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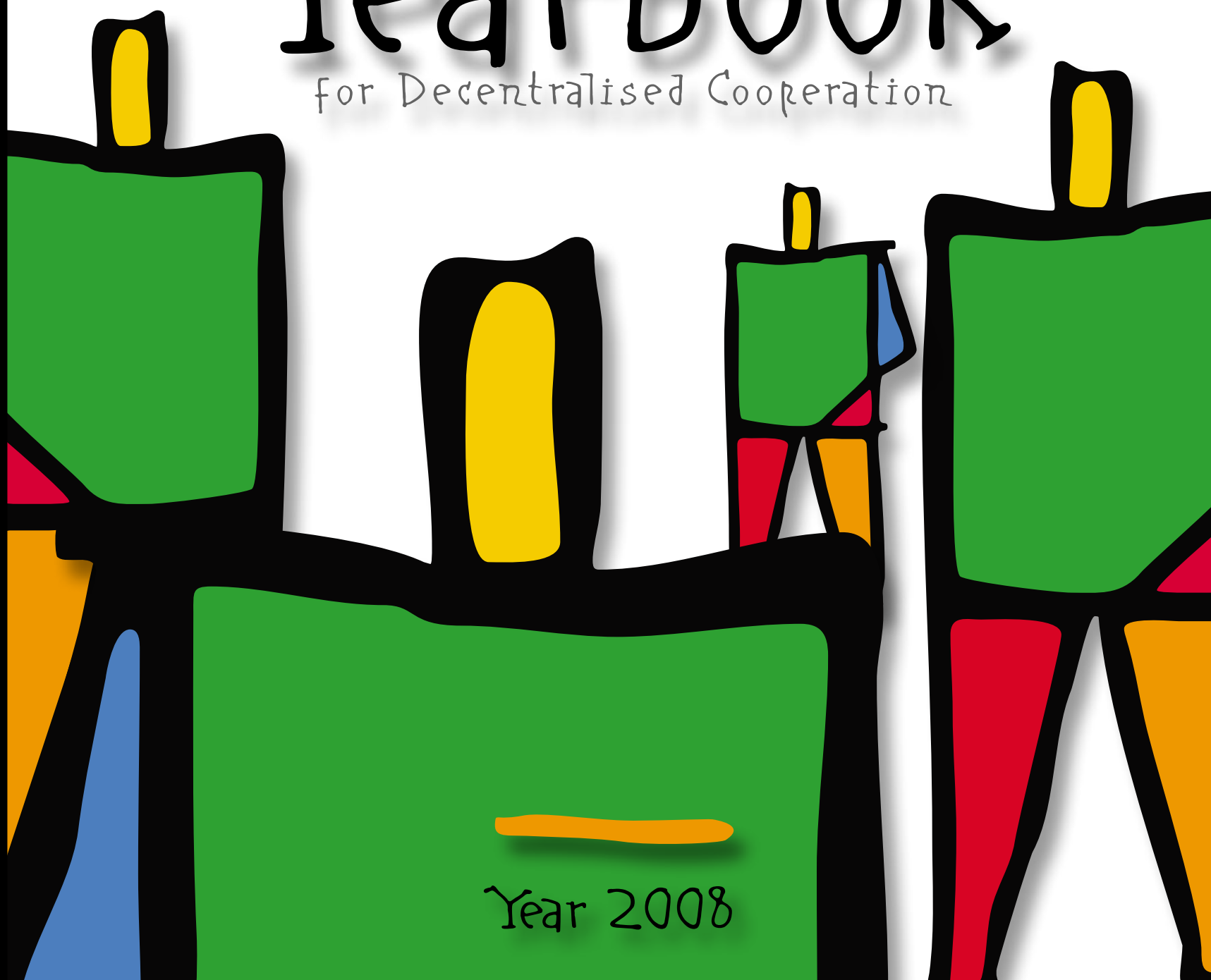
for Decentralised Cooperation

Year 2008

Yearbook

for Decentralised Cooperation

Barcelona Provincial Council

In the five years that have elapsed since the creation of the Decentralised Cooperation Observatory was proposed at the Valparaíso Conference on local partnership, which became a reality one year later, we have gone about accumulating a significant number of achieved goals. These goals include, unquestionably, our generation of added value in local institutional management through the promotion of collaboration between local and regional authorities. It is an added value that is concretised in more and better public service for persons, for citizens, from the proximity of the town councils and the municipalities.

The EU-LA Decentralised Cooperation Observatory has indeed allowed the multiplication of the impact of the governmental proximity action while lending a new dimension to the valuable body of political assets of decentralised cooperation between Latin America and Europe. In a brief period of time, it has become a useful and effective instrument for achieving a greater coordination and complementarity of decentralised actions, in the spheres of both bilateral and multilateral cooperation, at the same time as it has helped to promote the discussion on the models of public decentralised cooperation, a discussion that is necessary in order to strengthen the development of policies that will increasingly benefit citizens and that will also be more permeable to the concerns and initiatives of organised civil society.

I would like to underscore the fundamentally political value of an instrument such as the Observatory, since there is often a tendency to highlight the technical aspect of decentralised cooperation processes. Indeed, this is an essential and decisive aspect but it should not conceal the fact that it is a consequence of a process of political dialogue between the local authorities of the European Union and of Latin America. It should not be forgotten that the actions at technical level which are unfolded in the field of public decentralised cooperation are based on political decisions and premises, and it is this clearly political component which has situated the local governments in a prominent position on the international agenda of development.

For this reason, the EU-LA Decentralised Cooperation Observatory pursues the goal of intensifying these policies, because we people who participate in it know that only firm political action with a clearly local and decentralised character (a character, it should be said, that is still not sufficiently acknowledged today) can help to provide effective responses to poverty, inequality and social exclusion, and help to favour the social integration of immigrants, promote equality of opportunities between women and men, and develop more deeply the regional integration processes.

Our Yearbook constitutes an important element in this task since it offers materials, experiences and detailed reflections in connection with the main aspects of the everyday activity of decentralised cooperation, from the standpoints of methodological reflection and analysis, and of the critical assessment of specific cases. These are solid demanding contributions which make this publication a useful catalogue comprising valid strategic guidance as well as good practices.

The work that is gathered here is, consequently, a reliable witness to the intense effort carried out by numerous local governments that are operating in a coordinated way. It is an effort in which the Barcelona Provincial Council feels deeply involved, both because of our municipalist philosophy and because of the commitment of the network of 311 municipalities of Barcelona Province to the promotion of local policies of decentralised cooperation. It is, moreover, an effort in which we feel supported by our partners in the Observatory project and especially by our colleagues of the City Council of Montevideo, which fosters it jointly with us. I trust that this new edition of the Yearbook, as on previous occasions, will meet the expectations of all the persons who work in the field of public decentralised cooperation in Latin America and the European Union.

Antoni Fogué
President of the Barcelona Provincial Council

Presentation

Montevideo Municipal Government

To share with you this 2008 edition of the Decentralised Cooperation Yearbook is unquestionably an opportunity to reflect, assess, plan and pose some questions with respect to issues that occupy our everyday actions and which confront us with the decisions that will set the paths to the future.

On the occasion of the presentation of previous editions of this publication, we referred to the need to continue to forge and to build our identities in order to be able to advance towards integrated societies that are based on relations of greater equity, and towards new local, regional and international balances. We also referred to the fact that the commitment undertaken by the local governments, decentralised cooperation, and the efforts made to strengthen the processes of local and regional integration were tools that should continue to be built and consolidated in order to be able to face squarely the challenges of the future.

Today, in a world that begins to perceive quite clearly the impact of globalisation through a far-reaching economic and financial crisis that is posing new uncertainties across the length and breadth of the whole planet, decentralised cooperation acquires a special meaning. The challenges of equity, of the building of open cities, of social cohesion, of the creation of spaces of positive coexistence and safety where men and women may unfold fully their life projects, demand that we look with particular attention at the opportunities which arise when we travel the paths of co-development, building networks of local spaces.

From our Latin America, after fifty years of tests of diverse development models, we have seen the emergence of a context of great inequalities, of notable increases of the distances within societies. In the 1980s the concept of sustainable development changed completely the notion of "development", attaching to it adjectives with novel meanings: "human" and "sustainable". Accordingly, taking this trilogy of terms as the concatenated goals of development and basing them on different media, such as civil society, participation, the citizenry, equity, gender, the fight against poverty, justice, governance, safety, inclusion and the deeper development of democracy, the concept of development acquired a new conceptualisation that was not limited to the political or the economic. This conceptualisation in itself, however, also proved to be insufficient, lacking the necessary heuristic value and leading to new indicators and statistics that ended up concealing the distances. A powerful alternative then arose, drawing nearer the concept of social capital, that is to say, the concept of development with the generation of social capital.

In this direction, decentralised cooperation may discover an interesting path to be followed, one that is linked to the building of shared outlooks, in the cities and among the cities. This path implies the progressive incorporation of the changes that are processed in the people's outlook, the outlook on their surroundings, on themselves, that gives meaning to the advances beyond the material dimension. The change in the way of gazing reflects a change of attitude, a different way of projecting and of projecting oneself.

If we are then capable of reading and discovering elements of great value in the societies and in the cities, such as the growing associationism, the strengthening of ethical references and principles, citizen commitments, and participation in diverse spheres, we will be capable of building optimistic outlooks on the future and of beginning to fulfil the conditions which define the development of social capital. It will then be possible to open the way for a great transforming and building capacity, for a great creative capacity from within the societies.

The synchronising of societies, the breaking of barriers and the drawing closer of persons and communities, and the development of values, projects and great collective constructions are rare and special moments. The moments in which the meeting between people and communities awakens and strengthens values of solidarity and tolerance are perhaps less frequent and more difficult than the social responses which separate and confront the different. Nevertheless, amid the rubble, the suffering, the absurd confrontations and horrors that we repeat once and again, one same dream and one same hope continue to be strengthened and continue to grow.

In times of global processes, of acceleration and intensification of globalisation, of the shortening of times and distances... in times of development of supranational spaces, the cities –as spaces of proximity, of the building of citizenries, of scenes in which men and women take up the role of protagonists in the building of societies– hold great responsibilities for the future. It is from the cities that a place is built in the world so that the men and women of the entire planet may exercise fully their rights and unfold their dreams and projects, there, in that place, in any place where they may decide to do so.

To build this right, the Right to the city, entails today special challenges for decentralised cooperation, which should find the paths to build projects of complementation that will strengthen co-development, in order to discover and to enhance the value of social capital, to strengthen the dialogue between cities and to build shared outlooks.

Ricardo Ehrlich
Mayor of Montevideo Municipal Government

Yearbook 2008 Presentation

It gives me special pleasure to present you with the Observatory 2008 Yearbook, in its first year after finishing its cycle as a European project. After a four-year journey, we are beginning a new institutional stage under the coordination and leadership of Barcelona Provincial Council in partnership with Montevideo City Council, thereby reaffirming our strong commitment to public decentralised cooperation from local governments and for local governments. In this regard, the appearance of the fourth edition of the publication that details the progress made by the European Union-Latin America Decentralised Cooperation Observatory (DCO) presents a commitment to continue analysing, reflecting on and widening the knowledge on this phenomenon by compiling articles of interest on decentralised cooperation.

The 2008 Yearbook aims to follow along the lines of the previous editions, placing the emphasis on new trends deriving from the latest advances. In fact, in recent years we have seen important changes in terms of actors, methods, issues, resources and integration in the field of international development cooperation. In this regard, we would like to draw particular attention to the integration of decentralised cooperation into the context of the Paris Declaration (2005) and the role that local and regional governments can and must play in this agenda, which is marked by a new aid architecture, in support of an increased effectiveness and impact of international cooperation.

What we consider to be of special importance within the current context of the Paris agenda is the articulation, forms of coordination and concertation of decentralised cooperation with other cooperation actors, placing particular emphasis on the specific nature and added value of local governments. In this regard, and based on the results of the 3rd Conference held in Barcelona in May last year under the title **"Uniting efforts for Decentralised Cooperation: Articulation and coordination among actors",** we wanted to go a step further and look in greater depth at forms of articulation with civil society. In fact, after addressing the articulation of decentralised cooperation support programmes by national governments and/or international organisations, now the idea is to look closer at the relationships with the territorial actors who form part of the international cooperation actions in both Latin America and Europe.

On this occasion, we also wanted to highlight the recognition that local and regional governments have gained on the international stage and in particular the initiatives that have arisen in parallel to the Forums and Summits of Heads of State and Government. Some of them have a regional character, such as the **Ibero-American Forum of Local Governments** which held its third edition last year in San Salvador, or the **Forum of Local Governments from the European Union, Latin America and the Caribbean**, whose first edition was held in Paris in 2007 and which the Observatory actively participated in; coinciding with the Spanish Presidency of the EU, its second edition will take place in Spain in 2010.

Finally, this year we also wanted to draw attention to the celebration of the fifth anniversary of the Conference **"Review and outlook for decentralised cooperation between the European Union and Latin America in the area of urban policies"** which took place in Valparaíso (Chile) in March 2004 and gave rise to the creation of the Observatory. It is for this reason that we wanted to open this Yearbook with an article about the current status and evolution of decentralised cooperation and hold the 4th Conference under the title **"Valparaíso + 5: Balance, impact and outlook of local decentralised cooperation"**, due to take place this year in Mexico City.

I would like to take the opportunity once again to extend my thanks to all the members of the Observatory's offices for all the efforts they have dedicated to these initiatives and to the institutions and people who have made the publication of the 2008 Yearbook possible, without whose help it would be very difficult indeed to carry out the Observatory's activities.

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Agustí Fernández de Losada
General Coordinator of the EU-LA
Observatory on Decentralised Cooperation

Presentation

Analysis
of local decentralised
co-operation

This first section focuses on the analysis of decentralised cooperation with the aim of providing elements to strengthen local partnership between the EU and LA. In this section you will find articles on the process, impact, and introduction of decentralised cooperation into the scope of the new development cooperation agenda and the role of associations of municipalities in strengthening current practices.

The section opens with an article entitled 'EU-LA decentralised cooperation in perspective: an overview of its recent evolution (2005-2009)' written by Jean-Pierre Malé. Four years after the creation of the European Union-Latin America Decentralised Cooperation Observatory, this article aims to bring together the DCO's experience in order to place the recent evolution of public decentralised cooperation between the two continents in its most general context, reflect upon the trends that can be detected and identify some current discussion points relating to this phenomenon.

In this Yearbook, particular emphasis has been placed on analysing how decentralised cooperation fits into development cooperation policies. There is special interest in analysing the relationship between decentralised cooperation and the agenda of aid effectiveness that arose from the Paris Declaration (2005); we aim to look more thoroughly at the role local and regional governments can and must play in an agenda marked by a new aid architecture. The article written by Ignacio Martinez and Guillermo Santander, both researchers from the Development and Cooperation Department of the Complutensian Institute of International Studies (ICEI), aims to highlight how decentralised cooperation can contribute towards a greater effectiveness and impact of international cooperation.

Next, we were interested in looking in more depth at the role played by associations of local municipalities in decentralised cooperation as, in recent years, many national associations of municipalities and their federations have developed policies and services to support the exterior action of their municipalities. The article written by Peter Knip, director of VNG International, reviews the different trends in the international approach of European associations, focusing on the case of the Working Group on Capacity and Institution Building of UCLG –which is associated with the Commission on Decentralised Cooperation and led by VNG International– and on the LOGO SOUTH programme run by the Association of Dutch Municipalities.

Analysis of local decentralised co-operation

EU-LA Decentralised Cooperation in perspective: an overview of its recent evolution (2005-2009)

Jean-Pierre Malé *

Four years after the creation of the European Union-Latin America Observatory on Decentralised Cooperation, this article aims to bring together this organisation's experiences in order to: (1) place the recent evolution of public decentralised cooperation between Europe's cities and regions and their counterparts in Latin America in its most general context, (2) reflect upon the trends that can be detected, and (3) identify some current discussion points relating to this phenomenon.

The article begins by identifying some basic elements of the political and strategic environment and context which have characterised local governments' situation during this period, and the profound changes that are starting to take place in relation to the role and competences of these governments in the field of development.

The following section will then focus on the general phenomenon of local governments' international action and on the promotion of municipalism on a global scale.

Based on this political-strategic framework, the author goes on to analyse decentralised cooperation between local governments in the two regions and describes the changes observed in its practices and modalities, highlighting the importance and the complex, innovative and essentially dynamic nature of this phenomenon, as well as the evolution that can be seen at its very heart.

Next, the article turns its attention to the articulation of the public stakeholders in this field, showing how European and Latin American national governments are taking a growing interest in decentralised cooperation and are carrying out a wide range of actions in order to strengthen and channel this cooperation.

This finally leads the author to raise the question of how decentralised cooperation fits within the whole global system of development cooperation and to discuss its possible significance, leading him, in conclusion, to present today's main challenges and key topics of debate.

* Jean-Pierre Malé is an engineer and economist. Director of the ESTUDIS firm of consultants, specialising in cooperation, local and regional development and assessing public policies. He has been a lecturer at the Autonomous University of Barcelona and has led numerous technical assistance missions to African and Latin American governments on behalf of UNDP and other multilateral organisations. In the last 10 years, he has specialised in decentralised cooperation and has advised many local governments in this field. He was the Executive Director of the EU-LA Decentralised Cooperation Observatory from its founding until November 2008 and continues to work closely with this institution as its main advisor.

1. Introduction

1.1. Purpose of the article and the perspective it was written from

This article proposes to:

(1) place the recent evolution of public decentralised cooperation between Europe's cities and regions and their counterparts in Latin America in its most general context,

(2) reflect upon the trends that can be detected, and

(3) identify some current discussion points relating to this phenomenon.

This apparently straightforward aim faces some great difficulties, in particular due to the fact that decentralised cooperation is, by nature, a phenomenon based on the autonomy of local governments (hereinafter, LG) and is, for this simple reason, extremely diffuse and multifaceted. Each local government chooses its own types and modalities of cooperation and develops these from year to year without there being a single mechanism for gathering, systematising and compiling this basic information nor, much less, a global procedure for analysis, monitoring and assessment that would enable the general dynamics of this phenomenon to be identified and evaluated.

It is true that the EU-Latin America Decentralised Cooperation Observatory (DCO), launched in 2005, was created to gradually bridge this gap and that in its first three years it enabled a general overview of the decentralised cooperation relationships that exist between the two regions to be established for the first time. This original contribution to the knowledge and understanding of the phenomenon of public decentralised cooperation (hereinafter, DC) has been made possible thanks to the DCO's privileged position as a unique meeting point and observation space, which spans the bi-regional nature of EU-LA DC.

Despite these advances, we must recognise that information about the evolution of this phenomenon and local governments' practices is still very scarce. An important foundation of quantitative information has been gathered, which provides a fairly consistent 'snapshot' of the relationships established between European cities and regions and their counterparts in LA[1]. However, we still do not have clear indicators of the dynamics of this phenomenon, of its quantitative evolution, nor any reliable means of detecting the changes being produced in the content of this cooperation and in its forms and modalities.

Likewise, the work of the DCO has helped it to learn about many decentralised cooperation actions, launch multiple case studies, analyse many facets of DC and also to directly participate in an intense activity of contacts, meetings and debates of great strategic importance which, in the last four or five years, have revealed a gradual transformation of the world of DC.

It is based on this specific experience that we can identify –in an essentially qualitative manner– some of the important features and trends that have characterised the world of DC in the geographical area of Europe and Latin America over recent years (2005-2009) and try to provide a certain 'interpretation' of its recent evolution, aiming to situate the most recent events within the framework of the general dynamics of DC and the context of the ongoing transformation of the role of LGs.

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[1] | See, for example, the article by Santiago Sarraute and Hervé Théry in UE-LA DC 2006 Yearbook: "Analysis of bilateral relations among the sub-national public administrations of Latin America and the European Union"

To study the matter in greater depth, this article references work undertaken and published by the DCO, the preparatory documents for the Observatory's three annual conferences held in Montevideo, Guatemala City and Barcelona[2], knowledge acquired through contact with different stakeholders and experts from both continents, and experience accumulated in the debate arenas the author has participated in. Likewise, the article does not intend to reflect at any point the Observatory's institutional position, but simply to offer a subjective and personal viewpoint. This vision is subject to various limitations of information and understanding of the emerging phenomenon of international cooperation between local governments and remains strongly marked by the European perspective we find ourselves in. Taking these deficiencies into account, this article is presented simply as a first approach, which may sow the seeds for the future creation of a real assessment of EU-LA DC.

1.2. Conceptual foundations

To tackle the issue of DC, we will follow the methodological guidelines commonly used in the Observatory's work which identify as the main objective of analysis the DC relationships leading to the direct involvement of substate public institutions and generating relationships between them.

This issue lies at the confluence of two paradigms: international relations –with the emergence of LGs as new actors on the international scene– and development cooperation, until now principally marked by the concept of a North-South transfer. This complexity was presented and discussed in a

previous article and we will not return to it here[3].

What we do want to summarise here is the conceptual structure of this article. In order to situate DC within its most general context, as mentioned earlier, it may be helpful to use the logical sequence and terminology summarised below:

The initial basis for reflection is <u>the transformation of the role of LGs in governance and development</u>, within traditional national areas.

This transformation, together with other factors, determines the need for these governments to have international influence, which in this article we will call: '<u>LGs' international (or external) action'.</u>

This internationalisation generates in particular, among other aspects, some international relations between cities and regions, which we could label: '<u>LGs' international cooperation'</u> and which is a worldwide dynamic, not generally conditioned by a North-South vision.

Within this international cooperation by LGs, we enter into the field of <u>development cooperation,</u> when this international cooperation from local levels brings together LGs from the North and the South.

Furthermore, we have to bear in mind that development cooperation financed by LGs includes other aspects, as it may cover actions that do not involve a direct relationship between LGs in the North and the South. Indeed, many of these governments have developed other cooperation modalities

that consist of financing the actions of other stakeholders, such as development non-governmental organisations (D-NGO), sending humanitarian aid to populations affected by disasters and running development awareness and educational programmes for their own citizens. There is room for all these elements to be accounted for when trying to measure LGs' financial efforts in the field of development cooperation, as they form part of the aid financed by these governments. On the other hand, when we look into the phenomenon of cooperation between substate institutions, only those actions directly involving LGs are subject to study.

For practical purposes, when we use the term DC in the rest of the document, we refer to direct cooperation between cities and regions in Latin America and Europe, which means that we will focus on a phenomenon that forms part of international cooperation between cities and that at the same time represents a significant –although probably minor in terms of resources– part of the development cooperation maintained by LGs in the two regions.

1.3. Outline of the article

The previous observations show the relevance of starting, in the first chapter, by clearly determining some <u>basic elements of the political and strategic environment and context which characterise local governments' situation</u> during this period, and the profound changes that are starting to take place in relation to the role and competences of these governments in the field of development.

The second chapter will focus on the <u>general phenomenon of LGs' international action</u> and on the promotion of municipalism on a global scale, and will look in particular at the recent efforts to consolidate and struc-

ture the international representation of local authorities.

In the third part, and focusing this time on <u>international cooperation between LGs in the two regions,</u> more specific details will be given of the changes observed in practices and modalities of DC, highlighting the importance and the complex, innovative and essentially dynamic nature of this phenomenon, as well as the evolution that can be seen at its very heart.

The following chapter, dedicated to <u>articulating the public stakeholders in the field of DC,</u> will show how European and Latin American national governments are taking a growing interest in DC and are carrying out a wide range of actions in order to strengthen and channel DC in Europe and Latin America.

In the fifth chapter of this article, we will tackle the question of <u>how DC fits within the whole global system of development cooperation</u> and we will see how this issue is closely conditioned by the recognition of LGs' role and functions and by the cooperation approach being strengthened.

Finally, the <u>main challenges and discussion points</u> detailed throughout the work will be summarised.

2. A favourable political and strategic context for LGs

The political context of the field we are concerned with has in recent years been marked by a series of developments favourable to greater affirmation and visibility of LGs. Some international consensus has been achieved regarding the need to promote and strengthen the role of LGs in development and governance and some big steps have been taken in this direc-

[2] | *The article is based in particular on the documents from the 3rd Annual Conference, held in May 2008 and dedicated to the issue of LGs' coordination between themselves (article by E. Zapata) and LGs' coordination with other public actors (articles by Jean Bossuyt and Christian Freres).*

[3]| *Jean-Pierre Malé: 'Especificidades de la cooperación descentralizada pública: actores, contenidos y modelos'. Preparatory document for the Observatory's 1st Annual Conference (Montevideo, 2006).*

tion. In particular we could underline the progress made in three essential dimensions, which represent the foundations or basic principles on which DC is grounded:

✓ *the affirmation of local self-government,*

✓ *the decentralisation of the State and the transfer of competences and resources to substate administrations, and*

✓ *the recognition of local governments and their specific role in development.*

In addition, we must remember that all this has taken place within a general context of rapid urbanisation, which serves to underline the growing importance of cities as places that are managing the problems, needs and expectations of the population, if we bear in mind that 50% of the world's population now live in cities and that, according to the UN, 90% of worldwide demographic growth between 2005 and 2030 will occur in cities[4].

To round off this brief outline, it is worth noting that, recently, the existence of a financial, economic and social crisis that is difficult to forecast makes local and regional governments' actions more crucial and decisive for guaranteeing quality of life and social cohesion on a municipal, metropolitan and territorial scale.

Presently, all these elements work in favour of a greater awareness of the increasing importance of LGs and they generate a positive trend towards consolidating and strengthening LGs. Below we will pause to consider some of the aspects we have mentioned and examine the progress that has been made during the 2005-2009 period.

2.1. A basic principle: local self-government

With regard to local self-government[5], some important steps have been taken, at a bi-regional and global level, to recognise this essential principle which was established and put into practice in 1985 by the European Charter of Local Self-Government, subscribed to by 45 states. A willingness to also affirm the need for local self-government in the Latin American continent led those attending the 3rd Ibero-American Forum of Local Governments –held in September 2008– to discuss the Ibero-American Charter of Local Self-Government project.

In parallel, on a worldwide scale, the global organisation of local governments, United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG), has started to draw up a World Charter of Local Self-Government which, on being approved, would effectively position the principle of local self-government as a central point in models of democratic governance all over the planet.

The importance granted to the issue of local self-government in the abovementioned international forums and institutions allows us to expect that these advances on a formal and declarative level will be accompanied by effective progress in the area in the coming years.

2.2. The decentralisation of the State: affirmed objective, slow progress

With regard to the decentralisation of the State, which should logically both accompany and promote the recognition of local self-government, it could also be said

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that the institutional and political context in recent years has generally been favourable towards recognising the need for a greater transfer of competences (and sometimes resources), from the central government to substate administrations.

In Europe, during the 2005-2009 period, the positive evaluation traditionally attributed to decentralisation in this region has not been contradicted and a certain dynamic in this direction has continued to be present such as, for example, in Spain where the Autonomous Communities' statutes of self-government, created after the transition to democracy which ended Franco's regime, have been renegotiated and at the moment they are agreeing the financial implication of these agreements.

Likewise, the pending issue in almost all European countries is still 'second level' decentralisation, i.e., from regions to towns and cities, as the distribution of public resources among the different levels of the Administration continues to be marked by a notable imbalance and a chronic shortage of municipal resources.

Nevertheless, we can affirm that the decentralisation situation in Europe, although varying greatly from one country to another, is generally more advanced than in the Latin American region. Currently, the scarcity of local self-government and lack of decentralisation in many countries in this region constitute one of the main obstacles to developing DC.

Indeed, in Latin America, the starting point is further behind – above all in the countries in the region that do not have a federal structure. The First Global Report on Decentralisation and Local Democracy, drawn up by UCLG and published in 2008 (known as the GOLD Report), states that: "Despite advances in decentralisation, Latin America is still a continent with a high degree of political, territorial and economic centralisation, exacerbated by concentration in the metropolises and immense social and territorial disparities".

According to Carla Cors[6]: "Latin American countries usually share a strongly centralised State model.../...which has led to a very weak and fragile degree of local self-government which manifests itself in a shortage of resources for carrying out the allocated functions, economic and financial dependence on the central government, the lack of a public administration degree even in some cases, until very recently, non-existent local elections"[7]. Despite this weakness, democratisation processes undertaken from the 1980s onwards in most of the countries on the continent, have brought about changes aimed at strengthening self-government and improving local governance[8].

Along these same lines, the GOLD report, mentioned above, affirms that: "Decentralising experiences have reignited the debate about the importance of local development for sustainable and socially equitable development at the national level. The issue of good local governance is emphasized and

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4 | *This dynamic is especially important in Latin America, where over 70% of the total population live in cities.*

5 | *The definition of what is understood as local self-government can be found, for example, in the Report on Decentralisation and Local Democracy in the World, published by UCLG.*

6 | *Carla Cors, technical report for Barcelona Provincial Council, 2008 (not published).*

7 | *See for example the report: 'Balance de las políticas de descentralización en América latina', published by the Direction Générale de la Coopération Internationale et du Développement , MAEE, France, 2007.*

8 | *Although in 1980 only three countries had democratically elected municipalities, today all nations have municipal governments elected by universal suffrage. Decentralisation expenditure, on continental average, has risen from 11.6% in 1980 to 18.8% between 2002 and 2005.*

understood as a form of territorial self-government based on participatory networks of local actors, public-private alliances and the mobilisation of own territorial resources to activate the endogenous processes of development." *(p. 111)*

From these observations one can deduce that there has been in recent years, at least, a reaffirmation of the decentralisation issue on the Latin American agenda. Evidence of this would be, for example, the periodic Central American Conferences for State Decentralisation and Local Development (CONFEDELCA) which have been held every year since 2002, and have brought together representatives of national governments, LGs and civil society to discuss these issues – the last of these was the 8th Conference held in May 2009 in Antigua (Guatemala).

Nevertheless, the decentralisation situation in Latin America is still rather fluid and unstable, as certain political changes in Latin American states can cause a tendency towards re-centralisation, or generate important tensions related to the degree of decentralisation desired, such as is currently the case in Venezuela and Bolivia.

With all these nuances, it could be said that the general context at the beginning of the 21st century pointed towards a gradual improvement of the legal and institutional framework in order to take the local dimension more into account and make it possible for local power to be better exercised, and this has favoured the achievement of important progress towards recognising the role of LGs, as can be seen next.

2.3. Towards greater recognition of the role and specific nature of LGs in national development

A determining factor for developing DC is, without doubt, the level of recognition granted to local governments as well as understanding and acceptance, by national governments (NG) and international organisations (IO), of their specific role in development. In Europe and Latin America, the past few years have been marked by decisive steps taken in this direction and it seems that this dynamic is in its apogee, especially in Europe. The recognition we mention here concerns the actions of LGs within each national area, i.e., independent of all international activity or influence. There are two levels here which have different implications:

1) The first level is recognising the very important role of LGs as executors of public policies.

We can affirm that, in the period under consideration, the role of LGs in managing local affairs and in urban policies has become more visible than ever, but it is also evident in economic development, territorial structuring and social cohesion on a local scale. The United Nations, for example, states that 80% of implementing the Millennium Goals (MG) depends on local and regional administrations, which gives an idea of the weight of local public policies in improving citizens' living conditions[9].

In fact, there has been a tendency to recognise the importance of local governance more clearly and to position it as one of the key elements of general democratic governance. Thus, after a period during which international organisations had emphasised 'good governance' on a State level, these institutions have recently recognised that governance is not simply a question of

national governments, but that it manifests itself firstly on a local scale and that the articulation of national and local stakeholders is fundamental.

This first level of recognition is important and necessary, but it is not sufficient for LGs to be able to influence national and regional policies.

2) A second level –which immediately derives from the previous one– is the recognition of LGs as political actors who should be full partners in the creation and application of national development strategies and policies, as well as in regional integration policies.

Indeed, recognition of the importance of local levels should be accompanied by greater participation by LGs in national development policies. In this area, progress in recent years has been slow and central governments have not been particularly inclined to promote real concertation with substate administrations. The participation of local and regional governments in national processes and policies is still not very developed and is, in addition, very variable from one country to the next. On a regional scale, a tendency towards recognising LGs is materialising very slowly and is often limited to formal aspects. As an illustration, we could review how LGs have become involved with regional integration policies:

✓ **In Europe**, *the creation of the Committee of the Regions in 1994 established the institutionalised form of this concertation. The Committee formally has a consultative role on specific issues[10], but it*

aims to go beyond that and become a space for generating opinions and a means for applying pressure in favour of LGs, as it has demonstrated recently with the publication of the report on: 'DC in the reform of EU development policy' (2006), which preceded the European Parliament resolution on 'Local authorities and development cooperation' (2007)[11]. Despite these initiatives, and as Agustí Fernández de Losada points out, "the influential capacity of this consultative organisation in EU policies continues to be very slight".[12] Likewise, in 2004, the Commission launched a process of 'structured dialogues' with associations of local and regional governments which led to an increase in the level of participation by LGs in EU policies. Since then and until the end of 2008 nine thematic dialogues of this type were held.

Therefore, it could be said that Europe continues to progress little by little towards a system that permits greater participation by substate governments, although we must remember at the same time that there is still a lot to do in order for LGs' voices to be heard in the creation and implementation of the EU's general policies.

✓ **In Latin America**, *one has to bear in mind that the vigour of the regional integration process is not comparable with that which has occurred in the EU. The institutionalised participation of LGs within regional integration structures that has been applied in Europe through the Committee of the Regions has had its*

9| *Another indicator of the same type, this time in a European setting, is that more than 70% of community legislation is applied on a local and regional scale.*

10 | *The five areas in which it is obligatory to consult the Committee of the Regions are: economic and social cohesion, trans-European infrastructure networks, health, education and culture.*

11| *Statement published in the Official Journal of the EU, 16 May 2006 (Soulabaille Report) and European Parliament Resolution of 15 March 2007 (Schapira Report).*

12 | *See the article by Agustí Fernández de Losada: 'The participation of sub-state governments in the European integration process," in UE-LA DC 2005 Yearbook, published in 2006.*

parallel in the Southern Cone, with the creation of the Consultative Forum of MERCOSUR Municipalities, Federated States, Provinces and Departments (this organisation was formally set up in 2004 but only became operational from 2007). Therefore, progress is being made towards greater involvement by LGs in regional integration strategies, in particular in the Southern Cone sub-region, as a result of the Mercociudades network applying pressure on MERCOSUR to take the local dimension into account[13].

These examples show the difficulty for LGs to be considered by national governments as partners in all of their development policies. This is the origin of IOs' (UNDP, World Bank, etc.) insistence on a 'territorial approach to development' and the emphasis given to 'multi-actor' and 'multi-level' governance. This discourse has been spreading in recent years, although we must recognise that this issue is asserted more strongly by IOs than by national governments, which are naturally more reluctant to transfer their share of power to regions and municipalities.

3. LGs' international action and promoting municipalism: complex processes progressing towards structuring and consolidation

The context we have described –characterised by a certain reinforcement of local self-government, a positive trend towards decentralisation and, above all, greater recognition of the specific role of LGs in development on a national scale– during the period under consideration has provided a positive

general framework for implementing international action by LGs and fostering municipalism on a global scale.

These two strongly interconnected processes have rapidly and visibly been gaining strength over the past few years. LGs have been carrying out an important activity focused on reinforcing and structuring their international dimension, both at a political and representational level and in terms of technical content – not forgetting the gradual construction of tools for research, study and analysis and the creation of service centres and resources capable of supporting LGs' internationalisation.

In parallel, national governments and IOs have gradually begun to recognise the legitimacy and importance of LGs as international actors. We could briefly review the main results obtained in these different fields recently, starting precisely with the last aspect we have mentioned:

3.1. The recognition of LGs as international actors

he emerging phenomenon of LGs' international action, which has been widely described in many publications, both provokes and demands the recognition of LGs as legitimate international actors.

We must not forget that until very recently international activity was considered the exclusive domain of the central State. Progress in this field has been very intense and fast over the last two decades and this is due to a need to provide legal coverage for a de facto situation, as LGs have not hesitated to become involved in intense international activity, even though they did not have formal powers in that respect. To

take this situation into account legal frameworks had to be made more flexible and national governments –often reluctantly– have had to recognise DC and, in a wider sense, what is known as 'LGs' international action'.

European national governments' motives for supporting the international activities of its cities and regions have been closely analysed by Jean Bossuyt in his article: 'Políticas e instrumentos de apoyo a la cooperación descentralizada por parte de los Estados-miembros de la Unión Europea y la Comisión europea: un análisis comparativo'[14]. From the perspective of national states, DC is often viewed as complementary to or as reinforcing the traditional diplomacy between states or as a means of influence and economic, social, political and cultural penetration in certain countries. Thus, European countries have been overcoming their initial reluctance to accept that decentralised administrations could play a greater role on the international stage and in cooperation[15].

This type of recognition must pass through a transformation of the legislative framework and a gradual change in national legal frameworks in order to recognise the legitimacy of LGs' international action. In this field, the decisive progress was made prior to the period being considered in this article in many European countries, with the key dates on which important steps were taken towards recognising and legitimising DC being: Italy (1987), France (1992), Spain (2002), but the process –which is always subject to ne-

gotiation, advances and backward steps– has not finished and we can confirm that it still continues in the period being studied, which determines some new changes in the legal framework, such as for example in France with the adoption of a government bill on international action by territorial communities in January 2007.

Likewise, the most striking progress is not found within the judicial structure and does not correspond to changes in the competence and legal frameworks, but is manifested in the effective recognition of LGs as actors who should be included in the creation and execution of international policies.

In this area, LGs have been especially active in the period 2005-2009, and have applied firm pressure in order to be present in concertation spaces traditionally reserved by national governments. A good example of this is the attempt by LGs to have their voices heard at the Summits of Heads of State and Government of Latin American, Caribbean and European countries. To do this, the First Forum of EU-LA Local Authorities[16] was held in Paris in November 2007 and focused on local policies supporting social cohesion.

With a similar objective, within the Ibero-American area, three Ibero-American Forums of LGs have already been held. The issues tackled were local public policies responding respectively, to migration (Montevideo, 2006), social cohesion (Valparaíso, 2007) and youth problems (El Salvador, 2008).

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14 | Published in the UE-LA DC 2007 Yearbook.

15 | This has translated, for example in France, into the creation in 1992 of a specialised organisation dependant of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the National Decentralised Cooperation Commission (CNCD) and, in Italy, into the creation of the Interregional Development Cooperation Observatory (OICS) in 1991.

16 | We should point out that, in this case, the initiative came from the French government and that the Forum was organised with the participation of the national governments of Italy, Spain and Portugal, with the technical collaboration of the EU-LA DC Observatory.

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13 | We must also mention the work of the Andean Network of Cities in the Andean region.

This dynamic has also spread to smaller regional spaces, such as in the case of the First Forum of Central American Local Authorities (FALCA) held in 2008 in El Salvador, which dealt with the issues of territorial development, local self-government and Central American integration.

The practically simultaneous breakthrough of LGs into all these new spaces is rather striking and demonstrates the strength of the internationalisation phenomenon in these governments. However, we could lament that these events aimed at marking the presence of local actors perhaps have not yet had all the impact that could be expected, and that LGs' voices are still being held back or silenced. The EU-LA Forum of Local Authorities' declaration, for example, did not officially appear among the final documents of the Heads of Government Conference. Therefore, we are dealing with a slow and difficult, although probably irreversible, process of recognition.

In the same way, LGs have applied pressure to be present and to have a voice in international organisations. These organisations have gradually begun to recognise the importance of LGs and some, such as UN-Habitat, have granted them a consultative role at the heart of their organisations through the creation of the United Nations Advisory Committee of Local Authorities (UNACLA) in 2000, as the first formal consultative body in the UN system. This committee, made up of a group of mayors and representatives of municipal associations, advises the institution and issues reports in reference to issues within its competence[17].

3.2. Political strengthening: LGs' representation and dialogue with other stakeholders

The recognition and greater visibility of LGs on the international stage is making it increasingly indispensable to improve institutional, political and technical structuring of the activity of cities and regions. There has been an awareness of this need for many years, but the recent situation has accelerated the existing dynamics.

3.2.1. Unification of LGs' formal representation

As a central element of political strengthening and dialogue with other stakeholders, LGs have managed to provide themselves with a single legitimised structure for representing their interests and making their voices heard in existing international forums. The formal unification of the two LG platforms that existed at the beginning of the 21st century (IULA and UTO/FMCU) and the setting up of UCLG (which the Metropolis network has also joined) as a single platform representing local governments occurred before the period we are looking at, but is still very recent (2004) and is only just beginning to bear fruit.

In fact, the period 2005-2009 was marked by the gradual unfolding of the institution and its organisation, both on a geographical and thematic level. The representation of local governments has been built based on a pyramid of representation that includes national associations of municipalities and their regional groups such as the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR) and the Latin American Federation of Cities,

Municipalities and Associations (FLACMA). UCLG is made up of all these institutions, which indicates that its real strength largely depends on the consolidation of national associations and on the effective role they are able to play in these institutions.

3.2.2. Consolidation of associations of municipalities

Improving the technical and strategic capacities of associations of municipalities has become one of the focal points of the gradual consolidation of municipalism on a global scale. At the proposal of North European associations of municipalities, encouraged by VNG-International, a working group was created within UCLG to address the strengthening of associations and international cooperation between European associations and those of countries in the South. On an experimental basis three countries were selected (one of which was Nicaragua) to begin coordinating the actions of municipalities and regions in European associations participating in this working group.

3.2.3. Current challenges

The progress made in the area of the political and strategic representation of LGs should not conceal the inherent difficulties in such a process, which are of various types:

Firstly, we are facing the challenge of managing to build real representation, beyond the simply formal. Indeed, recently created representation structures such as UCLG must gain recognition as effective representation of LGs. This battle can never be definitively won and the many distinguishing factors that exist in a group as wide as that of LGs can easily lead to elements or risks of fragmentation. A clear and recent example of this is the creation of

the Forum of Global Associations of Regions (FOGAR) in 2007, through which its member regions propose to have specific representation, different to that of municipalities. If this new institution prospers, UCLG could find itself limited to representing only the municipalist 'movement' and not the group of substate governments.

Linked to the previous point, we must consider the difficulty of properly combining the different levels and spaces of representation offered to LGs, as national and multilateral institutions and organisations search for the way to coordinate with LGs. In recent years we have witnessed the creation of a series of ad hoc concertation spaces in which the issue is regularly raised of who really, in a specific and operative way, represents LGs. In these cases, pragmatic and sometimes hybrid solutions are usually found which, for each space, combine the presence of some LGs deeply involved in the specific issue with the more political or symbolic presence of a representative of a global organisation or, at least, with the backing of said institution.

This phenomenon has arisen on various occasions during the period being considered, for example on the creation of the European Platform of Local and Regional Authorities for Development, backed by the EU for a period of two years from January 2009, within the framework of the European programme 'Non-State Actors and Local Authorities in Development'. The composition of this Platform, specifically created within the framework of this European programme, brings together a cluster of local governments (specific cities and regions), networks of cities and regions and representation bodies (UCLG, CEMR).

As these institutions gradually mature they will probably be able to find realistic formulas adapted to the complexity of the phenomenon, maintaining a dynamic balance be-

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17 | *In addition, IOs give LGs special attention in their agendas, such as in the case of UN-Habitat, which held an Ibero-American Conference on decentralisation and strengthening of local authorities in Ibero-America, in Quito (Ecuador), in July 2008.*

tween a system that could represent a certain risk of fragmentation or multiplication of LGs' representation and one that may be overly pyramidal or hierarchical representation – always bearing in mind the great diversity and autonomy that characterise LGs.

3.2.4. The specific contribution of LGs

Another fundamental aspect related to the issue of representation is the content of the specific contribution that LGs can provide in spaces of this nature, beyond the simple satisfaction of seeing their participation as being recognised and legitimate.

Indeed, these different levels of recognition translate into the presence of mayors in specific forums, spaces and committees etc. However, the key issue is knowing what LGs have in common and what their 'representatives' can affirm and defend. There is, in fact, a real difficulty in reaching consensus or finding common positions within such a diffuse and diverse group, which does not yet have a tradition or culture of concertation but which in contrast shows great political and ideological heterogeneity. Likewise, what is shared is an agenda of priority issues tied in with LGs' responsibility for managing local affairs and with the new challenges faced by the local institution, even though it had neither formal competences nor sufficient resources.

In consequence, LGs' breakthrough into these forums should give them the chance to influence national and international agendas and place at the political forefront the key issues of concern for the local administrators who are facing the population's most basic problems: employment, housing, urban transport, schooling, positive coexistence, etc. It does not refer therefore to political pressure in the traditional sense of the word, aimed at favouring a biased option or a certain political or ideological approach, but to affirming 'the policy of daily life' as one of the focal points of general policies.

In the current period, one of the most important roles UCLG could play, in addition to demanding that LGs are represented – through UCLG– in the main existing forums, is possibly to generate a common discourse and give content to the expression of LGs in these spaces. This point merits some specific observations.

3.3. Technical strengthening: research and building a common 'discourse'

The period we are looking at was marked by great strides being taken in consolidating and expanding knowledge about LGs' international activity and DC, in the analysis of these phenomena, and in the construction of some common discourse capable of providing greater coherence and consistency for LGs' voices in the different spaces they are starting to publicly express themselves in.

This very significant advance is the result of the actions of different stakeholders, among whom we should highlight UCLG, certain national associations of municipalities, specialised observatories, certain research centres and academic spaces, and numerous experts and specialists from both regions. Each one is contributing to the gradual creation of collective knowledge which is at the same time an element of transformation and improvement of the studied phenomenon.

3.3.1. Progress in research into and creation of content

Without overextending ourselves, we could provide what we believe are some significant examples of the dynamic that has been generated around the research into and crea-

tion of content related to DC. Among other elements, we could highlight:

- lthe progress made by UCLG's DC Commission, which, in particular, has launched a collective reflection for drafting a Global DC Charter;

- contributions to the debate by national associations of cities such as, for example, Cités-Unies-France (in its seminar 'La DC change-t-elle de sens?', held in 2006) or the Association of Flemish Municipalities (with the production of a manual on DC);

- conceptual contributions by OICS and the EU-Latin America Decentralised Co-operation Observatory (in particular the 3 yearbooks, 6 studies and 2 manuals already published by the Observatory);

- the research work of institutions such as CESPI and ECDPM, by research centres such as CIEDEL and consultants such as VNG-International and Coop-Des Conseil;

- the mobilisation, around these different works and studies, of dozens of experts in Europe and Latin America[18];

- the international conferences exclusively dedicated to DC, such as the three DCO annual conferences, dedicated respectively to the delimitation of the concept of DC, to cooperation models developed by LGs and to the articulation of public stakeholders (local, national and multilateral) around the theme of DC, and also

- the opening of university teaching lines on DC (such as specialised modules within subjects in more general Master's courses on cooperation) and research awards specialised in this subject.

On a worldwide scale which exceeds the bi-regional EU-LA geographical framework, we should also mention the initiative launched by three French LGs, with the collaboration of the French government and the PNUD and the participation of the DCO, to create a global research and education institute concerned with international action by LGs. This institute, the IDHIL, has already held a series of preparatory meetings and seminars in Grenoble, Barcelona, Ouagadougou and Dakar and is preparing a similar meeting in Latin America.

All these elements contribute decisively to the technical and conceptual consolidation of the area of DC –which is as necessary as its political-institutional consolidation– and to sowing the seeds of a community of experts and researchers dedicated to the theoretical and practical study of DC[19].

3.3.2. Advances in education

In parallel with constructing these instruments to reinforce and consolidate research, we should also emphasise the progress made in the field of education, which has, for the first time, also shed light on the importance of European and Latin American actors' educational demands and on the gap that persists between the offer and demand for training in this field – at least in the Spanish speaking world.

As an illustration, the launch of the online DC specialist course by the DCO has been irrefutable evidence of local administrations' need to strengthen their technical and methodological bases. Some editions of the course

[18]| Such as for example: Gildo Baraldi, Jean Bossuyt, Alberto Enríquez, Christian Freres, Víctor Godínez, Bernard Husson, María del Huerto Romero, Bea Sanz, Eugène Zapata and many other renowned experts.

[19]| As an illustration, over 60 authors from Europe and Latin America, in similar proportions, have worked on the DCO's publications and educational actions alone.

have been nine times oversubscribed (450 applications for 50 places), despite the number of candidates per institution being restricted to only one person.

This insufficiently covered general and conceptual training need in decentralised cooperation, which has been revealed through this intervention, is due to the very recent nature of the phenomenon and the fact that in the academic world it has not yet generated the teaching and research area that it merits.

Furthermore, we should underline the fact that there are other centres that, in other languages, provide general educational activities related to DC, such as for example OICS and CESPI in Italy which have jointly created a space and set of educational materials: *'La Piazza della Cooperazione'* (2005), principally aimed at Italian regions[20].

4. A very dynamic public decentralised cooperation, with content and practices in full growth

Arriving at this point, we should now focus more specifically on the international cooperation activity between substate authorities that municipalities and regions have been carrying out, as the principal and best-known part of their international activity. We will restrict ourselves in this chapter to an overview, bearing in mind that this issue was developed more widely in the article by the same author published in UE-LA DC 2007 Yearbook: 'General overview of current practices and tendencies in public decentralised co-operation'.

4.1. The dynamism of DC

The phenomenon of international cooperation between cities and regions has been developing and spreading over the last years. The first thing that has become clear in the very recent period is that decentralised cooperation is a very broad phenomenon, which affects many local governments and is gradually expanding to become a fairly widespread practice in municipalities, if we exclude those which, due to their reduced dimensions, cannot or do not want to move towards international action.

Thus for example, Cités-Unies-France indicates that 80% of French municipalities of over 5,000 inhabitants carry out international cooperation actions. We do not have precise statistics available to compare with other countries, but similar data appears in some national and regional surveys carried out, for example, in Catalonia where according to the most recent data collected by the Catalan Cooperation and Development Fund[21], close to 75% of the municipalities in the region with more than 25,000 inhabitants participate in cooperation actions. Based on these indicators, we can affirm that international cooperation now forms part of LGs' field of action, although the national legal framework does not always explicitly recognise it as a competence of substate administrations.

It would be interesting to learn whether this general evolution of DC has been translated, more specifically, into the growth of bi-regional DC between the European Union and Latin America. We do know, through the

data collection and research work of the Observatory, that close to 2,200 LGs in the EU and LA are involved in bilateral relations (of city to city or region to region) or actively participate in networks whose activities are based on similar characteristics, common interests or shared priority issues. Unfortunately, we do not have reliable data available on the evolution over time of this phenomenon. Only some indicators allow us to state that the dynamic of municipal cooperation has remained steady or has even grown during the most recent period, at least until 2008, which marked the end of the first phases of the URB-AL programme.

Given the importance this programme has had for the phenomenon we are interested in, we will have to wait and see whether the third phase of the URB-AL programme, started in 2009, will or will not affect the growth trend for DC between the EU and LA. We do however know that the first two phases of the programme, which supported local governments' thematic networks, have been a decisive element in fostering bi-regional DC since 1995, by encouraging the participation of many local administrations which did not have previous cooperation experience.

It is not certain whether the third phase, focused on 20 large local social cohesion projects, will have the same effect on the phenomenon of DC and it is possible that the end of European funding will result in a certain deceleration of DC. Likewise, it is possible that other elements may take over from URB-AL as the driving force behind said cooperation between Europe and Latin America such as, for example, different national programmes (in France, Italy, Spain, etc.) that have been initiated and which will be examined next, or LGs in the two regions own self-government dynamics.

Perhaps the biggest problem is the end of the financing established for maintaining networks and launching common projects. We will have to see how many of the 13 thematic networks can be maintained without EU grants and what type of activities these networks will be able to guarantee without the Commission's financial aid. The closure of these spaces of exchange and contact between LGs would be a great loss for DC, as these networks (1) have often been the gateway to cooperation for many small and medium cities that had not previously undertaken cooperation activities, (2) have spread a culture and experience of horizontal working in networks among the LGs of both regions and (3) have generated common projects that were financed within the programme.

Beyond what will happen to the ex-URB-AL networks, the most important question is whether the networks have a future or not as modalities of cooperation in the absence of financial support mechanisms for running them. In other words, it will be strategic, in the coming years, to determine the conditions under which a local government takes charge of launching and promoting a network and, to detect whether or not new networks are created at LGs' own initiative, independently of national and international DC support programmes.

4.2. The transformation of the type of relationships and their content

Something that is perhaps more important than the number of local governments involved in EU-LA DC is the evolution of the content and practices of this cooperation.

We also have to take precautions here because we do not have quantitative indicators or observations available on the transformation of current cooperation models. We

20| *We should also remember that many resource and service centres offer more technical training on specific DC subjects –especially in the French language– such as the CIEDEL, the CERCOOP, etc.*

21| *The Catalan Cooperation and Development Fund carries out detailed surveys every three years. The latest data published is from 2003.*

can only detect in a qualitative way, based on the work and activities of the Observatory, some trends and innovating themes that appear in everyday practice and in debates on DC, among which the following stand out:

• **Gradual questioning of the aid-oriented content of local cooperation**

The departure point for local cooperation often stems from a desire to express solidarity from a local level –of a political or humanitarian nature– and this usually manifests itself in a material or financial transfer from North to South. This perspective, which we could call 'aid-oriented' and which is by nature unidirectional and asymmetrical, is still the dominant perspective which permeates both the indirect cooperation (via D-NGOs) and the direct cooperation that municipalities channel using tools and other formulas.

In this context, the municipality in the North is basically concerned with justifying its aid based on the needs that are not covered for the population in the South or on basic deficiencies in infrastructures in the 'beneficiary' municipality, while this municipality views the cooperation essentially as a source of resources that may ease the situation of vulnerable groups or partially compensate for its shortage of local finances. These 'representations' of what cooperation means correspond and are, to some extent, symmetrical.

A very important fact about the recent growth of DC between the EU and LA is that the desire to overcome this 'donor-beneficiary' logic is becoming increasingly clear. LGs express the need to find another type of relationship between the stakeholders in both regions – of a horizontal nature, based on the parties' mutual interests and with elements of reciprocity, under the leadership of the public institution and with the active involvement of citizens and local stakeholders.

On this basis the central content of DC is gradually shifting. Thus, we could say that in the spaces where LGs can voice their opinions, recently more importance has been given to the qualitative contribution of municipal cooperation and its irreplaceable character than to the financial volume it mobilises. In these forums a willingness has been observed to make it clear that local administrations are actors that can contribute other elements of a more qualitative and strategic nature, and that their cooperation has an added value that has no equivalent in cooperation coming from other sources.

• **Growing emphasis on institutional strengthening, as the central core of DC**

As a consequence of the above, the main focus of attention in local cooperation seems to be slowly shifting from aid-based content, which has traditionally characterised many interventions, to supporting local policies created and implemented by the local government and, from this, to strengthening decentralised public institutions and their democratic functioning[22].

This evolution is still slow and in its embryonic stages, but it is taking shape as a specific contribution by LGs to the world of cooperation. The difficulties encountered by results-oriented projects, which aim to have a direct influence from the North to satisfy basic population needs and which have been widely utilised in local cooperation, usually lead the municipalities involved to a deeper reflection on the general conditions that the local institution should meet in order to be able to plan, create and execute local public policies. From this, we can see the need to focus cooperation more on strengthening the capacities of the local institution in areas that

could cover the whole range of local government functions: strategic planning, operational programming, collecting and managing local finances, citizen participation, drawing up sectoral public policies, executing and monitoring them, assessment, etc.[23]

Thus, placing the strengthening of local administrations at the centre of cooperation leads, on the one hand, to a more institutional and cross-sectional approach –in which it is the whole group of municipal departments that can see themselves involved in cooperation activities– and, on the other hand, a more horizontal and reciprocal vision, which recognises that the two institutions involved in a relationship of this type can learn and exchange experiences and knowledge which results in a greater interest in exploring conditions of reciprocity in bilateral city to city relationships.

• **Emerging interest in local economic development and promoting the territory**

We have also detected a growing interest in focusing cooperation on local economic development, in order to have an impact on production activities and creating employment. Regional authorities –who have clearly stated competences in the economic administration of the territory– and local authorities –who have begun to take an active role in promoting their cities, in sustaining and developing employment and in the labour market integration of its population– are aware of the need to collaborate in these areas. In the words of José-Luís Rhi-Sausi, 'the action of local authorities above all takes the form of promoting local production systems (clusters of small and medium

businesses), which in turn involves: (i) strengthening the capacity to attract investment, (ii) creating functional economic contexts (infrastructures and competences), (iii) incorporating innovation and technological transfer in the territories, (iv) seeking international economic complementarity, and (v) integration into global trade'[24].

In this type of DC, the role of LGs is not generally to directly promote production activity, but to drive and lead a process of revitalising local economic stakeholders (municipal businesses, private companies, producers' groups, etc.).

We should emphasise that this cooperation encourages collaboration between LGs based on geographical proximity and shared characteristics and this is increasingly resulting in supra-municipal groups and alliances being set up and in territorial bonds becoming established, whether within the formal framework of the existing administrative divisions (regions, provinces, etc.) or within the flexible framework of groups created to specifically respond to concrete problems (labour catchment areas, natural divisions, inter-municipal associations for managing certain services, etc.). Thus, some regional cooperation systems have been successfully developed, particularly in Italy, which involve the articulation of the regional administration and local institutions. We could say that DC is gradually becoming richer, completing the city to city relationships with a new perspective of territory to territory cooperation.

This new dynamic reinforces the idea that true cooperation in economic and social

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[22] | See for example the DC Workshops organised by Cités-Unies-France in December 2006, on the theme: 'Institutional support, a new DC priority'.

[23] | See the study by Albert Serra: 'Fortalecimiento de los GL: la aportación de la cooperación descentralizada pública directa UE-AL', published by the EU-LA DC Observatory, 2008.

[24] | José-Luís Rhi-Sausi and Darío Conato, 'Cooperación descentralizada UE-AL y desarrollo económico local', published by the EU-LA DC Observatory, 2008.

areas can be based on common interests and on mutual strengthening, which distances us from the traditional 'donor-beneficiary' concept of a unidirectional type.

• **Growing importance of citizen involvement and local democratic governance**

Cooperation between cities also has an important political aspect, which is starting to gain some visibility and have a direct impact on local democratic governance. We can identify many bilateral relationships and networks of cities which focus on aspects of citizen participation, strengthening electoral processes, the functioning of local democracy, promoting the role of women in decision-making spaces, etc.

Not considering local societies as groups of 'beneficiaries' but as living networks of stakeholders involved in political processes and concerned about development, fosters a deepening of local democracy and causes progress to be made towards strengthening the public space of public policies and local stakeholders.

• **Towards a DC that impacts on national agendas and modifies structural conditions**

Another line of development worth mentioning is the appearance of DC actions that do not aim to reinforce partners, but instead to influence, in a more global way, national and international agendas and to have a positive impact on the general structural conditions which limit the exercise of local power or make it more difficult.

We can in fact see that bilateral actions may have important isolated effects, but there is a clear limit to their capacity to influence the general situation of a country's LGs. From this comes increased awareness of the need to accompany bilateral actions with lobbying and applying political pressure aimed at transforming certain elements of the legislative, competence and institutional framework, such as for example the degree of State decentralisation, the distribution of public resources among different levels of the Administration or the degree of stability and consolidation of local public role.

In this case, the content of cooperation is more focused on creating strategic alliances of LGs in the North and the South, which join forces in order to achieve structural changes in national and regional spaces.

4.3. The evolution of modalities

These new concerns and orientations in turn translate into an important evolution of cooperation modalities, given that more structural and horizontal content requires other ways and means than traditional aid-based content.

Therefore, we would highlight the following lines of development:

4.3.1. From indirect cooperation to direct cooperation from the public institution

The intention of emphasising and prioritising direct cooperation is currently, for many local administrations, a first ground for reform, as important as it is complex to implement. In various European countries and due to a series of circumstances, local governments had in fact 'delegated' the issue of cooperation from the very beginning to D-NGOs in their territories, limiting themselves to financing the projects presented by these organisations.

Little by little, the feeling that cooperation must be considered as a local public policy is growing, meaning that it should once again form part of areas in which: (1) a citizens' debate is useful and necessary, (2) the general interest has to determine the content of the actions and (3) the local government has to define and apply its own policy, clearly in accordance with the established conditions of citizen participation and of concertation with the other stakeholders in the territory.

A Northern municipality may have a policy of supporting the solidarity association movement and D-NGOs, but this is not enough for defining a local public policy of cooperation and it is necessary that it also and above all demonstrates a political commitment by the whole local government to creating a strategy for international action and developing its specific forms of cooperation.

Public DC has a new frontier to explore here and a wide space to reclaim in some countries such as Spain, where indirect cooperation (via D-NGOs) has always been (and still is) the dominant form and the one that absorbs most of the financial resources allocated by municipalities and regions[25].

This ongoing transformation at the same time involves an interesting development in the relationship between the municipal government and D-NGOs. Instead of considering them solely as institutions specialised in presenting cooperation projects, the municipality can offer D-NGOs a new role as members of a municipal council in charge of agreeing all the municipal cooperation policies with the local government and overseeing their implementation, and at the same time it can let them participate in the execution and assessment of the jointly agreed actions. In fact, the model of relationships should be developed between the municipal institution and local civil society, at the same time resituating D-NGOs with respect to the rest of the social partners in the territory.

4.3.2. From a sectoral vision to cooperation as a cross-sectional policy

A second aspect to highlight, linked to the previous one, is the gradual overcoming of the sectoral vision which considers cooperation as an activity in itself, separate from the rest of municipal life. This vision would often appear in an isolated cooperation department, considered in some way as an area of international social welfare and in charge of spending a specific budget on individual actions in countries in the South.

The new perspective that is currently emerging is a comprehensive and cross-sectional vision in which public cooperation policy falls within the framework of the city or region's strategic planning, it forms part of the set of local public policies implemented by the institution and it involves the whole local government jointly. In this dynamic, the idea of reinforcing the coherence between the different sectors of local government action gains strength, making cooperation and solidarity a cross-sectional criteria or issue that different departments must keep in mind and which they must contribute to.

Along these lines the figure of 'the cross-sectional cooperation plan' is appearing such as, for example, the one drawn up by the Spanish town council in Sant Boi de Llobregat in 2008.

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[25]| *In 2007, the Spanish Autonomous Communities channelled 72.8% of their cooperation via D-NGOs, and the municipalities 63.6%.*

4.3.3. From a municipal to a supra-municipal framework

Another very clear emerging trend is the search for supra-municipal frameworks, above all for cooperation actions that aim to strengthen local economic development.

Thus, some local institutions are starting to join together on a territorial basis in order to offer advice and support to a territorial group of municipalities in the South. One case with these characteristics has occurred between the county of Vallès Oriental and the Association of Municipalities of the North of Chinandega (AMUNORCHI), which is the development of an initial bilateral relationship between the municipality of Mollet del Vallès (Spain) and Cinco Pinos (Nicaragua). Changing the territorial reference and expanding the geographical reach of the cooperation has led the participating municipalities to centre their efforts on creating and later executing a development plan for the North Chinandega zone, with the technical advice of the municipal leaders of the county of Vallès Oriental. Another example is the cooperation between the Conseil Général des Hautes Pyrénées (France) and the Association of Municipalities of Cuenca del Río Santo Tomás (AMSAT) in Peru.

Various formulas have appeared in recent years which are heading in this direction: in Italy, for example, the regions traditionally carry out the task of coordinating and promoting their respective municipalities. We should highlight, in this respect, that: "Over the past three years the interest of Italian regions in Latin America and the Caribbean grew significantly. There are various reasons for this: the continuous presence of Italian communities in those countries; similar and complementary political, administrative, economic, social and cultural structures; a leading role of SMEs and their clusters in the economy; the presence of reliable and trustworthy institutions who are approachable, who form decentralised cooperation partnerships for co-development between the territories where DC is based".[26]

In this national context, aspects of supra-municipal coordination have found a new outlet recently with the creation of the programme '100 cities for 100 projects Italy-Brazil'[27], coordinated by the Local Authorities Cooperation Agency (ACEL), created by the province and municipality of Turin, and which was conceived during the 1st Forum on Decentralised Cooperation Italy-Brazil (Turin, 2005)[28].

In France, there are many examples of DC promotion within regional frameworks, and many of these have mechanisms for providing help and technical support for municipalities. However, the most innovative fact relates to the experiences of supra-municipal groups of varying sizes and without rigid geographical boundaries. This form of customised 'municipal association', arising from the specific needs of each action, is being encouraged by the French government as an opportunity to overcome the tight framework of city to city relationships. In September 2006, France promoted a seminar between this country and Southern Cone countries about: 'Inter-municipalism and decentralised cooperation: the common administration of local public policies'.

From these different experiences, which are to some extent on the EU-LA DC test bench, the question arises of whether cooperation between cities should not be gradually complemented by cooperation 'between territories', at the same time as proposing a necessary reflection on what role each type of partner should play (central government, region, territorial group, municipality) in cooperation based on articulating actors in different government levels. In particular, some debate issues that arise are whether it is necessary to have supra-municipal coherence frameworks, whether or not to submit national and regional territorial planning instruments, when they exist, and the legitimacy of the different actors for imposing their reference frameworks. All these questions fall within the wider problem of fitting DC into the agenda and the problem of development aid, as we will study in more detail later.

4.3.4. The consolidation of working in networks

A fourth line of development that can clearly be identified from the past few years is the gradual shift from bilateral actions (from city to city and region to region) to multilateral relationships, following a pattern of networks that bring municipalities and/or regions together.

Some networks of municipalities have been created spontaneously, based upon, for example, twinning various cities with the same city, such as in the case of Estelí (Nicaragua). This initial situation has led to different cities joining together around this common relationship, forming a support network made up of European municipalities, which was the driving force behind the later creation, as a supra-municipal territorial reference, of the Association of Municipalities of the Department of Estelí (AMUDES).

Another example of a small operational network is the one that was set up as the result of a common project by a URB-AL network, such as in the case of the network on 'Renewable energies and local development networks' made up of five European and six Latin American town councils.

Going beyond the small networks created to respond to specific situations or needs, important networks of cities and regions have been set up for different reasons such as, for example, territorial proximity, common thematic interests, shared characteristics, similar interests to defend, etc. It is worth recalling that the URB-AL programme has had the merit of increasing the visibility of and popularising on a large scale this new way of working in networks and generating common projects and that this has aroused a lot of interest in Latin America, especially in Southern Cone countries, which did not have an existing tradition of DC with European cities and regions[29].

4.3.5. Mutualisation of efforts and operational coordination among LGs

Numerous examples illustrate the efforts LGs are making to work together and to

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[26] | See the article by Gildo Baraldi in the UE-LA DC 2007 Yearbook, p. 43.

[27] | See the article by Marina Izzo and Andrea Stocchiero: "The case of Italian Decentralised Cooperation in Latin America", in the UE-LA DC 2006 Yearbook, p. 255.

[28] | The programme's objective is to support administrative decentralisation policies and participative democracy and today it is the most important framework of reference for DC between both countries.

[29] | In the case of Central America, the URB-AL programme has not had the same impact, as the dominant and very widespread model in the region was twinning, with political colouration (Nicaragua, El Salvador, and Cuba) or merely in the form of aid, in the case of countries affected by natural disasters.

share tools and resources. As elements of this type, we could quote:

• the specific programmes of associations of municipalities aimed at coordinating the actions of its members in each country or region of the South, under the 'country-groups' formula;

• the experience of the Cooperation Funds in certain Spanish autonomous communities and of the corresponding Confederation of Funds;

• the regional networks of resource centres aimed at satisfying municipal stakeholders' demands and providing them with technical support, such as the Agenzia di Cooperazione degli Enti Locali (ACEL) in Italy, or the nine regional mechanisms of multi-actor coordination which the French regions have created; or also

• the appearance of 'municipal agencies', created by associations of municipalities themselves, such as in the case of VNG-International in the Netherlands, or by local and regional governments such as in Germany with the recently created Service Agency 'Communities in one world' founded, as an autonomous body, by the governments of nine German federated states, together with the municipality of Bonn[30].

Here we can also see significant differences between the situations in the two regions. According to Eugène Zapata[31], a comparison of the current situation indicates that in Europe there is a proliferation of operational coordination mechanisms created by LGs while, in contrast, this does not occur in the same way in Latin America

where, in most cases, national DC articulation schemes are linked to policies promoted by central governments such as is the case in Mexico, Chile and Argentina. This leads us to examine national governments' involvement with DC in closer detail.

5. Articulation among public stakeholders: States' growing interest in DC

A very important phenomenon that has marked DC in the recent period is the growing involvement of national governments in supporting DC. Little by little, national governments are choosing to play a part in stimulating, accompanying, channelling and, sometimes, guiding this cooperation.

In Europe, this dynamic is not new and it first appeared well and truly prior to the period we are looking at. LGs' foreign presence and the beginnings of their international cooperation in the 1980s and 1990s were faced with a reluctance by national governments to give up part of the space and the prerogatives they had exclusively occupied in the area of international relations. Confronted by the evidence that they could not impede nor hinder this inevitable structural change, European governments, and especially the most centralised ones, had to review their legislative and competence frameworks in order to recognise the existence and legitimacy of decentralised cooperation, as we have seen in chapter 3.1.

However, the new fact that has been confirmed in the period 2005-2009 is that this dynamic has spread wider than formal

and legal aspects and has transformed into much more active and operational interventions of national governments: France and Italy, for example, nowadays develop genuine strategies of promoting and channelling DC in specific Latin American countries that interest them on a geostrategic level or which they have privileged links with (France with Brazil, Mexico and Chile; Italy with Argentina and Brazil).

A clear example of this type of intervention –in which the central State, both in Europe and in Latin America, plays a decisive role– can be found in the Franco-Brazilian DC Conferences held in Marseille in 2006 and in Belo Horizonte in 2007. The first of these events was preceded by a general campaign named: 'The Year of Brazil in France', which raised awareness of and popularised this Southern Cone country via many cultural events of all kinds in the different French regions. The meeting in Marseille was the culmination of this process. The event was organised and financed by the two central national governments, and French regions, federated states of Brazil and cities of both countries were invited to participate. The conferences focused on specific, previously agreed sectors of activity in which a practical analysis was carried out of the possibilities for decentralised cooperation. The substate administrations interested in establishing cooperation agreements were invited to present specific projects, and to finance them a fund was set up by common accord to be provided by both countries.

This example shows how European states no longer limit themselves to authorising, regulating and accompanying DC, instead they are starting to create real strategies

and to mobilise a set of diplomatic, technical and financial resources to promote decentralised cooperation with the countries that interest them[32]. This is not an isolated case but, more likely, an illustration of the new practices that are being developed. Evidence of this is the First Italy-Brazil DC Forum held in Turin in 2005.

In contrast, we could cite the case of Spain, as a rather special case of DC carried out until very recently in a completely spontaneous way, without any State funding. However, this situation has been changing over the past few years and the Municipia Programme, launched in 2006-2007, aims to bridge this gap and bring the country closer to the situation in other European countries.

In fact, according to its promoters, "Municipia has been designed as an open programme, of dialogue and concertation between the different stakeholders working in the area of municipal cooperation", and it enables them to "articulate coordinated and/or joint actions by the different public actors in Spanish Cooperation, aimed at supporting and strengthening local public authorities in countries receiving the aid".

Behind this formulation one can sense a strong interest by the Spanish State in coordinating, under its direction, the activities of local administrations considered as too diffuse, and a political will to re-establish some unity and centrality in the way development aid is managed. This is particularly reflected in the fact that the management of the Programme itself is entrusted, exclusively, to the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (AECID). We could therefore say that the Municipia Programme has an interesting

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30| The agency has five objectives directly tied in with promoting decentralised cooperation: (i) dialogue about local citizen participation policies; (ii) cooperation with foreign local governments, (iii) intercultural institutional strengthening; (iv) cooperation with emigrant communities; and (v) the introduction of fair procurement in the public sector.

31| Eugène Zapata: 'Dinámicas de articulación internacional a iniciativa de los gobiernos locales: panorama actual y retos a futuro', preparatory document for the 3rd Annual Conference of the EU-LA DC Observatory, Barcelona, 2008.

32| One of the oldest examples of this type of State practice is the Franco-Mexican Municipal Cooperation Programme, created in 1999, the main objective of which is to contribute to the process of decentralisation in Mexico by strengthening the administration capacities of Mexican local governments and promoting local democracy.

approach of reinforcing institutional capabilities and of encouraging local democratic functioning in the South, but that it aims to carry out this task under the leadership and control of the Spanish State itself and within the traditional paradigms of development aid [33].

These different examples, which are very current and still being operationally deployed, show how the growing interest of European national governments in DC is not without risk of a certain re-centralisation of international cooperation, which could in turn limit local self-government or distort the specific nature of DC. Indeed, if DC were finally perceived as an appendage to European countries' foreign policy or simply as an additional source of resources to complete official bilateral aid, said cooperation would lose the attraction and interest that it currently enjoys and which are linked to its independence and specific nature.

At the same time, we must bear in mind that official cooperation provided by European national governments has much more important resources available to it than decentralised institutions, and that their contributions can be decisive for progressing towards the objectives set by LGs such as, for example, the institutional strengthening of municipalities and regions. State cooperation can, for example, launch country-wide training programmes for local and regional staff, while DC generally acts in a more focused way, through bilateral city to city or region to region relationships. It is therefore necessary to progress towards a certain combination of State resources and the specific know-how of LGs and to carefully explore the correct conditions for articulating the different levels of public actors we have mentioned.

In Latin America, State support for DC is a more recent phenomenon but it is booming and is very dynamic in some countries. In the past three or four years, Latin American national governments have made some very important progress and have started to take positive action to support DC. As Christian Freres points out in a preparatory document for the 3rd Annual Conference of the EU-Latin America Decentralised Cooperation Observatory held in Barcelona in May 2008[34]: "In various countries an important change is taking place aimed at creating comprehensive programmes covering different instruments for promoting development." Below, we list some examples of the situation in this region taken from his document.

The research carried out shows that the range of possible support measures that a Latin American national government has available is fairly wide. It could, for example:

• *collect and systematise information about the DC action carried out by LGs in its own country or their possible foreign partners;*

• *offer its substate administrations practical resources, technical support and information;*

• *provide support platforms in the destination countries (through its embassies or cooperation offices);*

• *create spaces and channels of contact to generate partnerships. For example: DC fairs in the country of origin to attract potential partners and facilitate contact between the country's local administrations and those of the destination country, trips for governors and mayors;*

• *co-finance the cooperation actions carried out by its municipalities and regions;*

• *establish agreements with other governments for creating specific conditions (contacts, cooperation fund co-financed by both countries); and also*

• *organise educational and adaptation actions or produce teaching manuals adapted to the country's situation.*

These types of activities are starting to be implemented in countries such as Colombia, Chile, Argentina, Mexico and Uruguay. In these countries, the municipality or the region that wants to take steps towards having an international presence and experiencing DC starts to receive help and State aid in this process. Certain examples are particularly significant, some coming solely from State organisations while others coordinate with national associations of municipalities:

• In Chile, the Under-Secretariat for Regional Development (SUBDERE) of the Ministry of the Interior promoted a Support and Strengthening Programme for Subnational Internationalisation (2008), focused primarily on encouraging the internationalisation of Chile's regions.

• In Colombia, the International Cooperation Directorate for Social Action, an office of the Presidency of the Republic, launched, in conjunction with the federations of departments (regions) and municipalities, the Regional Initiative for the Promotion of Decentralised Cooperation in Colombia (2007) which aims to articulate DC in the whole country and to organise an annual International Decentralised

Cooperation Meeting (in October of this year the third meeting was held in Bogotá).

• In Mexico, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (SRE) runs the Mexican Programme of Twin Cities and Decentralised International Cooperation (PROMECHCID) which "promotes a federalist strategy for exterior policy through the setting up of inter-institutional liaison and coordination mechanisms between the SRE and local governments, for the appropriate subscription to Inter-institutional Agreements on the part of states and municipalities in Mexico with the corresponding subnational bodies from other countries". We should mention that the National Forums on International Affairs of Local Governments organised by the Mexican Chancellery since 2006 are not only limited to development cooperation, but they also tackle, in a more general way, what we have called "LGs' international action". Every year the Forum specially invites a country to give presentations and provide information about its DC experience and offer.

• In Argentina, the Directorate General of International Cooperation of the Argentinean Chancellery launched a Decentralised Cooperation Promotion Programme which, since 2005, has involved holding Decentralised Cooperation Meetings that include conferences, informative and contact spaces and which have been mainly attended by representatives of Italian and Spanish regions and municipalities.

• In Brazil, in contrast, the federal government has participated in specific collaboration actions with France and Italy, but it still does not seem to have built a system to support DC beyond these isolated interventions[35].

[33] | *This same impression is given, furthermore, by the Spanish government's position on the usefulness of centralising the coordination of all the Spanish cooperation actors, as expressed in the AECID's observations in the last EU communication or in AECID's Master Plan.*

[34] | *Christian Freres: 'Los gobiernos nacionales de América Latina y los organismos multilaterales ante la CD: ¿Hacia una articulación multinivel?'.*

[35] | *As you can see, the examples given have been taken principally from the experiences of Southern Cone countries and from Colombia. Other countries do not seem to have the same support mechanisms from national governments yet. In Central America, for example, this situation may stem from the fact that DC has traditionally been marked by a great deal of 'spontaneous' twinning between Latin American and European cities, especially in the case of Nicaragua and El Salvador. In this context, the State has not had to intervene to strengthen DC and facilitate or stimulate contact between local governments.*

In fact, according to Christian Freres, in the last few years there has been a certain proliferation of seminars and conferences on foreign activity, municipal diplomacy and decentralised cooperation in Latin America, many of which are supported by or organised directly by national governments. These events have more general objectives of raising awareness, but some of these meetings have the explicit aim of fomenting contacts among subnational organisations and DC.

The implementation of these programmes promoted by national governments, both in Europe and LA, raises one of the central issues of DC today, which is its degree of autonomy with regard to foreign diplomacy and the economic and geostrategic interests of national states. We will return to this issue when we review the challenges facing DC.

European programmes

The EU's support of DC is manifested via two types of programmes: thematic programmes and regional programmes. In the first category, which has a universal geographical application and is not limited to the two EU-LA regions, we must applaud the recognition of LGs, for the first time, as possible beneficiaries of the Non-State Actors programme, together with D-NGOs, trade unions, universities, foundations and other 'non-State' actors. This is an important step, but we cannot yet consider it as a satisfactory solution as it does not encourage different actors to work together but instead establishes quotas for distributing resources among the different categories of actors, with the part set aside for LGs being very minor.

In the category of regional programmes, the most noteworthy event in the period we are considering is the launch of the

third phase of URB-AL, with an important change of perspective in relation to the previous two phases (1995-2000 and 2001-2006).

After these phases, dedicated to providing economic support for setting up the 13 thematic networks and to financing the common projects generated within these networks, URB-AL III represents an important shift with regard to the content of the actions. The Programme now reveals the Commission's desire to focus its actions on large local projects in order to make the possible impact of DC on the central issue of social cohesion more visible. Therefore, URB-AL III could represent a decisive move to highlight the influence and impact of cooperation between European and Latin American local governments and to reinforce the idea that LGs are irreplaceable actors and that they must support each other.

A more debatable aspect of the new programme, as previously identified, is that URB-AL III no longer provides direct support for establishing and maintaining LG networks, financing possible common projects that arise from the work in networks or providing continuity for the general tools to support EU-LA DC, such as the EU-Latin America Decentralised Cooperation Observatory.

Put simply and in basic terms, one could say that URB-AL III has stopped financing the DC phenomenon itself and is now focused on providing the means and resources to demonstrate and increase the visibility of its potential impact in large urban projects. These changes seen in the content and orientation of the URB-AL Programme find their logic in the vision and perspective of the Commission: one could point out, for example, its confirmed desire to finance more innovative actions –after having provided some

important grants for operating the networks for 13 years– or the need to reduce management complexity and cost and to limit therefore the number of projects co-financed by the Commission, etc. Likewise, we must recognise that these changes affect a programme that until now has been a decisive element for consolidating and expanding EU-LA DC and therefore this raises different questions about the future of DC in this bi-regional area, as mentioned in chapter 4.1. which deals with the quantitative dynamics of DC.

6. How DC fits within the international development cooperation agenda

6.1. LGs basically seen as an additional source of funding for aid

The emergence of DC on the international cooperation scene and its growing importance –both in quantitative and financial terms as well as in qualitative terms– is generating an increasingly obvious interest from international organisations and institutions in charge of managing official development aid.

The first signs of interest have been directed at LGs, basically considering them as new sources of funding for international development aid.

From the North, the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the OECD has expressed its interest in trying to measure the corresponding financial flow. Basically, countries 'donating' aid, and the DAC that rep-

resents them, are trying to logically record the resources that substate administrations dedicate to cooperation as official development assistance (ODA). The DAC report 'L'aide allouée par les collectivités locales'[36], published in 2005, provided the balance of financial flow declared by local and regional administrations and registered by the national authorities in the different countries in the EU of 15 countries. The report highlighted the fact that some countries carry out decentralised cooperation which mobilises already very significant levels of resources, such as is the case with Germany, Spain and, to a lesser extent, Belgium, France, and Italy, while many countries do not yet record cooperation carried out by substate administrations, as they consider that these administrations represent a very reduced volume and it does not justify the effort of collecting and systematising the corresponding data[37].

This first report on the financial flows generated by DC has had an important impact in European countries and some of them have started to improve their information gathering systems. Spain, for example, via an agreement with the Spanish Federation of Municipalities and Provinces (FEMP) has restarted its annual surveys aimed at collecting data from municipalities. Thus, it has been possible to determine that in 2006 municipalities and regions' decentralised cooperation represented approximately 15% of total ODA and 40% of the total dedicated to cooperation projects in the country.

It is foreseeable that the effect of the OECD report will result in a gradual improvement of the statistics available in certain countries and in greater visibility for local cooperation, although the DAC currently has

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[36] *Cahiers du CAD*, 2005, vol. 6, nº 4

[37] *In this category were Denmark, Finland, Ireland, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom and Sweden.*

no plans to annually add the information it receives from national governments about DC.

In the South and from the perspective of the countries receiving development aid, DC has also been perceived, in its first stage, as an additional source of resources and as the only possibility, for local stakeholders, to have access to international aid. Seen from this point of view, DC may arouse criticism because of its disperse and uncoordinated character. This is a criticism reiterated by international organisations in charge of trying to coordinate and rationalise development aid. These organisations generally believe that LGs' excessive autonomy leads to the chaotic and inefficient distribution of aid in the area and they advocate the concentration and redistribution of the resources provided by DC. For this reason, they have set up mechanisms and programmes –the most well-developed of which is probably the ART-GOLD programme promoted by the UNDP– which aim to channel Northern LGs' contributions and redistribute them to local and regional administrations in the South in accordance with national plans established by common agreement between the international organisations and the government of the 'receiving' country, in concertation, in this case, with local government associations and representatives.

The hypotheses underlying a proposal of this type could be briefly summarised as follows:

• *DC is essentially a means of transferring resources from the North to the South, which should form part of the general logic of development aid (ODA);*

• *'spontaneous' DC is not a good delivery system for this aid, due to its decentralised and, therefore, diffuse nature;*

• *DC actions should be rationalised, coordinated and fall within the country's priorities and not left to the mercy of bilateral agreements between LGs, and*

• *centralised aid distribution, with the intervention of a multilateral organisation, is more efficient.*

These assumptions reflect the perspective and point of view of the organisations whose main role is managing development aid and which fall within the model of a North-South transfer of resources. However, these assumptions clearly lose some of their validity if one considers DC from a more political and strategic perspective in which the principal value is focused on direct contact between two public institutions, on internationally opening up each institution and each population, on reciprocal learning in the whole range of local administration strategies and policies, on strengthening local public policies and on the strategic alliances that are formed as a result of direct decentralised cooperation[38].

Considering LGs as financers and providers of development aid or as political actors that cooperate among themselves are two very different things. While LGs were only or primarily carrying out cooperation activities of an aid-based nature, the first option could have been correct and appropriate. However, when LGs initiate practices of exchanging experiences, two-way learning, mutually strengthening institutional capacities and strategic alliances to enable local power to be exercised, dealings with LGs in this new context must progress towards a deeper recognition of LGs as specific political actors.

6.2. The gradual recognition of LGs as stakeholders in the cooperation system

In the new paradigm that is gradually developing within DC, LGs are creating new models for the relationships between stakeholders in the North and the South, and this specific contribution might represent a perspective of transformation and improvement for international cooperation that could inspire other stakeholders in the international cooperation system.

The recognition of LGs as important political actors in North-South cooperation therefore demands the acceptance of this specific nature and its potential to transform, which in turn involves that their future incorporation into the international cooperation system should preserve their autonomy and not expect them to simply adapt themselves to existing coordination schemes and mechanisms inspired by a traditional vision of development aid.

Considering how LGs are drawing closer to the international cooperation system, we could say that they have started to carry out intense activity in this direction in recent years, on the initiative of both international cooperation organisations and LGs' representation platforms.

From the perspective of the United Nations, they are currently trying to develop a process to include non-State actors in the development cooperation agenda. In 2007 and 2008 ECOSOC, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations, promoted a series of seminars aimed at incorporating local and regional administrations, as well as national parliaments, into the general

reflections on aid from non-governmental organisations. These events culminated in the Stakeholders' Forum held in Rome in 2008 on 'The role of national and local stakeholders in contributing to aid quality and effectiveness' and in the first Forum on Development Cooperation, held in New York in June 2008.

