

The art of asymmetry in sister city relationships factors analysis

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Abstract: This research aims to bridge the literature gap in Asymmetric Theory. Thus far, studies on Asymmetric explain bilateral relations between countries in terms of cooperation, both economic and political. On the other hand, international relations between Countries are no longer dominated by the Central Government alone, Local Governments are also actors in international relations. It contributed to strengthening the discussion regarding Asymmetric Relations. This study also explained that the Local Government carried out the Sister City Relationship. This research uses a qualitative approach focusing on thematic analysis through the results of document examination in previous research. The analysis tool used is NVivo 12 Plus. The results show asymmetric relations in the Sister City Relationships based on the relationship between the actors involved in the partnership. This research identifies three factors behind the asymmetry in SCR, namely decentralization, paradiplomacy and interdependency. Decentralization as a factor that causes asymmetric relations between the Central and Local Governments; paradiplomacy as a factor that causes asymmetric relations between Local Governments and Society or Community – involved in SCRs; and interdependence as a factor that causes asymmetric relations between cities. The inequality between actors is what causes SCRs to become asymmetrical. This further strengthens the argument that the Asymmetric Theory can be developed to analyze international relations between Local Governments.

Keywords: *Autonomy, Asymmetry in sister City relationships, Decentralization, Interdependency, Paradiplomac.*

1. Introduction

Asymmetric theory views that there are always unequal bilateral relations in international relations, both in terms of political and economic power (Brzica, 2018; Long, 2017; Pu, 2022; Womack, 2016). Research on asymmetric relationships in many countries is developing rapidly in line with globalization and modernization. In addition, Asymmetric relations have been concentrated mainly in Europe and North America. These countries are the main driving force behind this idea. The asymmetric theory is used to analyze the fluctuating relationship between two countries in conflict so that it does not end in extreme tension (Firsing, 2012; Shin et al., 2016); on the contrary, in some conflicts, it ends with a cooperation agreement, as happened in the asymmetric relationship between China and Indo-Pacific countries (Yamazaki & Osawa, 2021); asymmetric relations between China and Mexico (Garcia et al., 2011); and latent conflict between Germany and France (Schild, 2020). Several international relations experts specifically link asymmetric relations as a form of asymmetric interdependence between core and peripheral countries (Musgrave, 2019; Nye, 2008).

In international relations, asymmetric relations are related to a country's diplomacy. A country uses diplomacy to change the attitude of other countries according to its wishes; thus, diplomacy can be said to be a way of negotiating to reach a profitable agreement. Diplomacy has several forms, such as bilateral diplomacy, multilateral diplomacy, preventive diplomacy, public diplomacy, and economic and

trade diplomacy (Cornago, 2016). These forms of diplomacy are used to explain various problems and phenomena in relations between countries. The actors in a cooperation agreement or diplomacy currently involve countries and new actors such as regional governments, communities, and even individuals at home and abroad. (Cornago, 2010; Mukti, T. A., Fathun, L. M., Muhammad, A., & Sinambela, 2021).

One of the new diplomatic actors is the Regional Government, the leading actor in Sister City cooperation. Sister City relations between developed and developing countries have become a topic of increasingly heated debate in recent years. Social facts show that some gaps and inequalities occur in the implementation of SCR between developed and developing countries. This gap is also found in bilateral relations between North and South. On the other hand, Northern countries generally have more excellent resources and capacity to support programs in SCR partnership. These Northern countries can become significant providers of technical assistance, technology, and funding to partner countries in the South (Shin et al., 2016). This SCR partnership is seen as a form of para-diplomacy.

On the other hand, Southern countries are often only passive recipients of SCR partnerships. Southern countries cannot influence the agenda and determine priorities for SCR partnerships (Bandauko & Bobo, 2018). As a result, SCR programs sometimes need to be more suited to local needs and interests in Southern Countries. Furthermore, there are concerns that this SCR partnership could strengthen the subordination and dependence of Southern countries on Northern countries. Inequalities in resources, knowledge, and bargaining power can lead to Northern domination in decision-making. So, joint efforts are needed to build asymmetric relationships in the SCR partnership.

