

# 05

Methodological guides  
URB-AL III

How can local institutions  
cooperate with each other?  
From specific projects  
to strengthening local  
public policies



**urb-al III**  
Orientation and Coordination Office - OCO



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From specific projects to strengthening local public policies

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## Prologue

The URB-AL III Programme Orientation and Coordination Office (OCO) is pleased to present a collection of methodological guides which are the result of work and exchanges with various projects and the lessons learned over the course of running the programme. These guides cover a wide range of topics such as: monitoring, evaluating and communicating projects, the construction of local public policies (LPPs) in Latin America, the effect these policies have on social cohesion and the definition of city strategies that incorporate a vision of social cohesion.

This guide, *How can local institutions cooperate with each other? From specific projects to strengthening local public policies*, has been written with the aim of providing sub-national governments with a tool that will help them generate and guide international cooperation projects that have an impact on public policies. During the course of the URB-AL III Programme, the OCO has made a special effort to support projects that promote local public policies designed to improve social cohesion in their territories through approved interventions. To do this, it has designed and implemented its own methodology, which was put into practice in all of the 74 territories running actions financed by the URB-AL III Programme. As a result of this work, carried out jointly by the OCO and the projects, an innovative experience of strengthening and creating public policies based on decentralised cooperation projects has been put into practice.

After witnessing the creation, consolidation and/or strengthening of more than 150 public policies in Latin America through the implementation of the programme, it was felt that it would be very useful to produce this guide so that the process could also be applied in other programmes or projects that aim to influence local public policies.

This guide is part of the new trend in decentralised cooperation, in which cooperation aims to be more horizontal and based on a relationship among equals and where the actors' own specific nature brings meaning and added value to the relationships formed among them. Thus, local governments' capacity to implement public policies is precisely what the programme aims to strengthen, thereby improving the local management of the territories and helping increase the wellbeing of their populations.

With this goal in mind, and in the knowledge that projects are still the central instrument in today's international cooperation, this guide focuses on attempting to respond to the following question: how can specific projects be leveraged to support public policies and institutional strengthening?

The guide reviews the key principles of decentralised cooperation focused on public policies in a very didactic way, with the aim of offering guidelines for designing, implementing and evaluating an international development cooperation intervention with this focus. In addition, a series of tools and practical examples

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are provided to help take advantage of specific projects already underway in order to consolidate public policies through institutional strengthening and improving local governance. In other words, this guide explains how to leverage an existing project to move in the proposed direction.

Finally, the guide highlights the specific nature of decentralised cooperation as a necessary and complementary method of bilateral and multilateral cooperation. The objectives, instruments and methods it offers enable more symmetrical forms of cooperation to be developed, in which reciprocity and mutual learning become the central element of interaction between local governments.

Here at the OCO, we hope you enjoy reading and applying the guidelines offered in this guide, and that it becomes a working tool for local governments that want to participate in decentralised cooperation relations.

Jordi Castells  
Director of International Relations at Diputació de Barcelona and General Coordinator of the URB-AL III Programme Orientation and Coordination Office

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# Introduction to the guide

## Background

As the managing body of the projects approved by the European Union in the framework of the URB-AL III Programme,<sup>1</sup> the URB-AL III Programme Orientation and Coordination Office (OCO) has attempted to highlight the role of these projects in local public policies (LPPs) and their contribution to social cohesion in the territories covered.

To carry out this task, the OCO has developed its own methodology, tailored to the situation it manages (decentralised cooperation projects) and its objective (demonstrate the contribution the projects have made to social cohesion through the corresponding LPPs). This methodology involves two steps:

/ Step 1: Assessing the projects' contribution to promoting and/or consolidating LPPs.

/ Step 2: Evaluating how these LPPs are designed to generate and contribute to greater social cohesion.

By applying step 1 to all the URB-AL III projects, the OCO has gained a great deal of experience of the relationship between specific projects and LPPs.

Therefore, the idea now is to capitalise on and disseminate this experience through the present guide, which should serve local governments as a practical tool for stimulating and improving the international cooperation they carry out among themselves.

## General approach and content of the guide

This guide has been conceived as a practical and didactic document, designed to help local governments develop international cooperation with each other that aims to strengthen local public institutions and improve the LPPs they implement.

As projects are the instrument that has traditionally been the central method of international cooperation, this guide focuses specifically on the following question: how can specific projects be leveraged to support LPPs and institutional strengthening?

To provide the elements needed to respond to this central question, the guide is divided into six chapters which discuss the following matters:

1. An overview of LPPs and current decentralised cooperation.
2. The guiding principles of local cooperation focused on supporting and improving LPPs.

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<sup>1</sup> URB-AL III is a non-refundable decentralised cooperation programme run by the European Commission and made up of 20 projects, with a direct impact on 75 territories. [http://www.urb-al3.eu/index.php/contenido/urb\\_al\\_iii\\_2009\\_2012\\_nuevos\\_retos?id\\_submenu\\_principal=36](http://www.urb-al3.eu/index.php/contenido/urb_al_iii_2009_2012_nuevos_retos?id_submenu_principal=36)

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3. Practical guidelines for designing cooperation projects specifically aimed at strengthening LPPs.

4. Taking advantage of existing specific projects to help consolidate LPPs by strengthening the local institution.

5. Taking advantage of existing specific projects to help consolidate LPPs by improving local governance.

6. Final considerations on specificity and reciprocity in cooperation between local governments.

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# 1. Local public policies and current decentralised cooperation: an overview

This first chapter of the guide aims to respond to the following questions:

1. What is a public policy (PP) in general? What are the specific features of a local public policy (LPP)?
2. How is a LPP built? What are the institutional and governance conditions that enable and help a local government to create and implement its LPPs?
3. How have local governments cooperated until now? What have the motives, objectives and instruments of decentralised cooperation been?
4. Why have specific projects been the most commonly used instrument in this field, and what are the limitations of this method of cooperation?
5. Why do we need a new form of cooperation aimed at strengthening LPPs?

## 1.1. What is a LPP?

As a point of departure, this section attempts to explain exactly what is meant by a LPP. Rather than provide a theoretical definition of this term, the aim is to clearly identify the key points of these policies and show what this concept means and involves for a local government.

Thus, we begin with the general concept of a public policy (PP) and then move on to discuss local public policies (LPP).

### 1.1.1. Public policies<sup>2</sup> in general: definition and key points

To explain the term PP that we will use throughout this guide, it is worth making a prior observation. As Francesco Chiodi points out: “In Spanish, we use the same word *-política-* to indicate what in English would be either *policy* or *politics*. The first word designates the actions a government takes to address matters of public interest (health policy, education reform, urban redevelopment plan, programme to promote social tourism in the region, etc.); while the second, in contrast, refers to the battle for power, political forces, parties, etc. In this guide, which was originally written in Spanish, the word *política* has been used in the sense of policy”.