In parallel, and in a more specific way, the OECD, the World Bank and various multilateral institutions have been attempting to gradually bring LGs into the dynamics generated by the Paris Declaration (2005) on Development Aid Effectiveness. This process has appeared in high-level meetings, seminars and forums, the last of which took place in Accra in September 2008 –with LGs being present via UCLG– and resulted in the adoption of the Accra Action Agenda, which clarifies and specifies certain aspects of the Paris Declaration, making more explicit reference to LGs.[39]

Along the same lines as recognising LGs as cooperation actors, finally mention must be made of the progress achieved in European cooperation policy. We have already seen how the thematic programme 'Non-State Actors and Local Authorities in Development', successor to the Commission's budget lines that until now were exclusively dedicated to D-NGOs, has for the first time opened up – albeit very tentatively– to LGs. Nevertheless this opening up to LGs is still far from perfect because in practice it assimilates them into D-NGOs like organisations receiving grants, i.e., like 'clients' of European cooperation policy instead of establishing clear concertation foundations so that local stakeholders, who carry out their cooperation policies with autonomy and using their own resources, can work as partners in defining and executing European policies and cooperate effectively with the Commission in this area.

38| *In addition, even if one accepts the traditional aid model there is no guarantee that centralised aid distribution systems, which have been in use for almost half a century, are more efficient than the direct contributions of municipality to municipality.*

39| *The fourth High-Level Forum is planned for 2011 in Colombia.*

A more promising development is the recent Communication from the Commission to the Council, the Parliament, the Economic and Social Committee and Committee of the Regions entitled 'Local Authorities: Actors For Development'[40], as this document aims to 'draw out the first elements of a response strategy that will allow capitalisation and maximisation of local authorities' experience as partners in development policy" (p. 3). This document recognises that "DC has emerged as a new and important dimension of development cooperation. It has become more comprehensive and professionalised; relying on institutionalised networks with outreach into developing countries; utilising a diversity of tools in all the regions of the world and with an exponential increase in financial allocations." (p. 4). To make progress in coordinating with local actors, the Commission proposes "the establishment of a structured dialogue on development policy with local authorities...under the aegis of the Committee of the Regions" and, as the first step, "to elaborate operational guidelines to enhance the involvement of local authorities in [development] aid programming and delivery and policy dialogue at [partner country], regional and EU level" (p.7). In conclusion, the Communication of the Commission is an invitation "to support the development of a holistic approach to local authorities as actors in development, at global, European and national level".

Also from Europe, we should mention the recently written European Development Cooperation Charter in Support of Local Governance, which was an initiative of the French government during its presidency of the EU and was presented at the European Development Days held in Strasbourg in November 2008.

These different initiatives reveal the progress made towards recognising LGs as actors with full rights in development cooperation policies and clearly state the need to discuss and specify how DC fits conceptually and operationally within the system of international development cooperation.

6.3. Bringing LGs closer to the Paris Declaration: Coordination or concertation?

Returning then to the possibility of extending the application area of the Paris Declaration, which is the most ambitious effort to integrate LGs into the cooperation agenda, we must underline how extremely important this Declaration is because it recognises both implicitly and explicitly the well-known deficiencies of the traditional systems of programming and delivering official development assistance (ODA) and because the signatory governments made a series of commitments that could, if carried out, substantially improve the quality and effectiveness of this aid. As we know, the underlying principles of this reform are: appropriation, harmonisation, alignment, results and mutual accountability.

This declaration was signed in March 2005 at the High-Level Forum held in Paris. LGs were not included or consulted during the process of drawing up and discussing the declaration as the document only involved national governments. The interest now shown by international organisations (OECD, World Bank, etc.) in getting LGs involved in implementing the Paris Declaration should be partly understood as another demonstration of the recent recognition of the important role played by these governments in development aid.

Decentralised cooperation –due to its new horizontal cooperation practices and its remarkable action in strengthening LGs in the South– is a cooperation modality that escapes much of the criticism levelled at traditional ODA and is probably one of the methods that comes closest to the principles affirmed in the Paris Declaration. For this reason, LGs show absolutely no resistance to the content of this declaration and are willing to endorse it, provided that this more intense participation in the international cooperation agenda does not result in the imposition of central authority directives, which come either from the countries of origin or from the aid destination countries.

In fact, the specific nature of local cooperation rests on some basic principles and, in particular, on:

- *the establishment of direct relationships between public institutions in the North and the South;*

- *content focused on institutional strengthening and supporting local public policies and exercising local power;*

- *cooperation of a horizontal type that aims to reveal the mutual interests of the institutions concerned;*

- *the mobilisation of local actors (D-NGOs, businesses, universities, schools, etc.) under the aegis of elected local governments;*

- *the dynamisation and strengthening of local democracy; and*

- *the power of control close to activities, by involving citizens and civil society in general.*

This is the added value provided by decentralised cooperation and, as a consequence, LGs cannot be considered as simple sources of additional finance for development cooperation in the traditional sense, instead they must be recognised as specific and innovative actors who provide proposals that can precisely help the usual donors to revise their actions.

The perspective of incorporating LGs a little deeper into the system of international development cooperation could be seen as a window of opportunity for better concertation among stakeholders (substate, national and multilateral) capable of respecting their specific natures and establishing authentic dialogue between them. We mentioned earlier the obvious interest in better articulating the different levels of public actors. This perspective, which goes beyond the possible adherence of LGs to the principles of the Paris Declaration, would have to involve, incidentally, a far-reaching reform of the concertation mechanisms of the organisations and actors involved in development cooperation, such as for example the DAC, which, under this new logic, would probably have to open up to participation by regional and local stakeholders and not restrict itself to a group of national donors.

We cannot hide the fact that the issue is very complex and will probably give rise to intense debates, as LGs' international activity can absolutely not be reduced to development cooperation activity – it has other dimensions of institutional, strategic and political relations. What is important right now is to identify that the role played, or that could be played, by LGs in development cooperation is starting to be discussed and that this process could result in new perspectives and models of cooperation.

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[40] | *COM Communication (2008) 626, of 8 October 2008.*

7. Conclusions: current topics of debate in an open process

At the end of this review of the recent evolution of DC presented in this article, it is certain that we are currently witnessing a living and complex process which could have important implications for existing institutional frameworks, international relations and development cooperation. In this open process, we have identified and will now review some of the main topics of debate at the moment:

7.1. The conceptual foundations: better identify the relationship between LGs' international activity, DC and development aid

One of the first focal points for debate relates to the actual nature of DC and what this emerging phenomenon represents and means. Indeed, much progress has to be made in understanding, analysing and promoting DC, better identifying its purpose and reach.

It is significant, for example, that an expert like Gildo Baraldi, Director of OICS, wrote in 2008: "DC is based on reciprocity and mutual interest. It is not only cooperation for development, or a means to support processes of territorial internationalisation.../...DC is at the crossroads of all this and much more; it builds up international partnerships between all active forces in both territories[41]." This demonstrates that DC is a complex and ambiguous terrain –which cannot be assimilated into traditional development cooperation practices– and that it is necessary to take theoretical and methodological reflection a step further in order to clarify the concepts used and to better understand the political significance and reach of the phenomena being studied.

Tied in with this point, we have mentioned in this document the need to build a 'discourse' or 'discourses' capable of recognising the emerging dynamics of LGs and helping with their comprehension.

7.2. The emergence of new models of DC

A second topic group concerns discussing actors' practices and identifying the characteristics of the new models and types of relationships that LGs are experiencing and developing. We have seen how DC is going through a phase of rapid growth, in which it is gradually leaving behind essentially aid-based relationships in order to explore innovative forms, linked to the specific nature of LGs as cooperation stakeholders. This 'new' cooperation is based, as we have seen, on a model of horizontal and reciprocal relationships, and not on a unidirectional North-South transfer of resources, knowledge or organisational systems.

The specific nature of LGs is not, therefore, their potential financial contribution – which is limited and cannot be compared with the needs of local administrations in the South which suffer a chronic shortage of means– but on the contrary their contribution as actors and promoters of local development, elected public authorities guaranteeing social cohesion and expert administrations in matters of managing local public services.

Following the evolution of new cooperation modalities originating in the local ambit, identifying original experiences of cooperation between cities and between territories, analysing their content and evaluating their results are all essential tasks in order to continue consolidating the heritage of this emerging phenomenon and therefore more financial and human resources should be dedicated to this end.

7.3. Articulating the actors, without subordination or conditioning

A third focus for debate deals with articulating the actors interested in DC. Firstly it is important to assess the real strength of the DC that arises at the initiative of LGs themselves, independently of aid programmes promoted by other actors. It is worth discussing and finding out whether this 'autonomous' DC will be capable of maintaining a dynamic and logic of its own or whether it will gradually be shifted into the realm of State diplomacy and 'reclaimed' as an additional and complementary instrument of this diplomacy. It is easy in fact, for the State's co-financing of actions to prompt LGs looking for additional resources to turn to State programmes and end up falling within their country's strategic priorities and objectives. From this point of view, the relationship between local and State cooperation is, at the present time, an important topic of debate, not only from the technical point of view of the articulation needed between the actors working in the same territory, but from the political perspective of what the different types of cooperation represent and the possibility of preserving, or not, local autonomy in this field against national interests[42].

It would also be interesting to debate and investigate further into another aspect of articulating actors, this time with economic and social stakeholders from the local ambit (businesses, trade unions, universities, schools, etc.), civil society organisations (citizens' associations, collectives and social groups, etc.) and D-NGOs.

7.4. Fitting in with the development cooperation system and the aid paradigm

A fourth topic of debate, which is starting to appear strongly, regards incorporating LGs into the cooperation system. This articulation is necessary – because an important amount of LGs' international activity forms part of diverse expressions of North-South solidarity, expressed in this case from the citizens' perspective – but it is not an outlook that exhausts the potential of DC. Greater recognition of LGs as development cooperation actors is desirable provided they are not considered as simple sources of finance that should be rationalised and coordinated, or as clients and the recipients of grants. Whether LGs end up as subsidiary actors in traditional cooperation or pioneering actors in a new way of providing cooperation depends on the content and form of this relationship.

Our personal opinion is that an intense dialogue between national and local governments is necessary because LGs' international activity, with its horizontal, reciprocal and mutual interest logic, could to some extent help to relieve the international development cooperation system of its aid-based content and of its possible paternalistic inertia.

41| Gildo Baraldi: 'A panorama of Italian decentralised cooperation towards Latin America and the Caribbean: vital role of the regions', in the UE-LA DC 2007 Yearbook, p. 42.

42| It is interesting, from this point of view, to ask oneself whether it is possible to develop a 'European' DC in which the elements of coordination between LGs in the different countries are equally or even more important than the articulation between the central government and the substate administrations of each country.

7.5. Designing instruments to come closer to evaluating impact

Finally, we could mention that cooperation between LGs would have to demonstrate its effectiveness and impact, with indicators and methods suitable for this type of cooperation and coherent with its objectives. We are not talking about robotically applying project assessment methodologies aimed at measuring the material and specific impact of the actions on the beneficiary population's living conditions, but instead detecting and assessing the effects of DC in terms, for example, of strengthening local capacities, institutional support, mutual learning, creating new opportunities, internationalisation, consolidation of local democracy, educating and raising citizens' awareness, improving the general conditions of exercising local power, etc.

Constructing methodologies adapted to the nature of DC represents, as we can see, another difficult and important challenge which should be tackled in a gradual and joint manner.

In conclusion, we can affirm that the path of international cooperation followed up till now in European and Latin American cities and regions has been very important and full of lessons, and that overcoming the challenges for the future that we have highlighted should, in the immediate future, enable the further consolidation of institutional relations between cities and between territories, as well as the direct links between the citizens of both regions.

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Analysis of local decentralised co-operation

The Paris Declaration and decentralised cooperation

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The global scene has changed significantly in recent years. Diverse dynamics have favoured the incorporation of new actors into the system of international relations and the decentralised governments have taken on a growing protagonism in this context. At the same time, important changes have transformed the development aid system. The building of the aid effectiveness agenda, especially promoted by the Paris Declaration, has entailed a revision of the aid model and of the relations of the aid system towards a greater protagonism of the partners.

KEYWORDS

*Paris Agenda |
Democratic ownership |
Alignment |
Harmonisation |
Aid effectiveness |
Decentralised cooperation |*

The Paris Declaration, due to its excessively State-centred conception of the aid system, sets the decentralised governments before the challenge of interpreting the agenda from the local perspective. Moreover, it demands that the decentralised governments should carry out a deep analysis of their practices and a reflection on the effectiveness of their work, while also posing several challenges in this respect: how to incorporate the principles of the Paris Declaration, once re-interpreted; how to adapt them to the reality of the decentralised governments, and, in short, to consider what and how the decentralised governments can contribute to the aid effectiveness agenda.

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1. The changes in the international aid system: new actors and new agendas

1.1. The decentralised governments in the aid system

In recent decades, diverse social, political and economic events have altered notably the international scene. The fall of the Socialist bloc in Eastern Europe, the regional integration processes, the emergence of interdependences associated with globalisation, or the attacks of 11 September 2001 and the subsequent 'Global War on Terror', which set the concept of security in the centre of the development agenda, have entailed important transformations in the system of international relations.

Together with these major phenomena, others have taken place, such as the thrust given to the processes of political and administrative decentralisation and the emergence of a transnational civil society, which have contributed to the appearance of new actors and to the intensification of the participation of others on the global scene and, in conjunction with them, to the establishment of new relations.

Supranational, regional, local and private actors are playing an increasingly substantial role in the international order, bringing about a questioning of a system which is characterised by the almost exclusive participation of the states. In this way a new, more diverse system has been shaped, a system marked by more heterogeneous relations but which demands, in turn, growing efforts of coordination, dialogue and opening of spaces of participation to the overall set of actors.

Within this context, the decentralised governments, and especially those in the states with higher levels of decentralisation, are probably the actors which have won the largest space. The exterior projection of the decentralised governments is not a recent phenomenon but the increasing weight which these actors are developing is indeed a novelty. Nevertheless, despite this advance, the role of the decentralised governments in most cases is confined to limited areas of exterior action, and these decentralised governments do not make their way into the exclusive spheres of action of the states, as are diplomatic-strategic issues, defence or security[1].
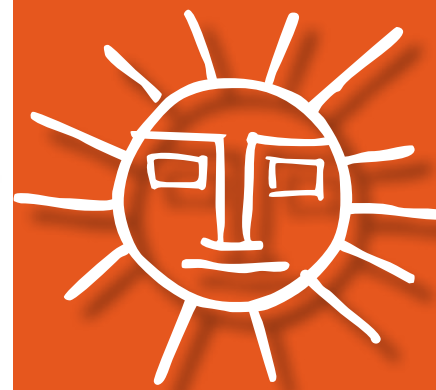
Assuming the existence of three main areas in which power is structured (military power, economic power and social power), it may be affirmed that it is in the latter-mentioned area that the action of the decentralised governments has been fundamentally situated[2], and that this action is finding a place increasingly in the economic area[3] (Del Huerto 2004:26-27). In fact, for many decentralised governments the economic agenda is the main motor that gives rise to their exterior action.

The capacity of exterior action of the decentralised governments varies significantly in each country, since the decentralisation processes in each of them have given rise to legal frameworks that endow the decen-

[1] Ugalde, A., (2006). 'La acción exterior de los Gobiernos No Centrales en la Unión Europea Ampliada', in Various Authors, Cursos de Derecho Internacional y Relaciones de Vitoria-Gasteiz 2005, Bilbao, UPV/EHU, p. 292.
[2] Idem.
[3] Huerto, M. del, (2004). Una aproximación contextual y conceptual a la cooperación descentralizada, Municipality of Valparaíso and Barcelona Provincial Council.

tralised governments with different margins of action. Moreover, together with the legal framework, there are other factors that influence the capacity of the decentralised governments to unfold their exterior action, such as geographical factors, bureaucratic and economic resources, or their location in regional integration areas.

The emergence of the decentralised governments on the international scene and the transformation of the relations which this phenomenon entails, makes it necessary to review the selfsame role of the states in order to develop the potentialities that these actors possess and, in this way, to favour complementarity and thereby optimise the role of the states in matters of exterior action.

One of the spheres of exterior action that has most clearly reflected the aforementioned global transformations is the international cooperation system, in which the decentralised actors and the civil society organisations (CSOs) have vigorously emerged. The decentralised governments and the CSOs have joined the official systems of aid and have come to consolidate themselves in some countries as key actors in the national systems of international cooperation.

The emergence of the transnational civil society, characterised by a large capacity of mobilisation and a twofold global and local nature, has become a fundamental factor in guiding the governments' exterior action towards the promotion of the development of the countries of the South, the establishment of fairer North-South relations and the stimulation of international solidarity. Numerous decentralised governments have been especially receptive to these demands and, in response, they have begun, in some cases, and intensified in others, their task of international cooperation for development.

On other occasions it has been the decentralised governments which, through the opening of spaces of participation in their policies of aid to civil society, have promoted social mobilisation in favour of international solidarity.

Consequently, there exists a connection between the upsurge in decentralised cooperation, the promotion of civil society as a global actor and the emergence of the CSOs as actors in the aid system. This connection has even come to generate a feedback between the aforementioned processes which is the result of an articulation of global and local logics that allow an awareness to be acquired of the influence of the global process on the local sphere, and which is the answer to the global demands from the local sphere.

Nevertheless, the implementation of international cooperation actions by the decentralised governments of the North does not always respond to motivations relating to international solidarity or to the search for fairness in the North-South relations. On some occasions, the actions of international cooperation for development are prompted by the materialisation of a political project, the defence of economic interests or the cultural projection of the decentralised governments of the North.

In addition to increasing the volume of official development assistance (ODA), the growing participation of the decentralised governments and the civil society actors in the aid system favours the incorporation of the local perspective and the outlook of civil society, endows international cooperation with a greater diversity and promotes an action that is more closely oriented to local development processes and to the strengthening of civil society.

Moreover, the consolidation of the decentralised governments and the CSOs has helped to make the aid system more complex by increasing some of the existing problems, such as the fragmentation of actions or the coordination difficulties. Consequently, the presence of decentralised actors and civil society in the aid system implies enormous potentialities for the promotion of the development processes while posing great challenges in terms of effectiveness at the same time.

1.1.1. Potentialities of the decentralised governments in the aid system

The participation of the decentralised governments in the aid system is important in terms of effectiveness and complementarity since it entails great potentialities in significant spheres for the promotion of development, spheres in which State and multilateral cooperation have shown themselves to be hardly efficient.

Governance, the strengthening of civil society and the local institutions, support to the management of public policies and the provision of basic social services in the local arena, as well as support to the processes of decentralisation, are some of the spheres of action in which decentralised cooperation may contribute added value and in which it may play a prominent role in development processes.

In this respect, decentralised cooperation is an ideal tool for fostering governance in view of its capacity to contribute to the strengthening of local governments and to promote dialogue between government and citizens. In this way, it helps to reduce the large breach that often exists between the citizens and the institutions of the State,

and to favour the exercise of transparency and the accountability in the local sphere.

Moreover, the nearness between the government and the citizens allows a better knowledge of the social demands and needs, and simplifies a better orientation of the public policies, on the part of the local governments, towards the people's needs. Decentralised cooperation then represents a potential support for a more effective management of the public policies and for a better coverage of services, which are aspects that have a notable impact on the fight against poverty and inequity.

Likewise, if decentralised cooperation is oriented towards local development it may favour the strengthening of civil society and the social capital of the partner countries since it entails an incentive for social mobilisation and the creation of social organisations oriented towards decision-making in the local sphere. In this way it allows the strengthening of democratic governance, control by the citizens and transparency in the exercise of authority[4].

Lastly, the dialogue that takes place between the decentralised governments of the North and the South within the frame of the aid system is often more direct and corresponds to less asymmetrical relations than those which are established between central governments of the North and decentralised governments of the South. Consequently, this dialogue offers a suitable framework for promoting aid processes which have the participation of the partners and which are oriented towards their priorities.

Along this line, the European Union underscores the role that the local govern-

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4| *Manor, J., (2000). Descentralisation and sustanaible livelihoods, IDS, p. 10.*

ments may play as significant actors in the promotion of development, mainly as a result of their accumulated experience and of the potential role which they may play in fostering change, preventing conflicts and supporting decentralisation processes, among other significant aspects for the promotion of development[5].

Figure 1 shows the potential of decentralised cooperation in the fight against poverty and in the promotion of development.

The aforementioned potentialities are important and they help to identify an ideal model of decentralised cooperation that may be targeted. To this end, in addition to developing these potentialities, it is also necessary to bear in mind some of the risks which are faced by decentralised cooperation.

1.1.2. Challenges of the participation of the decentralised governments in the aid system

The potentialities of the decentralised governments in the aid system invite an optimistic reading of decentralised cooperation and of its capacity to contribute to the development processes. It is also necessary, however, to observe decentralised cooperation from a critical standpoint, owing to the difficulties involved in developing its full potential and because it shows some of the restrictions which are common to all the actors of the system as well as other restrictions which are specific to the decentralised actors. Below we present some of the risks which are faced by decentralised cooperation and which limit the capacity to orient

Figure 1 | Strenghening of local governments vs. poverty:

Source: Adaptation of OECD (2005), Decentralisation and poverty in developing countries: exploring the impact, DEV/DOC, Paris.

it towards an ideal model in which the decentralised actors may contribute all their added value to the development processes.

Discretionality and asymmetry

The deregulated, voluntary and discretional nature of the aid system gives rise to vertical relations between donors and partners[6]. Especially among the decentralised governments of the North, the participation in the aid system involves a voluntary act that is not subject to legal obligations, while the partners depend to a greater or lesser degree on the resources of international cooperation in order to confront their development processes. Accordingly, for the partner country, the voluntary character of the participation is less pronounced, the greater its dependence on ODA.

The relations that are established by the decentralised governments of the North and the South within the frame of the aid system are determined, consequently, by the asymmetrical and discretional nature of the system itself. This fact does not mean that all the relations show the same degree of asymmetry, but rather that it varies according to the participation of the partners in the decision-making process within the context of the relations and of the adequacy of the actions with respect to the partners' priorities.

In summary, it may be affirmed that, to the extent that the aid is not instrumentalised, that it is not conditioned by the interests of the donors and that the participative processes are strengthened, the ver-

tical character of the relations established within the frame of the aid system is reduced.
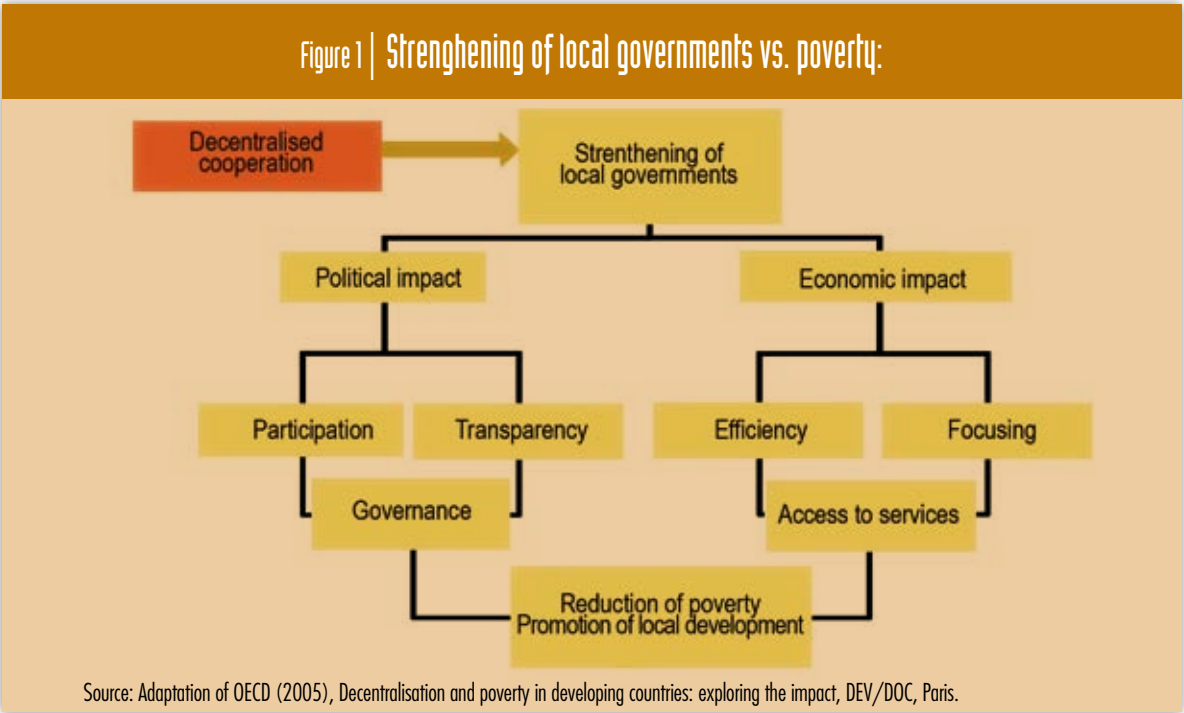
Instrumentalisation of decentralised cooperation

The motivations relating to international solidarity and the tie between decentralised cooperation and the participation of civil society make this a type of cooperation with lower levels of asymmetry than State cooperation.

Nevertheless, the political and economic instrumentalisation of international cooperation through the incorporation of agendas alien to the promotion of development is not an exclusive practice of the central governments. On some occasions the decentralised governments may come to link their international cooperation policy to their international political or economic agenda and incorporate interests alien to the promotion of development.
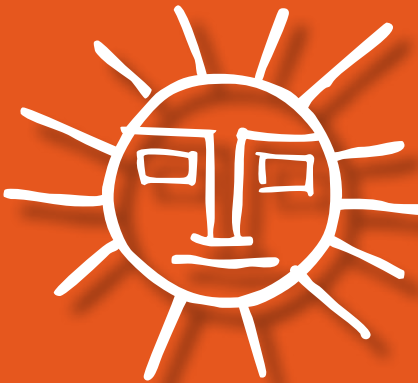
In some cases the international cooperation actions of the decentralised governments can even be interpreted in terms of internal policy by forming a mechanism aimed to achieve legitimacy and maintenance of the social peace in their relations with the civil society.

To the extent that an instrumentalisation is produced and the agendas alien to the promotion of development are those which shape the international cooperation policy, decentralised cooperation runs the risk of losing a large part of its potential to generate more horizontal relations and to contribute to development processes.

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[5] *The European Consensus on Development (2006/C 46/01), Official Journal of the European Union, 24-2-2006; Communication from the Commission to the Council, the European Parliament, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, European Commission, COM626 final, 8-10-2008.*

[6] *Sanahuja, J. A., (2007). '¿Más y mejor ayuda?: la Declaración de París y las tendencias en la cooperación al desarrollo', in Mesa, M (Coord.), Guerra y conflictos en el siglo XXI: Tendencias globales. Anuario 2007-2008 del Centro de Educación e Investigación para la Paz (CEIPAZ), Madrid, CEIPAZ.*

Difficulties in contributing added value to international cooperation processes

The strengths of decentralised cooperation lie in its capacity to contribute to the increase of the capacities of the decentralised governments of the countries of the South, in the support of the management of local public policies, the formation of social capital and the articulation of the associative fabric, as well as in the accompaniment of the decentralisation processes. The accumulated experience of the decentralised governments of the North in these spheres indicates that decentralised cooperation does not always translate into a contribution of added value through the aid system, at least to the extent that would be expected, because it is not always oriented towards these lines of action[7].

This circumstance arises when the decentralised actors reproduce the classic model of State cooperation based on the transfer of resources for the support of isolated demands which do not correspond necessarily to a strategic logic. This model limits a cooperation that is articulated with the public policies and that strengthens the public systems in the local sphere.

Political and administrative decentralisation, the strengthening of the local governments and of civil society, and local development are complex processes that demand in-depth analyses and long-term support and accompaniment interventions. On some occasions the policy of the decentralised governments of the North corresponds to a model of geographical and sectoral diversification with short- or medium-term actions that cause a large dispersion of resources and actions. These models based on the diversification of relations impede the establishment of strategic alliances with the decentralised governments of the South and limit notably the capacity to favour such processes.

As a general rule, these models based on the dispersion of actions lack a frame of overall analysis and consequently show a great shortage of coordination. As a result of this, imbalances may be generated due to the concentration of the interventions in specific regions and the lack of attention to others, regardless of where the main needs are situated.

Fragmentation of actions

The map of decentralised coordination is formed by a multiplicity of governments and institutions of regional, provincial and local scope, of both the donor and partner countries. Consequently, the growth of decentralised cooperation entails the proliferation of actors, some of whom establish multiple relations and start up a great diversity of actions.

Within this context, there arises an absence of overall analysis and of exercises of coordination between the decentralised governments themselves and with the central governments, and sometimes even within one same decentralised government. The collective outcome gives rise to a fragmented situation characterised by dispersed and unconnected actions and, consequently, to the existence of duplicities and overlaps, and to the loss of complementarities and synergies.

Due to all these features, some of which are specific while others are shared with the rest of the actors of the aid system, decentralised cooperation possesses great potentialities and faces big challenges in terms of effectiveness.

The transformations in the aid system have not only given rise to the participation of new actors and, in this way, to changes in the appearance of relations. In recent years significant changes have also taken place in the development agenda and in the aid architecture, changes which are addressed to promoting international cooperation for a more effective development. This new agenda of aid effectiveness (of which the Paris Declaration is the foremost exponent) makes necessary a reflection within decentralised cooperation in order to overcome the practices, mechanisms and instruments which limit its effectiveness.

1.2. Transformations in the development agenda and in the aid system

As from the 1990s, and especially as a result of the end of the Cold War, a set of changes began to take place in the international system which also affected the development cooperation system which is set within it[8]. In this way, the aid system was exposed to a significant process of change which operated in three different directions. In the first place, a process of revision emerged with respect to what the goals of development cooperation should be, understanding these goals as internationally shared objectives which, by their own nature, demand a common effort oriented in the same direction. Secondly, a process of reflection was activated with respect to the practice of aid, seeking to establish the principles and guidelines that should guide the action of donors and recipients in order to achieve the established goals. Thirdly, the process of change also affected the most quantitative sphere, giving rise to a reflection on the method of obtaining the financing necessary to confront these goals, and also on the mechanisms that should be implemented to this end.

Accordingly, the changes which took place in the aid system affected the aspects of the what (goals), how (practice) and how much (financing) of the development agenda, aspects which will be analysed in this section.

1.2.1. The goals of cooperation: the MDGs and the international development agenda

Until the 1990s, the cooperation agenda and the development aid policies were closely tied –and almost always subject– to the geostrategic conditioning factors of the Cold War. In this way, the aid policies of the donors did not correspond to the goals pertaining to their nature –the promotion of development in the most disadvantaged countries– and neither was it possible to coordinate such goals among the set of donors and establish a common agenda.

Nevertheless, beginning in the 1990s, the changes undergone in the system of international relations had implications for the development aid system. During those years, under the auspices of the United Nations, a set of summits and conferences were held on diverse issues and, on the basis of those meetings, a series of internationally shared development goals were established which led to the so called Millennium Summit.

From the Millennium Summit held in New York in September 2000 emerged the Millennium Declaration, which was signed by 189 countries and gathered a large part of the commitments which had been established in the course of the successive summits of the 1990s, grouping them into eight major goals (with their respective targets and indicators) to be achieved by the year 2015[9].The so called Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)

[7]| Martínez, I. and Sanahuja, J.A. Declaración de París: retos y perspectivas para los actores de la cooperación descentralizada en España. Carolina Foundation, Madrid. In press.

[8]| Of interest in this respect is the document by Alonso, J.A. and Sanahuja, J.A. (2006). 'Un mundo en transformación: repensar la agenda de desarrollo', La Realidad de la Ayuda, 2006-2007, Intermón Oxfam.

emerged in this way, forming a shared international agenda for the first time and setting the priorities which were to guide the aid policies of the donors at international level[10].

Consequently, the MDGs have constituted a sort of 'social agenda of globalisation'[11] in which, in addition to establishing clearly detailed development targets, a goal is embraced (Number Eight) which addresses the articulation of a 'Global Partnership for Development'. MDG 8 emphasizes, in this way, the importance of the coherence of policies by encompassing commitments relating to the opening of the commercial system, the relief of foreign debt and the access to technology and medicines for developing countries – at the same time as these countries commit themselves to good governance–, in order to contribute to the achievement of the seven preceding goals.

In short, despite the fact that the MDGs are not devoid of significant limitations –their lack of attention to the phenomenon of inequality, their inadequacy for the specific development needs of the middle-income countries or their emphasis on the supply are some of the criticisms appearing in the respective literature–, they also contain significant potentialities. Standing out among these potentialities as the principal contribution of the MDGs to the new aid architecture is the fact that they provide a set of shared goals to which the joint effort of the donors may be addressed, and the fact that they form an incipient international agenda of development.

1.2.2. The Paris Declaration and the Accra Agenda for Action: the aid effectiveness agenda

As was previously mentioned, together with the establishment of a set of shared goals

Chart 1.	The road to the MDGs		
Cumbre	Año	Lugar
Millenium Summit	2000	New York
Social Summit + 5	2000	Geneva
Earth Summit + 5	1997	New York
World Food Summit + 5	1996	Rome
Human Settlements Conference	1996	Istambul
World Conference of Women	1995	Beijing
World Summit for Social Development	1995	Copenhagen
International Conference on Population and Development	1994	Cairo
World Conference on Human Rights	1993	Vienna
UN Conference on Environment and Development	1992	Río de Janeiro
World Conference on Education for All	1990	Jomtien
World Summit for Children	1990	New York
Source: the authors, based on United Nations data		

[9] | *United Nations (2000). Millennium Declaration. Resolution 55/2 of the General Assembly, New York.*

at international level, the development cooperation system is undergoing significant changes with respect to the practice of aid, changes which affect the principles and guidelines which should direct the action of donors and partner countries in order to advance with greater effectiveness towards the goals pursued.

This concern for the achievement of a greater impact of aid has been formalised through the holding of several High-Level Forums on Development Aid Effectiveness. The first of these forums took place in Rome in February 2003 and was centred round the principle of harmonisation or, in other terms, the need for the donor countries to coordinate themselves and to implement suitable measures to simplify and homogenise their procedures in order to reduce the administrative load and the management costs entailed for the partner countries[12].

The 2nd High-Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness, which gave rise to the Paris Declaration, was held in that city in March 2005. This document, which was ratified by 122 donor and recipient countries, 28 international bodies and 14 civil-society organisations, puts emphasis on the quality of aid in order to achieve its greater effectiveness, and it pursues a model of more horizontal relation between donors and partner countries[13]. To this end, it establishes five guidelines which donors and partner countries should accept as guiding principles of their practice in the field of development aid: owner-

ship, alignment, harmonisation, managing for results and mutual accountability.

Ownership is understood as the need for the partner countries to be the ones who lead their own development processes and, to this end, the need for them to exercise the authority on the policies and strategies designed for such purpose. In this respect, in order for the partner countries to become the owners of their development processes, the donors should respect their leadership and strengthen their capacity to exercise it.

The alignment principle, for its part, refers to the suitability, on the basis of the leadership exercised by the partner countries, that the donors should base their support on the national strategies, institutions and procedures with which the partner countries endow themselves. In this way, the aim is to strengthen the recipient country's own capacities and avoid the creation of parallel and temporary management structures by the donor, the long-term effects of which are not to the advantage of the partner country's development.

The harmonisation of aid policies, a principle which, as previously mentioned, was included in the Rome Declaration, seeks to reduce the administrative and management costs incurred by the partner countries by means of a simplification and homogenisation of the procedures used by the donors, and by raising the coordination levels of the donors' operations.

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[10] | *These goals are: 1) to eradicate poverty and hunger; 2) to achieve universal primary education; 3) gender equality; 4) to reduce child mortality; 5) to improve maternal health; 6) to combat HIV/AIDS and other diseases; 7) environmental sustainability, and 8) to develop a global partnership for development.*

[11] | *Sanahuja, J. A., (2007). '¿Más y mejor ayuda?: las Declaración de París y las tendencias en la cooperación al desarrollo', in Mesa, M. (Coord.), Guerra y conflictos en el siglo XXI: Tendencias globales. Anuario 2007-2008 del Centro de Educación e Investigación para la Paz (CEIPAZ), Madrid, CEIPAZ, p. 71.*

[12] | *OECD (2003). Rome Declaration on Harmonisation. 1st High-Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness, Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, OECD, Paris.*

[13] | *OECD (2005). Paris Declaration on Development Aid Effectiveness. 2nd High-Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness, Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, OECD, Paris.*

Managing for results, on which a round table was held in Marrakech in February 2004, involves a revision of the systems through which the donors have managed and assessed their aid, seeking to establish a measurement based not so much on the resources contributed, as on the impact, expected results and accomplishments achieved with such resources.

Lastly, the principles of the Paris Declaration include that of mutual accountability, which affects the greater horizontality that should characterise the relation between the donor and the partner country on the basis of information, transparency and the mutual rendering of accounts.

Together with these principles, the Paris Declaration establishes a set of indicators and targets to be assessed in 2010, in order to be able to measure the progress which donors and partner countries have made along these lines. In this respect, it should be pointed out that in September 2008 the 3rd High-Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness was held in Accra for the purpose of reviewing, continuing and speeding up the matters contemplated in the Paris Declaration, and to this end the so called Accra Agenda for Action[14] (AAA) was approved.

Moreover, in consonance with the principles established in the Paris agenda which, as mentioned, puts emphasis on quality of aid, a new instrumentation has emerged which seeks to mitigate the adverse effects caused by previous (and still very present) practices of donors. Accordingly, with the aim to increase the aggregate impact of aid, instruments have appeared such as delegated cooperation, budgetary support and sectoral approaches. Among other things, these instruments seek to reduce the excessive fragmentation of aid which is associated with the proliferation of numerous actors within the international system of cooperation, and the lack of coordination with which they operate, while likewise seeking to strengthen the ownership of the partner countries and the alignment with them.

In short, this whole process, which is fundamentally embodied by the Paris Declaration and the AAA, makes evident the significance which has been acquired in the new aid architecture by the concern for the quality and effectiveness of aid, moving beyond the old approaches centred exclusively on the quantitative aspect of aid in this way.

1.2.3. Financing for development: from Monterrey to Doha

Although, as has just been mentioned, one of the fundamental features of the new aid architecture is the centrality assigned to the concepts of quality and effectiveness, this has been no obstacle to the maintenance of the cooperation system's attention on the financing necessary to achieve the established goals. The International Conference on Financing for Development which was held in Monterrey in March 2002 was addressed to this aim. This conference gave rise to the so called Monterrey Consensus, which approached a set of key issues that donors and recipients should take into consideration when articulating their policies in order to improve the financing for development[15].

In this way, the Monterrey Consensus establishes several measures which should be taken to favour the financing of the development agenda. On the one hand, it points out the need to mobilise both the national and international resources that are available, alluding to such matters as the good management of public affairs, the generation of a suitable economic climate, the fostering of public and private initiatives, the fight against corruption, transparency, the investment in basic social services, the role of direct foreign investment and the creation of new financing mechanisms. On the other hand, the Monterrey Consensus puts emphasis on the importance of possessing an open multilateral commercial system that is non-discriminatory and equitable and that is based on rules, on the need to increase the international financial and technical cooperation for development, on the significance of a suitable treatment and relief of foreign debt and, together with all this, on the coherence of policies.

In conjunction with this, likewise with respect to the financing of the development agenda, mention should be made of the approval, in December 2008, of the Doha Declaration, which follows up and reaffirms the commitments established in the Monterrey Consensus, and which emphasizes to a greater extent such aspects as capital flight, the role of remittances or the growing significance of South-South cooperation, while stating its concern for trends associated with the financial and food crises and with climate change [16].

In short, there are several changes to which the aid system and the development cooperation agenda are exposed, changes which are related to their goals as well as to their practice and financing, and which give rise to the shaping of a new aid architecture. In this respect, it is appropriate to consider how these changes affect the decentralised actors as integral parts of this system, and the role that they are to play in this architecture.

2. The changes in the international aid system: new actors and new agendas

The Paris Declaration was signed in 2005 as a result of the dialogue between the donors and a broad group of partner countries. Together with them, participating in the discussions and in the preparatory process for the 2nd High-Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness (which produced the Declaration) were international bodies and a small group of civil society organisations (CSOs). As a result of all this, the agenda which was promoted represents an important agreement among the actors of the international community, but in its process of preparation there were some notable absences: the lack of participation of the decentralised governments and the insufficient presence of civil society prevent one from being able to speak of a consensus among the overall set of leading actors in the development processes.

The weight of the central governments in the building of the agenda lends the Paris Declaration a State-centric outlook on the processes of development and of the aid system, an outlook which does not embrace the complexity and diversity of the situation of international relations or the interdependence of the local and global phenomena. This lack of recognition of the role of the local and non-governmental actors in the development processes places, paradoxically, a restriction on aid effectiveness and the development agenda.

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[14]| OECD (2008). Accra Agenda for Action. 3rd High-Level Forum on Development Aid Effectiveness, Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, OECD, Paris.

[15]| United Nations (2002). Monterrey Consensus of the International Conference on Financing for Development.

[16]| United Nations (2008). Doha Declaration on Financing for Development.

In addition to its State-centric character, the Paris Declaration reflects an excessively technical vision and a distorted image of the State since it links the problems relating to the existence of poverty and the absence of development with technical dysfunctions which can be resolved with technocratic approaches. Consequently, it involves a reductionist agenda that obviates the importance of the contract between the civil society and the State, the articulation of the local and national development processes, and the existence of a 'political economy of poor governance'[17].

The eminently technical vision of development reflected by the Paris Declaration, inasmuch as it minimises the political nature of development, introduces the risk of reducing the relations and instruments of the aid system to technical decisions devoid of political content. Accordingly, development is limited to a technical process and the aid agenda is disconnected from other agendas of donors –the economic, trade-policy, migratory, security or debt-treatment agendas– which affect directly the development processes.

The lack of participation of the local and civil-society actors in the building of the Paris Declaration is reflected in the results of the process, something that is especially visible in the principles of ownership and alignment, which are of fundamental importance for endowing the aid system with a more democratic character and for reducing its levels of asymmetry and discretionality.

The ownership principle affects the need for the partner countries to be the ones who lead their own development processes, exercising for such purpose the authority on the poli-

cies and strategies designed to carry out these processes. The main commitment which derives from this principle is the development and implementation of national development strategies. The text of the Paris Declaration, both in the body of the document and in the targets and indicators, makes reference to global development strategies, to strategies for the reduction of poverty and to sectoral and thematic strategies. No mention is made, however, of the local and regional development strategies, which are fundamental pieces for articulating the development plans in the national sphere.

The alignment principle, for its part, is focused on basing all the support of the donors on the national procedures, institutions and strategies of development of the partner countries. In order to fulfil this principle, both the donors and the partners have established a series of commitments: the alignment of the donors with the strategies of the partners, the donors' use of the partner countries' systems, the strengthening of the development capacity of the partners with the donors' support, the strengthening of the management of public finances and of the national systems of provisioning, and disconnection from aid.

Once again, on approaching this principle, the Paris Declaration shows a limited focus that reproduces the restrictions of the preceding principle in relation to the exclusively national logic of the strategies, and in relation to the participation of civil society and of the decentralised governments. The use of the national systems is a necessary condition to assure the fulfilment of the principles of ownership and alignment, and to endow the aid system with a more democratic character. Nevertheless, it is not a sufficient condition since the use

of the national systems, if they are not defined in a broad and inclusive way, may lead to the displacement of the sub-State governments and the CSOs as significant actors in the aid system and as development agents.

Despite the fact that the Paris Declaration reflects a restrictive conception in terms of both its development approach and from the standpoint of the actors involved, it is important to emphasize that it entails an unprecedented attempt to achieve a greater aid effectiveness. To do so it proposes the revision of the practices and relations of this system, it identifies common goals for the set of actors, and it takes as its basis some principles that are upheld by the civil society and by the central and local governments of the partner countries as indispensable criteria for endowing the aid system with a greater rationality.

Three and a half years after the signing of the Paris Declaration, the 3rd High-Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness was held in Accra (Ghana) in September 2008 for the purpose of reviewing, speeding up and promoting in greater depth the application of the Paris Declaration. The result of this Forum was the aforementioned AAA, which highlights a limitation of the advances in the fulfilment of the commitments undertaken in Paris. If this pace is maintained, just as is indicated by the monitoring surveys[18], the goals set in the Paris Declaration will not be achieved. For this reason, the conclusion was reached that in order to favour the fulfilment of the commitments of the AAA, it was necessary to take measures in three directions: the strengthening of the identification of the partner country with respect to development, the building of more effective and inclusive partnerships for development, and the achievement of results in terms of development and their accountability.

Although it is true that civil society did not participate fully in the building of the Paris Agenda, it is also true that it has been joining in over the course of the process from Paris to Accra, a fact that has had a notable effect on the final results of the process.

Several initiatives have been promoted by the civil society to influence the building of the aid effectiveness agenda: the efforts made to influence it by the International Steering Group (ISG), which brings together a large number of collectives and networks of the civil society of the North and the South; the Advisory Group on Civil Society and Aid Effectiveness, which has the purpose of advising the OECD Working Party on Development Aid Effectiveness and which has started up the Open Forum for CSO Development Effectiveness[19], and the work of reflection and influence of the European NGO Confederation for Relief and Development (CONCORD). As a result of the efforts of reflection and the work of influence, civil society had a greater presence at the 3rd High-Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness in Accra, with the participation of over 70 CSOs as compared to the 14 civil society organisations that took part in the Paris meeting.

For their part, the decentralised governments have not joined the process to the same extent as civil society, but despite their total absence of participation in the beginning, some advances have been made. The first approach of the local perspective to the Paris Agenda took place in February 2008 within the frame of the International Forum of the Advisory Group, the purpose of which was to prepare the political position of civil society with respect to its participation in the 3rd High-Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness. The decentralised governments were represented at this Forum by the Canadian Federation of Municipalities.

[17]| S Sanahuja, J. A., (2007). '¿Más y mejor ayuda?: la Declaración de París y las tendencias en la cooperación al desarrollo', in Mesa, M (Coord.), Guerra y conflictos en el siglo XXI: Tendencias globales. Anuario 2007-2008 del Centro de Educación e Investigación para la Paz (CEIPAZ), Madrid, CEIPAZ, p. 98-99.

[18]| OECD (2008). Monitoring Survey 2008 on the Paris Declaration. More effective aid for 2010.

[19]| Véase www.cso-efectiveness.org

In contrast to what happened in Paris, in Accra the decentralised governments took part with an official participation. As a result of this participation of the local governments in the process, United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG)[20] became a permanent member of the OECD-DAC Working Party on Development Aid Assistance. This is a fact of enormous significance since it represents a path of incorporation of the local perspective and the voice of the local governments in the building of the aid effectiveness agenda, especially with a view to the 4th High-Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness, which will take place in the year 2011.

To a large extent as a result of the incorporation of new actors, the AAA entails a significant change of course with respect to the Paris Declaration since, at least in the discursive sphere, it highlights the recognition of the local and non-governmental actors as important agents in the development processes.

In short, the AAA seeks to broaden the high restricted focus of the Paris Declaration and to incorporate the local governments and civil society into the dialogue on development policies and the performance of aid policies. In this respect, it states that "Developing country governments will work more closely with parliaments and local authorities in preparing, implementing and monitoring national development policies and plans". With respect to donors, the AAA adds that they will "support efforts to increase the capacity of all development actors –parliaments, central and local governments, CSOs, research institutes, media and the private sector– to take an active role in dialogue on development policy and on the role of aid in contributing to countries' development objectives"[21].

This change in focus points to an opening in the conception of the ownership principle from a limited and State-centric vision towards a principle of democratic and local ownership in which the importance of local actors and civil society in development processes is recognised.

The opening of the AAA with respect to the Declaration not only translates into a greater recognition of actors, but also brings about an increase in the focus on introducing such aspects as gender equality, the defence of human rights, and disability as development factors which, together with environmental sustainability (already present in the Paris Declaration), entail an opening towards a more integral conception of the alignment principle.

In summary, the advances incorporated into the AAA are significant and endow the Paris Agenda with a more comprehensive, integral, plural and, consequently, democratic character. These advances, however, do not entail a modification of the goals and indicators set out in the Paris Declaration, inasmuch as the AAA does not introduce new commitments. For this reason, the protagonism of the new actors and the opening of the focus run the risk of being reduced to a linguistic emphasis subject to an exercise of voluntarism of the donors.

In any case, regardless of the participation of the decentralised governments in the process and regardless of the outcomes of the process, the Paris Agenda is an initiative of great value for the aid effectiveness agenda. This is so because it may represent a turning point in the reduction of the asymmetries in the aid system since it constitutes an attempt to reduce the instrumentalisation of the aid policies and, what is perhaps its most important contribution, since

it has generated a far-ranging exercise of reflection on the effectiveness of development aid and policies, affecting all the actors who intervene on the global scene regardless of their participation in the building of the Paris Agenda.

3. The Paris Agenda from the local perspective

As has been pointed out, the decentralised and non-State actors have not been taken into account sufficiently in the formation of the development agenda and in the shaping of the new aid architecture. This aspect not only detracts from the legitimacy of this design, inasmuch as it does not include the voice of the local authorities and of civil society, but also limits the effectiveness of the design by eschewing key actors in the promotion of development, actors whose value appears to be beginning to be reappraised from the AAA.

Nevertheless, the fact that the decentralised actors have been excluded from the formation of this development agenda and, specifically, from the Paris Declaration, should not be interpreted as entailing a lesser responsibility for the fulfilment of the principles which are established in it. In other words, it is one thing that the process by which the Paris Agenda has been generated may be questionable, and quite another thing that the guidelines derived from the Agenda should lack validity.

Consequently, although it is an inescapable goal of the decentralised actors to work for a greater recognition in future events – translated into a voice and participation in the decision-making process–, their contribution to the promotion of development involves an increase in the effectiveness of their aid, a goal which is addressed by the principles of

the Paris Agenda. For all these reasons, the decentralised actors, as part of the international system of cooperation, should not stand apart from the guidelines of the agenda of effectiveness and quality of aid, but rather they should take them up and incorporate them into the deployment of their policies of development cooperation. As explained above, the principles established in the Paris Declaration are addressed to ownership, alignment, harmonisation, managing for results and mutual accountability. The way in which the Paris Agenda affects the decentralised actors will be analysed below.

3.1. From ownership to democratic ownership: the role of the local governments

According to the principle of ownership established in the Paris Declaration, in order to increase the effectiveness of their aid the donors should foster the leadership of the partner countries. In this way it is sought to assure that the partner countries will be the ones that exercise the authority on their development policies and strategies, by defining their priorities and taking the responsibility for their own development processes. Despite this, however, from its establishment the principle of ownership suffered from a marked State-centric character inasmuch as it leaves out the decentralised actors and civil society by putting the emphasis on the central governments.

Nevertheless, it is impossible to conceive a true ownership of the aid policies by the partner countries without including the decentralised and non-State actors of the South in this process. The basing of the principle of ownership on a cooperation scheme exclusively involving the central governments of the North and the South makes it impossible to grasp the complexity that all development processes en-

[20]| *The UCLG is a world organisation created in 2004 by cities and local governments for the purpose of providing a voice and representation to the local governments before the international community and to favour the cooperation between these governments. At present, the UCLG is formed by over 1,000 cities and has members in 127 countries.*

[21]| *Accra Agenda for Action (2008), Point 13.*

tail since the multi-level logics which may affect it are ignored and part of the actors in a task which should be shared by all are excluded.

Consequently, from this standpoint a transition is required from the concept of ownership to that of democratic ownership, which will not only affect the need for leadership on the part of the partner countries but also conceive the partner countries in a broader and more heterogeneous way that is not reduced to their central governments and that makes room for the role corresponding to the decentralised actors and to civil society. It is within this nexus leading from ownership to democratic ownership that a substantial part of the potentialities and capacities held by decentralised cooperation come to make sense. These potentialities and capacities are discussed below.

In the first place, the selfsame nature of the decentralised actors gives them a significant role to play in contributing to the fulfilment of the ownership established in the Paris Agenda. Accordingly, the participation of the local authorities not only contributes to the democratisation – and therefore to the real ownership – of the aid policies, but also, because of their greater nearness to the citizens, it may strengthen the active involvement of civil society and its incorporation into the decision-making processes. These are aspects which unquestionably have a direct effect on ownership.

In the second place, certain characteristic features of decentralised cooperation may also contribute to the fulfilment of the principle of aid ownership. On the one hand, by articulating it between two decentralised governments, it may give rise to more horizontal schemes and reduce the verticality that has traditionally characterised the cooperation between the central governments of the

North and the South. In this way, the greater horizontality which, a priori, may be attributed to decentralised cooperation vis-à-vis State cooperation strengthens the democratic ownership of aid to the extent that it allows the decentralised governments of the South to exercise authority on their development processes, feeling themselves to be their protagonists. It may also be pointed out that the establishment of more horizontal relations between the donor and the partner country is precisely one of the pillars on which the Paris Declaration rests and for this reason democratic ownership may be strengthened through decentralised cooperation. Moreover, since it has a positive effect on the leadership of the partner countries, the structure of decentralised cooperation contributes to the suitable identification of the needs of these countries and sets the priorities established by them in the foreground, which also leads to the democratic ownership of the aid deployed by the donors.

Thirdly, as well as by its nature and structure, decentralised cooperation may contribute to the fulfilment of the Paris Agenda (and in this case to that of the ownership principle) by the fields of work in which it has the greatest potentialities. The decentralised actors can also contribute added value to the aid system in several spheres of work, three of which will be highlighted here[22].

The first sphere is that of the institutional strengthening of the local governments, to which decentralised cooperation may contribute through technical cooperation, the exchange of accumulated experiences and the transmission of the knowledge acquired in matters relating to local governance. In this respect, going beyond the scope of this article, mention should be made of the potentialities which South-South decentralised cooperation also presents in this respect by

opening the possibility of sharing experiences between governments with common structural problems and challenges, and by generating "double-dividend" activities which stimulate the technical capacities of both the donor and the recipient[23]. In any case, through the institutional strengthening of the local governments, decentralised cooperation may work in favour of the establishment of more solid and efficient institutions in the local governments of the South and thereby improve their capacities to prepare their own development policies and strategies, something which contributes to the ownership of aid while allowing, as will be seen further on, the alignment of the donors with such policies and strategies.

A second sphere of work in which decentralised cooperation may also contribute a clear added value to the fulfilment of the ownership principle is the one relating to the support of the decentralisation processes activated in the partner countries. These processes, as has been previously pointed out, may be a key piece in the suitable management of policies connected with equity, cohesion or the provision of basic social services (granting them, moreover, a fundamental role in the achievement of the MDGs), which allows a better approach to the needs of the citizens of the South and, therefore, a greater ownership of the implemented aid.

Closely related to this and for reasons mentioned with respect to the nature of decentralised actors, the third sphere of work in which decentralised cooperation offers a

considerable comparative advantage is in the strengthening of the associative fabric of the South, by promoting the incorporation of civil society into the development processes and by watching out for its active involvement and participation in those processes[24].

In summary, all this highlights the role that the decentralised actors can play in the application of the ownership principle established in the Paris Declaration, especially if, as has been maintained here, the aim is to revise this principle in terms of democratic and local ownership. Now, together with the potentialities which decentralised cooperation possesses in relation to the aid effectiveness agenda, there are important challenges which the decentralised actors should face in the articulation of their development cooperation policies.

The decentralised actors should confront a first challenge, of clearly political character, which consists of achieving the real and effective participation of the local authorities and of civil society in the development agendas which are established within the context of the international system of cooperation. Without the achievement of this goal, the international system of aid will see a reduction in the possibilities of suitably identifying the local needs and of empowering citizens and making them feel that they are participants. Indeed, this will also cause a vertical cooperation scheme to be reproduced in opposition to the greater horizontality that the Paris Declaration claims to pursue, all of which

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[22]| *The spheres of work which are pointed out here do not by any means form the full set of areas to which decentralised cooperation addresses its attention. For a broader view of this matter and of the modalities through which decentralised cooperation unfolds, see Malé, J.P., (2007). 'General overview of current practices and tendencies in public decentralised co-operation', in EU-LA DC 2007 Yearbook, European Union-Latin America Decentralised Cooperation Observatory, Barcelona, p. 20-39.*

[23]| *Alonso, J.A., (Dir.), (2007). Cooperación con Países de Renta Media, Editorial Complutense – ICEI, Madrid, p.139.*

[24]| *Hernández, C. and Illán, C., (2006). 'Decentralised cooperation and institutional strengthening of local governments in the North and in the South', in EU-LA DC 2006 Yearbook, European Union-Latin America Decentralised Cooperation Observatory, Barcelona, p. 165*

would be to the detriment of aid ownership.

The second challenge faced by decentralised cooperation in relation to the ownership principle involves the modalities through which this cooperation is channelled. It should be pointed out in this respect that the decentralised actors have been providing a large part of their aid through D-NGOs[25]. On many occasions this has led to the establishment of financing schemes based on D-NGO project competitions, which have resulted in an excessively dispersed aid characterised by a large fragmentation and scattering among numerous interventions within an excessively confined time frame and financial framework. This circumstance entails two risks with respect to aid ownership.

On the one hand, despite the fact that its starting logic is to foster the participation of civil society, the excessive dispersion of aid may generate an undesired effect. Although this highly fragmented scheme simplifies access to financing for numerous D-NGOs of the North, it may hinder democratic ownership on the part of the civil society of the South since, considering that dispersed interventions of such scant duration and amounts are involved, the articulation of the broad complex participation processes required by democratic ownership is impeded.

On the other hand, running across this financing scheme is the so called aid chain[26], which is based on a vertical logic that extends from the highest link –the financer in the North– to the last link –the recipient population in the South–, after first passing downwards through the D-NGOs of the North and the South. The result of a chain of this type is that, along its path, the owner-ship of aid may become diluted since the D-NGOs of the North, aware of the priorities of the financing agent, may orient their actions with a view more to the financer's priorities than to the partner countries' needs, with the consequent production of an undesirable distortion.

In this respect, it is necessary to consolidate the direct cooperation of the decentralised actors as the mechanism through which this cooperation's comparative advantages can best be channelled in connection with aid ownership, such as support of local governance, the design of policies and the exercise of leadership. This circumstance should not lead to a neglect of the role which should be played by the D-NGOs and civil society in the implementation of this aid and in the design of policies, however, considering their capacity of contributing to the strengthening of the associative fabric of the countries of the South.

Lastly, as was previously maintained, the nature and structure of decentralised cooperation lend it larger doses of horizontality and, consequently, of aid ownership. Nevertheless, it should be pointed out that not all cooperation between decentralised actors, by the mere fact of its character as such, is automatically horizontal and symmetrical. Rather, it is a good idea to put in place the appropriate mechanisms and patterns of action so that these potentialities will be implemented[27]. A third challenge emerges in this way for decentralised cooperation, with a view to avoiding the risk of creating an excessively dulcified vision of itself, which may lead to the reproduction of the vertical and asymmetrical conducts which have often characterised State cooperation.

25| *By way of example, it may be pointed out that the decentralised actors of Spain, one of the countries where decentralised cooperation is of the greatest significance, channelled 72% of their ODA through D-NGOs in 2007.*

3.2. Policy alignment: backing the local governments

Together with the leadership which the partner countries should take up as protagonists of their development processes, the Paris Agenda identifies alignment as another of the principles which should guide the development policies. This alignment entails the need for the donors to base their support on the national procedures, institutions and strategies with which the partner countries endow themselves.

Decentralised cooperation possesses several potentialities which may be used to face this challenge and to contribute to its fulfilment and practical translation into aid policies.

In the first place, an indispensable requisite for the donors to be able to align themselves with the development strategies of the partner countries is, precisely, for these countries to possess sufficient capacities to be able to undertake the preparation of such strategies. Within this sphere, decentralised cooperation can play a significant role through its contribution to the strengthening of the local institutions of the South. The cooperation relations established between decentralised actors, which are directed on many occasions towards the improvement of local governance and the support of decentralisation processes, may endow the local authorities of the South with greater technical and institutional capacities to undertake the task of preparing their own development policies and strategies.

In the second place, decentralised cooperation not only stimulates the capacity of the local governments of the South to prepare their development strategies, but can also help to assure that these strategies unfold through a participative process that involves the civil society of the partner country. In a certain sense, it is not only a question of promoting the alignment of the donors with the partner countries but also, in close harmony with the previously mentioned democratic ownership, of assuring that the development strategies of the partner countries are, in turn, aligned with the needs and priorities of their citizens.

Thirdly, the establishment of strong ties which characterise a large part of the cooperation relations between the decentralised actors of the North and the South is also a factor to be considered with respect to the contribution of decentralised cooperation to the fulfilment of the alignment principle. The establishment of these solid ties, which may give rise to working relations which are more sustained in time, allows the maintenance of the long-term support and accompaniment which local development processes require. In short, by following this approach, the decentralised actors can back more responsibly, effectively and strategically the development policies undertaken by the partner countries.

Lastly, one of the goals of the alignment principle derived from the Paris Agenda is to avoid the creation of parallel management structures that disappear, once the donor's intervention has concluded, without having strengthened the capacities of the partner country. In this respect, to the extent that the decentralised cooperation (as has been seen, through the transmission of its acquired experiences and knowledge) is addressed to the

26| *An in-depth analysis of the aid chain may be seen in Martínez, I., (2007), La cooperación no gubernamental española en Perú, Complutensian Institute of International Studies (ICEI), Madrid, p. 15-49.*

27| *Martínez, I. and Sanahuja, J.A. Declaración de París: retos y perspectivas para los actores de la cooperación descentralizada en España. Carolina Foundation, Madrid. In press.*

strengthening of the local institutions, it will reduce the risks associated with the generation of such parallel structures at the same time as it will contribute to the strengthening of the partner countries' public systems of management.

In any case, all these potentialities possessed by the Paris Agenda for the local actors are constrained by the previously mentioned State-centric bias which characterises this agenda. The neglect of the local and the total emphasis placed on the national institutions and strategies distances the agenda from the aid effectiveness of a broader, more democratic and inclusive approach, which would make it a more effective instrument and one more in keeping with the challenges which are posed.

Together with this, it corresponds to the decentralised actors, in their contribution to the alignment principle, to incorporate into their praxis the new instruments associated with the aid quality agenda. The recourse to instruments such as budgetary support, sectoral approaches or pluri-annual frameworks of financing, not only promotes the alignment with the priorities set by the partner countries, but also obviates undesired effects in connection with a lack of coordination, a lack of predictability or an increase in management costs, which limit the aggregate impact of interventions.

Moreover, alignment with the partner countries should mean eschewing the possibility of channelling the donor's own interests through its development policies, and undertaking of a dilution of these policies' visibility for the sake of effectiveness. A true alignment, as has been pointed out, requires that the donors' aid policies should be placed at the disposal of the priorities established by the partner country and that other agendas should be left aside, a requisite that is not always fulfilled. In this respect, decentralised cooperation and

the actors who take part in it should undertake a commitment to the articulation of aid policies devoid of pretensions other than the promotion of the partner countries' development.

3.3. The harmonisation of decentralised cooperation

The Paris Declaration affirms the need for donors to deploy their aid policies in a more harmonised and transparent way, in quest of a greater collective effectiveness, which gives rise to the principle of harmonisation. Nevertheless, the suitable implementation of this principle affects very diverse dimensions of the cooperation policies. In any case, decentralised cooperation should heed the recommendations derived from the Paris Agenda in order to contribute to the implementation of more coordinated aid policies which are characterised, among other features, by the complementarity and simplification of the administrative procedures.

To this end, on analysing the harmonisation principle, it is essential, in the first place, to attend to the coordination with which the donors operate. In this respect, the emergence of decentralised cooperation has entailed the proliferation of a greater number of actors in the aid system and the demand for a greater exercise of coordination in a highly dispersed and fragmented system. Consequently, it is necessary for the decentralised actors to make an effort of coordination in at least two directions.

On the one hand, the decentralised actors should seek to coordinate themselves with other actors when undertaking the planning of their development policies. This applies not only to the coordination with other decentralised actors but also to the coordination with their respective central governments. However, the suitability of coordinating the development policies of the decentralised actors with those of their respective central governments should not be interpreted as a submission of the decentralised

actors to their central governments. In order for there to be a suitable coordination between the two levels, there should not only exist a willingness on the part of the decentralised actors but likewise the central government should show itself to be willing to incorporate their vision into the preparation of its planning documents and to respect their levels of autonomy. Moreover, the improvement of the levels of coordination requires the relinquishment of more instrumental conceptions of aid which have traditionally hindered such coordination[28].

On the other hand, the decentralised actors should improve their coordination systems in the operative sphere. In this respect, the promotion of joint initiatives with other decentralised actors with which ideas and spheres of work may be shared is of notable interest in improving coordination in the field. To this end, however, it is essential to have suitable mechanisms of information and communication between the various actors which will allow such operative coordination to be fostered.

In the second place, it should be kept in mind that coordination helps to increase the rationality of the system and the aggregate effectiveness of aid, but it does so in the most decisive way if it is carried out on the basis of the comparative advantages that have been previous identified. In this respect, the principle of the harmonisation of aid makes a call to the donors to seek complementarity by means of an appropriate division of labour among each other.

For the reasons that have been mentioned, the decentralised governments of the donor countries have unquestionably a specific value to offer and they have important comparative advantages that allow them to contribute to the recommended division of labour among

donors and to play a significant role in the harmonisation of the aid policies. Spheres such as local governance, decentralisation processes or the strengthening of civil society fall within this logic, which would allow the decentralised actors to seek a certain specialisation for the sake of the complementarity and effectiveness of the system.

In order to delimit the role which the decentralised actors may play in this division of labour among donors, and without obviating the complexity of such a task, decentralised cooperation should work in two directions. The first direction is that of identifying the comparative advantages possessed by the various decentralised actors, of becoming aware of their strengths and weaknesses, and of systematising their information in a good-practices bank. The second direction, on the basis of such information, would be to plan their cooperation policies in a more coordinated way, which would allow the greatest yield to be obtained from the various comparative advantages which are identified, in order to take advantage of the synergies and complementarities which may be based on them.

In short, in view of all that has been stated here and despite the State-centric focus with which the Paris Agenda was formed, the decentralised actors have a fundamental role to play in the achievement of the goals which are set by the agenda. In this respect, the decentralised and non-State actors do not only constitute a key piece for the transit from the ownership to the democratic ownership of the development policies, but they also have a clear added value to contribute to the international system of cooperation and to an agenda of aid effectiveness which, without their participation, may find itself seriously limited.

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[28]| *Martínez, I. and Sanahuja, J.A. Declaración de París: retos y perspectivas para los actores de la cooperación descentralizada en España. Carolina Foundation, Madrid. In press.*

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Analysis of local decentralised co-operation

The search for synergy. The role of national local government associations in municipal international policy: trends in Europe and the description of a case

Peter Knip *

Keywords

*local government associations |
municipal international cooperation |
association capacity building |
aid effectiveness |
 decentralisation |
municipal international policies |*

Observing the growing involvement of their membership in international affairs, many national associations of municipalities, as well as their international associations, have developed policies and services to support the members with their international efforts in the past years. However, it is observed that municipal international policy and cooperation is not yet a key task for most national associations of municipalities. Nevertheless their international role in development assistance and city-to-city cooperation is growing. Despite the great variety of specific international approaches by local government associations, it is argued that national associations of local governments can and should play a crucial role in the emerging aid-effectiveness agenda and the worldwide decentralisation efforts. National local government associations are well-positioned, to develop and guide a nation wide approach on municipal international cooperation if they have the political will and if they succeed to create synergy between the city-to-city cooperation from different countries and the development programmes of the national government and international donors. Also in development cooperation a multi-level governance approach is needed if we want to improve the functioning of the public sector.

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1. Presentation

It is no news at all to state that in most countries local governments are increasingly involved in international cooperation and develop their own international policy. Taking into account that thousands and thousands of local governments are active in the international arena, it is not a surprise that the motives, the objectives, the ambitions, the models, the instruments, the capacity, the finances, the activities of this involvement differ enormously. Observing this growing involvement of their membership in international affairs, many national associations of municipalities, as well as their international associations, have developed policies and services to support the members with their international orientation and efforts in the past years. Sometimes such policies and services were developed on the strong request for strategic and technical support by a group of local governments amongst their membership and sometimes this was developed on the initiative of the association itself.

In this article I will focus on this role of national local government associations in the emerging field of municipal international policy. The first section will deal with a few aspects of the history of the involvement of local government associations which are still relevant if one tries to understand the position and the potential of local government associations in this international work. In the second section of this article a description of the state of affairs of the work of local government associations in the area of municipal international policy will be given. Attention is given to the different roles, the different services and the volume of the work of local government as-

sociations in this field. In the third section the importance of the role of local government associations in the international orientation of municipalities in general and in development cooperation in particular will be assessed. Special attention will be given to the international cooperation between national associations in order to develop their capacities and become stronger players on behalf of their membership in the processes of decentralisation. Finally in a last section challenges for the further development of the role of national local government associations in municipal international policies will be discussed.

I would like to underline that I am not a scientist or a researcher. I am a practitioner. Since the beginning of 1989 I work in the Association of Netherlands Municipalities (VNG) to develop its role in this area of municipal international policy. This article is based on my experiences and observations as employee of VNG and later on as director of VNG International, the International Cooperation Agency of the VNG. Unmistakably this leads to a practical and a Western European bias. The situation in Latin America remains underexposed in this article: there is work for a practitioner from Latin America. Having said this, I will nevertheless refer to relevant literature where available and to a recent small research project I did together with Renske Steenbergen, staff member of UCLG. By writing down my experiences with the growth of VNG's services for its members in the field of international policies, I hope to give information and insights that will turn out to be useful resource material for further research. And more research is very important, because I do believe that municipal international policies and cooperation, and the role of local government associations in this field will only get further recognition

and will only advance in quality if it gets growing and sufficient attention from the academic world.

The careful reader has observed that I use the term 'municipal international policy' instead of 'decentralised cooperation'. This is not only caused by my Nordic background where the term 'municipal international cooperation' or 'city-to-city cooperation' (c2c) is more common than 'decentralised cooperation'. No, it is more related to two observations which make the term 'decentralised cooperation' too limited to describe the international work of national associations of municipalities. And also slightly ambiguous.

First of all, 'municipal international policy' refers to the overall orientation of local governments on their position in the world, including image or identity branding; international economic cooperation and competition; following and implementing international policy agendas; collecting and sharing relevant international know how and best practice through twinning, networks or others forms of contact; adoption of sustainable purchase and banking policies; development aid and cooperation; peace and human rights promotion as well as local awareness raising activities. 'Decentralised cooperation' like 'municipal international cooperation' refers more to one of the -and let me be clear: one of the most important- instruments of municipal international policies: cooperation with other local governments in the world in order to achieve specific goals. Whereas 'municipal international cooperation' is used for all cooperation activities of local governments, 'decentralised cooperation' seems to be used more specifically to refer to the role of local governments in development cooperation. The European Commission (COM 2008) uses decentralised cooperation "to

describe the publicly and privately funded aid provided by and through local authorities, networks and other local actors". Having said that it should be mentioned that several authors in recent articles use the term decentralised cooperation to describe the transformation of the traditional focus on aid projects between twinned local governments into "an instrument for mutual 'empowerment' which takes decentralisation and local autonomy as universal principles" (Gareché 2008). And Bossuyt defines modern decentralised cooperation as cooperation between sub-national levels of government in which the need to construct more egalitarian, long-term partnerships is emphasized with a view to tackling common agendas through structured, reciprocal exchanges (Bossuyt 2008). However, even with this broader and interesting definition decentralised cooperation remains just one of the instruments of municipal international policy. Municipal international policy goes beyond the field of decentralized cooperation and reflects the ambition of local government to be a reliable partner in the new international political space composed of multiple actors and to "occupy a strategic position at a time when they are being recognised by international organizations and by the European Union, as major actors on the international scene" (IDHIL 2008).

Secondly, the term 'decentralised cooperation' might suggest that the international cooperation between local governments is a decentralised task from central government to local government. And that is -unfortunately- still very far from reality in most countries. International cooperation between local governments originates from their authority to deal with their own household. International cooperation has been identified by many local governments as a necessary instrument to enhance the

quality of life in their communities. Or as an instrument with which they can contribute to international solidarity on behalf of their citizens. Increasingly local governments showed that they can contribute to local development elsewhere through their specific approaches and position. Increasingly local governments succeeded to get recognition for their work and convinced central governments and international donor agencies to co-finance such activities. However in many countries, probably to a certain extent apart from France and Spain, a well-formulated central government policy on how to work with local and regional governments to achieve international objectives does not exist. Based on such a well-considered view on the potentials of decentralised cooperation, we can imagine that central governments would decentralise certain tasks in the international arena to local and regional governments. Though we are still rather far away from this situation, this could create real partnership and a well-concerted multi level government approach in which different tiers of government would really join hands to achieve the international development goals. The -still rather minor- position of local government in the new EU Non State Actor Programme and the Communication from the Commission about local authorities as actors for development (COM 2008) are promising examples of growing recognition and partnership.

Having said all this, it is not my intention to start a long debate about terminology. On the contrary I will deal in all sections of this article especially with the role of national associations of local governments in the field of municipal international cooperation or -for those who prefer to use this terminology- decentralised international cooperation because this is on the one hand probably the most important instru-

ment for local governments to give shape to their international policies. And on the other hand, as I will argue later on, this is where national local government associations can contribute significantly to a more coordinated approach for the structured involvement of local governments in development cooperation efforts thus creating synergy between different levels of government in their efforts to promote decentralisation and to reduce poverty.

2. History of the role of national associations of municipalities

Reflections on municipal international cooperation often start with the impressive movement of municipal twinning relations or 'jumelages' in Europe after the Second World War. However, the history of municipal international orientation and cooperation is much older, but unfortunately still insufficiently described. Without doubt one of the most important milestones is the founding of the "Union Internationale des Villes" (in 1928 renamed as International Union of Local Authorities - IULA) in 1913 during a congress in Ghent which was convened at the instance of the Belgian Union of Towns. This first attempt of cities to work formally together in the international arena should be seen, as Gaspari (2002) points out, against the birth of a European international municipal movement at the beginning of the 20th century. Informal networks of European socialist councillors and well-known internationalists played a decisive role in the establishment of the International Union, which took place 6 years before the establishment of the League of Nations. More than 160 local governments, 50 specialised associations of local governments and 21 representatives of national governments participated.

Despite ambitious plans, World War I caused a 10 year interruption in the work of the International Union. The Union's secretary-general, the Belgian senator Emile Vinck, temporarily relocated to the office of the Netherlands Association of Municipalities (VNG) in neutral The Hague. After the war, the Union was refused a voice at the League of Nations. Fascist states, and others too, denied municipalities the right to participate outside national territory (Herbert, 2007). Nevertheless the organisation continued. Started as a voluntary association of individual cities, after World War I it soon became an international association of which the members were predominantly national associations of municipalities. The next international congress of the Union convened in Amsterdam in 1924 where the two main pillars of the organisation became visible: on the one hand the exchange of practical municipal expertise and information sharing about administrative systems in different countries between national associations of local governments and on the other hand the objective to contribute to peaceful international cooperation. Renamed as IULA the organisation soon expanded to the Americas and more marginally to Africa and Asia by the 1930s.

The development of IULA in the beginning of the 20th century has been a token of early awareness that national associations should play a role internationally on behalf of their membership. Although hardly documented, we know that many individual local governments in Europe warned against the rearmament after the First World War and initiated activities against the growing militarism. Many councils of local governments in Europe showed their concern about the rise to power of Hitler in Germany in 1933. A famous example is the decision by the Dutch city of Zaandam to boycott the purchase of German products. This decision was annulled by the

Dutch government because it was seen as appalling for a nation with which The Netherlands had friendly relations. Unfortunately it is not known how national associations of municipalities reacted to these actions of municipal international policy. It would certainly be an interesting field of further historic research.

After World War II, when free movement and free exchange of views were possible again, the idea of 'never again' was the core testimony. The only way forward for Europe was mutual cooperation. The well known 'jumelage' was the contribution of local governments to the reconstruction of Europe. In 1951 about 50 mayors took the initiative to create the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR), because they believed that the municipality was the best place to regain trust and understanding between the people of Europe. The Frenchman Jean Bareth, one of the founders of CEMR, defined 'jumelage' as an officially-sanctioned permanent partnership between two or more municipalities which promotes the exchange of knowledge and experience, and involves all layers of the population. The establishment of CEMR with national branches reveals the fact that many national associations of local governments didn't react very actively to the new twinning movement in Europe. Many national associations of local governments were occupied with national issues and limited there involvement to collect and publish information about the 'jumelages' and to mediate in case of requests for contact. The national branches of CEMR however started to stimulate and coordinate the 'jumelage' movement. According to Clarke (2008) we should not use the word 'movement' because it suggests more coherence than can be found in the history of town twinning; he argues that it is better to see town twinning just as a 'device for producing proximity'.

After World War II, IULA focussed in a rather neutral-political way on information exchange, representation and lobbying, membership servicing and on the promotion of decentralisation. In a reaction representatives of more leftist oriented local governments took the initiative to establish the United Towns Organisation (UTO) in Aix-les-Baines in 1957. Its objective was to promote international cooperation among cities and towns. UTO developed as a major protagonist of twinning and linking of all kinds with the aim to further the cause of human rights and permanently encouraging peace and justice.

In the sixties, fuelled by the proclamation of the Second UN Development Decade 1970-1980 in 1969, many local governments in Europe developed activities to support projects in the so-called Third World. Initially local governments focussed on awareness raising and on giving financial support to projects initiated by local citizens initiatives. Later on in the seventies and eighties many local governments developed partnerships with local governments in developing countries. Often on the request of active citizens groups many local governments embarked on more critical international policies as well. Municipalities declared themselves nuclear free, initiated activities to overcome the East-West divide, protested against the apartheid system in South Africa and showed solidarity with the people of Nicaragua. Due to the fact that just a minority of their membership developed active international policies, most national associations of municipalities took a rather detached position towards this phenomenon. The Association of Netherlands Municipalities (VNG) for instance just decided to make staff capacity available to support members with their international policy after strong appeals from groups of members in the late 1980s. How-

ever, when decisions by Dutch municipalities to give financial support to projects in developing countries were confronted with annulment by national government in the early seventies, the VNG vigorously defended the position of its members.

From the end of the eighties and beginning of the nineties onwards many national associations of local governments in Europe, as well as in other parts of the world, started to develop services to support their members in formulating and implementing municipal international policies. Often as the result of political discussions about the question whether this is really an important task for an association or not. It is illustrative to briefly describe the decision making within the VNG in the eighties and early nineties. After two congresses with a good turn out of Dutch municipalities involved in development cooperation, the VNG decided -after an offer by the National Council for Development Cooperation (financed by the Dutch government) to subsidize this- to assign one staff member to develop services in support of this type of work in 1987. In the same year more than 100 Dutch municipalities gathered to discuss their policies to promote peace, to resist nuclear weapons and to overcome the East-West divide. It lasted two years, with internal political debates, before the VNG accepted the idea to house a staff member to support this platform of 'cities active for peace' on the condition that the municipalities in favour of this would pay an annual additional fee to the VNG. In 1990 the first VNG handbook on municipal international policy is published: "A World of Municipalities. A description of international municipal activities". The handbook addressed the legal aspects of municipal international policy and cooperation, the municipal attention for jumelages and thematic knowledge networks in Europe, development cooperation, peace

and security, anti-apartheid, sustainable development and environment and finally argued for the need to develop an integrated international or global policy as municipality. In the same year the staff backed by the political board of VNG succeeded to successfully discuss central government funding for municipal cooperation with partners in developing countries with the well-known Dutch Minister for Development Cooperation, Jan Pronk. Two years later, confronted with a boom of twinning contacts with countries in Eastern Europe after the fall of the Berlin Wall and an increasing number of requests from young associations of local governments for assistance in both developing countries as well as in the young democracies in Eastern Europe, the VNG decided to make staff capacity available for this work out of its general income from membership fees.

The growth of attention for the international orientation of local governments in the different national associations caused a change in the attention of IULA as well. In 1995 IULA devoted for the first time its 32nd World Congress on municipal international cooperation. The research done by this network of national associations has been crucial and resulted in the publication "Local challenges to global change. A global perspective on municipal international cooperation" (Schep, 1995). It should be underlined that UTO as well as the network of 'Towns and Development' embarked much earlier on active support for decentralised cooperation and municipal international cooperation. From the mid-nineties onwards staff of national local government associations involved in municipal international cooperation gathered regularly within IULA in order to exchange experience and professionalize their work. From Latin America the national associations of Ecua-

dor and Colombia as well as the regional section of IULA (nowadays: FLACMA-UCLG) took part. Other active participants were the local government associations of UK, Canada, Finland, Sweden, Spain, Flanders and The Netherlands.

Nowadays attention and support for municipal international policy and decentralised cooperation are at the heart of the work of the world organisation of local governments United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG). UCLG is the result of a merger between UTO and IULA in 2004. Getting further recognition for the role of local governments in development cooperation is one of the main points of attention of UCLG. Political committees on decentralised cooperation, on the millennium development goals and on city diplomacy, the role of local governments on peace building, human rights and post-conflict reconstruction are in place. A technical working group on capacity and institutions building (CIB) of practitioners of various national associations is active to professionalize the work in the field of municipal international cooperation and has produced a paper on 'aid effectiveness and local governments' (Smith, 2008). UCLG, together with the World Bank, UN Habitat, EU, UNEP, ADB and 18 national donor countries, participates on behalf of the membership in the Cities Alliance, a global coalition of cities and their development partners committed to scaling up successful approaches to poverty reduction. The European section of UCLG, CEMR, has received subsidy from the EU -out of the new EU Non-State-Actor and Local Authorities in Development Programme- in order to create a European wide platform to coordinate and to improve the quality of the development work of the national associations of local governments. This all reflects the growing emancipation and confidence of local gov-

ernments that they are able to play a useful and necessary role on the international stage. It is time to have a closer look into the role national associations of municipalities play in the field of municipal international policy and cooperation nowadays.

3. State of affairs of the role of national associations of municipalities

The three classical roles of national local government associations and a brand new

Box 1 | CIB Working Group of UCLG

The UCLG Working Group on Capacity and Institution Building builds on a practitioners tradition within UCLG's founding organisations. The Working Group brings together professional practitioners from Local Government Associations (LGA) and individual local governments active in the field of Municipal International Cooperation (MIC) and Association Capacity Building (ACB) and local government and public sector reform programmes. The committee serves as a technical resource base for political committees of UCLG, and is linked to the Committee on Decentralised Cooperation. The CIB Working Group aims to discuss and exchange information on developments in MIC and ACB programmes, especially those focussed on development cooperation, in order to enhance the quality of this work, and to coordinate activities and programmes in order to avoid overlap and duplication of efforts. The CIB Working Group is trying to enrich discussions amongst local government practitioners involved in development cooperation and is fostering dialogue and coordination amongst members of UCLG involved in development cooperation initiatives. In order to enhance the quality of the development work and to contribute to donor coordination and aid effectives the following concrete activities are taking place:

- at least two annual meetings of the most active local government associations and cities in this field;

- active promotion of information sharing through an interactive website (www.cities-localgovenments.org/committees/CIB) and a compendium in which an overview is given about who is doing what and where;

- production of a position paper on aid effectiveness (Smith, 2008);

- support to the drafting of a UCLG charter on Decentralised Cooperation, expected to be produced in 2009;

- active programme coordination in 4 pilot counties: Mali, Ghana, Nicaragua and Burkina Faso; the local government associations

in the North together with their partner local government associations in the South coordinate the sharing of information on country strategies, sector analysis, current programming and identify opportunities for joint program planning, delivery and monitoring; each six months a programme report card is prepared and shared.

The CIB Working Group is chaired by Peter Knip, director of VNG International of the Association of Netherlands Municipalities, and co-chaired by Tim Kehoe, director of the International Centre for Municipal Development of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities. The CIB is supported by Renske Steenbergen, staff officer of UCLG who is situated in the office of UCLG in Barcelona; a staff position financed by VNG International.

emerging role apply to their functioning in the field of municipal international policy too:

3.1. Representation of the interests of the members

Although some national associations have not even approached the subject of municipal international policy or municipal international cooperation, the majority of national associations represent the interest of their members also internationally. Nearly all European and Latin American national associations are members of UCLG in order to reflect the position of the local governments in their countries. In addition to this the representative functions are exercised in organisations like FLACMA, CEMR, Congress of Local Authorities of the Council of Europe and the Committee of the Regions of the European Union. In addition to this they defend the international interest of their members vis-à-vis the central government in their own country. The lobby is focussed on defending the legal autonomy of their members also in the international work, on getting political and professional recognition for the role local governments can play in the international arena as well as on getting additional funding for local governments to run international cooperation projects. It often entails contacts with the Ministers for Foreign Affairs, European Affairs, Development Cooperation and the Interior as well as a lobby towards the Parliament and the staff of relevant line ministries. Especially in the case where the national association started to play a significant role in municipal international cooperation they have to advocate the interest of the membership also to other tiers of government, to the non governmental development organisations as well as to the business community. For example the chair of VNG, together with the chair of the board of directors of VNG and the director of VNG

International, the international cooperation agency of the Association of Netherlands Municipalities meet once every two years the Ministers for Development Cooperation and European Affairs to discuss issues of municipal international cooperation. In the past period excellent cooperation relations have been maintained with the staff of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs: a constructive dialogue takes place about issues like accountability, aid effectiveness, decentralisation, strengths and weaknesses of municipal international cooperation which also resulted in contributions of VNG International staff to policy documents of the Ministry. Furthermore VNG International organises bi-annual meetings with the spokespersons for develop cooperation in Parliament and has regular contacts with the national association of Provinces and the union of Water Boards as well as with the most important development organisations in The Netherlands.

