy to offer help in the form of food, blankets or other provisions. It was, therefore, non-central governments, but also individual actors who, through paradiplomatic forms, filled the vacuum left by central governments or state institutions, thus showing the different structures and forms of action and communication that differentiate diplomacy from below from official diplomacy (Ghilarducci, 2020).

Although the example we are presenting here requires a deeper analysis in order to understand the various realities and problems hidden behind the shocking images left, for example, by the children camped outside an embassy in the middle of a pandemic in winter weather, it does show, on the one hand, that the duty of care has undergone an inversion as a result of a political rationality that conceives human beings as an “object of protection, but also as a resource for mobilization” (Adler-Nissen and Tsinoi, 2018, p. 211). On the other hand, it exposes the limits of traditional statocentric diplomacy and the emergence of other diplomatic forms. Thus, in the face of biopolitical forms of negotiating life that exhort human beings to be “active providers of their own protection” (2018, p. 213) through the contracting of private insurance or other mercantile products if they do not want to be abandoned in the face of chance events, natural forces or systemic crises, the relationships of care, protection and solidarity that developed among the people camped out, and between them and the people who approached the camp to offer disinterested help, exhibit other forms of negotiating life and existence.

Final considerations

It was stated at the beginning of this article that our purpose was not to propose theories or provide certainties. On the contrary, we have tried to strain the epistemological limits of concepts such as diplomacy or paradiplomacy in order to extend theoretical horizons, introduce the concept of biodiplomacy into the debate and explore the liminal spaces in which plural forms of mediation of estrangement and negotiation of life emerge.

The analysis of margins and intermediate points also makes it possible to establish relationships between different phenomena and to analyze them on the basis of new concepts and theoretical exercises. The concept of biodiplomacy, for example, in the current context can be used to analyze three highly relevant issues. On the one hand, as has been done in this article, to expose the plural forms of diplomacy that are (re)produced or take shape in countless daily and everyday relationships. In this way, diplomacy detaches itself from the State and recovers its original meaning, which is none other than that of mediating relations with others and trying to acquire knowledge of that which is foreign to us (Der Derian, 1987).

Constantinou (2006) called homodiplomacy these diplomatic forms that respond to the need for human beings to rethink the forms of relationship that we develop among ourselves, and between us and the environment we inhabit. Emulating Ghilarducci (2020, p. 132) and his “homodiplomatic paradiplomacy”, one could speak of a *homodiplomatic biodiplomacy*; that is a form of “knowledge of self – and crucially this knowledge of self as a more reflexive way of approaching and transforming relationships with others” (Constantinou, 2006, p. 352), as well as with the environment we inhabit. In short, the way we negotiate our lives.

On the other hand, it can be used to think about the forms of production and reproduction of human subjectivity. We have previously stated that biodiplomacy, like diplomacy, emerges in the in-between or liminal spaces. In the current context, where uncertainty

accentuates the “border experience” in which subjectivity is (re)produced (Mendiola, 2001), it is worthwhile analyzing the ways in which the lives of subjects can be negotiated/controlled by others (Esposito, February 28, 2020).

Finally, in line with the previous point, biodiplomacy allows us to reflect on the phenomenon of cross-border relations. For this, however, borders should not be conceived, solely, as territorial delimitations, but as “effects” (Mendiola, 2001, p. 205) or as “complex and mobile devices” (Amilhat, 2016, p. 50) that are “scattered a bit everywhere, wherever the movement of information, people and things is taking place and being controlled” (Balibar, 2004, p. 1). That is, limits that, although they have their territorial concomitant, are first and foremost social (Sánchez, 2014). In the current context, for example, one might ask how biodiplomacy is articulated, developed and practiced when we are confined to our homes, when the door of the home begins to resemble an insurmountable border that separates us from nature (Aponte and Kramsch, 2020).

We see, therefore, that biodiplomacy makes reflective analysis possible. A task that, at present, when the control of the pandemic seems to demand the restriction and limitation of rights, becomes more imperative than ever. Only in this way will we be able to conceive forms of life and existence that are worth living when the longed-for “normality” arrives.

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