The asymmetric theory developed by Womack emphasizes that asymmetry exists not only in military and economic power but also in terms of geographic location, political priorities, and perceptions (Womack, 2016). It shows that asymmetric relationships can shape patterns of interaction, initiative, attention, and respect in international relations. Womack also emphasizes that smaller states may have advantages of location, access to information, or moral legitimacy that enable them to play a significant role even if they are quantitatively weaker. On the other hand, larger countries can be trapped in a power trap where their dominating capabilities will limit their space as actors in international relations. The development of globalization and economic liberalization trends have also brought sub-state actors to influence broader international relations. So, an asymmetric institutional approach also changes the structure and activities of sub-states globally (Munir et al., 2022). This phenomenon of collaboration by sub-state actors can be an opportunity for regional development and impact national development.

In connection with Womack's opinion, this research looks at the influence of asymmetric relationship patterns on Sister City Partnership to develop Asymmetric theory and formulate factors that influence the formation of asymmetric relationships, especially in SCR partnership. SCR partnership, previously known as maintaining good relations between geographically close regions, is now starting to experience significant development. The context of cooperation in SCR is not only in the fields of education and socio-culture but can also provide benefits for economic growth (Han et al., 2021). This change cannot be separated from the increasing development of decentralization in Southern countries, which gives authority to sub-state actors in establishing foreign cooperation to meet regional needs (Bontenbal & Van Lindert, 2008a). The inequality of authority between state actors and sub-state actors gives rise to an asymmetrical relationship between the two in the SCR partnership. Likewise, the relationship between sub-state and non-state actors with unequal roles creates an asymmetrical relationship. This research tries to prove the existence of asymmetric relationships in SCR partnerships and analyze the factors that influence the asymmetric relationships found in SCR partnerships, both at the State, Regional Government, and Community levels, by proposing an approach that this asymmetric SCR relationship is a concept where one actor has greater authority and size than the other actor. Even though there are challenges in this relationship, asymmetry can still be successful if the actors involved commit to a reciprocal relationship that seeks mutually beneficial cooperation. This research aims to find gaps in the literature related to previous asymmetric relationships.

2. Literature Review

Asymmetric theory in bilateral relations refers to the concept that in a bilateral relationship between two countries, there is an imbalance of power and influence; namely, one country tends to have a more dominant and vital position than the other country. (Womack, 2016). An essential aspect of asymmetric theory is the concept of dependency (Kim, 2019). Countries weaker in bilateral relations often depend on stronger countries economically, politically, and security-wise. This dependency can create an imbalance in bargaining power and negotiating ability. Apart from that, asymmetric theory also emphasizes the concept of resource utilization. Stronger countries use weaker countries' resources to fulfil national interests (Phillips, 2017).

On the other hand, the asymmetric theory also emphasizes the importance of weaker countries developing strategies and policies that can strengthen their bargaining position in bilateral relations. It is a form of awareness that bilateral relations are only sometimes zero-sum (Yamazaki & Osawa, 2021). In some cases, stronger countries may adopt a more cooperative and accommodative approach to maintain stability and mutually beneficial relationships. A good understanding of this theory can help countries to manage bilateral relations more effectively.

In the context of bilateral relations, China has a different approach from other countries as a country with an authoritarian system. In his research, Xiaoyu Pu describes the relationship between China and India as a form of asymmetric bilateral relationship, where the two have differences in power in the economic sector and are rivals in the trade sector. Based on the asymmetric theory developed by Womack, China has a power that is not very different from India, and this can be concluded as a symmetric relationship. In their bilateral relations, China does not use a soft power approach and is less responsive to India's concerns about China's position in the rivalry between the two (Pu, 2022). It shows that symmetrical bilateral relations can trigger conflicts of interest between the two.

On the other hand, China has succeeded in using a soft power approach in its bilateral relations with Myanmar. If viewed from the perspective of asymmetric relations, China has more substantial power than Myanmar. This relationship brought China to economic dominance in the trade sector in Myanmar by exploiting its people's historical relationships (Dossi & Gabusi, 2023). However, it cannot be denied that Myanmar also benefits from this asymmetric relationship, one of which is constructing a Chinese industrial area in the border area with Myanmar, which can absorb the country's workforce. (Hung, 2023). It shows that asymmetric relationships can create reciprocal relationships with the principle of interdependence between stronger and weaker countries.