3.2. Service provider for the member municipalities

With the growth of municipal involvement in international affairs many national associations have developed a broad range of services for the membership in this field. In order to give insight to this service it might be interesting to list 10 different services VNG International provides to the members of the VNG:

• Collective information supply: regular newsletters to mayors and their staff about relevant developments with regard to municipal international policy;

• Answering individual questions: many questions on international issues including subsidy advice and requests for mediation for international contacts or for thematic knowledge networks from municipalities are answered by VNG staff;

• Publications on relevant interna-

tional issues: every four years (following the cycle of local government elections) a survey on the state of affairs of municipal international policy and cooperation in The Netherlands is published; other very important publications are the handbook on municipal international policy and the overview of grants and subsidies for international projects which are regularly updated;

• Organise information meetings for selected groups of politicians and staff from local governments about topical issues which can be European subsidy programmes or new government policies; every four years a national congress on municipal international policy is organised;

• Offer training on subjects like project development, the logical framework and project cycle management, the intercultural dimension of international cooperation, etc;

• Presentation of the possibilities for international cooperation in council or committee meetings of the municipality;

• Tailor made advice on international policy papers, selection of international partners, and how to regenerate existing twinnings;

• Evaluation studies of existing international partnerships, the impact of international project support or the international policy of the municipality as a whole;

• Management of grant schemes financed by the Dutch government which enable Dutch municipalities to obtain co-finances for their international projects in countries in transition, countries of origin and developing countries;

• Management of websites where municipal international efforts are presented like a website with information about all city twinnings and a website with informa-

tion about the Millennium Municipality Campaign (see below) in The Netherlands.

3.3. Offering platforms to the membership for meeting, learning and networking

The platform function, bringing local governments together to exchange views and experiences and to develop joint action, is very important with regard to municipal international policy and cooperation. Several national associations have a tradition to bring all local governments with international contacts in one country together. This could apply as well to bringing the membership together on a thematic base. During such meetings experiences in the twinning relations are exchanged, ideas about the improvement of the relations are shared and problems and opportunities are discussed. As illustration it is good to refer to the fact that VNG International is running a few permanent platforms in which members with twinning relations in the same country meet regularly: a platform for cities with contacts in Morocco, Turkey, Surinam as well as in most of the Central and Eastern European countries. Apart from this there is a platform for contacts with Nicaragua as well. Within the largest grant scheme programme, LOGO South, VNG International has not only the task to assist Dutch municipalities and their partners with developing feasible projects, to monitor the implementation and to evaluate the results. VNG International has also the task to coordinate the municipal interventions in each country, to align the efforts with ongoing projects of other donors and to disseminate results together with the national association in the beneficiary country. Which means that VNG International has to cooperate closely with its members to achieve concrete results together with the partners in countries like South-Africa, Ghana, Namibia, Benin, Mali, Tanzania, Sudan, Indonesia and Surinam.

In order to develop VNG policy in the field of municipal international orientation a national advisory board of mayors and councillors of Dutch municipalities, chaired at the moment by the mayor of Groningen, have been installed which meets 4 times a year and advises VNG asked or unasked. A good example of a joint action with the membership of the VNG is the Millennium Municipality Campaign. In 2007 VNG International, after careful advice from VNGs national advisory board on municipal international cooperation, launched a campaign to stimulate Dutch local governments to become Millennium Municipality and support the UN Millennium Development Goals. Since the start of the campaign already more than 100 Dutch municipalities, often on the initiative of the council, took the decision to become Millennium Municipality and to adopt new policies in this field. Many municipalities decided to initiate new measures like fair trade purchase, actions for CO2 reduction, extra budget for development cooperation as well as to start contacts with a municipal partner in a developing country. Highly interesting is that

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Box 2 | Municipal International Cooperation: the LOGO SOUTH Programme in The Netherlands

Together with more than 50 Dutch municipalities VNG International implements the LOGO SOUTH Programme in 12 developing countries. The purpose is to strengthen not only the partner local governments in developing countries of the Dutch municipalities, but also what is called the local government sector that includes local government associations, training institutions for local government, but also national ministries for local government and trade unions for local government employees. The capacity development takes place along similar lines. Four levels are distinguished: the individual level, the institutional level, the sectoral level and the enabling environment. At the first level local government officials and politicians are addressed. The institutional level targets a local government department of a full council. The sectoral level includes all local governments, but also their associations, ministries for local government and local government training institutes. The enabling environment refers to the legislation, regulations, and economical situation in a country. In capacity development at all levels individual people are central. The challenge is to address a higher situated level through individuals, in other words institution development as the ultimate objective. In the LOGO SOUTH Programme the capacity development is addressed by introducing country programmes that form a framework for several city-to-city links that work on the same subject or policy field. This theme or policy field is defined in a participative manner by the city-to-city partnerships and includes also the national association of local government, national ministries and other relevant stakeholders. During implementations of the project activities this allows for exchanges of experiences among the involved and dissemination of results to others. Common challenges can be addressed at a national level. These challenges can vary from obstacles in the national legislation (decentralisation could be further developed) to budget constraints (decentralisation of competences was not followed by decentralisation or transfer of budgets) or lack in the capacity development of one or more of the involved (tasks at the local level or between the different tiers of government can not be fulfilled well). All these challenges become clear in a process in which several projects of city-to-city cooperation are implemented. All projects are based on proper local analysis. The local government projects have realistic purposes and aim for tangible results and sustainability. These projects are managed in a professional manner by the involved local governments in partaking countries. VNG International often in close cooperation with the national association of local governments in the beneficiary country coordinates the different activities,

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brings the different players together, offers training and advise to enhance professionalism, evaluates and approves project proposals, makes co-financing available, monitors the implementation, evaluates the project reports, addresses challenges and bottlenecks where possible and takes care together with its Southern partner to disseminate best practises. On an annual basis more than 5 million Euro is available for municipal international cooperation. More information is available on www.vng-international.nl.

Example: LOGO SOUTH Country Programme Nicaragua

Central in the Country Programme Nicaragua are strategic planning, including public housing and municipal taxes. Apart from 15 city-to-city links between The Netherlands and Nicaragua, the Asociación de Municipios con Hermanamientos entre Nicaragua y Holanda (AMHNH), INIFOM (Government institute for support to local governments), INVUR (National institute for public housing) and the Dutch Council for City Links Netherlands-Nicaragua (LBSNN) participate in the programme. In the participating municipalities in Nicaragua, the results of the strategic planning process have been included in their multi-year investment budgets and annual budgets. During the programme there is a growing correlation in the relationship between these instruments. Companies and a bank also participate. In the framework of the programme VNG International has enabled LBSNN to establish a pool of experts with Latin American and Spanish speaking Dutch experts who advise the involved municipalities in Nicaragua. Locally, there is increased cooperation and coordination of resources between municipalities, social organisations and the private sector. Managers, personnel and active volunteers of these organisations have undergone training. Processes and methods have been modernised and laid down in a 'system for municipal planning' disseminated by INIFOM. Municipal house building committees have been set up in the Nicaraguan municipalities, supported by a democratic municipal public housing policy. Public housing plans have been formulated in line with national policy and local strategic plans. Improved cooperation between the involved municipalities and the local NGOs and INVUR enables easier access to subsidy, resulting in the development of more (social) housing. The municipalities are booking an annual average increase in income of over 10% from municipal taxes and levies. Administrative information systems have been established and made operational. There is clear evidence of intensified and more horizontal cooperation and interaction between municipalities. Joint lobbies have successfully approached central government and national parliament in seeking support for several themes, including improved tax legislation.

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young councillors from different cities created a network of young councillors for the Millennium Development Goals and started with the help of VNG International to extend the network internationally as an extra local force for combating poverty.

3.4. Enforcing quality standards

In many modern democracies we observe a new emerging role of national associations of local governments in the field of enforcing quality standards. In order to support the claim of local governments and their national associations for further decentralisation and being the first government window for citizens, national associations develop in close cooperation with the membership mechanisms for quality enhancement and quality control. Instruments like benchmarking, peer-to-peer reviews, user groups and support packages to implement quality standards are increasingly used to strengthen the performance of

their membership at large. National associations of local governments in the UK and The Netherlands have recently even established new institutes like the Improvement and Development Agency for Local Government (IDeA) in the UK and the Quality Institute Dutch Municipalities (KING) in The Netherlands. As far as I know those new instruments for enforcing quality standards are not yet systematically used to improve the quality of the international policies of local governments. But without doubt it will be very important for improving the performance of local governments in the international arena to apply this new role of national associations to this field of municipal international cooperation as well.

Overlooking the state of affairs of involvement of national associations of local governments in municipal international policy in Europe and Latin America we can observe a great variety in the approaches to this field. Like was described for the VNG above, the choice for a certain approach is most of the time the result of a combination of political discussions and professional capacities. In the end the question is whether the national association has the will and aspiration to perform internationally. Generally speaking we can distinguish four main approaches:
•Approach 1: National local government associations that have a rather detached position to municipal international policy and limit themselves to a formal representation in the municipal international organisations and to providing some basic information and mediation services for their members (this is the case for many local governments associations in Latin America and in the new EU member states in Central and Eastern Europe);
•Approach 2: National local government associations that have adopted a more

or less active policy in this field and fulfil the classical roles of an association as described above also in the field of municipal international policy (this is the case in Austria, Greece, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Portugal, a few countries in Latin America as well as the United States);
•Approach 3: National local government associations with active involvement in this field which have succeeded to agree with their national government that central government funding is available to co-finance municipal international cooperation as well as association capacity building projects; some national associations limit their role in the implementation of these financial schemes to giving advise to their membership, while other associations took the responsibility to manage such funding programmes (Belgium, Finland, France, The Netherlands, Norway, Spain, Sweden, UK as well as Canada);
•Approach 4: National local governments associations which, most of the time -but not always- in combination with their active role like described under the 2nd and 3rd approach, have developed consultancy capacity to run international service contracts acquired through public tender procedures; in such assignments the international departments or international agencies of local government associations deliver professional technical assistance for local government capacity building and decentralisation programmes (Denmark, Finland, The Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, UK as well as Canada).

It is good to notice that some countries do not have one strong association, which can act on behalf of all local governments in the country. Competition between different national networks of local governments tends to make their position vis-à-vis central government weaker. Also a federal system with strong regions, like the Länder
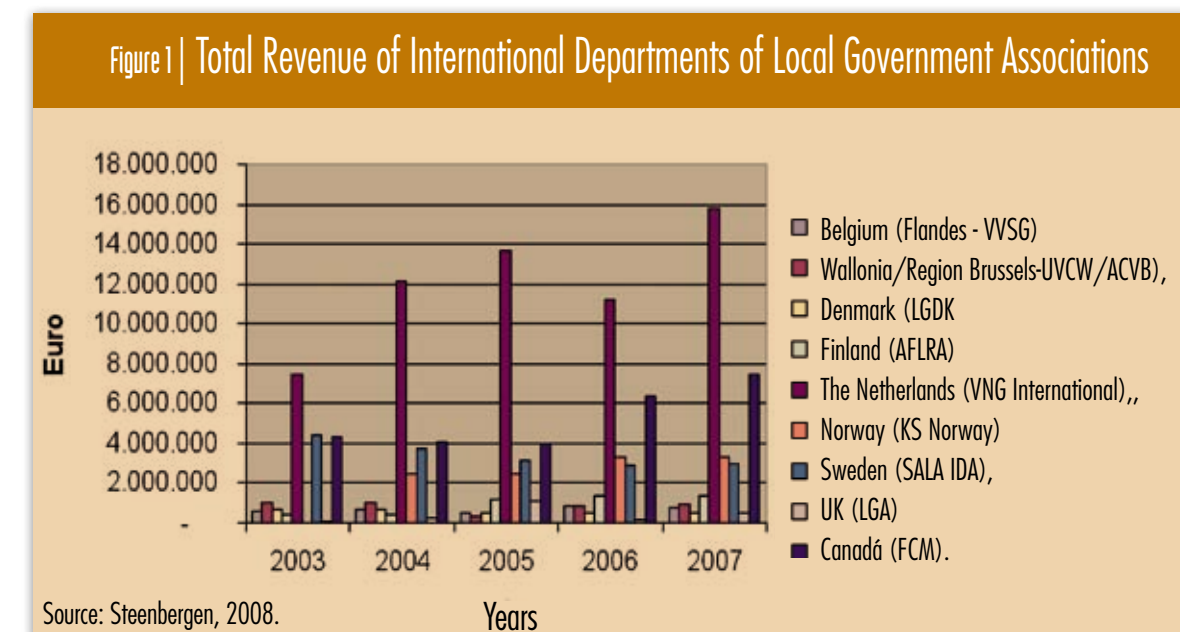
in Germany, has a significant influence on the position of national associations. In some cases the international work is done by specialised networks of local governments like in Italy where the Italian Coordination of Local Authorities for Peace and Human Rights provides services and undertakes international action on behalf of the 700 member municipalities. In a way the same applies to Cités Unies (CUF) in France too.

It is remarkable that most national associations, even the ones that adopted active international policies (above described approaches 3 and 4), haven't defined municipal international cooperation as a core task of the association. For instance the VNG has recently formulated 8 key priorities for the local government agenda and the dedication of VNG, but European and international affairs is not one of them. This reflects on the one hand that the local, regional and national orientation of local governments is still far more important than the international one and on the other hand that a lot of progress needs to be made.

How much money is available for the international work? How is the arrangement of the relationship with the Ministry of Foreign Relations? How do they organise the international work? Underneath we will answer those questions for a few of the most active national local government associations on the international scene, because it gives insight in the state of affairs and potentials of their involvement.

Below we can see in figure 1 that the total annual revenue of the most active local government associations in their international work in the period 2003 till 2007 has increased significantly with 56.4%. The national associations in The Netherlands and Canada have by far the largest international turnover, but the turnover of the national associations in Norway, Sweden and Finland is substantial too. However, the total turnover of all the most active associations together is rather modest: in 2007 they spend together an amount of 33.5 million Euro in their international work.

It is also interesting to look at the total value of the shares received from the

Figure 1 | Total Revenue of International Departments of Local Government Associations

Source: Steenbergen, 2008.

national government compared to the total sum of the total international turnover of the different local government associations (see figure 2). It is clear that the greater part of the money for the international work of local government associations comes from their national governments. However, it is important to notice that this share is decreasing. In 2003 the share from national government compared with the total sum of revenues for international work was 63.5% and this was decreased to 55% in 2007. A small part of the rest of the money for this work is financed by the local government associations themselves from the membership fees. Another part comes from other donor organisations. In case of VNG International funds are increasingly coming from the EU as well as from other agencies like USAID, UN and other bilateral donors.

The conclusion is that the number of programmes and projects and the corresponding funds for internationally active local government associations vary greatly per country. Six national associations have also an externally funded Association Capacity Building (ACB) component in their international programming. Such components are aimed at strengthening the capacities of associations of local governments in developing countries. Whereas KS Norway, FCM and VNG International implement ACB multi-annual programmes, the ACB budget of LGDK, SALA IDA and LGA (UK) is on a project basis. In other countries negotiations with the central government are ongoing to ensure the set up of ACB focussed projects and/or long-term programmes.

With regard to the programmes focussing on municipal international cooperation,

three simplified categories can be identified (Steenbergen 2008):

A) National governments that channel all funds available for international cooperation initiatives of local governments through the national local government associations (i.e. Finland, the Netherlands, Wallonia and with a different logic in Canada too). In other words, in principle there are no other financial means available for municipal international cooperation from national government. (See figure N° 3)

It should be noted that the programmes do not cover all the costs and that local governments need to co-finance the projects. In case of The Netherlands this is even obligatory.
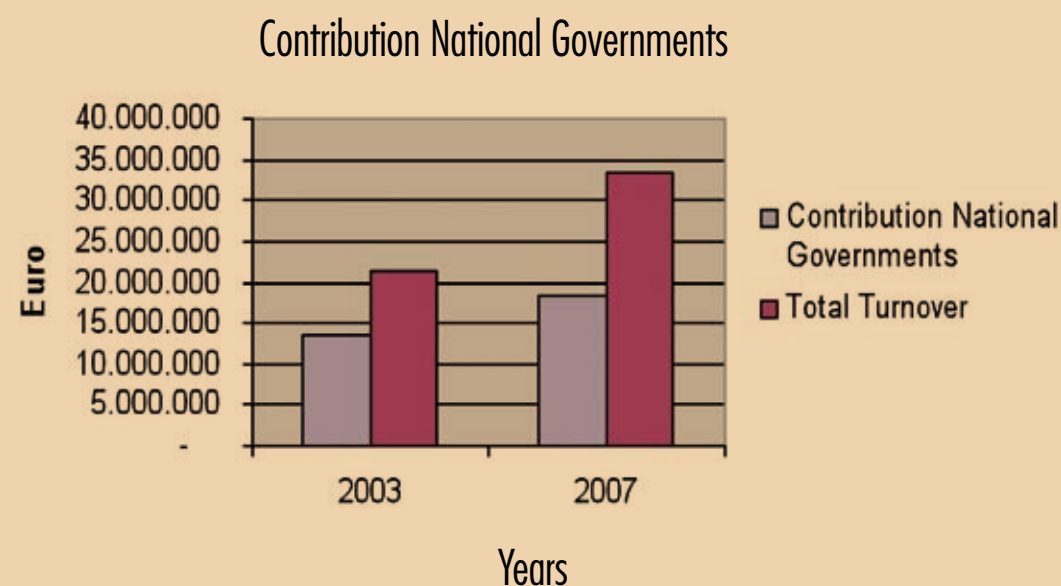
B) Part of the funds for municipal international cooperation is channelled through the associations, whereas another part is allocated to the municipalities directly. This is the case for Sweden and Norway. The case of Flanders is in-between the first and the second scheme, as the federal pro-

gramme channels the money via the LGA to the local governments, whereas the Flemish programme channels money directly to local governments and only asks for support of the VVSG. (See figure N° 4)

C) A limited role for local government associations, often due to a lack of resources for municipal international cooperation from the national government. Available funds for municipal international cooperation are channelled directly to the municipalities, though the amounts are relatively small compared to the funds that local governments mobilize themselves. The association does not channel funds, but mainly has an advisory role and supports and trains local government staff in the implementation of their international projects or programmes (i.e. Denmark, Germany, France, Spain and UK). (See figure N° 5)

The local government associations that adopted active international policies have organised their work through the establishment of professional international departments or

Figure 2 | . **Total share of National Government funds in the total revenue of International Departments of Local Government Associations in 2003 and 2007**

Contribution National Governments

Box 3 | **Association Capacity Building of VNG International**

With the financial support of the Association of Netherlands Municipalities and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of The Netherlands, VNG International aims to institutionally strengthen local government associations in order to improve their functioning as umbrella organisations for local government in developing countries. In other words, that these associations become better in representing the interest of the membership, better service providers to their members so that these in turn become better basic service providers to their citizens and that these associations become more capable in offering a platform to the local governments in the respective countries. The association capacity building of VNG International works primarily on a partnership basis with local government associations in four regions: West (ANCB-Benin, AMBF-Burkina Faso, NALAG-Ghana, AMM-Mali, UAEL-Senegal) and East Africa (ABELO-Burundi, ALGAK-Kenya, RALGA-Rwanda), South East Asia (NLC/S-Cambodia, ADKASI-Indonesia, MuAN-Nepal) and Central America (CO-MURES-El Salvador, ANAM-Guatemala, AMUNIC-Nicaragua). Along side the partnerships some resources are reserved

for a fund where other non-partner associations can apply for the implementation of a comparatively small institutional strengthening project for their association. Organisational assessments of the partner organisations were carried out and form the basis for the work plans as these showed the relatively weak and strong points of the involved local government associations. Attention has been given to what other aid programmes already offer to the involved associations. Fitting within their own plans -in most cases worded in multi-annual strategic plans- and focussed on 4 result areas (lobby function, service delivery, financial sustainability, better communication methods with the membership and internal administrative management capacities) targets are set and activities drafted each programme year. In a participatory manner on the basis of progress made in the past year and comparing this against up-dated objectives of these associations, the objectives and activities for the next year are formulated. The involved associations in each region are in varying stages of development and exchange of experience between them is a crucial part of the reciprocal learning process. VNG International is not only the programme coordinator but also functions as a resource. The resources it brings to the programme are two-fold: VNG itself is a local government association with nearly 100 years of experience, and the VNG has been supporting other local government associations around the world in similar ACB trajectories involving some 60 associations of local governments in the past 15 years. Part of the coordination work is decentralised to the four regions where we work with regional coordinators. Memoranda of understanding between VNG International and the partner associations are signed annually with an annual work plan as basis. For the identified expertise input that is needed terms of reference are drafted, the adequate expertise is then identified and activities undertaken. A colleague-to-colleague approach is often used. Institutional strengthening of the partner local government associations takes place by:

- Making use of resources of well-developed associations of municipalities through expert missions,
  online exchange of documents and experience, etc.;
- Making use of experience gained from other ACB activities;
- Mutual learning among associations in the same region; to enable mutual learning regional workshops
  are organised that focus on one or two well-elaborated themes;
- Facilitating activities for the benefit of the member local governments with a focus on service delivery
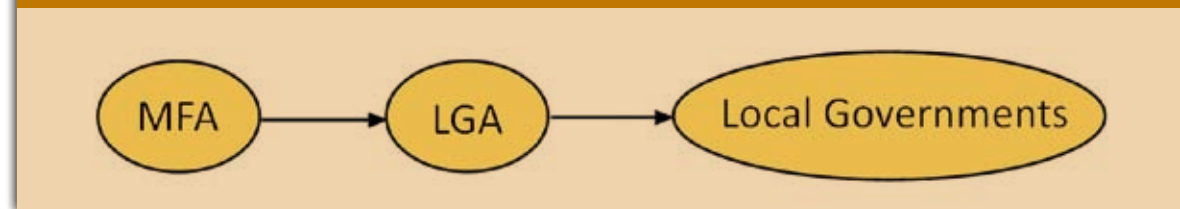 from the association to its membership.

VNG International takes a demand driven approach. This is appreciated by the partner associations, who are not always used to work that way with other implementing or donor organisations. The fact that VNG clearly focuses on the strengthening of the organisations themselves is new to some of them and has made them more conscious of what needs improvement. Other external organisations often approach them for project implementation at the local government

level of the country. At the same time the partner associations have come to appreciate the advantages of working as a group during the regional workshops and welcome the exchange of experiences within the region. One of the efforts is to organise regional workshops together with other implementing organisations like the Federation of Canadian Municipalities in order to align our work. Based on the practical experience five titles in a series of guidelines for local government associations have been published: strategic planning, communication, setting up an association, service provision and lobbying. They are available in English, Spanish and French in hard and soft copy and can be ordered via the website of VNG International: www.vng-international.nl. On an annual base more than 1 million Euro is available for the ACB activities.

Example: support to ANAM in Guatemala

ANAM is a private autonomous entity, established in 1960. All 333 municipalities of Guatemala are automatic member of ANAM. The current board of directors consists of 15 mayors and is elected for a one-year period. The last municipal elections were held in 2007. ANAM -with technical support from VNG International- lobbied to get decentralisation and municipal autonomy higher on the agenda of the political parties. In July 2008 the president of Guatemala, Mr. Alvara Colom, signed an agreement on local development and decentralisation to confirm his support to municipal development. ANAM does not have a multi-annual strategic plan. One of the key issues here is the change of the board of directors each year, which obviously diminishes its interest in longer term planning. ANAM finds itself still in a development phase and is supported by only a few international donors of which only two others than VNG International are interested in the institutional strengthening of ANAM itself (i.e. the Fundación Demuca of the Spanish and EU funded Programme Municipios Democráticos). Donor dependency is however hardly a risk for ANAM since only 7% of its income comes from international donors. They have a secured membership fee income as this is directly transferred from the national budget of ANAM. ANAM has planned to improve income coming out of self-financing events, overhead on projects and an additional national government support programme. ANAM delivers a very limited amount of services to its members (legal advice and forestall services). There are limited options to deliver more services because two central government agencies already deliver services for free. ANAM participated actively in the ACB regional workshops which gave them the opportunity to get acquainted with key issues of running a local government association and to identify their own longer term priorities. The elections of a board for one year will change after 2010 in a two-year period. For 2009 ANAM plans to establish departmental associations in order to have more participation of the membership and to better provide them with really tailor made services. VNG International with its experts and regional coordinator will support them in developing their service delivery strategy and to increase membership participation. The operational structure of ANAM will be strengthened as well. The departmental associations are going to play an important role in strengthening the municipal lobby at national level by providing the national association with input in position statements from each region in Guatemala.

Figure 3 |

even daughter companies. Local government associations with approaches 1 or 2 to their international work limit themselves often to having one or more international relation officers. One can find well-organised international departments in the national associations of Belgium, Denmark, Norway, Spain and the UK. The associations in Sweden and The Netherlands have established, in addition to their international department, special daughter companies -respectively SALA IDA and VNG International- which are completely focussed on the international work. The national associations have a 100% share in their subsidiaries. The situation in the Canadian association FCM is rather similar with their International Centre for Municipal Development which has a lot of autonomy but is still an integral part of FCM. The Finnish association is majority shareholder of the Finnish Consulting Group which is a large consultancy firm which does also decentralisation and local government capacity building projects, but consultancy work for national governments and the private sector too. The municipal international cooperation programme is not executed by this consulting firm but by the international department of the association.

Concluding, we can say that the situation in the various countries is very different and that it is somewhat difficult to make a comparison of the situation of the different local government associations. Clearly, FCM and VNG International dispose of the

most financial means, and still show a significant increase of their budgets, whereas other associations are operating on a smaller scale, sometimes limited to municipal international cooperation and sometimes offering technical assistance for association capacity building or decentralisation projects as well. A small group of advanced local government associations is starting to receive more funds, but the majority of national local government associations is still not very active in the field of municipal international policy. In Latin America structural national government funding for municipal international cooperation is as far as I can oversee not yet existing which limits the role national associations could play in coordinating and supporting the international efforts of their members. As Salomon describes, there are increasingly local governments in Latin America with a consistent and structural international programme but national associations have not yet developed capacity and policies to support this structurally (2009). Fernández, the director of the Association of Mexican Municipalities (AMMAC) said recently: "exploring the possibilities for a coherent policy in the field of decentralised cooperation in cooperation with our ministry of Foreign Affairs is still brand new for us, but an interesting opportunity" (2008). Nevertheless it is significant to observe that local government associations are receiving funds for municipal international cooperation and association capacity building and that the aspiration and political will to perform internationally is growing with
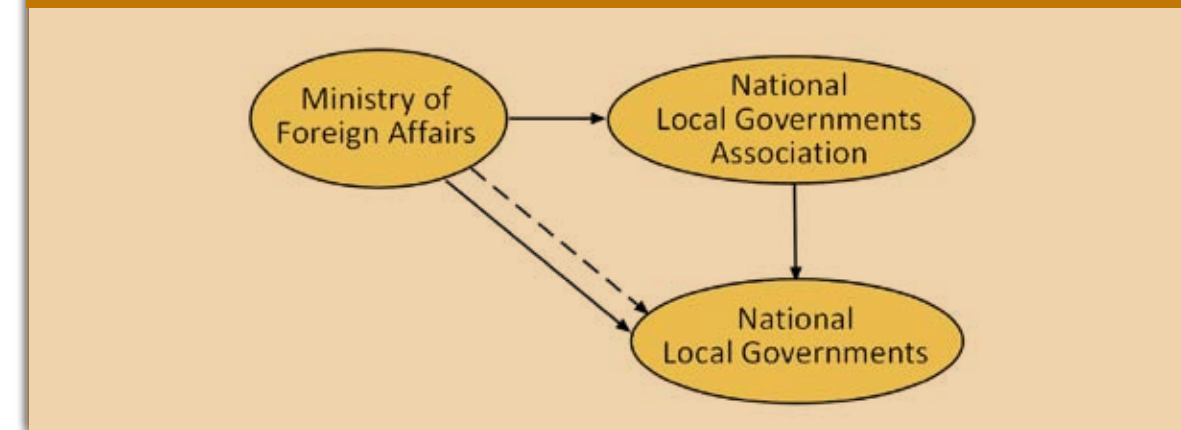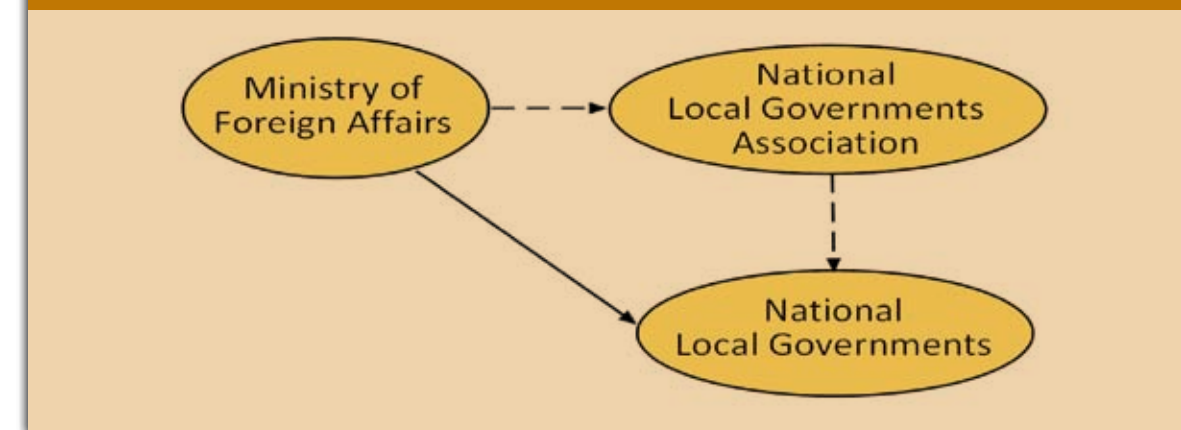

Figure 4 |

Figure 5 |

the national associations of Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, The Netherlands, Norway, Spain, Sweden, UK in the lead at the moment. .

4. Importance of the role of national associations of municipalities

Let us immediately distinguish two aspects of the importance of the role of national associations that often cause confusion. In discussions about development aid those two aspects are frequently tangled. On the one hand we have the issue of the importance of the national association of municipalities in the process of development, in decentralisation and improved service delivery. On the other hand we have the issue of the importance of the involvement of the national association in municipal international policy and cooperation in order to

make this instrument more effective and efficient. Make it fit in with the aid effectiveness agenda.

Let us start with the first aspect. My assumption is that the staff of many international donor agencies and ministries for foreign affairs involved in sector wide approaches and decentralisation programmes do not have a sufficient understanding of how influential national associations of local governments are in modern democratic countries and which instruments and arrangements are in place in those countries to safeguard a proper local government involvement in law and policy development. In order to cut a long story short. National local government associations are crucial organisations for having an effective and constructive policy dialogue between central and local government, for systematically defending the interest of local government and for practical service delivery to improve the quality of the performance of local government. In strong democratic countries with strong local self government one can observe the existence of strong national associations of local governments. The staff of such associations counts easily between 100 and 500 officers. It is of course interesting to observe that exactly those national associations developed active policies in support of municipal international policy.

The reverse side is that many national associations of local governments in developing countries are still rather weak. Their capacity is fragile and their visibility is nearly absent. They often even do not represent the local government voice and tend to follow the policies of the central government. Which is of course a serious handicap for the highly complicated process of decentralisation: the fundamental restructuring of competences between tiers of govern-

ment in order to democratise the country, to improve the service delivery, to enable economic development and to combat poverty. In this process a well-functioning national association is extremely conducive because it gives ownership and stimulates local leadership, it offers a partner to discuss the strategy with, it involves all local stakeholders, it can play a crucial role in building the capacity of the local governments and last but not least it enhances the possibilities for monitoring and evaluation. These are exactly the principles that should be in place to ensure a successful decentralisation process according to the literature (Nibbering and Swart, 2008).

All this often provokes the 'chicken and egg' discussion: involving a strong association is useful, but associations in developing countries are too weak to involve, so they are not involved which keeps them weak. Therefore it is a collective responsibility to create an enabling environment for national associations of local governments in developing countries to gain strength on behalf of their membership. Which means for the donor community that in order to harmonize decentralisation and urban sector approaches and include the local voice they have to enable and allow that the national associations of local governments in the beneficiary countries are going to play a role in policy formulation and implementation on behalf of their membership – even if they are weak for the time being. Which even means that donor agencies have to adjust their programme implementation strategies in order to enable the governments in the beneficiary countries to consult the local government sector properly. In this respect it is promising that a prominent policy maker of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs recently wrote: "Taking national processes as the point of departure

implies that there may be good reasons to slow down the pace of implementation of a sector programme, rather than speed it up because of donor spending pressure or the urge to harmonise. For instance, when sector programmes threaten progress in democratic decentralisation, or when key political or other stakeholders are not on board, or when we don't know where the money is going. Donors cannot substitute for domestic accountability systems. Nor can they take care of capacity development. The Netherlands, as a trusted 'investor' in sector development which has worked closely with partner governments, should not be afraid to demand the inclusion of, for example, local government programmes in joint sector funding arrangements, and a stronger focus on capacity development at decentralised levels." (Van Reesch 2008). Which means in my view as well: no 'Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers' and no 'National Decentralisation Strategies' anymore without sufficient consultation and participation of the national association of municipalities.

While fortunately enough donor attention for local government associations in developing countries is growing, two observations should be made (Risseeuw 2006). The donor tendency to focus on pilots mostly in service provision at the local level poses a risk. Many donors tend to use the local government association to reach the local government level without having sufficient attention for the need to strengthen the institution of the association itself. When a donor supports a local government association in order to build its capacity and to perform better on its three most important tasks, also this may bring a risk. The risk of replacement. The association of local governments for a certain length of time and for a certain amount of

money is secure, and it is no longer fully dependent on fee contributions from its members. Worse, the members themselves may interpret the arrival of the donor as a sign that fee payments are no longer necessary. In order to avoid this risk a proper association capacity building project approach should entail an incentive for the beneficiary local government association to work towards sustainability in the longer term. Also during project implementation the risk exists that the association is paying more attention to the donor agenda than to is own mission and that of its members. At the same time some realism is called for: the average national context in which these local government associations operate, the average characteristics of the member local governments with little or no real access to own revenues, make that obtaining sustainability for these organisations and at the same time performing as demanded by their members, is a long-term process. Also here radical changes do not happen over-night.

The importance of addressing the needs of mostly fragile national associations of local governments brings the relevance of association capacity building programmes executed by more advanced national associations of municipalities on the table. Increasingly it is understood that involving the weaker associations in peer-to-peer contacts, in international encounters, but also in critical cooperation processes with other associations might help to accelerate their process of gaining more strength. That is why association capacity building programmes are more and more part of municipal international cooperation programmes. For, both interventions can strengthen each other. National associations who feel ownership for support programmes for their membership can help to focus and align the assistance. They can disseminate results of municipal international cooperation to their

members as well. The other way round involving associations in such programmes will have impact on their understanding of what is going on at the local level and what kind of legal and financial constraints are hampering further development.

Then the second aspect. Are national local government associations key stakeholders for enhancing municipal international policy and strengthening municipal international cooperation? Well, as explained above, most of them are not yet. But they can certainly be like the 'avant-garde' shows. And they should be if we want to improve the quality and effectiveness of municipal international cooperation and increase the benefits of the international orientation of local governments. This is not the place to discuss once again all the strengths and weaknesses of municipal international cooperation. There is a growing recognition for the high potential of municipal international cooperation to address the development needs local governments in the world are facing (Konrad Audenauer Stiftung 2006, CEMR 2008, Clarke 2008, Commission of the European Communities 2008). However, what can national associations of municipalities do to overcome the identified weaknesses and to fulfil the mentioned strategic challenges and recommendations. As pointed out by Gareché the challenge for municipal international cooperation today is "to find a suitable level of coherence and coordination, without the need for one of these to submit itself to another and to respect individual visibility and specificities" (2008). He formulates as well 7 recommendations which I interpret freely as follows: transform the values of municipal international cooperation beyond the relief aid vision, move towards an even greater professionalism, promote more and better coordination, increase the availability of financial means, enhance the reciprocity and

ownership, adjust to the principle of multi-level governance with different types of local and regional governments involved and finally define the relationship that should exist between national governments and international organisations and the emerging role of local governments in the international arena.

National local government associations are well-positioned, if they have the political will, to work with their membership to formulate joint answers to the mentioned challenges and to follow the advices. Even stronger: they are established by the local governments to do so. Taking the lead in this process of enhancing the quality and effectiveness of municipal international cooperation and supporting the global orientation of their members is part of their 'raison d'être'. As Buis explains national local government associations are in "the ideal position to set up conditions, advices and to initiate exchange of experiences between different local governments and other tiers of governments regarding city-to-city cooperation" (2008). And he argues as well that a strong and accountable local government association can develop and guide a nation wide approach on municipal international cooperation. These are not only words. He describes the innovative model VNG International has developed for its major municipal international programme LOGO South in reaction to the evaluation of former programmes by the Policy and Operations Evaluation Department (IOB), an independent body of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs (IOB 2004). He argues that ownership by national local government associations and involved local governments is a key success factor which is unfortunately often lacking. FCMs core international programme, the Municipal Partnership Programme, has also features that answer to the formulated challenges.

Moreover, in the framework of UCLG the most active national associations of local governments are already active to further professionalize and improve the coordination of the international work. In the Working Group on Capacity and Institution Building the professional staff of active national associations and cities are meeting regularly to exchange experiences with technical assistance and project support, to renew views and visions and to make concrete mutual arrangements to coordinate the different programmes and projects, like described in box 1. In line with the Paris Agenda on Aid Effectiveness there is a sincere search for synergy. A rising awareness that spending public money on a growing number of incoherent international interventions by local governments is not a wise approach. It is seen as a shared challenge to develop a common professional identity as local governments and national associations that wish to achieve concrete results in development cooperation together and to contribute to improved accountability and thus to aid effectiveness, in order to show the world the added value municipal international cooperation. This is done in the conviction that if it is done well, it won't solve the urgent issues of poverty, conflict and violation of human rights on its own, but for sure it brings a crucial ally to the front.

5. Future challenges for the role of national association in municipal international policies

Between the lines, the careful reader has already discovered many challenges for national associations of local governments to support and guide the emerging role of local governments in the international arena. This article will finish with listing the five most important future challenges.

5.1. Increased involvement and ownership

An increasing number of national associations should embark on developing a more active policy to support their membership with their international work. As argued above national associations can, if there is the political will, guide a nation wide approach on municipal international cooperation. More active associations will create more substance. Especially in developing countries more ownership for the direction of municipal international cooperation is required. At this moment only the national associations of South Africa, Mexico, Ecuador and Colombia participate in the CIB working group of UCLG. Increased ownership can lead to more effective assistance for their membership, more finances and more visibility of their association. In the end all this should go beyond aid and assistance. It is the task of local government associations to show that they offer more than the classical develop cooperation; what they offer is a worldwide network which can draw colleagues from the South in the daily reality of local governments elsewhere. A network that enables cities in the South to cooperate with partners elsewhere in the world like many cities in the North work actively together in thematic networks to realize concrete results in their cities. A network based on peer to peer collaboration whereby cities and their associations support each other by sharing experiences and providing hands on advice. A network that facilitates cities in the South to become more attractive for talented young people to work for because it opens a window to the global world. A network which shows that international cooperation between local governments is a professional and reciprocal way of enhancing the quality of your municipal performance. This cooperation, including important South-South contacts, needs resources and attention to realize its promising potential.

5.2 Coordination is crucial but be careful

Coordination is crucial for the effectiveness of aid and assistance. Local government associations can contribute to a better coordination. However, it is extremely difficult. Local government associations suffer like other organisations from the human inclination to compete with others and plant their own flag. Frankly speaking local government associations in developing countries are often not very eager to coordinate and align activities. For, in the end it often limits their space to manoeuvre. Last but not least the bureaucratic conditions of the donors hamper sincere efforts of local government associations to align their work. Nevertheless: walk the talk. More and better coordination is a challenge that should materialize in the daily development work of local government associations. But be careful. Though coordination is crucial, the strong characteristics of municipal international cooperation, its closeness to local initiatives, should not be lost. Alignment and harmonization should not lead to one-sided top-down working relations.

5.3. Modesty

Modesty is required. The number of staff and the finances for municipal international policy and development cooperation are still very limited compared with the development industry and the national and international capacities available for foreign and development policy. The world organization of local governments, UCLG, has a staff of just over 15 people with which they have to fill in the partnership with the UN agencies. Compared with the national non governmental development organisations in The Netherlands, VNG International is with 50 staff and a turnover of 16 million Euro a very small player. As said above even the very active national associations of municipalities haven't defined municipal international policies of development cooperation as a key priority. As long as this is the case, is modesty appropriate.

5.4 Democratic legitimacy

Democratic legitimacy for municipal international policy and cooperation is crucial. Without more public support for the international role of their local representatives municipal international cooperation won't get its full strength and will the efforts of a national association of local governments in this field be in vain.

5.5. Multi-level governance approach

The call on national governments and international agencies should be done more vigorously: if there is a serious attempt on their level to develop a response strategy that will allow capitalisation and maximization of local governments as partners in development policies they should extend their cooperation with national associations of local governments. If they really succeed to align their budget and sector support amongst themselves, to involve national associations in the beneficiary countries seriously in the policy dialogue and to invite experienced national associations of local governments from the North in tailor made capacity building programmes, they introduce a multi-level governance cooperation which can lead to sufficient means and capacity for service delivery and poverty reduction at the local level. That is how national governments and international development agencies can play a decisive role in making international cooperation between local governments a powerful instrument to contribute to achieving the development goals.

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Social cohesion and reducing poverty

Introduction

As has become usual in past editions, this section also aims to highlight how decentralised cooperation can help to improve local public policies capable, due to their subject matter, of contributing favourably to strategies for improving social cohesion. Therefore, we present two articles focused on local policies of public safety and local cultural development respectively.

In the first case, an overview is provided of Latin American local policies dealing with the problems of the lack of citizen security in their territories and the potential of decentralised cooperation for helping to increase the level of security in these cities. In the present context, in which rates of violence and criminality are constantly on the rise in cities and in which the advance of organised crime has become a reality in some Latin American countries, the capacity of local-level government is the key to addressing inhabitants' needs. From this perspective, Gustavo Paulsen from the Latin American Observatory of Citizen Security and Lucía Dammert from the Latin American School of Social Sciences (FLACSO) Chile present a sample of the different local approaches that currently exist and then move on to discuss the opportunities offered by decentralised cooperation between the EU and LA for influencing the improvement of citizen security.

In the second article, entitled 'Culture, decentralised cooperation and local development', Eduard Miralles considers the phenomenon of decentralised cultural cooperation between Latin America and the European Union in the light of the new position held by culture in local development, proposing a type of decentralised cultural cooperation based on a distinction between the aims and methods of this cooperation.

After the declarations of the EU-LA summits in Guadalajara (2004) and Vienna (2006), the Heads of State and Government meeting in Lima in 2008 reaffirmed that social cohesion is a priority issue that must be tackled by the governments of both regions in order to face problems deriving from social inequality, poverty and exclusion. In this respect, social cohesion continues to be the focal point of the political relations and dialogue between the European Union and Latin America. As in previous editions, the 2008 Yearbook dedicates its second section to analysing how decentralised cooperation is an instrument that can contribute to improving and innovating local policies aimed at reducing poverty and –in a much wider way– at improving social cohesion that include society as a whole and go beyond policies directed at the most vulnerable and disadvantaged sectors. On this theme we present a first article by Marc Rímez, Executive Director of the Observatory, and Giulia Clerici, technical expert at the URB-AL III Office for Coordination and Orientation.

Social cohesion and reducing poverty

Citizen Security and Decentralised Cooperation in Latin America

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Rising insecurity is a core problem for most countries in Latin America. Local governments in particular are faced with an emerging issue that raises serious challenges for administration characterised by limited human and financial resources. In this process, decentralised international cooperation has become a key tool for progress in the exchange of experiences, initiatives and challenges. This document is intended to help in defining the current citizen security situation of the region, and the possible role of international cooperation in analysing, preventing and combating it. Special emphasis is placed on advances made and on the challenges raised by situations of insecurity for local governments and the presence of international cooperation.

Keywords

Decentralised cooperation |
Citizen security |
Local governments |
Prevention |
Resources |

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1.Introduction

The scale of the insecurity problems and the limited results of policies implemented in Latin America to deal with them are core features of a situation we experience on a daily basis. The number of lives lost because of violence and its economic cost are circumstances that are eroding the development processes of most countries in the region. Moreover, consolidation of areas of impunity in countries such as Brazil, Argentina, Peru and Mexico, which are intensely affected by organised crime, represent an obvious problem for governance and the quality of democracy.

Crime in Latin America has become more complex. The existence of regions where impunity reigns and where the State has retreated is evident in places as different as northern Mexico, central Colombia and districts of Rio de Janeiro and Tegucigalpa. The physical presence of organised crime with territorial control has thus checked governance in some nations.

Terms such as the "war on" or the "fight against" crime often prompt a "dichotomous and Manichean" (Cano 1997 and Garland 2001) perception of good guys and bad guys the sole solution to which is the neutralisation or elimination of one of them. There has thus emerged a new internal enemy, clearly identifiable by its physical and economic features, which appear in political and media rhetoric. This situation can be observed particularly in Central American countries where it is assumed that the culprits of every security problem are gang members (mainly city youth gangs), even when cases have been neither analysed nor investigated. In Brazil too, a similar stigmatisation process of the favela populations of the main city centres is evident. Regrettably, this process is not unique to these regions, but rather exists to a lesser or larger extent in every country in the region.

Another characteristic feature of the context in which public security policies in Latin America are defined is the crisis of legitimacy suffered by the Latin American legal system. The region's citizens perceive their system of justice as typically slow, corrupt and inefficient. This perception is based on the sluggishness and lack of diligence of trials and on the knowledge that people with economic resources can commit crimes yet do not subsequently receive due punishment.

Against this background, this document is intended to help in defining the current citizen security situation of the region, and the possible role of international cooperation in analysing, preventing and combating it. Special emphasis is therefore placed on advances made and the challenges raised by these situations of insecurity for local governments and the presence of international cooperation, with specific emphasis on decentralised cooperation, the need for it, and the best ways to focus it.

2. Conceptual framework

Further understanding of the phenomenon of violence and insecurity requires a multidisciplinary-based conceptual framework to identify its different facets. Given the complexity of violence and crime, they cannot be tackled with a single public policy strategy, but require a design that includes initiatives aimed at different causal

factors. Although diverse approaches may indeed stress some of these factors, a combined strategy is needed to yield tangible and sustainable impact over time. Consensus on the need for different policies has arisen after many years of disagreement over policies of greater control or repression and others that have been focused on prevention. Indeed, it was assumed politically that forces considered left-wing were against the use of the State security forces because of the systemic conditions being generated by the problems of criminality. Members of the right-wing conservative end of the political spectrum meanwhile perceived criminality as a rational choice taken by some subjects.

Control-based initiatives generally emphasise the features of the criminal justice system with which an individual who has committed a crime is detected, and the use of legal mechanisms to establish his or her criminal responsibility. The institutions responsible for control are generally the police and the judicial system. The police have the authority to use the power of the State as one of their main tools to control criminality. The judicial system, meanwhile, undertakes to establish the criminal responsibilities of those charged with a crime and to impose the respective sanctions. The penitentiary system, in turn, is intended to guarantee that punishments are implemented and that processes necessary to ensure offender rehabilitation and socialisation are established.

Such initiatives range from improvements to the police service through random patrols and faster reaction in response to calls from the public, to legislative proposals aimed at hardening penalties for offenders or at restricting the release on temporary licence of the prison population. Each is intended to reduce criminality by detecting,

dissuading and disqualifying offenders, and emphasises the State's capacity to reduce these problems.

Preventive policies are not implemented solely by the institutions of the criminal justice system. They are, rather, addressed both to identifying factors that could potentially incite individuals to use violence or commit crimes and to establishing mechanisms that reduce their intensity. In this task, these policies involve new actors and create new operating scenarios. Policies to encourage sport, to increase the educational opportunities of school-leavers, to install lighting in certain sectors, and even to design subsidised housing thus become the objectives of prevention policies. The scope of prevention policies should not entail the criminalisation of social policies, but rather focus prevention policies on the public that may be directly affected by the problems.

The rhetorical dichotomy between the two approaches has now been overcome. In practically all of the countries in the region and in the main local governments, emphasis has been placed on the complementary nature of both approaches. Crime prevention, moreover, has taken root as one of the priority tasks of public policies on citizen security. An outlook that emphasises the involvement of the public in locally implemented initiatives has also been established and accounts for a significant number of community prevention policies implemented in Latin America.

Unfortunately, interest in preventing violence and crime is currently more rhetorical than real, proof of which is evident in the priorities of public expenditure and budget debates, and the scant human resources assigned to these tasks. The Achilles' heel of community prevention is, more-

over, a tendency towards exclusion and the creation of an "other" who is threatening, labelled as dangerous, and supposedly legitimised by the community. This is a problem of practically all development initiatives in Latin America and must therefore feature in the design and implementation of community prevention policies.

From the 1990s onwards, different community crime prevention initiatives were developed in Latin America. Public actors used experiences from Europe and the United States and in defence of the citizen's role in crime prevention (and in some cases the control thereof) to design initiatives similar to those developed in other contexts.

In Latin America, however, these initiatives were typified not only by their novelty, but also by their partiality, short duration and in some cases their disappearance from the political scene without even having been completely implemented. Nonetheless, different experiences in community prevention implemented in Latin America seem to have had a significant impact on the sense of insecurity and in some cases on the perception of the police. Although the variety of initiatives performed extends across practically every country in the region and covers matters ranging from district-specific organisation of surveillance groups to social prevention initiatives, they all share in a lack of effective appraisal of their impact on crime.

3. Security in Latin America

3.1. Crime situation

Insecurity is one of the main problems faced by the region, not only because

of the number of offences committed each day, but also because of the indiscriminate use of violence used to resolve everyday conflicts of all kinds. Comparative analysis of problems of criminality is extremely complicated both because of the large range of legal definitions used to classify types of crime and the variety of questions asked in victimisation surveys. Comparison of countries is therefore generally based on the murder rate, which in Latin America amounted to 29 cases for every one hundred thousand inhabitants, according to the Pan American Health Organization, (PAHO, 1997). This rate represents the most extreme manifestation of violence and therefore does not necessarily reflect a climate of greater criminality, but rather a degree to which violence is used. Analysis of information from different countries in the region from the late 1990s reveals a situation of diversity. Hence, for example, while in countries such as Argentina and Chile rates were 4.8 and 3.0, respectively, in countries like Colombia and El Salvador there were as many as 89 and 150 murders for every one hundred thousand inhabitants (PAHO 1997).

Moreover, in some countries with low murder rates there has been a significant rise in the number of other reported offences (a growth of over 200% in Argentina in the last decade, for example). As for fear levels, insecurity cannot solely be attributed to the murder rate. The diversity of offence types used in each country, and the methods of systemising official information therefore limit the comparison of rates. There has, however, been a sustained increase in the number of offences reported in all the countries of the region. Paradoxically, diverse information can be found in sources of regional analysis, which refer to official documents. The following table

Table 1 | Murder rate 2003, different countries.		
COUNTRY	CEJA JSCA data	UNDP data
El Salvador	87,2	50,36
Colombia	102	55,8
Guatemala	31,5	35,8
Nicaragua	11,5	12,24
Paraguay	18,5	19,17
Panama	10,8	11,83
Peru	4,0	5,12
Uruguay	6,8	5,90
Venezuela	33,2	46,92

Source: the authors, with data from the UNDP (Álvarez, 2006) and the CEJA-JCSA (2006-2007 report).

Table 2 | . Offences against property, different countries		
Argentina 2005 (against property)	739.250 (rate 2.038)	UNDP data
Brazil 2003 (against assets)	857.14 (rate 484)	50,36
Chile 2005 (robberies and thefts)	316.802 (rate 1.947)	55,8
Colombia 2002 (against property)	358.230	35,8
Costa Rica 2001 (against property)	18.724 (rate 491)	12,24
Ecuador (against property)	86.747	19,17
El Salvador 2004 (associated with assets)	35.319	11,83
Nicaragua 2004 (against property)	21.332	5,12
Uruguay	6,8	5,90
Venezuela	33,2	46,92

Source: the authors, from different sources .[1]

shows the multiplicity of information and how it differs according to similar sources.

El Salvador, Colombia and Venezuela all present significant differences. In the first two cases the variations are considerable. For Colombia, in 2003, the CEJA-JSCA index shows a rate of 102, and statistics published by the National Institute of Legal Medicine of Colombia for the same year indicate 70.3, while the UNDP rate is 55.86. More significant than data differences is its size compared to the world rate of 10.8. The rates shown in table 1 are ten times higher than this average. Comparison of the murder rates in the region for 2003 also shows that Colombia, El Salvador, Guatemala, Mexico and Venezuela have the highest rates while the lowest are to be found in Chile and Peru.

Another important issue in Latin America is domestic violence which, depending on how it is defined, affects from 25% to 50% of women. Statistics of reported violence in Brazil indicate that 70% of violent acts in women's homes were committed by their partners (DAWN, 1998). Studies in different countries (including Brazil, Chile, Costa Rica and Colombia) indicate that domestic abuse rates are higher among women whose partner has been beaten in his childhood or who has witnessed violence against his mother. Information in the region is scarce. One of the few national studies made public was compiled in Mexico and shows that nearly 50% of women over 15 who live with their partner have been subject to at least one violent incident from them. These figures represent physical violence to 1.8 million women and sexual violence to 1.5 million.

As far as violence-related injuries are concerned, the scale places Chile above Costa Rica, Peru, Uruguay, Brazil, Colombia and Argentina, and clearly shows it to be the country with the greatest difference between the injury and murder rates. In Uruguay, the injury rate (316 in 2004) is equally worrying. Surprisingly, according to different sources for 2003, the rate in Colombia is between 206 and 322. The information gathered could on the whole suggest a violence-related injury "epidemic" in Latin America. The dif-

ferent rates reveal an alarming problem that requires more in-depth analysis, such as information on the proportion of serious injuries and very serious injuries in the general injury rate, in order to classify them.

The fear detected in victimisation surveys and other studies is mainly associated with public places (the street, in transport), the site of most thefts and robberies (except for burglaries). Such is the case, for example, of the city of Lima, where offences against assets are the main security problem and account for the main type of violence perceived by the citizens[2]. In Chile, "fear of crime is strongly associated with individual victimisation in the case of theft and assault, whereas

for vicarious victimisation only the burglary of a neighbour's house in the last year has a significant impact on fear of crime, albeit less so than individual victimisation" (Allende 2003). In Argentina, these studies show that in the city of Buenos Aires (CEJA-JSCA 2003) 28.4% of interviewees had been victims of offences against property and in the province, or Greater Buenos Aires area, 34% had been the victim of an offence against property of some type[3].

The most commonly committed offences in El Salvador were against assets, with a rate of 399 for every 100,000 inhabitants. In Uruguay, theft is the most commonly occurring offence, with a rate of 2,340. In

[1]| For Argentina: www.polcrim.jus.gov.ar/snic; Brazil: www.mj.gov.br/senasp/pesquisas (the figure includes kidnap and extortion and all robberies); Chile: www.seguridadpublica.gov.cl; Colombia: www.cejamericas.org/reporte (the figure is defined as "offences against property"); and El Salvador: UNDP, 2005 (the theft and robbery rate in 2004 was 399 per 100,000 inhabitants).

[2]| These offences accounted for 70% of total offences in 2004. 70% of reported offences were against property. Citizen security, Parliamentary Research Centre (2005).

[3]| In 2003, moreover, simple robbery increased by 21% on the rate for 2002, and aggravated robbery rose by 8% in the same period; although they decreased by 8% and 10% respectively on figures for 2002.

Chile, the highest rate is for robberies and thefts, with 1,974 per 100,000 inhabitants in 2005. In Colombia, offences against property accounted for 55% of the total for 2003. In Brazil in 2003 there were 856,774 robberies and 2,125,294 thefts. In Colombia, from 1990 to 2003, there occurred an average of 11,123 offences against property (Rivas), an offence for which there were 108,349 reports in 2005 in Peru (National Police of Peru 2005).

3.2. Political responses

In defining public security policies in Latin America, one item that should be stressed is the common origin of the ideas implemented. In most cases, therefore, although initiatives have been imported from countries or cities considered to be successful models, their implementation has not been duly appraised. These importing processes have even brought in "specialists" (such as the former Mayor of New York, Rudolf Giuliani, in Mexico, or former New York City Police Chief, William Bratton, in Guayaquil and Lima) to endorse the design of the initiatives. Good practices, however, are not restricted to the US or to situations outside Latin America. Recent years have indeed yielded examples of successful cases in the region, notably the experience of the city of Bogotá. (Buvinic, Morrison and Shifter 1999; De Roux 1994, and Dammert and Paulsen 2006).

The process of importing security policies is generally linked to initiatives internationally recognised as either promising or successful. Many cities and countries therefore run, for example, "community policing", "zero tolerance", "COMP-STAT", "alternative measures", or "three strikes and you're out" programmes that have been considered effective in dealing with problems of crime. Upon putting the imported initiative into practice, however, the only common ground is very often the name and the communication campaign organised around it, while the content and the implementation strategy are changed considerably. One such case is the community policing programmes introduced in the region (Frühling 2003 and Ungar 2001), which bear little similarity to their origin either in the United States (Sherman 1998) or in Europe (Crawford 1998). For example, the community policing paradigm in the countries where the concept originated seeks better and greater contact between police officers and the community as a whole. The initiative is therefore applied as a universal strategy throughout the institution. In a Latin American setting, however, community policing most commonly involves the design of specific programmes to which certain staff are assigned to improve relations with the community. The greater part of the institution meanwhile continues its practices as they were before.

Policies are therefore imported and implemented in "Latin American style" and feature no commitment to the prior profound changes that are required. The assessment objectives and designs are therefore changed and their capacity for impact is thus restricted. The effects of such redefinition may even be contrary to what is expected and turn the initiative merely into the use of the name of the experience. All the background information is therefore required to design policies that are locally feasible and based on promising ideas adapted to specific local contexts.

Another area in which this process of importing security policies is observed is in justification for investment in better technology, where the difference with North America and Europe is obvious. In the last decade, most countries in the region have invested substantially in improving the technological infrastructure of polices without any foreseeable results. Examples are the purchase of programs for georeferencing offences, and the purchase of complex programs to analyse criminal activity, which have been given priority over improvements in basic data gathering. Paradoxically, the technology can provide complex analysis of reported offences that are valueless because of shortcomings in the very processes of reporting offences.
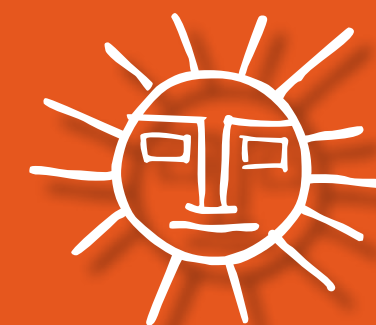
Another element common to recent public security initiatives in several countries in Latin America is the involvement of the Armed Forces in matters of the region's internal order and security. After the experiences of the 1970s and 1980s in the region, the need to keep the Armed Forces out of internal politics was patently clear, yet this idea is currently losing strength. In some countries such as Brazil, Mexico and Paraguay, the increase in the technology and firepower of organised crime has given rise to zones that are semi-free from the presence of the State. The increased power of the gangs of Central America has also entailed even greater involvement of the Armed Forces in internal security matters to support the work of the police, which has been overstepped.

A key and understudied issue is the unstable situation of the prison system. The region's prisons are subject to a crisis, which in some cases is terminal. Prison compounds designed for 600 people that are accommodating four times that number is no exaggeration and is rather more frequent than believed. The growth of the prison population has undoubtedly given rise to severe problems of habitability, particularly associated with density, or in other words overcrowding, a lack of essential services and, in some cases, even a breach of basic human rights. These situations do not prompt a process of social reintegration or rehabilitation, issues virtually forgotten, as there are very few penitentiary systems in Latin America that invest significantly in these matters. The globalisation of crime has also given rise to a diversity of nationalities in some prisons. Colombians in Ecuador's prisons or Peruvians in prison in Chile, for example, thus account for a significant percentage of prisoners, yet systems are very often unconnected and so prisoners' records remain unknown. In the process of coexistence, tight national subgroups are formed and these may prompt the outbreak of confrontations within the closed systems. In short, Latin America is in a paradoxical situation in which prisons are literally managed by the prisoners, who negotiate with the administration to attain certain benefits or to gain internal control of compounds.

There has also been a sustained increase in the private security industry, which provides a broad range of services ranging from bodyguard services and anti-kidnap insurance in some countries, to the surveillance of properties and districts. The total number of people working in private security is double or even triple the staff numbers of police institutions, which raises doubts about whether the monopoly on the use of force is really in the hands of the State.

Private security, in its different aspects, has therefore become an important economic force that involves the investment of millions of dollars in each country in the region. Unfortunately, it is estimated that a significant number of companies working in this area are unofficial, and these

companies perform over 50% of the work in some countries. Regulation of the activities in this industry is, furthermore, limited. Many countries, for example, lack specific regulations on the type and level of training security guards should receive. The same applies to licenses for carrying and supervising weapons. In most Latin American countries, private security guards have access to high-powered weapons for use in security tasks in open spaces. The presence of heavy-armed private security guards watching residences or even children's play parks in is therefore a daily sight in cities such as Tegucigalpa, Rio de Janeiro and Mexico City.

4. The role of local governments in citizen security

The role of local governments in citizen security has been growing increasingly important in Latin America, a fact that can be explained easily both by the close involvement of local authorities in the problems caused by crime and violence, and also by the successful experiences undertaken jointly by complementary actors within local governments. A notable example is the case of Diadema in Brazil, where the murder rate fell by 50% in a 4-year period on account of joint work among the local authorities, civil police, military police and grassroots community organisations.

The specific reality of each city has shown that it is the citizens themselves that know most about each town and that this public is constantly requesting local government for solutions in security matters. Local administrations have demonstrated the capacity to deal with the insecurity affecting the citizens. In a continent scourged by growing rates of crime and violence, the most significant experiences in reducing them have been run under the aus-

pices of local government or with its active participation in citizen security policies.

Latin American municipal governments have the strength and capability to articulate the public's demands directly and generate public policy geared to a successful reduction in objective local levels of insecurity and fear. This strength is clearly not applicable to all forms of crime and violence. It is, however, an extremely important factor in the design and execution of public policies associated with most of the factors that prompt the generation of insecurity and fear.

The local context can therefore be the proper place to seek new ways of exercising power, with social actors and systems able, within their own specific realities, to assimilate the logics of crime and violence in their regions. These ways of exercising power should be able to identify the factors common to the area, to practices and to typologies without either automatically repeating a greater police presence, or resorting to increased police infrastructure or facilities. The processes should rather be based on awareness of situations as they really are, and this entails the outlook and perception of all the actors who are either directly or indirectly involved as observers, victims or offenders in crime and violence.

One highly effective way of classifying crime and violence in subnational political units is the prioritisation of micro-regional initiatives, which entail a more accurate definition of the public's psychosocial tendencies. This provides an indication of collective behaviour on a smaller and therefore more manageable scale. This, together with initiatives performed with the micro-region's population in policies of education, culture, transport, health, environment, anti-poverty, gender, town planning, sports, production, social cohesion and community development, yields a conceptual and

contextual map of the situation and therefore better tools to properly design measures with a greater relevance to each particular reality.

Another item that provides for successful local experiences is the creation of multidisciplinary citizen security teams. Local security councils have therefore been formed in different Latin American cities. This new form of association has been implemented to provide a comprehensive response to the problems of citizen security and has both strengths and weaknesses. In an authoritarian culture such as Latin America's, establishing negotiation and management-capacity based models in the traditionally coercive area of security is complex. The strength of these initiatives, which have been run since the late 1990s, lies in the generation by the initiatives themselves of a cultural climate that increasingly favours public dialogue of this type.

Some of these initiatives, particularly the most successful, have yielded systems of training in security for mayors, councillors, police, health service personnel, and community actors, etc. On the basis of these training systems, citizen security priorities have been organised into three core areas:

(1) the constitutional and legal responsibilities of mayors and governors,
(2) citizen security management instruments, and
(3) civil coexistence.

As indicated in section one, importing external policies to the reality of Latin American cities has generated local public policy implementation models that resemble nationwide models and are standard throughout the country, with no consideration for local particularities, strengths, weaknesses, opportunities or threats, or for a town's history, the organisation of its social structures, or the migratory or

production systems that have forged its identity and memory. Local actors may therefore be the appropriate authorities to "adapt" plans and programmes, and successful experiences, to contexts different from those in which the imported practices originated.

This indicates the strength of local governments in a role particularly associated with prevention as an essential task for reducing violence and criminality in Latin America.

5. The challenges and opportunities of decentralised cooperation in citizen security

The growing legitimacy of local actors to adopt policies and execute programmes that were previously the domain of national states has allowed for the self-assured involvement of these sub-national authorities in the development of such initiatives. As indicated previously, this is the result of a series of factors associated with public demand and with the real success of cities that have decided to "sort out" some of their most pressing problems. There are also other causes associated with the new role of local governments in public policies in general, with the emergence of cities as stronger public actors with real jurisdiction and political power.

This phenomenon has led to the involvement of local governments, to a lesser or larger extent, in international relations and international cooperation, which was previously solely the reserve of national states. As stated repeatedly in recent years, this should be understood within the greater process of political, economic, social and cultural change accompanying what is known as globalisation, and particularly within the changes occurring in the notion

of the nation state and its associations with the regional political units of which it is formed (Romero 2004).

Decentralised cooperation is therefore one of a series of parallel mutually empowering interactions, which provide for and justify the increasingly significant role of local actors. These interactions include local citizen security policies.

No matter whether we adopt an axiological definition of decentralised cooperation like that of the European Commission, which describes decentralised cooperation as "a new approach in cooperation relations that seeks to establish direct relationships with local representative bodies and to promote their own capacities to plan and carry out development initiatives with the direct participation of interested population groups, taking into account their interests and points of view about development" (European Commission 1992), or we use a definition more oriented to the ethos of decentralised cooperation and describe it simply as "the act of international cooperation among local and regional governments" (Baraldi 2007), what is certain is that its instruments, practices and potential can be extremely useful in improving and consolidating suitable local citizen security policies.

Decentralised cooperation encourages development instruments that befit local government, contributes to the construction of local participatory and democratic institutions, favours greater involvement of the citizens, enhances and triggers processes of social solidarity, strengthens local government structures and capacities, and contributes to the fight against poverty and to the encouragement of social cohesion (Romero 2004). These dimensions are essential for the development of a democratic security that attends to social causes that may give rise to violence and some crimes, that properly acknowledges the roles of the actors involved in criminal and social processes associated with crime, that seeks the opinion and participation of the public in prevention and control policies, and that strengthens and properly legitimises the role of the State and its legal, police and political institutions to ensure the trust and assuage the fear of the public.

If, moreover, "decentralised cooperation is a mechanism that can lead to the establishment of interregional strategies, working at levels that are not always attainable in intergovernmental cooperation" (Romero 2004), and these strategies, given the common or similar causes of crime observed in Latin America, likewise require shared approaches, the strength that decentralised cooperation citizen security programmes can attain is therefore underlined.

Despite the huge potential of decentralised cooperation in contributing to local security policies, it is still embryonic and partial in the region. Perhaps the most significant measure undertaken arose from the European Commission's URB-AL programme, and specifically from Network 14 "Citizen security in towns", an association of 190 European and Latin American cities that worked under the coordination of the city of Valparaíso, Chile, from 2003 to 2006. Another noteworthy programme is UN-Habitat Safer Cities, which placed an emphasis on local policies and exchanges of experiences, vocational training and publications specifically addressed to Latin American local governments in their struggle to ensure the security of their citizens.

The Network 14 experience is interesting as an initial general approach to the local reality of citizen security in Latin America. Its core document, the books and publications edited, and the experiences recounted at its seminars and meetings, provided for the creation of a body of theoretical and practical contents of unquestionable value.

This network gave rise to a series of "Joint Projects", which were initiatives performed by network members with the financial support of the European Commission, which in all cases entailed joint measures featuring European and Latin American local governments. The joint projects were as follows:

The impact of urban design on the prevention of crime. Coordinated by the Province of Padua, Italy, with the following beneficiary partners: Valparaíso – Chile, Buenos Aires - Argentina, San Joaquín – Chile, Chorrillos – Peru, Treviso – Italy, and Málaga - Spain. This project, based on town planning and the use of technology, was geared to improving crime prevention strategies adopted in cities in Europe and Latin America.

The role of local government in articulating the integration of participatory citizen security policies. Coordinated by the Prefecture of Guarulhos, Brazil, with the following beneficiary partners: Rio Claro – Brazil, Quito – Ecuador, Coronel – Chile, Brussels – Belgium, Perugia – Italy, Barcelona – Spain, and Bogotá – Colombia. This project sought to increase the capacity of local governments to articulate with social and institutional actors on the integration of participatory citizen security policies.

Reducing the perception of insecurity (fear) of inhabitants in municipalities participating in Network 14. Project coordinated by the Municipality of Maule – Chile, with the following beneficiary partners: Salto – Uruguay, Chorrillos – Peru, Lamentin – France, and San Sebastián– Spain. The main objective of this project was to diagnose, define and increase the impact of local citizen security policies to reduce the perception of insecurity of inhabitants of member municipalities of Network 14.

Production and application of an intervention strategy to tackle juvenile delinquency from a multi-causal perspective. Coordinated by the City of Calama – Chile, with the following beneficiary partners: Riobamba – Ecuador, Valparaíso – Chile, Tuscany – Italy, and Villa Real de Santo Antonio – Portugal. The aim of this initiative was the creation of a reproducible, flexible and dynamic model to tackle juvenile delinquency and its association with employment and poverty, in order to improve related local public policies, and to create technical instruments for diagnosis and an exchange of knowledge and information among members of the local networks and member cities.

Migration from different perspectives in citizen security. Coordinated by the Municipality of Riobamba – Ecuador, with the following beneficiary partners: Quito – Ecuador, Calama – Chile, Junín – Argentina, Tuscany – Italy, and Villa Real de Santo Antonio – Portugal. The objective of this project was to diagnose and define causes of citizen insecurity prompted by migration in cities with migrant outflows and in the cities that receive them.

Collective insecurity and self-protection. Coordinated by Santa Cruz de Tenerife – Spain, with the following beneficiary partners: Junín– Argentina, Riobamba – Ecuador, Aserrí – Costa Rica, Santa Tecla

– El Salvador, Calama – Chile, Independencia – Peru, Treviso – Italy, and Panev žys – Lithuania. A priority objective of the project was to improve the response capacity and quality of collectives in an emergency situation, and to heighten awareness of the authorities for them to favour and encourage self-protective behaviours among the public.

Consolidation of local governments in citizen security: training and practices. Coordinated by the region of Tuscany – Italy, with the following beneficiary partners: Rosario – Argentina, Valparaíso – Chile, Quilpué – Chile, Diadema – Brazil, Guayaquil – Ecuador, Rio de Janeiro – Brazil, Quito – Ecuador, Bogotá – Colombia, San Rafael – Argentina, Madrid – Spain, and Liverpool – United Kingdom. The objective of the project was to create training programmes in urban security policy matters, based on an exchange of approaches and experiences.

Safe and civil cities. Coordinated by L'Hospitalet – Spain, with the following beneficiary partners; Region of Île – France, Hauts-de-Seine – France, Santa Fe – Argentina, Santa Tecla – El Salvador, Antioquia – Colombia, and Valparaíso – Chile. This project was geared to providing tools to strengthen local public policies for the encouragement of civic responsibility and coexistence in order to produce safer urban environments.

Promotion of good community participation practices in local crime prevention. Coordinated by San Joaquín – Chile, with the following beneficiary partners: Chorrillos – Peru, Aserri – Costa Rica, Santa Tecla – El Salvador, Padova – Italy, and Marbella – Spain. This project sought to strengthen community participation initiatives in crime prevention through the sys-

temisation, dissemination and promotion of local good practices.

Public space and social cohesion. Coordinated by the Municipality of Peñalolen - Chile, and supported by: Municipality of Santiago – Chile, Badalona City Council – Spain, Barcelona City Council – Spain, Municipality of Turin – Italy, Rosario City Council – Argentina, Mendoza City Council – Argentina, Municipality of Medellín – Colombia, Municipality of Juazeiro – Brazil, Municipality of Guatemala City – Guatemala. Associated bodies: Alberto Hurtado University, Chile, and Amapola Association – Italy. This project sought to tackle one of the main challenges associated with urban security: the recovery of public space for citizens and its restoration to the natural role for which it was designed, which is to prompt social cohesion. This was achieved through the acquisition of knowledge and exchange of experiences in good urban security practices associated with resolving conflicts in the use of public space and the systemisation of successful experiences.

Secure schools: promotion of local good practices in coexistence at school. Coordinated by City Council of Colonia - Uruguay, and supported by: Municipality of Quilpué – Chile, Municipality of Acajutla - El Salvador, Association of Municipalities of Vale do Ave – Portugal, and Jaén Provincial Council – Spain. This project sought to improve and encourage the coexistence of the different actors in the school community through the systemisation, dissemination and promotion of local good practices, in European and Latin American member countries. Diagnosis of the dynamics of coexistence of two schools in each member city yielded a definition of the problems associated with risk, violent and/or criminal conduct arising in the school context.

Successful experiences in the prevention of crime and violence in the school context, associated with the problems detected, were thereupon compiled and systemised. Lastly, educational material was produced in each school, thus allowing for the dissemination of secure, integrating coexistence in local educational establishments.

The joint projects implemented by the member cities of this decentralised co-operation programme in citizen security were thus performed in the following areas of local administration: town planning and public space, community participation in security, coexistence, the training of local agents, the organisation of collective measures for catastrophe prevention, and young people and violence. The scale of the experience, however, is still not broad enough to be able to generalise, standardise or establish typologies for the design of structures aimed at revealing methodologies relevant for the creation and consolidation of local public policies in citizen security. That notwithstanding, the experience features some elements common to these initiatives. These include:

- Horizontality. A parameter typical of decentralised cooperation among European and Latin American local governments. These are peer-to-peer projects in which the theoretical contributions, the experiences recounted and analysed, and the transfer of knowledge are from the European and Latin American actors alike.

- Diversity of the types of local actors involved. Diverse municipalities and sub-national institutions take part. Very small municipalities share experiences with the largest cities on the planet. There are rural and city municipalities and municipalities geared to one main production activity

such as tourism, which share initiatives with institutions with many sources of business and development, etc.

- Emphasis on knowledge transfer. Most of the projects run to date have involved measures such as catalogues of good practices, internships, training programmes, pilot schemes, seminars, and case studies, etc. As the subject area is only just emerging, there seems to be a natural tendency to seek basic orientation, to choose a model or guide, and to form a standard, common language.

- Common instruments and methods. Regardless of the specific nature of each case, activities were similarly based on sound information sources, which very often required great effort from the implementers, and shared diagnoses were developed with consideration at all times for the social actors involved. These examples show the existence of elements common to projects with very different scopes and objectives.

- A common vision of citizen security. The experiences of decentralised co-operation in citizen security feature a relatively similar approach with regard to the role of the State in crime prevention and the provision of security, and to the role of citizens in building democratic security in Latin America. Regardless of the influence of European experience in security or the Network 14 Core Document, which established a theoretical framework for the joint projects under its auspices, the local governments involved and the political agendas of their authorities seem to agree that public policies on citizen security should be geared to prevention, should respect and not prejudge citizens, and should create social, economic and cultural conditions

that foster a culture of peace and tolerance on the basis of participatory and democratic methods while acknowledging the specific nature of each region.

Despite the progress prompted by the implementation of these decentralised cooperation programmes in citizen security in Latin American cities, and the ideal practices they have generated, except in a few cases, these initiatives have not led to new public policy programmes that have been consolidated over time.

6. Challenges for decentralised cooperation in citizen security

These processes have shown that in these areas of action, significant chapters of decentralised cooperation in citizen security still have to be written. First, as far as issues are concerned, decentralised cooperation can still definitely contribute in areas in which local administration and other cooperation experiences have enjoyed significant success. A notable example is the huge area of common influence of gender and of citizen security policies. This connection promises both great potential for work and a pressing need for action, given the serious problems of gender-based and intra-family violence in Latin America.

Meanwhile, as previously mentioned, citizen security policies have generally suffered from a lack of perseverance. They are not so much constant, integrated efforts as a series of as yet isolated, inconstant initiatives. The decentralised cooperation programmes in citizen security should therefore provide instruments and resources to allow for proper duration, validation and assessment. Although these programmes have hitherto been intended as starting points from which

to perform more solid and permanent work in the future, the new phase of consolidation and impact that is required must necessarily include these elements. Decentralised cooperation requires stability. Because of their innovative nature in particular, these policies must be stable over time and must be run in phases and stages of implementation. For them to be applied as they were intended, with citizen participation, political accompaniment and appropriate strategic planning, they must be integrated in periods of time that take proper account of the structure and logics of public policy building processes.

Special consideration should also be given to the fact that citizen security policies require certain basic conditions that as yet do not exist throughout our continent, particularly with regard to the availability of trustworthy, complete and reliable information systems. Only thorough awareness of the reality subject to study and to change will allow for the construction of effective citizen security policies. Decentralised cooperation programmes should therefore not only take this fact into account and consequently appraise the specific features that the processes of project design, execution and evaluation may have, but should also use the opportunity to help generate these very necessary information systems, the intense need for which has been shown in the significant advances made in this regard by European national and local governments.

Lastly, these programmes should not lead simply to "importing" policies that, as mentioned previously, are often nothing other than trends or generalisations. The initiatives built with what decentralised cooperation has to offer must guarantee the coherence and adaptability of the measures implemented.

The successes to date of different decentralised cooperation programmes in very

diverse areas indicate that citizen security policies could also yield similar results. It has been mentioned that in a local context particularly, favourable circumstances come together for the development of successful initiatives to prevent crime and violence and

to reduce fear. If, through decentralised cooperation, local governments in Latin America are strengthened, then we are therefore facilitating the development of an ideal political-institutional arena for the security of its inhabitants.

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Social cohesion and reducing poverty

Culture, Decentralised Cooperation and local development

Edurad Miralles*

This article attempts to analyse the phenomenon of decentralised cultural cooperation between Europe and Latin America in the light of the new position culture occupies in local development. To do this we begin with a summary analysis of the state of local institutionality with regard to cultural policies in both the European Union and Latin America, establishing some fundamental models and trends. Secondly, the theories and concepts linking the notions of culture, cooperation and development are reviewed, identifying some key points for a new paradigm. Finally, a typology of decentralised cultural cooperation based on a double distinction between the aims and methods of this cooperation is proposed, placing particular stress on the position occupied by what could be considered as new strategies relating to the design and promotion of networks, agencies and agendas of local cultural development.

Key words

Local development | culture and development | cultural policies | decentralised cooperation| networks |

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1. Introduction

Nowadays culture is no longer simply the 'companion of the empire' that has traditionally added splendour to the governing of the nations during their most distinguished representatives' terms of office. Just as cooperation has expanded the limits of diplomacy beyond the usual international relations, and the presence of the non-governmental sector and, in particular, of regional and local subnational powers has significantly transformed the typical ways of viewing international action by the public sector, culture understood today as a development factor and as an instrument that fosters social cohesion has gone way beyond the most traditional conception of so called 'artistic diplomacy'.

The intention of this article is to try and detail this, starting with a summary analysis of the State of local institutionality with regard to cultural policies in both the European Union and Latin America, and establishing some fundamental models and trends. Secondly, the theories and concepts linking the notions of culture, cooperation and development are reviewed, identifying some key points for a new paradigm. Finally, we test out a certain well-reasoned and reasonable typology of decentralised cultural cooperation based on a double distinction between its aims –raising citizens' awareness, institutional strengthening, cultural development and structural (urban, economic and social) development– and methods –transferring resources, exchange of professionals, creators and citizens, training, information and consultancy and production and co-production of events, programmes and services–, placing particular stress on what could be considered as new

strategies relating to the design and promotion of networks, agencies and agendas for local cultural development.

However, despite the newness of these interactions and the undoubtedly important progress made recently in the relationship between its different areas, we can affirm that cultural discourse continues to be too absent from cooperation just as cooperation discourse is from culture. Similarly, cultural discourse continues to be too absent from development just as development discourse is from culture. Reducing these distances, albeit with the required modesty and bearing in mind the evident limitations, is the ultimate aim of this article.

2. New local institutionality and cultural policies

It is unavoidable to begin this reflection by affirming that the institution situation of culture in general, and in particular the presence of this institutionality in subnational, regional and local levels of the administration is precarious, discontinuous and even concurrent, both in European and Latin American countries. Although many constitutions explicitly recognise the importance of culture and the obligation of public authorities to protect and spread it, the translation of this will into regulations and the development and implementation of public cultural services is complex and insufficient and is far from reaching levels equivalent to those that can be found in similar areas of institutional action. Unfortunately, notions such as 'cultural system', 'service ratios' according to the number of inhabitants or 'coverage rate' of the existing service are absent from the usual discussions about cultural policies. A large part of the

current complexity is, to a great extent, related to the difficulty of defining the 'subject matter' of cultural policy –specifically, what do we understand by 'culture'[1]– as well as to the widespread existence of certain taboos, scruples or prejudices when it comes to laying down the ground rules for something as fragile and sensitive as culture – often 'State-controlled culture' is highlighted as being dangerous, while nobody judges the 'State control' of health or education as being illicit [2]. Needless to say, the relative historical novelty of cultural policies –largely non-existent before the Enlightenment and the 18th century– translates into a lack of tradition that contributes to increasing this precariousness and insufficiency.

Despite these peculiarities, it can be affirmed that there is no European or Latin American State that has not embarked upon, from the 19th century onwards, the development of certain forms of cultural institutionality concordant with a type of conception of what cultural policies should be[3]. Excepting the particularities that derive from each country's situation and from its specific development, in all cases one can confirm the existence of three lines of action –consecutive in their historical origin, but at the same time accumulative and simultaneous in the present– that we can broadly describe in the following way:

- Firstly, policies of 'cultural heritage' of a regulatory nature, focused on classifying, protecting and conserving heritage, whether this is moveable property or buildings, or assets of a tangible or intangible nature. These policies appeared in Europe at the end of the 18th century, and its most characteristic establishments –great museums, libraries, archives and 'national' theatres– were also rapidly implemented in the capital cities of the new Latin American countries which gained their independence at the start of the 19th century. The idea of heritage, in both cases, acted as a kind of 'genetic code' essential to substantiate the relationship between memory, people and nation that formed the basis of a new conception of the State.

- Secondly, policies of 'democratising culture', of a public service nature, aimed at developing strategies to make cultural heritage more accessible to more or less broad sectors of the population. The 'democratisation of culture' is a cultural policy characteristic of the welfare state, and its appearance dates back to the post-Second World War years. The 'new cathedrals' for the democratisation of culture –in the words of André Malraux, who in 1959 was appointed as Minister of Europe's first Ministry of Culture in France– will no longer be the great 'repository' establishments –libraries, museums, etc.–, but instead a new generation of 'showcase' establishments –so called cultural centres, maisons de la culture, etc.– that rapidly proliferated during the 1960s and 1970s on both continents, even if the premise of the advent of welfare was non-existent then[4].

- Finally, policies of 'cultural democracy' designed with a character of fostering, stimulating and promoting citizens' capacities, not only as the legitimate beneficiaries of cultural assets, but also as producers and creators of culture; developing the coordination of all the cultural actors present in the territory, both public and private or from civil society; and conceiving culture not as an objective in itself but as a development factor liable to cause a notable impact on a social, economic and territorial scale. The principles of 'cultural democracy' as the basis for a new agenda of cultural policies were firmly legitimised after the Mondiacult[5] conference held by UNESCO in Mexico in 1982, and were swiftly spread on both sides of the Atlantic throughout the 1980s.

If after this brief excursus we return to our initial reflection on the relationship between a possible new local institutionality and cultural policies, perhaps we can shed a little more light on this situation which we qualified, a little earlier, as being precarious, discontinuous and even concurrent. Firstly, the insufficient regulatory framework for cultural policies is particularly evident at local and regional levels in almost all countries; the usual rhetoric that considers the need to 'promote' or 'spread' culture as one of the obligations of public authorities, as well as to 'guarantee access' to this culture by citizens, rarely reaches important levels of realisation. An inevitable consequence of such a situation, in almost all European and Latin American countries, is the fact that the different levels of State administration, whether national, regional or local, are condemned to a situation of competence duplication that ends up generating both overlaps and genuine 'black holes' or 'grey areas'. This circumstance results in a large proportion of the cultural policies being constructed and resolved not so much from a legal strategy as from the strategy of a pact between the respective institutions, which in its turn ends up being both the cause and effect of a scarcely regulated operation.