From this perspective, a public policy could be defined in simple terms as: “A series of coordinated and planned actions by a public institution designed to resolve a negative situation, or improve an existing situation, which affects all or part of the local population and which

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2 This section has been considerably enriched by contributions from Francesco Chiodi, author of the guide *Identifying public policies' contributions to social cohesion*.

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therefore aims to achieve an objective set in the government agenda as one of its strategic components. These actions must be carried out by the local public institution itself or at least be led by it, with the participation and collaboration of other actors”.

To add a little more detail to this first definition, it could be said that public policies are an integral part of strategies led by public institutions and administrations that are designed to achieve specific goals and results using a number of resources (human, financial and material) to act on a particular structural or temporary situation (infrastructure, health, families, housing, employment, professional training, research, civil service, crisis, deficit), with the aim of achieving a series of previously agreed objectives (equality, justice, public health, social welfare, reduction of budget deficit, etc.), and which is evaluated on the basis of the quality and timeliness of the public intervention.

Beyond the formal definitions, it is important to highlight the key points that characterise a PP. These elements could be summarised as follows:

/ Firstly, it must be underlined that every PP expresses the intention to make a change, which means that it aims to generate a process of transformation from the current situation –considered as problematic or improvable– to a desired situation of greater quality.

This makes a PP a complex process, with technical and organisational components and dimensions, but also with political, social and citizen aspects that must not be overlooked.

/ Secondly, it is important to bear in mind that a PP is designed to tackle an issue of public interest, i.e., a problem of recognised social importance that warrants the intervention of the authorities. Policies are not drawn up or implemented to address transient or trivial matters, or to deal with issues on which public intervention would be neither desirable nor pertinent. It is necessary for society, through its mechanisms for representation and decision-making, to recognise that what is at stake is a matter affecting everyone which should be addressed with criteria and values in the public interest, thereby justifying the public institution’s leadership of and central role in the corresponding actions.

This second element is the basis of the legitimacy that justifies the specific and irreplaceable role of public actors in a PP.

/ A third important aspect is the public institution’s reference to the government’s strategy. A PP is really an act of government which falls within the framework of the institution’s strategic decision-making and planning. Thus, it should explicitly appear on the ‘government agenda’ as one of the priority areas the government has decided to act on.

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The central idea, in this case, is that a PP is the manifestation of a clear political will of the local government. Therefore, it forms part of the series of decisions and prioritisations that make up the public institution's strategic planning.<sup>3</sup>

/ A fourth point to stress is that a PP is conceived as an organised series of actions that implies and demands the institutional capacity to define and prioritise objectives, plan the activities, coordinate the resources and articulate all the agents and actors involved in it.

On this point, the emphasis is clearly on institutional capacity and the efficacy of public action, and the need to have the technical resources necessary to guarantee the policies.

/ Finally, it should be mentioned that a PP also needs a system of monitoring,

evaluating and disseminating the results, as it basically involves public funds being spent to achieve a specific goal, and it is necessary to be able to verify that this money has been used correctly.

In this fifth and final key feature of a PP, the stress is on transparency in public management and accountability to citizens.

An important point to underline is that a public policy is never static, as it falls within a dynamic marked by the constant social and political changes in local society. The needs of the different social groups can vary, as can the perception of urgency and consensus on the priorities. Furthermore, the political and institutional framework may be altered which requires PPs to have a great capacity for transformation and adaptation. As Aaron Wildavsky said, "all policies aspire to objectives that are constantly in motion. When we reach the point we want, the situation, the social demands, drive us on to continue acting", and we could add that public authorities should therefore be capable of proposing and agreeing new ways to create and launch other instruments. This is the origin of the opinion that PPs should be seen as complex social and political processes, with a medium and long-term scope.

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3 To clarify what is understood in this case as a government agenda, the following definition may be useful: "A government agenda, in turn, reflects the problems, demands, questions and affairs that government leaders have selected and prioritised as areas of action and more specifically as issues they have decided to act on. The issues that public policies address, among other characteristics, focus attention and interest and mobilise other actors in society. It includes, therefore, the central questions in the *public agenda*, formed of all the issues that the members of a political community commonly perceive as deserving public attention and as matters that fall within the legitimate jurisdiction of the existing government authority, in other words, which form part of what is considered as the institution's area of competence". (Page 30 of the *OCO Monitoring Guide*.)

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### 1.1.2. Local public policies: specific features

In the previous section we identified the general features of what has been understood since the mid-twentieth century as a 'public policy'. It is worth remembering that this concept has developed in a historical context in which central states held a virtual monopoly on the definition and execution of public strategies. For this reason, the term 'public policy' is generally associated with the figure of the central State. In this context, the local authorities' role could be to execute a public policy –when responsible for the local implementation of a policy that was defined in the capital–, but they were not afforded the right to create their own public policies.<sup>4</sup>

More recently, diverse phenomena such as globalisation, the crisis of the Nation-State, policies of decentralisation or strengthening civil society and citizenship have profoundly transformed the role and function of local governments. These have emerged today as actors on the international stage and also as promoters of territorial development, managers of basic public services and guarantors of quality of life and local social cohesion. Therefore, local governments are increasingly being

recognised as political actors that can exercise a certain amount of local autonomy and define and implement their own public policies to address the social demands and economic challenges they are facing.

In this new context, by speaking about local public policies we are emphasising the policies that the local government defines and implements as an autonomous and responsible political actor. Thus, local PPs have all the attributes listed above for PPs in general, but they also have some specific features of their own that are worth mentioning.

In particular, we would highlight three central aspects that hold much greater importance in LPPs than in State-wide public policies: citizen participation, coordination with local actors and collaboration with other levels of the public Administration.

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4 "Políticas públicas y cohesión social. Factores territoriales y gobiernos locales", Joan Subirats (URB-AL III, October 2010), [http://www.urb-al3.eu/uploads/documentos/PPLYCS\\_Subirats.pdf](http://www.urb-al3.eu/uploads/documentos/PPLYCS_Subirats.pdf)



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### ***A. Citizen participation***

Compared with the State arena, the local level is characterised by greater proximity between the local government and the citizens it serves. It is generally considered that the local institution is the closest level to citizens and the one that receives their demands and pressure at first hand. In fact, this proximity between the local government, civil society and citizens means that LPPs cannot be 'decreed' by the local government, but instead require greater legitimacy and broad consensus in civil society (organised or not) and among citizens in general. The local government, aware that in the next elections its performance will be evaluated by the population, usually seeks the greatest possible consensus with representatives of civil society and the organisations or bodies that have a recognised capacity for mobilisation and advocacy.