The literature on Asymmetric Relations shows that cooperative relations between cities worldwide have yet to receive enough attention. These cities are increasingly connected through SCR partnerships. In an SCR partnership, apart from the state being the central actor, the role of the regional Government is also very dominant (Mascitelli & Chung, 2008). In every SCR agreement with Partner Cities, the Regional Government is the leading actor in the negotiation process, making a memorandum of understanding and maintaining good relations between partner cities. This phenomenon can be understood through the Asymmetric Relations perspective, which views the relationships between actors in national and international systems as not always symmetrical. Authority, resources, and influence disparities can create asymmetrical relationship patterns in inter-city relations. However, research on this phenomenon has not been found, and asymmetric theory has not been utilized to analyze asymmetric relationships in SCR partnerships. A more in-depth study of the dynamics between actors in SCR partnerships can provide new insights into understanding increasingly complex patterns of international relations.

This research wanted to analyze the factors that encourage asymmetric relationships between actors in Sister City Relationships and the implications for the success and failure of cooperation between cities. Thus, this topic explored theoretical discussions in the study of International Relations, especially regarding Asymmetry theory.

3. Research Methodology

This study used a qualitative approach with a focus on thematic analysis. Thematic analysis was chosen to maximize the analysis of factors influencing asymmetric relationships in Sister City Relationships. This approach was chosen to guide researchers in finding analysis sources from previous research related to Sister City Relationships. The analysis of data is seen in Figure 1. Figure 1 shows the analysis process, which begins with data collection. The data selected was 175 SCOPUS articles. The data was collected by downloading directly from Elsevier articles related to Sister City within the last 20 years. The collected data is then transferred to the NVivo 12 Plus analysis tool. In coding data, the NVivo 12 Plus analysis tool provides features that can be utilized, such as creating nodes, categories, and relationships between categories. These features help researchers identify essential themes related to asymmetric relationships in Sister City Relationships.

First, 'theme identification' was used to identify the information contained in the documents that have been collected. This feature helps select and determine relevant themes in the analysis (Sotiriadou et al., 2014). Second, the 'cases and attribute classifications' feature was used to categorize the data that has been collected. It allows researchers to collect data based on specific attributes relevant to the research. Third, the 'theme mapping' feature maps the data coding results. This feature helps see patterns and relationships between pre-category themes (Nurkaidah et al., 2024; Paulus et al., 2017; Sotiriadou et al., 2014).

After data coding was complete, the coding results were analyzed and explained to answer research questions about factors influencing asymmetric relationships in SCR. A more in-depth description of the results of the analysis can reveal significant findings and information discovered from the data that has been collected and analyzed. Data constraints in this research include constraints in the data collection process if the required data cannot be accessed (closed). Using data analysis tools using NVivo 12 Plus can help ensure consistency in theme groups and data attributes (Rossolatos, 2019).

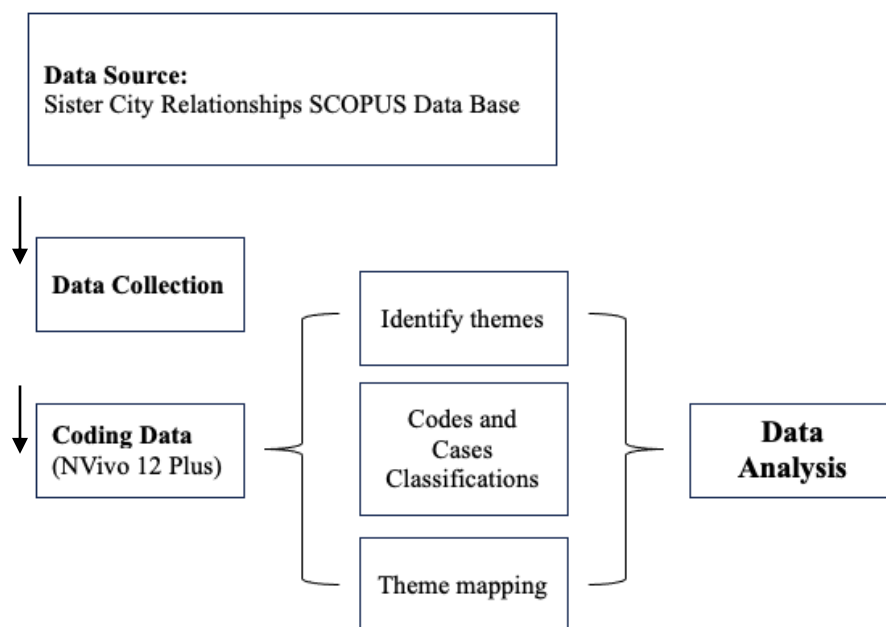


Figure 1.
Data analysis process using NVivo 12 plus.