On the flip side of competences we find funding which is, by any reckoning, insufficient for the local authority. Although nobody doubts that any competence, if it is not accompanied by reasonable funding, can only be an empty gesture or just a worthless piece of paper, what is certain is that from the point of view of cultural action this continues to be an excessively recurrent situation. This is particularly true in Latin American coun-

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[1]| *Although there are many definitions of the concept of 'culture', most of these are polarised between culture conceived as the fine arts, the purpose of which is to pursue excellence (The glory of the garden, as indicated by the title of the Arts Council of Great Britain report which in 1984 questioned the traditional orientation of said institution, since it was founded in 1946, towards the "development of better knowledge, understanding and practice of the fine arts, increasing the public's access"), and culture conceived in its anthropological dimension "as a set of distinctive, spiritual and material, intellectual and affective features that characterise a society or social group. This includes, in addition to the arts and humanities, ways of life, the fundamental rights inherent to human beings, value systems, traditions and beliefs" (World Conference on Cultural Policies Mondiacult, organised by UNESCO in Mexico in 1982).*

[2]| *The three main models of cultural policies that have existed in the world, excepting the system adopted by the former Eastern-Bloc countries, could be interpreted based on whether or not this 'control' exists by measuring the existing distance between the state as the subject of intervention and culture as the objective of this: while in the North-American National Endowment for the Arts model the state's intervention is theoretically non-existent and is limited to raising some form of subsidies for the sector, in the 'continental' European model of ministries of culture just the opposite occurs, and in countries with a tradition of arts councils –United Kingdom, Nordic countries, etc.– it is based on the principle of arm's length. Many Latin American states (Colombia, for example) have also debated between the ministerial model and the arts council. It could be affirmed, however, that the current trend is to seek some balance between both, as is the case of the United Kingdom, with the creation in 1997 of a Department for Culture, Media and Sport which co-exists alongside the Arts Council, or of Chile, with the setting up of a National Council for Culture and the Arts with ministerial authority in 2003.*

[3]| *With regard to Latin America see, in this sense, the now classic Políticas culturales en América Latina, coordinated by Néstor García Canclini (Grijalbo; Mexico, 1987).*

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[4]| *We should point out, in this regard, the significance of cultural institutions like the San Martín General Cultural Centre in the city of Buenos Aires, created in 1970, or the Teresa Carreño Foundation Cultural Complex in Caracas, created in 1973, both inspired to a great extent by the French model of the maisons de la culture developed during the immediately preceding years.*

[5]| *The final declaration of Mondiacult not only defined the notion of 'cultural democracy', but also among other things it explicitly highlighted 'the cultural dimension of development' and it recommended speaking of 'cultures' from a plural dimension and not only of 'culture'. See http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0005/000525/052505sb.pdf*

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tries, where in processes of 'devolving' competences from the national State towards local and regional levels of administration this transfer of powers is rarely accompanied by the transfer of the respective economic resources. This being the case, the local management of culture, on both sides of the Atlantic, has much more to do with the difficulties of resolving tensions caused by being the first step for citizens' cultural demand –very often without the ability to cope with this demand due to a lack of specific competences or sufficient funding– than to do with the rhetoric on the application of the subsidiarity principle as a necessary condition for the development of sustainable governance, which, although undoubtedly legitimate, is light years away from reality. In general, the cultural 'effort' made by local and regional administrations goes way beyond their possibilities. The Spanish case is a good example: even though the only explicit obligatory competence of the local administration in terms of culture is to provide a public library service in municipalities with a population of over 5,000 inhabitants, the de facto situation is that Spanish local public spending accounts for 55% of the total public spending of the administrations in Spain, and that the local administration generates 42% of the sector's public employment[6].

Consequently, and in a similar way to what happens in other sectors of decentralised cooperation activity, it must be clarified that in cultural cooperation 'decentralisation' struggles between being a mirage and a pending issue. Only in countries with an extensive and strong 'central'

tradition, as may be the case with France –perhaps the densest model of a 'cultural state' in the European context–, talking about 'decentralisation' and, by extension, of 'decentralised cooperation' manages to have true meaning. In places where the presumed 'centrality' is in reality precarious or non-existent, as is the case, in terms of cultural policy, in many European and Latin American countries, whether due to their federal orientation (Germany), or their scant commitment to the 'cultural state' (United Kingdom), or the relative newness of the 'central' cultural institutions (Spain, Greece, Italy or Portugal) or because of the existence of a relatively weak cultural institutional structure (such as in many Latin American countries), the formulation of a strategy of decentralised cultural cooperation ends up being ambiguous or complex.

We would like to offer some final considerations regarding the presence of cultural policies in inter-governmental bodies. With regard to the European Union, we must remember that the position of many of the member states, expressed in the different treaties of the Union, has traditionally consisted of blocking any attempt to construct a genuine common cultural policy, reinforcing the principle of subsidiarity from the Union towards the states and demanding unanimity in making decisions that affect the sphere of culture. Only since the approval of the European Agenda for Culture[7], at the end of 2007, would it seem that the European Union is willing to have a true cultural policy, launching mechanisms such as an open method of coordination with member states, structured dialogue

with the cultural sector and a strong presence of culture as an important element of the Union's international relations – a circumstance that should without doubt open up new horizons for cultural cooperation, decentralised or not, between the European Union and Latin America.

With regard to the URB-AL programme for cooperation between local –and in its third phase also regional– authorities in the European Union and Latin America, we should remember that despite the fact that in its mission statement frequent mention was made of the existence of an unmistakeable cultural community between both regions of the world, none of the thirteen thematic networks developed since 1995 during the first two phases of the programme were specifically aimed at cultural cooperation between local governments. Nevertheless, networks such as those dedicated to the 'conservation of historic urban contexts', 'urban social policies' or the relation between 'city and the information society' did make room, directly or indirectly, for cooperation projects of a cultural nature. In reflections about the future programme and, in particular, in the seminar on the lessons learned in the two previous phases which took place in the Argentinean city of Rosario in July 2007, the issue was raised of the need to incorporate cultural cooperation into URB-AL, and in the call for candidates of the third phase the possibility was considered of including cultural cooperation projects in the second strategic line focused on citizen participation. Nevertheless, the cultural cooperation projects presented were practically non-existent and none of the 20 projects finally selected are

centred on this method of decentralised cooperation (indirectly one of them, promoting sustainable tourism as a driving force for cohesion, inclusion and social development in border territories, deals with the cultural aspect of tourist activity in a tangential way).

Finally, we should mention the Latin American Cultural Charter, approved at the 16th Latin American Summit of Heads of State and Government held in Montevideo, Uruguay, in November 2006 and, in particular, its Action Plan adopted at the 10th Latin American Conference on Culture held in Valparaiso, Chile, in July 2007, as a recent frame of reference that opens up new possibilities for decentralised cultural cooperation in the Latin American area[8].

3. Culture, cooperation and development: heading towards a new paradigm

Strictly speaking, the relationship between the concepts of 'culture' and 'development' is not recent at all. Although it has already been underlined that to a great extent reference to the cultural dimension of development has only been incorporated into the field of cultural policies since the Mondiacult conference, held in Mexico in 1982, with regard to the European tradition, the éducation populaire movement deployed in francophone Europe after the Second World War, and in a particularly significant way during the 1960s, already placed the question of development at its centre[9]. In parallel, the theses on the 'pedagogy of liberation' by Paulo Freire also spread another way of interpreting the interaction

[6]| See the study La industria de la cultura y el ocio en España (Fundación Autor; Madrid, 2000). In this same regard, see also the study Diagnóstico de la gestión cultural de los municipios, carried out by the National Council for Culture and the Arts, Chile, in 2005, downloadable from http://www.cnca.cl/gestion/EstudioGestionMunicipios.pdf

[7]| See http://www.mcu.es/cooperacion/CE/Internacional/UnionEuropea/AgendaEuropeaparalacultura.html

[8]| See http://www.oei.es/cultura/carta_cultural_iberoamericana.htm

[9]| VSee in this regard the work of Geneviève Poujol L'éducation populaire: histoires et pouvoirs (Les Éditions Ouvrières, col. Politique sociale; Paris, 1981).

between education, culture and social and economic development throughout Latin America in the 1960s. In a reciprocal way, the consideration of the notion of 'development' as a specifically cultural category gradually acquired legitimacy in the formation of what was known as the movement of the 'non-aligned countries'[10]. This new order of things began to appear in strength on the international institutional scene in a series of inter-governmental conferences organised by UNESCO during the 1970s[11], the culmination of which was Mondiacult held in 1982[12].

The imprint of Mondiacult was undeniably important, even going beyond the considerable impact that it caused within the UNESCO organisation. From 1982 onwards, the binomial 'culture and development' became unmistakeably integrated into the agenda of inter-governmental cultural cooperation. UNESCO declared the period 1988-1997 as the World Decade for Cultural Development, and in 1993 the World Commission on Culture and Development was set up and then commissioned the Peruvian diplomat Javier Pérez de Cuéllar to write a global report on the issue. The final document was produced under the eloquent title of Nuestra diversidad creativa ('Our creative diversity')[13]. In 1998 a new Inter-governmental Conference on Cultural Development Policy was held in Stockholm under the title of 'The power of culture', the final Action Plan[14] of which constituted a genuine agenda for the governments of the states to tackle this issue. Finally, the World Culture Reports published by UNESCO in 1998[15] and 2001[16] paid special attention to the relationship between development and culture. In the wake of the previous decade, we could identify as the most important milestones in recent years the drafting and approval by UNESCO of the Declaration (2001) and later Convention (2005) for the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions[17], articles 12 and 14, respectively, of which are of paramount importance in terms of promoting international cultural cooperation and cultural development cooperation[18]. The Convention, which was the first regulatory text of an international nature on the issue that concerns us, came into effect in March 2007 and as of today has been ratified by 93 states and also by the European Union. It is, to conclude, also very important that in the Human Development Report by the 2004 United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) the monographic theme chosen was cultural development, under the title Cultural liberty in today's diverse world[19].

As one might imagine, the inter-governmental development of the relationship between culture and development that has been briefly described up to this point had an impact and undeniably important repercussions within European and Latin American local and regional public authorities, even despite the fact that their degree of coordination, beyond State associations of municipalities, was in general weak or precarious[20]. We should perhaps point out, on the European side, the work carried out during the 1980s by the Council of Europe, which dedicated some of its most outstanding research-action projects to the relevance of the relationship between 'culture and city' (project 5), 'culture and regional development' (project 10) and 'culture and neighbourhoods'[21]. Some initiatives such as the creation in 1992 of a European network of centres for training territorial cultural administrators[22] or the project to create, also in the 1990s, an observatory of urban and regional cultural policies –which never finally materialised– clearly illustrate the spirit of the Council of Europe in those days.

However, it was not until the beginning of the present decade that the translation into local-scale operation of the theses promoting the alliance between culture and development was largely consolidated. This

[10]| The G-77 group of developing countries was created in 1964 with the aim of mutually helping, sustaining and supporting each other in the deliberations of the United Nations.

[11]| These were the Helsinki Conference (1972), which in its final declaration dealt with the cultural aims of development, the Jakarta Conference (1972), which paid particular attention to the analysis of the cultural development of individuals, the Accra Conference (1975), whose final declaration underlined the notion of cultural personality as an element of all internal and social development processes, and, finally, the Bogotá Conference (1978), dedicated to exploring the relationship between cultural identity and pluralism

[12]| We should remind the reader here that to some extent Mondiacult staged a new correlation of efforts between the United States, the Soviet Union, the countries of Europe and the 'non-aligned' group and that after this conference was held, and in the midst of a crisis caused by the 1980 MacBride report on the new order in global communication, the United States, the United Kingdom and Singapore decided to abandon UNESCO, a decision that had profound economic consequences and affected the legitimacy of the institution. They did not return to UNESCO until 2003 (United States) and 2007 (Singapore), in the context of the approval of a Convention on Diversity which threatened to affect their interests in the global cultural market.

[13]| See Javier Pérez de Cuéllar and Lourdes Arizpe (coordinators): Nuestra diversidad creativa. Informe de la Comisión Mundial de Cultura y Desarrollo (UNESCO; Madrid, 1997). It is also interesting to consult the European section of this report, coordinated by the Council of Europe and published separately under the eloquent titles of In from the margins (English version) and La culture au cœur (French version). In Spanish, for reasons not relevant here, the title translates as Sueños e identidades. Una aportación al debate sobre cultura y desarrollo en Europa (Ed. Península/Interarts; Barcelona, 1999).

[14]| See http://portal.unesco.org/culture/es/ev.php-URL_ID=15540&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html

[15]| See World culture report 1998: culture, creativity and markets (UNESCO; Paris, 1998).

[16]| See World culture report 2000-2001: cultural diversity, conflict and pluralism (UNESCO; Paris, 2001).

[17]| See http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0014/001429/142919s.pdf. The Convention was approved at the 33rd General Conference of UNESCO, held in Paris in October 2005, with 148 votes in favour by member states, votes against by the United States and Israel and abstentions by Australia, Liberia, Honduras and Nicaragua. Without doubt, its future influence on the global market of cultural goods and services and its implications for negotiating Free Trade Treaties were a determining factor in this regard.

[18]| In article 12 of the Convention, aimed at promoting international cultural cooperation, explicit reference is made to the need to facilitate dialogue on cultural policy, strengthen the strategic and management capacities of the public sector by means of exchanges and idea-sharing sessions of best practices, strengthen alliances with civil society, NGOs and the private sector, promote the use of new technologies and foster the exchange of information and encourage co-production and co-distribution agreements. Likewise, article 14, dedicated to development cooperation, sets out strategies for strengthening cultural industries in developing countries, and highlights the need to generate capacity-building initiatives through training and exchanging information. The article further establishes the transfer of techniques and empirical knowledge in the area of cultural industries and businesses and, finally, it details financial support measures, in particular through the creation of an International Fund for Cultural Diversity. The Convention was, therefore, a real agenda of a regulatory character for international cultural cooperation of a development nature, whose reach towards the regional and local bodies of the respective signatory countries should not go unnoticed.

[19]| See http://hdr.undp.org/en/reports/global/hdr2004/

[20]| However, we must highlight in Europe the existence of the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR), created in 1951, which has played an important role in promoting twinning between cities, as well as what was originally named the Conference (1957) and from 1994 onwards the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities (CLRA), a consultative body of the Council of Europe, and, as a consequence of the approval of the Maastricht Treaty of the European Union in 1992, the creation in 1994 of the Committee of the Regions. With regard to Latin America, we would highlight in the Mercosur countries the Mercociudades network, created in 1995, with a Cultural Thematic Unit which has been in operation since that same year.

[21]| See, in this regard, the work of Michel Bassand Cultura y regiones de Europa (Oikós-Tau; Barcelona, 1996), which compiles the work of the Council of Europe's project 10, as well as the three volumes published by the Council of Europe in 1998 under the title of Culture and neighbourhoods (also available in French under the title of Culture et quartiers).

[22]| Which is nowadays, although of a rather more academic nature, ENCATC (European Network of Cultural Administration Training Centres). See www.encatc.org

concretion resulted from the convergence, on the one hand, of the process initiated in 2002 in Porto Alegre, in the framework of the 2nd World Forum of Local Authorities for Social Inclusion [23], in which municipal officials responsible for culture in some cities, led by Porto Alegre and Barcelona, agreed to draft the Agenda 21 for Culture, a document which was publicly released in the city of Barcelona on 8 May 2004 during the 4th World Forum of Local Authorities for Social Inclusion , and, on the other hand, the creation of the world organisation United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG), set up in Paris on 6 May of the same year, as a result of the unification of the World Federation of United Cities (FMCU), the International-al Union of Local Authorities (IULA) and the organisation Metropolis of the world's great cities[24]. UCLG's Culture Commission assumed Agenda 21 for Culture from that point on as the roadmap and main guideline for its task of fostering cultural cooperation between cities all over the world.

Despite the fact that Agenda 21 for Culture is an undeniably universal instrument, it is worth remembering that the cities that have until now been most active in terms of its initial drafting and its effective application for the most part belong to countries in Latin America and Europe. For this reason, to a great extent, its particular commitment to what we could consider as a new paradigm for the relationship between culture, cooperation and development on a local scale –a paradigm that is both alternative and complementary to the one deriving from the principles of UNESCO's Convention on Diversity[25]– is particularly relevant to the scope and aims of this article.

Agenda 21 for Culture proposes, first of all, to go beyond the approach commonly accepted after Mondiacult, which views culture as a 'factor of development' liable to cause transformations of a structural nature in social, economic and territorial spheres, to instead try to reformulate the notion of 'cultural development' in light of the new situation caused by processes of globalisation and digitalisation on a grand scale. Unless 'cultural development' strategies are incorporated, development could end up being poorly sustainable and even contradictory or counterproductive. The traditional trilogy of sustainability, which used to anchor the notion of development in the sustainable management of environmental, economic and social dimensions of collective existence, nowadays requires a fourth pillar, that of cultural development, without which development is considered incomplete[26]. In a context in which the economy of the intangible –or what some call the 'experience economy' (Jeremy Rifkin) or the 'capitalism of fiction' (Vicente Verdú)– and the predominance of symbolic value over the traditional economic values of change or of use have

reached levels that until recently would have been unthinkable, it has been shown that the increasingly repeated use of culture as a 'resource'[27] –whether in the form of argument, pretext or alibi– is liable to generate important economic or town-planning side effects that can end up, if a strategy of 'cultural development' is not incorporated, causing new situations of poor development or of unsustainable development generating new conditions of inequality and difference through the abuse of something like culture which, traditionally, has been associated with achieving much more egalitarian or fair situations[28].

In this regard, placing the concept of sustainability at the centre of local cultural policies means, in light of Agenda 21 for Culture, overcoming a certain 'Stockholm syndrome' that has over the past years been afflicting both creators and managers and politicians responsible for the matter (who have been obsessed with demonstrating that investment in culture and the arts is certainly not throwing money down the drain, nor even investing in something that only offers educational or spiritual returns in the medium or long term, but instead that the money dedicated to culture produces capital gains[29]), and beginning to demand 'what about us?' or, put another way, to start considering the reversion of an important part of the capital gains that culture generates into protecting and improving the cultural ecosystem in general and, especially, what without any doubt constitute two key elements of the cultural dynamics: the element of creation (where 'cultural' capital is accumulated, preventing it from being squandered or even eventually escaping to other territories where recognition could in theory be more feasible) and the element of citizens (where 'cultural capital', via the proper appropriation mechanisms, becomes a generator of 'social capital', thus compensating for cultural inequality in the best possible way and preventing the differentiating effect inherent in culture from contributing to greater social fractures based on difference and inequality[30]). To express it in a more or less graphic way, we are talking about reversing the traditional spectrum of local cultural policies, that tends to favour 'cultural diffusion' as the most important strategy[31] and consequently relegates attention to the element of creation and the element of citizens to a subsidiary position, and trying to do exactly the opposite.

Arriving at this point it is indisputable that a relatively ecosystemic approach to local cultural policies, such as the one to some extent contained in Agenda 21 for Culture, opens up a new category of commitments and responsibilities for those who, in their daily technical or political work, are in charge of these policies. In this

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[23]| See http://www.agenda21culture.net

[24]| See http://www.cities-localgovernments.org

[25]| If Agenda 21 for Culture is, to put it one way, a good plan or map for local navigation, placing its most notable emphasis on local development and social cohesion, but which often needs the help of complementary instruments of a greater scale to tackle global problems, something symmetrically opposite occurs with the Convention on Diversity, as it is a good world map or global plan for dealing with diversity and cooperation in the new spaces of the so called creative economy, but at the same time it requires instruments of a more suitable dimension when trying to deal with local situations.

[26]| See, in this regard, the work of Jon Hawkes The fourth pillar of sustainability: culture's essential role in public planning (Common Ground/Cultural Development Network; Melbourne, 2001), indisputable inspiration for the fundamental principles of Agenda 21.

[27]| See the work of George Yúdice El recurso de la cultura: usos de la cultura en la era global (Gedisa; Barcelona, 2002).

[28]| Although the references are undoubtedly controversial, the weakest points of apparently successful undertakings such as the Guggenheim Centre in Bilbao, inaugurated in 1997 (a 'franchised' museum conceived as a catalyst for the urban and economic development and for the global positioning of its territorial surroundings without incorporating a specific strategy of 'cultural development'), or the Universal Forum of the Cultures Barcelona 2004 (an event to some extent conceived outside the cultural dynamics of the city where it took place) may serve as examples of this relatively spurious use of culture as a resource.

[29]| Even an institution as important as the World Bank organised, in conjunction with UNESCO, a large event on this issue under the title 'Culture Counts' held in the city of Venice in 1999. See http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0012/001223/122395mb.pdf

[30]| See the work of Néstor García Canclini Diferentes, desiguales y desconectados (Gedisa; Barcelona, 2004).

[31]| Although it may seem anecdotal, it is in fact eloquently significant in this regard to mention the unfortunately ever more frequent generalisation of the term 'programmer' as a category totally synonymous with the more traditional 'manager', 'mediator' or 'events organiser'...

regard, and without intending to be exhaustive, some of these are detailed below:

- The necessary synthesis between culture viewed in its anthropological sense and culture viewed in its artistic sense. Beyond the sterile debate about the supremacy of one over the other or vice versa, what today acquires a strategic dimension is the place of art and of artists in the creation of new social meanings and situations, and also revaluing and developing the symbolic or ritual dimension of many daily practices.

- The need to radically restructure the relationship between local cultural policies and initiatives –deeply rooted among citizens but with scarce or non-existent singularity, visibility and international projection– and excellence-oriented cultural policies and initiatives – capable of projecting the place beyond its territory, but often questioned or even rejected by important sectors of the population. French cities such as Lille (with its exemplary approach to being European capital of culture in 2004) and Marseille (future European capital of culture in 2013), or Glasgow in Scotland (which was also the European capital of culture in 1990) or, on the other side of the Atlantic, Medellín in Colombia or Rosario in Argentina have recently eloquently demonstrated how it is possible in another way to build excellence based on proximity and proximity from excellence.

- It is important to place at the centre of institutional action the development of strategies for generating active and organised cultural citizens. Often, when local cultural policies talk of 'civil society', in reality they are only referring to organised professional associations and groups[32]. The voice of culturally active citizens continues to be largely absent from this panorama. Just as the existence of an identified and organised public opinion has been an indispensable condition for legitimising other areas of public action such as feminism, environmentalism and pacifism –to the point where many artists and creators usually support these causes when, paradoxically, they are indifferent or insensitive to causes related to the cultural arena–, the future of a new conception of cultural policies largely depends, in our opinion, on the successful construction of this civil voice that is absent today.

- There is, likewise, an urgent need to progress towards new ways of approaching the diversity and intercultural dialogue inspired by issues that are nowadays crucial, such as the fact that identity, in the context of cultural policies, is no longer going to be a determining and determined prerequisite, but rather a fundamental aspect of its projection. Furthermore, the multicultural approach, based on recognising and legitimising each and every one of the existing cultures in a specific territory, should not go against the creation of conditions for interculturality between the communities representing the respective cultures, in fact quite the opposite. Also, the idea of diversity is in itself 'diverse', as situations derived from ethnic, linguistic or migratory diversity have little or nothing in common with one another and, in short, one of the great challenges for the future of public policies is to be able to guarantee the 'right to be different' and the so called 'right not to be different' as a fundamental condition for contemporary citizens.

Finally, and to conclude not only the contributions made by Agenda 21 for Culture, but also the potential features of a new paradigm that combines the notions of culture, cooperation and development outlined in this chapter on a local scale, mention should be made of the importance of exercising 'local thinking' as a radically new and unequivocally essential task for the immediate future of governing cities. The municipal territory was at first the setting for 'local action' par excellence, which in its day was the fundamental work of its institutions. The imperative of 'acting locally' was gradually complemented by the need to 'think globally', and the appearance of new communication instruments together with the emergence of new forms of networking gave way to the possibility of tackling a new task, that of 'acting globally'. However, nowadays it is not only possible, but necessary to go a step further with the intention that cities, faced with the threat of mass urbanisation –more than half the world's population now lives in cities– and the risk that 'local' will be considered only as the setting for most of the global conflicts and problems, demonstrate that 'local thinking' is the only way to ensure that cities are also the laboratory for creative and appropriate solutions to these global problems. Culture, to a great extent, constitutes the synthesis of the most genuine local thinking. And decentralised cooperation, over the coming years, will be based on both the traditional transfer of resources and exchange of professionals and information and on the joint construction of instruments to exercise 'local thinking' by cities with greater and better success[33].

4. Coordinates for a typology of decentralised cultural cooperation

Any attempt to outline some coordinates that allow us to define the phenomenon of decentralised cultural cooperation in the existing space between the European Union and Latin America and to describe its fundamental typologies must be approached provisionally and with a good measure of caution. Not only due to the absence of precedents, but also due to the accumulation of circumstances that often hinder decentralised cultural cooperation initiatives from reaching fruition. These difficulties, in short, normally have two different origins. On the one hand, if decentralised cooperation, in general, still too frequently has to face the incomprehension of some national governments which question the legitimacy of substate, regional and local authorities regarding international relations, this prejudice, in the case of cultural cooperation, is in addition usually compounded by the little or poorly resolved double dialogue taking place in almost all governments between those in charge of foreign affairs ministries or departments and those in charge of cultural departments. The distribution of competences for international cultural relations in hardly any case is explicit or clear. We also must not forget that cultural departments in local and regional governments are usually small, recent and underfunded, and on many occasions have to demonstrate to the 'hard core' of their institution, and in particular to their own international cooperation managers, the importance of the initiative they would like to carry out.

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[32]| It should be noted, as an example, that the makeup of practically all of the 'national coalitions' in favour of diversity that in their day carried out an indisputable task of raising political and social awareness of the need for a Convention on Diversity, has rarely included actors different to the usual professional trade or union associations and societies managing the rights of authors and creators.

[33]| Just as an illustration of the possibilities of 'local thinking', we should highlight here the work undertaken by the Commission on Culture of the Spanish Federation of Municipalities and Provinces (FEMP) during the 2005-2008 period, aimed at constructing a system of indicators to assess the impact of Agenda 21 for Culture on a local scale, thereby fulfilling what article 49 of the Agenda indicates in relation to the need to "propose a system of cultural indicators that support the deployment of this Agenda 21 for Culture, including methods to facilitate monitoring and comparability". See, in this regard, http://www.femp.es/index.php/femp/noticias/documentos

This lack of institutional legitimacy, external and internal at the same time, co-exists alongside a second no less complex difficulty. The fundamental modus operandi of cultural cooperation, decentralised or not, usually consists of initiatives based on the mobility of cultural assets and creators or artists. And if the former is often an impossible mission –the customs horror stories linked to the arrival and departure of exhibitions, works of art, books, etc. would be interminable–, the latter, i.e., the free movement of people connected with different cultural areas, is one of the most difficult Gordian knots to solve within the Convention on Cultural Diversity[34].

Without any kind of doubt, what we could call the 'bottom line' of cultural cooperation, decentralised or not, consists of artistic exchange, both in terms of cultural assets and creators. As we stated at the beginning of this article, at first it was 'artistic diplomacy' linked to the comings and goings of the leaders of the moment. However, decentralised cultural cooperation very soon added two genuine methods to the tradition of artistic exchanges: the first of these was twinning between cities, whether because of similarities in their names, geographical or productive coincidences, historical similarities, shared migratory flows or political or revolutionary solidarity[35]. These twinnings, also very often based on artistic exchange, usually have a high capacity for establishing bonds between the inhabitants of the respective twinned cities as their main added value. Their principal weakness, in contrast, is that they are often 'short cycle' initiatives, with a risk after a few years of sinking into oblivion or being limited, at most, to the existence of a road sign at the entrance to the municipality or to the presence of a plaque on the facade of the city or town hall. The second specific method of decentralised cultural cooperation that very soon came onto the scene relates to initiatives to restore or refurbish some important building or monument that forms part of the local cultural heritage, although in this case it is an initiative also present in national governments' repertoire of cooperation methods[36].

The most relevant distinction for outlining the coordinates of a hypothetical typology of decentralised cultural cooperation consists of differentiating the 'aims' of this cooperation –i.e., the ultimate objectives with which the different initiatives are undertaken– and the 'methods' or basic forms by which cooperation is produced. In this regard, in our judgement there could be four basic aims of decentralised cultural cooperation:

- Raising citizens' awareness of a specific matter or issue.

- Increasing institutionality or institutional strengthening.
- Cultural development in its strictest

34| *Article 16 of the Convention on Diversity establishes the need to "grant preferential treatment to artists and other cultural professionals and practitioners, as well as cultural goods and services from developing countries". Needless to say that the management of this double standard that on the one hand restricts the free entrance of products of a media kind from countries which on an international scale lead the entertainment industry and on the other hand encourages the mobility of that and those which come from developing countries is one of the crucial and at the same time most complex challenges for applying this Convention.*

35| *We should point out, in this regard, the large number of European cities, and also of other Latin American countries, that have been twinned with cities in Cuba and Nicaragua since their respective revolutions.*

36| *The Autonomous Government of Andalusia, to a great extent through its exemplary Andalusian Institute of Historical Heritage, has carried out highly-efficient work in this area in numerous Latin American countries*

Basic aims and methods of decentralised cultural cooperation

	Raising citizens' awareness	Institutional strengthening	Cultural development	Structural development
Transferring resources				
Exchanging people				
Training and consultancy				
Producing services				

sense, with special attention to the elements of creation and citizens.

- Using culture as a factor of structural, social, economic or territorial development.

Similarly, the basic methods of decentralised cultural cooperation could be listed as:

- Transferring economic, human or infrastructural resources.

- Exchanging people, whether creators, managers, politicians or culturally active citizens.

- Developing training, information or consultancy programmes.

- Producing and co-producing specific events, programmes or services.

The following double-entry table sets out all the possible combinations of the basic aims and basic methods of decentralised cultural cooperation, generating a typology of 16 possible ways of working.

Although a detailed analysis of each of these points and their illustration with relevant examples and good practices is undoubtedly a necessary exercise, its scope and intentions far exceed the limitations of this article. Below we detail, in a disorderly and not very categorical way, some inspiring examples of different cooperation trends indicated in the table:

- The 'Zaragoza Latina'[37] project, promoted by the City Council of Zaragoza, Spain, which consists of shifting the idea of 'guest city' to the area of performing arts, music and visual arts festivals. Today, cities such as Tijuana, Caracas, Montevideo, Bogotá, Mexico City and Buenos Aires have all shown their cultural production in Zaragoza.
- The 'RedDeseArtePaz'[38] project, promoted by different public and private cultural centres and groups in the cities of Medellín, Santiago, Sao Paulo, Estelí and Barcelona, whose objective is to strengthen social cohesion and the culture of peace by using the tools of contemporary art and culture.

- The seminar on 'Urban policies and cultural development: planning as a strat-

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37| *See http://www.zaragozalatina.com*
38| *See http://www.deseartepaz.org/?cat=8*

egy'[39] held in Quito, Ecuador, in 2008, organised by UCLG, Interlocal and the municipality of Quito. More than twenty European and Latin American cities participated, exchanging their experiences of using culture as an instrument for urban planning.

- The 'La Ruta CArte' project, promoted by the municipality of Escazú, Costa Rica, together with another twelve cities in different Central-American countries, aimed at creating complementary cultural tourism routes in the region based more on the arts than on heritage, as a strategy for strengthening the local creative fabric.

Although this outline describes the basic profile of decentralised cultural cooperation, there are three 'transversal' strategies that, in our opinion, form an authentic trilogy of new ways of working, as they mutually and reciprocally strengthen and complement each other. We are referring to what we could provisionally call the creation of 'networks', the development of 'agencies' and the drafting of 'agendas' for decentralised cultural cooperation.

Networks in general, and cultural and territorial administration networks in particular, are not, strictly speaking, a new phenomenon. For some years now this new form of horizontal, polycentric and changing organisation has started to cause a shift in the vision of pyramidal systems and radial structures in cultural cooperation discourse[40]. Although not all the structures that call themselves networks really are networks in terms of their operating[41], what is true is that on the European and Latin American scene we have witnessed, over the course of the past few years, a certain network boom. On a European scale, Eurocities[42] and Partenalia[43] provide good examples of networking by first or second level local administrations, while the International European Theatre Meeting (IETM)[44], Banlieues d'Europe[45] and the Trans Europe Halles (TEH)[46] network of independent cultural centres are examples of networking in specific sectors of artistic and cultural activity. There is even some tradition of 'network of networks', i.e., of 'second degree' structures that aim to coordinate the action capacity of already existing networks; such was the case with the now extinct Forum de Réseaux, largely backed by the Council of Europe during the 1990s, or the organisation that for many years was known as the European Forum of Arts and Heritage (EFAH), nowadays called Culture Action Europe[47]. Probably the most important shadow in this panorama that we are attempting to synthetically describe is the absence of specific networks which, in the European area, deal with both the cultural dimension and the local dimension; only Les Rencontres[48], a network of European local and regional cultural elected members with almost 20 years of experience and more than 200 institutional representative members, seems to bridge this gap. We must also mention, at the beginning of the present decade, the network Sigma[49] of European intermediate authorities for culture and proximity, which was later on integrated into the generalist network Partenalia.

The Latin American panorama of local and cultural networks functions, broadly speaking, in a similar way, although the density of the existing initiatives is without doubt somewhat less. We must not forget, in this regard, that the networks phenomenon as a new concept of action 'travels', as it were, from the north to the south of Europe firstly, and then from Europe to Latin America. Probably, and even in spite of the 'low density', the frenzy of initiatives and proposals that we find nowadays surrounding the networks is much greater in Latin America, to some extent mirroring the situation experienced in Europe in the previous decade. With regard to networks of local authorities, the network Mercociudades[50] is without doubt the most consolidated and the one with the longest experience. The Mercosur Cultural Network[51] is the most outstanding example of (not necessarily governmental) networks of cultural and artistic initiatives in Latin America. Probably, the only specific networking initiative that has united the cultural sphere and the local dimension is the Central-American Network for Local Heritage Management (REGAGEL).

Mention must be made of the scant presence of networks working on the binomial 'culture and local authority' on both sides of the Atlantic. While networks like the Network of Cultural Centres in Europe and America or the Iberformat[52] network of cultural management training centres exemplify this transatlantic character, their orientation is not necessarily institutional. In parallel, the Union of Ibero-American Capital Cities (UCCI)[53] has been doing a good job at the crossroads between cultural and local aspects during recent years, but its scope is limited to only the big cities and cities that are the capital of their respective states. Finally, the Interlocal[54] network of Latin American cities for culture is probably the only structure aimed at both the cultural and the local sphere with a significant presence on both continents. Set up in 2003 in Montevideo, it today includes almost one hundred local governments belonging to practically all the Latin American countries and, as one can see on its excellent website, it carries out an

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[39] | See http://www.redinterlocal.org/spip.php?article368

[40] | See, in this regard, the book coordinated by Javier Brun Redes culturales. Claves para sobrevivir en la globalización (AECID; Madrid, 2008), which in addition to being an excellent theoretical reflection on the subject contains an exhaustive repertoire of the main European and Latin American cultural networks.

[41] | Such is the case of the world organisation United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG), a pyramidal structure that aims to promote the development of its commissions and groups working in networks.

[42] | See http://www.eurocities.eu

[43] | See http://www.partenalia.eu

[44] | See http://www.ietm.org

[45] | See http://www.banlieues-europe.com

[46] | See http://www.teh.net

[47] | See http://www.cultureactioneurope.org

[48] | See http://www.lesrencontres.org

[49] | See http://www.sigmacp.org

[50] | See http://mercociudades.org

[51] | See http://www.redculturalmercosur.org

[52] | See http://www.iberformat.org

[53] | See www.munimadrid.es/ucci

[54] | See http://www.redinterlocal.org

interesting and continuous programme of activities.

A frequent reflection on cultural cooperation via networking is that despite the fact that on paper networks offer many possibilities for the shared management of initiatives, working at a distance, with only the support of digital technology, still represents a certainly complex change of perspective, faced with which the commitments made do not always materialise. To use a well-known adage, often 'networking is not working', i.e., the best way to not do something is to attempt to do it by networking. Probably networking requires a little more time to improve its effectiveness, but it is also true that the hypothesis of 'distributed cooperation', upon which action in networks is based, contains more than a little dose of utopia. It is in this regard that the synergy between 'networks' and 'agencies' or 'resource centres', conceived as small-format management centres that can act as the real driving force behind network initiatives, is beginning to appear as a possible solution for increasing the effectiveness of cultural cooperation.

There have been two particularly popular models of 'agencies' or 'resource centres' over recent years. Firstly, the 'observatories', designed to be units specialised in the transformation of information into knowledge (maps, directories, statistics, indicators, databases, repertoires of good practices, etc.). The oldest record of this type of initiative in Europe is prob-

ably the Département des Études et de la Prospective[55] (DEP) of the French Ministry of Culture, founded together with the Ministry itself in 1959. Nowadays there are many local and regional observatories for culture in Europe. Just as an example we could mention the Observatoire des Politiques Culturelles[56] based in Grenoble, France, which has just celebrated its 20th anniversary, the Osservatorio Culturale del Piemonte[57] based in Turin, Italy, and the Basque Observatory of Culture[58] based in the Basque Country, Spain. Regarding Latin America, we should mention initiatives with long experience such as the Observatory of Cultural Industries[59] of the government of the city of Buenos Aires and the Observatory of Cultures[60] of the district government of the city of Bogotá, Colombia. The Organisation of Ibero-American States has recently been attempting to set up a support system that will enable the region's cultural observatories to work in networks.

Without raising any doubt about the role of the 'observatories' as resource centres or 'agencies' of support for cultural action, nowadays it is clear that for decentralised cultural cooperation it is not only important to know about the situation, by compiling hard facts and information of all kinds, but that it is also necessary to construct instruments for transforming it. Thus, during recent years, the discussion about the effectiveness of the observatories has led to the need to set up new bodies, which we will

55| See http://www.culture.gouv.fr/nav/index-stat.html
56| See http://www.observatoire-culture.net
57| See http://www.ocp.piemonte.it
58| See http://www.kultura.ejgv.euskadi.net/r46-19130/es
59| See http://www.buenosaires.gov.ar/areas/produccion/industrias/observatorio/?menu_id=6933
60| See http://www.culturarecreacionydeporte.gov.co/observatorio/index.html

call 'laboratories', and which in addition to transforming information into knowledge try to close the cycle by transforming knowledge into innovation. With regard to Europe, probably the most far-sighted predecessor of this way of working was the Centre of Cultural Studies and Resources[61] of Barcelona Provincial Council, Spain, founded in 1986 by Eduard Delgado, one of the pioneers of Euro-American cultural cooperation. However the real debate on a European scale about this topic took place at the beginning of the current decade when, as the result of a report by the European Parliament, the European Union proposed the creation of a 'great' European observatory of culture. Many of the existing local and regional bodies raised their voices in alarm, and proposed as an alternative the creation of a 'laboratory' of cultural cooperation in Europe which after an eventful and complicated history finally materialised in the LabforCulture[62], which is managed by the European Cultural Foundation based in Amsterdam, the Netherlands.

Probably the debate about the suitability of some new structures that, under the title of 'laboratories', carry out work to support decentralised cultural cooperation initiatives is still pending in the current Latin American context. Nevertheless, it is worth concluding this reflection by mentioning a new initiative, promoted by the Cultural Thematic Unit of the Mercociudades network, UNESCO's Mercosur Regional Office and Barcelona Provincial Council, Spain, with a view to establishing a 'Laboratory of Cultural Cooperation in Mercosur Countries',

whose scope is inspired to a great extent by the considerations presented in this article. The laboratory will be set up in Villa Ocampo[63], which is located in the town of San Isidro, close to Buenos Aires, and is the old family holiday property of the sisters Silvia and Victoria Ocampo – muses of Buenos Aires' intellectual society in the mid-twentieth century.

5. Some final reflections

To conclude we would like to highlight some of the fundamental issues dealt with in our reflection, as they constitute arguments that endorse the growing importance of decentralised cultural cooperation between local authorities in Europe and Latin America and which represent future challenges for strengthening and consolidating this type of cooperation:

- The importance of consolidating the institutionality of culture in general, bearing in mind its growing importance in the framework of public policies, and local cultural institutional structure in particular, given that it is on a local scale that the relation between the institution's offer and citizens' demand is quantitatively and qualitatively most important.

- The need to take 'cultural development' further as a concept that goes beyond and complements the vision of culture as a 'factor of development' which has occupied a predominant position in the relations between development and culture during recent years.

61| See http://www.diba.cat/cerc
62| See http://www.labforculture.org
63| See http://www.villaocampo.org

- The interest in fostering coordination among existing cultural and local networks, creating better conditions for dialogue between European and Latin American networks, as a central strategy for strengthening decentralised cultural cooperation.

- The opportunity to incorporate new support systems, adding to the traditional work of the 'observatories', which is based on transferring information into knowledge, the possibilities of a new type of agency, the 'laboratories', much more focused on the transformation of knowledge into innovation applied to local cultural cooperation.

Social cohesion and decentralised cooperation in Latin America

Marc Rimez y Giulia Clerici*

The recent political, economic, institutional, social and cultural transformations –known together as the 'process of globalisation'– have resulted in a break from the State's traditional monopoly on international relations. Increasingly, local governments and non-State actors have begun to take a leading role in the process of reconfiguring international relations, making themselves an active part of international development cooperation, among other things. This has enabled a new method of cooperation to emerge: public decentralised cooperation and, in particular, direct public decentralised cooperation, understood as a set of "direct cooperation relationships that are established between local and regional governments […] based on the involvement and autonomy of these stakeholders".**

1. Introduction

Decentralised cooperation emerged in the 1990s as a cooperation method that stayed fairly close to the traditional model of official development assistance (ODA), i.e., a model of a basically aid-oriented nature, based on vertical relations between North and South, and essentially carried out by funding NGO projects or individual actions such as building basic infrastructures or sending materials and humanitarian aid. The debate about its practices has made some important progress in recent years, thanks to the studies and research work carried out by organisations such as the EU-LA Decentralised Cooperation Observatory, among others, and the innovative practices of some local governments committed to becoming leaders in this field. Gradually, and through intense reflection on the specific characteristics and the potential added value of this type of development cooperation, the need has been affirmed to focus decentralised cooperation actions on issues found on local public agendas, to affirm the leading role of local governments in managing these actions and to establish partnership relations with an approach of mutual exchange and networking, as well as inserting cooperation initiatives into the general strategic vision of local governments themselves, i.e., converting them into public policies. Decentralised cooperation has been gradually anchoring itself in the specific nature of the local governments that carry it out, both in terms of competences and modus operandi.

As stated in the second volume of the Guía para la acción exterior de los gobiernos locales, published this year by the Observatory, at this point "the challenge, for every city and local authority, consists of developing capacities and strategies which contribute towards putting international action and decentralised cooperation into practice within the framework of a policy contained in the local public agenda"[1]. Thus, transforming a group of sectoral and individual interventions, often restricted to local governments' actions and carried out without a defined strategic framework, into a genuine local public policy, understood as a specific and strategic dimension of public action, capable of associating the legitimacy and responsibilities of elected public bodies with the guarantee of citizen participation, in the broadest sense of the term.

According to this Guide, the three key elements of this local policy of decentralised cooperation, which correspond to the respective levels of analysis and –we understand– of action, are, or should be:

• "Thought (the strategic planning and assessment of the cooperation policy, understood as intrinsically related processes that result in setting objectives and defining strategies and lines of action, in agreement with the city project to be promoted and driven);
• Agenda (definition of the issues and specific methods of intervention);
• Organisation (the internal organisational structure on the one hand and, on the other, the system of relationships and alliances established with other relevant actors in the territory)"[2].

Taking into account local governments' priorities and specific expertise, there

[1] Sanz Corella, B. (2009). "Guía para la acción exterior de los gobiernos locales y la Cooperación Descentralizada Unión Europea-América Latina". Elementos para la construcción de una política pública de CD, OCD, Barcelona, 2009, p.27
[2] Ibid

are various issues that should be considered as priorities in shaping a decentralised cooperation public policy. Among them are strengthening local public institutions, local economic development and public policies of social cohesion. To illustrate the potential, scope and limits of decentralised cooperation public policy, the first part of this article analyses the dynamics of decentralised cooperation in the area of social cohesion, set as a global objective in the international work of one of the leading European regional governments in terms of public decentralised cooperation policies and practices, Barcelona Provincial Council, and as a strategic priority in relations between the European Union and Latin America.

Despite the notable progress made towards the conceptual definition of a local public policy of decentralised cooperation, it should be mentioned from the start that there is an enormous gap between discourse and practice, even in the local and regional governments that are leading this field. Perhaps that is where one of the future challenges for decentralised cooperation lies, and we attempt to tackle this topic in the second part of this article, which suggests some of the big issues that should be included in the public decentralised cooperation agenda in the next few years. This agenda proposal is obviously not intended to be exhaustive, much less in a context of accelerated changes related to both the restructuring of international cooperation practices and actors and to the general context of crisis in the paradigm of development deriving from the international systemic crisis. However, we do propose some lines of action –and from our point of view priorities– for making substantial progress towards consolidating public decentralised cooperation.

2. Public policies of decentralised cooperation and social cohesion

As mentioned previously, in the case of Barcelona Provincial Council, supporting social cohesion –among other dimensions of territorial and economic cohesion which are of course part of the whole– is explicitly stated as "the global objective for the institution in its international work" .[3]

This strategic character of social cohesion is likewise the foundation of Barcelona Provincial Council's commitment to taking up the challenge of the technical and strategic coordination of the URB-AL III Programme, which has become the project with the broadest scope in terms of human and financial resources and, above all, in its influence and impact on actors and practices in EU-LA relations, taken on within the framework of this regional government's international cooperation. In this regard, within the framework of the URB-AL Programme, the European Commission has once again demonstrated the innovative nature of its cooperation practices by entrusting a consortium mainly formed of local governments in Europe and Latin America with the task of coordinating and supporting the implementation of a programme led by local governments in the Latin American continent.

We must remember that social cohesion also constitutes one of the two great focal points of the cooperation relationships between the European Union and Latin America, and its political priority has been strongly reaffirmed in various Summits of Heads of State and Government from Madrid until Lima in 2008. This political priority that first translated into a pilot Programme, EUROsociAL, with a budget of 30 million euros, has been substantially reinforced within the framework of the 2007-2013 budget schedule for cooperation with Latin America. For this period, the European Commission's commitment represents around 900 million euros, of which some 225 million correspond to regional programmes, while social cohesion is present as a transversal aspect in almost all the European Commission's cooperation programmes with Latin America .[4]

2.1. Social cohesion as an alternative to social inclusion and the fight against poverty

Defining the concept of social cohesion is not an easy task, as demonstrated by the multiplicity of lines of analysis and definitions generated by copious academic, political and institutional debate about this concept. It is not our intention to reconstruct this conceptual debate here, or to discuss the validity of the different approaches from which the concept of social cohesion has been analysed, by both academia and political institutions. However, it is useful and necessary to revisit some fundamental elements of this debate in order to define the analytical and operational framework that forms the basis of our reflection. Likewise, attempting to clarify and define the concept of social cohesion is not simply a style exercise confined to the ivory tow-ers of academia; instead it is an analytical exercise that has important operational implications in terms of both public policies and development cooperation policies.

From a conceptual point of view, it is necessary to avoid reducing social cohesion to other concepts belonging to the same semantic universe, such as the concepts of integration and social inclusion. The concept of 'inclusion' relates to the relationship between the whole and its constituent parts (the integration and participation of some specific elements in a wider group), while the term 'cohesion' indicates the relationships between the different elements that make up the whole. Social inclusion therefore relates to "a limited issue (…), such as the relative access of certain groups to social resources and/or to the resulting well-being, as well as the perceptions that individuals or groups have, based on the former, of their relative position within the social order"[5]. The notion of social cohesion, on the other hand, expresses something much broader and more complex regarding the capacity of a society to satisfactorily manage the coexistence of the individuals and groups within in. According to the definition by the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), social cohesion represents "the combined objective of the size of the welfare gap between individuals and between groups, the mechanisms that integrate individuals and groups into the social dynamics and their sense of membership and belonging to society"[6]. From this we can see that the analytical opposition to social cohesion is not social exclusion, but social disintegration or anomie, which –as well as cohesion– are systemic phenomena that involve society as a whole[7]. Social cohesion does

[3]| Barcelona Provincial Council, "The promotion of economic, social and spatial cohesion through the reinforcement of local democratic governance within the framework of international municipalism. This objective is coherent, at the same time as it strengthens the will of the Barcelona Provincial Council to establish itself as a reference point of municipalism in both Catalonia and the rest of the country and also on an international scale", Barcelona Provincial Council Strategic orientations for the international action of Barcelona Provincial Council 2008-2011, Barcelona 2008, p. 27

[4]| See European Commission, Latin America. Regional Programming Document 2007-2013, Brussels, 2007.
[5]| Sorj, B. and Tironi, E. (2007). 'Cohesión social en América Latina: un marco de investigación', Pensamiento Iberoamericano, n. 1, p. 120.
[6]| ECLAC (2007). Social cohesion. Inclusion and a sense of belonging in Latin America and the Caribbean; United Nations, Santiago de Chile, p. 16.

not therefore necessarily mean a lack of social exclusion: the fact that a community or society is very cohesive can even make the inclusion of certain groups or individuals within them more difficult[8]. Likewise, social cohesion is not the antonym of poverty: a society can be very poor but at the same time very cohesive. It is certainly not necessary to remind the reader that many primitive and traditional societies, in general with very limited levels of material development, are characterised by their high degree of cohesion. Thus, economic development does not necessarily and automatically generate social cohesion; on the contrary, development processes can break the traditional bonds that guarantee cohesion within a society.

Finally, we should remember that the social cohesion approach presupposes the recognition of the differences between groups and people as a natural, positive and enriching element of societies. In consequence, the ultimate aim of a social cohesion policy is not to repress these differences, but to manage them in the best way within a framework of shared values and rules in order to achieve a harmonious balance between the different members of a society. Therefore, there is a close relationship between the adoption of a political social cohesion approach and the construction of citizenship and democratic governance[9].

In terms of public policy options, the adoption of a cohesion approach instead of an inclusion approach leads, in a context characterised by the presence of scarce or limited resources, to superseding strategies focused on the fight against social exclusion and extreme poverty to develop a universal strategy of social cohesion that includes society as a whole and not only its marginalised and disadvantaged sectors. As specified by the Council of Europe "it is necessary (…) to find ways to face not only problems of who is excluded from society, but also, and more ambitiously, to seek a way to build more cohesive societies in which the risk of exclusion is minimised"[10]. This is an eminently political choice, associated with a strong ethical foundation: the State would have the legal and moral obligation to guarantee basic rights and equity or at least equality of opportunities and to build a cohesive and solidary community of citizens.

Thus, in terms of social policies – which continue to be a favoured, although not unique, focal point of policies with a more or less direct effect on social cohesion– the widespread application of social policies focused on Latin America from the 1970s and 1980s onwards, by trying to concentrate their effects on the poorest and/or most marginalised groups ended up increasing the segmentation of society into different categories, creating stigmatisation, segregation and social polarisation[11]. This demonstrates that focused policies can involve social and political costs that in the end outweigh their benefits. Furthermore, the principal argument in favour of focused policies, i.e., the economic efficiency of public subsidies based on concentrating re-

sources and benefits, has recently been put to debate due to the empirical observation that in many cases the cost of managing these policies is so high that the difference with the cost of implementing a universal policy turns out to be minimal[12]. This has to do mainly, and in particular in countries with little institutional development, with the growing costs involved in identifying the beneficiaries of focused programmes, which are linked to the need to avoid excluding people that should be included and not identifying people as beneficiaries who in reality should not be considered as such[13].

The traditional paradigm of development policies promoted since the 1980s by some international institutions and Latin American national governments within what is known as the Washington Agreement, identified poverty as an obstacle to development, and extreme poverty as an ethical challenge that could not be overcome by only market and growth laws, which already represented progress in relation to the neoclassical theories of growth, based on the Rostow model[14] among others. From this perspective, once the problem of extreme poverty is solved the other issues, considered subsidiary, will have been resolved by the actual growth dynamics without requiring the State or public policies.

Nevertheless, the exponents of other currents of thought have argued, for decades, that development is hampered not only by poverty, but also and above all by inequality and the poor distribution of income, and that in consequence interventions aimed at eradicating poverty are not sufficient for achieving sustainable and widespread development. Among the first to systemise this analytical approach was the Latin American structuralist school of the 1950s and '60s[15], whose representatives finally joined together in the ECLAC debate space. For example in Buenos Aires in 1967, Aníbal Pinto published Distribución del ingreso en América Latina[16]. When the same author reincorporated ECLAC, this institution published in 1970 his first comparative study on the concentration of income in Latin America and its negative consequences for the economic development of the continent[17]. The study argued that the concentration of income had a double negative impact on the development of the region: on the one hand, it led to the construction of a reduced internal market which impeded dynamic industrialisation in the region; and on the other hand it had strong implications in terms of unequal access to basic social policies, and implicitly in citizen participation. It is not only anecdotal to mention

[7] | *Sorj, B. y Tironi, E., Op. Cit.*

[8] | *Vranken, J. (2001), No Social cohesión Without Social Exclusión?, Eurex: Lecture 4, <http://shiva.uniurb.it/eurex/syllabus/lecture4/Eurex4-Vranken.pdf>*

[9] | *Godínez, V.M. (2007). Cohesión social y cooperación descentralizada. La experiencia europeo-latinoamericana, European Union-Latin America Decentralised Cooperation Observatory, Colección de Estudios de Investigación /Number 2, Barcelona Provincial Council*

[10] | *Council of Europe, cited in Godínez, Op. Cit., p.15.*

[11] | *For the case of Mexico, for example, see Rimez, M. and Bendesky, L. (2000). 'Dos decenios de política social. Del universalismo segmentado a la focalización', in Clavijo, F., Reformas Económicas en Mexico, 1982-1999, Lecturas del Trimestre Económico no. 92, Economic Culture Fund and ECLAC, Mexico DF.*

[12] | *For the European case see Atkinson, A. (1995). 'On Targeting Social Security: Theory and Western Experience with Family Benefits', in Van de Walle, D. and Nead, K. Public Spending and the Poor: Theory and Practice, John Hopkins University Press, Baltimore.*

[13] | *Errors of type I and II, according to the terminology of Cornia and Stewart, cited in Vargas, J.F. (2000), Políticas Públicas Focalizadas o Universales. ¿Dilema?.<http://www.webpondo.org/files_enemar03/focaliuniversal.pdf>*

[14] | *Rostow, W. W. (1960) The Stages of Economic Growth: A Non-Communist Manifesto, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.*

[15] | *See for example Prebisch, R. (1963). Hacia una dinámica del desarrollo latinoamericano, Economic Culture Fund, Mexico D.F.; Pinto, A. (1970). 'Naturaleza e implicaciones de la heterogeneidad estructural en América Latina", in El Trimestre Económico, Vol. 37 (1), no. 145, Economic Culture Fund, Mexico D.F.).*

[16] | *Editorial Universitaria de Buenos Aires, Argentina, 1967.*

[17] | *ECLAC (1970). The distribution of income in Latin America, United Nations, New York.*

that the ex-President of Chile (2001-2006), Ricardo Lagos, published his thesis on this same subject in 1962.[18]

Gradually, even the organisations most strongly anchored in the traditional paradigm of development, such as the IDB and the World Bank, have adopted this vision, recognising the perverse effects of the concentration of income on the development of the Latin American continent and the need to include the fight against inequality and the poor distribution of income in the region's development strategies[19].

Finally, in 2008 the OECD published a study which demonstrated that in most of its member countries not only poverty but also inequality in terms of income have risen considerably in the last 20 years. On average, the income of the wealthiest 10% of the population is almost nine times higher than that of the poorest 10%. This rise in inequality is generally attributable, according to the OECD's analysis, to the disproportionate increase in the income of the wealthiest sector of the population compared to the middle classes and poorest sector[20]. Nowadays there is some consensus on the fact that the reconcentration of income to the detriment of wage income and in favour of capital income that has been registered worldwide over the past decades constitutes one of the main causes of the

current world systemic crisis[21], which means that adopting a social cohesion approach to reduce this gap has become particularly important. This approach is naturally related to the current renewal of interest in policies of market regulation and fiscal reform.

2.2. The importance of the local level in social cohesion and the relevance of decentralised cooperation

As the State is the ultimate legal guarantor of social rights, the main responsibility for guaranteeing social cohesion without doubt rests upon its shoulders. However, social cohesion can only be achieved if it is considered a responsibility shared by all sectors of society, all levels of government and civil society. From this perspective it could be argued that local governments are in a privileged position for being able to contribute to attaining the objective of social cohesion.

On the one hand, the situations that undermine social cohesion (such as for example increased job unreliability and insecurity, faults in the educational and health systems, environmental degradation and urban deterioration, broken social bonds…) are global problems but they first appear on a local scale, at the territorial and community level. Local govern-

ments are the closest institutional channel to the territory and its citizens. Their proximity and accessibility permits them on the one hand to identify the situations that erode social cohesion, and on the other, to channel the needs and preferences of groups and individuals and consequently to guarantee a higher level of citizen participation in defining solutions to the problems that affect them and also efficiency and effectiveness in implementing the policies that enable them to face these problems.

On the other hand, the process of globalisation has resulted in a certain erosion, both upwards and downwards, of the State's monopoly as a service provider and holder of public policy competences. This has opened up many spaces of participation and competence for local governments (or at least of their demand for recognition) with regards the design and implementation of public policies which directly or indirectly affect social cohesion.

In some cases, such as in most European countries, the opening up of these spaces has translated into the definition of a specific judicial and legal framework to regulate the action of local governments and to guarantee their competences and autonomy. During the 1980s and 1990s, Latin America experienced a historical phase of democratic transition, accompanied by reforms of the State and the start of the decentralisation process, accelerated in some countries in the region. However, this process, also within the context of very marked territorial disparities, has achieved very varied and not always satisfactory results.

One of the main weaknesses of the decentralisation processes in the region is the low level of resource transfer and financial autonomy allocated to local governments. These, provided with few resources and little tax collection power, suffer from a high level of dependence on transfers from the central

government and consequently on their expenditure priorities, which are not always compatible with the needs of the territories.

With regards their competences in terms of providing public services, in addition to enjoying limited exclusive competences (for example, depending on the countries or regions, in areas of street cleaning, waste collection and treatment, drinking water, street lighting, town planning, roads network…), Latin American municipalities share the management of many public services with intermediate administrations and national governments (for example in areas of planning, education, health and civil defense). In these cases the problems of coordination between different levels, ambiguity and overlapping responsibilities for managing each level are very common.

Furthermore, in a growing number of countries in Latin America, local governments have very often found themselves obliged, in compensation for deficiencies or the near-absence of the State in many territories, to gradually assume competences for public policy that are not recognised by legislation and therefore to act "outside the law" or at least within the grey areas of the law. This situation will probably not be sustainable over time, but it is a reality that must be taken into account. Without ignoring the importance and the potential of local governments in terms of fostering and strengthening social cohesion, it is necessary to bear in mind the limits they face when carrying out this task, above all in the Latin American context.

The mandates of local authorities, elected in the region's countries by universal suffrage, are usually of short duration and often without the possibility of re-election. The management of personnel is governed in most cases by a "spoil-system", which results in the rotation of a substantial part of the person-

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[18]| *Lagos Escobar, Ricardo. La concentración del poder económico: su teoría: realidad chilena. Santiago de Chile. Del Pacífico, 1962. 181 p. 4 editions.*

[19]| *IDB (1999). IPEAS 1998/1999: Facing up to Inequality in Latin America, IDB, Washington D.C. and De Ferranti, D.; Perry, E.G.; Ferreira, F. and Walton, M. (2004) Inequality in Latin America: Breaking with History? The World Bank, Washington D.C.*

[20]| *OECD (2008). Growing Unequal? Income Distribution and Poverty in OECD Countries, OECD, Paris.*

[21]| *The mechanism of financial crises and their recurring character have been well-known for a long time by economists and economic actors in general. In his Short history of financial euphoria, J. K. Galbraith shows how the same mechanisms are at the root of the financial crises since the 'tulip bulb' financial speculation crisis in Holland in the 17th century until the current financial crisis. His Short history aims above all to show us how short economic actors' memories are and how gregarious their behaviour is, both in the recession and at the peak of the credit cycle. In Latin America, literature on the financial crisis and economic cycles has been rediscovered due to the foreign debt crisis of the 1980s. In particular, ECLAC has once again highlighted, among others, the work of H. Minsky on the credit cycle and its impact on the real economy, and work of Diaz-Alejandro on the financial crises in Latin America.*

nel with every political change in the administration. All this makes continuity in local management and the adoption of an internal long-term perspective considerably more difficult. Moreover, to this one must add the known deficiencies in training staff working in local authorities.

All this has a tendency to strongly limit the institutional and political autonomy of Latin American local governments and their real ability to implement public policies of social cohesion. The institutional strengthening of local governments and reinforcing their operational and management capacities therefore appear as priority objectives in order for these governments to be able to design and implement these policies.

Likewise, recognising the importance of the local level, above all in the context of the crisis of the nation-state as a result of globalisation processes, does not mean ignoring the unquestionable role of the State as a provider of public services and the body responsible for shaping and implementing public policies that cover the entire territory. Local governments' policies, although necessary, have a clear and defined spatial and systemic limit; for this reason they cannot substitute State policies, instead they must form part of these, be integrated into and complement them in order to achieve their full effects.

In view of the aforementioned, for local governments to be able to develop effective social cohesion policies it is necessary on the one hand to take the process of democratisation and decentralisation of the State further in terms of both competences and resources; and on the other hand to seek complementarity and concertation with higher levels of government, without

whose support local governments' room for manoeuvre would remain limited.

In this regard, it should be mentioned that decentralisation is not necessarily synonymous with greater social cohesion, as demonstrated by the example of the municipalisation of basic education in Chile. When this was carried out in the 1980s, without the implementation of the corrective fiscal mechanisms that should have been required in a country characterised by strong regional imbalances and a long centralist tradition, the Chilean experience reproduced and intensified the initial imbalances in the territories in a sector strategic for building equal opportunities. The nature of decentralisation thus relates to its content and the need for complementarity between the different levels of local, regional and national governments with regards concertation of the policies that correspond to each level.

The adoption of a social cohesion approach also involves a change in the conception, the priorities and specific methods of international development cooperation. Adopting this approach in development cooperation means, on the one hand, converting the traditional paradigm of responding to needs into a paradigm of creating capacities. On the other hand, it means complementing investments aimed at eradicating extreme poverty with interventions whose objective is institutional strengthening and promoting democratic governance, which are necessary and fundamental elements for achieving social cohesion.

In conclusion, achieving social cohesion is a shared responsibility and an essential challenge for attaining widespread sustainable development. In the current global setting local governments possess great potential for contributing to the achievement

of this collective goal, beyond the structural limitations they face and which it is important to be aware of. Furthermore, public decentralised cooperation can substantially contribute to constructing and strengthening local capacities for action in this field. In order for this potential to be expressed to the maximum it is necessary to create coordination and complementarity mechanisms with all the levels involved, fully respecting the autonomy of local stakeholders. In this regard, one of the most important challenges for the immediate future of public decentralised cooperation is the incorporation into its actions of the principles formulated in the Paris Declaration, above all the principle of harmonisation. In the context of coordination, understood as respectful concertation of autonomy, local governments can –and must– actively participate in the general effort to improve aid effectiveness and spread good practices.

3. An agenda for decentralised cooperation in Latin America

In this second part, we will try to provide some ideas about the public decentralised cooperation agenda and its management, especially with Latin America, taking the specific experience of Barcelona Provincial Council as our basis, within the framework of the priorities set in the previously mentioned Strategic Guidelines document. It should be mentioned that the issues of management and agenda can sometimes be closely linked, even if it is only because proactive management with transparent instruments and with a certain degree of flex-

ibility is usually a sine qua non for meeting the deadlines of some agendas.

The intention here is not to be exhaustive, not in the least, but is instead to propose some points that in our opinion are priorities for achieving significant progress towards consolidating public decentralised cooperation, in particular in Latin America.

3.1. Towards greater recognition of the leading role of local governments in development

Local governments are fundamental stakeholders in development and, therefore, can be key actors in international cooperation. For this reason, we must once again underline the need for their greater recognition by the international community.

We should mention some important progress achieved recently in this regard. We refer in particular to the Communication of the European Commission "Local authorities: actors for development" of October 2008 which explicitly recognises the importance of local governments for development, as well as the importance of decentralised cooperation as an emerging method of international cooperation[22]. Likewise, the cooperation of local and regional governments is explicitly considered and taken into account within the framework of the Accra Agenda for Action[23]. This represents a huge advance considering the absence of decentralised cooperation in the Paris Declaration[24]. Nevertheless, it is necessary to continue working in order for the international community to recognise local governments as full partners in devel-

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[22] COM(2008)626, Brussels, 08.10.2008.

[23] <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/58/19/41202043.pdf>

[24] <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/53/56/34580968.pdf>

opment cooperation and allow them to assume a more important role.

As already mentioned in the first part of this article, decentralised cooperation presents certain characteristics that potentially make it the ideal choice for certain types of actions as well as for fostering appropriation – sine qua non for sustainability and in fine for aid effectiveness. However, many local and regional actors recognise the need for the genuine coordination of actions and actors, on condition that this is understood as concertation in respect to autonomy and not coordination imposed from above.

To attain this concertation, it is essential that local governments are systematically given access to the boards of donors, country-programming exercises, etc. by the large national and international cooperation agencies. It would, for example, be useful if a local or regional government, chosen by its peers, could participate in the work of DAC. Further down the road, among themselves, local governments could create "Local associations for development" that would allow them to coordinate their efforts in benefit of specific members.

Bearing in mind the structural limitations of many local governments when acting directly in development processes, it could be fundamental to prioritise in all circumstances the type of international cooperation, whatever the scale, aimed at the institutional strengthening of local governments so that these acquire or consolidate the capacity to assume their competences in front of their citizens. This should translate into methods of cooperation and funding aimed at the institutional strengthening of local governments that will allow them to assume a truly leading role, avoiding their substitution and the delegation of their competences to other development actors.

A particularly effective method for achieving this goal is the direct management of cooperation by local governments and in particular of the direct cooperation from local government to local government. Regarding this, we have already mentioned the leading role assumed once again by the European Commission in the framework of the URB-AL Programme by entrusting the coordination of the third phase of this Programme –aimed at direct cooperation with local governments in Latin America in the area of local social and territorial cohesion policies– to a consortium of local governments.

Likewise, ways would have to be found by which national and international cooperation agencies could set up mechanisms to enable local governments to be entrusted with the management of cooperation programmes focused directly or indirectly –as in the case of decentralisation support programmes– on other local governments, in particular when these are programmes of institutional support.

3.2. Promote a culture of assessment

A second priority for reinforcing the relevance and impact of decentralised cooperation lies in promoting a culture of assessment: ex-ante for greater relevance of the actions and ex-post to measure the impact of the cooperation actions and to provide sources of feedback for these actions.

An ex-ante assessment of projects generally focuses on the relevance of the action, its feasibility, the possibility of carrying it out within criteria of reasonable conditions of effectiveness and efficiency, as well as a first estimation of its results and impact. Systematically carrying out a relatively thorough ex-ante assessment should lead to greater control over the overall relevance and viability of the planned actions. This verification of the relevance should be accompanied by a review of similar or complementary actions by both the beneficiaries and other local actors in the same sector or in the same geographical region, as well as by the verification of the synergy, complementarity or duplication that may exist with the actions of other sources of cooperation. Only a full examination of this set of variables can guarantee a certain relevance of an action a priori.

In parallel, an ex-post assessment does not only enable an evaluation of the results and the impact of the actions, according to a set of criteria that range from relevance, effectiveness and efficiency to the results and impact. Beyond analysing the quality of a past action, detecting its possible faults or dysfunction, this evaluation exercise above all delivers information about the possible refocusing of future actions. On the other hand, the gradual introduction of systematic assessment throughout the whole cycle of cooperation enables the anticipation of certain faults or deficiencies in both its formulation and its execution. Systematically taking the conclusions and feedback from this assessment into consideration when formulating new actions –in general the result of an obligation imposed by the existence of an independent and autonomous assessment service, accountable only and directly to the highest authorities– quickly produces a general rise in effectiveness and efficiency in all the phases of the project cycle.

Finally, as the empirical study of decentralised cooperation is a very recent process, by now many of its actors are convinced of its added value compared to other models of cooperation, as well as of its potential in certain fields and sectors. Nevertheless, the long-term impact of decentralised cooperation remains relatively unknown. It is therefore necessary to study this situation more thoroughly in order to understand its real scope as well as its limits and weaknesses. This challenge has led the Observatory to include this issue and the creation of the suitable methodological instruments as one of the central themes of the Conference of the EU-LA Decentralised Cooperation Observatory in 2009.

3.3. Professionalize the management of cooperation

Another global challenge for all the local and regional administrations working as partners in decentralised cooperation is the professionalisation of its management. Moreover, this dimension represents one of the central aspects of cooperation: the institutional consolidation of local governments and the creation of social and human capital with regards professionalisation require a systematic effort to train local government workers in the subject of managing decentralised cooperation.

Since 2005, thanks to the support of the European Commission and the work of its members, the EU-LA Local Decentralised Cooperation Observatory has generated a wealth of strategic and pedagogical material and has provided training courses aimed at politicians and technical experts from local and regional governments in the European Union and Latin America. Until now, it has trained more than 500 people

in decentralised cooperation. Today, composed of Barcelona Provincial Council and Montevideo City Council, the Observatory has significantly reinforced its training actions in managing decentralised cooperation, both in Latin America and in Europe, to contribute to the professionalisation of local relief workers.

Furthermore, an issue that relates both to management and the political agenda would be to make progress towards the legal definition and operationalisation of a "statute of local expatriate relief workers". This point should become one of the priorities that enables decentralised cooperation to be strengthened, at the same time as providing local public cooperation professionals the guarantees and professional recognition they need.

This implies, among other things, trying to gain access to the statute of 'international technical assistance' that exists in many countries who are beneficiaries of international cooperation and which is allocated to professionals from national and international cooperation agencies and the large international NGOs. Without doubt, this involves launching the necessary studies in the legal field with other European regional governments that already have a statute, with beneficiary countries and with the national states the relief workers are citizens of.

As regional governments begin to try and expand their direct actions and/or implement twinning actions (exchange of personnel between administrations), and if they wish to avoid remaining dependent on intermediaries such as NGOs, private or public foundations, they should ask themselves this question and come up with a satisfactory response in order to provide themselves

with professional and quality relief workers. Therefore, this initiative should be carried out, from the start, on a European level and in association with the European regional actors who are most active in decentralised cooperation.

If this professionalisation of the human resources of public decentralised cooperation is not realised as a priority, there is a risk that it will not progress from being a passing phenomenon. If public decentralised cooperation does not manage, in the coming years, to demonstrate its impact and have access to a body of cooperation professionals, there is a risk that it will have to continue carrying out its actions by systematic recourse to other actors, such as NGOs or professional consultants, thereby losing a large part of its added value which specifically derives from its knowledge of the local world and its proximity to populations.

In conclusion, decentralised development cooperation is a process in constant growth and continuous evolution. The prolific conceptual reflection that has developed in recent years around this phenomenon has enabled the definition of a model of decentralised cooperation (in the analytical sense of the term) that goes beyond the traditional vision of ODA and which sees decentralised cooperation as a true local public policy, reaffirming its added value, above all in areas such as social and territorial cohesion, and in the leading role of local authorities in this cooperation.

However, and despite the important progress made in this area by some particularly innovative local and regional governments, in the field of decentralised cooperation there is still a gap between discourse and practice that must gradually be closed. The challenge in this regard is double. On

the one hand, it is necessary to gain greater recognition by the international community of local governments as fundamental actors in development and, therefore, as full members in cooperation. On the other hand, these same local governments will have to assume their own responsibilities in this area, stop delegating their cooperation actions to intermediaries and develop their own public policies of cooperation, as well as increasing the quality of their actions by professionalising the management of these actions and adopting a culture of assessment, among others.

Governance and institutional strengthening

As every year, governance and institutional strengthening merit a specific section in the Yearbook, given that this is one of the areas in which decentralised cooperation can most clearly contribute its added value. In fact, local governments are experts in managing local public policies and it is precisely their experience in this matter that forms the ambit in which it makes most sense to generate direct relationships between local administrations to facilitate mutual learning in favour of the technical and political strengthening of local and regional governments.

On this occasion interest has been focused on the articulation of local and regional governments with actors in their territories (local and international NGOs, universities, businesses, associations, unions, etc.) in developing their international cooperation policies. Good local governance lies in the capacity to employ relational governance with the actors in the territory as experience shows that local development projects that enjoy the involvement of citizens have a much higher guarantee of sustainability. Along these lines we present two articles, one by Jean Bossuyt focused on the experience of European local governments and another by Manuel Ortega and Alberto Enríquez on the practices in Central America.

In the first article, the author draws attention to how decentralised cooperation, due to the nature of the actors leading it, is the best way to encourage European local governments to contribute towards their Latin American counterparts assuming the role of 'catalysts' for the actors in their. Likewise, Jean Bossuyt seeks to contribute elements that will spark a reflection on mechanisms that help local and regional governments to fulfil the role of energising civil society in their territories, involving citizens in their international cooperation policies.

The article 'Decentralised cooperation in Central America and its contribution to articulation between local governments and civil society' presents a review of the different policies, practices and instruments through which Central-American local governments connect with civil society in their territories in relation to international cooperation activities. The authors take the Central-American experience as their starting point for an exploratory reflection on the conditions that can help local governments to assume the role of energising civil society in their territories in order to involve it in the international cooperation policies that they carry out.

Governance and institutional strengthening

The articulation between european local governments and the civil society of their territory in decentralised cooperation

Jean Bossuyt *

European local governments and regions are increasingly involved in decentralised cooperation activities as autonomous actors. In the process, they are gradually developing international activities in the framework of their own competencies. While local governments are the main protagonists of this cooperation, they are not supposed to operate in splendid isolation from other actors. Ideally, decentralised cooperation goes beyond the implementation of a set of development projects. Its value and specificity lies in its capacity to help Southern local governments to play a 'catalyst' role in local development processes by bringing together the various actors on the territory. Also in Europe, local governments stand to gain much from involving a wide range of local actors in the whole process of putting in place an effective decentralised cooperation policy based on egalitarian long-term partnership and reciprocity.

This paper focuses on this articulation between European local governments and the various non-state actors (civil society in all its diversity; private sector; citizens) in decentralised cooperation activities. It first explains why the articulation of actors within a given territory is an important factor in promoting effective decentralised coopera-tion. It then examines what this articulation means in practice, based on the experiences of a sample of European local governments and regions from various territorial contexts. To this end, different dimensions are explored in the context of city links : the visions and strategies underlying these multi-actor partnerships; the various actors involved; the mechanisms and modalities used to ensure participation; and the possible contribution to raising development awareness and promoting global citizenship. Building on this analysis, the paper identifies a set of future challenges in terms of strengthening the articulation of actors on the territory. It should be stressed that the paper does not aim at providing a comprehensive state of the art analysis of the topic. Its main purpose is to provide food for thought on the (relatively understudied) relationship between decentralised cooperation policies carried out by European mu-nicipalities and civil society engagement in these processes.

1. The critical importance of multi-actor partnerships

Before analysing how the collaboration between European local governments and civil society works on the ground, a basic question should first be addressed: why is this articula-tion of actors so important? Why should Euro-pean local governments bother about it? Why should they invest time and energy in mobilis-ing the various civil society groups, private sec-tor actors and citizens of their territory when engaging in decentralised cooperation (DC) processes?

This issue merits attention as several stakeholders may not be convinced that multi-actor partnerships are crucial for ef-fective DC. European local governments themselves may be tempted to reduce mu-nicipal international cooperation to techni-cal assistance and exchanges between civil servants, thus reducing the scope for civil society participation in DC. Doubts may also exist among civil society organisations working on development matters in the various municipalities and regions in Eu-rope. They may see local governments as competitors for donor funding or fail to see the added value of participating in de-centralised cooperation schemes. National governments from the EU increasingly pro-vide support to DC activities undertaken by their sub-national authorities. Yet expe-rience suggests that some of these donors have shown reluctance to make space for the engagement of civil society groups in decentralised cooperation processes. Also Southern municipalities may not always be eager to adopt participatory multi-actor ap-proaches in DC-related activities.

Against this background, it seems ap-propriate to first provide a clear justifica-tion for a pro-active role of European local governments in building coalitions with the civil society, businesses and citizens of their territory

1.1. Multi-actor partnerships are a core element of direct DC

In the field, DC adopts a multiplic-ity of forms, reflecting diverging levels of ambition, maturity and capacity among participating municipalities. In a grow-ing number of cases, European local gov-ernments and regions engage in 'direct' forms of DC as autonomous agents, con-cerned with developing a full-fledged ex-ternal action.

This type of DC goes far beyond the traditional concept of twinning arrange-ments with their focus on project aid, funding and ad hoc exchanges. Direct DC emphasises the need to construct more egalitarian, long-term partnerships be-tween municipalities with a view to tack-ling common agendas confronting their societies and territories through struc-tured, reciprocal exchanges. Multi-actor partnerships in a specific territorial space constitute a core element of this more so-phisticated form of DC. This holds true for local governments on both sides of the equation. In the South, local govern-ments are supposed to act as 'motor' of local development processes by promot-ing cooperation between all the relevant actors and stakeholders. In Europe, lo-cal governments also stand to benefit from adopting a multi-actor approach in DC activities with a view to mobilise, in a pro-active manner, all possible sources of knowledge, expertise, funding, etc. in favour of an effective implementation of DC activities.

1.2. Local governance is about improving state and civil society interaction

A key objective of the direct DC approach is to promote the democratic governance of local governments. While is not evident to create a shared understanding of what a viable local governance system entails, most definitions identify two main axes in the concept:

• responsive and accountable (elected) local governments (as key development actors and nodal point for the delivery of public services at local level);
• a vibrant civil society that is enabled to play its dual role as partner in local development processes and as countervailing force (with the capacity to demand rights, transparency and accountability).

Responsiveness, accountability, civil society participation... All these elements clearly point out that local governance is essentially concerned with the interaction between local governments and its citizens, whether as individuals, businesses or civil society organisations (Smith 2004). Local governance is about the way power and authority is exercised at local level. Experience across the world suggests that local governance is the 'software' needed to ensure local government performance. The more local governments involve stakeholders in local decision-making, the stronger and more sustainable its decisions are likely to be.

All this has far-reaching implications for European local governments involved in direct forms of DC that seek to support the development of responsive and effective local governments in the South. The promotion of viable local governance systems

through DC implies, by definition, a multi-actor partnership approach. By embracing this broader political and institutional agenda, European local governments are invited to also pay attention to civil society participation in their DC policy and practice. External development partners working on DC have the task to support both better governance within local governments and to combine this internal reform agenda with efforts aimed at a better interfacing with empowered citizens and civil society organisations.

In practice, working both with local governments and a wide range of new actors (e.g. citizen groups, private sector associations, non-governmental service providers) opens a huge agenda for European local governments. It implies the adoption of participatory approaches which see the citizen as the 'maker and shaper' instead of the mere 'user and consumer' of local public policies. It calls for the promotion of innovative governance mechanisms such as participatory planning and budgeting through DC. It puts a premium on supporting civil society groups as well as citizens to express voice, demand better services and ensure a quality control of public service delivery.

This participatory approach should not be limited to interventions in the South. The local governance imperative also applies to the way a European local government manages its overall DC policy. Ideally, the development of a full-fledged external action policy by European local governments and regions (including a DC component) is the subject of extensive consultations with the civil society of the territory involved. Experience suggests that many of the European municipalities that have made the leap from traditional DC project approaches to promoting local governance processes are

also committed to change in their own communities. They choose to develop a multi-stakeholder approach in order to create a shared responsibility for local development (Dhaene and Bartholomeeussen 2004).

1.3. International cooperation increasingly relies on multi-actor partnerships

A third reason why direct forms of DC are well-advised to embrace participatory approaches (in both the South and in Europe) is related to major changes that have occurred in the international cooperation system over the last decade.

Two major trends merit particular attention. First, a new aid paradigm has emerged, aimed at turning more responsibility over to partner countries. In practice, this means promoting ownership; supporting sector-wide approaches; decentralising decision-making and implementation of aid programmes; as well as working primarily with existing institutions and capacities in the country. Second, a wide variety of 'new' actors have appeared on the development stage, including civil society, local governments, the private sector, social and economic partners. They all claim space in which to play their legitimate roles in the development process. Not surprisingly, there is some confusion among these actors about 'who should do what', compounded by territorial fights, jockeying for position and competition for funding. In response, donor agencies are increasingly adopting a multi-actor approach to partnership with a view to fostering collaboration between state actors (at both central and local level) and non-state actors (in all their diversity). This

cooperation philosophy is also reflected in the Accra Agenda for Action (September 2008) which seeks to accelerate and deepen the implementation of the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness (2005).

This new aid environment -with its focus on country ownership and the participation of a wide range of actors- creates opportunities for the integration of DC approaches into mainstream development cooperation. The signs on the wall are there. Over the last years, the role of local governments in development has been widely recognised. The local level is increasingly perceived as a fundamental layer of governance. Donor agencies display a growing interest to link up with local government actors; to mobilise their knowledge and expertise in the implementation of programmes in support of decentralisation; or to provide innovative forms of funding for local governments. However, the battle is not yet won. Many governments from the South resist decentralisation and civil participation. The new aid modalities, particularly budget support, entail the risk of re-centralising development policy management. Much remains to be done to integrate local governments into the overall cooperation process.

In order for local governments (from both Europe and the South) to benefit optimally from these new openings, they must show that they have a clear added value to offer. This is where direct DC, conceived as multi-actor partnerships for local development and governance, comes in. Local governments that can demonstrate a capacity to manage their societies and territories in a participatory manner are likely to be attractive partners to work with in an in-

creasingly multi-layered and multi-actor international cooperation system.

1.4. Participation is beneficial for the legitimacy, quality and sustainability of DC

Also from a strategic and operational perspective, European local governments seem well-advised to adopt a multi-actor approach in developing a DC policy. For many municipalities across Europe, taken individually, it is not evident to create political and institutional space for a meaningful external action, reflected in a solid set of DC activities in the South[1]. There can be fierce debates whether this constitutes a legitimate core task of the municipality or political opposition against spending public resources on such matters. Even if the green light is obtained, DC proves to be a demanding task to perform for a (small) municipality, especially if the aim is develop reciprocal and mutually beneficial longer-term partnership. Capacity weaknesses may drastically reduce the scope for a meaningful DC approach. The challenge of sustaining DC partnerships is also real, as political coalitions may change or because of budget constraints. In short, the foundations of DC partnerships are at best fragile if the whole weight of the process has to be carried by the European municipalities alone.

The participation of a wider range of stakeholders from within the territory in DC schemes may help to overcome this fragility:

• Involving citizens and civil society groups in the development of a DC policy is likely to give a boost to the *legitimacy* of the whole enterprise undertaken by European local governments.

• Civil society participation may also have a positive impact on the *overall quality* of DC interventions. Civil society groups as well as citizens can bring new ideas, agenda, capacities and resources to the DC partnership. They can exercise pressure on the municipality to adopt more ambitious forms of DC. They may also have a key role to play in the implementation of components of the DC programme for which they have a comparative advantage.

• Opening DC partnerships to citizens is likely to enhance the *sustainability* of the whole operation. By investing in linkages between citizens and organized groups in society (e.g. schools, colleges, hospitals, trade unions, voluntary organisations, cultural organisations, etc.) on both sides, one may over time create real relationships at grass roots level as well as broadening the ownership of the DC partnership. The citizen engagement may, in turn, lead to all kind of spin-off activities between civil players -whose lifetime may even exceed the formal DC arrangements between the participating cities.

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[1] *| In a speech at a conference in Hamburg (2006), Peter Knip, Director of VGN International Holland, pointed out that many Dutch mayors display an interest in international cooperation but that it remains difficult to orient this towards professional support to local governments in developing countries. Their priorities rather lie in Europe (i.e. participating in European city networks, primarily for economic purposes), in profiling the city internationally (i.e. branding the position of the city's companies or institutions in the international arena) and in contacts with countries of origin (i.e. shifting city partnerships to countries that have important migrant populations in Holland such as Turkey, Morocco and Suriname).*

• Focusing on citizens may raise development awareness among the population and contribute to building active citizenship in the North.

2.The articulation of actors in the practice of European local governments

A huge variety of DC approaches exist across Europe and within countries. This diversity also applies to the participatory approaches used by local governments in different European territorial realities. Furthermore, nothing is static in the world of DC, as response strategies of European local governments tend to evolve over time as a result of internal dynamics (e.g. the increased international focus of cities) or external incentives (e.g. the existence of national support schemes in favour of DC).

In order to get a picture of how European local governments engage with the civil society of their territories, the following analytical framework could be used to identify existing models and practices (see box 1 below). It examines four key dimensions of a multi-actor approach to DC as well as a set of specific strategic/operational questions for each dimension.

For analytical purposes, the remainder of this section will consider each of these dimensions separately, though it is obvious that they are closely interrelated.

Box 1 | Analytical framework for understanding multi-actor approaches

Key dimensions of a multi-actor approach to DC	Possible strategic and operational questions
1) To what extent have European local governments defined a clear vision and strategy for involving other actors from their territory?	• Rationale used to justify civil society participation in DC? • Underlying cooperation models and opportunities for participation? • Expected added value? • Existence of clear guidelines for implementing joint DC approaches?
2) How diverse is the set of actors involved in DC?	• How inclusive a concept of civil society should be used? • What type of (pro-active) roles can be played by local governments to include other actors from the territory? • Existence of incentives to get various civil society actors on board?
Mechanisms and (funding) modalities used to involve other actors all along the DC cycle (formulation, implementation and monitoring of DC policies)?	• Is it possible to distinguish different models to facilitate the articulation of actors? • Added value and role division between actors? • Existence of multi-actor dialogue and implementation mechanisms? • To what extent are roles given to other actors compatible with local government leadership of DC processes?
4) What measures are taken to raise awareness and mobilise citizens?	• What opportunities are offered by DC to promote development awareness? • What works, what does not work?

2.1. Existence of a clear vision/ strategy for involving other actors?

On the whole, it could be argued that European local governments or regions across Europe globally acknowledge the need to engage other actors in DC processes. Also national and regional associations in Europe express a political commitment to foster participatory approaches in DC and try to propagate this approach when providing capacity building support or facilitation services to their member municipalities engaged in DC processes. This is consistent with wider trends towards participatory governance in local governments across Europe.