For this reason, the definition, execution and monitoring of LPPs are usually very closely linked to the activation of existing participation processes (in the case of municipalities that already have an established system of citizen participation with different types of advisory councils), or to the creation of ad hoc mechanisms for consultation and consensus, as we will see in greater detail later on.

### ***B. Public-private coordination and cooperation with other local actors***

The fact that LPPs concern the local society and directly affect the local economic and social fabric means that the

local actors feel directly involved and can also intervene, positively or negatively, in the local public institution's projects and programmes. In this territorial approach, an important requirement for the success of LPPs is that those responsible for them know how to connect with the other local actors and obtain a high level of cooperation with them. For this reason, building LPPs usually involves reflecting on how to establish and guarantee good public-private coordination, and on interesting experiences of cooperation among the municipal institution, publicly owned corporations (when they exist), private companies, producers associations, union representatives and, generally, the local economic and social actors willing to collaborate with the city council to create and manage LPPs.

### ***C. Coordination with other levels of the Administration***

If we compare LPPs with State public policies we find that local policies also have the specific characteristic of often being considerably more complex –as they have to involve other public and private actors– and of needing a series of actions and financial resources provided by various levels of the Administration: provincial, regional or State, in addition to municipal. Many LPPs are built in this way, combining State or regional programmes with local government actions, while trying to bear the specific local characteristics in mind, but at the same time taking maximum advantage of external contributions.

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It could be said that local governments' position in the institutional network –which until now has been relatively 'subordinate'–, as well as the chronic shortage of local financial resources, forces them to constantly seek new formulas for multi-level coordination and co-financing mechanisms to be able to carry out their LPPs.

We should stress that local authorities' role in this institutional dialogue will depend on established formal aspects –such as the scope of their legally recognised competences–, but also on informal aspects like their capacity for initiative, promotion and institutional communication, and the legitimising force that comes from strong links with citizens and organised civil society.

For all these reasons, LPPs, more than State-level public policies, are defined by the demands of real citizen participation, the construction of a participative democracy, collaboration among the territory's different actors and the consolidation of mechanisms of multi-level governance.

## 1.2. How is a LPP built?

At this point, we are now in a position to understand how a LPP is built and generated. This process generally involves a series of successive stages, among which we would highlight the following:

1. Identifying a negative or unsatisfactory situation concerning or affecting all or part of the local population (or an area in which the present situation could be improved).
2. Recognising that this is a collective and public matter, and that it requires an effective intervention (or response) from the local public institution. This point guarantees, as mentioned earlier, the legitimacy of the public institution's direct involvement in the public interest.
3. Activating mechanisms for citizen participation and collaborating and consulting with other actors, and possibly promoting a public and citizens' debate with the aim of generating a certain consensus on the way to approach this issue and the role of the different agents.
4. Including this issue on the local institution's 'government agenda', i.e., recognising that it is an important matter and should be one of the local government's priorities. This point assumes that the local institution has the power to tackle this issue or that it decides to intervene in this matter even though it does not formally fall within its official area of competence.

5. Creating a strategy for tackling the problem or improving the situation. This can be done individually (formulating a specific LPP) or in the framework of a wider (integrated) process of strategic planning, taking all of the local institution's LPPs into account.

6. In the launch or implementation period, using existing systems of citizen participation, collaborating with other local actors and coordinating with other levels of the Administration, or setting up the necessary mechanisms to do this.

7. Planning the corresponding actions, deciding which agents will be involved (public and private), setting the objectives, identifying the human, financial and material resources needed, the specific results to be achieved and the timeframe of the various actions.

8. Implementing the planned actions, mobilising the capacities of the local institution and the other agents involved.

9. Monitoring and evaluating the interventions carried out, with the aim of improving the LPP applied. The matter of participation by citizens and other actors arises once again in this phase. Thus, it is important to focus on disseminating the results, communicating with and being accountable to the population.

In addition to the above, and to clarify the meaning of certain terms and illustrate particular aspects of LPPs, we could consider the following complementary definitions extracted from the *OCO Guide to Monitoring Projects*:

<p>The concept of the policy</p>	<p><b>Concept of the policy:</b> this expression refers to the principles and foundations underlying the policy. The concept or foundation of a policy is based on an analysis of the situation and its interpretation on the basis of values and convictions.</p> <p>For example, the concept of a policy on work-life balance could be based on principles such as the following: (a) women's right to fulfilment through work; (b) verifying the objective difficulty families have in dedicating time and energy to their children when they are absorbed, for many hours each day, in their working activities; (c) the State's obligation to safeguard people's welfare and, therefore, to reduce the difficulty families face when trying to balance their work and family lives; (d) low rates of employment among the female population, leading to a failure to take advantage of one of the territory's important sources of wealth (as employment creates wealth); (e) the conviction that a healthy balance between work commitments and family life (relationships between couples, living with and educating children, etc.) brings important benefits in terms of labour productivity and raising healthy children.</p> <p>Based on diagnoses, assumptions, values and foundations, the policy defines its objectives. For example, in the case referred to, reducing the difficulty of balancing work and family life, while promoting women's employment.</p>
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<b>The strategy</b>	<p><b>Strategy of the policy:</b> the aim of the strategy is to achieve the objectives set by the policy using the best possible means available or those that have been chosen from several options. The strategy, therefore, refers to how things will be done and the instruments to be implemented to direct the matter until the goal is reached.</p> <p>In the previous example, a policy strategy could be summarised and broken down in the following way: (a) introduction of flexible working systems so that women can work less hours without a serious cut in salary or so that they can also work from home; (b) creation of financial incentives for companies to promote flexibility and help women access nursery schools close to their place of work; (c) increase the number of child-care services; (d) promote a culture of co-responsibility between men and women for educating their children.</p>
<b>The instruments</b>	<p><b>Policy instruments:</b> refers to services, measures and programmes put in place or reinforced in line with the strategic decisions adopted.</p> <p>Continuing with the same example, the instruments could be: (a) introduction of flexible working mechanisms = reinforcing or creating new types of contract such as teleworking or part-time; (b) creation of financial incentives for companies = creating a line of subsidies for businesses; (c) increase the number of child-care services = investment plan to increase the public and private nursery schools/crèches on offer; (d) promote a culture of co-responsibility between men and women = communication campaign aimed at changing gender stereotypes related to working women.</p>
<b>The results</b>	<p><b>Specific results of the policy:</b> the results of a policy are what is left or produced by its implementation.</p> <p>For example, a result could be greater collaboration by the male population in household chores; another result could be an increase in demand from women who want to benefit from new types of flexible working contracts. In this case, a project could contribute, for example, by carrying out a communication campaign, training the educators in new nursery schools, creating a dissemination plan among the companies in the territory to promote the measures proposed by the policy, etc.</p>

### 1.3. What does a local institution need to develop good LPPs? Conditions and prerequisites

Now, if we turn to the prerequisites and essential elements for a local public institution to be able to create and implement good LPPs, the following stand out in particular, and could be grouped into three large 'blocks', corresponding to: (1) the local public institution's determination in political terms, (2) its technical and organisational capacity, and (3) the quality of local governance.