4. Result

In this section, data for analysis was obtained by collecting previous research documents sourced from SCOPUS. This document was analyzed using NVivo 12 Plus software for the data coding. It was

done to make it easier for researchers to present and interpret data to answer research questions regarding the factors underlying asymmetric relationships in Sister City Relationships. Asymmetric relationships are not just about differences in capabilities but also include geographic, political, and perception dimensions (Womack, 2016). However, in this research, we want to find the asymmetric relationship related to the actor's ability in SCR. To find factors that influence SCR relationships, this research refers to actors' ability in SCR partnerships. It was found that there is an asymmetric relationship between actors, namely state actors as actors who design decentralization policies, sub-state actors as actors who implement Sister City cooperation based on interdependence, and non-state actors as para-diplomacy actors who experience a trend of increasing their role in SCR partnership. as seen in figure 2.

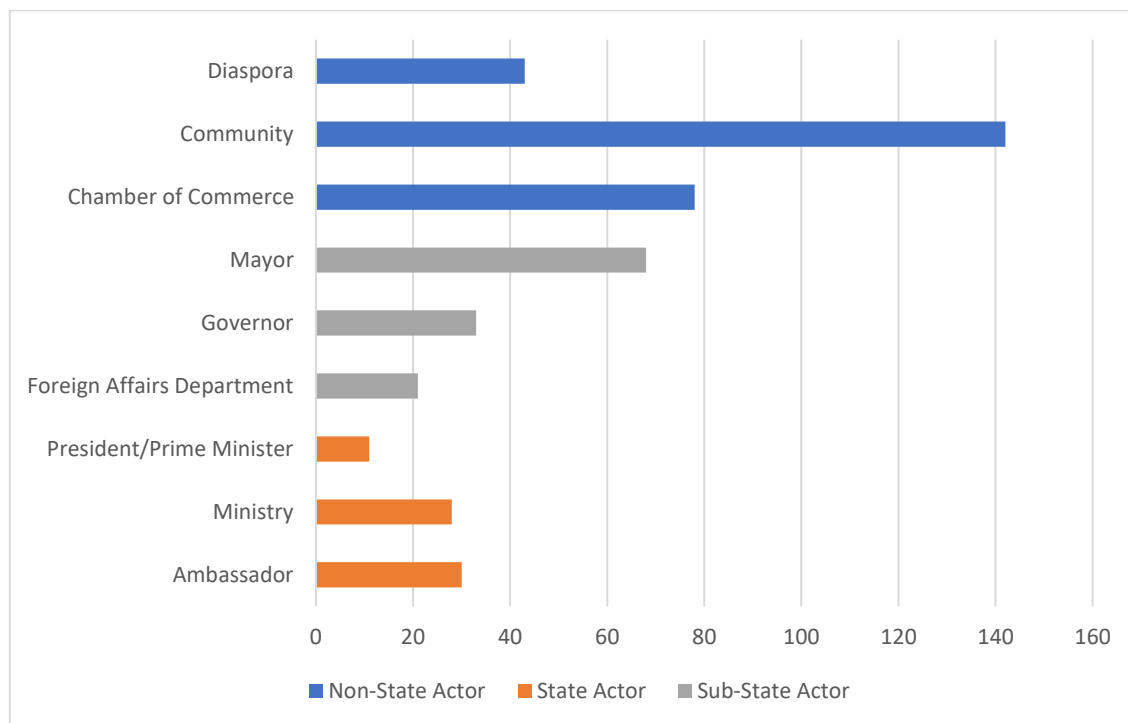


Figure 2.

Actors in the sister city relationships collaboration (obtained from various sources and processed by the author using the NVivo 12 Plus application).