However, there is limited evidence of European local governments defining a comprehensive vision/strategy for involving multiple stakeholders in DC, providing clear guidelines for dealing with essential "why, who, what for and how" questions. The articulation of actors in a given territory tends to vary hugely according to the specific local context and be based on tradition and organic processes rather than on a deliberate policy.

In practice, the opportunities for involving other actors from the territory largely depend on the type of DC programmes supported by local governments/regions. The link with the underlying cooperation models is crucial to understand the type of 'actors-articulation' sought, as illustrated in Box 2 below.

Box 2 | Underlying DC models and actors involved		
Type of DC models	Main objectives	Other actors likely to be involved
a) Traditional aid-oriented twinning programmes	-poverty reduction -funding for small development projects -provision of ad hoc technical assistance to southern partner municipality	Primarily development NGOs Sector specific actor depending on the aid project funded (e.g. schools or youth groups)
b) Structured, reciprocal partnerships ('direct DC') as the emanation of a municipal external policy	- institutional development - local governance - social cohesion -long-term relations between the societies and citizens of both cities - structured exchanges on managing territories	A wide range of public and private actors including civil society groups, universities, hospitals, businesses as well as citizens on both sides of the partnership (depending on the nature of the intervention)[2]
c) Subsidy programmes for local citizens projects in the South	- Support to a wide range of small-scale citizen's initiatives	Development NGOs and organised citizens groups
d) Financial participation in ongoing international campaigns (e.g. the Millennium Development Goals or the Fair Trade movement)	– expressing international solidarity	Development NGOs Education NGOs Local businesses
e) Support to awareness raising activities towards citizens from the territory	- sensitizing the population - broadening support for international cooperation - promoting active forms of 'global citizenship'	Education NGOs

In this reflection paper on the articulation between European local governments and civil society, it seems particularly useful to compare and contrast the opportunities for multi-actor participation provided by traditional aid-oriented twinning arrangements, on the one hand (see modality 'a' in the box above) and 'direct' DC, on the other hand (modality 'b').

According to Husson (2007), most of the DC partnerships still remain strongly focused on promoting (ad hoc) human contacts, facilitating intercultural exchanges or supporting local development projects –following a traditional donor-recipient relationship. In this type of DC processes, the issue of 'articulation of actors' is likely to be of limited strategic importance. As can be seen in the overview scheme above, the main actors to be implied in this DC modality are the development NGOs. In this scenario, the nature of the partnership tends to be instrumental (on both sides). European local governments seek cooperation with NGOs primarily for efficiency considerations, as it allows them to delegate the implementation of projects to actors that have supposedly a greater experience in aid. The implication of NGOs tends to be primarily driven by financial motivations (access to funds).

This situation prevailed (and still largely prevails) in Spain. From the 1990s onwards, local and regional governments responded to pressures from citizenship movements pushing for the achievement of the UN target of 0,7% of GDP and started to set aside funds for international cooperation. Confronted with their lack of experience in development matters, sub-national governments massively used NGOs to channel these resources to the South[3]. Under these conditions, there are limited incentives for local governments to play a dynamic role in trying to mobilise the various civil society organisations and businesses of their territory. The motivations for NGOs to engage with DC are primarily of a financial nature rather than inspired by a clear strategic choice to help constructing of a full-fledged DC policy for the local government of its territory. However, things are moving forward in Spain with a growing number of regional and local authorities (primarily larger cities) engaging in direct forms of DC. The recently launched national support programme, MUNICIPIA, managed by the Spanish Agency for International Cooperation, also seeks to develop initiatives that may lead to a strategic association of the different actors and stakeholders in these more sophisticated forms of DC.

Initially, DC activities in Italy also took place along the line of traditional twinning arrangements. However, particularly the regions have gradually adopted a much more ambitious approach to DC. According to Izzo and Stocchiero (2007) this has led to a broadening of the ob-

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[2]| *In this category one usually finds: (i) specific support measures for the institutional development of local governments, geared at specific municipal competencies (e.g. waste management, water and sanitation, housing), and primarily involving municipal expertise; (ii) a wide range of possible (cultural) exchanges among organised groups.*

[3]| *According to Malé (2006), it is estimated that 78% of the cooperation promoted by the autonomous regions in Spain consists of subsidies for NGOs to carry out local development projects.| According to Malé (2006), it is estimated that 78% of the cooperation promoted by the autonomous regions in Spain consists of subsidies for NGOs to carry out local development projects.*

jectives underlying the DC programmes, reflecting the region's desire to "internationalise the territory" and tackle common local development challenges (e.g. local governance; local economic development; social cohesion). This, in turn, has created new opportunities for mobilising a much wider set of actors that may have a stake in DC processes.

In Belgium, several Flemish municipalities involved in DC went through a similar experience. With the help of a rather progressive regional support scheme (funded by the Flemish government) and the technical assistance of the Flemish association of municipalities (VVSG), a number of local governments managed to transform their traditional DC approach into long-term partnerships aimed at promoting local governance as well as ensuring a strong community involvement in the North.

2. 2.   How diverse is the set of actors involved in DC?

This is a second dimension to be carefully considered by European local governments and regions that are committed to open-up their DC policies to other actors from the territory. It invites them (i) to make clear choices with regard to the type of actors to be involved (i.e. inclusive or selective approach?); (ii) to pro-actively invest time and resources into the mobilisation of actors from the territory; and (iii) to create the necessary incentives for a meaningful participation over time.

With regard to the types of actors to

be involved, European local governments generally adopt a pragmatic approach when it comes to identifying relevant actors that may be interested to participate in DC activities. The conceptual analysis tends to be fairly limited and there is not much tradition of elaborating sophisticated typologies of actors. The identification of potential partners usually happens "as the process moves on", depending on the local context, the specific nature, orientation and focus of the DC programme and the dynamics proper to the civil society groups in the territory. As a result, one can find a huge diversity of experiences across Europe ranging from rather selective approaches to open-ended and inclusive actors approaches (targeting all relevant forms of linkages between citizens on both sides).

However, as an increasing number of European local governments and regions gradually adopt more sophisticated forms of 'direct DC' (as autonomous actors), it might be advisable to deepen the reflection process on the diverse categories of actors to be subsumed under the concept of 'civil society'. This may help local governments to better understand the arena of civil society players in the territory (beyond traditional development NGOs) as well as the various agendas, motivations and interests at play. It may also contribute to clarifying the overall policy of European local governments towards civil society organisations and their potential roles in DC processes.

The development sector can provide a source of inspiration for a conceptual delineation of 'civil society'. An extensive literature[4] exists on (i) the origins of the concept and

the different political schools of thought that have influenced its evolution over time; (ii) the nature of civil society, its various forms, roles and expected contributions; (iii) the possible approaches to engage with and support civil society. The box 3 below summarises some relevant insights that might be of use for European local government in terms of refining their understanding on what civil society actors could mean for their DC programmes.

What does all this mean for European local governments? Three major strategic/op-

erational implications may require particular attention:

First, it might be useful for European local governments to examine more closely "who is who" in terms of civil society in the municipality. To this end, they could carry out, during the inception phase of a DC policy, some kind of basic 'mapping' of the various actors in their territory. This may help to avoid using civil society as a 'basket concept' with the risk of masking the diversity, inequality and struggle within the realm. Second, this typology of actors

Box 3 | Some definitional pointers

- A broad general definition of the term civil society is that it refers to arenas in which organisations and individuals play intermediary roles between the level of the family, on the one hand, and the State and the Market, on the other hand. These organised groups enjoy a degree of autonomy from the State and the Market, and constitute therefore a distinct sphere, also called a 'third sector'.

- Civil society provides the space and means for articulating and aggregating public interests, forming public opinion, developing agendas outside the state and the market and creating the means to influence them

- The arena of civil society is constituted by self-organised, self-governing, non-state, non-profit institutions that employ non-violent means to achieve a public interest or good through collective action[5].

- Civil society is invariably heterogeneous and competitive. Like society at large, civil society is a realm of power, inequality, struggle and conflict among competing interests. It is populated by diverse formal and informal groups and organisations that may or may not choose to cooperate on certain issues

- As such, civil society encompasses a huge diversity of actors, according to national/local characteristics. These may include local communities, cooperatives, neighbourhood associations, social movements, environmental groups, economic and social partners (trade unions; employers associations; private sector associations), churches and confessional movements, development NGOs, universities, cultural associations, media, etc.

- Civil society may perform a diversity of roles including (i) acting as dialogue partner in public policy processes; (ii) delivering social and economic services (project implementation); (iii) promoting institutional transparency and accountability ('watchdog agencies'); (iv) building constituencies for change and reforms (or the so-called 'socialization function of civil society'[6]).

- From this analysis it can be inferred that the profit-oriented business sector is not part of the civil society. It belongs to the market forces and is driven by economic imperatives.

[4]   A good overview of current debates is provided in: Pratt, B. (ed). Changing Expectations? The Concept and Practice of Civil Society in International Development. NGO Management & Policy Series Nr 16. INTRAC

[5]   This is an ideal-typical definition of civil society. In practice, one is likely to also encounter 'un-civic' organisations claiming to represent civil society yet without sharing these ethical values.
[6]   This function encompasses roles that relate to citizens' skills and communication of information, elements that are critical in the development of "active citizens" with a capacity for autonomous judgement and participation in the democratic process. It involves stimulating political awareness, developing skills for participation, education for democracy, dissemination of information to empower citizens, the creation of civic virtues, etc. It contributes to building social capital in communities (Putnam, 1993)

could be used to clearly distinguish the various roles to be performed by civil society and private sector associations in DC processes. Experience shows that European local governments are particularly interested in the delivery capacity of civil society (i.e. ensuring effective implementation of DC projects). But in the more sophisticated version of 'direct DC', conceived as long-term partnerships aimed at addressing common challenges in managing societies and territories, the other roles of civil society are likely to become more important. European local governments should also make clear choices with regard to the contribution expected from civil society and private sector in DC policy-making, in terms of ensuring transparency and accountability and in relation to building social capital. Third, a neat distinction should be operated between civil society and business, as the two set of actors belong to other spheres.

Another question to be considered under this heading is the roles that could be played by European local governments to dynamically and pro-actively mobilise the actors of their territory. Evidence from various sources indicates that this is not an easy thing to achieve. It does not happen spontaneously but requires a clear strategy to bring local people and organizations on board and to develop over time constructive and lasting partnerships. In practice, it calls upon local governments (executive board, councillors as well as civil servants) to take a number of measures, possibly including:

• participatory approaches to design-

ing an overall external policy/DC partnership;

• a political willingness to move beyond a mere city-to-city link by opening-up the DC process to a wide range of potentially interested actors;

• a preparedness to create space for citizen initiatives within the DC partnerships;

• a willingness to facilitate/mediate linkages between actors from the territory and counterpart organisations in the South, including the provision of strategic funding;

• a systematic investment in information and awareness building around the existence of the municipal partnership and envisaged activities, amongst others through the local media[7];

• the existence of mechanisms to assess the quality of the participatory approaches used by European local governments towards local stakeholders in DC processes;

• full transparency and accountability on the evolution, results and further development of the DC programme, including its possible discontinuation.

With regard to pro-active approaches that European local governments can use to mobilise civil society, it is worth referring to the Dutch DC programme LOGO SOUTH, implemented by VNG International. The primary aim of the programme

is to support the building of partnerships between municipalities in the Netherlands and in countries in the South, based on a community of interests between experts and actors sharing similar challenges. This 'colleague to colleague' approach makes it possible to diversify the range of actors involved. Furthermore, LOGO SOUTH has a number of thematic programmes, including one on 'public participation at the local level'. It seeks to promote knowledge, exchanges and mutual learning processes on how to improve public participation at the local level. While the programme focuses on participatory approaches in the context of Southern municipalities, many of the issues and methodological challenges also apply to citizen participation in DC processes in Europe. The programme has thus developed an analytical framework to help understand local authorities what drives participation, the so-called CLEAR framework[8]. It looks at five factors that affect participation: (i) individual capacity to participate; (ii) willingness to engage in public affairs (resulting from a sense of community, social capital or citizenship); (iii) enabling environment at the level of civil society (reflected in an appropriate civic infrastructure for participation); (iv) attractive participation schemes (that are diverse, engaging and reflexive) and (v) a responsive local government.

Closely linked to this pro-active role of local governments, is the question of incentives to be offered to civil society actors and businesses of the territory to participate in DC. Beyond financial incentives (which are likely to be rather reduced in DC programmes), European local governments could make a smart use of the 'internationalisation' incentive. This refers to the fact

that many civil society players and private sector groups on the territory (especially in medium-sized and larger cities) are keen to develop their international profile and agenda in the context of the globalisation process. The universities and high school offer a good example. For a variety of reasons they want to expand their international horizon and build collaborative arrangements with peer institutes in Europe but also in the South (e.g. to facilitate exchange programmes between students). The existence of a municipal partnership can provide an interesting framework for civil society groups to pursue their international agenda while at the same time contributing to the DC programme of the municipality.

2.3. Mechanisms and modalities used to involve other actors all along the DC cycle (formulation, implementation, monitoring)

A wide range of possible mechanisms and institutional arrangements are used by European local governments to structure the participation of civil society organisations and private sector actors in DC processes. Also here, the choice for specific organisational formats will depend on contextual factors proper to the different European territorial realities. Some of the key variables include:

• The history and maturity of DC programmes in EU Member States. Countries with a long-standing tradition of 'direct DC', emanating from local authorities and focused on establishing long-term partnerships, will display more sophisticated institutional arrangements of local government-civil society articulation. This is, for instance the case in France, particularly at the level of the regions.

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[7]| *This point is strongly made in a recent stock-taking document on Municipal Partnerships, produced by SALA IDA, the branch for international development cooperation at the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions. It contains several stories of Swedish twinning arrangements with cities in the South that have succeeded in "capturing unexpected stakeholders" in DC processes. However, the need for an active investment by the municipal coordinator is stressed as a key condition for effective mobilisation of civil society player (for more details see: SALA IDA. Municipal Partnership. International Cooperation for mutual benefit).*

[8]| *The acronym refers to the five factors explained above: Can do; Like to; Enabled to; Asked to and Responded to (together CLEAR). For more details see VNG. LOGO SOUTH Thematic programme on Public Participation.*

• The degree of autonomy enjoyed by local governments and regions for developing an external action.

• The existence of national support schemes of EU Member States in favour of DC. These donor programmes can have a determinant influence on the nature of the DC approach chosen by municipalities, especially if the European local governments are highly dependent on this funding. It can therefore also affect the underlying articulation of actors on the territory, as illustrated in box 4.

• The scale of the European local government involved. In Spain, for instance, the major cities (e.g. Barcelona) have a Master plan for their DC programme. Such a policy framework leads cities to be more specific on the role division between the various players and the mechanisms for dialogue and joint action.

• The dynamism, organisational strength and advocacy capacity of the various civil society groups in a given territory.

Taking into account this diversity of contextual elements, the question raises whether it is possible to elaborate a basic typology of approaches for involving other actors in the management of DC processes? Is it possible to discern different models for articulating the various territorial actors in current practices of European local governments and regions?

A careful analysis of various experiences across Europe suggests that three main models tend to be applied, reflecting different visions on the place and role of civil society in DC schemes. Each of these approaches starts from European local governments as the drivers of the DC process. Yet the underlying vision on DC, on the place and role of other actors therein and on the required institutional mechanisms to make it work, display major differences.

The following three models could thus be distinguished

A) DC model based on delegated cooperation, i.e. a model whereby the European local government/region decides to support DC activities that focus on delivering (financial) aid for development projects and to 'delegate' the responsibility for implementation to development NGOs, considered to be more qualified to do the job. The choice for an aid-oriented DC programme implies a rather limited role for the local government in the whole process while the synergies with other actors may be confined to development NGOs. In this scenario, the main mechanisms for local government-civil society interaction will be some kind of an interface structure between the two sets of players in order to organise a smooth aid delivery process. The modalities used are likely to be classical tools for accessing 'donor' funds (e.g. call for proposals).

B) DC model based on functional cooperation, i.e. a model whereby the European local government/region decides to engage in a DC process that focuses on establishing an institutional cooperation with a partner city and to take responsibility for the management of the relationship (as an own competence of the municipality/region). The choice for an institutional-oriented DC programme implies a lead role for the local government in terms of making overall policy choices, selecting a partner, concluding an agreement and formulating action plans. However, these local governments generally seek to associate other actors in the DC process on a functional basis. The search for synergies with civil society is instrumental. i.e. targeted at strengthening the institutional partnership established by the municipality. In this scenario, one is likely to find a much more diversified participation of actors as well as more sophisticated interface structures and modalities of collaboration between local governments and civil society groups.

C) DC model based on a joint action approach, i.e. a model whereby the European local government/region decides to

set up a lasting institutional partnership with another city (as in the previous model) but where it also has the explicit aim, right from the outset, to fully involve the citizens and organised groups from the territory. The synergies with other actors are not only sought for functional reasons, but reflect a political project to support the empowerment of the population and its participation in the overall local governance process. The cooperation is based on 'co-ownership' of the DC process and a 'joint action' approach all along the DC cycle. In this scenario, the mechanisms and modalities used are likely to be open-ended, inclusive and based on the principle of 'co-management' of the DC programme.

Box 5	Three models and their main characteristics.			
POSSIBLE MODELS	**Key features**	**Role division between actors**	**Mechanisms and modalities**	**Quality of DC approach**
a) DC based on delegated cooperation (to development NGOs)	- Limited vision on DC - Municipal budget for traditional development activities - Focus on delivering aid projects - Articulation actors confined to development NGOs	- Limited role municipality (acting as donor and controlling funding) - Delegation of DC execution to development NGOs (acting as implementing agencies or intermediaries)	- Light interface structures for ensuring smooth aid delivery - Modalities used are geared at accessing aid budget of the municipality (e.g. call for proposals)	– At best valuable local aid projects reaching out to beneficiaries - Doubts about sustainability projects - High risk of substitution by development NGOs - Danger of patronage and clientelism - Real added value of DC not optimally used
b) DC based on functional cooperation	– Vision of DC as 'direct' cooperation between autonomous municipalities - Broader agenda than development - Focus on institutional cooperation - Synergies sought with variety of actors in order to improve implementation of DC programme	- Lead role for municipality in overall DC process - Involvement of various layers and actors within municipality - Facilitation and mediation role of local governments to build local coalitions - Functional roles for other actors depending on nature DC programme⁹	- Formalised mechanisms for dialogue and collaboration with a variety of actors - Inter-personal and inter-service collaboration (peer-to-peer) - Flexible implementation modalities according to the nature of the DC programme - Opportunities for co-funding may arise as DC programme unfolds	– Opportunity to support local governance processes through 'direct DC' - Functional cooperation with other actors can give a boost to legitimacy, relevance and effectiveness of DC - DC framework can provide an incentive for new citizen initiatives
c) DC based on 'joint action' approaches	– DC reflects political vision on need to strengthen both local government and civil society participation - Integrated vision on articulating actors and territories - Co-ownership of DC process between LG and other actors	- Recognition of the roles of the various actors, each with their distinct identity - Joint responsibility for developing a full-fledged DC process (with a local government and a civil society component)	- Mechanisms aimed at a co-management of the DC process - Joint implementation arrangements - Joint funding modalities	- DC as a catalyst of change processes in both municipalities - Focus on improved local governance conceived as a better interaction between state and citizens - DC as a tool for international cooperation aimed at jointly addressing the challenge of managing societies and territories - Quality depends on inclusiveness of governance space and leadership/expertise various actors

Clearly, this is not supposed to be a watertight categorisation. In practice, one may find hybrid forms of DC programmes. Moreover, DC is by definition a highly dynamic process. European local governments can start a DC programme using the traditional aid-oriented model, based on delegated cooperation modalities, and then gradually evolve towards more sophisticated DC programmes, based on multi-actor partnerships.

It may also be relevant to give some practical examples mainly related to the models 2 and 3, as they may be particularly relevant to many European local governments engaged in DC.

For an illustration of model 2 (i.e. functional cooperation), the experience of Flemish municipalities may be relevant. DC is a relatively new phenomenon in Flanders (Belgium). Not surprisingly, many municipalities tend to set their first steps in DC by using the 'delegated cooperation model' (a feature also to be found in other European countries). Yet as mentioned before, a group of municipalities has been able to embrace a more ambitious agenda by developing a genuine DC policy involving an institutional partnership with a city from the South. The features of model 2 (see box 5) largely apply to them. The Flemish local governments involved are in the driving seat when it comes to defining the DC policy. They generally act as the facilitator and 'director of orchestra' of the city-to-city cooperation. Yet systematic efforts are made to associate a variety of other actors from the territory on a functional basis. A key mechanism for articulating the actors is the "Advisory Board for Development Cooperation". Box 5 illustrates how this usually works in practice

Illustrations also exist of the application of model 3 (i.e. DC according to joint action approaches). Two examples are briefly developed in the framework of this paper.

The first case concerns Reggio Emilia, a medium-sized town in the Emilia Romagna region of northern Italy. It has shown itself to be highly responsive to issues of social inclusion and civic participation in developing public policies in support of an effective municipal welfare system. Both the local authority and the town's citizens display a genuine interest in improving the political situation in Eastern Europe and Africa by making use of the instrument of twinning arrangements. The DC concept of Reggio Emilia seeks to combine local government strengthening with the empowerment of the population. Each municipality urges its citizens to dialogue and to meet representatives of the partner municipality in order to improve local governance by sharing experiences and best practices at all levels of society. Ideally, such an approach should lead to the definition of a fully participatory and shared strategy of cooperation (Foracchia 2004). In the experience of Reggio Emilia, this 'joint action' approach to DC, based on a co-ownership and co-management of the whole process, works well in twinning arrangements with Eastern European cities. The main reason for this is the existence of broadly similar concepts of democracy and participation. In order to manage this type of multi-actor partnership approach, the DC programme requires a coherent institutional framework. The scheme below illustrates how Region Emilia ensures the articulation of the various actors in the DC process.

The challenge for Reggio Emilia is to apply this approach in its partnerships with cities in the South (in this case in Mozambique and South Africa) where the conditions may be less suitable, partly because of hierarchic decision-making structures and capacity problems among

⁹| *The region of Lombardy in Italy, for instance, has developed a DC policy with a strong focus on local economic development. Naturally, it has been inclined to establish functional cooperation with the private sector of its territory*

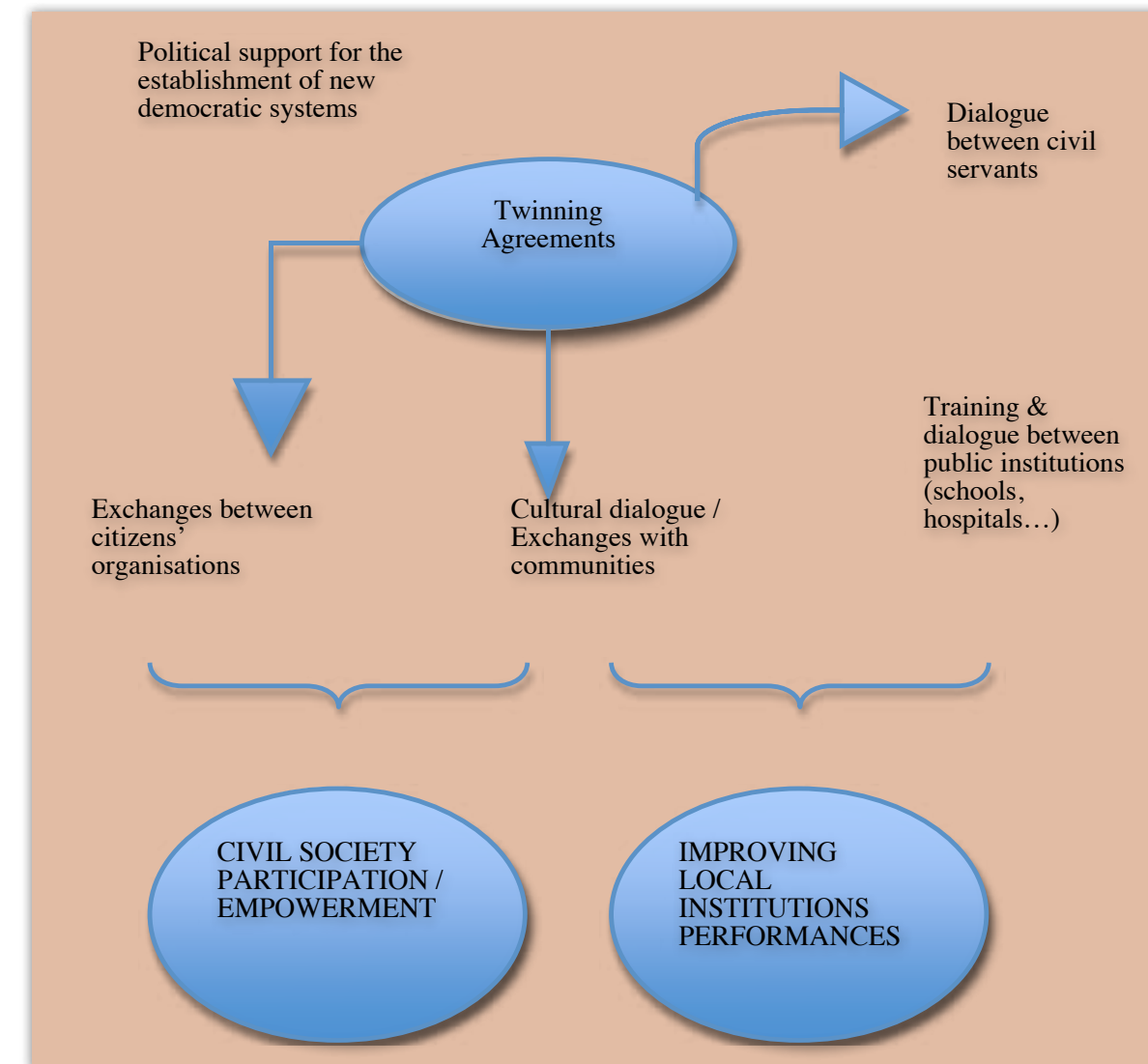## Box 6 | The Advisory Board as a mechanism to articulate actors

This structure exists in the various Flemish municipalities involved in 'direct' DC. It is a tool for the city to engage with citizens and organised groups that may potentially be interested in the DC programme. Its main operational features include:

- The DC programme is managed according to a triangular setting: (i) civil servants: (ii) political actors (mayor, responsible alderman, councillors) and (iii) the advisory board (representing citizen's interests, organised collectively and individually).

- There are no guidelines as to who should sit in the Advisory Board, as participation happens on a voluntary basis. However, most of the Boards tend to include NGOs (local and regional levels), university, private sector, schools, actors involved in the social economy sector, etc.).

- The formulation process is steered by civil servants (in collaboration with the partner city) define the cooperation agreement and a 3-year plan. However, the formulation mission is carried out by a mixed delegation involving political actors, civil servants and a representative from the Advisory Board. If requested, the Flemish Association of Cities and Communes also sends a delegate to provide technical assistance.

- The draft plan is then agreed by the (deputy-) mayor and submitted for discussion to the Management Team of the city (i.e. heads of different services) and the Advisory Board. Amendments are possible before the plan is voted at the City Council. In some municipalities, the Advisory Board can be more active and exert a right of initiative at the formulation stage. The quality of inputs provided by the Board tends to vary hugely from one municipality to another, depending on the commitment and professionalism of the people involved.

- Implementation modalities vary from one case to another. Some local governments ensure the coordination of multiple initiatives and actors. Others prefer to provide 'fragmented' support (through different actors).

- In some municipalities (e.g. the city of Ostende, twinned with Banjul, Gambia), the involvement of the Advisory Board has led to a greater understanding of the specific added value of 'direct DC' among civil society players (used to traditional forms of development cooperation). This, in turn, has enhanced the political support basis for municipal DC and even led to new modalities of co-funding from NGO sources.

civil society. At the same time, the various actors in Reggio Emilia tend to react differently when working with Southern municipalities. Particularly NGOs are inclined to support 'easier' technical projects (e.g. the construction of water wells) which do not require them to pay attention to the wider context.

A second example of a 'joint action approach' comes from France. It illustrates the evolution over time of the

DC approach, promoted by the Region of Loire Atlantique. Since 1988, the Region autonomously developed and managed a series of DC activities in Guinée Conakry (West Africa). In 1994, the choice for a multi-actor approach was enshrined with the creation of a specific agency "Association Guinée 44" to conduct and coordinate the DC policy of the various local governments and civil society groups of the Region interested in developing activities with the Guinean partner, i.e. the Region of Kindia. The decision-making structures of the Association encompass 4 types of actors: (i) the Regional Council of Loire-Atlantique; (ii) participating local governments of the Region; (iii) civil society groups and other institutions; (iv) individual members. In December 2007, the institutional structures were again adapted with a view to ensure a greater mobilisation of the various actors of the

Region in the DC process. The statutes now foresee a new array of capacity services to civil society groups of the territory as well as an extension of the geographical focus (beyond Guinée) of DC activities, in the same spirit of building local coalitions and multi-actor partnerships for effective DC.

2.4. The contribution of DC to citizen awareness and mobilisation

A fourth dimension to consider is the link between DC programmes and the participation of individual citizens from the territory. To what extent can DC contribute to sensitizing citizens about the need for international solidarity and cooperation? Can European local governments add value compared to development education efforts carried out by NGOs on the territory? To what extent can DC foster global citizenship among Northern citizens?

Raising development awareness has long been reserved to NGOs. For decades, a wide range of development education activities have thus been undertaken towards citizens. Many of these programmes have yielded significant results. Furthermore, the European civil society sector has sought to modernise its overall approach to development education, to enhance the professionalism of its staff, and to improve impact (including through exchanges and networking[10]).

Despite these efforts, the NGO-route towards sensitizing and educating Northern citizens has also shown limitations. A key problem often encountered is the limited capacity to reach out to broader segments of the population, particularly when NGOs try to go beyond the (humanitarian) aid message and the traditional (often ideologically biased) North-South analyses. It remains a huge challenge for education NGOs to promote reciprocal forms of international cooperation and global citizenship.

In this context, the need to involve other actors in the delivery of development education emerged. This trend also affected European local governments. Particularly DC programmes were seen to constitute a potentially useful complementary instrument for mobilising public support for international cooperation and involving citizens in DC processes. Often pushed by civil society groups from their territory, European local governments started to allocate resources for a wide range of awareness raising activities related to North South issues. These typically include programmes aimed at promoting fair trade; supporting MDG campaigns; applying the 0,7% norm to the municipal budget; or allocating resources to NGOs to carry out development education towards the citizens of the territory.

Evaluative material on the impact of DC in terms of creating development awareness or promoting global citizenship, are scarce. The overall evaluation of the first municipal international cooperation programme 1997-2001,

funded by the Dutch Government, provides some interesting insights[11]. For the Ministry, a key priority of the programme was to broaden public support for international cooperation, amongst others by ensuring the participation of citizens in the twinning processes. Yet the importance of this objective was not shared by the other actors involved. The Dutch municipalities were primarily interested in the intensification and expansion of city linkages, while VNG International (in charge of the overall management of the programme) pushed to put local government strengthening in the South at the centre of DC. In addition to this, the various parties did not manage to translate the key objective of mobilising public support into clear implementation modalities, nor was donor funding put aside for achieving this purpose. As a result, this dimension was largely neglected in the programme. The new support programme LOGO-SOUTH (2005-2009) incorporates the main lessons learnt from this evaluation. It puts a premium on using DC as a means to build partnerships between municipalities while involving a wide range of actors/citizens/experts in the process. This direct citizen exposure is seen to harbour potential for raising development awareness through direct forms of exposure and participation in concrete DC activities and exchanges.

Experiences across Europe suggest that DC programmes can be an effective vehicle for reaching out to a broader set of constituencies. City links offer opportunities to "give a face" to North-South cooperation and to explore new ways of international cooperation in the sense that it can:

• Facilitate the involvement of politicians and officials from local governments

through peer contacts appealing to their field of work.

• Mobilise citizens around concrete stories about towns in development through direct exchange processes that bring Southern realities closer.

• Help to find creative ways to address problems of racism or fear for other cultures among Northern populations. In this context, it is worth mentioning the growing interest of European local governments with large immigrant groups in establishing DC programmes with municipalities in the main migrant countries of origin. In addition to the general objectives of DC, these city links also seek to promote mutual understanding between migrant and host societies, social cohesion and integration of migrants through contacts and exchange of information[12].

• Provide a framework for establishing international relations between organized civil society groups from the respective territories

• Contribute to the gradual development of a full-fledged external policy for the European local governments involved.

This list shows that DC can be a trigger for mobilising citizens around international cooperation issues. At the same time, it is necessary to refrain from having inflated expectations on the contribution of DC programmes in this area. As mentioned before, many European local governments involved in DC operate largely within the aid paradigm, based on North-South transfers. The development education activities, undertaken in this type of frameworks, are likely to be couched in the same mould than the traditional NGO approaches. They may

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[10] *An interesting example is DEEEP (Development Education Exchange in Europe Project), a programme initiated by the Development Education Forum of CONCORD (the umbrella structure of European NGOs). It aims at strengthening the capacity of NGDOs to raise awareness, educate and mobilise the European public for world-wide poverty eradication and social inclusion (www.deeep.org)*

[11] *See: On Solidarity and Professionalisation. Evaluation of Municipal International Co-operation (1997-2001). IOB. Policy and Operations Evaluation Department. August 2004*

[12] *For a practical example see Van Ewijck, E. Decentralised Cooperation between Dutch municipalities and municipalities in migrant countries. Main development and main theoretical debates, illustrated by several case studies. Report for the NCDO. March 2008*

help to widen the public involved but not necessarily enhance the capacity of citizens to engage in international cooperation partnerships based on equality, reciprocity and mutual responsibility.

3. The contribution of DC to citizen awareness and mobilisation

This paper explored the articulation between European local governments/regions and the civil society/private sector groups operating on the territory. It sought to build a case for promoting multi-actor partnerships in the formulation and implementation of DC policies. The argument was made -on the basis of both theoretical justifications and practical evidence- that this approach may help to realise the full potential of DC as a distinct form of international cooperation, driven by local governments but fuelled by the active participation of a wide range of other actors.

The analysis of current practices with regard to multi-actor partnerships in DC processes initiated by European local governments and regions shows a mixed track record. While a growing number of municipalities have embraced this approach in their external action, many others still see DC mainly as an instrument to fund traditional aid projects in partner cities. In the latter form of DC, the scope for a meaningful involvement of a plurality of civil society/private sector groups remains limited.

Considering the benefits of a proper articulation of actors from the territory in DC processes, the questions arises how European local governments and regions can be further stimulated to adopt this multi-actor approach. Four main challenges come to the surface:

• Broadening the scope of the international cooperation agenda. This first challenge lies in the hands of European local governments and regions themselves. As long as their DC horizon focuses on supporting the delivery of aid projects in the South (mainly through NGOs), the articulation of civil society and private sector actors from their territory will also remain rather limited. However, if they embrace more sophisticated forms of 'direct DC' –oriented towards the establishment of mutually beneficial partnerships for a better management of local societies and territories- the opportunities of citizen participation are likely to seriously expand (as demonstrated by cities that have embarked on this path). In the era of globalisation and urbanisation, European local governments and regions have much to gain from developing a full-fledged external policy, with a strong DC component, owned and promoted by both public and private actors from the territory. In this context, it would be useful to further investigate what type of incentives may help to push European local governments to "cross the Rubicon" and to engage in reciprocal forms of international cooperation.

• Negotiating a new partnership between local governments and civil society. Development NGOs are a critically important partner in DC processes. At this stage, they tend to play a variety of roles. In the South, they are often asked by European local governments to implement development projects on their behalf or to participate in the promotion of local governance (in association with local civil society organisations). In the North, development NGOs equally perform different functions in DC programmes, including mobilising public support; influencing the orientation of DC policies (through Advisory Boards or advocacy activities); organising awareness raising events, etc. As a growing number of European local governments make the shift towards 'direct' forms of DC (as autonomous actors exercising a municipal competency)

there will be a need to redefine "who does what" in DC and to sort out new partnership modalities. The challenge will be to move beyond situations whereby NGOs act as a 'substitute' for local governments and to articulate a task division based on legitimate roles and comparative advantages. This will require a strategic dialogue between both set of players, not only within the territory but also at higher levels (e.g. between national associations of municipalities and representative umbrella NGOs).

• Providing smart donor support to multi-actor modalities of DC. EU Member States and the EC are important players in DC processes, primarily through the funding they provide. In several EU countries, the challenge is to convince national authorities to put in place support schemes that foster a multi-actor partnership approach to DC. Two major benefits can be expected from smart forms of financial support. First, a stronger articulation of actors is likely to improve both the design and implementation of DC programmes as well as ensure "better value for money" in terms of impact on the ground. Second, by supporting multi-actor approaches to DC, national schemes help to realise the potential of this specific instrument of international cooperation. These DC partnerships can then, in turn, more easily be integrated and used in mainstream cooperation processes (alongside other tools and channels).

• Energizing the solidarity, social capital and expertise of citizens. Ideally European local governments and regions play a proactive role in promoting citizen participation in DC processes. This paper has touched upon possible strategies to be used for that purpose. Yet more debate, stocktaking of experiences and exchanges are needed to identify effective ways and means to fully mobilise the energies and resources of citizens in DC. It is also interesting to further explore how citizens themselves can be the driving force in demanding stronger participation in the DC programmes of their municipality. In some cases, citizens do not wait for the local government to start twinning with citizens from another city. A case in point is the Birmingham Ramallah Twinning Initiative (BRTI), an initiative that started from a wide range of civil society groups. The purpose is to enable citizens from the two cities to build ongoing and formalised relationships at grassroots levels. There are now expectations that the City Council will jump on the boat and to provide funding in line with that provided for the other five twinning arrangements that Birmingham has.

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Governance and institutional strengthening

Decentralised cooperation in Central America and its contribution to articulation between local governments and civil society

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1. Introduction

The main objective of this article is to offer a structured analysis of the different policies, practices and instruments that Central American local governments use to interact with the civil society in their territories that is linked to international cooperation activities.

The analysis begins with a conceptual introduction to what is understood by articulation, civil society, decentralised cooperation and their possible interrelation.

The second part deals with some existing modalities of articulation in Central America between municipal governments and organisations of civil society linked to decentralised cooperation, as well as with other actors, especially businesses. Furthermore, the study seeks to identify the mechanisms used and how these relationships form part of local decentralised cooperation policies.

The article aims to present the practices and models of interaction that local governments use with these actors and to see how the policies, projects and working strategies of organisations of civil society are articulated with local development plans and with the international action of Central American municipalities. In other works, how the work carried out by non-governmental organisations (NGOs) endorses the political agendas and local development actions of local administrations or whether, on the contrary, their impact is not always in line with these.

However, looking beyond this actor, the article also aims to study the articulation between local governments and the other territorial actors mentioned above, to find out how they participate in the decentralised cooperation policies in their territories and how to encourage their involvement. Thus, the article attempts to initiate a prospective reflection on the mechanisms that help local and regional governments to assume the role of dynamising the civil society in their territories in order to involve it in the international cooperation policies they carry out.

Finally, the article ends by offering some reflections on the Central American experience, thereby attempting to contribute to encouraging future debates on the multilevel relations associated with decentralised cooperation.

2. Conceptual analysis: articulation, civil society, decentralised cooperation

Generally speaking, the concept of articulation refers to the union and organisation of the different elements of a whole so that this becomes organised and balanced.

In the case of the State, articulation is known as a process of coordination, and even concertation, between the public administrations themselves; but also between the State and the non-State public area and what is known as the private sector. In this case, articulation rather than being a technical process is a political process which seeks to change the correlation of efforts in order to achieve objectives of interest to the actors involved in the relationship.

In the case of articulation within the State, this can work vertically, i.e., be practised as coordination between different levels of public administrations, and horizontally, as coordination between public ad-

ministrations on the same level. The special characteristic of articulation between public administrations, whether horizontal or vertical, is that in a democratic regime the relationship is not established in hierarchical or subordination terms, but with mutual autonomy and, therefore, as coordination among equals. Local government-central government articulation is not only important for guaranteeing greater effectiveness and efficiency in State management, but also because local issues are over-determined by other central areas of authority and local actors should have the ability to influence the decisions taken in these areas that affect their governance and development.

The type of articulation with other non-State actors that stands out in particular is that with civil society, with the business sector, and with external actors, such as in international cooperation. In this article we basically focus on this aspect and on articulation with civil society, particularly articulation with the NGO sector.

In the case of articulation within the State and with its different administrations, the predominant tendency to overcome consists of the often feudal operation of each of the sectoral administrations of the central government, as well as the subordinating bias of their relations with other sub-national public administrations. In Central America these relations tend to be conflictive when the public administrations have different political affiliations.

2.1. Local governments' articulation with civil society

We begin with the concept that civil society comprises a wide range of non-commercial and non-State organisations

and structures in which individuals seek to achieve shared objectives and ideals. For this reason the concept cannot only refer to NGOs.

Civil society plays different roles related to democracy and governance, development, citizen empowerment and social control. All these roles have been considered of interest for international cooperation.

In terms of its role in democracy, citizen participation holds particular importance. Civil society is seen as a fundamental element for the good running of a democratic society and the growth of social capital. From this perspective, civil society is usually considered as one of the three points of a key triangle of governance (civil society, State and private sector), or as one more authority that, together with the executive, judicial and legislative authorities, and independent communication media, contributes to good democratic government.

With regards its role in development, civil society is viewed as a group of actors differentiated according to their values and their effectiveness in development programmes. The rich variety of civil society enables donors, governments, citizens and other organisations to identify partners they can form alliances with in order to achieve their development and public interest objectives. In Central America, civil society's participation is largely based on NGOs, i.e., it tends to join together in a great number of development non-governmental organisations, which frequently leads to confusing the term civil society with NGOs.

Civil society is also considered an instrument for consolidating the social power of some segments of society, such as the poor, the dispossessed, women, and ethnic

or other groups. Its role in processes of defending and enforcing human rights and constructing citizenship is increasingly being recognised as important. Furthermore, in this regard the social control exercised by civil society over the rule of law and the political system allows it to play an also essential role in the autonomous control of the State and the market. This role has increasingly been developing in Central America, sometimes combined with civil society's active role in development.

These perspectives of civil society's roles are different, but complementary, and they highlight it as one of the necessary components of a democratic society with a responsible and effective system of government, as efficient organisations providing development programmes and operations, as instruments for the social empowerment of certain groups and for respecting human rights, and as a guarantor of citizens' rights within the State and the market.

It should be pointed out that in Central America, civil society is under construction as, with some exceptions, the prevailing authoritarianism and armed conflicts have not permitted the minimum democratic conditions to be created for this civil society to develop and flourish. It is only since the peace processes of the 1990s that Central American civil societies have begun to create the conditions for constructing non-State public spaces and organisations that enable it to occupy these spaces, as opposed to the State or the market. The emergence of this civil society in this new space under construction has had to take place in competition with other actors, such as political parties and the State itself, which are distrustful of the appearance of this new actor and its aspirations of autonomy and self-representation. That is

why the challenge of articulating the different public administrations with civil society involves overcoming mutual distrust, further aggravated by political polarisation deriving from war and the social situation which, added to the frequent dispersal of civil society, its heterogeneity, its unequal ability to make proposals, its limited influence on the articulation of requests and their translation into policies, all hinder relations. On the other hand, the frequent and still prevailing tendency towards an authoritarian, vertical and patronage relationship, with its correlate in the promotion of aid-oriented actions, also does nothing to strengthen articulation relations between the State and civil society in which each actor maintains their autonomy and contributes from their own identity.

In this article we will largely focus our attention on civil society's role in development and on its position as an ally of decentralised cooperation, although without undervaluing its other functions, particularly those which relate to democracy and local governance.

2.2. Local governments, civil society and international cooperation

Since the mid-1980s traditional cooperation has begun to show signs of exhaustion, and the perception of the weaknesses, and even failure according to others, of its approach and its mechanisms for improving the living conditions of the population have become widespread. The frequent criticism of the poor effectiveness of traditional development aid was the motivation behind the Paris Declaration in 2005, one of whose main points established the need for aid workers to articulate their cooperation with the plans of the receiving coun-

tries, who should be directing the assistance. The harmonisation of cooperation that should occur among the donors themselves and with national governments is based on aligning assistance with the plans that should have been defined in a participative manner by the receiving country.

However, two of Southern civil society's criticisms of the articulation promoted by the Paris Declaration are that it considers cooperation relations only as a State affair, in which the interlocutors are central governments and in which the space for local governments and civil society in the peripheral countries is practically non-existent or marginal; and secondly, that due to this civil society's marginal role, the alignment of international cooperation with local governmental plans does not necessarily reflect an alignment with widespread national consensus but only with government plans, which damages the sustainability of these plans with each change of administration.

Nevertheless, it is a fact that in their role of contributing towards development, organisations of civil society also form part of the architecture of international aid. These organisations assume roles whether as donors, as channels or recipients of the official assistance of donors. In their position as guarantors of citizens' rights and social control, these organisations act in defence of public interests before the State and vis-à-vis international cooperation.

In their capacity as donors, organisations of civil society in developed countries mobilise voluntary financial contributions or services amounting to billions of dollars with development aims in mind.

These organisations also act as chan-
nels and receivers of official assistance being donated, receiving funds from official aid workers to finance their development programmes or to redistribute them among other organisations of civil society. This is, for example, the predominant form assumed today by North-South decentralised cooperation. NGOs or Northern foundations usually act as intermediaries for decentralised cooperation.

Civil society organisations (CSOs) also carry out an essential task of defending interests and supervising both governments and donors. In this role, CSOs can promote aid effectiveness even when the funding is not being channelled through them, and can apply pressure so that financial contributions provide maximum benefit for the poor and follow a transparent route.

However, traditional official development assistance has tended to minimise the role of civil society, particularly in the South. In the Paris Declaration, for example, civil society continues to be limited to playing an instrumental role, and is viewed as a public management instrument that aims to assist governments and their cooperation to improve their performance and achievements. This tendency is usually also present in the case of traditional decentralised cooperation, which uses the dominant modality of projects. It is true that these civil society functions are important because they can contribute to increasing participative processes under government management, or rather they can serve as a parallel instrument for official donors to align themselves with the priorities of the benefitting country in fragile states. This perspective corresponds to the vision of civil society as one of the pillars of a democratic State, just as with the especially important role that it is believed CSOs can play in states
in conflict or non-democratic states. However, in Central America the instrumental perspective does not normally recognise the role of CSOs as development actors in their own right, whose objectives and activities are not necessarily defined according to their relationship with the government, and whose role often consists of questioning the government –which can sometimes lead to conflictive relationships. This is a particularly important point in the case of Central America, due to its recent process of democracy and the high levels of government intolerance of criticism and alternative proposals.

In fact, the instrumental vision takes for granted that there is a national or local consensus on the needs and priorities of a country, department or municipality, which is why it is not recognised that CSOs may legitimately represent alternative points of view, or that a debate about alternative solutions could be useful. From this last perspective, social change has a greater probability of responding to the needs of the poor when there is a diverse and dynamic civil society capable of promoting the priorities of the poor, good governance, ethnic and gender equality and respect for human rights.

Articulation has been seen as an essential element for achieving democratic governance and sustainable local development. However, it should not be assumed that this articulation boils down to a simple process of public management or capitalising on civil society for the purposes of public efficiency in this management. On the contrary, it should be viewed as a political process which expands and strengthens electoral and participative democracy, the democratisation of the political parties, the widening of the non-State public space and the construction of
citizenship, contributing to social inclusion, tolerance and civil society's ability to make proposals and criticisms.

Thus, as another option for dealing with the perceived weaknesses of the traditional approach and mechanisms, and to respond to new international situations, a great deal of interest is currently being shown in the emergence of the new approach to decentralised cooperation relations. The particularity and special nature of the actors in this type of cooperation enables them not only to add their numbers to the existing actors in this field, but instead to carry out another type of cooperation, making the most of their specific characteristic as autonomous local governments in order to complement traditional cooperation with a solidary, horizontal and multi-directional approach that is less conditioned by commercial or geopolitical interests. This facilitates more flexible cooperation, involving other territorial actors, taking their interests and points of view into account and strengthening their counterparts' capacities, thereby improving the effectiveness and efficiency of the local management of public policies.

2.3. Decentralised cooperation, local governments and civil society

Government-civil society articulation usually takes place in the local arena due to its actors' proximity to each other. The emergence of local governments onto the international scene through decentralised cooperation may boost this articulation, particularly because of the important roles that can be played by NGOs in these local government international relations.

The broadest definition of decentralised cooperation could be that it comprises all cooperation whose actions are directed at local governments and local community

organisations. The narrowest definition would be that it encompasses the group of direct public cooperation actions that local and regional governments carry out in the international arena within the scope of their competences. This definition emphasises that the particularity of decentralised cooperation lies in it being different from the traditional cooperation of national governments and in the fact that it is carried out via a direct relationship between local governments, i.e., it actively involves decentralised governmental authorities on both sides of the relationship. It does not exclude other subjects as long as they are of a local nature. However, the predominant definition of decentralised cooperation is based on the most common practice of NGOs mediating this relationship, and carrying out the task of raising and channelling funds.[1] Nevertheless, the narrow definition considers not only the partners in the relationship, but also the cooperation method (decentralised and decentralising towards the other local actors), and a design and process aimed at cooperation and coherent with decentralisation.[2]

This is the case because one of the particularities of decentralised cooperation is that it is territorial. Local governments have the advantage of proximity: they are the closest administrations to the population. Therefore, they are more sensitive to local development needs. Local governments' territorial roots enable them to involve other local actors, expanding and intensifying the relationships with NGOs, universities, businesses, schools, hospitals, etc. These local roots not only contribute to the adaptation and sustainability of actions by local actors, but they also establish a more democratic foundation for decentralised cooperation. The fact that local governments assume leadership of decentralised cooperation is precisely what enables a wide range of local social actors to be mobilised, providing them with an action framework that is coherent and under citizens' control. In other words, decentralised cooperation has the power to promote and strengthen a broad relationship between local governments and other local social partners, especially a very direct relationship with citizens, which permits better control and greater involvement and bottom-up participation. This in turn introduces greater depth and sustainability into processes of local development. Furthermore, local governments' articulation with civil society, NGOs, universities and other similar organisations to some extent facilitates their international relations by taking advantage of the professional expertise and specialisation of these organisations in order to make this articulation more fluid and efficient.

We should however reiterate that decentralised cooperation which is indirect or via intermediaries, as practiced by the Northern NGOs that participate in subnational government competitions to award grants for cooperation projects and actions directed at other subnational authorities in the South, is the type of relationship that prevails in some countries such as Spain, if we take into account the number of actions and initiatives that can be identified.

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[1] *See for example the definition provided by Córdoba Provincial Council: "When we speak of decentralised cooperation we refer to actions carried out, directly or indirectly, by local or autonomous public institutions, i.e., those local or autonomous institutions which are public, but do not administratively correspond to the dictates of the central administration."*
(www.dipucordoba.es/internacional/pdf/cuba- contextos.pdf+Hermanamientos+Nicaragua+modalidades +enfoques&hl=es&ct=clnk&cd=40&gl=ni)

[2] *Guía municipal para la cooperación. www.resdeseurosur.com*

However, nowadays there is a tendency to encourage decentralised cooperation practices and actions that involve the municipality or local entity being an active partner in development cooperation and not simply a financing entity or executor of projects.

3. Central American experiences of articulating local governments with civil societies linked to decentralised cooperation

In Central America, after the peace agreements that were signed in the 1990s, one of the most important phenomena has been the gradually increasing presence, in all countries, of municipalities as spaces and subjects of development and democratic construction. Together with this national presence, they have also begun to occupy spaces in the international arena. In some cases, such as with Nicaragua, the municipalities had an international presence prior to the peace agreements, as this presence appeared precisely during the armed conflict that the country was involved in throughout the whole of the 1980s.

Local governments' breakthrough as new national and international political actors coincided, on the one hand, with the growing need for reforms aimed at State decentralisation in order to strengthen these actors, and on the other hand, with an increase in the number of local development experiences and processes in which citizen participation, concertation and articulation among the main territorial actors became the order of the day.

The 2008 State of the Region Report dedicated a chapter to the topic of 'The regional challenge of strengthening local governments.' It pointed out that in the 1999-2007 period the regulations governing municipalities' operation underwent important transformations, although "despite the profusion of legislative reforms, it can be said that these did not significantly modify the framework of municipal competences" (State of the Region: 2008). Furthermore, in the 2002-2005 four-year-period, the average State transfers as a percentage of municipal governments' total revenue rose from 26% to 30%, which without doubt meant an increase in their capacity to invest in developing their territories.

In this context, also influenced by globalisation and international trends favourable towards democracy and State decentralisation, another fundamental actor also emerged in national and local development processes: civil society. The participation of civil society in public spaces and policies converted citizen participation into a leading issue. With the aim of promoting this, in recent years a number of legal and political reforms have been carried out in the different countries in the region. Noteworthy among these are the Development Council Law in Guatemala (2001), and the Citizen Participation Law in Nicaragua (2003) and in Honduras (2006). In these three cases the regulations define a series of principles to guide participation and create new direct democracy mechanisms and authorities. Of particular interest is the Nicaraguan law, which states that citizens have the capacity of initiative in the municipal council, and establishes an assembly process for citizen participation in the local governments' most important annual decision: their budgets. In the case of El Salvador, at the end of 2005 reforms were made to the Municipal Code emphasising the need for local governments to make a greater commitment to citizen participation, stating that the local level has an 'obligation'

to promote this. It also stressed the need for transparent management –additional articles being incorporated into the current regulations on this matter– and the municipal government's accountability to the community was also reinforced. Incidentally, these reforms were sponsored by 92 organisations of civil society, and it was the first time in the country's history that municipal law was reformed on the initiative and with the participation of citizens.[3]

Since the 1990s, citizen participation has attempted to respond to the difficulties facing democracy which primarily relate to the fragility of its institutions, the concentration of power and the crisis surrounding the legitimacy of the political system and, secondly, to a lack of conditions that permit equal recognition of citizens and their leading role in democratic construction and development.

"In the field of citizen participation, the most outstanding feature of the 1999-2007 period is the regional tendency towards setting up a greater number of mechanisms of direct democracy on a local level. These measures aim to bring municipal decisions closer to citizens and can therefore be considered as political decentralisation arrangements" (State of the Region 2008). Nevertheless, as stated in the same report, "there is an important difference between what the rules stipulate and what occurs in reality". (State of the Region 2008).

Given that there are different conceptions in the region of what citizen participation means, mechanisms of direct democracy encompass a wide variety of areas. In fact, municipal regulations recognise, on the one hand, mechanisms of information and consultancy, and on the other, instruments of control and participation in management. (State of the Region 2008).

In spite of the spread of national and local mechanisms and participation bodies, there is still a considerable gap between the current regulations and how they are put into practice –an issue documented in different studies and surveys. This shows that local governments' articulation with local civil society continues to be an important challenge.

On the other hand, there is a fair amount of evidence in the different countries in the region that shows that the local development processes that have made the most progress and have produced the most results are those in which citizen participation is strongest and most systematic. One of the cornerstones of this participation is local governments' articulation with NGOs, which represent the majority of the organisations of civil society in Central America.

For this reason, for the purpose of this article we wanted to focus specifically on these processes of articulation between local governments and civil society linked to decentralised cooperation, drawing on references and examples that enable us to illustrate the current situation in the region.

It should be noted that Central America has extensive experience of decentralised cooperation, particularly in Sandinista Nicaragua which initiated these relations in the 1980s. The most paradigmatic cases are

the experiences of twinning cities, which have evolved from a militant solidarity policy to become decentralised cooperation as a relationship between partners which has spread to other countries in the region. At the same time very active non-governmental organisations have been emerging in all the countries, some of them specialising in local work and articulating themselves with local governments to this end and playing important roles as channels or executors of decentralised cooperation.

Next we attempt to provide a preliminary analysis of some of these articulation experiences.

3.1. Experiences of decentralised cooperation involving articulation between local governments and civil societies in Central America

In Central America, decentralised cooperation involves a rich diversity of actors and practices, and is applied using many mechanisms, methodologies and instruments.

3.1.1. Actors and modalities Central American municipalities use to interact with each other

In Central America there is a great variety of actors and modalities of interacting with local governments, including non-governmental organisations, associations, foundations, universities, research centres and others. The modalities include bilateral articulations with different actors and multi-actor interaction methods. Relations with private enterprise are weak and for the most part virtually non-existent.

The most frequent relationship local governments have is with NGOs. It is possible to identify three types of organisations linked to decentralised cooperation: organisations donating or channelling funds, organisations with a territorial and community base usually receiving funds, and support organisations. The former are usually Northern organisations, sometimes with a presence in countries in the South, which receive funds from local governments and channel them to their counterparts or directly to local governments in the South. One example is the Dutch NGO Dritte Welt Haus e.V (Third World House) based in the city of Bielefeld, which for many years has been channelling funds from European cities twinned with the city of Estelí in Nicaragua. In turn, the territorially-based organisations emerge in order to respond to the needs of the inhabitants of a specific territorial area. This category is basically composed of municipal, local and neighbourhood associations, as well as other associations with more specific aims. In some cases, such as the Nicaraguan Community Movement, these are national organisations with a presence in departments, municipalities and neighbourhoods. They obtain their resources from sources other than their members' contributions, including decentralised cooperation. Their objectives and functions cover a broad range of activities that tend not only to meet many community interests, but also to generate and promote solidary links. Support organisations are set up with the aim of helping others, including local governments, and included among these are social services entities, promotion and development organisations, organisations defending rights and academic centres.

We should point out that increasingly in Central America while many

3| *For further information see: Enríquez Villacorta, Alberto: 'Participación Ciudadana en la transformación del marco legal municipal en El Salvador: lectura y lecciones de una experiencia de incidencia política'. Lecture given at the Global Conference on how to build political will for participatory governance. Glasgow, Scotland. June 2008.*

NGOs are specialising in local work, in some cases they are setting up networks or associations among themselves and are becoming involved in decentralised cooperation. One example is the Nicaraguan Network for Democracy and Local Development, comprised of almost fifty non-governmental organisations that are becoming more and more specialised in supporting and developing the local area, and which at some points has been linked to financial aid from the Catalan Fund, the Confederation of Spanish Funds, and Barcelona Provincial Council. A similar case is that of the Network for Local Development in El Salvador. This trend is important as it contributes to overcoming the dispersed nature of efforts and strengthens alliances with local governments, particularly in cases where these are necessary for influencing change in political conditions and making these more favourable towards local governments, as with the policy of State decentralisation.

Northern NGOs play an essential role in channelling funds from mainly European – but also Canadian and North American– and mostly Spanish territories, with different aims that range from simple aid-oriented assistance to strengthening local processes and actors in Central America.

In most of these cases, local governments in the North assume the role of financing cooperation activities. These may be very different in nature and in most cases are proposed and are carried out by NGOs. The central element of this relationship is the transfer of financial or material resources for different purposes.

For Jean-Pierre Malé, strictly speaking, "this kind of co-operation would not be included in what we usually refer to as public decentralised cooperation (PDC), since it does not ensure the establishment of a direct relationship between the two public institutions."

Among the local governments promoting this type of decentralised cooperation one can identify some cooperating city councils in bilateral relations, including twinning, with Central American municipalities, but also some city councils associated with municipal solidarity funds such as the Catalan Fund, the Majorcan Fund, and the Minorcan Fund.

This method is used by a very wide range of the international and national NGOs working in Central America, and particularly in Nicaragua and El Salvador.

A good example is the municipality of Tecoluca in El Salvador, where decentralised cooperation has been channelled mainly through non-governmental organisations such as the CORDES Foundation, the National Development Foundation (FUNDE), and Las Mélidas, and secondly through the Association of Rural Communities for the Development of El Salvador, CRIPDES.

In these cases it is the three NGOs and CRIPDES who have the relationship with local governments or the Spanish municipal solidarity funds. It is these organisations who, understanding Tecoluca's local development needs and processes, decide on the content of the projects, create them and present them. And it is these same organisations that carry out the projects once funds have been received, although in agreement with the municipal government and trying to ensure that they are in line with municipal plans.

In cases of indirect cooperation via

NGOs or social organisations, the municipal institution is substituted by citizens and private partners – albeit non-profit making. Therefore, one of the principal doubts raised about this type of cooperation regards its poor or zero sustainability, given that the public and decentralised funds of Northern territories tend to strengthen NGOs more than the local institutional structure, especially when the local government is not directly involved.

Nevertheless, it has been seen that the mediation of finance-channelling NGOs in Southern municipalities does not always substitute local governments' direct relationships. Examples in Nicaragua show that both relationships can exist at the same time, such as in Estelí, where the mediation of the NGO Third World House with European twinned cities has not prevented these cities from also maintaining direct relations, as occurred in the case of Bielefeld which assisted with drafting the municipality's Strategic Plan; or the case of the city of Utrecht in the drafting of León City Council's Structural Master Plan. In both cases there were exchanges of experiences and direct consultancy, while other resources were coordinated and channelled through NGOs.

Another actor that some municipalities work with in the context of decentralised cooperation are their own associations of municipalities. In the specific case of El Salvador this occurred with the Corporation of Municipalities of the Republic of El Salvador, COMURES. An example of this is the Community of Madrid's financial support for the Jiboa valley micro-region –located in the paracentral area of the country and made up of the municipalities of San Cayetano Istepeque, Tepetitán, Verapaz, Guadalupe, Mercedes La Ceiba and Jerusalén– after the earthquakes of 2001, assisting with the design of its Territorial Development and Regulation Plan. In this case COMURES was also supported by the "José Simeón Cañas" Central American University (UCA).

This last example illustrates how in recent years the articulation of local governments and actors, such as universities, research centres and service providers, with support NGOs has been growing in Central America. Some of these cases involve alliances with decentralised cooperation, such as with Barcelona Provincial Council.

Other actors related with local governments are involved in more complex articulations connected with empowering citizens and local development. An example of this are the actors involved in experiences run by Dutch cities twinned with 16 Nicaraguan municipalities and which promote local development projects based on establishing relationships with local actors. These relations are structured in a type of participative triangle composed of the city council, the local private sector and the local civil society –normally formed by NGOs. These cities thereby foster the articulation of actors considered essential for local development. They also establish strengthening actions based on the needs detailed and prioritised in these actors' strategic plans. For example, in the case of city councils, in addition to exchanges and technical advice, exchanges also take place between the politicians of the twinned cities, on issues such as local governance, municipal management, and local leadership, among others. In the case of the private sector and civil society, participation is encouraged to coordinate interests in both municipal and departmental development councils. In the case of civil society, partici-

pative and empowerment processes which contribute to constructing citizenship are fostered. The programme is promoted and also co-financed by a Dutch NGO.

Another example of multiple actors is the articulation in networks that has been promoted by the European Union URB-AL programme to support decentralised cooperation between the EU and LA. This programme has been run in some Central American municipalities with satisfactory results.

Another new example of local governments' articulation with civil society, businesses, universities, political parties and central governments is the Central American Conference for State Decentralisation and Local Development (CONFEDELCA). This is an innovative space and process in the area of decentralised cooperation which, due to its nature, is the first of its kind in the region.

In this case local governments' relations with civil society linked to decentralised cooperation, social organisations, NGOs and universities take place in a different context, outside their territories and in conjunction with other local development actors such as central governments, parliaments and private enterprise.

CONFEDELCA is a space for reflection and debate, for generating ideas and building links that aims to elevate the importance of local development and State decentralisation in Central America and which brings together the main actors independently of their approaches. The Conference was set up in 2000, as a result of the interests of local governments of Central American countries, the authorities of Barcelona Provincial Council –an entity formed of city councils that had been

participating for years in training and exchanges in the area of local development in this region– and two NGOs, FUNDAUNGO and FUNDE, both committed to local development.

After eight years, CONFEDELCA is undoubtedly an endeavour that has managed to generate exchange and debate among actors who would not normally meet, in a perspective that combines the development of the territories with Central American integration. Furthermore, it has helped to build bridges and form links between actors within the same country and in other Central American countries. And without doubt, its core principle continues to be decentralised cooperation in which the two most important actors are local governments and civil society articulated in DC – although without detracting from the importance of the other actors.

Another unusual example of local governments' articulation with other actors linked to decentralised cooperation is the Institute for Local Development in Central America (IDELCA). This institute responds to the need to contribute towards bridging a very visible gap in the Central American region: the formation of a new political leadership emerging in the territories. One of the novelties of IDELCA is its composition and institutional model, made up of local governments via three associations and two unions of municipalities, organisations of civil society and a university centre linked to decentralised cooperation. Its great challenge is to develop itself by strengthening the continuous interaction and growth of its member local governments/organisations of civil society and to resist the easy temptation of turning itself into an NGO operating in isolation from its members. IDELCA has the backing of

Barcelona Provincial Council and other Spanish decentralised entities.

When referring to these modalities of decentralised cooperation, Jean-Pierre Malé indicates that their added value lies in the political influence they wield: "The impact of actions of this kind does not automatically depend on the amounts invested, but on the potentially attainable political impact. In this respect, without significant financial resources but with a strong political will, PDC can contribute to the process of change taking place in the different countries, and it can also play a determining role in the creation of spaces for dialogue with multiple participants".

He also indicates that "local governments' increased awareness that PDC is not limited to the bilateral relations a municipality or region may establish with its counterpart(s) seems to us to be a significant step in order to progress towards a more global level of intervention. This level could, in turn, represent a means to influence political processes that have consequences on local life, helping to modify structural conditions that limit and restrain local governments."

3.1.2. Policies that Central American local governments use to interact with civil society in their territories linked to decentralised international cooperation activities

In most Central American cases the relationship between local governments and organisations of civil society, such as NGOs and universities, is not maintained within the specific framework of explicit policies on decentralised cooperation. In other words, with some exceptions, there is not a specific policy of decentralised

cooperation guiding the relationship between municipal governments and national and international NGOs, universities, etc. These relations are usually formed spontaneously and respond to specific needs or opportunities. In the majority of cases policies underlie cooperation practises.

However, this phenomenon is not usually due to national governments' restrictive policies on decentralised cooperation whether direct, indirect or delegated, but it is not due to these governments' official support policies either, although in some cases this can occur. The only case of a specific official policy supporting decentralised cooperation in Central America dates back to the 1980s, under the Sandinista government. This was very clearly expressed in the actions of the Foreign Affairs Ministry, government bodies, embassies and consulates, in addition to legislation that has since then guided Nicaraguan local governments' international relations, and also in the Foreign Affairs Ministry's support for these relations. However, this official support began disappearing from the 1990s onwards. In the case of Nicaragua, this trend has worsened since the new Sandinista administration (2007-2011), which has entered into open conflict and even carried out actions that have been described as the persecution of some organisations of civil society, such as the movement of women opposed to therapeutic abortion and lobbying NGOs not aligned with their government. These tensions have polarised the government's relations with autonomous civil society and have tended to affect the articulation of a large number of local governments loyal to the government party with independent civil society, whether linked to decentralised cooperation or not.

This tendency by Central American local governments of not having explicit and specific policies for decentralised co-operation can be illustrated by the concrete example of the municipality of Tecoluca in El Salvador. The government of this municipality, which has been in the hands of the FMLN since 1994, has developed an aggressive and systematic policy on international cooperation in general, including decentralised cooperation. This reached such a degree that in the 2000-2003 period municipal revenue was 3 million dollars, while that executed with international cooperation funds exceeded 12 million. Nevertheless, its underlying policy on international cooperation has been the same whether decentralised or not; it has carried it out under the same ideology and with the same principal aim of mobilising financial resources for the municipality, not concerning itself very much with who executes these.

Its relationship with the previously mentioned NGOs is marked by two fundamental elements: these NGOs must move resources –regardless of whether they are from decentralised cooperation or not– and they must contribute to implementing projects that benefit the municipality. The different administrations have not been concerned about whether the origin of the funds is decentralised or not.

However, a very different situation is found in Santa Tecla, which is one of the few Central American municipalities that have made progress towards structuring and implementing an explicit and specialised decentralised cooperation policy. Here are some reflections from the actors in this municipality.

After the earthquake in January 2001 which severely shook the city: "decentral-ised cooperation has broken through in Santa Tecla, highlighting a growing difference from traditional cooperation, which favours a more aid-oriented approach and is almost always disconnected from the municipality's strategic agenda and local development plan, and has an interim vision basically relating to the interests and agendas of cooperation bodies that are not always sensitive to the needs of the municipality and therefore do not always consider the challenges or timeframes of the municipality" (Interview with Enrique Rusconi, Councillor of Santa Tecla, 7 April 2009).

After nine years of administration, and two re-elections of the mayor, the Santa Tecla Municipal Council believes that this approach has been correct and that decentralised cooperation's contribution has become substantive.

The municipal government wanted to make the very most of the opportunities, and, therefore, without ignoring the traditional lines of cooperation, it has given decentralised cooperation a powerful boost. The intention has been, first of all, to connect Santa Tecla with the local world on an international scale. To promote and position the city internationally, understanding that this requires a two-way effort, outgoing and incoming, in cooperation relations with other municipalities and territories, whether European, Latin American or Central American. With this endeavour we have learnt that decentralised cooperation can have an impact if local leadership, both government and citizen, gets directly involved. This is precisely what gives it added value" (Interview with Oscar Ortiz, Mayor of Santa Tecla, 14 April 2009).

Santa Tecla thus tends to promote most of its decentralised cooperation di-rectly. Within the framework of this policy and its development plans, the municipal government only occasionally channels decentralised cooperation through NGOs and in relatively small projects.

3.1.3. Practices that Central American local governments use to interact with civil society in their territories linked to decentralised international cooperation activities

The most frequent practices identified relate to channelling funds and relationships of support in which various situations can arise:

A) In many cases, international NGOs channel decentralised cooperation funds and even some consultancy and support services to Central American local governments. We have already mentioned European twinnings with Estelí which usually channel their funds via an NGO. The same occurs with all Spanish funds.

An example of one of the most frequent practices is support for the participative strategic planning of local development. In the case of the municipality of Tecoluca, the Foundation for Development (FUNDE) has been participating as a facilitating body for many years in the process in its different phases. This has strongly influenced its relationship with the different municipal governments that have continued the efforts. The government of Tecoluca views FUNDE as a source of support, not only to provide continuity, but also to continue making progress with the implementation of the plan and with any adjustments required. This effort has been backed by the Majorcan Fund and includes advising and supporting the municipal government.

Another recent example of this type of practice is the first participative strategic plan in the city of San Salvador, which was supported by Barcelona City Council and facilitated by the City Foundation. In this case the initiative came from the City Foundation and was based on an agreement between the San Salvador municipal government and Barcelona City Council; funds from the latter were channelled through this foundation.

These examples can also be found in other Central American municipalities. The drafting and monitoring of the strategic plans of the municipalities of Estelí and León in Nicaragua benefitted from the financial and technical support of European cities twinned with these municipalities. These cities channelled their funds and technical support directly or through NGOs representing them in these territories.

B) Practices of training local actors, such as the municipal government, local organisations of civil society, and micro and small businesses. In this case, the relationship is established between those requesting and those offering the service. Tecoluca once again provides a good example. Based on this clearly identified need, the municipal government promotes and accepts contributions by NGOs, like FUNDE, towards training and qualifying the municipal government, councillors, civil servants, leaders, organisations of women, young people, etc. Cooperation for this activity has come from the Catalan Fund, the Majorcan Fund, and the Minorcan Fund.

Similar situations can be found in other countries in the region such as Nicaragua, where assistance from decentralised cooperation, whether channelled through NGOs or direct, has been used for the institutional strengthening of local actors such as local government workers, small-businessmen and members of organisations of civil society. One

example is the Council of Netherlands-Nicaragua Twinning's programme which works with 16 Nicaraguan municipalities twinned with Dutch cities and whose partners include the local government, private sector and civil society. The programme includes training and institutional strengthening.

Nevertheless, the most important example of this practice has been the founding of the Institute for Local Development in Central America (IDELCA) which brings together university bodies, foundations and NGOs for training and qualification, research and lobbying. This Institute is supported by Spanish decentralised cooperation.

C) Fostering and implementing citizen participation. This is another of the practices that has connected local governments with NGOs linked to decentralised cooperation. In the case of Tecoluca, the CORDES Foundation and FUNDE have provided important support in this field for the municipal government, playing a double role: as facilitators of the different processes and as consultants to the municipal government in this field. In situations of conflict they even take on the role of mediators between the local government and organisations of civil society. Other examples can be found in Nicaragua where decentralised funds have supported citizen participation processes, including important assistance for networks of civil society, such as the Nicaraguan Network for Local Development.

3.1.4. Instruments that Central American local governments use to interact with civil society in their territories linked to decentralised international cooperation activities

In Central America it is possible to identify at least three instruments that connect local governments with civil society in their territories linked to decentralised international cooperation activities: projects, agreements and contracts.

The most common interaction instruments are projects. On most occasions NGOs design their own projects and look for decentralised cooperation assistance via different mechanisms such as tendering, official notices or direct negotiations. Once funds have been obtained for carrying out a project, this is implemented in the municipality or micro-region. We should point out that on some occasions NGOs carry out this process without the prior agreement of local governments. Sometimes agreements are made with territorial organisations of civil society such as local development committees, women's organisations, etc., although in other cases the projects are constructed in agreement with local governments.

Another instrument is the agreements that are signed between one or various NGOs or universities and the local government, and it is these agreements that provide the framework for designing and carrying out projects. In general, this practice is very scarce in Central America.

A third instrument is service contracts. These are established when there are specific and direct requests and offers of services from NGOs and universities in order to carry out a technical consultation, training, a study, the facilitation of planning processes, etc. The relationship in these cases consists of 'selling' development services, which is sometimes free or local governments may contribute a small percentage of the cost or the investment.

3.1.5. Articulating the policies, projects and working strategies of organisations of civil society with the local development plans and international action of Central American municipalities

The degree to which the policies, projects and working strategies of organisations of civil society are articulated with the local development plans and international action of Central American municipalities is uneven in this area. In some cases, the articulation of local civil society with local governments via municipal or departmental development councils or similar bodies allows the initiatives to be harmonised. In other cases, there is no articulation.

There are many reasons for disarticulation that originate in local governments themselves or national and international NGOs, or from both. Thus, for example, local governments often do not have a policy or vision of local development, and therefore an idea of the local government as a service provider predominates, added to a short-term, client-based or instrumental perspective of its relations with civil society. In this context, all cooperation – including decentralised cooperation– is limited to seeking funds to carry out highly-visible public works that help to win votes.

With regard to NGOs, and even some universities, their outlook of local development is also very often partial or non-existent. Local development becomes synonymous with carrying out work and activities in municipalities. Many NGOs try to implement their own agendas independently of territorial processes. And rather than negotiating with local governments, they 'sell' them their projects. Finally, they also maintain an aid-oriented or traditional approach to development assistance as a common cooperation method. This hinders the development of actions with a low level of public awareness, such as processes of institutional strengthening, building capacities, exchanging experiences, processes of empowerment and constructing citizenship.

Another factor which has an influence on this lack of articulation is the political polarisation affecting most of the countries in the region.

A strategy that benefits all the actors should be the framework for all the projects that form part of the territories' ongoing local development processes; it should establish agreements between the three parties, i.e., the territory the decentralised cooperation originates from, the 'beneficiary' territory and the organisation carrying out the activity in relation to implementation, and it should establish quality control mechanisms in the interests of optimising the results. Concertation is seen as an unavoidable necessity to ensure the articulation of all the actors.

3.1.6. Mechanisms that help local and regional governments to dynamise civil society in their territories in order to involve it in international cooperation policies

Central American local governments do not usually have specific mechanisms for interacting with their local civil societies linked to international cooperation activities. They normally use the same general participation mechanisms to regulate their relationship with the area's citizens.

In some cases, the most commonly used mechanism is participation in local de-

velopment councils; but in municipalities with more experience in the international arena and better developed relationships, there are usually international relations offices linked to offices promoting citizen participation, as is the case in Estelí and León in Nicaragua or Santa Tecla in El Salvador. In other cases, the mechanism consists of involving NGOs in the processes of drafting and monitoring the municipality's strategic plans.

3.1.7. Models of local government interaction with actors from civil society linked to decentralised cooperation

A first model of local government interaction with national and international NGOs linked to decentralised cooperation that has been identified in Central America derives from the role of NGOs as donors or channels for resources. In this case, two possible situations can be observed. The first arises when NGOs are the donors or executors of a project designed and managed by them. The relationship in this case usually assumes the traditional donor-beneficiary form. Quite often local plans make no provision for these actions. However, another situation observed arises when the role of international or national NGOs is as an intermediary for carrying out defined actions in a direct relationship between local governments. The most typical case is twinning, which does not exclude direct relations or NGOs acting as intermediaries in the relationships between municipalities. In these cases the relationships usually involve not just financial resources but also technical and political assistance and the actions normally coincide with local development plans.

Another model observed is the articulation established between the Central American local government and national and international NGOs in institutional participation spaces, such as municipal or departmental development councils or similar spaces. This permits a more stable relationship and enables alliances to be formed for strategic projects. The cases of articulation in the municipality of León and Estelí in Nicaragua are an example of this. Another example is the alliance between the local government of Tecoluca and the CORDES Foundation for the construction of the 'Solidarity Industrial Estate' in which productive and production services companies have been set up, with the land being contributed by the local government. Another alliance is with the Intersectoral Association for Economic Development and Social Growth, CIDEP, to build a Technological Institute which the municipality provided the land for, just as in the previous case.

A third model observed derives from the partners' experiences of strategic activities, such as long-term planning and citizen participation, without them necessarily maintaining relations in institutional spaces. This occurs in the municipal government of Tecoluca and FUNDE in El Salvador and in other cases in the rest of the countries.

A fourth model relates to the technical and professional support relationships offered by NGOs, universities and academic centres. These situations usually involve the sale of research, consultancy, facilitation, or training services, sometimes supported by decentralised cooperation.

A fifth model of articulation relates to medium and long-term actions of polit-

ical advocacy with other actors, such as in the specified case of CONFEDELCA and IDELCA.

These models reflect traditional tendencies in some cases, but also emerging features of new ways of articulating local governments with civil society and the roles decentralised cooperation plays in these relations.

It is important to point out that some of these relationship models do tend to overcome the old client-oriented tendencies which are still common in many of the country's municipalities, tendencies which do not allow the development of a strong civil society nor foster local development and which make the process of consolidating democracy in the region slower and more complicated.

4. Conclusions

A) Central American municipalities have been gaining national presence and extending their international relations with local governments, NGOs and even international citizens' organisations, albeit in an uneven way across the region. This new situation has brought about an intensification of relations on a local, national and international level. In accordance with the growing importance of municipalities on the national and international stage, approaches have been made to institutions and organisations, such as universities and research, lobbying and development NGOs, which in some cases have been able to coordinate themselves to tackle local problems. Nevertheless, this density of relationships and articulations does not generally occur in all

Central American municipalities. It can be observed that some of the municipalities with the highest degree of decentralised cooperation are also those in which there is greater articulation and citizen participation. However, except in Nicaragua, where the number of municipalities with twinning relations is higher, in the rest of the region there are still relatively few municipalities involved in international decentralised cooperation relations.

B) In municipalities where decentralised cooperation relations exist there are many different actors and modalities of interaction with local governments, including non-governmental organisations, associations, foundations, universities, and research centres, among others. Modalitiess include bilateral articulations with different actors and multi-actor relationships, including articulation in networks. Relations with private enterprise are for the most part almost non-existent, as the participation of the business sector still tends to be rather limited. Some cooperation policies such as the one coordinated by the Council of Netherlands-Nicaragua Twinning aim specifically to strengthen and coordinate the territory's key actors, including the local private sector. Other actors have been opening up spaces for local participation, such as women, children and young people, and ethnic groups. It should be mentioned that in the cases in which national and international NGOs act as intermediaries for decentralised cooperation relationships, local governments' direct relations are not always substituted, taking for example the cases of twinning in which both types of relationship can exist side by side.

C) The most frequent relationship maintained by local governments in Central America is with national and international NGOs, which –as already mentioned earlier– if viewed in terms of their connection with decentralised

cooperation, can be grouped into three types: organisations that donate or channel funds (usually organisations in the North), organisations with a territorial and community base that usually benefit from funds (municipal, regional or sectoral associations), and supporting organisations (entities providing social, promotion and development services, defending human rights and academic centres).

D) Central American local governments do not generally have specific mechanisms for interacting with their local civil societies linked to international cooperation activities. They normally use the same general participation mechanisms to regulate their relationship with the area's citizens.

In some cases, the most commonly used mechanism is participation in local development councils or similar bodies, but municipalities with more experience in the international arena and better developed relationships often have international relations offices linked to offices promoting citizen participation, as is the case in Estelí and León in Nicaragua or Santa Tecla in El Salvador. In other cases, the mechanism consists of involving NGOs in the processes of drafting and monitoring the municipality's strategic plans. There are few cases in which NGOs have harmonised their plans with the local governments' plans and these usually coincide with their participation in more stable and permanent mechanisms of articulation with the local government such as local development councils and similar bodies.

E) The Central American experience allows us to identify five models of local government articulation with civil society linked to decentralised cooperation.

A first model of local government interaction with national and international NGOs linked to decentralised cooperation that has been identified in Central America derives from the role of NGOs as donors or channels for resources. In this case, two possible situations can be observed: one in which the intermediary relationship tends to substitute direct relations between local governments in the North and South and usually takes the traditional donor-beneficiary form; and another in which this intermediary relationship coexists alongside direct relations between local administrations, as is the case with twinning.

Another model found is the articulation established between Central American local governments and national and international NGOs in institutional participation spaces, such as municipal or departmental development councils or similar spaces. This allows a more stable relationship to be formed and alliances to be made for strategic projects.

A third model observed relates to the partners' experiences of strategic activities, such as long-term planning and citizen participation, without them necessarily maintaining relations in institutional spaces.

A fourth model consists of the technical and professional support relationships offered by NGOs, universities and academic centres, taking various forms such as the sale of research, consultancy, facilitation, or training services, sometimes supported by decentralised cooperation.

A fifth model of articulation relates to medium and long-term actions of political advocacy with other actors, such as in the specified case of CONFEDELCA and IDELCA.

It is important to point out that some of these relationship models do tend to overcome the old client-oriented tendencies which are still common in many of the country's municipalities and which do not allow the development of a strong civil society nor foster local development and which make the process of consolidating democracy in the region slower and more complicated.

F) Articulation with other actors in the territory, such as the central government and its delegations, is not usually very fluid and varies depending on the central and local governments in power and the political affiliation of the administrations. Generally speaking, central governments do not normally restrict decentralised cooperation relations, but they do not promote or support them either. Only very recently in Nicaragua the central government's relations with autonomous and independent NGOs have tended to be very tense. Therefore, signs of a negative impact can be observed in the articulation between some NGOs not aligned with the government and some local administrations controlled by the governing political party.

G) In Central America we have seen that there are some mechanisms that help local governments take on the role of dynamising the civil society in their territories to involve it in the international cooperation policies they carry out. Of particular note among these is the creation of spaces and mechanisms of information and systematic training on the municipality's international relations and the role local actors can play. Campaigns carried out to raise awareness and increase mutual knowledge have proved to be an effective mechanism for encouraging more local actors to become involved in cooperation relations. In Central America, the best-known examples of raising awareness have traditionally been achieved by twinning cities, which in addition to official relations also involve relationships between the respective civil societies. Some cooperation programmes include elements of raising awareness, such as the assistance programme of European cities twinned with Estelí (Delft, the Netherlands; Bielefeld, Germany; Evry, France; Sant Feliu de Llobregat, Spain, and Sheffield, United Kingdom) to rebuild this city after Hurricane Mitch and to support the drafting of its Strategic Development Plan. This programme specifically provided for an element of raising awareness that included seminars in the five cities in the North, an exhibition of photographs, talks, videos and visits by representatives of the cities at each seminar. Furthermore, educational material was produced and circulated in schools in these cities twinned with schools in the municipality of Estelí. Other examples are the systematic inclusion of awareness-raising in the work programmes of Barcelona Provincial Council (López Selga 2008) and Barcelona City Council (2009), for example. But one could also say that raising awareness and communication are one of the roles also played by the training and education courses on decentralised cooperation organised by the European Union-Latin America Decentralised Cooperation Observatory.

However, the most important awareness-raising mechanism observed in Central America is the direct participation of actors from civil society in establishing twinning relationships with their counterparts on the basis of the multi-directionality and mutual interests of institutional twinning relationships.

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Processes of regional integration and internationalisation of local governments

In the present context, processes of regional integration are increasingly taking on more importance for facing the challenges and impacts of today's globalisation. These processes have repercussions on local life and, therefore, it is becoming more important for local governments to make their voices heard in integration policies. Specifically, decentralised cooperation appears to be a favoured framework both for the exchange of learning experiences and information among local governments in Europe and LA, and for demanding the presence of local and regional governments in supra-national decision-making spaces.

Next, you will find two articles about the experience of the international Forums of Local Governments that have been appearing over recent years and which highlight the need to progress towards multilevel governance. The article by Juana López, Director of International Relations and Cooperation of the FEMP, provides an assesment of the experiences of the Forums of Local Governments at international level. The document pays special attention to the Forum of Local Governments from the European Union, Latin America and the Caribbean, the first edition of which was held in Paris in November 2007 with the active participation of the Observatory, and which is due to hold its second edition in Spain next year.

For his part, Juan Ignacio Siles del Valle, Director of the Ibero-American Conference Division (SEGIB), presents us the experiences and challenges that must be faced by this Forum, the 4th edition of which is held this year in Lisbon.

