Scottish Parliament European and External Relations Committee
Inquiry into “Connecting Scotland – how the Scottish Government and its Agencies engage internationally”

Written evidence from
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Overview
1. In response to an invitation from the EERC to present oral evidence on its ‘Connecting Scotland’ inquiry on Thursday 5 February 2015, I would like to preface this by outlining some key issues that underpin the effective international engagement of substate governments, and considering Scotland in comparative perspective. In particular, I will focus on the potential advantages of developing an overarching normative framework based on a narrative of ‘The Scottish Democratic Model’ to underpin the Scottish Government’s highly functional International Narratives.

2. In line with the aims above, I will focus my evidence on the third core question underpinning the Committee’s inquiry: “What can be learnt from the approaches of other sub-state governments? In particular, how do the EU and international offices of other sub-state governments operate and what tangible outcomes do they achieve?” before reflecting on the first question in my concluding recommendations, that is: “Is there a clear, coherent and well-resourced strategy for European and international engagement within the Scottish Government and its agencies?”

Conceptual Definitions
3. First, some definitions may be helpful. Paradiplomacy refers to the international activities and external engagement of substate actors – such as regions, provinces, ‘stateless nations’, cities and local governments. Paradiplomatic activities may be analytically separated into three categories: economic, cultural, and political activities.

(a) Economic paradiplomatic activities - which are the most widespread and, arguably, significant to SSGs - can be explained by rational self-interest. The aim is to develop “an international presence for the purpose of attracting foreign investment, luring international companies to the region, and targeting new markets for exports”¹. A very successful example is Bavaria’s foreign trade services strategy, whose “aim is to consolidate our position as an attractive and reliable partner of the global economy and to strengthen and further develop the international competitiveness of companies in Bavaria”.² To achieve this goal, the Bavarian government cooperates closely with chambers of commerce and SME groups to tailor its target external relations to the requirements of

http://www.stmwi.bayern.de/fileadmin/user_upload/stmwivt/Publikationen/Erfolgreich_im_Ausland_englisch.pdf
small and medium-sized businesses. This has resulted, for instance, in successful biotechnology trade missions to Japan and China.  

(b) Cultural paradiploomatic activities are usually focussed on bilateral exchanges and cooperation, and are often strongly linked to economic concerns. Examples of such activities include educational and tourism exchange programmes, membership of trans-border associations and city twinning activities. Archetypal of this strategy, the Catalan government has strongly focussed on cultural activities in its external relations. Criekemans calls this the “so-called ‘double export’: the simultaneous promotion of Catalan identity and the economy. The Institut Català de les Indústries Culturals (ICIC), which operates separately from Catalonia’s foreign policy, plays a pivotal role in the cultural promotion of Catalonia. Via its network abroad, ICIC actively promotes Catalan cultural products (audiovisual, music and the performing arts)…. The idea of the Catalan model is that the promotion of culture and identity can facilitate economic cooperation, and vice versa.”

(c) Political activities involve the pursuit of substate governments’ political objectives in the international field. The aim is to “develop a set of international relations that will affirm the cultural distinctiveness, political autonomy and the national character of the community they represent.” Political paradiploamy may involve the maintenance of permanent delegations abroad, substate representation in international institutions, participation in multilateral negotiation schemes, involvement in international treaty-making, the sending and hosting of international missions, the launching of political statements and declarations on international issues, and foreign aid programmes. Concrete examples include Quebec’s representation in UNESCO; Greenland’s membership of the Nordic Council; the representation of the Austrian, Belgian, German and Spanish substate regions in the EU Council of Ministers; the signing of the RegLeg Joint Declaration; and Flanders’ establishment of diplomatic representations in a dozen foreign countries and its associate membership of the World Tourism Organisation.

Paradiplomacy actors
4. The most dynamic actors in parapiplomacy tend to be constituent units of devolved or federal multi-level states – such as the Belgian regions, the Spanish autonomous communities, the German Laender, the states of the USA and the provinces of Canada. This is primarily due to two factors: (1) the extensive policy competences of the units in question – which often exert control over economic development, culture, the environment and other areas that are subject to ‘internationalisation’; and (2) the (financial and policy) capacity of these actors to dedicate resources to enhancing international

5 Lecours (2008), op cit, p2.
engagement. A third factor noted in the academic literature is the presence of a nation-building strategy by the unit in question, which constitutes a strong motivating force to put that substate territory on the international map and to obtain recognition of its claims.6

5. Substate governments (SSGs) have been engaged in paradiplomatic practices for over a century, if not longer. In particular, the southern US states were particularly active in economic paradiplomatic strategies during the 1950s, in order to stimulate export and attract foreign investment.7 However, the last three decades have witnessed an exponential rise in paradiplomacy, with the scope and intensity of substate international relations increasing. In addition, the ‘usual suspects’ of Quebec, Catalonia, Flanders etc. have been joined on the world stage by a wave of active SSGs in Argentina, Chile, Brazil, China, Russia, India and Africa.8

6. From the perspective of an SSG, this leads to an important question: what differentiates a successful paradiplomatic strategy from the rest? This is especially pertinent when there are so many regions competing for internal investment (especially from the BRIC countries), and political and cultural recognition.