4.1. State Actor dalam Kerjasama Sister City

In SCR partnership, differences in government systems give rise to differences in authority among state actors. In the Federal States, the Central Government does not have much role in SCR partnerships. SCR partnership is regulated and implemented entirely by the Regional (State) Government. It differs from a Republic, where the state actor is the Central Government and has a central role. The Central Government acts as the primary coordinator. One of the main functions of state actors in SCR partnerships in both federal and republican countries is to develop legal and policy frameworks that support SCR partnerships (Cross, 2010; Ryan & Mazzilli, 2021). In addition, the Central Government promotes and facilitates SCR relations through diplomacy, establishing bilateral agreements between countries, and resource allocation. (Freire, 2017). Another role of the Central Government is to build country branding at the international level so that it can encourage regional government interest in establishing SCR partnerships. However, specifically, the role of state actors in the Republic is to create decentralized regulations on foreign cooperation carried out by Regional

Governments. Furthermore, the Central Government also acts as the provider of Full Power to Regional Governments to carry out Sister City cooperation agreements (Mukti, 2013; Thontowi, 2009)

In Figure 2, it is seen that the President/Prime Minister is the actor who has the most minor role in the overall SCR partnership. However, as head of state, a president has policies that build the country's image. Nation branding efforts are carried out to make nation-states appear as actors by building images and carrying out joint attributions with cities in various other nation-states. (Buhmann, 2022). A President is also an actor who paves the way for creating bilateral cooperation between countries before the Regional Government continues the cooperation. An example is President Xi Jinping's 2014 visit to India, which was then followed by a return visit by the Indian Prime Minister to China in 2015, which resulted in an agreement to form a State/Provincial Leaders' Forum to increase strength and institutions in para-diplomatic exchanges between the two countries (Chatterji & Saha, 2017).

The following State Actor is the Minister or Ministry that plays a role in the success of the SCR partnership. Apart from creating a policy and regulatory framework conducive to the development of SCR, relevant ministries are also needed to allocate financial and technological resources to support projects in SCR partnership. The coordinating role between ministries ensures synergy between SCR partnerships and national or regional development programs (Lu et al., 2005). Apart from the President, Prime Minister, and related ministries, the next state actor who has a role in the SCR is the Ambassador. However, the role of the Ambassador can be seen in the SCR partnership carried out by Republic countries, such as China and Indonesia. Ambassadors are essential in promoting culture and people-to-people linkages in SCR partnership. Where Ambassadors can initiate and promote the formation of SCR partnerships. It can be seen in the SCR partnership between Shanghai and Montreal, where the Ambassador was the representative of China during his visit to Montreal and became the liaison and negotiator for the SCR partnership between the two cities (de Villiers, 2009a).

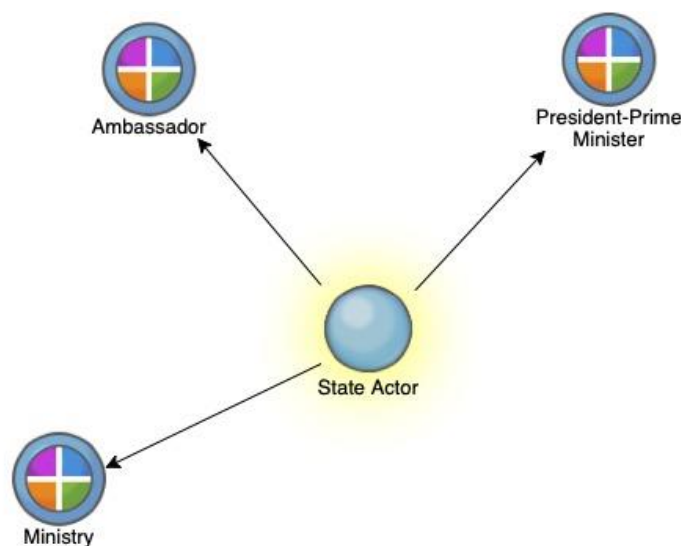


Figure 3.
State actor in sister city relationships.

4.2. Sub-State Actor of Sister City Partnership

In SCR partnership, the Regional Government acts as the leading implementer and manager of SCR partnership. Regional Government is also responsible for identifying regional potential and needs and formulating appropriate cooperation programs (de Villiers, 2009b). Regional Government also plays a role in establishing interpersonal relationships by building trust with SCR partners at home and abroad. The sub-state actors in the SCR partnership are the Governor, Mayor, and the Regional Foreign Affairs Division, as in Figure 4. The Governor coordinates to align the SCR program with regional

development policies and goals. In this case, a Governor can facilitate cross-sector dialogue and cooperation, ensuring that SCR initiatives are integrated with spatial planning, economic development, and other development agendas at the provincial level. As is the case in the government system in China, although each province has two political leaders, namely the party secretary and the Governor, and both have the same amount of power within their jurisdictional boundaries, oversight of the running of the Government as well as administrative affairs and economic cooperation is held by Governor (Zhang et al., 2020). The next sub-state actor who plays a role in SCR is the Mayor. Apart from being the main initiator of SCR at the city level, the Mayor also acts as a coordinator who reconciles the needs of partner cities with local city resources (Nye, 1990). So, there is interdependence between the two SCR cities.