With the aim of illustrating a European experience of regional integration we present a first article written by Javier Sánchez, Director of the European Centre for the Regions, European Institute of Public Administration, and Gracia Vara Arribas on the European Commission's Structured Dialogues. This article investigates the evolution of a specific form of participation by European territorial associations in the process of shaping EU policies. The dialogues are a consultation instrument between the European Commission and regional and municipal networks at an early stage of the European decision-making process.

Moreover, it is becoming more commonplace for local governments to carry out international action and/or have a structure and resources dedicated to policies of international relations. One of the consequences of local governments' breakthrough into the international arena is the presence of new logics for managing cross-border areas. The following document, written by Rokael Cardona, details the experience of the Lempa River Tri-national Border Association, a local-level regional integration organisation based on a decentralised model, and explains how decentralised cooperation contributed to it being set up.

Processes of regional integration and internationalisation of local governments

Local Government Forums in the international arena: the Forum of Local Governments from the European Union, Latin America and the Caribbean

Juana López Pagán*

KEY WORDS

Decentralised cooperation |
networks |
Latin America |
local development |
regional integration |
political entrepreneurship |

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1. Introduction

Proper consideration and evaluation of the local government forums of an international nature held hitherto requires brief mention of the role played internationally by local governments in intergovernmental relations, in order to establish a basis for understanding the way in which institutions and different levels of government should now interact with one another and rise to common challenges.

Recognition of local governments as legitimate institutions with democratic representation and capacity to articulate public life has turned them into agents that not only interact with governments within their natural, internal, sphere of action, but also interact either bilaterally or multilaterally with their counterparts in international bodies, in networks of cities, or in regional international local government forums such as the Ibero-American Forum and the European Union-Latin America and the Caribbean Forum.

Currently, the presence of local governments is required in the international arena, from geographically distant yet institutionally similar areas, because the reality of local government in today's globalised world calls for interaction among them. It is therefore essential to define the nature of the role played by local governments in different fields that currently extend beyond purely national interests, without forgetting that the effective implementation of supranational policies requires the invaluable cooperation of local governments.

Interdependence has become crucially important and many of the matters traditionally considered exclusive to an international context, such as the defence of human rights, the struggle against climate change, and understanding among different cultures, have taken on a local dimension just as many matters that initially appear to be significant only locally have become priorities for national governments.

Consideration of the position, opinion and appraisal of local governments in an area of international political discussion can therefore guarantee success in the application of each given political strategy, and also help to create spaces for dialogue between local and national perspectives, with consideration for the fact that local governments are now involved in nearly every area on the international agenda, either formally or informally, with a leading or subsidiary role, on an individual basis or within networks of associations. The challenge facing us is to ensure that the voice of local governments is heard at the forums or sites for establishing international guidelines on public policies that may directly affect local affairs.

This article will focus its analysis on the bi-regional relation between the European Union and Latin America and the Caribbean, on the Summits of Heads of State held since 1999, and on the way in which the European Union-Latin America Forum and the Caribbean has emerged in this context. However, as this space for dialogue was created very recently and its first meeting took place in Paris as recently as November 2007, it is therefore appropriate here to limit the context and deal with the emergence to the two existing local government forums –the Ibero-American Forum and the Euro-Latin American Forum– because of their matching aims and objectives.

2. Local government forums as the main instruments of intergovernmental relations in the international arena

The local government forums were created as places of meeting and cooperation for the local governments of both regions, which were generally grouped into national associations or federations of local governments from countries in the Ibero-American community and the European and Latin American community of nations.

These recently-established meeting places have the support of the local governments of both regions and are intended mainly to influence the debates of the Summits of Heads of State and Government in order that their conclusions may be publicised and taken into consideration respectively by Ibero-American and European and Latin American leaders.

Their basic objectives are:

• To establish an arena for dialogue and cooperation among local governments in order to encourage and strengthen relations among the individuals living in the cities who are represented by thousands of local representatives.

• To promote solidarity, collaboration, and cooperation for development and trade in the Ibero-American area and among European and Latin American cities.

• To encourage joint economic, social and cultural ventures to prompt the sustainable, balanced development of local governments.

• To bring to the Summits of Heads of State and Government (both the Ibero-American and EU-Latin American and Caribbean) the perspective of local public policies for in-clusion in discussion of the matters successively debated at these Summits.

Leading representatives from the local governments of each region take part at the forums to undertake in-depth analysis from a local perspective of the problems that the Heads of State and Government discuss each year or every two years, and to provide opportunities and methods of working in order to direct approach and the application thereof to suit the demands of development.

The development of the two forums, albeit virtually parallel in time and identical in objectives, has been different. The Ibero-American Forum of Local Governments has been recognised and endorsed both by the national governments of the most recent three Summits, and by the other member countries of the Ibero-American Community. The SEGIB, entrusted with the organisation of the Ibero-American Summits, has therefore included the Forum on the Summit Agenda, is actively involved at the Ibero-American Forum, and acknowledges its importance and the significant work and vision of local governments, which it holds in consideration in the Final Declarations of the Summits.

There have hitherto been three Ibero-American Forums of Local Governments, held in Montevideo (Uruguay, 2006), in Valparaíso (Chile 2007), and in San Salvador (El Salvador). The next Forum is to be held in the autumn of this year in Lisbon and will coincide with the Ibero-American Summit[1].

The 1st Forum of Local Governments from the European Union, Latin America and the Caribbean, held in Paris in 2007, although organised upon the initiative of the central governments of France, Spain, Italy and Portugal, was designed as the first formal space for the political lobbying of the local governments of both continents to influence the bi-regional agenda of states. Its organisation was headed by national associations of local governments (Italian Committee of United Cities, the National Association of Italian Municipalities, and the Spanish Federation of Municipalities and Provinces) and supra-national associations (Council of European Municipalities and Regions, Federation of Latin American Cities, Local Governments and Associations), and by the EU-Latin America Decentralised Cooperation Observatory (Barcelona Provincial Council). The Forum's final declaration included a statement of the intention and commitment of the actors to establish it on a biennial basis in preparation for the Summits of Heads of State and Government of both continents.

The work of Spanish local governments in the Latin American region has been and continues to be very intense and geared at encouraging the institutional development and enhancement of the region's local governments. This work has likewise been favoured by the close cultural bonds that unite us, by the gradual creation and encouragement of policies in the field of training, and by the exchange of experiences and good practices.

3. Inter-regional strategic partnership of latin america, the caribbean and the european union

Before dealing with the suitability of a Forum of Local Governments from the European Union, Latin America and the Caribbean, it is important to set its foundation into context by considering the huge significance, for both regions, of the biennial European Union-Latin America/Caribbean Summit. This brings together the leaders of both regions, has institutionalised dialogue at the highest level, and has established a series of shared principles and objectives based on a common project: the Inter-regional Strategic Partnership.

These Summits are important basically for four reasons:

• Relations between the two continents have improved significantly in the last thirty years. The two regions share common values such as human rights, democratic principles and multilateralism.

• The strategic partnership of the two continents reflects the growing importance and increasing potential of the Latin America and the Caribbean region and the commitment of both regions to strengthening and deepening their relations in the future.

• The enlarged European Union is an important economic and political partner for Latin America and the Caribbean as it plays the leading role in the provision of aid for development and foreign investment and is the main trading partner of some Latin American countries.

• Relations between the two blocks have developed on a bi-regional level (EU-Latin America/Caribbean) at which there have been specialised debates between the EU and specific subregions (MERCOSUR, Andean Community, Central America, CARIFORUM) and between the EU and specific countries (Mexico and Chile).

For Spain, the relaunch of these relations to coincide with the Spanish Presidency of the EU in the first half of 2010, when it is also to host the 6th European Union-Latin America/Caribbean Summit, represents a great opportunity[2].

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[1] *Ver en el presente Anuario y en esta misma sección el artículo "El Foro Iberoamericano de Gobiernos Locales" escrito por Juan Ignacio Siles del Valle, Director de la División de la Conferencia Iberoamericana SEGIB*

4. The Forum of Local Governments from the European Union, Latin America and the Caribbean

The initiative to set up a Forum of Local Governments from the European Union, Latin America and the Caribbean that could appear on the Agenda of the Summits of Heads of State arose from the support of four European national governments, specifically France, Spain, Italy and Portugal, for a Forum, held in Paris on 28 and 29 November 2007, of local governments from both regions on matters of decentralised cooperation and social cohesion.

Thereafter, the four national governments, the main national associations of local governments of these four countries, supra-national associations of local governments, the European Commission, and the EU-Latin America Decentralised Cooperation Observatory assumed the challenge of turning this bi-regional meeting into the 1st Forum of Local Governments from the European Union, Latin America and the Caribbean, the results of which were presented at the EU-LAC Summit of Heads of State of Lima in May 2008.

The Forum was organised by all the actors who took part at it. There are, nonetheless, many matters that must be reviewed and agreed upon before holding the second Forum; matters that range from more plural participation of the elected representatives of both regions, to the assumption of the leading role in the organisation process by the corresponding association of municipalities and the host city, and greater commitment from the European Union through acknowledgement of the Forum as a framework for political dialogue apt for consideration at Summits.

It is the task of local governments and of the networks in which they associate to clarify matters such as the nature of the Statute for participation at the Forum; working on the same subject agenda as the Summits; defining a specific agenda for European-Latin American local governments; and pressing for a framework of political dialogue among national governments, all of which should be undertaken without forgetting that this Forum is a framework of bilateral cooperation among the local governments taking part at it.

The challenge to consolidate this Forum currently lies in the hands of Spanish local governments for several reasons: first, because the Declaration of the 1st Forum appointed Spain to host the 2nd Forum of Local Governments from the European Union, Latin America and the Caribbean, to coincide therefore for the first time with the Summit venue; second, because the Forum is officially included on the Summit Agenda and a delegation of local representatives may thus attend the Summit to present the results of the Forum; third, because of the close cultural ties and great cooperation between Spanish and Latin American local governments, and fourth, because the Summit and therefore the Forum will both coincide with the Spanish Presidency of the EU.

Many favourable circumstances foreseen for next year may help prompt a significant step forward in consolidating the Forum. For this to happen, the articulating role of the FEMP –with the support of the Spanish Government, and specifically the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation– will be essential during the Forum, as will the involvement of the associations that took part in the organisation of the 1st Forum and the actors essential to holding it such as the EU-Latin America Decentralised Cooperation Observatory.

The consolidation of the Forum, the definition of its objectives, the legitimation of partners and its intervention capacity must be debated and approved next year when it is held, as the result of these will determine the Forum's future and continuity over time.

5. Conclusions: current situation and future challenges

We are faced with a historic opportunity to strengthen transatlantic ties with all the Americas, and especially with Latin America, ties that can be strengthened from a national, European and local level.

For several reasons, Spain is in an exceptional position to respond to this opportunity; first, because in recent years it has generated an image of renewed proximity with America because of its entry in the EU, its encouragement of Europe-Latin America cooperation, and the effort it has made at the annual Ibero-American Summits, plus its bilateral financial aid; second, because in recent years the Latin American region has furthered its commitment to democratic institutions and has experienced more sustainable economic growth; third, because what is at stake is a political project that may set an example of political openness, development and social cohesion to the rest of the world; and fourth, because it has established the relaunch and consolidation of the Euro-Latin American region as one of its strategic priorities within the framework of the Spanish Presidency of the EU in 2010.

This is an opportunity for both regions and one for which the joint construction of a political agenda must also take into account local perspectives and effort, because foreign policy understood as the institutional affairs of the government of a nation state recognised as such, whether with other nation states or with international bodies, has been superseded by international relations that surpass the nation state. Multi-level articulation is becoming indispensable in order to meet the great world challenges that today stretch beyond the traditional scopes of decision taking. Holding these local government forums within the framework of the Summits therefore requires the articulation of public policies from different levels of government, which results in policies with a greater, better and, above all, more global vision.

Lastly, however, there remain some matters that require further progress. First, within the Euro-Latin American framework the summits have no permanent secretariat, such as the SEGIB for the Ibero-American Summits, thus making it necessary to rely on the will of each State that holds the Pres-

2| *"One of the main priorities on the agenda of the Spanish Presidency will thus be the Union's development as a global player in a more complex international society in which the Union's capacity to speak with one voice is crucial for the consolidation of strategic partnerships with regions and actors of key interest for Europe. The Spanish Presidency will therefore be highly Euro-American in nature with a view to establishing a twenty-first century transatlantic agenda, a subsequent phase to the current New Transatlantic Agenda –adopted during the Spanish Presidency of 1995–, in which context relations with Latin America and the Caribbean will assume special significance: Spain, more than ever before, will serve as a bridge between Europe and Latin America. The Spanish Presidency is to host the 6th European Union-Latin America/Caribbean Summit – one of the key events of the Spanish Presidency": Strategic lines of the Spanish Presidency of the EU in the first half of 2010.*

idency to include this Forum on its global agenda. Establishing precedents in this regard and demonstrating the value of holding it will unquestionably help to establish the Forum over time. It is also particularly important that within the Summit framework, a space should be created for dialogue between local and national perspectives, and the appropriate mechanisms and procedures established to include the position of local governments in the Declarations and thus guarantee their presence.

The Spanish Government's commitment in this respect is clear and evidence thereof lies in its inclusion on the Agenda and subscription to a joint plan of action between the FEMP and the Secretary of State for the European Union, the considerations of which include the organisation of this Forum.

The challenge at grassroots level, by contrast, lies in empowerment on the part of local governments and their associations of municipalities to work best in networks with all the actors essential for the organisation of the Forum, and thus to take the qualitative leap to holding a Forum of local governments organised by and for local governments.

Processes of regional integration and internationalisation of local governments

The Ibero-American Forum of Local Governments

Juan Ignacio Siles del Valle   *

* | *Director of the Ibero-American Conference Division (SEGIB)*

1.Background

The Ibero-American Forum of Local Governments was created as a parallel initiative to the Ibero-American Conference system and not from a proposal arising in the Summits of Heads of State and Government. In fact, it was municipalities that, attempting to respond to their own needs, decided to organise themselves and set up an alternative space for fostering Ibero-American integration based on cooperation and developing public policies within a strictly local ambit. With this Forum, the Ibero-American world, restricted to 22 States, was considerably expanded to include hundreds of municipalities and intermediate regions. The Ibero-America of national commitments by central governments was thus extended and focused on the level of citizens.

Although local meetings with Spanish participation had been held before in the Latin American region –in Arequipa, Peru, in 2003, and in San Salvador, in 2005– it was not until 2006[1], when, on the initiative of the Montevideo City Council –a partner of Barcelona Provincial Council– and the Santa Tecla City Council in El Salvador (the three of which are twinned cities and have close cooperation links), the decision was taken to hold an Ibero-American Forum of Local Governments within the framework of the 16th Ibero-American Summit of Heads of State and Government, which in that year was held in Uruguay.

The recently set up Ibero-American General Secretariat (SEGIB) did not initially participate in organising this Forum, as it did not have a specific mandate for this, nor was there any agreement on the role it would play in this event. Despite this, the Secretary General, Enrique Iglesias, aware of the importance of the meeting and of its implication in the Conference, attended the first Forum to study the possibility of associating this new organisation with the meetings.

In 2007, at the request of the Municipality of Valparaíso, the Pro Tempore Secretariat of Chile chose to include the Forum of Local Governments among the meetings that would form part of the Ibero-American Conference that year. In view of this, the SEGIB, after having actively participated in the 2nd Forum held in October, formally proposed the incorporation of the Forum in the Ibero-American system during the preparatory meetings for the Summit.

Thus, during the 17th Ibero-American Summit, the Forum of Local Governments was formally included in the Declaration of the Heads of State and Government as part of the Ibero-American Conference.

Moreover, during the Valparaíso meeting an effort was made to establish an internal institutional framework, discussing the possibility of creating a participation system that would overcome the remarks that some central governments had made before the first Forum in Montevideo took place.

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[1] | *We should not forget that even before the Ibero-American Summits were created in 1991 there was an important Ibero-American municipal meeting space, the Union of Ibero-American Capital Cities, which has been in operation for 25 years and holds assemblies every two years. The Union has a General Secretariat which carries out important cooperation and information tasks, but its scope of action is limited to Ibero-American capital cities, to which the cities of La Paz, Barcelona and Rio de Janeiro have also been added. As yet Andorra la Vella has not been incorporated.*

The differences basically originated from the different perspectives regarding how to summon Ibero-American municipalities to participate in the Forum; whether to do so directly by invitation or by incorporating national associations and federations of municipal governments, with the aim of having them decide, through dialogue with the municipalities, who the participants from each country should be.

The Forum in San Salvador addressed the difference of opinion over participation methods right from the moment of its candidacy. At the end of the Valparaíso Forum the city of San Salvador was approved as the location for the 3rd Forum, but it was also decided that the Salvadorean capital would share the presidency of the event with the Corporation of Municipalities of the Republic of El Salvador (COMURES). The meeting was therefore organised jointly by the Municipality and the Corporation.

This made it possible to approve a Statute in San Salvador which fundamentally established the role of the Forum as well as the criteria that should be applied when organising a participation that is truly representative of Ibero-American municipalities.

2. The challenges

The aim of the Ibero-American Forum of Local Governments was, from the very beginning, to become a space for meeting and cooperation between State associations or federations of local governments of municipalities and provinces in the countries that make up the Ibero-American Community of Nations, in order to foster and strengthen relations between the citizens living in these territories and to promote

joint actions in cultural, social and political areas which would result in the sustained and balanced development of Ibero-American cities.

However, after the first meeting, it soon became apparent that Ibero-American municipalities were not only seeking horizontal proximity among themselves, but they also wanted to be closer to other spaces in the Ibero-American Conference so that, from the local arena, they could voice the need for central governments and parliaments to take municipalities' concerns into account and to incorporate their proposals into the definition of public policies, the distribution of State budgets and administrative decentralisation.

Just as in Montevideo, Valparaíso and San Salvador, local governments tried to provide an answer to the issue presented by the Pro Tempore Secretariat as the central topic to be dealt with by the Conference, as well as by the Summit of Heads of State and Government. In the first Forum, specific proposals were presented on the issue of migration; in the second, actions to decentralise and strengthen local governance were proposed as ways of contributing to greater social cohesion; and in the third, increased participation by young people in local decision-making was suggested. The conclusions and declarations of the three forums were presented to the Summit's preparatory body and, as far as possible, incorporated into the Declaration of the Heads of State and Government.

However, the deliberations of the three forums held to date have not been limited to the subject matter proposed for the Conference and annual Summit of Heads of State and Government. The debates, with rich and broad local political content, have also focused

on other issues of a more municipal character, such as defining local public policies, governance and local autonomy, territoriality, resource administration, social management and participation by citizens and social partners in defining policies and strategies and in the management of municipal resources.

Nevertheless, it has still not been possible to establish a dialogue framework in which local authorities can meet with leaders in the Summits of Heads of State and Government to present them with the conclusions of the discussions held in the Forum. Perhaps in practice that is not be feasible, but the municipalities would like to see their proposals and the conclusions of their debates reflected in the final results of the Ibero-American Summits. This could also be achieved if the municipalities' national associations approach their own central governments in order for the Ibero-American heads of State to take local initiatives to the plenary sessions of the Summit.

The debate about the Ibero-American local issue has likewise extended in the wake of the 2nd Ibero-American Forum on Public Safety, Social Violence and Public Policy, held in Barcelona in July 2008, and organised by the SEGIB, Barcelona Provincial Council, Barcelona City Council and the Spanish Federation of Municipalities and Provinces. The aim of this Forum was to present, from a local perspective, different strategies for applying existing public safety and social cohesion policies in Ibero-American countries and their main cities, and to enable an exchange of any experiences that could be viewed as successful and inclusive, in terms of them having increased the level of safety and reduced violence and that have improved living conditions for all sectors of the population, generating greater social cohesion and more equitable coexistence.

Over 70 municipal delegations, government representatives and experts in the field participated in this Forum, the conclusions of which were submitted to the Summit of Heads of State and Government.

But perhaps the most ambitious objective developed by the Forum of Local Governments is the Ibero-American Charter of Local Self-government, presented and approved as a Project in the 3rd Forum in San Salvador but which will need to be subject to an evaluation phase before it can be ratified by the Summit of Heads of State and Government. The document received a positive evaluation from the participants of the Forum, but it was agreed that it should be considered by the greatest possible number of Ibero-American municipalities and that this process be carried out by both regional networks of Local Governments and associations in order for the project to be analysed and even enriched by local authorities' contributions. At the same time, it was agreed that during 2009 a specialised meeting would be held in order to gather ideas and initiatives presented through these networks and associations that would lead to the final draft of the text, so that it could be definitively approved by the 4th Ibero-American Forum of Local Governments.

The text of the Charter would later be submitted, via the political bodies in charge of preparing the Summit of Heads of State and Government, in order for it to be adopted by Ibero-American governments.

The Charter of Local Self-Government would thus become a reference for all the region's countries and, although Ibero-American states each have very different ways of recognising municipal autonomy within their legal systems, the Charter

would establish guidelines for administrative and financial decentralisation that would involve a transfer of responsibilities in areas ranging from administration, urban planning, infrastructures, the collection of certain taxes, education, health, cooperation, transport and public safety, and also the equitable and agreed allocation of sufficient resources for Local Governments to be able to carry out these tasks appropriately, for the benefit of all citizens. At the same time, the Charter would involve recognition by central states of the important contribution Local Governments can make towards defining State public policies concerning cities and which contribute to increasing social cohesion. Finally, the Charter would involve the general acceptance that municipalities should have the necessary autonomy to manage their own competences and resources.

3. Cooperation

Another of the areas in which the Forum of Local Governments can develop with greater scope is cooperation. This does not only refer to the fact that holding a municipal meeting at a certain time of the year enables bilateral management to be carried out between different cities –which is already a positive thing in itself– with the aim of setting up support in specific areas of administration, social organisation and productive development, but it also refers to creating multilateral municipal cooperation programmes that allow cities that may or may not have greater resources to forge links with other municipalities, exchange knowledge and experience, expand their area of action and gain access to funding and/or technical cooperation systems. Regional networks of municipalities already carry out important

assistance work via inter-municipal cooperation, but they also do so by managing economic resources for the State, which is the main system of regional integration, and through this for multilateral funding organisations.

Given that a network of Ibero-American municipalities has not yet been set up, cooperation needs to be extended beyond the simply bilateral and should strengthen the current meeting points between Spanish and Portuguese municipalities and also the cooperation networks that have been set up by the Federation of Latin American Cities, Local Governments and Associations (FLACMA), Mercociudades, the Andean Network of Municipalities and the Federation of Municipalities of the Central American Isthmus (FEMICA).

The Local Decentralised Cooperation Observatory project between the European Union and Latin America, which extends beyond the strictly Ibero-American area, is coordinated by Barcelona Provincial Council in partnership with Montevideo City Council. The Observatory, whose main aims are to compile information about decentralised cooperation processes between Latin America and the European Union, to carry out research, to disseminate, and to educate, is a good example, together with other programmes currently promoted by the European Commission (URB-AL Programme), of the type of project that could be promoted by the Forum of Local Governments.

In the Ibero-American area there is already an official Summit Programme, the Ibero-American Centre for Strategic Urban Development (CIDEU) –which existed long before the Forum of Local Governments was founded– consisting of

a network of more than 90 cities (among which there are significant absences), and whose work is connected with strategic urban planning. CIDEU represents the type of specific cooperation action that could be organised through the Forum of Local Governments and that they could promote if they had the support of the most representative Ibero-American municipalities[2].

In the future the Forum should become a platform for the creation of new cooperation programmes in diverse areas. These programmes could involve the technical and financial assistance of municipalities that have their own cooperation resources or they could be set up with the support of three countries in order to become an official Initiative of the Ibero-American Summits.

4. The difficulties

The issue of participation will need to be carefully analysed in the future, not only in the internal context of the Forum, but also within the framework of the Conference, as it must be recognised that attendance has been falling over the three Forums held to date, not only in terms of the number of municipalities represented and in the level of representation (there are fewer mayors present each time), but also in terms of the number of cities with a large population participating.

This difficulty is increased even further by the fact that there has not been continuity of participation, which greatly

complicates the adoption of joint programmes that may have some impact on the development of both national and local public policies, and even lessens the possibility of establishing bilateral and triangular cooperation agreements between Ibero-American cities.

The challenge of holding the Forum in 2009 has the additional problem that no Portuguese city has ever attended any of the three previous events, which will make it difficult for the hosts of the 19th Ibero-American Summit, to be held in Portugal, to reach an agreement with the Portuguese Association of Municipalities or any other Portuguese city regarding the venue for the Forum of Local Governments.

This situation is in contrast with the high level of the discussions generated during the sessions of the Forum Assembly, as well as of the proposals and commitments agreed.

It would be a good idea therefore to reflect upon some of the difficulties that the Forum must face for its future development and which, if duly resolved, could help to consolidate it.

1) The Ibero-American local world is, to some extent, hard to encompass in numbers, as it does not have a system of its own that municipalities form part of or feel part of. The assumption that all Ibero-American municipalities could participate in the Forum is unrealistic and makes its concretion difficult.

2) National associations and federations do not always represent all the mu-

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[2] | *Although it is a non-governmental organisation and is not made up by a network of municipalities, the Ibero-American Union of Municipalists (UIM), backed by the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (AECID), carries out training and research work and assists a large number of Ibero-American municipalities.*

nicipalities in a country and they are very often fragmented or divided for biased political reasons and even respond more to central government guidelines than to the views of their members.

3) Most local authorities cannot take frequent absences from their work to participate in international events, regardless of the importance these events may have.

4) Small local governments do not have their own resources for participating in international meetings.
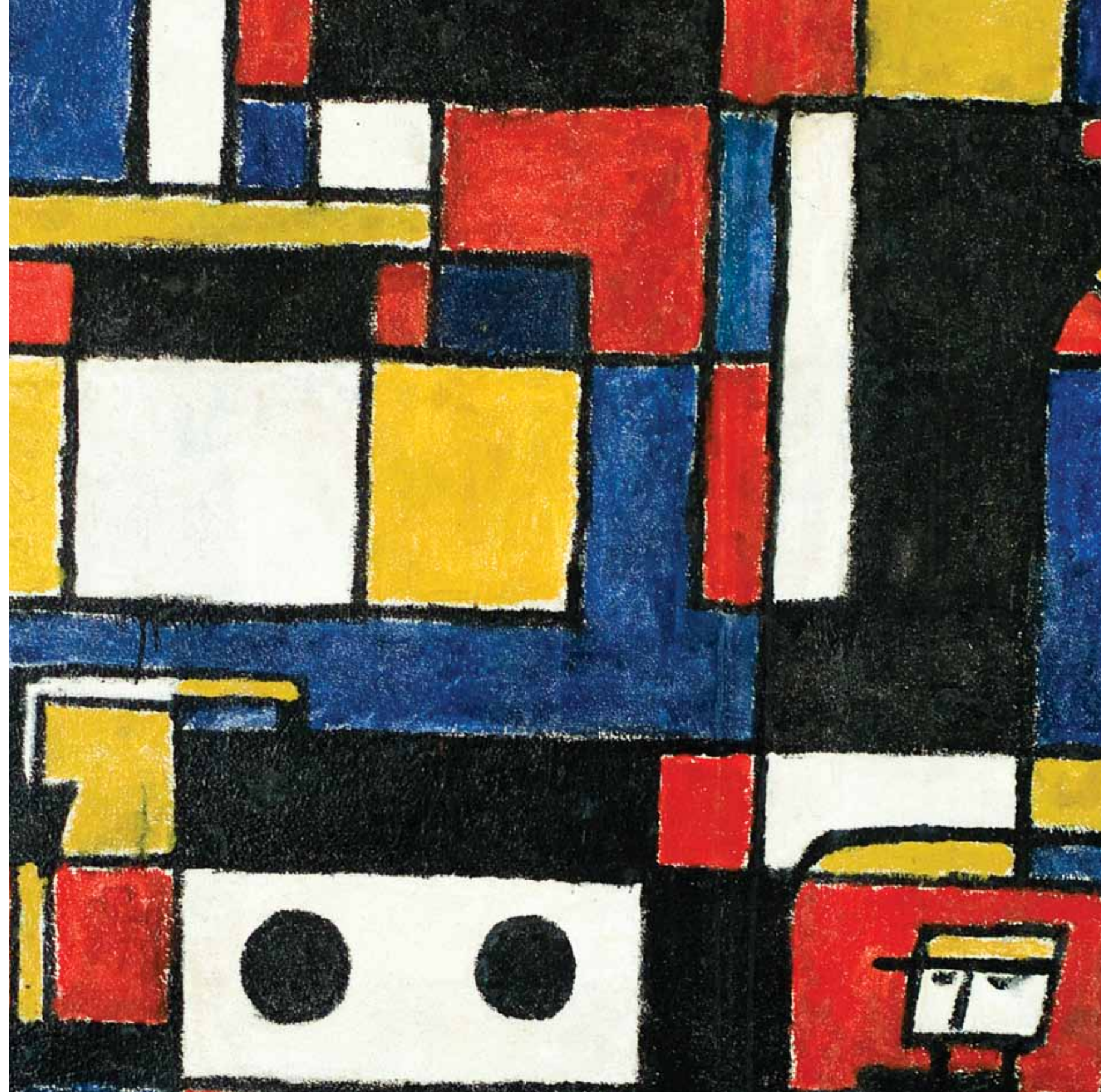
5) There are various international events in the local ambit that overlap on the calendar.

6) The Declarations of the forums are usually abstract and do not contain concrete results that could be transformed into local public policies, nor do they establish assessment or follow-up methods for the proposals and commitments made.

7) There is no special attraction for large Ibero-American cities to participate, as another meeting and cooperation body already exists, namely the biennial Assembly of the Union of Ibero-American Capital Cities.

The Forum should therefore aim at consolidating itself, for which it is essential to establish something such as a permanent membership (open and flexible) that institutionalises its activities. This would provide continuity for the Forum's projects and deliberations, enable it to develop goals and objectives, facilitate its self-regulation and organisation, ensure more representative and qualified attendance by the municipalities, and create a sense of belonging.

Finally, we should also ask ourselves, for the future, whether the Forum should have a Technical Secretariat that would revitalise the activities of the Assembly and manage the Forum's projects during the periods between each meeting, coordinate the start-up of an Ibero-American network of municipalities and contribute to organising the annual assemblies.

Territorial networks and policy-making: structured dialogues with the European Commission

Javier Sánchez Cano *
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This article investigates the evolution of a specific form of participation by European territorial associations in the process of forming EU policies: structured dialogue. This is a European Commission consultation method aimed at involving regional and municipal networks in the early stages of European decision-making. Launched in 2001 with the publication of the White Paper on European Governance, structured dialogue already has a long history. This article identifies a continuous activism by the institutions involved (Committee of the Regions and the Commission) that does not always correlate with the interest and participation demonstrated by territorial networks. It analyses the background and legal basis of this instrument, its functioning from 2004 until today, and proposals for improvement made by different European territorial associations. In a year of changes in the Parliament and the Commission, the authors identify three possible routes towards improving structured dialogue, which could convert it into a true method of pre-legislative consultation.

Key words

*Territorial networks |
Structured dialogue |
Regions and European Union |
Regional integration |*

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1. Introduction

The existing concern at the heart of the European Commission about appropriate sub-State participation in the early stages of shaping policies has been around for a long time. Dating back to the time of the Prodi Commission, when with the turn of the century, and without needing to revise the treaties ('a traité constant'), it launched a series of interesting proposals in its White Paper on Governance[1]. Those were the days of good governance, understood as the way in which the EU used the powers conferred on it by its citizens, and governed by the principles of openness, participation by all the social actors, accountability, effectiveness and coherence.

This concern had a clear correlate in the position of regional and local authorities, often expressed through the associations they form part of. Both regional and local authorities had actively participated in the debate generated by the abovementioned Commission's White Paper on Governance. Although no European-level conclusions were adopted regarding the way to involve local political actors in the internal development of European regulations –the States continued to be principally responsible for this– the need to territorialise the EU, in terms of information, was however clear, as was the importance of listening to citizens' demands in the European legislative process, and above all the need to establish a systematic dialogue with social representatives –including local authorities– to improve the effectiveness of governance in the European Union (Sánchez Cano 2007).

This article analyses the functioning of one of the proposals drawn up by the Commission in its White Paper with a view to improving sub-State participation in shaping European legislation: structured dialogue. This instrument was created by the Commission in order to facilitate permanent and stable dialogue with associations of local and regional authorities, representatives of the so-called 'third level' in the EU, i.e., territorial administrations.

This work has a twofold objective: on the one hand, to initiate a reflection on an instrument which, until today, has not been the object of specialised analysis. And on the other hand, to make a critical evaluation of the real results of the dialogues and of the possible need to revise them. How is the structured dialogue (SD) proposed by the White Paper working? Is it effective? What are its defects? And, from a point of view more connected with the DCO and this Yearbook, to what extent is the openness of this dialogue space a catalyst for local/regional action and cooperation in networks?

All this in a changing European context: the principles of the White Paper on European Governance (good governance) were redirected in the Mandelkern report of the same year towards considerations of better regulation, in the context of the Lisbon strategy. This article analyses how these two concepts (good governance and better regulation) are linked in the interpretation and realisation of the different dialogues held until now, and what impact this slightly forced link has on any future review of the principles that govern this dialogue.

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[1]| COM (2001) 428 final: European governance. A White Paper.

The article is divided into three parts. In the first part we describe the background and legal basis of the structured dialogues. The second follows the evolution and the content that has made up this instrument, from 2004 until today. Finally, the third part aims to offer an assessment and determine whether the objectives sought with its implementation have been achieved, as well as suggesting some ways to improve the instrument.

2. Background and legal basis

2.1 The proposal of permanent dialogue

The Commission has had an integrative approach in its contact with the outside world. With this approach, each individual, business and association can offer their ideas and suggestions to the Commission. However, the situation of an expanding Europe including 250 regions and 100,000 local authorities made it necessary to look for ways to structure dialogue with these actors, and to reduce the number of subjects on the table. This was how the Commission, after a long consultation process, and "in response to requests from territorial actors" unveiled the idea of maintaining a "more systematic dialogue with the representatives of regional and local governments through national and European associations at an early stage in shaping policy."

On 11 December 2002, when the report on European Governance[2] and the Communication 'Towards a reinforced culture of consultation and dialogue'[3] were adopted, the Commission announced the issue of a Communication establishing the framework, objectives and conditions of this dialogue with associations of local and regional groups.

This Communication[4] specifies the additional and complementary character of this dialogue with respect to any other method of consulting regional and local authorities. It more clearly sets out the role of the Committee of the Regions (CoR) within the framework of the proposed dialogue, and it establishes a reference framework to determine which associations may participate in the dialogue.

The Communication from the Commission of December 2003: some specifications

The Communication was published in December 2003 under the title 'Dialogue with associations of regional and local authorities on the formulation of European Union policy'.

The aim of the dialogues was for the Commission to learn about the opinions of sub-State organisations before initiating the formal decision-making process for European policies, especially in the case of policies with a strong territorial impact which could have regional/local repercussions. It is noteworthy that the instrument had some specificities such as the express declaration that the dialogue would be complementary to other consultation processes, and would not replace them. Furthermore, it clarified that the dialogue would serve to reinforce the CoR's links with territorial associations,

facilitating the elaboration of statements representing a common sub-State opinion on a specific issue.

Tömmel (2004:112)[5] identifies a series of reasons to explain the Commission's facilitating attitude:

• The Commission cannot deal with each decentralised region or stakeholder on an individual basis and that is why it wants to encourage the representation of interests by promoting cooperation and the forming of associations among regions and stakeholders with similar interests.
• The Commission hopes that these associations or networks will be able to draw up –taking the exchange of experiences as a starting point– proposals that better adapt to the needs of the beneficiaries.
• The Commission is trying to decentralise parts of the policy process, in particular the implementation of certain programmes, to horizontal organisations in order to reduce administration costs on a European level and to obtain more effective programmes.
• The Commission wants to organise a horizontal transfer of policies, in particular between the most developed regions and the least developed ones, with the aim of fostering innovation in the regional and structural policies of these less developed regions.

The new instrument of permanent dialogue was very well received at first in sub-State political levels, as it seemed to provide an opportunity to increase –if not improve– direct contact with European institutions, traditionally closed to regional and local levels of government. However, it did not take long for signs of disenchantment to appear.

In fact, the Prodi Commission had promised in its White Paper to issue a Communication setting the working parameters of the dialogue, and it was after the publication of this Communication that the first voices of dissent began to be heard: the Communication established, as the White Paper had already done, that the dialogue would be carried out at the beginning of a policy proposal and it would be maintained between the Commission, the associations of regional and local authorities (national and European) that were invited in each case, and the Committee of the Regions. Therefore, right from the start it excluded from the idea of a structured dialogue any direct contact with the actual regions – not necessarily articulated in a network. Furthermore, the criteria that associations had to meet in order to be eligible included the need to be representative bodies of a group, capable of issuing opinions previously agreed by its members and also capable of adequately informing them of the results of the dialogue[6]. Finally, it established that only those associations directly concerned with the issue being debated would be invited.

The issue of the selection criteria and of who would be responsible for this selection was also controversial: a balance had to be established between representative associations of different categories of sub-State organisations. The number of associations had to be limited to make a genuine ex-

[2]| COM (2002) 705 final of 11 December 2002.
[3]| COM (2002) 704 final of 11 December 2002.
[4]| COM (2003) 811 final of 19 December 2003.

[5]| *Tömmel, Ingeborg (2004). "Transformation of governance: The European Commission's strategy for creating a 'Europe of the Regions'". Morata (2004b).*
[6]| COM (2003) 811 final.

change of opinions and proposals feasible. The list of associations to invite, as well as the issues to be dealt with, would be decided by the Commission based on a proposal by the CoR. The aim of the dialogue was to provide the participants with an opportunity to express their opinions and points of view, as well as to help reinforce the relationships between these associations and the CoR. To some extent, a new form of consultation, with the intervention of the Committee as facilitator, became institutionalised.

What remained to be clarified was whether this would satisfy the regions' wishes, and in particular those with legislative powers, represented by CALRE (Conference of the European Regional Legislative Parliaments, consisting of 74 regions of 8 Member States, MS), which would participate in the successive dialogues. In addition, the CoR was allocated a pre-eminent role in organising and selecting the different participants, which was not always accepted to the same degree by all sectors.

Two types of meeting were anticipated. On the one hand, an annual meeting was to be held with the President of the Commission to analyse the legislative and work programmes that the European Commission presents each year. This dialogue was not intended to substitute the President of the Commission's meeting with the CoR to present these plans, instead it would complement it, enabling representatives of the associations to maintain a political dialogue at the highest level on the planned guidelines for the EU's activity. Nevertheless, and as we will see later, the initial idea has gone off track: the Presi-

dent of the Commission's meeting with the Committee of the Regions to present its annual programme is now held to coincide with the structured dialogue. This has meant that the dialogue is no longer a pre-approval of the work programme, but simply the presentation of this plan, without prior sub-State discussion.

In accordance with the 2003 Communication, in addition to these 'general meetings', thematic meetings were planned with the members of the Commission responsible for policies with a territorial impact, with the possibility of holding them annually if justified by the work programme. Based on this, the agenda for the meetings was to be determined by the Commission's general work programme and by the calendar of initiatives with important territorial impact.

2.2. From systematic and permanent dialogue to structured dialogue: a random name change?

In principle, the term chosen in the White Paper on European Governance was 'systematic dialogue'. Thus, on page 15 of the Paper, under heading III on proposals for change, we find the idea of "establishing a more systematic dialogue with European and national associations of regional and local government at an early stage of policy shaping". This term also appears in the later Communication in 2003[7], the report on work carried out towards a permanent and systematic dialogue. Reference is made to the dialogue being systematic because of its continuity, and permanent in the sense of it not being limited to an annual meeting, but that continuous consultation with these territorial organisations is recommended.

7| *Number 811.*

In the first meeting held in May 2004, talk began about holding a more structured dialogue with territorial groups. Arising from a cooperation agreement signed by the CoR, the Commission in November 2005 and the meeting held to prepare the 2006 action programme, the term 'structured dialogue' became widely accepted to allude to the regular and institutionalised nature of the dialogue.

This term seems to be more in keeping with the reality of the dialogues held until that time. The transformation from permanent and systematic to structured betrays the shift that has taken place over recent years in the ideas that presided over the development of this consultation tool and, in addition, it reveals the instrument's deficiencies, as we will shortly see.

2.3. Selecting the participating associations

The selection of the associations that may participate in a dialogue is the responsibility of the Commission: the Commission is in charge of approving the list of regional and local networks that participate in each meeting, based on a proposal presented by the CoR. The invitations are issued at least six weeks in advance and the Commission is also responsible for sending out the necessary documentation so that the participants can prepare for the meeting.

The dialogue, in accordance with the 2003 Communication, is politically organised; in this way only elected representatives playing an important role within the association can participate and speak during the meeting.

The CoR set up a database for eligible associations to subscribe to in order to be selected to participate in the dialogues: the list of European and nationals associations.

The selection procedure is relatively simple: for each of the thematic dialogues a list of specific participants drawn from the CoR database is set up, taking into account the experience necessary to deal with the specific issue on the agenda. In the case of national associations selected and included on the list, the approval of the head of the corresponding national delegation is required following the proposal made by the Secretary-General of the Committee. The approved list is proposed to the Commission, which is in charge of sending out the invitations.

The dialogue meetings are announced on the CoR's website as soon as they are announced by the Commission. It is also possible for associations registered in the database to apply to participate in specific dialogue meetings.

3.1. The meetings from 2004 until today: description of their content

Since this consultation instrument was launched in 2004, a series of general structured dialogues have been held[8], totalling six so far, added to which we should include the nine thematic meetings held: Climate Change, October 2005; Maritime Policy, December 2005; Communication Policy, June 2006; Ed-

8| *1st in May 2004 (Prodi); 2nd in February 2005 (Barroso); 3rd in November 2005; 4th in December 2006; 5th in December 2007 and 6th in November 2008.*

ucation and Culture, June 2006; EU Budget and Common Monetary Policy, October 2006; Flexicurity, September 2007; Neighbourhood Policy, December 2007; Regional Policy, June 2008; Health Policy, December 2008.

Fifteen in four years which, since the very beginning, has not prevented different voices from repeatedly calling for an increase in structured dialogue contact. Thus, for example, President Barroso recently committed[9] to increasing the dialogue between the regions and the Commission by improving the mechanisms of structured dialogue. These declarations were made at an important moment for the regional movement, when expectations for the ratification of the Treaty of Lisbon were still high, and they opened up the opportunity to actively participate in controlling the principle of subsidiarity.

However, if the number of dialogues held to date is relevant, even more so is the content of the debates and the greater or lesser impact the exchange of opinion between the Commission and local and regional networks may have when the former is drawing up new legislative initiatives. Analysing the content of the dialogues will help us to explain the evolution of this instrument, to identify its deficiencies and to come up with proposals for possible improvements.

Despite the many years that these dialogues have been running, it has still not been demonstrated that the principles detailed in the White Paper are being respected with this method of consultation – even though the dialogues were conceived for this very purpose.

These principles are:
1. Regional/local participation prior to European-level decision-making.

2. Strengthening coordination between the Commission and regional authorities.

3. Ensuring that citizens better understand the objectives of European policy.

4. Greater transparency.

3.2. General structured dialogues

The first structured dialogue was held in May 2004 and was attended by President Romano Prodi and the President of the CoR at that time, Peter Straub. More than sixty European, regional, local and national associations participated, together with representatives of the European Commission and the Committee itself. This first dialogue represented the official launch of this new consultation instrument; the result, however, was far from what was expected: there was not a specific agenda; the speeches were made without any common thread or goal. The evaluation was, as always, mixed: disappointing for some participants –one of whom described the session as "an empty useless show"[10], but at the same time an important symbolic step for others[11].

Since then many other dialogues have taken place and they have been consolidated as a regular activity within the CoR. The associations have met twice with the President, José Manuel Barroso, for a general dialogue on the Commission's annual programme (February and November 2005), for a thematic dialogue with Commissioner Stavros Dimas on climate change (October 2005), with Commissioner Joe Borg on maritime policy (December 2005), with Commissioner Ján Figel on matters of education and culture (June 2006) and with the Vice-president of the Commission Margot Wallström on communication policies and Plan D (June 2006). In September 2006, President of the Commission Barroso and President Delebarre of the CoR agreed to develop the dialogue further by making it more dynamic.

The second dialogue (24 February 2005) brought together President Barroso and representatives of local and regional associations. This was the first meeting with the new President, who confirmed his intention to continue this dialogue launched by his predecessor, Romano Prodi, one year earlier. The participants established the need to hold an annual meeting at the beginning of each year to deal with the Commission's work programme, and if necessary a second general meeting with Vice-president Wallström for a more specific audience at the end of the year.

Furthermore, thematic meetings would be held on specific issues with the participation of the commissioners concerned. The associations directly affected would also be invited.

With regards the selection procedure for speakers at the meetings, until that point there had not been any problem due to the small number of people eligible to participate. Nevertheless, it was agreed to set up a clear and transparent selection system and to include an option for indicating whether or not the delegate would like to speak in the application form to sign up for meetings. This fact itself is evidence of the dialogue being restricted – as a dialogue is not a true dialogue if there is no possibility of free speech in response to presentations made by others.

It was also agreed from the start that the CoR website should be developed as a centre of information for associations about the dialogues being held. Finally, we should mention that it was decided to use the tri-annual meetings between the Secretary-General of the CoR and the secretary-generals of the associations to plan the joint dialogue with the Commission.

The third dialogue, which was the second meeting with President Barroso, took place on 17 November 2005. Representatives of twenty local and regional associations attended – a smaller number of participants than at the first meeting, but nevertheless highly representative. This second meeting dealt with the European Commission's legislative and work programme for 2006.

The year 2006 was definitely a good period for starting up the structured dialogues; continuing the development of the White Paper on Governance, the importance given to these dialogues was demonstrated in speeches made by commissioners Barroso, Wallström, Figel and Almunia, who defined them as a necessary exercise for communication between institutions and local and regional representative authorities, in accordance with the European principles of subsidiarity and proximity.

[9] | *Declarations made by President Barroso on the occasion of the fifth Structured Dialogue.*
[10] | *Comment made by one of the participants of the first dialogue 'First European Managers Forum' organised by the EIPA-ECR in October 2004.*
[11] | *Responses provided by the Platform of European Associations representing regional and local authorities after the launch of the territorial dialogue on 10 May 2004.*

The fourth dialogue was held on 7 December 2006. This was the third meeting with President Barroso in preparation for the 2007 work programme, which included among other initiatives 'better regulation', by creating impact assessment reports, and simplifying and reducing administrative costs. The Commission would send the CoR the reports it considered as priorities in order to receive its opinion, thereby strengthening the cooperation between these two organisations.[12]

During the meeting, representatives of the associations explained their priorities, welcoming the successes and highlighting the outstanding work regarding possible improvements to the structured dialogue instrument. CALRE emphasised that the principle of subsidiarity was the best way to manage the interests of each region, with regions holding legislative power being able to participate in the process of implementation according to the internal configuration of the respective Member States. The idea of better regulation, within the context of the Lisbon Strategy, alludes to the need not only to reduce regulation, but also to improve and simplify the existing regulation. In the same terms, the participation of regions and local authorities increases as the subsidiarity principle begins to play an important role in achieving this simplification, thus, in order to achieve maximum effectiveness, European-level regulation should only be necessary when it is not possible on a local, regional or national level.

Structured dialogue is an effective instrument for exchanging experiences at this sub-State level, and is the optimum way to shape specific policies that require local or regional action. In accordance with these parameters, administrative costs would be reduced as it would not be necessary to mobilise stakeholders not directly affected by the policies in question, and at the same time regulatory production could be cut back to the strictly necessary. The impact reports drafted in each proposal measure this effectiveness[13]. Mr Barroso confirmed the importance of the subsidiarity principle and also underlined the value of the reports drafted by the CoR, making a commitment to increasing cooperation during the pre-legislative stage. The Commission backs the development of territorial pacts between national levels and their regional/local authorities. This is how the guiding principles of structured dialogue established in the White Paper on European Governance were transformed to take other new ones on board: the guiding principles of the Lisbon Strategy, enshrined in better regulation: benchmarking, reduction of administrative costs, impact assessment etc., relegating the 'good' governance as conceived by the Prodi Commission to the background.

Lastly, in the CoR's resolution, which appears as an appendix to the report[14], the focus was on the development of the European Groupings of Territorial Cooperation (EGTC) and on greater and more effective participation by regional and local representatives in pre-legislative and implementation processes, within the terms of the Lisbon Strategy.

The fifth dialogue, dealing with the 2008 work programme, took place on 29 November 2007. On this occasion the Commission was represented by its Vice-president, Margot Wallström. In this meeting, in addition to the notable absence of the President of the Commission, what really stood out was the decreased number of representative associations (18 compared with the 20 who participated in the two previous meetings) and above all the reduction in the number of speeches given. In the fifth dialogue only 13 associations spoke, while in previous years this number varied between 16 and 17, with the exception of the huge participation in the first meeting with Mr Barroso, at which 29 speeches were made.

Throughout the debate held at this meeting, the President of the CoR, Michel Delebarre, stated that SD should remain a flexible tool and that it should be as focused as possible in order to foster multi-level governance effectiveness. The suitability of sub-State cooperation lies in its greater proximity to citizens in terms of transmitting European policies to them and understanding their interests and expectations. Delebarre to some extent rekindled the original principles of the dialogue, or at least kept them alive.

Moreover, many of the growth and employment goals established in the Lisbon Strategy[15] depend on and involve a high level of participation by local authorities, and many of them are also implemented and financed at this level. A noteworthy element of the speech made by the representative of CALRE was the recognition of the regions in the Treaty of Lisbon and the importance of providing a greater role for these regions with legislative powers in the consultation process when approving European budgets, as well as insuring the independence of these regions' financing systems[16].

In the CoR's decision on the priorities for 2008, which appears as an appendix to the final report on the structured dialogue that took place[17], the focus was on the importance of better regulation and fulfilling the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality, as well as the participation of regional authorities in drafting impact reports in the phase prior to decision-making. Likewise, it welcomed the proposal in the Green Paper on territorial cohesion which the Commission was planning and would finally present in October 2008[18] and considered that the EGTCs offered great potential for territorial cooperation. Furthermore, it referred to the decentralising result of the neighbourhood, interregional cooperation and cross-border policies. This served to further reinforce the links between the principles of better regulation, and the idea or necessity of reinforcing dialogue with associations. Thus, as previously discussed, dialogue at this infra-State level and the creation of impact reports are determining factors for the regulatory effectiveness and simplification sought by the goal of 'better regulation'. The exchange of experiences that takes place throughout the SD and the presentation of interests must be consolidated as the best tool for decisively influencing European policies, elevating the real interests of citizens to this level and

12| *An important point in the debate arose in the speech given by the representative of the German Municipalities when he tackled the objective of 'better regulation'.*

13| *On this point, regulations on award of contracts are criticised as they rule out contracts under certain thresholds, resulting in increased administrative costs for local and regional authorities.*

14| *Page 67 of the Report on Commission Legislative and Work Programme 2007.*

15| *Drawn up after the summit held in Lisbon between political leaders from the EU in March 2000, under the agreement of the Member States with the aim of modernising Europe and which was relaunched in February 2005 focusing on economic growth.*

16| *Speech by Izaskun Bilbao, President of the Basque Parliament and Chairperson of the Conference of the European Regional Legislative Parliaments.*

17| *Page 39 and following of the Commission Legislative and Work Programme 2008.*

18| *COM 2008, 616 final, 6 October.*

eliminating excessive, obsolete and ineffective regulation.

It is not possible to comment in greater detail on the sixth dialogue, held on 27 November 2008. In this case, and after the President of the European Commission, José Manuel Barroso, presented the Work Programme of the European Commission for 2009 to the plenary session of the Committee of the Regions, Hervé Jouanjean, Vice-secretary General of the European Commission, presented the same programme to the participating territorial associations. As we know, the Commission's programme for the year this article was written aims to focus on improving the EU's capacity to provide fast and effective responses in times of crisis, like the present. For this reason, it aims to provide a practical approach directed at all the citizens of the EU, based on four main priorities: growth and employment; climate change and a sustainable Europe; a Europe close to its citizens; and Europe as a world partner.

3.3. Thematic structured dialogues

As a result of these first general meetings to discuss the annual action programmes, a need was identified to establish thematic dialogues, to shape more specific policies for action and to enable a more effective exchange of experiences.

In accordance with the previously mentioned Communication of the Commission of December 2003 and the CoR's decision of March 2004[19], the list of issues to be included in the thematic dialogues was to be drawn up by the CoR in consultation with the associations, who could suggest issues to be dealt with via the Committee's website.

The first two debates were dedicated to sustainable development policies; the first in October 2005, following the signing of the Aarhus Convention on the implementation of the Kyoto Protocol in the EU, and the second in December 2005 on maritime policies.

The third meeting, held on 15 June 2006, with the participation of Commissioner Margot Wallström, dealt with communication policies, following the White Paper of 1 February 2006, which aimed to reduce the distance between the EU and its citizens. Noteworthy from this dialogue was the idea of communication as a two-way action, aimed at both explaining the decisions made and gathering requests. The Commission has drawn up different initiatives to improve its communication capacity and to promote greater proximity with its citizens, including among them the Commission's Plan for Communication and Plan D (Democracy, Dialogue and Debate) from 2005, as well as the 2006 White Paper on European Communication Policy. This last Paper aims to foster communication and public debate in Europe, including regional, local and European levels, as well as NGOs, civil society and interest groups, in order to reinforce the role of citizens and the democratic process. The Committee of the Regions and the European Economic and Social Committee were reinforced as representation areas for civil society, following the principle of subsidiarity.

The fourth thematic structured dialogue was held on 20 June 2006 with Ján Figel, Member of the Commission for Education, Training, Culture and Multilingualism. The issues debated included the contribution to the success of the Lisbon Strategy and the role of regions and cities together with relevant associations. The Commission encouraged interregional dialogue and the exchange of practices for the optimum development of the Lisbon Strategy, whose follow-up and evaluation is the responsibility of the Member States.

Another important topic in this education and training sphere was cross-border cooperation (TEMPUS programme) as well as regional information exchange practices, reflected in the Commission's Communication on Youth Participation and Information of July 2006 and the European Youth Pact and Promotion of Active Citizenship[20] within the framework of the Lisbon Agenda. The Youth programme, which would be replaced in 2007 by the Youth in Action programme, backs projects created by young people, most of which are implemented locally.

A fifth thematic meeting was held on 20 October 2006, between regional authorities, the CoR and members of the Commission, this time with the Commissioner responsible for Economic and Monetary Affairs, Joaquín Almunia. At this meeting, the Commissioner reminded those present that the commitment made by governments on all levels and the administration of their budgets were vital for the success of the European Monetary Union's policies, and underlined that the recognition of the legal responsibilities of regional and local authorities should be proportional to their financial resources. There was a discussion about the fact that, since the 1990s, the progressive fiscal decentralisation of many Member States (MS) had increased local and regional authorities' autonomy and along with it the need to readjust their role in decision-making, as well as the ability to require them to comply with the values set out in the Stability and Growth Pact (although, being a commitment acquired by MS, responsibility for non-compliance would lie at national level), all of which meant that the allocation of fiscal competences in Europe was far from homogeneous. Nevertheless, in the debate it was made clear that this decentralisation had not been accompanied by higher levels of deficit (with the exception of Germany). To ensure economic stability in this decentralised panorama, it was advisable to grant regions greater flexibility for managing their own resources, at the same time as setting objective parameters for the development of national stability programmes.

In his speech the representative from CALRE spoke of the possibility of the regions participating in the approval of European budgets and being able to make observations on aspects within their spheres of responsibility. In response to this, the Commissioner indicated that this decision, as well as the distribution of fiscal management in MS fell within the sphere of national competences, and therefore the Commission was unable to comment on the matter, but it could reinforce the solution that best adapted to existing regional needs, whether by internally facilitating regional participation or direct participation via specific committees within the Council (as some MS had been doing in certain areas).

The sixth thematic meeting was held in September 2007 with Vladimir Spidla, Commissioner for Employment Policies, after the adoption of the Commission's

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[19] | CdR 380/2003 item 2.

[20] | 30 de mayo de 2005, COM (2005), 206.

Communication on flexicurity of June 2007[21]. The Commissioner remarked on the importance of this debate, as the regional level, apart from national guidelines, is ideal for putting into practice these policies of employment and exchange of experiences (especially continuing training and active labour market policies). The Association of German Municipalities criticised the Commission's Communication for not referring to the importance of local and regional authorities in this respect. This association also criticised the youth employment situation, the labour market re-integration of people over 50 and the reconciliation of family and work life –areas in which municipalities and regions play an important implementation role due to being in a better position to respond to the needs of citizens and to face issues of social responsibility. During this meeting the Commissioner indicated that a Convention had been signed together with the OECD on exchanging good practice in local employment strategies. He also highlighted the importance of the CoR in representing regions and municipalities in the implementation of the Lisbon Strategy. Decentralisation in the Lisbon Strategy is manifested in the regional administration of structural funds and attention to the principle of subsidiarity that governs European policies. The conclusions derived from this meeting would be noticed when defining future policies in this area. Flexicurity policies cover the issues of public-private collaborations and the incorporation of social considerations into these same policies.

Benita Ferrero-Waldner participated in the seventh thematic meeting on 18 December 2007 which dealt with European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP). The Presi-

dent of the CoR expressed his satisfaction with the meeting, considering it a great success thanks to its intense debate. Benita Ferrero also underlined the advantages of regional and local incorporation in ENP debates, as they are a source of experience and knowledge for drawing up strategies and setting objectives. It was made clear that regions play a complementary role to that of the CoR in issues of neighbourhood policies, being especially relevant at a regional level in matters such as migration, Black Sea Synergy, the EUROMED programme, economic cooperation and visa procedures. Migration policies are a national competence, therefore the ENP deals with this issue in a complementary way.

In the debate it was made clear that although MS from the Commission were the only official negotiators involved in drawing up ENP plans, the importance of consulting local authorities and civil society was recognised. MS need to make renewed efforts in terms of the liberalisation of agriculture in order to conclude negotiations with the EU's commercial partners, thus improving cross-border trade. Local and regional authorities are fundamental for immigrant integration policies, being a common goal and thus eligible for European funds in that respect.

In the eighth thematic meeting (18 June 2008) the Commissioner for Regional Policy, Danuta Hübner, presented the Fifth Report on Economic and Social Cohesion to the associations. This presentation had been preceded by a long consultation period, during which many of these associations had discussed and elaborated their own proposals on the issue. These served as the basis for the different, and numerous, contributions pro-

vided[22], which shared a series of ideas:

• Connecting the cohesion policy and the defence of the EU's economic and social model to face the challenges of globalisation.

• Defending the regions' capacity to apply and adapt this policy: if each region experiences the impact of globalisation in different ways, it is important that they have the tools available to respond in a specific way, and to fully exercise their endogenous capacities.

• Requesting that the Commission consider other sectoral policies with a strong territorial impact: environmental policy, transport policy, research and development, energy policy, especially in relation to improving their coordination with the cohesion policy.

• Congratulating on the fact that, once the Treaty of Lisbon came into effect, the goal of territorial cohesion would be part of the European Union's primary legislation. Given that all the stakeholders would be part of its execution, the EU needs to generate a shared notion of this concept and determine the actions to be carried out by all the policies and levels of government in order to achieve this objective set out it the Treaty.

The ninth thematic meeting (9 December 2008) brought the territorial associations together with Androulla Vassiliou, Commissioner for Health. The issues discussed were patients' rights to cross-border medical attention; patient safety and the quality of medical services; and the Green Paper for health professionals. Various European regions, including Cata-

lonia, agreed to present a report within a month on the benefits and objections that they believed a future European Directive on patient mobility should include. This Directive was presented in July 2008, with the aim of reinforcing the rights of patients who travel to receive treatment in another Member State. The Directive established that European citizens do not require prior authorisation from their country of origin to have recourse to 'health tourism' and they have the right to be reimbursed for the cost of the treatment on their return. However, a series of safeguards were being considered to avoid placing the financial viability of public health systems at risk. This issue is critical for the European regions that directly manage these services, and therefore they must play a central role in determining these expenses as well as receiving the corresponding payments – which, in principle, would be made to the corresponding Member State and not the region itself. For all these reasons, the regions with management capacity in this area have been able to enter into direct dialogue with the European Commission's Directorate General for Health.

4.Evaluation

4.1 Have the objectives of the White Paper been met?

After analysing the meetings, it is possible to evaluate whether the objectives of the White Paper have been met. We should remember that this Paper made certain proposals for action[23], directed at Member States as well as the Commission

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[21]| *COM (2007) 359 final.*

[22]| *Las de la AEBR, AEM, ANCI, Arco Latino, CALRE, CMRE, COSLA, CRPM, Eurocities, Asociación de Municipios Alemanes y REGLEG. Véase el Anexo I para una lista completa de asociaciones y sus siglas.*

and the Committee of the Regions. For the former, a recommendation was made to set up internal systems open to local and regional participation that would allow these sub-State organisations to participate directly in shaping European policies. Compliance with this aspect varies depending on the State, but we can state that different decentralisation processes, ever more widespread, are heading in this direction.

Participation prior to decision-making

In order to test the success of the structured dialogue that the Commission promised its regional and local stakeholders, it is necessary to look at the goals that were sought. The dialogue was focused as a means of integrating regional and local experiences and situations into the elaboration of European policies, i.e., prior to the legislative process. Likewise, this pre-legislative phase is the ideal moment for issuing impact reports, which are sufficiently flexible to be adapted to local needs once European policies are adopted.

The objective set in the White Paper of "establishing a more systematic dialogue with representatives of regional and local governments through national and European associations at an early stage in shaping policy" has been met in part. Most of the debates have been held prior to drafting or issuing Communications or proposing several policies in this field.

As an example, we could mention the first dialogue, on the implementation of the Kyoto Protocol, which was held after the Aarhus Convention was signed and prior to the Regulation that was developed; the second of the themat-ic structured dialogues was held prior to the adoption of the Green Paper on the future of Europe's maritime policy; the one relating to education was prior to the approval of the Resolution of the Council on Education and Training within the Lisbon Strategy. In turn, the dialogue relating to the Economic and Monetary Union preceded the inter-institutional agreement on the financial framework for 2007-2013. And, finally, the recent meeting held on 9 December 2008, on the issue of health, preceded the drafting of the Green Paper on the European Workforce for Health[24].

Nevertheless, on other occasions, the debate on communication, flexicurity and on the European Neighbourhood Policy came after the issue of the corresponding White Paper and Communications, respectively. In the case of regional policy, we could say that, despite the 5th report on cohesion already having been drafted –with broad regional participation– this debate was still open, and the presentation to the associations took place at the appropriate moment.

Therefore, although most of the dialogues held seem to have achieved the aim of meeting prior to the decision-making process in order to listen to the experiences and situations of regions and local authorities, some of them have taken place to establish a subsequent exchange of ideas on an already decided issue, to receive criticism and modification proposals for the future. The same could be said of the general dialogues, at which the annual action programme already drawn up by the Commission is approved, hardly leaving any room for substantive contributions from the associations. It is notable that the programme for 2008 reserved, for the first time, a section for future policy initiatives to be defined, leaving some margin for dialogue with other stakeholders.

Likewise, it is difficult to delimit the power and amount of influence that these meetings have had over subsequent legislative development. The question is whether they are a genuine democratic instrument for bringing these policies closer to civil society, or whether they are used by the Commission to apparently legitimise its activities.

Analysing the significance of the meetings in terms of the number of participants from regional and local associations, we can see that from the first debates until the most recent ones the level of participation has varied relatively little. Nevertheless, the number of representatives who speak at the meetings has fallen, and above all since 2005 in the annual general debates. This reduction could be due to the application of more restrictive measures agreed between the CoR and Barroso's Commission or it could also be due to criteria of greater effectiveness, if it is believed that a more limited dialogue could be more fruitful.

Another fact that we should mention is the analysis of the type of participants invited to the dialogues. The White Paper established that European and national associations of regional and local groups would be invited. The aim was clearly for highly representative associations with broad territorial coverage to participate. However, we must point out the participation of some associations and representations restricted to a small or very limited territory. This participation may not be fruitful, as its contribution stays close to its particularities and may not be extensible to the other regions. In this respect, perhaps it would be more effective to limit participation to those organisations that can contribute experiences or present interests that are truly representative and extensible to the other regions. On the other hand, and in contrast to the aforementioned, representation that is too general and reduced would not provide results or attend to real needs.

Another important criticism is the 'dynamism' of the presentations, a quality underlined as desirable by President Prodi during the opening of the inaugural meeting of the dialogue on 10 May 2004. This dynamism is not so in reality, as the registered participating associations that want to speak have to indicate this wish in advance and present their questions, so that the Commissioner is able to prepare an answer beforehand. Therefore, a genuine dialogue does not take place, instead there is a presentation of successive proposals and interests interspersed with the Commission's respective responses or viewpoints.

Strengthen coordination between the Commission and regional authorities

The structured dialogue should serve as a consolidated and systematic forum for the expression and exchange of sub-State interests and practices, institutionalising, to a certain extent, the Commission's consultation instruments. However not all regions can participate nor do they do so individually, only those that the CoR together with some associations have selected can take part. The exchange of experiences among the associations can facilitate the Commission's understanding of regional and local interests, on condition that they are specific and realistic proposals, but do not focus on such specific issues that they fall outside the scope of the Commission's activities.

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[23] *Page 15 of the White Paper.*
[24] *COM (2008) 725 final.*

Ensure that citizens better understand the objectives of European policy

This level of dialogue consolidates the expression of citizens' interests –as it is the representatives of the democratically elected territorial authorities that bring their most direct concerns and interests to the Commission and the European level. This reduces the democratic deficit suffered by the EU and increases citizens' confidence in European policies, as regional and local authorities are also in charge of transmitting the bulk of European policies to their citizens, or at least the first level of the administration that citizens can direct themselves to.

Greater transparency

Sub-State participation brings policies closer to citizens and makes them more understandable. However, the fact that only certain regional and local associations participate and not others could raise doubts about its complete transparency, as well as the final results of this contribution and its later real reflection in European policies, especially in the general meetings. Likewise, structured dialogue has been criticised by some associations (see the section on the Assembly of European Regions) as a genuine dialogue is not held –the questions and responses are prepared in advance and this leaves no room for spontaneous contributions, nor is sufficient time allocated to each association, and they have no real influential capacity that may be reflected in the final legislative result [25].

4.2. Participating associations and their observations on the functioning of structured dialogue:

Below we will analyse the observations most often repeated by the associations with the greatest presence in the debates held until now.

ASAEL (Association of Local Authorities in Aragon) has a permanent office in Brussels. According to its website (http://www.asael.es/), it provides its members with information on the EU and its policies, as well as serving as an intermediary for the queries its members send to institutions. In a representative role, it participates in the structured dialogues with the CoR and the Commission.

Arco Latino (representatives of second-level provinces and local administrations in the western Mediterranean territory) has participated in the debate on budgets, regarding work programmes for 2006, expressing its interest in the elaboration of specific proposals for the European neighbourhood policy in the Mediterranean; with regard to the debate held with the Commissioner on regional policy, it underlines the lack of recognition of the representative role of second-level local authorities (the provincial councils in Spain) despite their potential.

The Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions (CPMR) represents 160 regions in 28 countries, and it manifests the interests of these regions in its areas of activity. An up-to-date calendar of activities is maintained on its website. The issues of neighbourhoods, cohesion policies, sustainable development, mari-

time policy and development with ACP countries were listed as its principal interests throughout the dialogue maintained with Benita Ferrero and during the annual general meetings.

EUROCITIES is the representative of the 120 principal European cities, and is very present in the structured debates. Since the beginning, it participated in the general dialogue with Barroso in February 2005, in which this network welcomed the practice of structured dialogue as an instrument to foster participation by cities and regions in processes of shaping European legislation, as they are responsible for the implementation of the bulk of European policies. During this dialogue, it highlighted the need to set up thematic debates, which at that time did not yet exist, in order to deal more effectively with specific European policies. Likewise, it proposed holding a high-level meeting prior to the Spring Council between the Presidency of the Council, the Commission, the Parliament, the CoR and the associations of regions and local authorities. From the general debate held on 7 December 2006, the conclusions of the President of EUROCITIES in this respect were not entirely satisfactory, as he considered the time granted to the associations of local authorities as insufficient and he suggested that this instrument be restructured in such a way as to obtain a genuine dialogue.

An important role in these dialogues is played by **CALRE**, the Conference of the European Regional Legislative Parliaments, as it brings together regional authorities with legislative powers. In the meeting held with the Vice-president of the Commission to discuss the 2008 action programme, CALRE underlined the importance of these meetings for drawing

more transparent, effective and sustainable European policies closer to citizens. At this meeting, as well as at the one held with the Commissioner of Economic Affairs in October 2006, the Conference raised the question of the criterion for financial autonomy and the possibility of European organisations recognising the regional fiscal systems of some MS. It considered that regions with legislative competence that have national budget autonomy, being co-financers of the EU's regional policy and the majority of them managing European budgets, should systematically participate in the debates on budgets. In response to this proposal both the Commissioner of the Monetary Union and Vice-president Wallström, in their respective debates, stressed that competences for designing fiscal structures and for budget collection fell within the scope of MS' powers. Thus, the Commission could not decide on regional participation in budget approval nor in other areas that recognise this regional budget autonomy, and could only support national internal measures directed at greater regional representation in preparing budgets.

The **AER**, Assembly of European Regions, representing 255 regions and 13 interregional associations, has participated in different dialogues. It has spoken about the White Paper on Communication Policy of 2006, welcoming the broad recognition of the role of regions in bringing European policies closer to citizens, as important partners for institutions. Their website provides a list of the association's activities and declarations. Their positions, speeches and questions put to the commissioners appear on the same website, up to the debate on health of 9 December 2008. The AER has made some interesting observations with regard to the practice of structured dialogues.

[25] | *AER White Paper on the Role of the Regions in Reconnecting Europe with its Citizens, March 2006, pág. 18.*

In its report on 'the Role of the Regions in reconnecting Europe with its Citizens' of March 2006, the AER presented specific recommendations for revitalising the dialogue and converting it into a genuine direct dialogue between regional associations and the Commission. Although at first it received the initiative of maintaining systematic territorial dialogues with optimism, congratulating the efforts of Prodi's Commission, it seems that changes in the structure of the Commission served to overturn the initiative, cutting short these expectations.

The AER's recommendation for re-activating and recovering the original intention of these debates is, principally, to separate them from the inter-institutional intermediary action of the CoR and to leave more room for direct participation by the associations[26]. A vital element of this refocusing of the structured debate is that the dialogues should be held before the approval of the Commission's annual action programmes (and not afterwards as has happened in the past). In this way a genuine dialogue is possible and the contributions of the associations can be reflected in European policies.

To improve participation during the debate, increasing quality and opportunity, it proposes reducing the number of participants to those European-level regional and local representative associations which offer interesting and appropriate contributions.

In a communication on 31 August 2006 the AER proposed to the Commission greater transparency and administrative lightening of the processes of citizen participation. Furthermore, it stressed the need for associations to receive different treatment to other lobbies, as the former form part of the structure of European governance and represent the interests of public authorities. Therefore, the system for applying to participate in the debates, as if it were for lobbies, should be abolished and left open for the regions concerned to participate. Finally, to enable the practices to be evaluated, it recommended that follow-up reports be drafted by the Commission evaluating the regional contributions and whether they had been considered and finally included in European policies – the idea of follow-up that Barroso referred to in his meeting with the CoR on 12 April 2005 on evaluating the structured dialogue, but without proposing specific measures in this respect[27].

5. Conclusions

Despite the criticism and deficiencies it may present, structured dialogue is an instrument that demonstrates the progressive decentralisation of Europe, the internalisation of the EU's policies and the Europeanisation of the regions which, as stakeholders and finally responsible for many European policies, demand the right to participate in shaping these policies, not only to clarify the details, but at the moment of their conception.

Probably, there is some contradiction between the usual lobbying method used by networks of cities and regions –not very formalised, personal, with different times,

based on technical capacity more than on political representativeness, highly specialised...– and the actual concept of structuring debate. We are sure that, in shaping specific policies –a case worth studying would be the drafting of the EU's new maritime policy and the work of associations like the CPMR– , the contact between networks and the Commission is continuous and fruitful. Holding structured dialogues thus appears to be a highly formalised occasion in which to give this contact a more institutionalised setting, although with all the limitations inherent in the work dynamics chosen.

The regions need to take part in the European pre-legislative process; at the same time, the great complexity of European policies, their broad spectrum and their intricate legal scale, result in this form of participation being equally complex, uneven in terms of interests and competences, based on formal procedures –consultation opened by the Commission– and informal procedures –impact evaluation reports presented on regional initiatives. Therefore, it will be difficult to establish a setting –these structured dialogues– in which the function of reaching pre-legislative agreement is fully developed, with information, participation and optimum results; it is simply too broad an objective for such a limited format. Nevertheless, we should take note that the commissioners with responsibility for issues of greatest territorial impact –with the exception perhaps of Science and Research (Commissioner Janez Potočnik) and Common Agricultural Policy (Mariann Fischer Boel)– have held sectoral meetings with European territorial associations using the mechanism of structured dialogue.

A very important element to bear in mind is the fact that it is the CoR itself that hosts and organises these meetings between associations and the European Commission. In 2004, this did not appear to be a problem: the Committee was at a relatively low point, commissioners were not frequenting it, and the dispersion of its work and reports were limiting its ability to have an impact and influence on the EU's legislative process. Nevertheless, this trend has reversed: now it is normal for the Committee's plenary sessions to be attended by two or three commissioners, generally to present and explain new legislative initiatives. With this, one of the initial objectives of the dialogues –pre-legislative participation– has been exceeded by the CoR's own dynamics. In its assembly hall and corridors the CoR provides access to this role for a greater number of stakeholders –its members– who in addition enjoy greater political authority. This could be seen in the last dialogue, with the President of the Commission, the plenary session and the General Vice-secretary and the associations present at the dialogue.

Nowadays the dialogue is not a real mechanism of pre-legislative consultation, and the goals and objectives it originally sought under the Prodi Commission appear to have been overtaken by the political priorities marked by the Barroso Commission: it is no longer the tool for good governance it was at the beginning of the century, but an instrument that aimed to serve better regulation, but which scarcely achieves the objective of improving regional institutional presence in Brussels.

For this instrument to become more effective it is advisable, as laid out in the Assembly of European Regions' report, to separate it from the institutionalism of

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[26] *Caso práctico, The Structured Dialogue, página 18, AER White Paper on the Role of the regions in reconnecting Europe with its citizens, March 2006.*

[27] *Pág. 5, R/CdR 62/2005 item 3a.*

the CoR; although this is a good interme-
diary and organisational partner, it should
not intervene too much in the dialogue
in order to permit a genuine exchange of
experiences. Currently, according to the
AER's report of March 2006, the CoR
has assimilated the structured dialogues
into the consultation that the Commis-
sion holds with the CoR after drafting its
work programme[28]. This assimilation has
served to diminish the importance of this
debate for the associations, as this is the
only formal consultation instrument they
have available to them and the fact that it
is always held afterwards detracts from its
effectiveness and credibility.

Also relevant for improving the ef-
fectiveness of the structured dialogue is the
need for participants to discuss sufficiently
specific and specialised issues in order for
them to make real contributions; but not
excessively so, to facilitate the exchange of
experiences and interests with other Euro-
pean regions and associations. It should,
therefore, raise the level of the participants,
not in quantity, but in quality, as well as tak-
ing more care over the process of drawing
up proposals, so that they are not only rel-
evant but also original. At the same time, it
would be appropriate to set up a mechanism

for following-up the different dialogues to
be able to determine their impact on the
pre-legislative process.

Finally, we cannot omit to mention,
given the general theme of this Yearbook,
that holding a thematic structured dialogue
dedicated to decentralised cooperation
could be of great interest. Local mobilisation
and involvement were already high when, a
few years ago, the Commission published
its Communication on 'Governance in the
European Consensus on Development: To-
wards a harmonised approach within the
European Union'[29]. This Communication,
which was the subject of an opinion by the
CoR[30], already made way for a clearer defini-
tion of local/regional interface within inter-
national cooperation activities. A more recent
Communication, 'Local authorities: actors for
development'[31] directly suggests the possibility
of establishing "a structured dialogue on de-
velopment policy with Local Authorities (LA).
This could take place under the aegis of the
CoR, given its role in providing local authori-
ties with a voice at EU level, and include LAs
and LA Networks. This dialogue could take the
form of annual assemblies, involving all those
active in this system of cooperation in order to
strengthen these networks, enhance aid effec-
tiveness and assure sustainability of one-off and
pilot actions." (Point 3.1).

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[28]| *As established by point I. 3 of the Protocol on the cooperation agreement that governs inter-institutional rela-
tionships between the CoR and Commission. R/CoR 86/ 2007 item 3a).*

[29]| *COM (2006) 421 final, 30 August 2006.*

[30]| *(2007/C 197/09)*

[31]| *COM (2008) 626.*

Appendix I | associations and websites

Associations	website
EUROCITIES	http://www.eurocities.org
Conference of the European Regional Legislative Parliaments (CALRE)	http://www.calre.be
Conference of European Regions with Legislative Power (REGLEG)	http://www.regleg.eu
Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA)	http://www.cosla.gov.uk
Assembly of European Regions (AER)	http://www.aer.eu/
Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR)	http://www.ccre.org/
Association of European Border Regions (AEBR)	http://www.aebr.net/
European Network of Cities and Regions for the Social Economy	http://www.revesnetwork.net/
Arco Latino	http://www.arcolatino.org
Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions (CPMR)	http://www.crpm.org
European Association of Elected Representatives of Mountain Regions (AEM)	http://www.promonte-aem.net/AEM
Baltic Sea States Subregional Co-operation	http://www.bsssc.com/
Union of Baltic Cities	http://www.ubc.net/
Association of German Landkraise	http://www.kreise.de/landkreistag/
Union of Polish Metropolises	http://www.selfgov.gov.pl/eng/about-ump/index.html
Association of Local Authorities in Aragon (ASAEL)	http://www.asael.es
National Association of Italian Municipalities (ANCI)	http://www.anci.it
Local Government in Denmark	http://www.kl.dk
Association of French Regions	http://www.arf.asso.fr/

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Central American Integration from a local perspective: The Lempa river tri-national border association

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The article describes the institutional nature and the factors that gave rise to the Lempa River Tri-national Border Association (Mancomunidad Trinacional Fronteriza Río Lempa), a decentralised municipal body for local development in what is known as the "Trifinio" region, a convergence zone of three Central American countries: Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador. It provides analysis of the differences between the deconcentrated institutional model, which has revolved around the Trifinio Plan, and the decentralised model, entailing the formation of the Tri-national Association, which has become a body for regional integration with a local impetus. Reference is made to the main milestones in Central American integration in order to emphasise the innovative nature of the new body, which could provide the impetus for a new kind of integration process in the Central American region. Emphasis is placed both on the role and contribution of decentralised cooperation as a stimulus for the creation and start-up of the Tri-national Association, and specifically on European Union URBAL III project backing for the implementation of the first joint Tri-national project to encourage social cohesion and territorial integration.

KEY WORDS

Association |
Decentralisation |
Local development |
Regional integration |
Decentralised Cooperation |

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1. Introduction

The Lempa River Tri-national Border Association[1] is a public, decentralised and autonomous association for local development, located in a region in which three Central American countries converge. Its legal status was awarded by the Ministry of Governance of the Republic of Guatemala in 2007, an initial step towards becoming a body for tri-national integration. It comprises twelve municipalities, each represented by their respective local governments, of which six are in the Republic of Guatemala, Esquipulas, Concepción las Minas, Olopa, Ipala, Asunción Mita and Santa Catarina Mita; four in the Republic of Honduras, Ocotepeque, Sinuapa, Concepción and Santa Fe; and three in the Republic of El Salvador: Metapán and San Antonio Pajonal. The foundation of this Association represents the first time in the history of the region that the municipalities and their local governments have initiated an attempt at Central American political integration, and the seed for true political, social and economic integration prompted from a local level in convergence with regional policies.

The Lempa River Tri-national Border Association (MTFRL), a multinational, decentralised body geared to integration, arose from the initiative of the region's local governments, in convergence with the initiatives of the Trifinio Plan authority[2], and within the context of measures of support for decentralised cooperation in Central America. The Association is a qualitatively different alternative to the institutional deconcentrated integration paradigm implemented by the central governments of the three countries from the 1980s onwards under the "Trifinio Plan", which has been rather ineffective in meeting cross-border development objectives. The current novelty lies partly in the coexistence of both institution types, one of which (the Trifinio) is centralised and governmental and operates on the basis of functional deconcentration, while the other (the Association) is a municipalist, multinational, and decentralised institution that operates on a basis of decentralised cooperation and the long-term prospects of which feature a paradigm of social democracy, with significant citizen participation, and true local cross-border regional integration. Both institutions share the goal of Central American integration in a specific cross-border territory, which was also affected by the armed conflicts in El Salvador and Guatemala.

This Association is even more significant if one considers that the integra-

[1] *The Lempa River, which flows into the Pacific Ocean, is the longest river in Central America and has a basin in three countries: Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador. It rises in the volcanic mountains of the region's central plateaux, at an altitude of approximately 1,500 metres above sea level in the Department of Chiquimula in Guatemala, enters El Salvador in the north-eastern part of the Department of Chalatenango, and flows into the sea from the Pacific coastal plain, between the Departments of San Vicente and Usulután. Its highest point is 2,805 metres above sea level in the mountains of Honduras. The Lempa River tri-national watershed covers a total area of 17,790 km², 10,082 km² of which are located in El Salvador, 5,251 km² in Honduras and 2,457 km² in Guatemala. The main river course is 422 km long. 360.2 km run through territory in El Salvador. Although the river is used for fishing and crop irrigation, it is mainly used for the generation of electrical energy, responsibility for which lies with the Executive Commission of the Lempa River*

[2] *Since the 1980s, the name Trifinio has been given to the convergence point of the borders of the Republics of Guatemala, El Salvador and Honduras. It is a zone of high ecological value, acknowledged for its species of flora and fauna and based around the Montecristo Massif, which covers altitudes from under 400 metres to 2,419 metres above sea level.*

tion of the Central American isthmus[3] remains a slow process, despite the host of institutional initiatives undertaken since 1951. The current international crisis has again raised the issue as recent years have not seen rapid progress in human development and regional integration in Central America. It is therefore necessary to rise to these challenges on a joint basis and to rediscover both the region and integration as strengths that complement the measures that each State must inevitably take to ensure the well-being of its people .[4]

2. Background: the deconcentrated paradigm of cross-border integration

Given the importance of the Trifinio Plan as an attempt at regional cross-border development and a form of integration that has also contributed to the creation of the Association, a broad outline of the Plan is given below to place the new joint institution in context.

From the 1970s onwards, the three countries had come up with different initiatives[5]. On 12 November 1986, they eventually signed the "Technical Cooperation Agreement among the governments of the Republics of Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador with the General Secretariat of the Organisation of American States and the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture to formulate a Plan for Integrated Development in the Border Region of the three countries".[6] The first plan, which concluded in 1988 and was subsequently known as the "Trifinio Plan", was recognised at the highest political level by the subscription to a Treaty by the three countries involved, which will be mentioned later.

The Plan is oriented in two complementary strategic directions: the first is the conservation of the zone's natural resources, based on an integrated approach to development, and the second, a notion of

cross-border integration as a step towards Central American integration. Years later, both ideas featured in the foundation of the Lempa River Tri-national Border Association.

The Trifinio Plan arose from a concern for forestry conservation, namely the defence of the cloud forest that crowns the Montecristo Massif at the meeting point of the borders of El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras. Analysis of the region and international environmental experiences subsequently led to the conviction that the forest could not be effectively protected if considered on an isolated basis.

The needs of the economically weak rural towns in the surrounding area, unaware of the consequences of the indiscriminate process of deforestation, were thus exerting constant, unrestrained pressure on forestry resources, which were gradually being damaged and were virtually at risk of disappearing. This reflected the long-term history of the world's forests, which are undergoing ever faster degradation on account of demographic explosion and a growing demand for forest raw material for industrial, mining, domestic or urban development purposes.

The forest was therefore considered as the intangible nucleus of an area of the biosphere reserve. A surrounding belt, used predominantly although not exclusively for forestry, was identified as a buffer area, and a larger strip was assigned to a variety of purposes, in which forestry would also feature in localised zones naturally suited to its use as such.

Meetings and negotiations with the national authorities of the three countries

yielded the Trifinio Plan's current demarcation area, which includes 8 municipalities in El Salvador, 15 in Guatemala and 22 in Honduras. The elements identified led to the idea of producing a Plan for the Integrated Development of the Trifinio Region.

The Trifinio Plan is also a concrete example of the integrationist vocation of Guatemala, El Salvador and Honduras. These countries signed up to the General Treaty on Central American Economic Integration, which gave rise to a specific instrument known as the "Tripartite Treaty of Economic Association", which was enacted in 1960. The Trifinio Plan arose as a more viable and effective alternative, with significant results in multinational integration, in the 1980s, upon the exhaustion of the initial stage of solely economic regional integration, which revolved around the common Central American market.