**Functional and Normative Paradiplomacy**

7. It is clear from a reading of the literature on paradiplomacy that most external activities have focussed on functional objectives. Indeed, according to the vast academic literature on this subject, the primary goal of paradiplomacy is to achieve economic returns and investment in the substate territory. However, I would also suggest that some of the most successful SSG international strategies have also been underpinned by a clear normative rationale, which provides an overarching framework for economic, cultural and political activities. This normative dimension of paradiplomacy has been under-theorised in the literature. One exception is Cornago, who focusses on functional and normative dimensions of paradiplomacy, identifying the latter with ‘ethno-political claims, human rights advocacy or international solidarity’.9 I would extend this definition to include other moral concerns of SSGs, of democracy, peace and environmental justice.

8. By considering the normative dimension of paradiplomacy, one may address the criticism that substate relations tend to be overly functional and technocratic. According to the authors of a book on (state) diplomacy, “What paradiplomacy lacks is the political meaning that is constitutive of state-based

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9 Cornago 2010 op cit, p19.
forms of diplomatic practice". Let us now consider some examples of normative paradiplomacy from the Aland Islands, Catalonia, California and Wallonia before considering lessons that Scotland may learn from this comparative examination.

**Comparative Case Studies**

**Aland**

9. The Aland Islands are a Swedish-speaking archipelago of 6500 islands in the Baltic Sea, which enjoy a federacy status within the otherwise unitary Finland. The Aland Islands were granted this status in 1920, after the League of Nations intervened in a conflict between Sweden and Finland over which country the islands rightfully ‘belonged’ to. After extensive (peaceful) negotiations, it was decided that Aland was to remain part of Finland but that it should be granted extensive autonomy. In the 1980s the authorities in Aland developed an international strategy to promote the ‘Aland Example’ as a model of peace and conflict resolution. This normative strategy has strongly shaped its cultural, economic and political external activities, as well as giving it greater leverage in its relations with the Finnish state. In 1984, Aland gave itself the nickname ‘Islands of Peace’ – an idea that gained international currency when ethno-political conflicts became a major concern of the international community. Alanders then focussed on mapping conflict zones around the world where the Aland Example could be of relevance, resulting in numerous international study visits and over 250 foreign delegations to Aland, who all had the purpose of learning more about the Aland Example. This branding strategy enabled this tiny group of islands (pop. 27,000) to “anchor its position within the international community” and also to “influence its domestic relations with the Finnish government” and to protect/enhance its self-government.

**Catalonia**

10. Catalonia has also recently engaged in a different form of ‘normative entrepreneurship’ in its foreign relations. In addition to the cultural-economic strategy, as outlined above, the Catalan Public Diplomacy Council (Diplocat) has since 2014 focussed on an international awareness campaign of Catalonia’s democratic process and ‘right to vote’ on its constitutional future. As the Diplocat website states: “the Public Diplomacy Council will inform the principal political and economic decision-makers at the European and international levels about the democratic process that has started in Catalonia. The right to decide of the people of Catalonia must be exercised freely, without coercion or threats, within the Europe of the twenty-first century. The process will be fully democratic, peaceful, and orderly. We will work to get this message out to the world.” To disseminate its message of

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“the Catalan model of democratic participation”, Diplocat has organised a series of high-profile events across Europe to officially ‘promote a fairer, more peaceful, democratic and sustainable world’ and, presumably, drum up international sympathy on the issue of Catalan’s democratic right to vote on its future (one of which I was invited to participate in\[^{14}\]). Diplocat has established offices throughout Europe to promote cultural exchange, business networking and election observation missions.

**California**

11. An example of a functional form of paradiplomacy with strong normative underpinnings is California’s sustainable development paradiplomacy. California has established itself not only as a bastion of sustainable development through its foreign environmental policies (i.e. a functional pursuit), but also as a ‘moral conscience’ of the USA, and indeed the world, through its pressure on others to implement similar policies (a more normative pursuit). This has involved establishing a cap-and-trade programme to reduce regional greenhouse emissions, including agreements with Mexican states and Canadian provinces.\[^{15}\] To underline these normative aspirations, when declaring the new regional pact to cut carbon emissions, California stated that it “won’t wait for the rest of the world before it takes action on climate change”\[^{16}\].