Additionally, among the three sub-state actors in Figure 4, the Regional Foreign Cooperation Agency is the most interesting one. Several countries, such as China and Japan, have established overseas units in provinces/cities, an extension of the Central Department of Foreign Affairs (Chatterji & Saha, 2017; O'Toole, 2001). The existence of regional foreign cooperation bodies as an extension of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs can be relied upon to integrate the Central Government's priority agenda with the overall regional development agenda. On the other hand, the existence of this division/agency as professional staff who understand diplomatic protocols and international partnership management and have negotiation skills that can assist Regional Governments in designing more comprehensive and collaborative cooperation agreements with SCR partner cities, especially in the economic sector. (Cross, 2010).

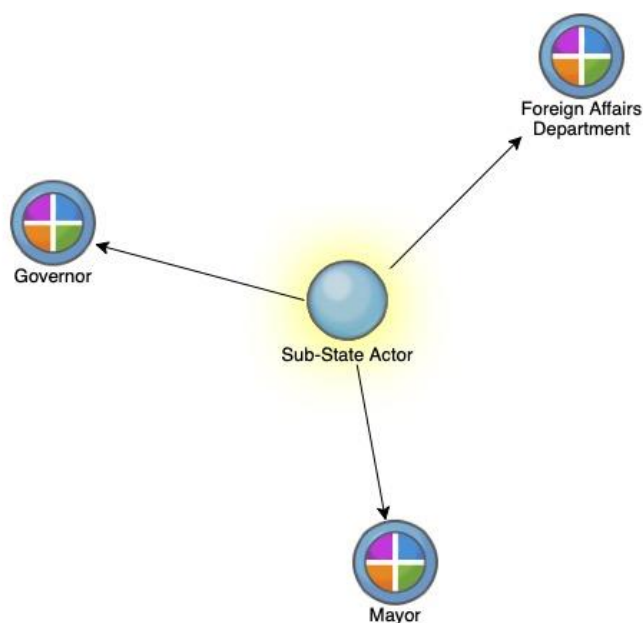


Figure 4.
Sub-state actors in sister city partnership.

4.3. Non-State Actor of Sister City Partnership

Apart from the Central Government as a state actor and Regional Governments as sub-state actors, some non-state actors play an essential role in managing effective SCR partnerships. Non-state actors are parties outside the Government, consisting of organizations and community communities within and abroad. One of the primary roles of non-state actors is as agents of social and cultural change in SCR partnerships. For example, civil society organizations, youth groups, and cross-cultural communities can play a role in facilitating the exchange of arts, culture, and cross-community activities. (Tristofa & Tham, 2022). Through these activities, non-state actors can help build better understanding,

eliminate stereotypes, and strengthen ties of friendship between the two cities. In Figure 5, non-state actors involved in the SCR partnership are categorized, namely the Chamber of Commerce, Community, and Diaspora.

Regional Chambers of Commerce have an essential role in supporting the success of SCR partnerships in the economic field. As an organization representing the interests of the business world, the Chamber of Commerce profoundly understands the economic potential and business opportunities in both partner cities (Bontenbal & Van Lindert, 2008b). The Chamber of Commerce also has relationships with the micro and macro sectors, so the SCR program can be designed to support regional economic growth and investment. Even though there are state and sub-state actors, the sustainability of SCR partnerships depends on the participation of local communities (Cremer et al., 2001). The next non-state actor was the diaspora. In SCR partnership, the diaspora can identify collaboration opportunities as individuals with business relationships and networks in both regions. As public diplomacy actors, the diaspora has a role as para-diplomats who promote a positive image and increase the visibility of the diaspora's home city in foreign partner cities. It can encourage increased tourist and tourism sector income in the two SCR cities. It is done by the Brazilian diaspora in the United States, Portugal, and Japan (Campbell, 2015).