#### *A. Political determination of the local government*

The first (and fundamental) requisite is that the local government is determined to address the populations' problems and the needs of the territory through a series of LPPs, as we have described. This involves three key elements in particular:

/ The clear political will of the government to face and resolve the problems, overcoming the possible resistance of certain actors or sectors of the population.

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/ The capacity to prioritise the issues in political terms and build a genuine government agenda.

/ The will to mobilise all the institution's capacities to support the LPPs, in a comprehensive and cross-sectoral manner.

***B. The local institution's technical capacity***

The second block of prerequisites refers to the local institution's technical capacity, which could be detailed in the following way:

/ Capacity to detect collective problems and identify possible areas for improvement using social needs information systems, observatories, think tanks and other instruments.

/ Strategic planning capacity, which involves establishing a culture and practice of conducting diagnoses, periodically reviewing the problems to be addressed, prioritising these problems, creating strategies, defining guidelines and strategic focal points, etc.

/ Institutional structures adapted to tackle fairly complex and generally multi-sector problems.

/ Operational planning capacity.

/ Availability of the human and material resources needed to implement the LPP.

/ Existence of monitoring and evaluation systems, dissemination channels and accountability structures.

/ Financial and revenue capacity to be able to assume the cost of the policies.

All of this constitutes the technical and administrative structure necessary for a local institution to be able to create and develop good LPPs.

***C. Participative culture and quality of local governance***

The quality of the LPP does not only correspond to the political will of the local government and its technical capacity. The creation and implementation of a good LPP also requires, as mentioned in chapter 1, the local government to have constructed a system of participative multi-actor and multi-level local governance and, in particular, to have operational tools and solid experience in the areas of:

/ Citizen participation.

/ Coordination and collaboration with other social and economic stakeholders in the territory, under the leadership of the local institution.

/ Coordination desirable with other institutional levels.

As we will see later on in chapter 3, identifying these three blocks of conditions and prerequisites helps us determine how and where cooperation among local governments could have an impact. It is important to bear in mind that this guide has been written for local governments that want to

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activate and improve their international cooperation with the principal objective of strengthening LPPs.

Cooperation of this type could, for example, attempt to have an impact on the second and third blocks, i.e., on the area of institutional technical capacity and on local governance conditions. The first block, focused on the political will of the local government, would be hard to consider as a goal of cooperation and is, instead, a necessary condition for this to develop in the first place.

Keeping this general presentation of LPPs in mind, we now dedicate the rest of the chapter to reviewing how local governments have cooperated until now and indicate the path they need to follow so that decentralised cooperation can become an instrument for consolidating LPPs and institutional strengthening.

## **1.4. Cooperation between local governments: methods and instruments**

### **1.4.1. The 'traditional' method of cooperation: the specific project**

The most commonly used method of international cooperation has traditionally been to define specific projects designed to cover needs or improve specific aspects, but not focused on consolidating LPPs or on institutional strengthening.

This concept of cooperation has tended to be accompanied by a strong asymmetry between the actors involved in it, as it clearly distinguishes between the party providing the resources (known as the 'donor') and the party receiving these resources (known as the 'counterpart' or 'receiving' cooperation partner).

This section provides a brief outline of some of the limitations and shortcomings of these isolated projects and, more generally, of this concept of cooperation. In particular, we could highlight some clearly limiting points, such as, for example:

/ Specific isolated projects are instruments generally geared towards achieving specific tangible results but, in contrast, they are poorly suited to instigating or supporting social processes and changes, strengthening institutions or improving conditions of governance.

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/ These projects depend more heavily on external intervention and financing than on an endogenous dynamic, and do not in themselves establish conditions of sustainability in the medium or long term.

/ One-off actions of this type usually create differences (between the ‘beneficiaries’ and the rest of the population) and generate compartmentalised systems for maintaining the benefits of the projects. They do not guarantee lasting improvements to public services or coverage of basic social needs under public interest criteria.

/ The project is often designed, in this case, as an isolated and compartmentalised action, which functions separately to the rest of the ‘receiving’ institution. It has its own objectives, resources, budget, calendar, rules and monitoring and evaluation systems which, generally speaking, are not integrated into local development instruments and mechanisms.

/ In the process of identifying, selecting and executing these types of projects, the actors taking the decisions are usually the two local governments –the ‘donor’ and the ‘receiving’ partner– and the participation of civil society and citizens’ organisations is either non-existent or usually considered as an element of justification and legitimisation only after the project has been agreed from above.

/ On the part of the ‘receiving’ institution, specific projects are often considered as simple sources of resources and complementary funding, rather than as instruments for institutional improvement.

We could develop this critical analysis further, but the points provided above are a sufficient introduction to the following section.

#### **1.4.2. The differences between a specific project and a public policy**

Comparing the characteristics of a specific project with the key features of local public policies that have been mentioned above, the differences are clearly visible. The following table summarises some of them.

The analysis should be refined a little more to avoid falling into a simplistic dichotomy that would oppose the terms ‘project’ and ‘policy’ too sharply and present them as incompatible. In fact, looking at the table it is clear that a specific project cannot claim to be a public policy, but one should bear in mind that a public policy could easily be translated into a series of different projects, if that is what is called for given the nature of the problem to be resolved.

Aspects	Specific project	Public policy
Genesis and decision-making process	Generally, decisions regarding the content and financing of a specific project are made by the local government's leaders, without the involvement of a participative process.	The creation and launch of a public policy are part of the established processes of local democracy, and require public information and the participation of opposition political groups, members of advisory councils and other local stakeholders.
Main objective	To resolve some of the specific needs of a group of beneficiaries or cover a particular need the local institution has.	Provide a sustainable response to a problem that affects a group or the general population.
Time horizon	The project has a very limited timeframe, usually between one and three years.	The time horizon of a public policy is usually medium or long term, with possible reviews depending on the rhythm of the political changes within the government.
Origin of resources	The project usually has a large proportion of external resources. It is largely exogenous in character.	A public policy usually mobilises resources mainly from the local institution itself.
Management of actions	The management of a specific project can be delegated to operators from outside the local institution or to specifically created institutions that are only designed to last for the duration of the project.	The management of a public policy is the direct responsibility and one of the central lines of action of a department within the local institution. This department can outsource certain specific tasks, but it remains totally involved in monitoring and evaluating the policy.

We could imagine, for example, that a local public policy aimed at facilitating underprivileged children's access to schools would be subdivided, for operational reasons, into three projects: a first project to provide free school transport, a second focused on creating school canteens and a third to reduce the expense of text books through rotation systems among students.