**Wallonia**

12. A different normative strategy has been linguistic: Wallonia has been actively engaged in supporting the flourishing of the French language throughout the world. According to Criekemans, the Walloon francophonie strategy has been pursued as a “way of reaching out to new potential partners. It is not a coincidence that the Walloon CGRI-DRI (the department responsible for external affairs of the Walloon Region and French-speaking community) has established a vast number of contacts and agreements with a number of French-speaking countries and territories in Africa and the rest of the world”.\[^{17}\] This overarching normative strategy – to secure the place of the French language and culture – also has strong functional aspects. The francophonie strategy has strong ‘jump-start potential’ in relations with other states, as the “common language and culture are seen as factors that smooth a spillover effect into other policy domains… [and] the international platform of the francophonie is also considered to be a good basis upon which to achieve other goals, such as sustainable development”.\[^{18}\]

**Lessons for Scotland?**

13. I now wish to turn my attention to the first question, of whether the Scottish Government has a clear and coherent paradiplomacy strategy.


\[^{15}\] Bjola and Kornprobst op cit.


\[^{17}\] Criekemans 2010, op cit, p41.

\[^{18}\] Ibid
Scotland has invested considerable energy into its paradiplomatic activities, with a focus on promoting its policy interests within the European Union, reaching out to its diaspora – in particular in North America, encouraging foreign investment, and promoting a ‘positive image’ of Scotland overseas.

14. This ‘positive image’ appears to have come in three main guises since devolution:

   (1) a celebration of Scotland’s (highland) cultural heritage, designed to connect with Scottish diaspora abroad, i.e. ‘Tartan Day’;
   (2) capitalisation on Scotland’s natural resources and commitment to renewables to position Scotland as a sustainable energy leader in Europe, i.e. carbon targets 2050; and most recently,
   (3) the presentation of Scotland as a ‘voice for humanity, voice for progressiveness, voice for tolerance’.

The Scottish Government’s *International Narratives* (2015), which are linked to the latter image of Scotland as a ‘voice for humanity…’, include the following: a cultural narrative, economy narrative, education narrative, energy narrative, events narrative, food and drink narrative. There are therefore several complex and distinct messages contained within these narratives, most of which are explicitly functional. But what ties all of these narratives together? It is difficult to identify an overall framework that integrates all of these international objectives into a single narrative. Scotland’s paradiplomatic strategy has been criticised as ‘ad hoc’ in the literature. The challenge is to give it more coherence and a structural framework to contain, and indeed valorise, all of these individual functional goals.

**Policy recommendation**

15. On that basis, I wish to make a policy recommendation to strengthen and frame Scotland’s international engagement strategy. That is, to develop a normative framework based on a ‘Scottish Model of Democracy’ to anchor all of its other functional objectives. This suggestion is based on policy learning from other substate regions that have promoted a successful international strategy through normative entrepreneurship. Whereby Aland has become the ‘peace islands’, California is the world’s ‘moral conscious on environmental matters’ and Catalonia has become the bastion of ‘right to vote’, Scotland is in a position to capitalise on its democratic credentials as a place of deep civic engagement in public affairs.

16. Scotland currently has a high level of name-recognition within the international community (and indeed, the international public at large) for its recent referendum on independence. However, instead of highlighting within-UK tensions of ‘being on the brink of breaking up the UK’, there is an opportunity to develop an alternative, enduring narrative of Scottish democratic engagement.

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20 [http://www.scotland.org/assets/Narrative_Overarching_22.01.15.pdf](http://www.scotland.org/assets/Narrative_Overarching_22.01.15.pdf)
21 See, especially, Crekemans 2010, op cit.
17. A ‘Scottish Model of Democracy’ – in similarity to the Aland Model or Catalan model – would consist of the promotion of Scotland's unique features and history, as the centre of the ‘Scottish Enlightenment’, but in particular, more recently as a vehicle for peaceful deliberation on Scotland’s proposed parliament (the Scottish Constitutional Convention) and the referendum on Scottish independence, both of which resulted in unparalleled levels of civic and political engagement and, in the latter case, voter turnout. The development of a ‘Scottish Democratic Model’ brand would achieve the following objectives: capitalise on the recent international spotlight on Scotland, mark out a niche for Scotland amongst other substate international strategies, provide a framework to link other narratives of Scotland’s self-image (cultural, geographical, functional, moral), and appeal not only to Scotland’s diaspora, but also other places that are undergoing democratic transitions or processes of self-government which are looking to draw lessons from other peaceful, constitutional models (for instance, Tibet, Tobago, Hong Kong). In addition, marketing a Scottish democratic model would have the added advantage of creating domestic appreciation for Scotland’s democratic achievements – which, in comparative perspective – are indeed considerable.

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