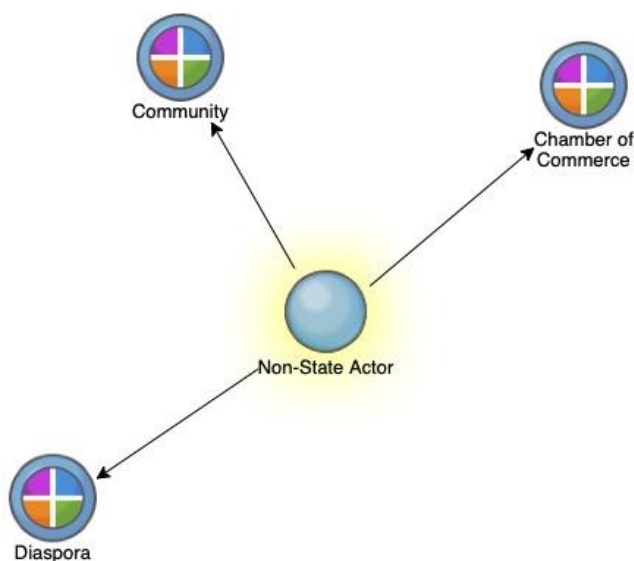


Figure 5.
Non-state actors in sister city relationships.

5. Discussion

Cooperation between regional governments through the SCR program is increasingly popular in the development of globalization. SCR is a form of para-diplomacy carried out by two regional governments from different countries to exchange experiences and cultures and mutually promote economic and trade relations. However, in practice, the SCR cooperative relationship cannot avoid asymmetrical relationships where there is an imbalance of power and resources both internally and externally between the parties involved. It can be seen from asymmetric relationships between SCR, state, sub-state, and non-state actors. It can be influenced by decentralization, paradiplomacy, and dependency factors in SCR actors.

Decentralization divides authority, responsibility, and resources from the Central Government to Regional Governments (Frisvold & Caswell, 2018). In the context of SCR partnership, decentralization can impact the ability of Regional Governments to establish and manage international relations. First, decentralization can provide greater autonomy for Regional Governments to determine their foreign

policy, including establishing SCR partnerships. However, not all Regional Governments have the same capacity in terms of diplomacy, budget, and human resources to manage international relations effectively. As a result, Regional Governments that are stronger economically and politically can offer more resources and opportunities in SCR partnerships.

In contrast, weaker regional governments can only offer little and tend to be passive in SCR partnerships. It can then create an imbalance in negotiating and designing the SCR partnership MoU with potential SCR partners. Second, regional governments' capacity differences can also create inequality in accessing international resources and networks. Stronger Regional Governments can attract investment, technology, and expertise more easily from foreign partners abroad, while weak Regional Governments will be left behind. This condition results in an asymmetrical relationship, where the stronger Regional Government has a better bargaining position in the SCR partnership. Stronger regional governments can provide more favourable terms for their regional interests.

In comparison, weaker Regional Governments must accept this situation to continue to benefit from cooperation from the stronger Regional Governments. Therefore, decentralization can influence asymmetric relationships between state actors in SCR partnerships. The central and regional governments must work together effectively to manage SCR partnerships.

Interdependence also influences asymmetric relationships in sub-state actors involved in sister-city cooperation. In SCR partnerships, countries and sub-state actors such as regional governments, cities, and local communities are involved (Rudiany et al., 2021). The interdependent relationship between these actors can also create an asymmetrical situation. First, differences in resources and capacities between the sub-state actors can influence interdependence. More prosperous cities or local governments generally have larger budgets, infrastructure, and human resources to contribute to SCR partnerships.

Meanwhile, less developed sub-state actors may rely heavily on support and assistance from more vital partners. It can provide a lower bargaining position for less developed sub-state actors in negotiating terms of cooperation. Second, differences in political priorities and agendas between the sub-state actors can create asymmetric interdependence. More substantial cities or regional governments may seek to promote their political interests and agendas through SCR partnership, while weaker sub-state actors must adapt to these conditions. This situation can create tension and inequality for sub-state actors with more vulnerable positions. Third, differences in information access, networks, and international connections between the sub-state actors can strengthen asymmetric interdependence. More vital sub-state actors usually have better abilities to obtain up-to-date information, establish connections with international partners, and take advantage of cooperation opportunities.

Meanwhile, less developed sub-state actors may only have limited access, thus being weaker in negotiations and decision-making. Fourth, differences in diplomatic capacity and negotiation capabilities between the sub-state actors can also influence asymmetric interdependence. Sub-state actors who are more experienced and skilled in international diplomacy tend to influence decision-making processes and gain more significant benefits from cooperation.