The important thing is that, in this case, the three projects are integrated into a common strategy and are simply the operational breakdown of the same policy.



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### **1.4.3. Limitations of cooperation through projects and the need for a more comprehensive approach**

The observations made in this first chapter of the guide demonstrate that to respond to the social, economic and political problems that arise within its municipality or territory, a local government must create and implement local public policies, as defined and presented above. It cannot limit its action to addressing individual negative situations or urgent problems as they come up, it must instead analyse the existing situation as a whole, choose the priorities, establish realistic strategies, plan the necessary resources, ensure the appropriate elements of citizen participation and collaboration among stakeholders, and evaluate and disseminate the results, which basically means governing through the application of genuine LPPs.

We have also seen how local governments have cooperated internationally to solve problems, but more often than not this has been through the use of specific projects, which has serious limitations, as detailed above.

Under these conditions, the challenge we are facing at the moment is: How can cooperation become a decisive element for consolidating local public policies and strengthening the corresponding institutional capacities? In the next chapter we briefly outline what the key points of this type of cooperation would be.



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## 2. Guiding principles of cooperation focused on LPPs

After having presented the debatable aspects of cooperation projects, this guide now aims to clearly highlight the difference between a cooperation approach based on specific projects and one that attempts to develop a strategy to support local public policies.

### 2.1. Some new objectives for decentralised cooperation: consolidating LPPs and institutional strengthening

To address the deficiencies identified in the previous chapter, it is necessary to move past the welfare approach to cooperation and set some new objectives for cooperation among local governments which focus on strengthening local public institutions and consolidating and improving the LPPs they carry out.

This approach is based, in particular, on respecting the political function and social responsibility of the local authorities in each country. Thus, it explicitly excludes any attempts by northern governments to directly resolve problems of poverty or unmet basic needs in the south, and also it does not delegate non-governmental organisations. On the contrary, this approach deliberately aims to consolidate local public institutions, which are legitimately entitled to manage local affairs.

Just as the method of using specific projects was tied to an asymmetric vision (north-south, donor-receiver), these new objectives are associated with a new focus on partner relations between local institutions that are as symmetrical as possible, meaning that they can now cooperate with each other to obtain common benefits, mutual learning and reciprocal empowerment.

This new option must be clearly expressed and justified, and the relevant instruments for carrying it out must be constructed. This guide hopes to contribute towards this task and help local governments that wish to focus their cooperation on consolidating local public policies, by showing them how they can make the jump from specific projects to LPPs.

### 2.2. Characteristics of the new cooperation

As a reminder of what has been discussed so far, it could be said that the new type of institutional cooperation based on partnership has a series of specific characteristics that distinguish it from welfare-based cooperation.

In particular, it has been shown that:

/ It requires an institutional commitment and a firm political will.

/ It explicitly refers to the strategic planning framework and the agenda of the local governments involved.

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/ Its objectives go beyond the tangible results of certain specific actions and consist of consolidating, improving or generating a LPP.

/ The expected results are not measured solely in terms of quantitative increases (number of beneficiaries, physical actions, etc.), but in terms of improving institutional capacities and increasing qualitative results.

/ It calls for different evaluation criteria and indicators to those of 'traditional' cooperation, so that it is possible to assess whether it has contributed towards obtaining more efficient, more participative and better quality LPPs.

### **2.3. Elements to take into account when cooperating on LPP matters**

To initiate and carry out this new form of cooperation it is necessary to consider the different determining factors that condition which resources and instruments can be used in each case:

/ Firstly, it is important to remember that each LPP must respond to a specific problem arising from a particular local situation. This means that LPPs have a markedly endogenous character and therefore it is not appropriate to think of cooperation as the 'exportation' and replication of models, regardless of how successful they may be. On the contrary, any cooperation in this field requires an

in-depth review and reformulation of the existing solutions to adapt them to the real problems in a specific territory and local society.

/ Nevertheless, it must also be recognised that local governments' LPPs share some common and fairly universal points. In fact, local agendas show strong similarities, as local public institutions have to deal with very similar problems and issues, although in situations and economic, social and political environments that can be very different. It is important to remember that a local institution, whatever the context, has to fulfil certain essential functions that are alike in all countries and cultures such as, for example: providing accessible first-level basic public services, organising the urban and territorial space, channelling local democracy, etc. This is the basis of the very specific nature of cooperation between local governments, as we will see further on.

/ Another important point to take into consideration is the degree of autonomy the local institution enjoys to be able to define its own LPPs. In this area, the situation may vary greatly from one country to another, and it is important to have precise information about this point when initiating decentralised cooperation, to avoid generating misunderstandings or frustration.

/ The previous point is linked to the local institution's area of competence, understood as the list of full or shared competences that the current

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administrative law recognises as within the local authority's remit. Theoretically, LPPs can only be developed within the local institution's area of competence. We know that the formal and explicit definition of the competences granted to the local level can vary substantially from one country to another. This can create difficulties for cooperation between local institutions that do not have the same area of competence. However, this point must be considered dynamically, as the local competence boundaries can shift depending on the circumstances and social needs. Local governments have often taken on certain issues, such as gender and international cooperation, despite these areas not formally falling within their recognised remit on a local level. The pressure of citizens' needs and demands means that, sometimes, local institutions find themselves obliged to respond, even though the issues raised are not explicitly included in their catalogue of competences.<sup>5</sup>

/ It is also necessary to consider the existing differences in organisational and decentralisation culture in the practice of public-private collaboration, or in the relationship between the different levels of the Administration. The heritage, history and experience of each local government may be very different and

in one way or another condition the solutions that are adopted.

/ Likewise, degrees of transparency and citizen oversight vary considerably. This explains some local governments' reluctance to cooperate with the authorities of certain countries in the south, which they sometimes consider insufficiently democratic.

/ Finally, a widely shared point that affects cooperation between local governments is the chronic shortage of local finance and the low level of local resources, which frequently turn out to be insufficient to be able to put LPPs into action or to widen the scope of their competences.

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5 In certain countries the local authorities are elected and enjoy a high level of autonomy, while in others they may be simple delegations of central power.



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## 3. Practical guidelines for designing cooperation projects aimed at strengthening LPPs

After conducting a summary analysis of LPPs and cooperation between local institutions, we now focus in greater detail on the practical guidelines that can be given to local governments for designing and implementing cooperation projects aimed at consolidating LPPs.

In this third chapter of the guide we look at the design phase and attempt to identify and detail the objectives that could be sought in new projects designed in accordance with this new perspective. In fact, it is important to clarify from the start what the project is proposing and how it plans to have an impact on strengthening LPPs.

Thus, we are going to use the elements developed in the first two chapters of the guide regarding what a LPP is, how it is built and what technical, institutional and political conditions are necessary for a local institution to be able to create, implement and evaluate its LPPs.