The 1980s were a decade of low-intensity war in the region, in which revolutionary struggles coexisted with State terrorisms and attempts from outside the region to end the conflicts and establish peace. It was a decade of vagueness in the regional integration paradigm. The first Trifinio development plan was announced in the very year in which the First Presidents' Summit at Esquipulas, Guatemala (Esquipulas I), agreed to create the Central American Parliament. A year later, in 1987, the historic Esquipulas II Agreement was signed in the city of Esquipulas. From a cross-border local perspective, the Trifinio Plan[7] was the spearhead of the new phase of regional integration, which culmi-

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[3]| Central America, situated between the Pacific and Atlantic Oceans, comprises the Republics of Belize, Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Costa Rica and Panama, and lies between the north and south of the American continent. It has a total population of 41 million inhabitants and covers an area of 525 thousand square kilometres.

[4]| As stated in the Third Report of the State of the Region Project published in Central America in August 2008.

[5]| The introduction to the 1988 Plan literally states that "During the Central American Meeting on the Management of Natural and Cultural Resources held in San José, Costa Rica, in December 1974, the delegations of the three countries agreed to propose the creation of a Multinational Park in the area. Later, in 1975, Guatemala produced a Preliminary Management Plan for its zone and showed interest in formulating a joint Master Plan with the other two countries. In 1971, the Government of El Salvador had acquired a property on the Montecristo Massif and developed some infrastructures to protect the cloud forest and, in turn, the city of Metapán, which was exposed to floods. In Honduras, the area was declared a priority for the performance of inventories and, with regard to which it presented a basic proposal for the establishment of the Reserve. Both these and other events in 1983 prompted the Regional Council for Agricultural Cooperation in Central America, Mexico, Panama and the Dominican Republic (COREICA) to request the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture for a project profile on the "Establishment of LA FRATERNIDAD Biosphere Reserve in the Trifinio area". It also agreed to seek technical and financial support from other international agencies. On the basis of the proposal from El Salvador, and the support of the Tropical Agricultural Research and Higher Education Centre (CATIE), COREICA produced a profile for a study geared to the formulation of a management plan for the Reserve. In March 1984, this profile was presented to the Secretariat of the Organisation of American States by a Mission of Ministers of Agriculture from the member countries of COREICA. The Department of Regional Development of the OAS undertook the groundwork to obtain finance for the performance of the project. The results of this work included backing from the European Economic Community in the form of non-reimbursable partial financing for the initial studies, addressed to the formulation of an Integrated Regional Plan for the Development of the Tri-national Trifinio area".

[6]| On the same date, the Organisation of American States (OAS) and the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA) signed the "Cooperation Agreement for the performance of the Multinational Project for the Development of the Border Region of Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador", which establishes the technical bases for their joint participation. The OAS and the European Economic Community –EEC– also subsequently signed an agreement for the OAS to administrate the financial resources provided by the EEC for the studies.

nated in the 1990s with the Trifinio Plan Treaty, together with the launch of two important institutions: the Central American Parliament and the Central American Integration System (SICA).

The Trifinio Plan was specifically designed to make Central American integration tangible through the provision of an alternative to previous models that disregarded the role of the regions and of an approach befitting regional border development. Even though the territorial and political scope of its objectives were more modest, it was thought to have a greater chance of success as it could provide solutions to specific problems more relevant to the interests of the populations involved.

The Trifinio Plan region comprises national zones on the fringes of their respective countries. The region can generally be considered as a homogeneous zone for planning purposes. It is a mountainous region particularly suitable for forestry, the soils and plant cover of which are subject to an accelerated process of deterioration. Water is scarce both for agriculture and for domestic use. The predominant production activity is farming, which is characterised by a predatory use of natural resources. There is a high poverty rate and virtually all the economic and social indicators are unfavourable in comparison with respective average national values. The region is a sender of migrants and public sector programmes and investment are scarce.

Both the physical proximity and the similarity of the problems faced by the resident population of the Trifinio area point to a certain degree of existing border integration or, in other words, a "de facto", spontaneous or natural integration that has arisen from the convergence of the following factors:

a) Economic complementarity of the border populations, manifest mainly in trade and in the use of the health and education services of other countries, which, in turn, gives rise to movement on existing roads and at border posts; b) Travel of people who live in the border sectors of the three countries is facilitated by residents' permits that may be obtained simply with the identity card of the countries of origin. Border trade is limited to the exchange, based on price benefits, of essential and mainly food products; c) Tourism. There is a significant flow of tourists in the region. These are mainly attracted by the Shrine of the Black Christ in the Basilica of Esquipulas, a centre of religious pilgrimage, and the Copán Ruins, because of their great archaeological appeal; d) The road infrastructure[8] that facilitates Central American physical integration and converges in the Trifinio area, which connects the region relatively

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7| *The Coordinating Committee of the Trifinio Plan held its first meeting on 20 and 21 November 1987. This was marked by important ceremonies in the cities of Metapán, Esquipulas and Nueva Ocotepeque (El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras, respectively), subsidiary centres of the Trifinio Plan, attended by the Vice-Presidents of the three countries, the Secretary General of the OAS, the General Director of the IICA, the Representative for Central America of the European Economic Community, several Ministers of State and national and local authorities from the three countries, and special guests. On this occasion, the Coordinating Committee took some important decisions, which included: official approval for the documents "Tri-national diagnosis of the integrated development plan for the Trifinio border area" and "Integrated development strategy for the Tri-national Trifinio Region". It thus approved the three basic programmes and the 28 tri-national projects contained in the Plan. For the purposes of the Plan, the Trifinio Plan Agreement defines the border area as a region of 7,584 km2 that comprises the whole of the Department of Chiquimula and four northern municipalities of the Department of Jutiapa, in Guatemala, five municipalities in the Department of Santa Ana and three municipalities in the Department of Chalatenango, in El Salvador; and all the Department of Ocotepeque and six municipalities in the Department of Copán, in Honduras.*

TABLE 1	Time chart of the paradigms of Trifinio cross-border integration, against the background of periods of conflict and peace and of Central American integration, 1950-2009			
YEAR/ PERIÓD	CONFLICT AND PEACE IN C.A.	CENTRAL AMERICAN INTEGRATION	TRIFINIO AUTHORITY	LEMPA RIVER TRI-NATIONAL BORDER ASSOCIATION (MTFRL)
1951	Signing of the Charter of San Salvador, which gave rise to the Organisation of Central American States (OCAS)			
1960	Start of the armed conflict in Guatemala (1960-1996)	Tripartite Treaty of Economic Association (Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador)		
1960-79		CENTRAL AMERICAN COMMON MARKET		
1979-92	Revolutionary war in El Salvador			
1979	Sandinista revolution			
1983	Foundation of the Contadora Group			
1986	Esquipulas I Agreement	Foundation of the Central American Parliament		
1987	Esquipulas II Agreement	Founding Treaty of the Central American Parliament (PARLACEN)		
1988			First Trifinio Plan	
1991	First formal sitting of the PARLACEN	Creation of the Central American Integration System (SICA)		
1992			Second Trifinio Plan	
1996	Peace agreements: El Salvador (1992); Guatemala (1996)			
1997		Foundation of the Tri-national Commission of the Trifinio Plan	Trifinio Plan Treaty	
2002				Creation of the concept of the Association in the new Guatemalan Municipal Code Foundation of the PPT [10] Association
2004				ESQUIPULAS: launch of the initiative to create the TFRL [11] Association
2005.2006		Foundation of the IDELCA [12]	The Trifinio promotes the foundation of the MTFRL	Local government assemblies to approve the Memorandum of Association of the TFRL Association
2007			The Trifinio recognises the MTFRL	Legitimisation of the TFRL Association before the Guatemalan Government
2008.2009				Legitimisation in Honduras and El Salvador
2008				The MTFRL wins a URB-AL project
2008 [13]				The Tri-national Association submits the 2008-2023 Tri-national Territorial Strategic Plan to the three Vice-presidents

SOURCE: Produced by the author.

10| *Poder para Todos Association, cofounder of the IDELCA.*
11| *TFRL: Lempa River Tri-national Border.*
12| *Institute for Local Development of Central America (IDELCA).*
13| *Public act held in Guatemala City on 21 November 2008.*

well with the primary and secondary road networks of the three countries. There is nevertheless a very clear lack of suitable local rural roads; e) Integration of the electricity generation and distribution systems, thus facilitating interconnection between Guatemala and El Salvador and with the Honduras system to Panama.

Based on recognition of these factors, the Trifinio is intended to intensify and improve the border integration process by establishing conditions for the sustainable development of the area. The countries thus alter the relative importance of their border zones, which assume a geopolitical role that turns them into priority areas for the implementation of joint projects.

To enhance the process institutionally, in 1997 the three governments signed and enacted the Treaty of the Republics of El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras for the enforcement of the Trifinio Plan. The Treaty is the legal framework for the performance of tri-national programmes, projects and initiatives geared to the promotion of cross-border cooperation and the sustainable management of shared natural resources. It defines the region as "an indivisible ecological unit, on which only the joint and coordinate action of the three countries may satisfactorily solve the problems of its inhabitants and provide for the sustainable management of its natural resources". The Treaty establishes the geographical area of action in the tri-national region and the powers that the governments have in enforcing it. It institutionalises the Tri-national Commission of the Trifinio Plan,

which is formed by the Vice-presidents of El Salvador and of Guatemala and a President-Designate of Honduras.

The Commission has its own legal status, with administrative, financial and technical autonomy, and a Tri-national Executive Secretariat. It is the highest tri-national regional authority and entrusted with the enforcement of the Trifinio Plan.[9]

3. The contribution of decentralised cooperation to the creation of the Lempa River tri-national border association

The Lempa River Tri-national Border Association was created in the period following the signing of the peace agreements in El Salvador and Guatemala, in a Central American context characterised by growing recovery of areas of municipal autonomy, State decentralisation and citizen participation. A new correlation of political and social forces grew with democratisation and the peace agreements and decentralised municipal cooperation appeared for the first time in this region, under the leadership of Barcelona Provincial Council (DIBA).

This municipal institution, detecting a need for stronger local power and in close collaboration with the new Central American leaders, supported the creation of innovative spaces and institutions to add to this democratising spirit from a local perspective. Hence

the organisation in 2001 of the Central American Conference for State Decentralisation and Local Development (CONFEDELCA), the first two meetings of which were held in San Salvador (2001) and Guatemala (2002) and were attended by the Vice-president of the DIBA[14]. The fourth meeting (2004) was held in Tegucigalpa, Honduras, and attended by Mr. Celestino Corbacho, who as President of Barcelona Provincial Council at the time publicly offered support for the creation in the region of a new institute with a municipalist orientation, the Institute for Local Development in Central America (IDELCA). Its establishment was entrusted to the *Poder para Todos* Association of Guatemala, which had been created in 2002 as a non-governmental, not-for-profit organisation geared to enhancing State decentralisation and local democracy and placed an emphasis on support for the creation and consolidation of associations of municipalities.

From 2004 and 2005, three processes supported by decentralised cooperation converged in the Central American region. First, the CONFEDELCA conferences continued in Central American countries, in Panama (2005), in Costa Rica (2006) and then again in El Salvador (2007). Second, as part of the cooperation project with the DIBA[15] the *Poder para Todos* Association, and other municipalist actors from the re-

gion, promoted the regional agreement to create and legalise the IDELCA. This was achieved by means of the Act of Panama (April) and the filing and registration of the Institute as a not-for-profit, non-governmental organisation (Guatemala, December 2005), which allowed for the formal public launch of the IDELCA in July 2006 and the start of its work throughout the region to form a new local municipalist leadership with a view to establishing new Central American integration. This would feature the active involvement of the municipalities and their local governments, with the backing of a cooperation project to ensure the operation of the IDELCA, by the Catalan Consortium, comprising Barcelona Provincial Council, Barcelona City Council, and the Government of Catalonia.

In 2004/2005, the *Poder para Todos* Association also supported the creation of a border association with El Salvador (the Lake Guija Association) and formally initiated support for the creation of what is now the Lempa River Tri-national Border Association[16] I, upon express request by the Mayor of Esquipulas, Chiquimula, Julio Lima Franco, and by the Mayor of Santa Fe, Honduras, Roque Humberto Polanco Deras, who had done the groundwork to ensure the support of the Tri-national Commission of the Trifinio Plan, which backed this initiative.

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[8]| *The Trifinio zone is the only region in which a railway line connects two countries: Guatemala and El Salvador. Unfortunately, the Guatemala section has not been in operation for several years and for security reasons, service in the El Salvador section is practically limited to goods transport (mainly cement).*

[9]| *The Trifinio Plan Treaty was ratified by the Legislative Assembly of the Republic of El Salvador on 24 April 1998, by the Congress of Honduras on 25 May 1998, and by the Congress of Guatemala on 26 April 1999, after publication in the official parliamentary records. The three countries drew up their Instruments of Ratification for the purposes of filing with the Secretariat General of the Central American Integration System (SG-SICA).*

[14]| *Mr José Montilla was invested as President of the Government of Catalonia on 28 November 2006.*

[15]| *From March 2004, Barcelona Provincial Council supported two Poder para Todos Association projects. The Government of Extremadura and the Parliament of Extremadura also cooperated in the creation of the IDELCA.*

[16]| *In 2004, the opposition to the Mayor of Metapán, in El Salvador, delayed the process. It was restarted in late 2005 and was given great impetus throughout 2006, after the municipal elections in March. In this municipality these were won by Mr Juan Umaña, a born leader with a deep commitment to the new initiative, who even fought off the resistance from other mayors from El Salvador in the border region.*

It was these Mayors, with a passion for municipalism and local autonomy, who came up with the idea of creating the Association after sharing experiences at an international event on cross-border development held in San José, Costa Rica. The commitment and perseverance of these local leaders prompted the political commitment of a further nine mayors and a mayoress, who, with a firm belief in Francisco Morazán's[17] dream of integration and after overcoming many political and legal obstacles, succeeded in founding the Association in Guatemala City on 27 February 2007, when they signed the Memorandum of Association, based on Guatemala's new Municipal Code, which had been enacted in 2002[18].

The Lempa River Tri-national Border Association is thus a politically purposeful, committed, responsible and locally relevant response to new trends in sustainable local development, to State decentralisation and to new challenges in Central American integration.

This is set within the context of new Latin American integration strategies, and enjoys the backing of active decentralised cooperation that supports and respects the dynamics of local Central American stakeholders. They are immersed in the task of deepening political democracy and regional integration from a municipal level, while making use of the institutional framework of the Trifinio Plan's Tri-National Commission.

As part of this process, one of the first strategic initiatives of the Tri-national Association, with the backing of the Trifinio Vice-presidential Commission, was to draw up a joint strategic plan with the other associations of each country in the cross-border area. This process was key to the development of the project entitled "Promotion of the social cohesion and regional territorial integration of Central American Trifinio border municipalities" (Application no.: DCI-ALA/2008/79), which was presented by the Lempa River Tri-na-

tional Border Association in a bid for a URB-AL III subsidy award, and approved in late 2008[19]. This represented a high-impact achievement for an association that had recently been formed yet had a very clear objective and great influence in regional integration. The proposal lay within the suggested territorial scope of the URB-AL III Programme award, in matters associated with territorial planning policies and integrated territorial management models, and featured a participatory and consensus-based approach, all with an emphasis on cross-border cooperation among countries in the same region or territory[20].

The general objective features the three following components: a) the inclusion of social cohesion and integrated land management on the public policy agenda of the three countries' local governments (municipalities and associations), b) the articulation of joint processes of social cohesion and integrated territorial management on both a local [municipal] and a national level, and c) the reappraisal, extension and adaptation of the public policy framework effective in each of the three countries and containing elements favouring the development of social and territorial cohesion. This will provide the basis for institutionalising the process of participatory integrated planning, a process

that includes the formulation of public policies.

The territorial planning process may thus give rise to an innovative design model and encourage social cohesion policies within the framework of transnational associations of local governments or, in other words, municipalities and associations.

URB-AL is one of the most important European Commission decentralised cooperation support programmes and is now in its third phase, geared to the design of public social cohesion policies. This explains why the Tri-national Association project was not only presented at a good time, but also makes sense within this programme, at a juncture that favours the achievement by the Association of the objectives set out in the project submitted.

In conclusion, the initial years of the twenty-first century have seen the strategic coincidence of the new dynamics in Central American municipalism, the institutional mechanisms of the Trifinio Plan, and the innovative presence of decentralised cooperation, which prominently features Barcelona Provincial Council and the new Central American leaderships, manifest in new municipal institutions also involved in these new efforts. These have also fortunately coincided with URBAL-III phase three in public social cohesion policies.

17| *General José Francisco Morazán Quezada (born 3 October 1792, Tegucigalpa, Honduras – died 15 September 1842, San José, Costa Rica), was an orator, writer, soldier, Central American statesman, member of the Liberal Party, President of the Federal Republic of Central America (1830-1834; 1835-1839), Head of State of Honduras (1826-1830), Guatemala (1829) and El Salvador (1839-1840) and de facto Head of State of Costa Rica (1842). General Morazán embodied the ideal of Central American union. For over a decade, Morazán dominated the political and military panorama of Central America. Acknowledged as a great visionary, thinker and politician, Francisco Morazán attempted to turn Central America into a progressive nation through liberal reform. The boldness of these changes for the time led, in 1837, to a conservative backlash in Guatemala, which culminated in the end of the Federal Republic of Central America. Morazán eventually became a victim of his own ideals. His ideas never materialised and the great majority of the people of Central America thus eventually abandoned the liberal cause. This benefited the conservatives, who had been removed from power in 1829 and whose ideas led to the division of Central America into five small nations. Taken from Wikipedia.org.*

18| *The following mayors and mayoress founded the Association upon signing the Memorandum of Association: for the Republic of Guatemala, Julio Roberto Lima Franco, Mayor of Esquipulas, José Antonio Guerra, re-elected Mayor of Concepción las Minas, Óscar Guevara, re-elected Mayor of Olopa, Roel Pérez Argueta, re-elected Mayor of Ipala, former President of the National Association of Municipalities, René Vicente Osorio, re-elected Mayor of Santa Catarina Mita and President of the Lake Guija Association, and Elmer Martínez Bolaños, Mayor of Asunción Mita; for the Republic of Honduras, Francisco Adelmo Valle, Mayor of Ocotepeque, Marco Antonio López Valdivieso, Mayor of Concepción, Roque Humberto Polanco Deras, re-elected Mayor of Santa Fe, and Marco Antonio Peña Pinto, Mayor of Sinuapa; for the Republic of El Salvador, Juan Umaña Samayoa, Mayor of Metapán, and Silvia Liceth Chavarria, Mayoress of San Antonio Pajonal.*

19| *On 20 October 2008, Mr Julio Roberto Lima Franco, President and Legal Representative of the Lempa River Tri-national Border Association received notification from Mr Luis Esteire, Programme Manager (URB-AL), that "… with regard to the proposal entitled 'Promotion of the social cohesion and regional territorial integration of Central American Trifinio border municipalities' (Application no.: DCI-ALA/2008/79), presented by the Lempa River Tri-national Border Association in response to the URB-AL III subsidy award, "…upon recommendation by the Committee, the European Commission has decided to award a subsidy of 2,813,357.00 euros to the Lempa River Tri-national Border Association".*

20| *Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador are involved in this project. There are 20 municipalities from Guatemala, in 3 associations; 5 municipalities from Honduras, in 1 association; and 12 municipalities from El Salvador, in 2 associations. All lie within the Trifinio border region, shared by the three countries.*

4. Recognition of the need to create the Tri-national Association

It is important to consider the socio-economic and environmental context in which the Lempa River Tri-national Border Association originated. On one hand the measures of the Trifinio Plan had had scant impact since its appearance in 1986 and, on the other, poverty and environmental deterioration, which had already been diagnosed in the 1980s, were widespread.

This represented a basic challenge for the new Association, as the local development management body from a perspective of the territorial integration of the region. Socially, poverty-related factors affecting natural resources remained:

(a) high illiteracy rates;
(b) limited employment opportunities;
(c) low social investment, mainly in drinking water and basic sanitation, and
(d) the weakness of local social organisations.

As for the environmental sustainability of development, the region's problems are associated with the vulnerability of the natural resources and the way in which they are exploited and used by the inhabitants, particularly in rural zones, which has given rise to deterioration processes that can occasionally prompt permanent alterations with serious social and ecosystemic consequences.

Despite the efforts of the three states over two decades, a serious institutional deficit in the Trifinio region, which prevents proper management of the region's problems and exploitation of its potentialities, has been acknowledged since 2004. A fundamental part of the problem is that bodies, such as local governments, experiencing these difficulties close at hand do not have the power, the regulatory framework or the resources to deal with them. They suffer from great institutional weakness and seriously require resizing under a new agreement with the central governments as part of urgent progress towards real integration of approaches and solutions. Relations between the region's local governments and the central governments need to be redefined, a task that could be facilitated by the associations. The centralised institutional framework, which was valid initially and dates from the late 1980s, can no longer deal, on its own and from the centre, with the challenges of real sustainable development and effectively tackle demographic pressure on natural resources, or rural poverty, social deficits, the lack of basic infrastructure, the lack of production infrastructure, the needs for economic improvement, the effective protection of natural resources and growing threats of environmental deterioration.

From 2003, awareness of these problems and the initiatives of the municipal governments of the Trifinio cross-border region prompted the mayors to work hard to organise the local governments into associations. Five associations were therefore legitimised in the national border areas. These were: a) in Guatemala: the North-eastern Association, which comprises eleven municipalities from three departments[21], the Lake Guija Association [22], and the Copán-Chortí Association[23]; b) in Honduras: the Association of Municipalities of the Valley of Sesecapa (AMVAS)[24]; and c) in El Salvador, the Association of Cayaguanca Municipalities[25] and the Association of Trifinio Municipalities[26].

The organisation and union of the municipal governments in the area are nonetheless in their early stages and must be strengthened. The associations in each country are generally substantially limited in their organisational and operational structures and this hinders their capacity to generate integrated, regional initiatives beyond their territories. The creation of a Tri-national Association had therefore become necessary in order to spearhead the coordination of work in each border area.

The initiative of the local governments to create and form the Lempa River Tri-national Border Association is proof of both their leadership capacity and their interest in being subject to cross-border local development, while making use of the conditions of municipal autonomy yet taking new needs into consideration.

2007 was therefore an intense period of activity geared to the attainment of legal status through the filing and registration of the Association with the Guatemalan Ministry of Governance, given that there existed no similar precedent. There was also similarly intense lobbying and positioning of the Association before the highest authorities of the Trifinio Plan, by means of public presentations at Presidential House in San Salvador and at the offices of the First President-Designate of Honduras, and before the Plenary Session of the Central American Parliament at its seat in Guatemala City.

Local governments were clearly crucially important in the creation of the Tri-national Association. A brief conceptual reference and a comparison thereof with the specific conditions of this region are therefore required. The term "local government" comes from the Latin *localis*, which means pertaining to a place, territory, region or country, and refers to the spatial and temporal relation established between the rural or urban population and territory. Here, local government refers to the municipal area of the political and social organisation of the three countries involved, in the respective territories previously described.

The notion of local government defines different-sized political units of government –states, municipalities, cities–, which are geographically and administratively defined, and socially and culturally heterogeneous. In this case it

[21]| *These are the municipalities of Esquipulas, Concepción Las Minas, Quetzaltepeque, San Jacinto, Chiquimula, Zacapa, Estanzuela, Río Hondo, Teculután, Usumatlán and San Cristóbal Acasaguastlán.*
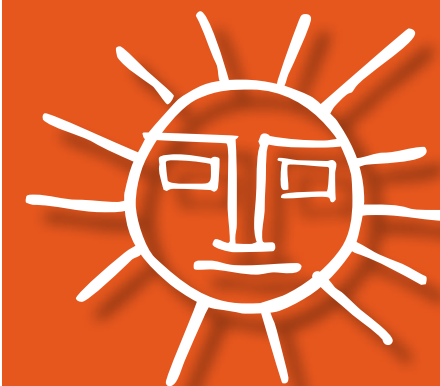
[22]| *Comprising four municipalities: Agua Blanca, Asunción Mita, El Progreso and Santa Catarina Mita, in the Department of Jutiapa.*

[23]| *Comprising four municipalities in Guatemala: Olopa, Camotán, Jocotán, San Juan Ermita, and one in Honduras, Copán Ruinas. The municipality of Copán Ruinas in Honduras only has an agreement with the Copán-Chortí Association, as it did not succeed in legitimising the COPÁN-CHORTÍ Bi-national Association, which was promoted in the zone.*

[24]| *Comprising four municipalities from the Department of Ocotepeque: Dolores Merendón, Ocotepeque, Santa Fe and Sinuapa, from the Department of Ocotepeque.*

[25]| *Comprising five municipalities: Citala, Dulce Nombre de María, La Palma, San Ignacio and San Fernando, all of which are in the Department of Chalatenango.*

[26]| *Comprising five municipalities: Masahuat, Metapán, San Antonio Pajonal, Santa Rosa Guachipilín and Santiago de la Frontera, all of which are in the Department of Santa Ana.*

refers both to cities and to rural municipalities that coexist in conditions of social and economic inequality. One of the most critical features of the local government arena is the establishment of social relations among different actors who express different interests, demands and needs: authorities with powers of leadership, public and private institutions, local communities with different degrees of social cohesion, and social and political organisations.

Like all authorities, local government can assume different political forms. In this case, the Association features local governments that are making great strides towards democratisation and integration. Reflection on the democratic form of government in the local arena became particularly important in the Trifinio region from the 1980s onwards as part of political democratic transition, and then from the 1990s among moves to achieve democracy and local development, at a time not only of economic internationalisation and the global coordination of territories, towns and regions, but also of renewed efforts geared to Central American integration. The scope of local government, moreover, is distinguished by the proximity between governors and the governed, by the prevalence of direct formal and informal relations among the social agents that use the territory, and by the intergovernmental relations established with other levels of government[27].

In our case, all these matters are essential because in the twenty years the Trifinio Plan had been in existence, it had not given proper consideration to the importance of local governments in the management of the cross-border region. It is also important to point out that the concept of local government in the Trifinio region refers to the popularly elected governments of its established municipalities. Local government is made up of the councils, insofar as the municipalities they represent have political, economic and administrative autonomy in all matters incident.

5. Nature of the Lempa River Tri-National border Association

The Lempa River Tri-national Border Association is a contribution to Central American and Latin American political integration from a local autonomy level, which is possible against a background of peace, decentralisation and the institutional and territorial integration of the states involved. The Association is based on a specific model of political, legal and institutional integration from a municipal level and heralds a phase of integration different to the model that has prevailed since 1951, which is characterised by weak, specifically trade-oriented economic integration and which has disregarded its municipal scope and the cross-border territorial areas.

The form of integration of this Tri-national Association is based on the following political, legal and institutional aspects: a) the nature of the municipality and municipal autonomy, defined and recognised in the respective national constitutions and municipal laws of the three Republics involved; b) the concept and scopes of the Association ('mancomunidad') of municipalities, defined in the Municipal Code of Guatemala, Decree 12-2002, which has no prohibitions at all either in the political constitutions or in the municipal bylaws of the other two countries; c) the sovereign power held by each of the three states involved to grant and recognise the legal status of a local supra-national body of such characteristics; and d) the treaties on Central American integration, and in particular the Trifinio Plan Treaty.

5.1. The TRI-NATIONAL Association as a body of political integration

Central American integration, since its outset in 1951[28], has followed a path of physical and economic integration and has hinted at a path of political and legal integration through the Central American Parliament –PARLACEN–, albeit as yet unsuccessful because of institutional weakness, the reluctance to participate of one of its member states (Costa Rica), and the unbinding nature of this institution's decisions.

The Lempa River Association is a supra-national, interstate body that arose from the political commitment of the local governments of the respective adjacent municipalities in the cross-border area of the three nations (hence the adjective 'tri-national'), which took the decision, based on the right to political autonomy enjoyed by the municipalities within the constitutional framework of the states, to relinquish some municipal-State sovereignty in order to share a broader sphere of sovereignty based on the integration of their respective local governments in a joint (supra-municipal) government with a supra-national scope. They did so with a view to coordinating, orienting and planning local development within a framework of municipal powers that may be extended and developed on a basis of municipal autonomy and the decentralisation and deconcentration policies of the member states.

5.2. Aims and powers of the Lempa River Tri-national Border Association

This Association was established to exercise municipal autonomy in the cross-border area by means of:

1) the creation, development, coordination and regulation of plans, programmes and projects for the protection, conservation and sustainable management of the natural resources and the territory of the Upper Lempa River Basin, which is the site of the Tri-national Montecristo Protected Area, known as La Fraternidad Biosphere Reserve;

2) the unification of efforts, initiatives and resources for the joint and several Tri-national promotion and enforcement, with the active citizen participation, of public policies aimed at achieving sustainable cross-border development;

3) the development of activities geared to the integrated management of natural resources, their conservation, protection and reduction of risk to the population, by applying the corresponding legislation; and

4) the specific promotion of rational land use, conservation, care for and protection of water as a regional public asset, with consideration of all aspects of the Local

27| Ramírez Kuri, Patricia: Gobierno Local, en Léxico de Política. http://www.books.google.com.sv/books

28| As mentioned previously the Charter of San Salvador, signed in 1951, gave rise to the Organisation of Central American States (OCAS), which played an important role in efforts and policies geared to Central American integration.

Agenda 21 as a basic reference.

Developing these powers, which are essential for sustainable local development, will require adaptation of the jurisdictional framework of the Association and the respective Ministries of State with powers over said territory. Although the issue of potential conflict in this regard has already been raised, the Guatemalan Ministry of Foreign Affairs[29] has decided to implement a process of reforms to the instruments of Central American integration among Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador with a view to updating them and bringing them into line with new cross-border integration, decentralisation and local autonomy needs.

It is clear that this Association of municipalities transcends physical national borders and has given rise to a cross-border social, cultural, economic and demographic area that is taking shape as a dynamic space for the action of different economic, social, environmental and political agents. These express the need to tackle long-term poverty and the deterioration of natural resources, and to make the most of economic and social opportunities that are only possible with advances at all levels and scopes of integration.

Because of growing socio-economic problems there is currently an urgent need to democratise public access to basic services and to local development through autonomous institutions with a proven capacity in the management of public services and development, and with powers derived from their legal status, personnel and enforcement structures. The councils and the associations of municipalities are the two bodies currently in the best position to fulfil these ends. Because of their proximity to the needs of the public, they play a core role in the provision of public services and in the generation of local development investment programmes.

5.3. The role of the Association in the prevention and resolution of conflicts

Potential conflict arising from the control, management and use of natural resources, particularly water and timber, has always existed in the Trifinio border region. The central governments, both on their own account and in coordination with the Trifinio authority, have generated mechanisms to prevent and to resolve conflict. Pressure exerted by communities on these resources is, however, growing, while a sufficiently sophisticated and agreed legal framework for establishing a stable climate of peace and governance in the zone is lacking.

Against this background, the Tri-national Agenda for Dialogue, an instrument of management and political consensus for Trifinio-promoted sustainable development, has become particularly important. This agenda should be based on an approach that is shared by national governments, the Tri-national Association, other existing national associations in the cross-border area, and the region's civil society. The Association's local governments must develop the political will and management and administration capacity to be effective mediators with central governments and to become strategic local area partners and thus jointly achieve desirable sustainable development goals in the region, with the active and constant involvement of civil society.

The Tri-national Agenda for Dialogue has at least three essential objectives: the first is ongoing dialogue democratically established among the local governments of the area, through the Association; the second is dialogue among local governments and central governments, the latter represented by the Vice-presidencies of the Republics; and the final objective is dialogue among governments (State and local) and the region's civil society. This should all be focused on establishing genuine areas for democratic citizen participation and on generating political models of cross-border local governance with a view to the proper management and conservation of natural resources, particularly water and timber, and the application of economic and social policies to eradicate poverty.

5.4. The Lempa River Tri-national Border Association as a supra-/multi-national municipalist territorial institution

The novelty of this Association lies in the fact it is a local territorial body with the characteristic legislative and executive powers (and probably specific legal powers in the future) of municipalities that are spread out over a cross-border (transnational) area. It therefore has a decision-taking and joint public policy management structure, in which governments, civil society, and the member municipalities of the three countries are permanently represented.

The institutional structure of the Association has five levels: a) the General Assembly, which is formed by elected authorities from the member municipalities and is the governing authority and highest decision-making body; the structure and the role of b) the Board of Administration as the executive body of the General Assembly have also been consolidated; a c) General Executive with its respective technical and administrative support structure has also been formed; d) the Civil Society Tri-national Advisory Council, which involves the private sector, citizens' communities and associations, and government authorities established in the region, with a voice but not vote, and is an authority that represents progress in social participation in this Association; and, e) the Tri-national Advisory Board formed by "…technical staff appointed by national and international institutions of the region" (Art. 12, 40 and 41 of the Memorandum of Association). To ensure the operation of the General Assembly, the Board of Administration and the Association's other bodies, the following regulations and other management instruments will be applied.

5.5. The Tri-national Association as a legal institution

The Association's legal status was founded on diverse general and specific laws. These include the political constitutions of the Republics of Guatemala, El Salvador and Honduras. One of its specific foundations is the Guatemalan Municipal Code, with specific regard to the rules on associations of municipalities. It is also generally founded on the Municipal Code of El Salvador and the Law on Municipalities of Honduras; on the Civil

[29] | At a meeting called by the Deputy Foreign Secretary, Lars Pira, upon the initiative of the Poder para Todos Association and the Tri-national Association, in April 2009 a vital decision was taken to promote legal reform of the Trifinio Plan Treaty and other instruments of integration, in order to redefine the jurisdictional framework and define more precisely institutions' specific areas of operation, particularly insofar as water and other natural resources are concerned.

Code and the Regulation of Registration of Civil Associations of Guatemala; and on the Law of Territorial Planning of Honduras.

Given its supra-municipal, supra-national and cross-border nature, the Association is specifically founded on article three of the Treaty signed by the Republics of El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras for the enforcement of the Trifinio Plan[30].

Upon compliance with all the legal regulations, the Association was legitimised before the Guatemalan Ministry of Governance in December 2007, and completed the other legal requisites in the other authorities of the State of Guatemala between December 2007 and July 2008. It also fulfilled every legal step required in international law, including recognition by the consulates of El Salvador and Honduras for registration in these countries. For the Association to have proper integrationist status, however, it must also be legally recognised before the governments of Honduras and of El Salvador.

Regardless of the ground covered to date, which is very significant, it also requires greater recognition from the different authorities for Central American integration. The award of legal status means the Tri-national Association is subject to rights and duties and is therefore empowered to present projects before different national authorities in the three countries and before international cooperation bodies.

6. Impact of the Association on the management of the territory and cross-border local development

The creation of this Association has a direct impact on the nature of municipal law, on national law and on the law of Central American integration, which has influenced the notion of local autonomy as a factor of regional integration. The Association enjoys the features of a body based on the democratic rule of law.

The legal nature of this Association stems from the authority to take autonomous decisions enjoyed by the municipalities and, within this, the legislative faculty of municipal governments not only to associate with one another within each country, but also to associate with other municipalities from other countries without the existence of any express limitations thereto. This is protected under international law on Central American integration, the spirit of which is the unification of the countries or the express purpose of integration in all aspects of development. There are therefore no restrictions of any kind from the perspective of integration law in force.

This involves agreeing on the new challenges in local development, decentralisation and Central American integration. The purpose of the new framework of relations among local governments and central governments is therefore to initiate a new institutional phase of sustainable development in the region in which the central governments not only strengthen their guiding role in the public policies of the Trifinio region,

but also at the same time have the political will to transfer, gradually and on a concerted basis, exclusive powers, regulatory capacity, and resources to local governments through the Tri-national Association. Areas of shared responsibility are meanwhile defined so that the associate municipalities, with the constant accompaniment of the central governments, can, on a local and responsible basis, tackle a series of problems that the municipalities, because of their proximity, can manage better and at a lower cost and prevent from becoming more serious.

7. International recognition of the Lempa River tri-national border Association

In its short life, the Association has seen quick and significant recognition by different international authorities.

The first instance is the Association's notable progressive recognition in the institutions of Central American integration, for which it has enjoyed the support of stakeholders from the civil society or the integration system.

The Central American Parliament was the first institution to recognise the Tri-national Association. The involvement of the Member of Parliament for El Salvador in the Central American Parliament, Mr David Hernández[31] was crucial in establishing the legal structure of the Association Assembly because of its nature as a body of tri-national local integration. This move also prompted the Central American Parliament to open doors in the integration institutions to the Association, the first Board of Administration of which was sworn in at a plenary session at the seat of the PARLACEN in Guatemala City in January 2007. Another recently created Central American body, the Institute for Local Development in Central America (IDELCA)[32], helped to administer this process.

Another instance of recognition of the Tri-national Association was the public presentation at the seat of the Vice-presidency of the Republic of El Salvador, an occasion at which the Vice-president, Attorney at Law Vilma Albanez de Escobar, as member of the Tri-national Commission of the Trifinio Plan also swore in the first Board of Administration, chaired by the Mayor of Esquipulas, Guatemala, Mr Julio Roberto Lima Franco, at an act that took place in May 2007. It was particularly important not only because of the status of the protocol revealing the significance assigned to the event, but also because of the content of the Vice-president's message.

The First President-Designate of the Republic of Honduras, Mr. Elvin Santos Ordoñez, performed a similar act in June 2007.

The most important act of recognition of the Association took place in Guatemala City on 21 November 2008, at the Second Annual Meeting of the member Vice-presidents of the Tri-national Commission of the Trifinio Plan, as the highest authority thereof, hosted

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[30]| *The Treaty was published respectively in the official parliamentary records of each of the three countries: in El Salvador, in number thirty-seven, of the twenty-fourth of March, nineteen ninety-eight, in accordance with executive agreement seventy-eight; in Guatemala, in the Diario de Centroamérica, decree number eleven stroke ninety-nine; in Honduras, in La Gaceta: Diario Oficial de la República de Honduras, decree number ninety-one stroke ninety-eight.*

[31]| *Mr David Hernández was Member of Parliament for the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (FMLN) in the National Assembly of El Salvador from 2000 to 2003 and in the Central American Parliament (2003-2006). Since 2007, he has been political advisor to the Council of Santa Tecla, El Salvador.*

[32]| *Presided by the Mayor of Santa Tecla, El Salvador, Mr Oscar Ortiz. The steps taken by the IDELCA enabled the Support Program for Regional Central American Integration (PAIRCA), which is backed by the European Union and attached to the Secretariat of the Central American Integration System (SICA), to establish conditions to support cooperation moves made by the Tri-national Association before the European Union and the European Parliament, a contributing factor in the final phase of approval of the URB-AL Project, which was awarded to the Association by the EU in October 2008.*

by Doctor Rafael Espada, Vice-president of the Republic of Guatemala.

The programme on this occasion featured at the Vice-presidents' main meeting table the President of the Association, Mayor of Ocotepeque, Honduras, Mr Francisco Adelmo Valle. There were two significant points on the agenda: first, the President of the Association formally submitted the Association's 2008-2023 Tri-national Territorial Strategic Plan to the Vice-presidents, which was an unprecedented act and one that demonstrated the gradual empowerment and institutional consolidation achieved with the support of several institutions; and second, the Meeting of Vice-presidents announced the award by the European Union's URB-AL III Programme of 2.8 million euros to the Tri-national Association for the project to promote social cohesion and regional territorial integration.

The European Union's recognition of Lempa River Tri-national Border Association was therefore highly significant and has given rise to a project that provides the opportunity, from a local government level, to initiate a process of consolidating a paradigm of cross-border regional integration.

Not only is the Association itself a specific example of local regional integration, but by operating effectively it should also give rise to more and better initiatives, programmes and projects for further integration of its territories, as an expression of better social cohesion and policy in the three countries that converge in it.

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Case studies

The last section of the Yearbook focuses on the analysis of the current state of decentralised cooperation in countries that are carrying out intense activity in this field. In this edition, the DCO wanted to highlight the cases of Germany and Colombia, because of their dynamism in decentralised co-operation activities in LA and the EU respectively.

Germany is one of the countries which, according to the DCO's data, dedicates the most resources to decentralised cooperation with LA, and particularly with Nicaragua. Currently, German local development policy is going through a period in which, together with the Federal Government and the Länder (federated German states), local governments are able to assume a decisive role with great responsibility in the area of international development policy. In this setting, the authors Bernd Lämmlin and Dr. Stefan Wilhelmy present a critical overview of German decentralised cooperation, drawing attention to the challenges that must be faced in order to take advantage of the opportunity provided by the current situation for intensifying relations between German and Latin American local governments.

For its part, Colombia is one of the countries that have shown the most interest in recent years in fostering decentralised cooperation. The document, by Sandra Olaya and Jeannette Vélez, investigates the vision of internationalising Colombian territorial authorities. According to their analysis, the process of decentralised cooperation has been carried out in a gradual and fragmented way in response to the specific nature of the region and there are still few cities that are immersed in the process. In order to illustrate some experiences that may serve as a reference for Colombian local and regional governments, the authors focus on the experience of the country's Departments and Capital District.

Case studies

German decentralised development cooperation
The role of local governments

Bernd Lämmlin*
Stefan Wilhelmy**

German local development policy is facing a great challenge both internally and externally. On the one hand, processes of urbanisation, democratisation and decentralisation are at the heart of a profound structural change taking place in Southern countries. This transformation in turn requires Northern countries to make changes in order to welcome new cooperation partners and new political structures and needs. In this process of adaptation there is a great opportunity for German local governments to make a constructive contribution towards fostering the development of their local government partners.

On a par with the Federal Government and the Länder (federated states of Germany), local governments can play a decisive role with great responsibility in the field of international development policy. On the other hand, it is important to note that compared with other European trends, German cooperation work still suffers from a deficiency in terms of the solidity of its legislative and financial framework. This is why local governments' potential cannot be fully utilised as it should be. Above all, relations with Latin America are still far from ideal. There is very little cooperation between German local governments and Latin America, with activities being particularly focused on Nicaragua.

This article aims to demonstrate that the future success of German local development policy (above all in its relations with the South) lies in improving its efficiency, effectiveness and capacity to establish links with development cooperation on an international scale. Only by doing so, will it be possible to face this challenge. It is necessary to increase the exchange of experiences (for example, with Latin America) among German local governments, improve contact with European local governments (for example, with Spain), win new allies that are interested in cooperating internationally and above all, improve the integration of local governments into national development cooperation.

KEY WORDS

Local development policy |
North-South municipal partnerships |
German-Latin American municipal relations |
Paris Declaration |
quality of local development cooperation. |

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1. Introduction

The importance of local development policy on an international scale has increased considerably. With the adoption of Agenda 21 at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in 1992, local governments were recognised as some of the principal actors in implementing sustainable development strategies. Since then, they have been gaining more and more recognition in national and international agreements and treaties. This was seen at the United Nations World Summit in 2005, when Kofi Annan (then the Secretary-General of the UN) underlined the importance of local governments within the Millennium Development Goals (MDG). The commitment to achieving good governance also includes local governments in Goal 8 and Target 12[1]. We should particularly highlight that it was not only at the large conferences held by the United Nations[2], but also in other international conferences[3] that decisions were taken to foster cooperation by local governments and encourage local actors' responsibility vis-à-vis global needs.

On 1 March 2007, the European Parliament presented its 'Report on local authorities and development cooperation', in which local governments were finally officially declared as international actors. They were recognised as "essential partners" in development policy and proposals were included to ensure better structuring and funding of local development cooperation[4] activities on a European scale.

In one of its latest communications, the European Commission also declared the importance of regional corporations and highlighted the need to improve information channels in order to achieve a better coordination and efficiency of decentralised development activities.[5]

At the same time it is necessary to bear in mind that in local governments all global changes, whether economic, ecological or social, are felt with greater intensity. This is why local governments have reacted by affirming their links with other local governments, not as a kind of solidary assistance with their partners in the South, but as a contribution towards global development. This gives local policies an international profile, as well as being an important aspect when considering the global competition that the different regions are facing nowadays.

Looking at global trends, it is also possible to see how the legal and material margin of international action of local governments in many European countries has been significantly expanding.[6] Although on

[1] Millennium Development Goal 8 (MDG): 'Develop a global partnership for development'. Target 12: 'Develop further an open, rule-based, predictable, non-discriminatory trading and financial system'. Includes the commitment to achieve good governance, development and the reduction of poverty, in national and international arenas.

[2] For example, in the international conferences Local Renewables 2004, Early Warning 2006, and in the conference of mayors for Biological Diversity (Biodiversität) which was held in Bonn in 2008.

[3] See: United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) (Local Governments Millennium Declaration, Beijing 2005), the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR) 2007, as well as Deutscher Städtetag (German Association of Cities, in Cologne 2007).

[4] European Parliament, 2007

[5] Commission of the Community, 2008

[6] According to studies by different countries, see: Wilhelmy et al., 2007; Emminghaus, 2003.

different dimensions, local development cooperation has been promoted by most states and adapted according to the region's bilateral policy. This is due to the institutional constellations and different historical contexts typical in each country.

Nevertheless, it is noteworthy that the tendency to foster local development policy and integrate this into professional strategies has not yet become fully established in Germany. Confronted with this, it is essential to raise two important issues: on the one hand, how German local governments use their potential to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, and on the other, how they defend their own international interests.

This article will analyse the challenges facing local governments and their partners, and the main conditions of local development policy in Germany. Taking one of the current studies of the German Institute of Development Policy as a base (Fröhlich/Lämmlin 2009), this article will also describe the development policy activities of German cities, municipalities and *Landkreise* (districts),

detailing in the following chapters the differences between the national and international fields of activity. Furthermore, a chapter is dedicated to cooperation between Germany and Latin America. To end the article particular attention will be paid to the outlook for German local authorities' development policy and to the opportunities that exist for improving the quality of future development cooperation.

2. Local development cooperation: challenges and opportunities

Nowadays many developing countries are undergoing radical changes, not only in their population structures but also in their governments. For this reason Southern cities are facing two important challenges: rapid urbanisation and a continuously growing population. These processes have even reached the most remote rural regions of Africa and Asia, placing the development of these areas at risk. In the worst cases, a vicious circle exists,

Table 1 | Terminology

The following terminology will be used below to observe the difference between the terms 'development policy' and 'development cooperation'.

The term 'local development policy' will refer to the activities of local governments, whether within their own country or abroad. The term 'local development cooperation', in contrast, will only be used to refer to activities carried out by local governments in international cooperation and with foreign entities.

Furthermore, only those development policy activities that are carried out 'officially' will be taken into account. Included among these are the administrative activities of cities, municipalities and the Landkreise. Other members of local governments, such as citizens, local economy, parishes, etc., will not be considered as principal actors.

generated by the progressive increase of poverty, environmental pollution, crime rates and the loss of State control. Urbanisation, on the other hand, provides development opportunities for the region. Not only the geographical proximity of resources, services and new work fields, but also contact with new markets and innovations in cultural, scientific and economic areas can all be considered as benefits that provide an opportunity to join a wide network of new social and economic structures.

It is particularly important that cities receive the necessary political and economic support to be able to take advantage of these opportunities. The urbanisation of most developing countries should therefore occur in parallel with measures for democratising and decentralising administrative entities in order for local governments to be strengthened in their functions and so that their new activities do not exceed their capacities. It is very common, however, to find deficiencies on a municipal level with regards organisational experience and financial management, which often put the region's development process in danger.

Processes of decentralisation and democratisation help to consolidate local governments' independence, granting them the power to act and make decisions self-sufficiently according to their own particular needs. The general trend is to give local governments responsibility for the sectors of education, health services, transport and utilities (water, gas, electricity and waste, etc.). Based on this, it can be seen that these are also the sectors that the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) focus on. Starting with the eradication

of extreme poverty and hunger (MDG 1), continuing with achieving universal primary education, reducing infant mortality, improving maternal health, combating HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases (MDG 2, 4, 5 and 6) and finishing with the resolution to guarantee the sustainability of the environment and promote a global partnership for development (MDG 7 and 8), it is clear that to achieve the Millennium Development Goals Southern cities have a principal role to play in the development processes of the countries they belong to.

For this reason, cooperation agreements between Northern and Southern cities have taken on increasing importance:

• because Northern cities can transfer their knowledge and experience as local autonomies with administrative independence and a high level of participation in governmental affairs,

• because cooperation between partnered cities makes it possible to hold dialogue on the same level, without including higher authorities that may apply some kind of hierarchical pressure,

• and, no less importantly, because, generally speaking, in projects carried out on a local scale the needs of the region can be better identified, thus achieving a level of effectiveness that can rarely be matched by projects on an international scale.

This last point is most notably visible in relation to the explosive increase of poverty in deprived urban areas. According to studies by the World Watch Institute, located in Washington, only a minimal amount of Official Development Assistance (ODA) is set

aside for investment in urban suburbs. (Perlmann/Sheehan 2007).

However, we should mention that many German cities are still not prepared either economically or institutionally to be able to adapt their activities to current needs and thus provide effective assistance in processes of structural change. This is why most of the German cities that have cooperation agreements have to be backed by other authorities or institutions. Some European states (such as Spain, France and Norway) have decided in recent years to offer their respective partnered local governments the support they need to increase their participation in State activities and include their services in calculating Official Development Assistance (Wilhelmy et al. 2007). In Germany, however, a change of position and ideology still needs to be considered in order to improve the legal and funding frameworks for local development policy.

Local development policy can only be granted true value when local authorities receive the information and training necessary to carry out activities aimed at development and the corresponding support for the population.

3. The condition of German local governments' development policy

Below we will describe the principal conditions of local development policy. Among other aspects, we will analyse the legal, political and institutional frameworks, and the funding options for development policy activities in Germany. An introduction

to the German federal system and an account of local governments' position will help to better interpret these aspects.

3.1. Development cooperation in the German federal system

The Federal Republic of Germany is a constitutional and federal democracy with a political system characterised by its division of executive, legislative and judicial powers, which occurs not only horizontally but also vertically. This last division results in the German government being made up of the Federal State and the *Länder* (federated states) which in turn are subdivided into local government units (cities, municipalities and *Landkreise* [districts])).

It is important to mention that German Basic Law (Constitution/ *Grundgesetz*) stipulates in a detailed order of competences which matters correspond to the Federal State and which are the responsibility of the *Länder* and local governments, respectively. The *Länder* administrations, for example, enforce the respective laws relating to education, internal security and municipal self-government. In addition, they enforce most of the federal laws too. Local governments, on the other hand, do not have the right to pass their own laws, but in accordance with the subsidiarity principle (based on Article 28 of the Basic Law) they are responsible for local regulation and administration. In this way citizens are able to maintain direct and constant contact with local government authorities, which enables decisions and administrative responsibility in the

local arena to be undertaken according to the needs of the inhabitants and the specific conditions of the area in question. The respective federated state determines the legal framework, while financing comes from local funds and, whenever necessary, with transfers from higher authorities.

In Germany there are a total of 16 *Länder* (federated states), 313 *Landkreise* (districts) and approximately 12,400 cities and municipalities[7].

At the same time, there is a distinction between 'independent' and 'dependent' cities and municipalities, i.e., those with either their own, or a joint, administration, with the latter acting according to the interests of the local governments that make them up. Furthermore, they are also organised federally into Regional Corporations (*Landesverbände*).

3.2. Legal principles and admissibility

In German basic law no mention is made of the terms 'development policy' or 'development cooperation'. Nevertheless there is agreement with regards the definition of development cooperation as one of the forms of international relations, which according to paragraph 1 of Article 32 of the Basic Law (in conjunction with paragraph 73 of Article 1 of the Basic Law) correspond to the functions of the federated state (Rudzio 2000). This position is arguable, as it does not completely fit into the principles of the Basic Law. For this reason, local development policy is currently legitimised by Article 28 of the Basic Law, which stipulates local governments' right to self-administration.

This right could be interpreted as a provision of local governments' competences, which allows them to carry out international activities on their own initiative, as long as these activities do not harm the

Table 2	The special role of the *Stadtstaaten* ('independent cities') in the field of local governments' development policy

The three independent cities (Berlin, Hamburg and Bremen) play a special role in the German federal system, as they fulfil both functions typical of local governments and those of the Länder. This also applies to the field of development policy, with these cities establishing cooperation projects with different cities, in which they carry out various activities that foster development within the country in different sectors (capacity building, procurement, etc.) on the level of the independent cities.

These activities are funded by the Bundesland (federated state) the city belongs to. Thus the cities can make important contributions to the sector of local development policy. The districts within the independent cities can also in turn establish contact with developing countries with the aim of launching cooperation activities. Just like local governments, the districts carry out their functions autonomously. The city of Berlin operates important initiatives that are mainly independently funded. In some cases the federated state may assume a coordinating role.

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[7] *Federal statistical service (Statistisches Bundesamt): 'Administrative structure in Germany' ('Verwaltungsgliederung in Deutschland') of 30.06.2008 (2nd quarter).*

rights of the Federal State or the *Länder*. Furthermore, the municipal charter lays down the principle of 'presumed competences for the Länder' (*Zuständigkeitsvermutung zugunsten der Gliedstaaten*) (Katz 2002). The consequence of this principle is that all those competences which according to the Basic Law are not explicitly allocated to the Federal State fall within the remit of the *Länder*.[8] In this regard, the German federal system's subsidiarity principal is once again demonstrated.[9]

All those sectors which fall outside the regulation of the Federal State (for example, culture, police law, regional law, etc.) are explicitly assigned to the *Länder* (federated states) (Rudzio 2000). The criterion of this principle is also applicable to the relationship between the State and the municipalities. Consequently, here the 'presumed competence of the municipalities' (*Zuständigkeitsvermutung zugunsten der Gemeinden*) also prevails (Schwanenflügel 1993). This means that municipalities have authority over and/or are responsible for all public activities, as long as they are related to the local community. However, there is no legal classification within the *Länders*' municipal regulations which specifically determines the legal framework for these regional actions.

3.3. Political and institutional consolidation and conditions of appeal (*Berufungsgrundlage*)

There are various political resolutions (on a regional level) and declarations (on a federal level) which in accordance with the previous interpretation of the Basic Law confirm the legal admissibility of activities of local development policy and at the same time serve as conditions of appeal. Furthermore, the initiative of the Federal State or of the *Länder* to set up appropriate institutions, as well as the integration of local governments into development cooperation programmes and projects, are another example of State support for local development policy on its different levels.

For this reason, in addition to their declarations of support, all the resolutions made in the Council of Minister's conferences (*Ministerpräsidentenkonferenz*) have great importance as political conditions of appeal for German local governments. In these resolutions the Länder, on the one hand, declare themselves in favour of a local development policy which is carried out independently and, on the other hand, they commit to supporting and fostering this principle. To do this they also demand the appropriate backing of the federal government. The criteria that the *Länder* must comply with within the framework of inter-

national development policy activities were formulated at the conference of the Council of Ministers of the Interior in 1985.[10]

In the last meeting of the Council of Ministers, which was held in Dresden in 2008, the agreement to foster local development policy activities was renewed. Moreover, ministers announced their desire to distribute and coordinate the activities of the different participants from the German State in order to act coherently and improve the efficiency of German development policy. In accordance with the Paris Declaration (on the effectiveness of development cooperation) and the Millennium Development Goals, the *Länder* are trying to make use of their competences and specifically contribute to the development process. To achieve these goals it is necessary to expand the development cooperation of the territorial corporations on all levels. For this reason, great importance is explicitly granted to local governments' contribution to cooperation.

In the field of activities carried out by the *Länder*, particular emphasis is placed on cooperation with immigrants from developing countries, contributions in the areas of education and culture, and support for issues such as governance, decentralisation and developing staff and organisations (capacity building) to promote the State's public services.[11] It should be noted that these resolutions do not fall within local regulations or the *Länders*' laws. For this reason the legal basis for local activities on an inter-

national scale cannot exactly be determined.

In contrast to other European countries, Germany does not have any kind of stable and strategic system of integrating local governments into national development cooperation. There is a particularly notable lack of participation and dialogue in the development of strategies and the establishment of principles. Nevertheless, there are institutions that serve as an example of local governments' great regard and support for development activities. Some examples of these are Servicestelle Kommunen in der Einen Welt, SKEW/InWEnt[12] (Service Agency Communities in One World) –which is an initiative of the Federal State, various Länder and the city of Bonn– and also the cooperation of Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ) GmbH (German Association for Technical Cooperation)[13] with Deutscher Städtetag (German Association of Cities).

SKEW supports local governments mainly in their development activities on a national scale, while GTZ supports projects on an international scale, focusing above all on fostering democracy and government decentralisation (issues that will be detailed in chapters 4 and 5 respectively). However, it should be pointed out that many projects cannot be strictly classified as domestic or international.

Furthermore, the associations of local governments *Deutscher Städtetag, Deutscher Städte- und Gemeindebund and Deutscher Landkreistag* promote and support their

8 | *See paragraph 1 of Article 70 of the German Basic Law (GG): 'The Länder shall have the right to legislate insofar as this Basic Law does not confer legislative power on the Federation.'*

9 | *In accordance with Article 30 of the Basic Law.*

10 | *The following services are permitted: 1) cooperation or "contact (principally) directed at the union"; 2) assistance to repair or prevent structural weaknesses in a foreign local authority (also known as 'Development Aid'), e.g., supplying tools, staff training; 3) services in kind or monetary services for humanitarian reasons, e.g., when a disaster threatens, when there is a historical link; 4) compensation for other reasons, e.g., services aimed at a children's home where children and young people of both nationalities live; 5) promoting projects by which the local government "motivates its inhabitants to make donations, awards subsidies to encourage other donations or designates subsidies for raising a specific amount of money, if this was not achieved with donations"; therefore the public should also be given the opportunity to offer its help, as the idea of promoting a project should not be limited to just a monetary interpretation; 6) fostering activities originating in the beneficiary government, e.g., cultural events typical of the region, educational methods for young people and adults, exchanges of experiences between local authorities.*

11 | *Available at: http://www.wusgermany.de/index.php?id=1333&L= [01.12.2008]*

12 | *InWEnt –Internationale Weiterbildung und Entwicklung gGmbH (Capacity Building International) is an international organisation on a global scale dedicated to developing people and organisations through capacity building and dialogue on behalf of the Federal German Government and the Länder.*

13 | *Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ, German Association for Technical Cooperation) is a global organisation which carries out international technical cooperation operations on behalf of the Federal German Government.*

members' commitment to the area of development cooperation, whether directly or as members of SKEW.

Another of the main actors and contact organisations for local governments is the German section of the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR). This organisation represents German cities, ministries and districts in United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) by contributing and sharing experiences. Moreover, it supports the Millennium Goals of the governments within UCLG[14] and encourages its members to adopt and contribute to achieving these objectives.

The institutional consolidation of local development policy is generally very varied. The great number of community associations, local networks and political actors from all levels (regional, national, global) reflects the importance of local governments as essential partners in national and international development policy, which also demonstrates how indispensable networks of regional authorities are. This is the result of the recognition of how important their participation in national and international policy is, especially in the globalisation era, and not only in terms of exchanging experiences among local governments.

Decisions on issues concerning local development cooperation are generally taken by the city council in the area. A survey carried out in 2008 by the *Deutsche Institut für Entwicklungspolitik* (DIE, German Development Institute)[15] confirmed that in the majority (38%) of the 60 local governments active in this sector, decisions regarding development policy were taken in the

first instance by the mayor or by the staff of the administrative body of the city council in the region.

3.4. Funding options

In contrast with other European countries, Germany does not have any national budget line or other type of *Länder* budget model that is specifically allocated to fully cover the expenses of development policy activities. For this reason, there are few *Länder* in which subsidies are provided directly and are projected in the local budget (for example in North Rhine-Westphalia). As local governments' development policy activities are not obligatory, it is common, especially in times when resources are scarce, for few subsidies to be allocated long-term to funding this sector and, therefore, few projects are carried out.

For this reason it is important that local governments are aware of the different external and internal funding options they may have access to –and that they make use of them– in order to make a continuous and lasting commitment to carrying out development policy activities. German local authorities also have the opportunity to participate in the funding programme 'Non-State actors and local authorities in development' run by the European Union, and which aims to encourage local decentralised development initiatives. This is a thematic programme which, as a new financing instrument, replaces the previous 'Decentralised Cooperation' and 'NGO Co-financing' subsidies.

'Decentralised Cooperation' was a funding instrument set up by the European Union in 1995 and was aimed at accompanying development cooperation between cities in Europe and Latin America (URB-AL), Asia (Asia URBS) and the EU's neighbouring Mediterranean countries (Med-URBS). Some of this cooperation is still taking place. The URB-AL cooperation, for example, will reach the end of its final phase in 2012.[16] The main objective common to all these programmes was to initiate and support contacts and thematic networks of contact between local authorities. However, whether due to a lack of information or the complexity of the programmes, few local authorities have taken advantage of these sources of funding.

In addition to receiving subsidies from the Federal State (e.g., from the Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ)) and from the *Länder*, there is also a possibility of working in cooperation with local non-governmental organisations; particularly with those that although they belong to private organisations, are also promoted by the BMZ. Nevertheless, it is important to underline that the main source of funding for local policy activities are donations, sponsorships and grants received from the church and various foundations(see Chart 1).

4. Local development policy within the country

As demonstrated in the DIE study, German local development policy is highly varied (Fröhlich/Lämmlin 2009). Although this article focuses on the activities to

Table 3 | German cities in the European Union's URB-AL Programme and the 'Cities for mobility, mobility for citizens' cooperation network between cities."
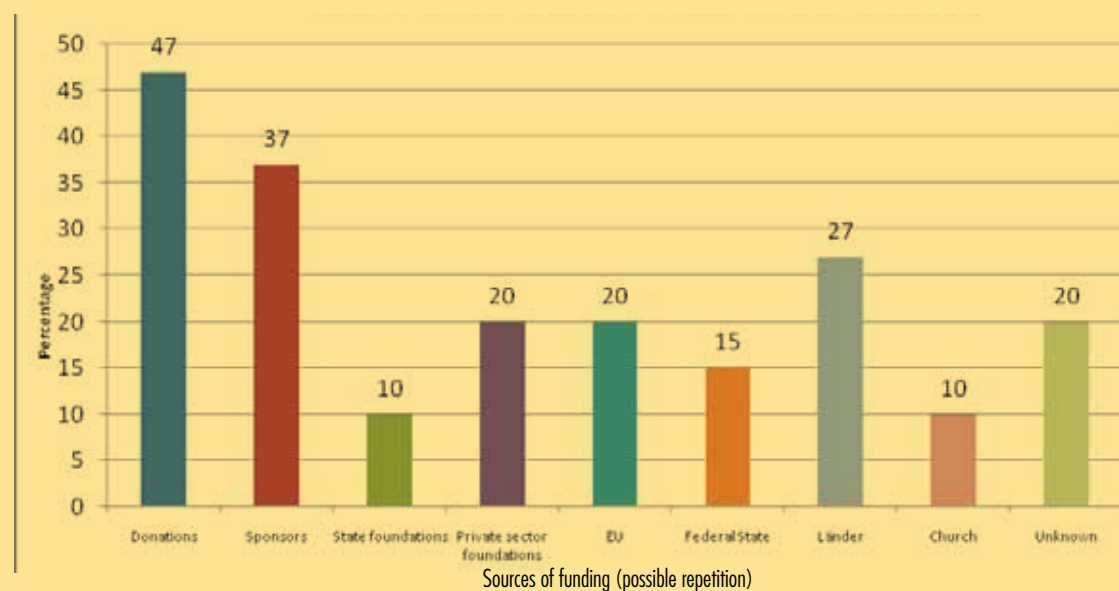
*In addition to promoting local projects, 13 thematic networks were set up within the framework of the URB-AL European programme (see previous page) which coordinated more than 2500 local organisations, associations, NGOs, unions, universities and businesses, organised by different local authorities. The city of Bremen, for example, coordinated Network no. 13: 'The city and the information society' and Stuttgart ran Network no. 8: 'Control of urban mobility'. All the participating entities in the latter managed not only to maintain the network during the period set within the programme (from 2000 to 2003), but they are still running it today. This is how the city of Stuttgart created the network '**Cities for mobility, mobility for citizens**' on the basis of URB-AL, in which they continue to promote "[…] transnational cooperation between municipalities, transport companies, the economic sector, the scientific sector and representatives of civil society […]". It currently has 441 members from 63 countries (approximately 100 from Germany, 14 of which are regional bodies). Its principal objective is to promote mobility that is accessible, environmentally friendly and economy-focused. To do this, the network fosters the development of innovative concepts and a permanent exchange of knowledge and experience, it carries out projects to improve traffic and it advises its members about the possibilities of subsidies and organising industrial cooperation.* [17]

[14] | *Available at: http://www.cities-localgovernments.org/uclg/upload/template/templatedocs/ENG_Mill_Decl.pdf*
[15] | *The questionnaire used in this survey was sent to at least 1292 local authorities, firstly to all those which actively participate in German development policy. 203 responses were received (16%). This represents only 2% of the total number of German local authorities, which means that the result of the survey is not representative of all the authorities. The charts in this article are based on the results of this survey. (Fröhlich/Lämmlin, 2009).*

[16] | *See European Commission, 2008.*
[17] | *Available at: http://www.cities-for-mobility.net/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=30&Itemid=97 (15.12.2008).*

Chart 1 | Use of sources of funding for local development policy

Source: Fröhlich/Lämmlin, 2009

promote development that are carried out mainly on an international scale, it is relevant to point out that, in addition to cooperation, other activities are also carried out within the country:

• Fair trade: The Ministry of Economic Cooperation, the *Länder*, churches, various non-governmental organisations and other social movements and initiatives promote activities to foster voluntary and fair trade relations between producers and consumers. These include the annual 'Fair Week' and the 'Fair Trade Capital' competition organised by SKEW, which is held every two years, with 2009 marking the fourth occasion.

• Fair Procurement: More and more German local authorities are refusing to purchase products that do not comply with certain ecological and social production

standards. For example there are 114 resolutions by local councils and 7 by regional councils supporting the fight against exploitation and child labour.[18]

• Political education for development: The Federal State, the *Länder*, municipalities, the church and other institutions promote education for global and sustainable development. In 2007, for example, the conference of ministers for Culture launched a cooperation teaching plan with InWEnt to promote political education for development in all the country's schools. The State also runs competitions among schools to foster an interest in development policy and to promote numerous United Nations initiatives throughout Germany, within the framework the 'Decade of Education for Sustainable Development'.
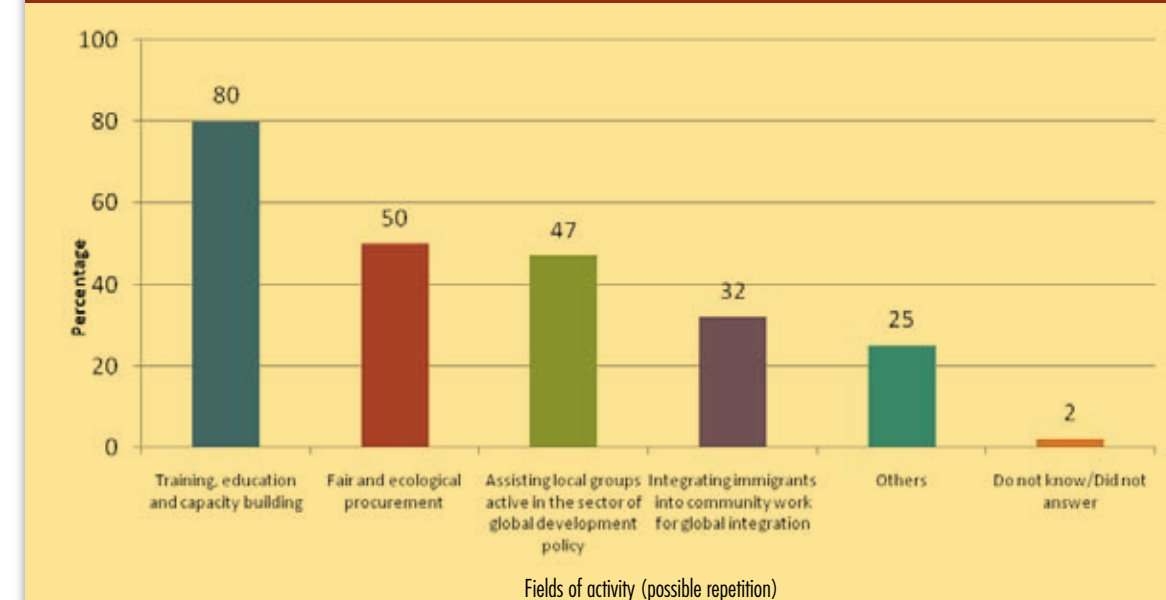
• Integration of immigrants: The inclusion of immigrants and foreign organisations in the activities of local global integration groups *(Eine-Welt-Arbeit)* can be enriching and advantageous for German local governments, and not only in terms of cultural exchange and knowledge sharing. This cooperation also helps to improve the integration of immigrants into society and their co-existence in the community. Multicultural constellations also have a positive effect on international activities.

• Networks connecting local actors: Cooperation between local actors has a very important role in development policy. On a local level there are various NGOs that offer financial support to local governments and help to coordinate activities and projects

aimed at development. Furthermore, on an international level they take charge of organisation, enriching activities in a qualitative and quantitative way.

As already mentioned in chapter 3, the SKEW Service Office is particularly special compared with other European institutions. As a consultative institution at the service of local governments and non-governmental organisations, SKEW is a global organisation dedicated to supporting local development policy through capacity building and dialogue. SKEW's main areas of work are focused on migration and development, fair trade and fair procurement, and cooperation between international communities. By carrying out projects in these sectors it encourages the

Chart 2 | Developement policy fields of activity within the country

Source: Fröhlich/Lämmlin 2009.

[18] | *Information taken from: www.aktiv-gegen-kinderarbeit.de.*

participation of cities and municipalities in international development cooperation and in Local Agenda 21 for sustainable development. The following projects provide examples of these:

• The model trilateral cooperation project between local governments in Germany, France and Burkina Faso (*Kommunale Dreieckspartnerschaften*): within the framework of this project, workshops are offered on specific themes linked to the relations between the regions involved. One of these courses, for example, describes the process of decentralisation experienced by Burkina Faso, the structure of development cooperation in France and the intercultural implications of cooperation between these two countries.

• 'South Africa 2010 – Germany 2006 … let's stay friends': this project focuses on the exchange of knowledge and experiences between the German cities that participated in the 2006 FIFA World Cup and the nine cities that are hosting the FIFA World Cup in South Africa in 2010.

• The '*Interkulturelle Kompetenzbildung und Zusammenarbeit mit Diasporen*' project ('Intercultural capacity building with diasporas') is dedicated to personal development and capacity building for people of immigrant origin and organisations that are keen to play an active role in development policy. The principal aim is to form networks of contact with German local authorities and to encourage cooperation.

SKEW is backed by the organisation InWEnt gGmbH and works on a global scale on behalf of *Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit* (GTZ, German Association for Technical Cooperation) and most of the Länder. Its special nature, in comparison with other European organisations, is particularly due to its unique structure of participants and members. Members of the SKEW network include the Federal State, the Länder, local authorities, private foundations, non-governmental organisations and international institutions. For this reason SKEW is able to work on an international scale, with the aim of turning the United Nation's Millennium Development Goals into reality. Among the broad spectrum of activities it carries out, SKEW publishes studies and provides advisory services and organises events and competitions.

5. International cooperation from local governments' point of view

Just as in other European countries, German local governments also carry out a wide range of international projects to foster development. German cities, municipalities and districts do not only take part in classic cooperation activities in other cities and local entities, but they also contribute to the transfer of practical knowledge, techniques and criteria in the international cooperation networks they belong to.

In order to make optimum use of local governments' knowledge and capacities, GTZ joined forces with *Deutscher Städtetag* (German Association of Cities). The main objective of this union is to foster the administrative autonomy of municipalities in developing countries, as a contribution to the democratisation process and to also offer the appropriate support for building the necessary structures in this context.

With this aim in mind, a database was set up containing details of all the qualified staff in German local governments who are available to provide their knowledge of different disciplines as consultants or advisors in technical cooperation projects. The administration of this database is managed by *Deutscher Städtetag*. Integrating municipal projects and setting up cooperation for development work in the technical field represent one more opportunity for GTZ and German local governments to work together.[19] Here are some examples:

• GTZ's cooperation with the city of Stuttgart (speciality: mobility, urban planning and integration): at the request of the local entities associated with GTZ contact can be established, for example with Stuttgart's respective governmental departments, and meetings arranged.

• GTZ's cooperation with the city of Cologne: above all for exchanging experts and specialists within the framework of the project to promote the youth of Chile (Interjoven) which has been carried out since 1998.

• The joint drafting of a concept for promoting tourism between the cities of Heidelberg and Aleppo (Syria) as a GTZ initiative – project to clean up and renovate the centre of Aleppo (2002).

In these examples mention is made, above all, of large cities whose special activity does not reflect the international commitments of local authorities in general. This is due to the fact that in Germany no reliable statistical verification has been carried out yet in this sector, as local governments are not obliged to provide information about their international activities. Nevertheless, they are given the opportunity to voluntarily register their cooperation with the German section of CEMR. All information registered may also be stored in the database owned by the EU-LA Decentralised Cooperation Observatory (DCO) for later publication.[20] Due to the voluntary nature of the data obtained, it is not possible to assign it adequate informative value (see chapter 6).
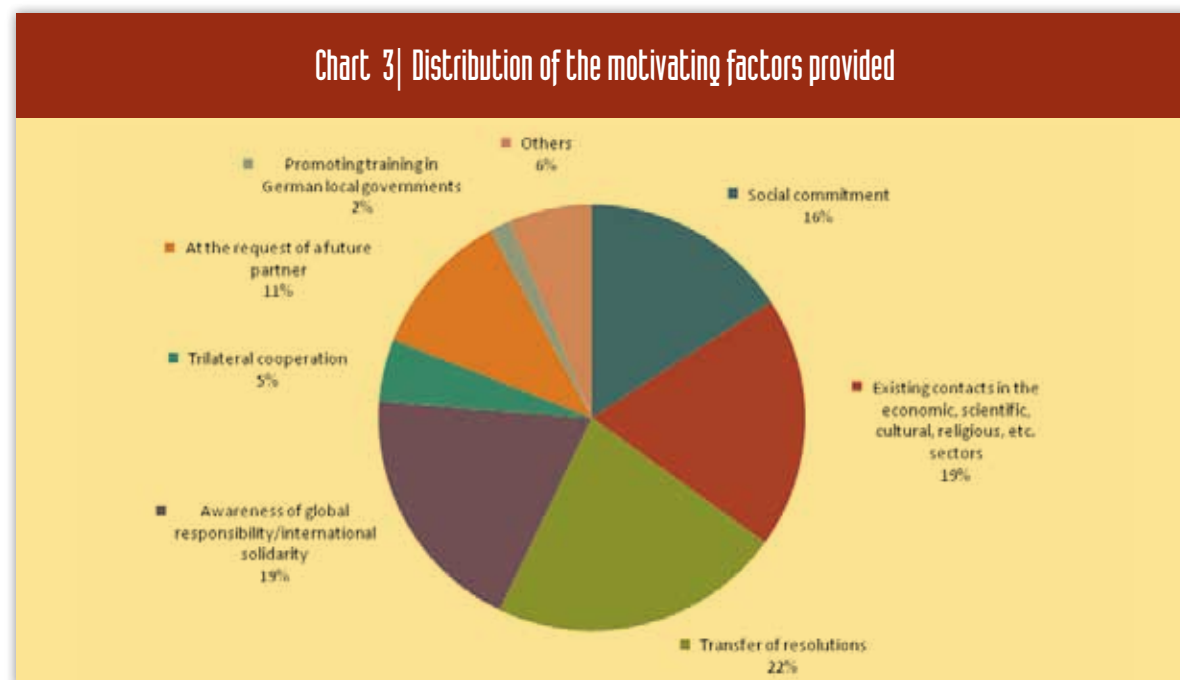
In the following section, the qualitative results of the DIE survey mentioned earlier (Fröhlich/Lämmlin 2009) will be used to describe German local governments' international activities. Some 58% of the local authorities surveyed stated that they carried out activities to foster development on an international scale. Among these activities the following were named: 'cooperation with other local authorities' (41%), as the most common form of contributing towards development; 'simple contact' (17%), as relations without any kind of formal context; 'joint projects' (17%); 'agreements with specifically determined timescales or aims' (11%, according to the German section of CEMR) and 'other international activities' (12%) – which are carried out via participation in urban networks.

5.1. Content and motivation

Although there are many reasons for forming a partnership, they can be divided into two large groups. The first group is made up of local governments that consider development policy as their main motivation (with 41%) for setting up these types of international relations. These local governments can in turn be split into two smaller categories: those that act in response to a sense of global responsibility

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19 | *On behalf of BMZ, GTZ also supports the Kaukasus urban network (Städtenetzwerk Kaukasus) (Duration period: from 2002 to 2009).*

20 | *Contributions can include city twinnings, friendships, contacts and projects.*

Chart 3| Distribution of the motivating factors provided

Source: Fröhlich/Lämmlin, 2009

and those that act with the aim of implementing political resolutions.

The second group, in contrast, is made up of those local governments (35%) whose development activities form part of their institutional foundation, due to their strong social interest and desire to foster already existing cooperation. These local governments are in continuous contact with partners on economic, scientific, cultural, religious, etc. levels.

Some 16% of cooperation originates from exterior factors. Some of the causes were, for example, the transformation from bilateral to trilateral of a European cooperation activity, or a special request from future partners. Although raising public awareness was generally mentioned as an important factor, cooperation to foster capacity building in the municipality was hardly ever initiated.

The principal working sectors for cooperation with other local governments mentioned were: culture (by 80% of the local governments surveyed), education (by 60%, above all primary and secondary education systems, including specific school projects and inter-school cooperation), and public services (by 74%, mainly to improve infrastructures). These results correspond to the typical sectors of activity that specialised literature on the subject of local development cooperation names and recommends.[21] Some 83% of those surveyed mentioned other sectors in which local development cooperation assistance could be concentrated. Although to a lesser extent, participants in the survey also mentioned measures aimed at protecting the environment and climate (by 29% of those surveyed), the exchange of experiences in managing local authorities

[21] | *See Fröhlich/Lämmlin, 2009*

(by 26%, including training staff specialised in local issues) and also aid for children and young people (29%, especially projects with street children).
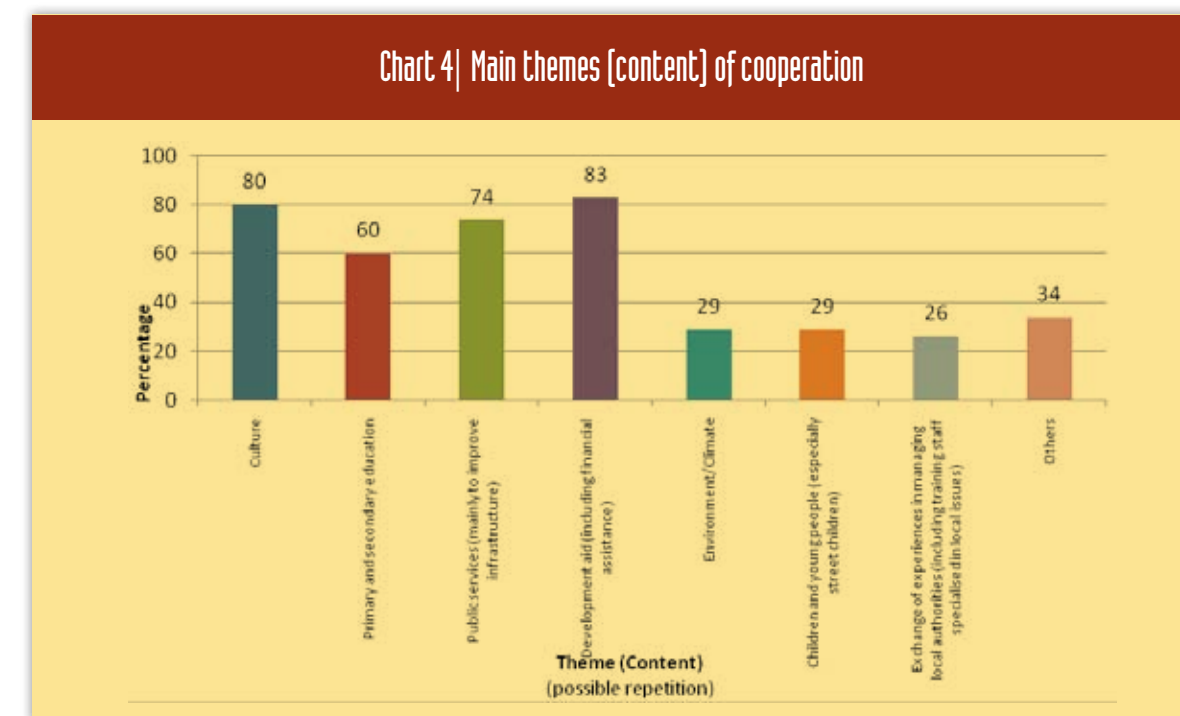
5.2. Strengths, key success factors and comparative advantages of local development cooperation

Two of the most important motivators for local governments –participation and social interest and the existence of prior contact– are in turn considered as key factors for the success of local cooperation. In this regard, a fifth (21%) of the local governments surveyed on this issue answered that good contacts with administrations, politicians and the population are decisive for ensuring the success of any cooperation. Some 12% valued the support of civil actors as a positive factor in cooperation relations. This is due to the fact that close contact between the actors in cooperation is the result of a relationship based on mutual trust established over the years. It is also no surprise that with regard to the essential content of cooperation (e.g., education, infrastructure and culture), 12% of those surveyed considered professional training as one of a community's strengths.

Likewise, local governments (8%) believe that including their partners in project planning is a decisive factor for guaranteeing the success of cooperation. Despite being unaware of the Paris Declaration, many governments underlined the importance of adapting development assistance projects to the needs of their partner governments in developing countries.

German local governments also highlighted the importance of cooperation in which all the partners act on the same level,

Chart 4| Main themes [content] of cooperation

Source: Fröhlich/Lämmlin, 2009

whether within long-term work, on specific projects within the cooperation or in the contact maintained with civil actors. Furthermore, the exchange of experiences was, for 6% of those surveyed, one of the reasons they felt that maintaining long-lasting cooperation was worthwhile. On the other hand, another 7% felt that more importance should be given to integrating each of the actors involved into administration and policy. This is due to the fact that, in general, although above all in the past, for many local governments local development policy has occupied a secondary position.

Moreover, it should be noted that 71% of local governments active in development cooperation highlighted direct contact with the population affected as a decisive factor. Proximity to the affected sector is one of the greatest advantages that local development policy has to offer in comparison with work carried out on a

national or international scale. Furthermore, 62% highlighted the advantages of specific knowledge about the regional conditions and the assistance capacities that can be developed within the context of long-term local cooperation.

Thus, in order to carry out an appraisal of national development policy on all its levels it is essential to take into account all the advantages for each of the political entities (Federal State, Länder, local governments) to be able to distribute activities in the most appropriate and effective way.

5.3. Deficiencies and problems

The deficiencies and problems of local development policy can be identified more accurately than the advantages that may be envisioned. The most important problem in this

Chart 5 | Advantages of local development policy compared with national and international policy

Source: Fröhlich/ Lämmlin, 2009

aspect stems from a lack of resources. Those surveyed referred not only to resources of a financial nature (28%), but also to the shortage of qualified personnel (15%). Another disadvantage mentioned relates to structural problems with cooperation, among which include, above all, geographical distance, language and cultural differences, and the structural situation of the local authority partner (for example continuously changing contact personnel).

5.4.Benefits

Of those surveyed, 47% considered improvements to the living conditions of the population benefiting from development cooperation as the main advantage. In general, they did not only mention specific and measurable results, such as building a school, setting up an administrative structure or public services, but also other less tangible results, such as empowering the population and fostering peace and democracy. A fifth of the local governments surveyed viewed the direct contribution towards raising public awareness as one of the principal advantages. Following this, other benefits mentioned (each with 16%) were meeting global challenges and exchanging experiences among the entities involved in cooperation.

6. Development cooperation between German local governments and local authorities in Latin America
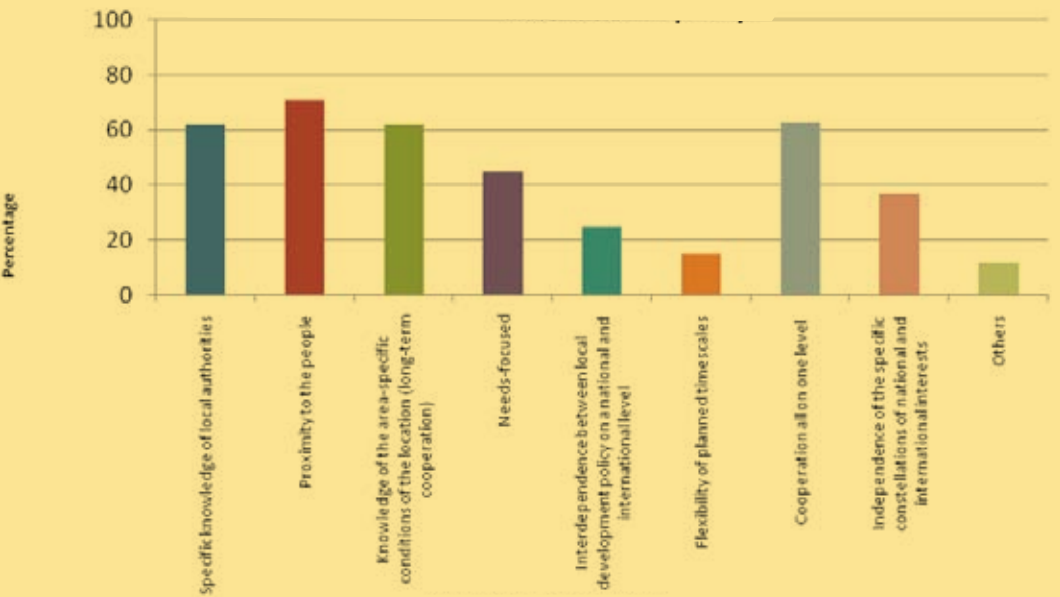
Currently there are around 12,600 local governments in Germany. According to the German section of CEMR, these governments

are working on more than 5,088 local cooperation activities.[22] The most important partner country is France: since the Second World War 1999 official Franco-German alliances have been formed on a local level. Another 460 have been made with Great Britain and 366 with Poland, i.e., with Germany's ex-adversaries from the war. Therefore, it could be said that, above all in the 1960s and 70s, the main motivation behind these cooperation activities has been reconciliation and greater understanding between the populations.