In principle, asymmetric interdependence between substate actors can create a situation where a stronger substate actor can take advantage of its dominant position to set agendas, conditions, and benefits that are more favourable to its interests. Efforts to strengthen the capacities of underdeveloped substate actors, build trust, and create fair negotiation mechanisms can help reduce asymmetric relationships in SCR partnerships.

In the context of the SCR partnership, para diplomacy can provide more expansive space for Regional Governments to be directly involved in international cooperation (Wilson, 2023), one of which is through the SCR partnership. Paradiplomacy can influence asymmetric relationships among non-state actors involved in SCR partnerships. Several factors cause it. First, regional governments as para-diplomacy actors have more significant resources, access, and authority than non-state actors, such as civil society organizations, the private sector, or community groups. Regional governments can provide budgets, facilities, and broader institutional connections to support SCR partnership programs. It can

create dependency and unequal bargaining positions for non-state actors. Second, the decision-making process in para-diplomacy tends to be dominated by regional governments. Non-state actors are often only involved as consultants or implementers, with little influence in determining SCR partnership priorities, strategies, and policies. The involvement of non-state actors is often passive and reactive, following the agenda set by the Regional Government. Third, regional governments, as actors involved in para-diplomacy, have better access to information, data, and international networks. Meanwhile, non-state actors tend to have limitations in this regard. This gap in information and international connections can make it difficult for non-state actors to participate effectively and influence decision-making processes. Fourth, differences in capacity and resources between local governments and non-state actors can create unbalanced incentives. Local governments may be able to offer more attractive rewards, facilities, or work opportunities for non-state actors to engage in SCR partnerships. It can encourage non-state actors to focus more on fulfilling the interests of the Regional Government rather than fighting for their interests. Fifth, para diplomacy carried out by Regional Governments can impact power dynamics at the local level. Regional governments involved in SCR partnerships can gain legitimacy and more vital political support. At the same time, non-state actors who are less accommodated in this process can experience marginalization and decreased influence.

In the context of SCR partnership, regional government para-diplomacy can create asymmetric relationships detrimental to non-state actors. Even though the involvement of non-state actors is essential in supporting the success of cooperation, their bargaining position could be more vital than that of Regional Governments as para-diplomacy actors. Therefore, efforts are needed to strengthen relationality between Regional Governments and other non-state actors and build more participatory and balanced mechanisms in the para-diplomacy process.

6. Conclusion

This research shows that asymmetric relations occur in bilateral relations between countries and SCR partnerships. Asymmetric relations in SCR have two patterns, namely, the pattern of foreign relations and also the pattern of domestic relations. Asymmetric relationships in overseas patterns, namely with foreign partner cities, are caused by asymmetric interdependence factors. It was also found that there were asymmetric relations within the country that influenced SCR partnership, namely asymmetric relations between state and sub-state actors. Where both of these things are influenced by decentralization. Furthermore, an asymmetric relationship exists between sub-state actors and non-state actors. It is caused by the para-diplomacy factor, where non-state actors have more potential in para-diplomacy along with the development of globalization.

The results of this research provide an essential contribution to the asymmetric theory previously developed by Womack. Womack's Asymmetric Theory centres on the state as the only actor in an asymmetric relationship. However, the results of this research show that asymmetric relationship dynamics also occur between sub-state actors and other non-state actors. In the context of SCR, State actors include the President, Ministry, and Ambassadors; sub-state actors include Governors, Mayor, and the Regional Foreign Cooperation Section; non-state actors include the Chamber of Commerce, Civil Society Community, and Diaspora/Individuals. This research reveals that asymmetric relationships can form between these actors. This finding also expands the scope of Womack's asymmetric theory by showing that imbalances of power and resources occur not only among state actors but also between various stakeholders in SCR partnerships. It provides a more comprehensive understanding of the complexity of asymmetric relationships in SCR.

The limitations of this research lie in the data used, which still uses secondary data. Further research must be conducted in-depth and based on case studies to test the asymmetric theory in Sister City Relationships collaboration. One area that needs to be explored more profoundly is the asymmetric dynamics in the relationship between the Central Government and Regional Government and the dynamics between the Regional Government and the Community. In addition, cross-disciplinary studies

are expected to produce richer insights regarding situational factors that influence asymmetric relationships, especially in SCR partnerships.

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