This will allow us to identify which levels cooperation can intervene in.

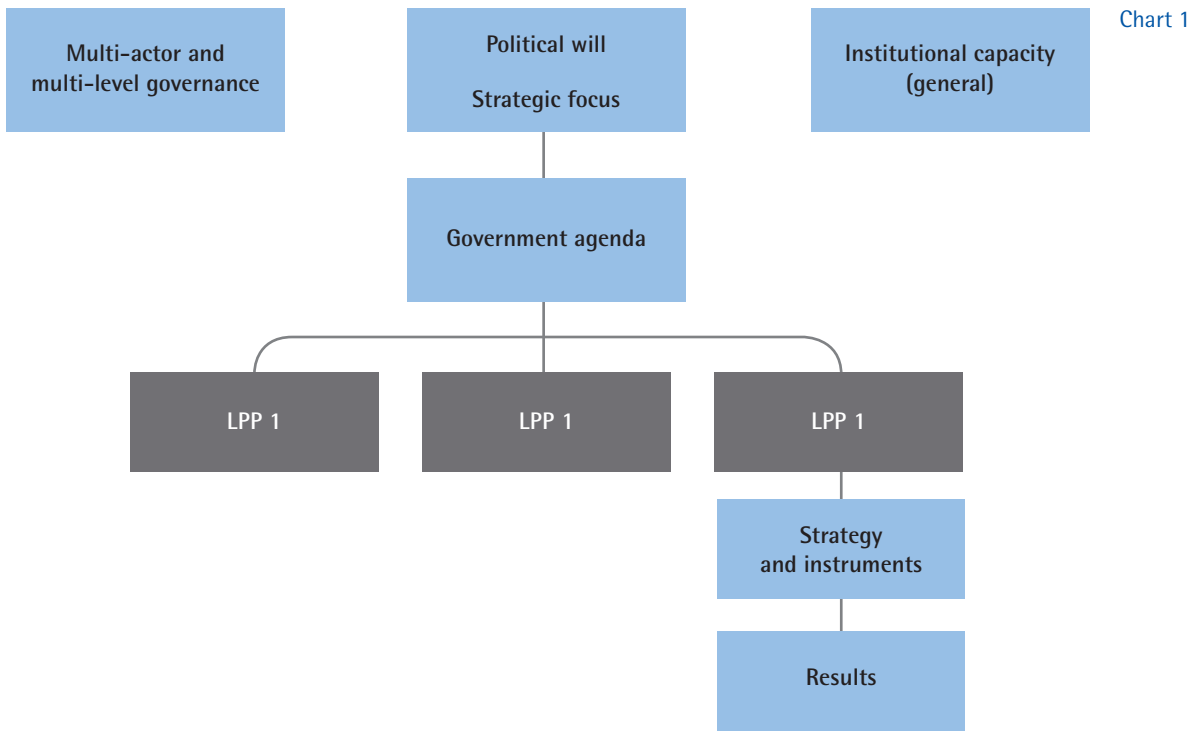
### 3.1. How and where to situate cooperation?

When a local government is determined to cooperate with the primary objective of consolidating LPPs, it will find that it can attempt to influence different levels. To understand these different options, the following chart provides a useful summary of the process of creating and constructing LPPs for a specific local institution. (See chart 1.)

This chart sums up all the information discussed so far:

The three blocks of general elements that facilitate the creation of LPPs are at the top of the chart. These three blocks, (1) political decision-making capacity, (2) technical capacity to plan and manage LPPs, and (3) local multi-actor and multi-level governance, are the three pillars supporting the definition of the government agenda. This forms the basis for developing the different sectoral LPPs, which in each case involves defining a specific sectoral strategy and striving for certain solid results.

Using this simplified representation, it is possible to identify five levels on which cooperation of this type may have an impact (and which are presented below), ranging from the simplest and most immediate to the most complex. In a schematic way, cooperation between local institutions can aim to:



A. Boost the results of an existing LPP, without changing or improving it in principle.

B. Transform or improve an existing LPP.

C. Launch or promote a new LPP, not included in the government agenda so far.

D. Increase the general capacity-building (human and technical) of a local institution to create and manage its series of LPPs.

E. Improve local governance conditions to make them more favourable to the development of genuine LPPs.

We will now move on to detail these different objectives and the effect the project has on each of these levels by offering practical examples taken from the URB-AL Programme.

However, it should be borne in mind that this schematic presentation (which is useful for identifying and specifying the main focus of each project) is not to be taken as a rigid and exclusive structure. The same project may combine several of these objectives and act simultaneously on different levels.



### 3.2. Design aimed at boosting the results of an existing LPP

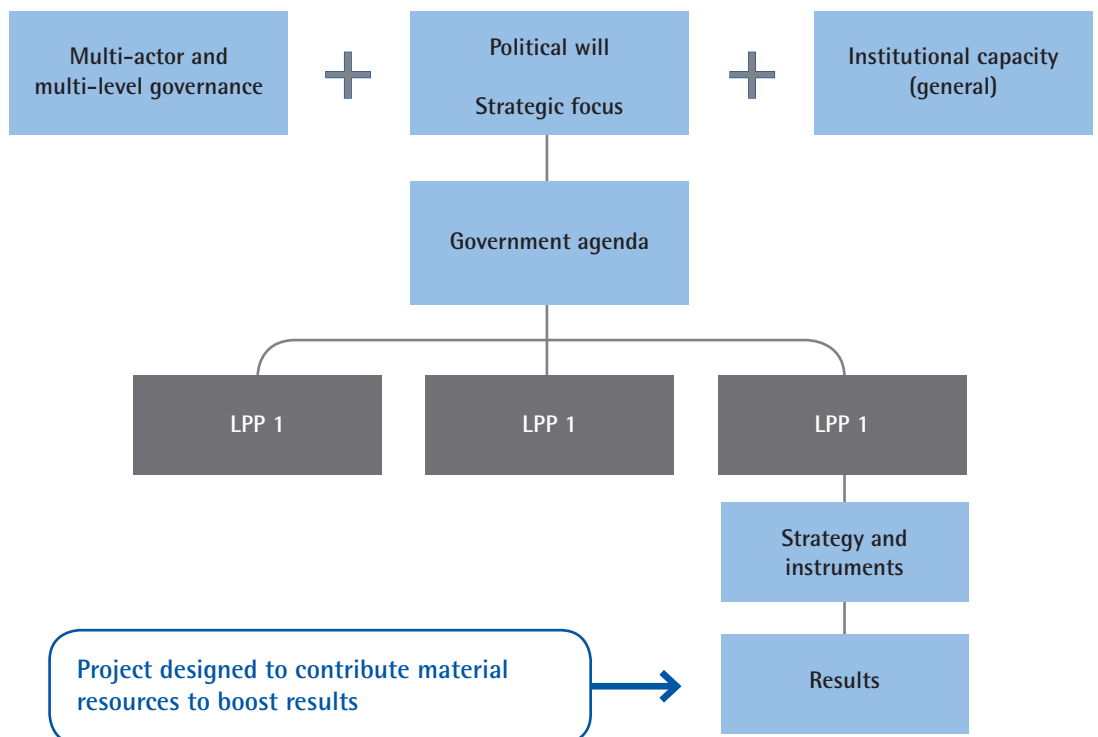
We have seen that cooperation between local institutions should not be centred solely or mainly on the transfer of financial resources. In fact, although it is true that there can and must be a transfer of funds in cooperation, this should not be the main objective. It should instead be a means of establishing another type of relationship based on exchange and mutual learning between the cooperating local institutions.