However, Germany presents a smaller number of cooperation relations with partners outside the European continent – only 400 in fact. If we subtract from this number the relations with industrialised countries, such as the United States and Japan for example, we are left with only 200 'development cooperation actions' with communities in Africa, Asia and Latin America. From among these three regions, Latin America occupies last place with a total of 36 cooperation actions with Germany.[23] Even taking into account simple relations like 'friendships' (7) and 'contacts' (11),[24] the total number of official alliances only reaches the modest sum of 54. One could almost say that German cities, municipalities and districts have not yet become aware of the existence of the countries in Central and South America, excluding Nicaragua, which will be described later.

This, on the one hand, contradicts South America's positive image of and interest in Germany, but it does however tally with the low level of importance that Germany

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[22] | *The data for the following statistical analysis of current relations between local governments were provided (unless otherwise specified) by the Council of European Municipalities and Regions Central Data Bank, available at: www.rgre.de on 31.1.2009.; see also Spengler (2009).*

[23] | *The figures detailed in the CEMR data bank (and therefore also in the Observatory's data bank) are higher –see also Spengler (2009): 41 'Partnerschaften'– but were corrected within the context of this article as many calculations demonstrated clear errors.*

[24] | *The German CEMR data bank differentiates local-level alliances into three types: cooperation, friendships and official contact.*

grants this region of the American continent in its international relations and foreign policy.[25] On the other hand, within civil society and in many German schools there are a great number of intense relationships with partners in Latin America which have remained stable over many years. Although not considered in the research behind this article, it is worth mentioning that these types of relations represent an important basis for future local cooperation.[26]

In order to interpret local-level alliances between Germany and Latin America, it is necessary to make a comparison with other European countries, which at the same time underlines the significance of European colonisation and emigration up to the present day.

According to the EU-LA DCO data bank there are 462 cooperation activities between local and regional corporations in Spain and Latin America: 86 with Nicaragua, 74 with Cuba and 71 with Argentina. In the case of Italy, 271 (142 with Argentina and 43 with Brazil) cooperation activities are being carried out; France has 148 (of which 55 are with Brazil); and Portugal carries out 59 activities (of which 49 are with Brazil). Not only does Spain have a much greater number of alliances with Latin America than German local authorities do, but so too do Italy and France.

These important differences do not only have formal causes but also statistical ones, which will be detailed below for greater understanding. Information from the only German data bank of local-level alliances –the data bank of the German section of CEMR– is provided in a completely voluntary manner by German authorities[27] , in contrast to what occurs in other European countries. As most

entities do not update their data constantly, the existing data is too old or incomplete and therefore does not reflect the current number of local-level relationships. Another of the aspects to take into account is that the data collected in Germany refers exclusively to local governments, without considering the *Länder*.

In contrast, the Observatory's data bank, as well as the databases of other countries, refer to other lower government levels such as regions and national departments. In any case, this aspect is still not very representative of relations with Latin America: even taking the Observatory's data bank into consideration, it is necessary to bear in mind that the number of German alliances (65, including 'contacts' at the level of the *Länder* and/or chambers of commerce) in other countries is still significantly lower in comparison with the rest of Europe. It is also notable that, with the exception of the trilateral cooperation between North Rhine-Westphalia, Ghana and Rhineland-Palatinate, until now there has been no other similar type of alliance in which one of the Länder participates with South America. The principal causes of this lack of interest shown by German local authorities and the *Länder* are not of a statistical nature, but instead have political and historical origins.

As the categories of 'friendships' and 'contacts' represent less official types of relationships between local governments, only the 36 'cooperation activities' between German and South American entities provided by the CEMR data bank will be considered from this point on[28]. However, it has been demonstrated by examples such as the solidarity between the cities of Aschaffenburg

(Bavaria) and Villavicencio (Colombia) that there are various relationships which despite their intensity have not adopted the status of 'cooperation' and are therefore not registered in the CEMR German section's data bank. Nevertheless, it must be mentioned that this is the only data bank that provides sufficient information for carrying out a comparative statistical analysis. Previous experiences have also shown that it is however possible to recognise a trend for interpreting the relationships between local authorities in Germany and Latin America in general.
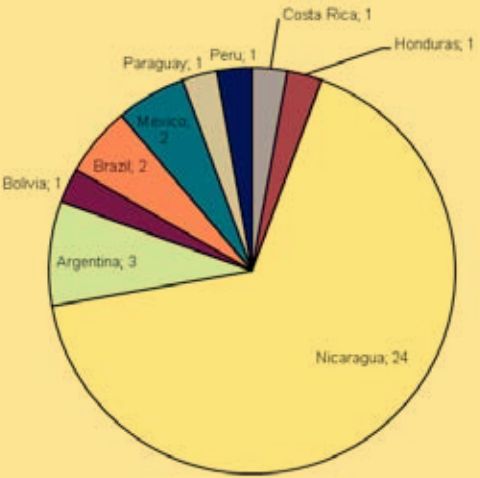
As shown in Chart 8, two-thirds of German local cooperation activities (24) are concentrated in Nicaragua; the remaining

third are distributed equally among other Latin American countries.

The privileged position held by Nicaragua can also be observed in other European countries.[29] In the case of Germany at least, it can be safely assumed that many of these relationships were set up on the basis of a foreign policy which did not correspond with the position held by the conservative actors of the Federal Government at the time.

Of the 24 cooperation actions between German and Nicaraguan local governments, 19 were created between 1985 and 1992 (see chart 9). At that time Germany's official foreign policy supported the anti-Sandinista policy of the United States government. It

Charta 6| Distribution of German local-level cooperation

Source: author's interpretation based on the CEMR German section's data bank

[25] | See Wilhelmy, 2009
[26] | The central data bank (available at: www.ewik.de) has for example @@@ twinning between schools registered.
[27] | See Wilhelmy et al. 2007.

[28] | The intensity of exchange between the authorities involved in the 'contacts' that have been created in recent years and decades, but that have never turned into 'friendships' or 'cooperation actions', is in general questionable – even so, it would be more appropriate to analyse each case in particular.
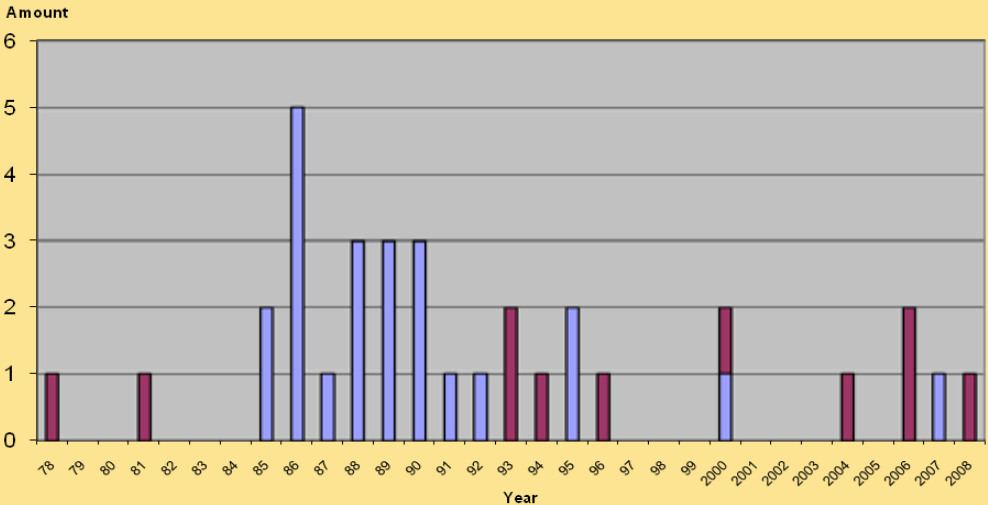[29]| In the Observatory's data bank there are for example 218 'alliances' (i.e., not only cooperation activities) registered by Spanish local governments and 21 'alliances' by local governments in the Netherlands.

can be assumed that the local actors at that time not only wanted to show their solidarity with allied populations, but also to a great extent they wanted to demonstrate their sympathy with the aims of the Sandinista government. The alliance between Berlin and San Rafael del Sur (Nicaragua) in 1966 was the first, and until 1975 the only cooperation between Germany and Latin America. Until the start of the Nicaraguan local politics boom in 1985, there were a total of only 4 local cooperation activities: in addition to that with Berlin, there was cooperation between Weingarten (Baden-Württemberg) and Blumenau (Brazil) in 1975, between Hamm (North Rhine-Westphalia) and the Mexican city of Mazatlán in 1978, and between Sigmaringendorf (Baden-Württemberg) and Rafaela (Argentina) in 1981

As chart 10 clearly shows, the majority of local cooperation was established between 1985 and 1995. Since the mid-1990s there have only been isolated cases of new alliances being agreed. However, since 2006, a small but gradual increase in the number of agreements can be seen, which could in turn be interpreted as an increase in German local authorities' interest in Latin America.
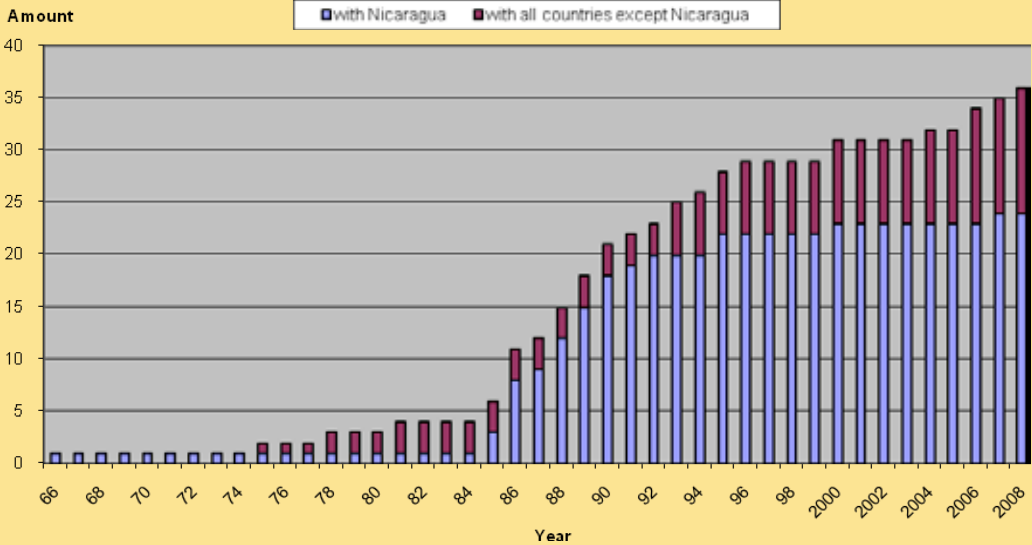
Furthermore, in the 16 Länder it is notable that most of the alliances agreed are concentrated in Germany's largest Länder: almost half of all the alliances with Latin America and two-thirds of the cooperation activities with Nicaragua have been agreed by North Rhine-Westphalia (10 in total, 8 of them with Nicara-

Source: author's interpretation based on the (with Nicaragua / with the rest of Latin America) bank.

Source: author's interpretation based on the CEMR German section's data bank.

gua) and with Hessen (7 in total, all with Nicaragua). These agreements were made mainly between 1985 and 1992; the period during which both *Länder* were under the governmental control of the German Social-democratic Party.
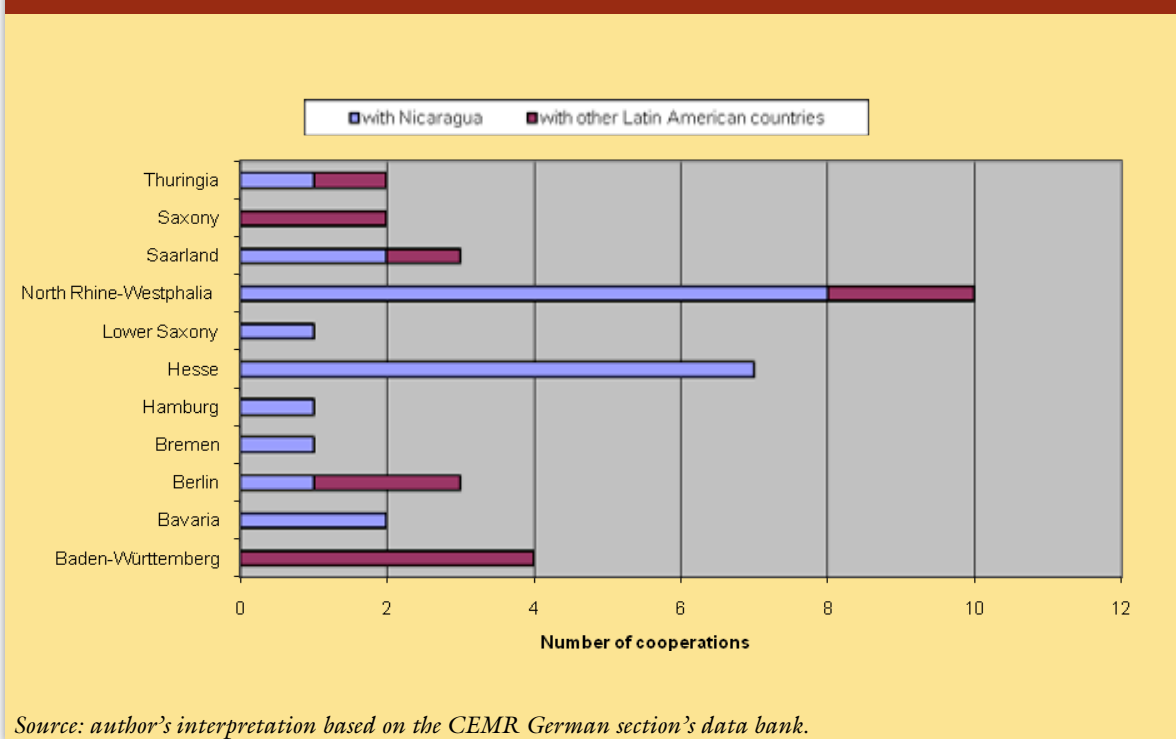
Only 8 of the 13 *Länder* that do not belong to the *Stadtstaaten* (City-State) category (i.e., all except the autonomous cities mentioned in previous chapters: Berlin, Bremen and Hamburg), have some type of relationship or alliance with Latin America. The number of cooperation activities established with Länder in the North and East of the country is very limited or almost non-existent. For example in the East, only the *Länders* Thuringia and Saxony carry out cooperation activities, with two alliances each.

It is noteworthy that this distribution also coincides with that of the cities and municipalities that have committed to actively participating in sustainable development projects (above all those in Local Agenda 21) (Wilhelmy 2006).

The issues that generally make up the bulk of the local alliances with Latin America are always the same: education, cultural exchange, and all those related with drinking water (supply, saving) and the environment.

In local relations with Nicaragua and Honduras these issues have played a very important role in the past, especially humanitarian aid and rebuilding projects after hurricane Mitch. In this context the projects mainly carried out consisted of

Chart 9 | Distribution of German local cooperation activites corresponding to each of the Länder

Source: author's interpretation based on the CEMR German section's data bank.

improving local infrastructures, supplying energy and drinking water, sewerage systems and also planning improvements to selective waste collection and rebuilding homes.

In addition to municipal administration activities, each of the alliances involves the provision of many honorary services and the strong commitment of the population. In Germany it is even common for these activities to be mainly self-subsidised by the sponsored authorities. However, there are various criticisms and shortcomings that must be mentioned: 1) Local activities have absolutely no connection with those of the Federal government; in particular, they are not linked to the activities of the Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) or to

those of other implementation organisations. 2) Until now there have been no German local authorities working actively and continuously in Latin America. 3) Furthermore, it is for this reason that opportunities for exchanging experiences and integrating with other European entities actively in cooperation with Latin America hardly ever arise. Some suggestions for improvement in this regard will be discussed in the following chapter.

7. Outlook – the international discussion about aid effectiveness and local development policy

The Paris Declaration in 2005[30] and the Accra Agenda for Action in 2008[31],

which focus on increasing the effectiveness of development cooperation, both reflect the commitment made by donor and partner countries, including among them Germany, in addition to all the international organisations that have signed these agreements. The five principles of the Paris Declaration for increasing the effectiveness of development cooperation –harmonisation, ownership, alignment, managing for results and mutual accountability– refer to the joint action of donor and recipient countries.

7.1. Harmonising development policy activities on different levels – the role of municipalities

According to the Paris Declaration, the task of multilateral and bilateral development policy is to harmonise the methods and procedures for providing assistance used by the different donors. While this objective has been established at European Union level and has been adopted by the BMZ as one of the goals of its political agenda[32], the question arises of how this distribution of tasks can be organised within donor countries, and in such a way that the available resources may be used to maximum effect.

If we consider municipalities as autonomous actors in development policy together with the federated states and the Federation, we should therefore aim to harmonise development policy among all the State and/or sub-State actors. To carry out this harmonisation process with maximum efficiency, it is necessary to take into account the comparative advantages offered by the different levels and to make the most of these. In the previously

mentioned DIE study, the following fields of activity and recommendations for the local (or municipal) level were proposed as the basis for harmonising development policy actors (Fröhlich/Lämmlin 2009):

Activities within the country:
- information and educational tasks as an essential point;
- requesting and encouraging a commitment to development from all the actors involved in the municipality (NGOs, church, businesses, schools, etc.) by coordinating and supporting all their activities (including cooperation with associations of immigrants, with the aim of integrating their knowledge into local development policy);
- a policy of fair and environmentally friendly procurement, coherent with municipal policy.
Activities outside the country:
- concentrate technical knowledge on providing and improving municipal services in the context of partnerships with municipalities in developing countries with the aim of contributing to their self-administration;
- participate in appropriate international networks and exchange technical and administrative personnel;
- include local NGOs citizen commitment and encourage and coordinate the different actors in the context of municipal projects carried out abroad.

In these fields of activity, local governments may present comparative advantages that should be taken into consideration in a multilevel approach between the

30| *Result of the 2nd High-Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness of the OECD/DAC.*
31| *Result of the 3rd High-Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness of the OECD/DAC.*
32| *We should mention here the EU Code of Conduct. The German response can be seen in the BMZ reforms relating to defining basic regional points, intensifying the dialogue between donor and developing countries, concentrating on a few basic strategies and promoting programmes that unite instruments and donors.*

Federation, *Länder* (federated states) and municipalities in order to complement the activities of other levels. Together with the tasks of information and education within the State, the federated states can focus on research related to developing countries and scientific and technical cooperation with those countries. Likewise, local governments can easily add their specific knowledge to development cooperation by sending qualified personnel, in addition to uniting their domestic and international activities through associations with municipalities in developing countries. In this way cooperation work will become more concrete and visible for the German public opinion (Wiemann 2008).

7.2. The debate about quality [33]

The amount of local micro-projects, which are often not coordinated with each other or with other donors and which are not subject to the quality control measures of higher-ranking bodies, has raised serious doubts among cooperation professionals about the usefulness and effectiveness of local governments' commitment to development aid. These doubts should also be faced in Germany in particular by initiating a debate about quality standards and seeking ways to implement these standards in local development cooperation organised in a decentralised way.

Thus, in terms of its development cooperation, Germany could look to countries such as France, Spain and the Netherlands, in which local levels are much more integrated into national policy and quality standards.

The next chapter provides a brief outline of the options for examining and improving the quality of the municipal level's commitment to development. One of the conditions for obtaining a qualitative increase involves, among others, accepting and considering international agreements (Paris Declaration, Millennium Development Goals, etc.) in the context of local development partnerships. Implementing the criteria established by the Paris Declaration requires not only fundamental changes to local development policy (planning financial security, unified evaluation of projects), but should also lead to a parallel Declaration on a local level, as has already occurred with the municipal Millennium Declaration, which corresponds to local governments' capacities and resources, firmly integrating them into international cooperation.

Through this, local governments would be provided with certain criteria for organising their activities and commitment to development more efficiently. The foundations for a more qualitative kind of cooperation could be established by starting at the planning stage by complying with principles such as ownership and alignment with partners, and management rules such as transparency and focusing on results, in addition to greater harmony and cooperation with other actors working in the same field.

Local governments active in development aid activity should continue to support structural transformations in their partner municipalities in an 'effective' way. In the case of there being a democratically legitimate administration in the municipality in the beneficiary country, for example, cooperation projects focused on urban growth and strengthening local administrations' competences should be agreed not only by civil associations in the Southern municipality, but also by the administration. Both projects and procedures should be able to react to rapid structural changes in neighbourhoods, taking any new problems and needs into account.

The resolution made in October 2008 by the Council of Ministers *(Ministerpräsidentenkonferenz)* regarding the *Länders*' development cooperation, which also concerns German local governments, as well as the current debate about a model of funding local development cooperation, seem to be heading in a hopeful direction, following the example of other European countries which already include local levels in their development policy. German municipalities and local governments, however, should anticipate that greater support for their activities will certainly also mean greater demands being placed on them, i.e., they could be required to ensure better quality in subsidised projects and to comply with specific conditions (for example, including many actors). At the end of the day, however, this could benefit local governments when it comes to requesting assistance from European funds.

7.3. Basis for possible control criteria and increased quality

To achieve a qualitative increase in projects it would appear useful to take the previously mentioned principles and management rules as a guide. This path requires knowledge and commitment more than financial means. It is therefore advisable to establish these principles in a practical and mandatory way by means of contractual cooperation agreements between cities, such as a memorandum of understanding, or a letter of intent, etc. In this regard, drafting and publishing the relevant example contracts would be a positive measure.

The introduction of quality criteria, such as alignment with partners, demands greater conceptual flexibility from donor local governments in the interests of their partners in the South. The degree of independence they enjoy in contrast with other development collaboration projects will, without doubt, be reduced by the necessary coordination, agreement and coherence required. Furthermore, it would be mandatory to consider international resolutions (e.g. Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers), national development strategies and basic bilateral agreements. [34]

Quality must be visible in the output and the outcome of partnership work. Achieving this requires the introduction of management instruments to measure and control quality and enable the contribution of local projects to be evaluated based on previously agreed objectives. Basically, this means carrying out an assessment of the effects. In the case of an association between cities, these refer to a wide range of activities between both countries (e.g., school exchange programmes, delegations of local politicians, small development projects, etc.), or national activities (e.g., activities of associations, interaction with other local bodies, etc.).

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[33] | *See also: Held, U./Nitschke, U./Wilhelmy, S., 2008.*

[34] | *Regarding possible basis for German local governments see: Eberlei, W./Scherrer, B., 2009.*

In the national arena specifically we often find regulatory objectives such as education for development, international solidarity and understanding between peoples. However, evaluating and measuring the extent to which the agreed objectives have been achieved is very difficult in these fields. A greater number of members in cooperation associations or a growing interest in issues relating to development policy, studied by using surveys, as well as the amount of donations or sales of fair trade products in the area could well serve as indicators for measuring the effects of cooperation in German municipalities. Likewise however, institutional learning, consisting of improving organisation and optimising the working procedures of cooperation associations, which often function on a volunteer basis, is another valuable indicator. In the background of the search for valid indicators the question arises of linking effects, such as for example, the effects of associative work on education for development and vice versa, about which hardly any studies exist.

In relation to specific projects both in the national and international arena, the search for criteria for evaluating the quality of these projects presents less difficulty. In this situation, above all, it is a case of identifying the strategic objectives for the project that can be measured and putting them into practice right from the start, and that these objectives are later evaluated. Evaluating projects is necessary, even when this sometimes exceeds the capacities of the volunteer actors involved. Given that a wealth of experience in evaluating development projects already exists, there is no doubt that important improvements could be achieved through specific capacity-building programmes for cooperation actors. Therefore, the effects of specific measures could be estimated, such as the number of students who benefit from certain school material, the construction of a new school or a teacher being contracted by an African municipality. Moreover, it is very important to set up evaluation and quality control systems as positive instruments for learning and continuous training in local development cooperation work.

In order to clarify and better structure the quantity and variety of cooperation projects between the North and the South, for example by showing the total of developmental effects that German cities' associations have had in a specific country and/or sector, it is essential to have a data bank in which local governments are obliged to record the projects, objectives and effects of their cooperation activities. In this way, it would be possible to take greater advantage of the synergistic effects among the municipalities themselves, and also among local and State activities, thereby avoiding the duplication of work. Until now, however, the simple registering of partnership activities in the German section of CEMR's data bank has been voluntary and therefore contains large gaps. For this reason it is necessary for cooperation federations to make resolutions and take measures across the whole of Germany, or even on a European level, aimed at increasing the transparency and obligatory nature of registering local activities overseas. The French practice, which makes access to financial resources for cooperation conditional on registration in a central data bank, represents a good example to follow (see *Wilhelmy* et al., 2007).

Concepts such as:
- establish principles in cooperation agreements,
- develop indicators for evaluating the effects in the national arena,
- implement training programmes for evaluating the effects of cooperation projects,
- develop an obligatory list of all cooperation activities and
- unify the criteria for encouraging donors,

all show how much work and how many subjects for discussion will be generated by the discussion about the quality of local development policy.

In this regard, it would be advisable to boost exchanges within the EU that enable German local governments to learn from the experiences of other donor countries. Greater coordination of German local governments both on a national and European scale could help to alleviate the deficiencies that were referred to in chapter six.

The positive experiences obtained in the model trilateral cooperation project between local governments in Germany, France and Burkina Faso, sponsored by Servicestelle *Kommunen in der Einen Welt* (Service Agency Communities in One World), could easily be taken advantage of. Through the cooperation between German and Spanish municipalities with common partners in Latin America, for example, the activities of European donors could be united, resulting in the greater coordination and effectiveness of local cooperation projects in beneficiary countries. By utilising these measures, perhaps it would be possible to gain the interest and commitment of more German municipalities. Without doubt, an increase in the exchange of experiences among the German municipalities already active in Latin America would be a first step in the right direction.

In the short term, this could be achieved by holding meetings between all the municipalities in question; in the medium and long term, meeting the objective would require the creation of a regional group focused on Latin America or on more specific groups of countries, such as for example, that of the 24 German municipalities active in Nicaragua. In this case, what are needed are institutions that act on a federal level, such as associations of municipalities and Servicestelle *Kommunen in der Einen Welt* (Service Agency Communities in One World).

Case studies

Decentralised cooperation in Colombia: A first analysis of the vision of the departments and the experience of Bogotá as Capital District

Sandra Olaya Barbosa*
Jeannette Vélez Ramírez**

The links between subnational entities in diverse parts of the world are increasing and becoming stronger. Nowadays it is common to speak of bilateral relations between provinces, departments, cities, regions, districts and municipalities. In Colombia, the process of integrating territorial entities into international networks and the signing of twinning agreements has taken place gradually, in a fragmented way and according to the particular conditions of development and potential in the territory. This situation hinders a diagnosis that would provide an overview of the current dynamics and the vision that each institution has created with regard to the process of international integration and cooperation. In view of this fact, this article studies the phenomenon by analysing the vision that the departments and the Capital District have constructed in their current Development Plans. This has enabled us to discover that the use of decentralised cooperation is tied to the evolution of the territorial entities' vision of internationalisation.

Key words

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1. Introduction

In recent years, the subject of decentralised cooperation has been promoted in different thematic forums on international cooperation held in the country – not only in academic circles but also in areas of local public management. Leaders of departments and cities are actively participating in these reflections and spaces of concertation that consider the evolution of cooperation, the role of the relief workers and their beneficiaries. Likewise, both central and decentralised entities are promoting this method in virtue of its potential as a complementary tool for territorial development.

However, there are few studies that focus on the development of this phenomenon in Colombia. Until now there has been no precise information available about these experiences and there seems to be some confusion about the definition, the actors and the scope of this method. The most common approach to investigating the situation of decentralised cooperation has been to study specific cases that reveal the magnitude and the impact of these experiences in one or various local governments.

Although providing an overview or presenting the current state of affairs in the evolution of decentralised cooperation in the country is enormously complex[1] , this article presents a first consideration of the territorial entities' vision based on an analysis of their Development Plans and the organisational structures they have for responding to the phenomenon[2]. The latter has enabled us to discover not only the current state of the process of the strategic planning of international cooperation and the instruments available for moving ahead with its management, but also to determine that this process is strongly linked to the vision of international integration that each territorial government has developed.

In this regard, it has been concluded that the dynamics of decentralised cooperation must be understood in virtue of territorial entities' internationalisation processes. Those governments that are developing an internationalisation strategy or agenda are already incorporating these methods as part of their management. For their part, those that demonstrate an implicit or undeveloped vision of their role on the international stage still maintain a traditional vision of cooperation. The good news is that most of the territorial entities analysed already reflect a positive vision of processes of international integration, which allows us to suggest that the dynamics of decentralised cooperation will become stronger over the coming years.

Finally, and without ignoring the progress made by other cities[3], the article presents the experience of Bogotá as Capital District, bearing in mind that this territorial

institution has developed not only a strategic vision of decentralised cooperation, but has also made progress with organisational structures and procedures that enable it to respond to the phenomenon. It is believed that the city can capitalise on its experience to become one of the models or guides for local governments' international action, at least in Colombia.

In turn, the article presents the fundamental elements that enable the dynamics of territorial entities' international cooperation and action to be understood. Firstly, the State's territorial organisation is explained, providing information about the constitutional competences of the departments and municipalities. Secondly, a schematic presentation is provided of the legal framework of international cooperation with the intention of situating the reader in the current legislation. And thirdly, we describe some of the entities that have taken on a guiding or articulating role in this method of cooperation in the country.

This being the case, this article constitutes a first overview of decentralised cooperation, but recognises that the process of gathering and systematising the information on this phenomenon is still in its early stages. Although this text is mainly descriptive, it presents part of the results of the research carried out within the framework of the Colombian Observatory of International Policy (OPEC) at the University of El Rosario, which is focused on providing a first diagnosis of the international management initiatives implemented by departmental and municipal territorial entities.[4]

4| See Olaya, Sandra. 'Estudio de las iniciativas regionales y locales que se han desarrollado en Colombia en materia de política exterior y / o su gestión internacional: Bogotá-Cundinamarca, Medellín-Antioquia e Ibagué-Tolima como regiones pivotales y asociativas', Colombian Observatory of International Policy (OPEC), Faculties of Political Science and Government and of International Relations, University of El Rosario, Bogotá, Colombia.

2. Colombia's territorial organisation: departments, districts, municipalities and indigenous territories

The Political Constitution of 1991 establishes that "Colombia is a Legal Social State, organised in the form of a unitary republic, decentralised, made up of autonomous territorial entities, democratic, participative, pluralistic and founded on respect for human dignity (…)". Likewise, article 286 establishes that "departments, districts, municipalities and indigenous territories are territorial entities. The law may grant the status of territorial entity to the regions and provinces that are formed under the terms of the Constitution and the law".

In virtue of the above, the country is organised into 32 departments, 1101 municipalities and 4 districts (Bogotá D.C., Capital District; Barranquilla, Industrial Port and Special District; Cartagena, Tourism and Cultural, National Heritage District; and Santa Marta, Tourism, Cultural and Historic District). Furthermore, the Constitution creates the possibility of grouping two or more departments into regions and the creation of provinces with two or more neighbouring municipalities or indigenous territories from the same department, or from different departments, in the case of indigenous territories (Articles 306, 307, 321 and 329).

It is necessary to clarify that the Constitution stipulates in article 288 that the "Organic Law of Territorial Organisation will establish the distribution of competences among the nation and the territorial entities". For the

analysts, this Law constitutes the main development of the Political Charter on matters of decentralisation, participation and the spatial design of the territory[5]. However, until now 17 government bills have been presented before the Congress of the Republic without being approved. Currently, Colombia is still waiting for the Organic Law of Territorial Organisation to be passed in order to strengthen the process of decentralisation and territorial autonomy.

Nevertheless, and with all the gaps in the legislation, the competences granted by the Constitution are the point of reference for territorial management. In this respect article 287 establishes that "Territorial entities enjoy autonomy for the management of their interests within the limits of the Constitution and the law. By virtue of this they will have the following rights: To govern themselves under their own authority; to exercise the competences appropriate to them; to administer their resources and establish the taxes necessary for their operation; to participate in national revenues".

In turn, article 289 indicates that by law, departments and municipalities located in border areas may directly promote with the territorial entity on the border of the neighbouring country, on an equal level, cooperation and integration programs aimed at promoting community development, the provision of public services, and the protection of the environment. It is appropriate to mention that the Constitution does not regulate the participation of the other territorial entities with regards carrying out cooperation activities or programmes with other regions.

Article 295 states that the entities may issue securities and bonds of public debt, subject to the conditions of the financial market, and

also may contract foreign credit, all of this in accordance with the law regulating the matter. To summarise, despite the regulatory gap, territorial entities enjoy autonomy for managing their interests, they can promote cooperation programmes between border territories and contract foreign credit. It would seem, therefore, that the constitutional framework does not represent an obstacle to the possible international action of territorial entities.

3. The legal framework of international cooperation in Colombia

The legal framework of international cooperation is founded on the principles of International Law and on those agreements and declarations signed by the country, on the competences established in the Political Constitution and on the current regulatory framework which has enabled its institutionalisation. Of course, the present process of organisation corresponds to the background, the organisational structures implemented and the need to establish a guiding and coordinating body for managing cooperation. (See table 1).

Below we present a table indicating the constitutional competences and the regulatory framework with regard to international cooperation. This framework establishes the national institutional structure responsible for international cooperation, as well as its functions and its scope.

From the above it is possible to observe that the Presidential Agency for Social Action and International Cooperation, Acción Social, an office of the Presidency of the Republic, is responsible for coordinating the development of cooperation policy. In this regard, the regulations also define the forms of cooperation in order to determine their scope in this matter.

5| Trujillo Muñoz, Augusto. Descentralización, regionalización y autonomía local. 2001, p. 131.

Table 1 | Regulatory framework of international cooperation (IC) in Colombia

		Regulatory framework of IC in Colombia
Constitutional competences	Article 9	The external relations of the State are based on national sovereignty, on respect for the self-determination of peoples, and on the recognition of the principles of International Law approved by Colombia.
	Article 62	The fate of donations (...) effected according to the law for social purposes may not be altered or modified by the legislative body, unless the purpose of the donation should no longer be applicable.
	Article 189	Numeral 2. It is the responsibility of the President of the Republic to manage international relations; appoint the members of the diplomatic and consular corps; receive the corresponding foreign officials; and sign international treaties or agreements with other states and bodies of International Law to be submitted for the approval of the Congress.
	Article 226	The State will promote the internationalisation of political, economic, social and ecological relations on the basis of reciprocity and the national interest.
	Article 227	The State will promote economic, social, and political integration with other nations and especially with the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean (....)
Current regulatory framework	Decree 1942 of 11 July 2003	Assigns to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MRE), the task of formulating and guiding the IC Policy in its different forms.
		The Administrative Department of the Presidency of the Republic (DAPR), will participate in the administration and promotion of technical and financial international cooperation. It will be responsible for the general guidance, control and assessment of the activities of Acción Social.
	Decree 2467 of 2005	Redefines the institutional nature of international cooperation. The Network of Social Solidarity and ACCI will be merged, to become the Presidential Agency for Social Action and International Cooperation, Acción Social.
		Administrate and promote non-repayable technical and financial IC not under the management and coordination of the MRE.
		The reference to the channelling of all cooperation requests received by the country is hereby eliminated.

Source: Table created by the authors based on information obtained from Acción Social. La Cooperación Internacional y su Régimen Jurídico en Colombia. Pages 20-26.

On the one hand, it defines the method of "repayable cooperation (occasional credit), that is treated as credit and therefore must be subject to the existing regulations on debenture loans. Acción Social intervenes in this management, but the approval and contracting procedure falls within the jurisdiction of the National Planning Department, DNP and the Ministry of Finance and Public Credit[6]".

On the other hand, there is non-repayable cooperation; in this regard Acción Social is in charge of the coordination, articulation and promotion in the country. This is subdivided into different forms:

1. according to the type of activity carried out (humanitarian and emergency aid, food aid and cultural cooperation);

2. according to the activities involved (grants, scientific and technological cooperation and donations);

[6]| Acción Social, 'La Cooperación Internacional y su Régimen Jurídico en Colombia'. P. 25.

3. according to the country's level of development (vertical or North-South cooperation, horizontal cooperation –also known as Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries (TCDC)– or South-South cooperation, and triangular cooperation)[7].

The Agency has established its operation by means of an International Cooperation Directorate, a Sub-directorate of New Sources of IC and a Sub-directorate of Official Development Assistance.

4. Institutions and associations fostering territorial entities' decentralised cooperation and international action

4.1. The role of Acción Social: fostering and promoting

In essence, the role assumed by Acción Social in this area is of fostering and promoting decentralised cooperation with the intention of arousing the interest of departmental and municipal administrations. As can be observed, the New Sources Sub-directorate has identified four forms of work, including decentralised cooperation. The aim of this form is "to generate greater volume and impact for cooperation actions to strengthen the capacities of the Colombian territories (departments and municipalities)".[8]

4.1.1. Decentralised cooperation meetings

The Agency has made an interesting effort to open up spaces for reflection and knowledge exchange. Without doubt this has contributed to clarifying concepts and to fostering this type of cooperation among territorial entities. In this regard, since 2007 annual meetings have been held on decentralised cooperation, with the intention of increasing awareness of the different access procedures, by exchanging information with the actors and organisations that carry out this type of cooperation and its main beneficiaries, members of the National International Cooperation System.[9]

The 1st meeting, held in Bogotá on 26 and 27 September 2007, enjoyed the participation of representatives from 10 European sources of decentralised cooperation, and contributed towards generating knowledge on the prospects of Colombia carrying out decentralised cooperation actions. In the context of the meeting a regional initiative was signed to promote decentralised cooperation. This meeting was held in association with the Colombian Federation of Municipalities, the National Federation of Departments, the Medellín Co-operation Agency and the Colombian Confederation of NGOs.[10]

The 2nd meeting took place in association with the ART Programme of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), on 15 and 16 October 2008 in the city of Barranquilla. Its objective was to achieve the widespread social implementation the ART-REDES Colombia Programme and also to hear specific proposals for the regions in Colombia to be

[7]| Acción Social, 'Cooperación Internacional en Colombia'. Electronic document.

[8]| Acción Social, New Sources Sub-directorate, 'Institucionalización de la Cooperación descentralizada en Colombia'. Document sent directly by the institution.

[9]| Acción Social, New Sources Sub-directorate, 'Institucionalización de la Cooperación descentralizada en Colombia'. Document sent directly by the institution.

[10]| Idem.

able to carry out decentralised cooperation actions. On this occasion 10 European decentralised bodies participated. [11]

In turn, the 3rd meeting to be held on 29 and 30 October 2009 in Bogotá is the result of a Bogotá-Cundinamarca alliance, in a regional construction effort that is planned as one of the dynamics and promotional tools of the internationalisation of Colombian cities and regions. The meeting is being supported by the United Nations Development Programme, UNDP.[12]

4.2. The National Federation of Departments (FND): an association with leadership potential

This entity brings together the 32 legal representatives of Colombia's departments, has its own resources and a work team focused on working towards strengthening the territorial entities. Basically, the Federation is a political organisation that presents its members' interests before the National Government, the Congress of the Republic and national and internationals entities, both public and private.

One of its objectives is to "Promote the departments' relations with national and international organisations, with the aim of fostering the exchange of technology and experiences in the area of administration and development". In this regard, its role is to be a real *interlocutor*, a communication channel that links the needs of the territorial entities with the different actors.

The main guidelines are established by an Advisory Board made up of seven governors, from each of the country's regions, and the main political concertation forum is the General Assembly of Governors which is held twice a year. At this meeting the priority issues are presented to the National Government.

The National Federation of Departments has actively participated in the activities arranged by Acción Social as the coordinating agency for international cooperation. It has even offered its services as a communication channel between national and international cooperation agencies and the territorial entities.[13] Nevertheless, a management unit that could promote the issue more effectively has yet to be set up.

In this regard it is considered necessary to progress towards the consolidation of a working area that could strengthen, through training and qualification, the management of international cooperation. The Federation has enormous potential as it has the opportunity to learn about the priority issues of the country's departments and to look for international partners and counterparts that could proactively fit in with the interests of subnational entities.

4.3. The Colombian Federation of Municipalities (FCM): strong promoter of internationalisation

Just like the FND, the Colombian Federation of Municipalities aims to defend the interests of all the municipalities, districts and associations of municipalities in the country. In this regard, its mission consists of "representing the collective interests of municipalities, to lead and support the development of municipal management, defending autonomy and promoting increased decentralisation".[14]

In recent years, the Federation has assumed the task of promoting the internationalisation processes of territorial entities and has created the necessary tools to offer municipalities institutional support with international cooperation, including specific work on decentralised cooperation projects. It is praiseworthy that in just a few years it has consolidated itself in areas that go beyond simply transferring information such as consultancy and training in creating projects.

It is interesting to note that it is working on an International Decentralised Cooperation System, created in 2002 with the technical and financial support of the Spanish Agency for International Cooperation, AECI. This system has 9 regional units and a Technical Secretary which the Federation is in charge of.[15] Consolidating this information system is a fundamental step for providing feedback and promoting decentralised cooperation in Colombia.

The Federation publishes an informative bulletin of international affairs for local governments which it sends to all the members and which provides details of specific reflections, municipal experiences, source profiles and international events. In fact, the latest bulletin[16] includes a first analysis of the concept of decentralised cooperation. Likewise, it has made progress in the area of training and technical assistance by running online courses on municipal internationalisation, workshops and short courses on international cooperation and mechanisms for accessing official and decentralised cooperation.

As a representative association, the Federation already participates in different international networks, among them United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG); the Federation of Latin American Cities, Local Governments and Associations (FLACMA); the Ibero-American Union of Municipalists; and the Information and Training Centre for Local Authorities (CIFAL).

5. A first analysis of the vision of the Colombian departments

A review of the Departmental Development Plans (DDP) approved for the period 2008-2012, has enabled us to identify some aspects of the vision of international cooperation currently held by the departments. This analysis presents the thoughts and plans of the different administrations for this period; however, the results can only be corroborated by the respective management reports that are endorsed at the end of their terms of office. Nevertheless, a first analysis is offered of the territorial entities' vision of international cooperation with the caveat that the findings presented here must be taken in context and understood in virtue of the individual characteristics of each of the territories.

Firstly, this analysis enables us to confirm that most of the Colombian departments consider international cooperation as an important instrument for supporting the different strategic lines, programmes and sub-programmes in their DDPs. An interest is perceived in articulating the projects to the specific needs already prioritised by the territorial governments as, on occasions, even despite there being a broad dynamic among relief

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[11] *Idem.*

[12] *Idem*

[13] *Colombian Federation of Municipalities, 'Misión'. Electronic document.*

[14] *Colombian Federation of Municipalities, 'Oferta Institucional de Cooperación Internacional'. PowerPoint presentation.*

[15] *Bulletin no. 4 of 2009.*

[16] *See IDEA, 'Servicios – Cooperación Internacional'. Electronic document.*

workers, projects and objective populations, the level of connection with the central focal points established by the local governments is relative.

Secondly, the importance granted to international cooperation as an instrument to support the management of the DDPs has different scope. While some departments need to make progress towards a system, strategy or agenda of international cooperation, others consider it essential to promote or consolidate the departmental committee or a management unit in this subject matter. Finally, there are very few governments that have not developed a vision of international cooperation but there are also many who only announce its importance but do not move ahead to the next stage of developing specific programmes to make it viable. (See table 2).

As shown in the previous table, 25 % of the departments will develop a system, strategy or agenda for international cooperation. Of these, Nariño and Tolima are moving forward with methods of decentralised cooperation, exchange of experiences or twinning, which represents 6% of the departmental total.

Nevertheless, it is interesting to underline that the dynamic of decentralised cooperation is frequently related to the internationalisation vision that each of the local governments have developed. In this respect, most of these departments present in their respective DDPs an explicit vision of internationalisation, and some of them even consider it necessary to articulate a strategy that takes into account the focal points of cooperation and international projection in a simultaneous way. It can be expected that the decentralised cooperation dynamic of these territorial entities will become strengthened over the coming years.
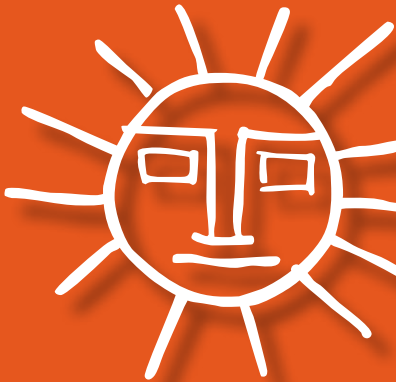
In turn, 34% of the departments mentioned the need to dynamize, consolidate and promote the International Cooperation Committee and/or an operational or management unit to this end. In this type of orientation we found concerns about the institutional capacity to manage resources from an operational point of view. Likewise, in most of the Development Plans there is an implicit vision of internationalisation, mainly associated with issues of economic development and competitiveness. In other words, we find a reflection on the importance of successfully becoming integrated into international markets, attracting investment and encouraging trade, without developing a programmatic area to tackle this goal.

Thus, throughout the DDPs we find different sub-programmes, projects and goals that lead us to the conclusion that the territorial entity is aiming towards international economic integration. For their part, Amazonas, La Guajira, Santander and Quindío have developed an explicit vision through specific programmes in each of their DDPs.

Finally, it is interesting to analyse the 31% of the departments that consider international cooperation as a contribution to the programmes in their respective DDPs but have not developed specific strategies or programmes to make this viable. Cases like Antioquia and Cundinamarca can be understood in virtue of the progress they have already achieved in this area during previous administrations. Thus, the Department of Antioquia has the Institute for the Development of Antioquia (IDEA), which is in charge of managing cooperation and international business. This institute is implementing a strategy to dynamize international cooperation in the Department. In Cundinamarca an Office of International Cooperation was set up which is in charge of the strategy and future projection of the cooperation dynamic. These two territorial entities have developed an explicit vision of internationalisation mainly associated with economic development and competitiveness.

The other departments, although they have not established specific cooperation plans, have advanced towards an implicit vision of internationalisation. As evidenced by the previous findings, a greater emphasis is observed on economic integration, dynamising trade and attracting foreign investment. Points that stand out are the need to implement *bilingualism* programmes in the educational system and to develop a 'brand' image of the region.

Although the evolution of the *decentralised cooperation* dynamic from a programmatic point of view is still in its early stages, there is evidence of a strong orientation towards seeking spaces in which to promote and integrate the territories internationally. This trend

Table 2 | Vision of international cooperation in Departmental Development Plans—aggregate percentages

GENERAL VISION	SCOPE OF THE VISION	DEPARTMENTS	TOTAL	ESTMATE	AGREGATE %
It is an important topic as a contribution to the Departmental Development Plan programmes	They will promote, consolidate and dynamise the International Cooperation Committee and/or an international cooperation management unit. *They will not go further towards developing a strategy or agenda for international cooperation*	Amazonas, Atlántico, La Guajira, Norte de Santander, Putumayo, Santander, Valle del Cauca, Quindío, Sucre, Vaupés, Vichada	11	34%	91%
	They will develop a departmental agenda/strategy/system for international cooperation (including in some cases dynamising the International Cooperation Committee and/or a management unit)	Arauca, Boyacá, Caldas, Casanare, Meta, Nariño, Risaralda and Tolima	8	25%	
	In addition to the previous characteristics, they want to move forward with methods of decentralised cooperation, exchange of experiences or twinning	Nariño, Tolima	2	6%	
	They do not establish specific strategies or programmes	Antioquia, Bolívar, Caquetá, Chocó, Cauca, Cesar, Cundinamarca, Guaviare, Huila, San Andrés and Providencia	10	31%	
They have not developed a vision of international cooperation in their Departmental Development Plans		Córdoba, Magdalena and Guanía	3	9%	9%

Source: Olaya, Sandra. 'Análisis de los Planes de Desarrollo Departamental, vigencia 2008-2011'.

may, in the medium term, encourage territorial governments to participate in international networks and associations, to promote these governments through international marketing strategies and expand international action strategies that dynamize this method of cooperation as an instrument for internationalising local government. (See table 3)

It is worth mentioning that the Colombian departments are in the phase of recognising the importance of adequate international integration to contribute towards developing their territories. Specifically, as previously mentioned, 34% of the departments are making progress in the sphere of 'theory', involving planning and assessment. (Sanz 2008) Some have set their objectives and strategic areas; others are defining them at this exact moment. For this reason, it is important to underline that we are in a good moment for encouraging reflection on the complementary role that decentralised cooperation can play as an instrument anchored in local needs and capacities. (Sanz 2008:20)

Table 3	The Colombian departments' visions of internationalisation as found in the 2008-2012 DDPs			
VISION OF INTERNATIONALISATION			
	32	100%	EXPLICIT / IMPLICIT
SI	13	41%	EXPLICIT: Will develop a strategy of internationalisation or of international promotion activities for the department.
	19	59%	IMPLICIT: They mention the importance of becoming integrated into the international scene but activities are developed on each programmatic central theme without articulating an internationalisation strategy.
SUBJECTS RELATED TO THE VISION OF INTERNATIONALISATION		(WHETHER IMPLICIT OR EXPLICIT)	
23	72%	COMPETITIVENESS/ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT - (exports, investment, opening markets)	
12	37%	TERRITORIAL MARKETING - CREATION OF BRAND IMAGE - TERRITORIAL PROMOTION STRATEGY	
11	34%	TOURISM	
6	19%	EDUCATION - BILINGUALISM/MULTILINGUALISM PROGRAMMES	
6	19%	BORDER DEVELOPMENT (INTEGRATION, COOPERATION, COMMERCIAL EXCHANGE)	
5	16%	CULTURE - STRENGTHEN ETHNIC DIVERSITY, PROMOTE THE ARTS, HERITAGE, INCREASE EXCHANGES WITH OTHER CULTURES	
5	16%	MIGRATION: NETWORKS OF CITIZENS OVERSEAS (PEOPLE FROM TOLIMA, NARIÑO, QUINDÍO, ETC.)	
1	3%	ENVIRONMENT - FOREST DEVELOPMENT	

Source: Olaya, Sandra. 'Análisis de los Planes de Desarrollo Departamental, vigencia 2008-2011'.

5.1. Organisational and management structure of the Colombian departments

The preceding analysis has enabled us to determine the existence of the will, from a programmatic point of view, to manage international cooperation in its different forms and to make it viable. Of course, this motivation must be accompanied by an organisational structure that can respond to these processes and expand them according to the progress already achieved. In this regard, if the intention is to support the different programmes in the Departmental Development Plans, the area designated for articulating them should have an overall vision of the multiple processes proposed by the department, in order to lead them towards specific strategies. This area could be located within an existing secretariat or alternatively a new area in charge of dynamising international actions could be forged, based on a transversal vision.

As proposed by Sanz (2008), "the organisational structure and processes for managing cooperation relations from the municipal (departmental) body, and more generically for actioning international work, (…) constitute one of the key success factors for achieving the set objectives and improving the quality of cooperation"[17] . Likewise, developing the agenda should be, where possible, the responsibility of a clearly identified specific public official or team. In this regard, Zapata (2007) has pointed out that "this person will be responsible for supervising and managing the administrative aspects of international affairs and, most importantly, coordinating actions with other key government areas. Foreign partners should rely on such officer as a valid interlocutor who is always available and ready to help."[18]

In Colombia there are not many studies available on this matter, nevertheless it is worth mentioning the survey carried out in 2006 by Acción Social. This sought to determine the profile of the international cooperation offices in the Colombian public sector and was answered by 24 of the 32 provincial governments and 5 of the 32 city councils of the capital cities. This survey, although it does not represent a total sample, is a starting point for determining the organisational evolution of the territorial entities, at least on a departmental level.

This survey revealed some interesting findings. Firstly, the management of international cooperation is mainly carried out in offices and Planning Secretariats; on some occasions, consultant offices have been set up to carry out this task. Thus, 41.7% of the departments assigned the management of international cooperation to planning secretariats and only 20.8% designated public officials to work directly on this area. Furthermore, it was found that most of these public officials were freely appointed and removed, representing 79.2% of the departments that responded to the survey.[19]

In turn, it was found that the exist-

[17] Sanz Corella, Beatriz (2008). Guía para la acción exterior de los gobiernos locales y la cooperación descentralizada. Unión Europea-América Latina. Volume 2: Elementos para la construcción de una política pública local de cooperación descentralizada. P. 122.

[18] Zapata Garesché, Eugène D. (2007). Manual práctico para internacionalizar la ciudad. Guía para la acción exterior de los Gobiernos locales y la cooperación descentralizada. Unión Europea-América Latina. Volume 1. P. 56

22 Departments / 72%		Form	Total	Aggregate
OPERATIONAL UNIT/ PERSON IN CHARGE	YES			
	Person responsible, without specifying the government area	Consultants in charge of IC.	5	22%
	Planning Secretariat	Part of its functions. The person directly responsible is the Planning Secretary.	13	56%
	With an operational unit in the Planning Secretariat	IC unit, office, area or group.	5	22%
	Other secretariat	Productivity and Competitiveness Secretariat, Economic Development Secretariat.	2	9%
	Other office	Delegation in Bogotá.	1	4%

Table 4 | Organisational forms of IC in the departments, analysis applied to 72% that have an operational unit or person in charge in a Secretariat

Source: Olaya, Sandra. 'Barrido Virtual de las Estructuras Organizacionales del orden Departamental', updated June 2009.

ence of organisational structures, offices and working areas was relatively new. In the case of the departments, 29.2% reported having been in existence for more than six years and 37.2% for less than two years. For Acción Social, this result evidenced that the management of IC on a territorial level was recent, and together with the high turnover of staff, it was difficult to consolidate the consistent and continuous management of cooperation matters.[20]

The research carried out in the framework of the Colombian Observatory of International Policy (OPEC) at the University of El Rosario provides a series of statistics that allow the organisational evolution of the departments in this area to be observed. This study sought to identify the organisational characteristics of the departments, specifically whether there was a management unit or area within their respective organisational structures, whether this was the responsibility of consultants or whether it was a function of one of the provincial government Secretariats[21].

The results lead us to conclude that two years after the survey carried out by Acción Social, the departments have continued specialising their management areas, despite the still prevailing tendency to assign the matter to a Planning Secretariat or a unit that shows an affinity and interest in managing international cooperation. In this regard, the study showed that 69% of the departments had an operational unit or a person in charge of IC in one of the already established Secretariats. Likewise, it was found that the organisational structures of some provincial governments have already been modified, providing a new place for the management of cooperation and international relations.

Five of the departments that reflect this type of organisational structure have already set up an operational unit, management area or working group – an aspect that can be considered as positive as it grants importance and capacity of institutional response to managing cooperation. Cundinamarca and Valle del Cauca both have international cooperation offices, Santander has an International Technical Cooperation Group and Quindío has a working area dedicated to this objective.

Finally, it is interesting to consider those departments that have set up an office or area of international affairs in their Economic Development or Productivity and Competitiveness Secretariats. As mentioned by Sanz (2008:130) this method is found in those governments that "basically focus on promoting the city (department) on the international stage to gain private investment and resources which are integrated into the municipal development plan and foster the city's (department's) growth".

This analysis of the makeup of the organisational structures of the Colombian departments has enabled us to identify a general tendency towards granting administrations the institutional capacities required for managing the issue of cooperation. In this regard, local governments have developed different organisational methods that present interesting results, highlighting as an influential factor the political will of the departmental governments towards international integration and managing cooperation.

This fact is considered fundamental for dynamising the international integration of sub-national entities and going beyond the 'aid-oriented' vision of international cooperation towards methods that favour the relationship between partners and the exchange of experiences with other regions. The findings presented here reveal that in the medium term the departments will expand their vision to include the opportunities that decentralised cooperation can offer as a complementary tool for local development.

6. The drive of a pivotal city: Bogotá, Capital District

Bogotá's experience as Capital District is enriching bearing in mind its background,

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[19] | See Presidential Agency for Social Action and International Cooperation, Acción Social. 'Perfil de las Oficinas de Cooperación Internacional en el Sector Público', Bogotá, December 2006. Electronic document. P. 3-6.

[20] | See Acción Social. 'Perfil de las Oficinas de Cooperación Internacional en el Sector Público'. Electronic document. P. 3-6.

[21] | The principal method of gathering information used was virtual. Therefore, information available on the websites of each provincial government and the main city councils was taken. In some cases information was verified by telephone and in three departments (Cundinamarca, Antioquia and Tolima) field work was carried out. Furthermore, the National Federation of Departments (FND) database was consulted.

objectives and expectations. The city as an organised territory[22] has made a commitment to the international integration of the Bogotá-Cundinamarca region by recognising it as a pivotal region[23] and by promoting an associative method[24]. Currently, both territorial entities present in their respective Development Plans an explicit vision of cooperation and internationalisation and have developed organisational structures with a corresponding working team to deal with tasks related to internationalisation.

6.1. The background: the Bogotá-Cundinamarca region

The process of Bogotá-Cundinamarca regional integration has brought with it a reflection on and boosting of the region's international integration dynamics, considering both political and economic elements. Numerous studies have been carried out into this process[25], but the competitiveness study carried out by the firm Monitor in 1997 opened up "a road map for converting the city into a competitive platform in Latin America and for identifying alternatives for its

international integration"[26]. As stated by Bogotá City Council, "This study provided the first comparison of Bogotá with other cities in the world (…)"[27].

In 2001, with the intention of strengthening the regional integration policy, two concertation and coordination spaces for regional affairs were set up: the first is known as the Bogotá-Cundinamarca Regional Planning Committee (MPRBC), made up of Bogotá City Council, Cundinamarca Provincial Council and the Autonomous Regional Corporation of Cundinamarca (CAR) and the second, known as the Regional Competitiveness Council (CRBC), composed of, in addition to the entities already mentioned, the Bogotá Chamber of Commerce and 1800 organisations from the public, business, academic and social-civic sectors of Bogotá and Cundinamarca. [28]

As indicated by Bogotá City Council, the Regional Planning Committee is in charge of discussing, planning and guiding regional integration from a territorial perspective, among public actors; and the Regional Competitiveness Council is in charge of discussing, planning

and guiding this integration from an economic-productive focus among public and private actors.[29] In particular, the CRBC was inspired by conceptual and categorical approaches such as 'global city-region'[30] and by the experiences and approaches used in other cities.[31]

In this regard, the Council was "conceived as a stage for voluntary participation in which public-private initiatives come together to cooperate in the collective goal of converting the territory of Bogotá and Cundinamarca into one of the five most competitive regions with the highest quality of life in Latin America[32]. Based on this, the foundations were laid for shaping the Regional Competitiveness Plan 2004-2014.

Later, and taking this Regional Plan as a reference, a coordinated piece of work was carried out between the Regional Planning Committee and the Regional Competitiveness Council which resulted in the Regional Internal Agenda of Productivity and Competitiveness. This agenda includes the Regional Plan and articulates a sectoral, transversal and regional vision. As referred to in the City Council's report, during the administrations of Bogotá Mayor Luis Eduardo Garzón and the Governor of Cundinamarca Pablo Ardila, the following projects were managed: bilingual region, tourist region, attractive region, mega agro-industrial project, regional agenda of services and enterprising region.

Of course, this whole process has had an effect on the planning carried out by the city's and department's administrations. Little by little, the Development Plans began incorporating this vision of international integration mainly related to issues of competitiveness and economic development. According to the City Council, in "the period 2001-2007 a component of regional integration in all spatial areas –urban-regional, urban-rural, national and international– was incorporated into the objectives of the city's economic policy"[33]

According to the report, the Development Plan of the administration of Antanas Mockus sought to institutionalise interregional and international relations, and in the period of Luis Eduardo Garzón "taking advantage of the opportunities of the creative integration into the international community" was defined as one of the Plan's seven strategies".[34]

6.2. The vision of Bogotá's Development Plan (2008-2012)

The Development Plan approved by the Municipality of Bogotá on 9 June 2008 established as one of its *structuring objectives* the 'global city', understood as being a city that is "reliable, capable of placing economic growth at the service of human development (…) a city with

[22] | *Concept developed by S. Boisier. It is understood as a structurally complex territory. The complexity relates to the variety of subsystems that can be independently recognised as forming part of the whole (regional) system; the hierarchy or decision-making capacity shown by these subsystems; the proportion of non-lineal articulations present in the system, and the recursivity present in the system. See Boisier Sergio, 'El desafío territorial de la globalización. Reflexiones acerca del sistema regional chileno'. Document 95/15. ECLAC, Office of Regional Policies and Planning. P. 4-5.*

[23] | *The pivotal region is an "organised territory that contains and expresses a culture, capable, in turn, of generating identity and, consequently, capable of virtuously balancing the society/territory equation". See Boisier 'El desafío territorial de la globalización. Reflexiones acerca del sistema regional chileno' P. 5.*

[24] | *The associative region is present when pivotal regions form other larger ones by voluntarily uniting with adjacent units. These associations are usually formed through tacit agreements between the organised territories themselves or with similar regions. See Boisier Sergio, 'Posmodernismo territorial y globalización: regiones pivotales y regiones virtuales', in the journal Ciudad y territorio. Estudios Territoriales. (Vol. II, no. 102). Madrid.*

[25] | *Bogotá City Council has identified the following studies: Study Fase II (BIRF-PNUD-DAPD (1974); the studies Misión Bogotá Siglo XXI (1990-1992), the Transport Master Plan drafted by the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) in 1996, 'Bogotá-Sabana ¿Un territorio posible', University of the Andes and Bogotá Chamber of Commerce, among others. See Bogotá D.C. City Council, Planning Secretariat, 'Balance de la Política de integración regional e internacional de Bogotá 2001-2007', Bogotá, January 2008, p. 16-17.*

[26] | *Bogotá D.C. City Council, Planning Secretariat, 'Balance de la Política de integración regional e internacional de Bogotá 2001-2007', Bogotá, January 2008, p. 17.*

[27] | *Idem.*

[28] | *Bogotá D.C. City Council, Planning Secretariat, 'Balance de la Política de integración regional e internacional de Bogotá 2001-2007', Bogotá, January 2008, p. 22*

[29] | *Idem.*

[30] | *Concept developed by Scott (1998) and inspired by the idea of worldwide cities proposed by Hall (1996) and by the notion of a global city developed by Saskia Sassen (1991). See Bogotá D.C. City Council, Planning Secretariat, 'Balance de la Política de integración regional e internacional de Bogotá 2001-2007', Bogotá, January 2008, p. 26.*

[31] | *Bogotá D.C. City Council, Planning Secretariat, 'Balance de la Política de integración regional e internacional de Bogotá 2001-2007', Bogotá, January 2008, p. 26-28.*

[32] | *Bogotá D.C. City Council, Planning Secretariat, 'Balance de la Política de integración regional e internacional de Bogotá 2001-2007', Bogotá, January 2008, p. 42.*

[33] | *Bogotá D.C. City Council, Planning Secretariat, 'Balance de la Política de integración regional e internacional de Bogotá 2001-2007', Bogotá, January 2008, p. 42*

[34] | *Bogotá D.C. City Council, Planning Secretariat, 'Balance de la Política de integración regional e internacional de Bogotá 2001-2007', Bogotá, January 2008, p. 56.*

	Table 5 | Organisational structures for IC and international action set up in the latest periods of government in Bogotá City Council		
Years	**Administration**	**Type of organisational structure**	**Functions or issues covered by the section**

1998	Antanas Mockus	Consultancy for the Nation and International Relations	Managing the city's international affairs
			Three strategies: - International agenda
			    - City promotion
			    - International cooperation

2001 2002	Antanas Mockus	Consultancy – Department Region and Competitiveness Part of the Mayor's Office	- Tasks associated with cooperation: identifying issues and strategic partners (agencies, regions, cities and private sector) - Coordinating actions to achieve greater participation by the city in the processes of international cooperation
2003	Antanas Mockus	Consultancy of Region and Competitiveness Part of the Administrative District Planning Department	Apoyar y asesorar en el ámbito internacional la participación en las redes de ciudades y la coordinación de los acuerdos bilaterales de hermanamiento con ciudades estratégicas.
2006	Luis Eduardo Garzón	Competences assigned to the District Planning Secretariat (SDP) Agreement 257 of 2006	Supporting and advising in the international sphere on participation in networks of cities and on the coordination of bilateral twinning agreements with strategic cities
2006	Luis Eduardo Garzón	Competences assigned to the Socio-economic Planning Sub-secretariat (SDP) Decree 550 of 2006 Regional and International Integration Directorate (DIRNI)	Coordinating and articulating district and international cooperation managed by organisations and entities in the Capital District
2008	Samuel Moreno Rojas	District Directorate of International Affairs Part of the General Secretariat Decree 163 of June 2008	Directing the design of the Capital District's regional integration and IC policies Coordinating and organising Bogotá's participation in different international networks of cities promoting decentralised cooperation. Maintaining bilateral relations between Bogotá and other cities in the world Designing and promoting policies and strategies leading towards strengthening Bogotá's international relations with other cities, countries and organisations in the international arena Establishing relations with different international actors, citizens of Bogotá resident abroad, different cities in the world, multilateral and bilateral organisations and other international entities Promoting and channelling Bogotá D.C.'s international relations policy Design and promote , together with the entities in the Capital District, the strategy for promoting and projecting the city's image in the world Monitor the international trends of cities, regions and nations to enable the District Administration to define public policies with a strategic perspective in the context of globalisation. (only some functions are shown)

Source: Olaya, Sandra. Taken from information in the following institutional documents: Bogotá D.C. City Council, Planning Secretariat, 'Balance de la Política de integración regional e internacional de Bogotá 2001-2007', Bogotá, January 2008, p. 119; Bogotá City Council, 'Estrategia de Cooperación Internacional de Bogotá, Distrito Capital-ECI', 2008, p. 35; and Bogotá City Council, Planning Secretariat 'Herramientas y procesos para ofrecer cooperación', Collection no. 2, 2008, p. 7.

the ability to think and act both globally and locally"[35]. As previously mentioned, this Plan presents an explicit vision of internationalisation and international cooperation.

With regard to its vision of internationalisation, in addition to issues related to competitiveness, it established programmes to strengthen Bogotá's international presence; to create a network of citizens from Bogotá living abroad and to implement a programme that would enable members of the population of working age to become certified in the English language. In turn, the vision of cooperation focused precisely on strengthening the strategy of decentralised international cooperation, promoting networks of cities in the world and identifying projects and programmes of a bilateral and multilateral nature to achieve greater levels of execution and financing of the plan.[36]

6.3.Development of Bogotá's organisational and management structure

The city has gone through various organisational alternatives to respond to the dynamics of international action and international cooperation. It has tried formulas ranging from consultancy, assigned to different areas of the City Council; the later allocation of competences to the District Planning Secretariat and finally, the creation of an Office of International Affairs in the framework of the General Secretariat of the current administration. With all this, we can clearly see the concern about providing coherent management of international affairs and managing resources using their different methods. (*See table 5*)

This information allows us to identify various aspects of the process of institutionalising the city's international action and cooperation. Firstly, we find a sustained effort, at least in the last administrations, towards adapting the institution and the processes to international work. As pointed out by Zapata (2007:49), "this means allocating responsibilities, tasks and authority for decision-making processes". In that regard, the city has found itself in a continuous process of reflection about its ability to respond to the requests for and offers of cooperation and the transversal nature of the processes in accordance with the territorial demands.

In fact, as has been observed, Decree 163 of 2008 created the Directorate of International Affairs and, along with it, a series of competences and functions that should be articulated with the Regional and International Integration Directorate (DIRNI). In virtue of this, the Inter-Institutional Committee for International Cooperation (CICI) was set up, composed of these two entities and the District Finance Secretariat. The aim of the CICI is "to guarantee the processes of accessing and offering international cooperation in order to implement district policies and strategies"[37]

Via this coordination body the administration's entities work together to define the action framework for international cooperation, to guide other district entities and organisations in formulating

[35] Bogotá City Council, 'Plan de Desarrollo: Bogotá Positiva: Para vivir mejor, 2008-2011'.

[36] Idem.

[37] Bogotá City Council, 'Estrategia de Cooperación Internacional de Bogotá, Distrito Capital-ECI', p. 38.

[38] Idem.

[39] The following processes have been created: 1. District process for accessing sources of international cooperation and 2. Process for offering cooperation, with its procedures and routes. See Bogotá City Council, 'Estrategia de Cooperación Internacional de Bogotá, Distrito Capital-ECI', p. 38.

proposals to present to international cooperation organisations, to design indicators and assess the impact of IC in Bogotá, among others.[38] In turn, processes and procedures[38] have been developed to manage international cooperation offers and requests. In this way, all the district entities know very clearly that they should channel their applications to IC agents through the CICI.

The progress made until now, such as the formulation of the International Cooperation Strategy (ICS) in 2007 and its later updating in 2008, reveals the importance that the search for this transversal international action has had, aiming to "prevent overloading or monopoly of foreign affairs by a single office; whatever the internal organisational structure, transnational actions will eventually be in the hands of the key local policy areas of the government.".[40]

In turn, the formulation of the strategy enabled the reaffirmation and consolidation of the processes promoted by the district administration. As indicated in the document, "the challenge we face today is to seek the ideal instruments and means to manage cooperation in the long-term and permanently, going beyond temporary cooperation that threatens to be of an isolated nature"[41]. In other words, the local government has gone beyond the approach of doing it for its own sake[42], conceiving a strategy that assesses both the external and internal context and identifies its local priorities,[43] in virtue of a vision anchored in territorial development.

Finally, it is appropriate to point out that the institutional adjustments carried out have enabled the continuity of the city's international action to be formalised and guaranteed as well as the management of decentralised cooperation as a commitment to the future. The criteria discussed by Zapata (2007:56) allow

the city's progress in this area to be identified. (See table 6)

6.4. Decentralised cooperation: the city's commitment

The new millennium awoke an explicit and programmatic interest in the city for strengthening links, participating in networks and exchanging experiences with its counterparts around the world. In this decade more intense activity is being generated around signing pacts and agreements with other cities and initiating the city's participation in different networks which enable it to promote issues that enrich the accumulation of exchangeable experiences among its counterparts.

Nevertheless, Bogotá's approach to this type of cooperation dates back to the 1970s, from the signing of an agreement with the city of Miami with the aim of developing exchange and cooperation programmes in different fields. Later on we find some initiatives such as the agreements signed with Seoul in 1981, Rabat in 1988 and Caracas in 1998.[44]

As indicated in Bogotá City Council's report, these associations were not the product of a previous assessment or systematisation, but instead largely corresponded to situations connected with the development of cooperation in international relations and to policies in the short, medium and long term designed by the different district administrations[45]

Nevertheless, these isolated and temporary initiatives opened up the city's vision

Table 6	Current level of sustainability of Bogotá D.C.'s international relations.				
Criteria*	Incidental relations	Projects	Programmes	Integral strategy
Link with the Local Development Plan				Very high
Institutional commitment of the local government				Very high
Dedicated technical and financial resources				High**
Participation of local actors			Occasional	

*Only four of the six criteria proposed by Zapata (2008:56) have been taken.

Source: Olaya, Sandra. Taking Zapata (2008:56) as a reference for analysing the case of Bogotá D.C.

**The Multiannual Investment Plan 2008-2012, assigned a budget item to the 'Global City' structuring objective, to the total of 550,740 million pesos, equivalent to 2% of the available resources. From this amount, for the Programme corresponding to 'Competitive and International Bogotá' a total of 89,000 million pesos was assigned. See Bogotá City Council, 'Plan de Desarrollo: Bogotá Positiva: Para vivir mejor', 2008-2011. (Agreement no. 308 of 2008)

Table 7	Vision of decentralised cooperation defined by city	
Definitions of decentralised cooperation defined by city	
Decentralised cooperation	Development Assistance that is channelled by the autonomous administrations, i.e., through the governments of the regions, provinces or municipalities of the same country or different countries. This type of cooperation is linked to the appearance of other development aid actors, such as civil society, NGOs and the autonomous or decentralised entities of many countries that have taken up a preferential position as channelling agents for international cooperation.
Public decentralised cooperation (PDC)	Subdivision of Cooperation. 'Group of IC actions carried out or promoted by local and regional governments'. Channels via two routes: Direct: direct relationship between local and regional governments Indirect: actions presented by a NGO and funded by substate governments The ICS cites the EU-LA DCO in this definition.
Private decentralised cooperation	This arises with NGOs and businesses and provides an opportunity for its counterparts in receiving countries to join together (in the form of consortiums, temporary unions, etc.) to carry out projects that may be funded by a third party (city, state, multilateral organisation, company or international NGO).
Twinning	Agreements signed between two cities, municipalities or provinces in countries with common interests (…) seeking to define cooperation projects or activities that benefit both parties
Networks	Are associations of experts or cities that, by means of strategic alliances, exchange information, experiences or knowledge or carry out joint projects and coordinated actions and strategies for the parties.

Source: Table created by the author based on information taken from Bogotá City Council, 'Estrategia de Cooperación Internacional de Bogotá, Distrito Capital-ECI', p. 20; and Bogotá City Council, Planning Secretariat 'Herramientas y procesos para ofrecer cooperación'. Collection no. 2, 2008, p. 10.

40| Zapata (2007:49).

41| Bogotá City Council, 'Estrategia de Cooperación Internacional de Bogotá, Distrito Capital-ECI', p. 4.

42| Expression used by José Luis de Castro. See De Castro José Luis, Las regiones en las relaciones internacionales: los siguientes pasos. La Estrategia de acción exterior del Gobierno Vasco, 30 October 2006, p. 6.

43| See Zapata Garesché, (2007). Manual práctico para internacionalizar la ciudad. Guía para la acción exterior de los Gobiernos locales y la cooperación descentralizada. Unión Europea-América Latina. Volume 1, p. 32.

44| Bogotá D.C. City Council, Planning Secretariat, 'Balance de la Política de integración regional e internacional de Bogotá 2001-2007', Bogotá, January 2008, p. 121.

45| Bogotá D.C. City Council, Planning Secretariat, 'Balance de la Política de integración regional e internacional de Bogotá 2001-2007', Bogotá, January 2008, p. 124.

regarding the possibilities and opportunities for developing joint cooperation projects, exchanging experiences and promoting vital issues for the local government in international settings and forums. These approaches led the city to assume some roles that enabled it to become recognised as a new actor in international relations.

Currently, the city is making progress towards the strategic planning of a local public policy of international cooperation, taking the promotion of decentralised cooperation as its essential basis. This is how it was reflected in the updated ICS presented in 2008, which involved a participative consultation between the District's entities, organisations, localities and programmes as part of its construction. This exercise included an information gathering process in which each entity identified the priority strategic lines subject to international cooperation and worked towards identifying the good practices that each actor had systematised and organised to be offered as technical cooperation to other cities on a national or international level.[46]

Likewise, the ICS identified the basic concepts of this method of cooperation, twinning and networks, taking as a reference the contemporary discussions and contributions made by institutions that are experts in this matter. Later on, the Planning Secretariat contributed to the aim of clearly establishing the basic definitions, and published a book available to all entities that provides the tools and processes for offering cooperation. (See table 7)

This defining of concepts and later designing of the procedures for offering cooperation is a clear example of the leading role the city wants to assume in orienting both the design and execution of the different cooperation options, whether direct or indirect. In this

regard, the ICS clearly determines two fundamental aspects of its vision. Firstly, although decentralised cooperation is presented as one of the fundamentals of the strategy, it is a complementary method of this, considering the multiple possibilities offered by other cooperation alternatives.[47]

In turn, both the ICS document and the book of procedures establish that the same cooperation strategy is an important tool for the internationalisation of the city. So cooperation is presented as a means that therefore goes beyond the traditional visions of some cooperation managers.

Likewise, it is possible to say that the city has already taken some fundamental steps progressing towards specific actions in this area. Among these, it has already consolidated the 'theory' stage, which capitalises on the policy and the city's successful management experiences. The ICS was the first strategic planning exercise to be based on the priority thematic lines and transversal issues that had previously been agreed.[48] Finally, the city has made progress in the stage of the internal organisation of the local government, setting up the necessary organisational structure to respond to the phenomenon, including, as previously referenced, a manual of processes for the district actors.

Now the city must take on a series of challenges with regard to implementing and assessing this strategy. Firstly, as mentioned by Sanz (2008:88), with regard to the signing of agreements and twinnings it will be necessary to move ahead with formulas that enable the city to go beyond symbolic settlements and international courtesy, to constitute genuine cooperation framework-agreements, strategically designed according to the local priorities and situations of both municipalities and based on the principle of reciprocity and exchange with their counterparts.[49]

[46]| City Council of Bogotá, 'Estrategia de Cooperación Internacional de Bogotá, Distrito Capital-ECI', p. 15.

Table 8	Cooperation agreements, twinnings, July 2009					
Name of agreement	Type of agreement	Objective	Cooperating organisation	Date signed	Term
Autonomous Community of Madrid	Cooperation Framework Protocol	Identify the suitable areas for collaboration that contribute to the development of Bogotá	Regional Agency for Immigration and Cooperation of the Community of Madrid	22 July 2008	31 December 2012
Bilbao Metrópoli 30	Understanding Framework Agreement	Unite efforts to carry out and fulfil the objectives of the 4th City and Values Forum to be held in Bogotá D.C. on 29 and 30 September 2009	Association for the Revitalisation of Metropolitan Bilbao	31 March 2009	31 December 2009
Stuttgart	Twinning Agreement	Mutual commitment to local development and twinning and development cooperation	City of Stuttgart (Germany)	17 November 2008	
Montevideo	Cooperation Agreement	Reaffirm already existing cooperation, strengthen cultural and artistic relations, and initiate joint actions to promote tourism in Montevideo and Bogotá	Montevideo City Council	25 September 2008	2 years
Quito	Cooperation Agreement	Strengthen friendship bonds between the inhabitants of Bogotá and Quito and boost cooperation between the two cities in areas of mutual interest, especially in the transfer of best practices, social and productive innovation and academic and cultural exchange via joint actions between public and private sectors and academia	San Francisco de Quito (Republic of Ecuador)		4 years
Chicago	Twinning Agreement	This cooperation aimed to promote prosperity and develop friendship between the people of the two countries. Designate a committee or delegated staff to coordinate the visits and programmes	Ciudad de Chicago		

Source: Bogotá City Council, Office of International Affairs, 'Convenios de Cooperación, Hermanamientos', 2009.

[47]| The other fundamentals established in the ICS are: The promotion of South-South cooperation, the generation of information mechanisms that foster the articulation of the offer and demand, the co-responsibility and sustainability of its actions and the generation of incentives for private relief workers. See Bogotá City Council, 'Estrategia de Cooperación Internacional de Bogotá, Distrito Capital-ECI', p. 19.

[48]| The ICS sets the following strategic thematic lines: social development, institutional development, productive development and generation of revenue, environment, habitat and disaster prevention. With regards transversal issues it established: women and gender; science, technology and innovation, and culture. See Bogotá City Council, 'Estrategia de Cooperación Internacional de Bogotá, Distrito Capital-ECI', p. 24-25.

[49]| Sanz (2008:88)

As observed, until 2007 the agreements and twinnings carried out were established in virtue of provisional and even sporadic initiatives. In thirty years, six agreements were managed with cities in different parts of the world that do not enable one to distinguish a geostrategic vision of the territorial alliances. Neither is there clear information available about the results and evaluation processes of the management realised.

Currently, under the auspices of the Directorate of International Affairs, the city is signing and carrying out new agreements backed by the programmatic focal points of the ICS and the District Development Plan. In these agreements it is possible to find different elements that are progressing towards a new type of results-focused management. Some more specific agreements are observed, with implementation timescales that clearly determine the aim of decentralised cooperation. (See table 8)

In this regard, the recommendation is to work towards a strategic reflection on the selection of partners: with 'whom' shall we twin and 'why' (Sanz 2008:88). The ICS has made progress in selecting strategic lines but it is still necessary to go further in terms of both *requests* and offers to identify the strategic geographical zones or areas that enable the course of integration to be defined, i.e., the role of the city as a partner and as a leader in certain areas of the regional and international setting.

Secondly, with regard to its participation in networks of cities it is necessary to continue with the management being carried out by creating a lobby strategy which clearly determines the thematic elements that the city wants to promote in interna-

tional forums. The networks in particular are suitable spaces in which to establish contacts and possible cooperation agreements between cities. Moreover, they are also extremely interesting arenas for assuming leadership positions in that may be highly beneficial in terms of the level of promotion for the local territory.

The report presented by the city council in 2007 highlights the need to maintain continuity in the work and specifically identifies the absence of a strategic plan that prioritises the networks in which it should participate. It also draws attention, although this is an aspect already overcome by the creation of the Inter-Institutional Committee (CICI), to the need for greater coordination of the actions of the different entities responsible for this matter. Likewise, it is essential to continue considering internationalisation from a regional point of view, including the progress already achieved in the framework of the Bogotá-Cundinamarca Regional Planning Committee (MPRBC) and the Regional Competitiveness Council (CRBC). According to the warnings in the report, not adopting a model of a city integrated into the region could become a threat to Bogotá's process of integration.[50]

To conclude, we can affirm that the work carried out by the Capital District may soon become a successful experience to follow, not only by Colombian municipalities, but also by other local governments that want to finalise and clearly follow an internationalisation plan linked with territorial development. Although there are no recipes for integration, knowing about and assessing the experiences of those who have built successful processes is an excellent feedback mechanism.

50| *Bogotá D.C. City Council, Planning Secretariat, 'Balance de la Política de integración regional e internacional de Bogotá 2001-2007', Bogotá, January 2008, p. 137.*

7. Conclusions: Challenges and future expectations

The preceding analysis enables us to draw conclusions about various aspects of the rise of the phenomenon of decentralised cooperation in Colombia, the vision developed by the departmental territorial entities and the organisational response that has gradually been formed to deal with the management of cooperation in the country.

Generally speaking, it is necessary to make progress in constructing an interactive information system to promote learning about this type of cooperation. One of the main obstacles to learning about decentralised cooperation trends lies in obtaining aggregate statistics and systematised experiences that record the progress of this phenomenon in Colombia. Until now, the role of national entities and associations of departments and municipalities has been focused on fostering and promoting this type of cooperation, aiming to clarify concepts and sharing some experiences that have been gathered by different territorial entities.

It is natural that as yet there is no information system that permits the experiences to be systematised; nevertheless, we must move forward with constructing a pedagogical and functional tool that will allow us to learn about the specific characteristics of this phenomenon. The Colombian Observatory of International Policy (OPEC) has carried out a survey to be processed by each department and the capital cities. However, it has been necessary to support the data collection process with visits and direct work with the different public officials responsible for cooperation in the provincial governments and main city councils.

The role assumed by the Presidential Agency for Social Action and International Cooperation–Acción Social has been crucial for raising awareness and promoting decentralised cooperation. Holding annual meetings allows knowledge to be expanded and spaces of concertation between interested decentralised entities to be opened up. In this regard, the meetings have been held with the support of the strategic and vital entities for promoting this phenomenon, such as the Colombian Federation of Municipalities, the National Federation of Departments, the Medellín Investment and Cooperation Agency and the Colombian Association of NGOs.

Most of the Colombian departments consider international cooperation as an important instrument for supporting the different strategic lines, programmes and sub-programmes in their DDPs. However, the scope of the vision is determined by the depth of the planning processes. While some departments are in the phase of planning systems, strategies and agendas, others consider it necessary to dynamize their respective international cooperation committees or create management units with this aim. Finally, an important percentage of them do not develop specific activities in their respective Development Plans.

However, one of the relevant aspects that can be concluded, based on the departmental experiences presented, is that most of the territorial entities that have developed an explicit vision of internationalisation show a positive tendency towards developing strategies of decentralised international cooperation, seeking alliances and the exchange of experiences. This allows us to reaffirm that the vision of cooperation and internationalisation is mutually related in terms of the former serving as an instrument for the process of international integration and the latter

relating to the expectations of local development.

The departments continue specialising their organisational structures to respond to the dynamics of cooperation. Although most have set up a management unit or specific functions in their Planning Secretariats, the different organisational forms reveal positive and interesting results. The creation of offices responsible for international affairs is confirmed as a more complete vision that takes in the management of international cooperation as part of its functions. For its part, the specificity of managing decentralised cooperation is still minimal, most often standing out in Strategic Plans but not in management structures.

We can affirm that the Colombian departments are in the phase of strategically planning cooperation, a unique opportunity to include the management and promotion of projects using different methods, among them decentralised cooperation. The current situation demands more thorough discussion and the active role of the associations and entities interested in this issue, in order to expand the knowledge that local governments have in this regard.

The experience of Bogotá as Capital District may soon become an example of 'good practice' with regard to the management of decentralised cooperation in Colombia and for other interested local governments. The study makes this prediction in the light of the city's progress in terms of strategic planning, its efforts to establish an international structure in keeping with today's international needs, the development of processes that guide the district's entities in offering cooperation, and the regional vision that it has developed in its internationalisation process.

Finally, it is hoped that the method of decentralised cooperation is strengthened as a practice among the territorial governments. However, as mentioned, it is necessary for the strategic plans to further develop not only priority lines but also strategic zones both for requesting and for offering cooperation. Likewise, it is necessary to continue the reflection exercise on the evolution of the concept of international cooperation. Although the territorial entities are making progress on this, it is still possible to find visions anchored in the traditional vision of cooperation, of an 'aid-oriented' nature and that favours verticals relations.