However, cooperation focused mainly on transferring human and material resources

can be considered interesting and valid when this contribution is not designed simply to resolve a particular problem, but is explicitly put towards consolidating a specific LPP. (See chart 2.)

We therefore find ourselves clearly within the framework of an existing LPP, which forms part of the local government agenda and its strategic planning and scheduling instruments, and which the cooperation project is not trying to alter or modify. This is usually a sectoral LPP, in fields such as economic promotion, environmental management, healthcare, education, citizen security, etc.

Chart 2



<p><b>PROJECT:</b> INTERNATIONAL LINE. UNION OF TWO COMMUNITIES</p> <p><b>Coordinator:</b> Ponta Porá Prefecture (Brazil)</p> <p><b>Territory:</b> Municipalities of Ponta Porá (Brazil) and Pedro Juan Caballero (Paraguay)</p>	<p>This project involves two neighbouring border municipalities: Ponta Porá (Brazil) and Pedro Juan Caballero (Paraguay). These two municipalities have defined a policy of urban integration and territorial planning designed to coordinate the urban fabric of the two municipalities and reduce any possible imbalance or inequality in the provision of public services, while maintaining the identity of each municipality.</p> <p>Before launching the project, the two municipalities had started to implement this local public policy by carrying out a series of common activities, such as creating and launching the International Municipal Parliament (PARLIM) and carrying out coordinated waste collection activities.</p> <p>The URB-AL project falls within the framework of this already existing policy. The basic aim is to provide the resources to boost the results of this policy and accelerate its impact.</p> <p>Specifically, the tangible goals of the project are: (1) to construct a market to improve the poor existing commercial infrastructure in the border area, and (2) to redevelop this zone.</p> <p>A third more qualitative objective focuses on promoting the participation of trade and civil society associations, as had already been experienced in the implementation of other local public policies (for example, the Guaraní Aquifer).</p>
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Under these conditions, cooperating local institutions should take the existing strategic plan or government programme as a clear benchmark, identify the LPP that will be subject to cooperation, provide a progress report and indicate any planned actions and decide on the methods of intervention the project will use.

In this case, cooperation consists of providing economic and/or human resources that enable more actions to be carried out, the number of beneficiaries increased or simply to speed up the planned timeframe. The objective is not to bring about a change in the policy local, but to amplify its results.<sup>6</sup>

Thus, the project takes charge of delivering part of the specific planned actions and/or provides human and material resources to consolidate or build the capacity of the managers and officials responsible for implementing the LPP in question.

Based on this example, it is important to note that one interesting aspect of this type of cooperation is how those in charge of an existing local public policy can start to identify and design projects that cover part of the activities included in the LPP in question, and how they can seek cooperation partners that guarantee part of the financing for these projects, to which local or national resources will be added.

6 As mentioned previously, the proposed categories should not be taken as mutually exclusive. A project designed to improve the results of an existing LPP may give rise to an exchange between the cooperating partners and ultimately have a certain influence on improving the policy in question.

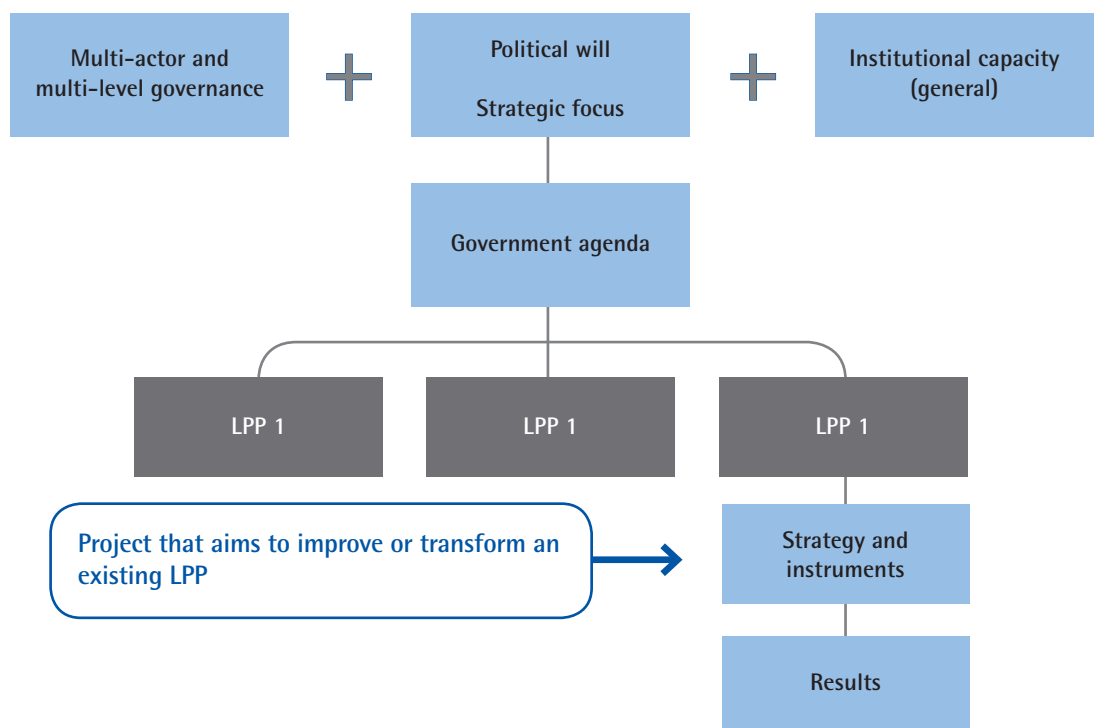
In this financing strategy, which involves the local government searching for and selecting partners, this local entity should be aware that not all sources of funding are the same, and the fact that local institutions cooperate and exchange experiences with their counterparts in other countries provides invaluable added value, beyond the simple transfer of economic and human resources.

### 3.3. Design aimed at improving an existing LPP

Compared with the previous case, the specific and indispensable role of decentralised cooperation becomes even more evident when the aim is not simply to increase or speed up the results of a LPP, but is instead to bring about a qualitative improvement of this policy. (See chart 3.)

We continue with the scenario of an existing sectoral LPP, but in this case the cooperation activity aims to help review, refocus or enrich the way in which the policy is carried out. The initiative may

Chart 3



<p><b>PROJECT: LOCAL POLICIES ON THE PREVENTION OF VIOLENCE IN MARGINAL URBAN AREAS</b></p> <p><b>Coordinator: State of Pernambuco (Brazil)</b></p> <p><b>Territory: Municipal Government of Paysandú (Uruguay)</b></p>	<p>The Municipal Government of Paysandú had a traditional-style local public policy to control violence in marginal urban areas using mainly repressive tactics.</p> <p>The URB-AL project was designed to help change the focus of this existing policy.</p> <p>Its initial approach was to be redirected towards an approach involving prevention, integration and citizen participation. The project is, therefore, very clearly designed to review and improve an existing local public policy.</p> <p>The principal activities in the project are, among others: (1) creating a community police force, (2) setting up Local Security and Coexistence Committees, and (3) creating a Coordination Office to work with the central government.</p> <p>In particular, the project intervenes on three levels:</p> <p>A. In the planning phase, a 'Pilot Intervention Plan' was drafted, which defined the objectives, expected results and activities.</p> <p>B. In the implementation phase, the project facilitated and mobilised the actions needed to coordinate the actors (local government, civil society, organisations, private companies) and the different levels (central, local).</p> <p>C. In parallel, the project guarantees capacity-building for local specialists, police officers and civil society stakeholders, and technical and financial support for local social and civic inclusion activities.</p>
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<p><b>PROJECT: LOCAL DEVELOPMENT AND EMIGRATION IN LATIN AMERICA (EMIDEL)</b></p> <p><b>Coordinator: L'Hospitalet de Llobregat City Council</b></p> <p><b>Territory: Autonomous Municipal Government of La Paz (GAMLPL)</b></p>	<p>The government of La Paz has a regulatory framework and model of local economic development that is applied through the Administrative Office of Economic Development (OMPE). This policy has been strengthened through this project by generating a management model for municipal economic development and its territorial instrument: the model of plural entrepreneurship.</p> <p>According to the project coordinator in La Paz and the representatives of the Economic Promotion Units interviewed, the project has given them the opportunity to link productive and social activities and identify the sectors of the population involved in some type of vulnerable economic activity in order to support them. In this regard, they feel that applying the entrepreneurship model generated by the project from the economic promotion units has enabled them to act from a more comprehensive and strategic perspective, adapting this instrument to the particular character and needs of their territories.</p> <p>This mechanism has allowed them to provide content and staff for the existing economic promotion units and those created in seven of the nine sub-municipalities of La Paz with a view to contributing to a real policy of promoting territorial development, with clear components of social cohesion.</p> <p>This project, therefore, aims to transform and improve an existing local public policy.</p> <p>Main activities:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Strengthen the OMPE and create six Economic Promotion Offices or Units specifically in charge of defining and carrying out a local promotion strategy tailored to the particular situation in each district.</li> <li>2. Identify needs and provide capacity-building for micro-business owners and training for local experts.</li> <li>3. Implement alternative markets to improve exchange between producers and consumers with solidary prices.</li> <li>4. Coordination and collaboration with local agents and entities working in the area of local economic development and emigration.</li> <li>5. Disseminate the project and raise awareness.</li> </ol>
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<p><b>PROJECT: LA BASURA SIRVE (Rubbish is useful)</b></p> <p><b>Coordinator: Comune di Arezzo (Italy)</b></p> <p><b>Territory: Municipality of Cuenca (Ecuador)</b></p>	<p>The municipality of Cuenca has until now had a 'classic' local public policy on waste management, which has been carried out by a specialised municipal corporation.</p> <p>The URB-AL project aims to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Consider the social and economic dimension of waste collection and recycling activities and enhance the role and participation of people working in these activities.</li> <li>2. Promote integrated management with a vision of social cohesion.</li> <li>3. Spread a culture of environmental recycling.</li> <li>4. Attempt to disseminate and promote this new perspective in other territories, with a view to making this model a benchmark for Latin America.</li> </ol> <p>Thus, the project seeks to have an impact on an existing public policy and contribute towards improving and transforming it, introducing new guidelines and experiences. It could be said, as indicated in the monitoring reports, that "previously, Cuenca's Municipal Public Cleaning Company (EMAC) only handled the technical side of waste management, but it has taken advantage of the project to introduce the social element of recycling workers and it has promoted this in coordination with the municipality's Secretariat of Social Inclusion, and the Ministries of Education, Health and Social Integration, in order to protect their rights and those of their children".</p> <p>The project focused in particular on:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Drafting a specific plan for waste collection and recycling workers.</li> <li>2. Developing technical training courses on waste management, and activities to raise awareness of environmental issues.</li> <li>3. Consolidating EMAC as the public corporation in charge of waste management.</li> <li>4. Coordinating the project with the other municipal departments and other levels of the Administration to jointly improve the health and rights of the people working in this sector.</li> </ol>
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come from either of the partners (i.e., from a local government's desire to explore new perspectives and ways of doing things or from the partner's interest in disseminating or spreading a successful practice), but the important thing is that the conscious and declared objective of the project is, in this case, to substantially transform an existing LPP with the support and know-how of a partner who has more experience in this field.

In one way or another, the cooperation project involves exchanging and disseminating new methods, new approaches and new systems of

participation by local stakeholders, in an area in which both partners carry out a LPP, each with its own characteristics. A good example of this situation is the project "Local policies on the prevention of violence in marginal urban areas" (see table on page 36), which is aimed at reviewing a policy on security and controlling violence.

Of particular interest in this case is the specific role played by decentralised cooperation. In addition to the financial contribution and institutional support provided by any international cooperation project, the presence of other local

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institutions as partners in the project has allowed a valuable exchange of successful experiences with the municipality of Bergamo (Italy), such as police training practices, and with the city of Recife (Brazil).

Thus, two elements were combined: (1) the will to ensure that the interventions in the project were locally defined, in the framework of broad collaboration with different actors and sectors of society, and (2) dynamic openness towards other experiences which help to enrich the level of knowledge and the local experiences, thanks to the contributions of the project's international partners.

We could also mention another similar example, focused on transforming an existing public policy, this time in the field of local development linked to the issue of emigration.

The role of decentralised cooperation and its added value are particularly interesting in this last example because the project aims (beyond providing resources) to establish a dialogue between local governments in the emigrants' cities of origin and the destination cities. This has enabled these two types of municipalities to work together to create, in particular, training content and guidelines.

Another interesting example is the project *La basura sirve* (Rubbish is useful), the specific focus of which is to reformulate a LPP on waste collection and recycling.

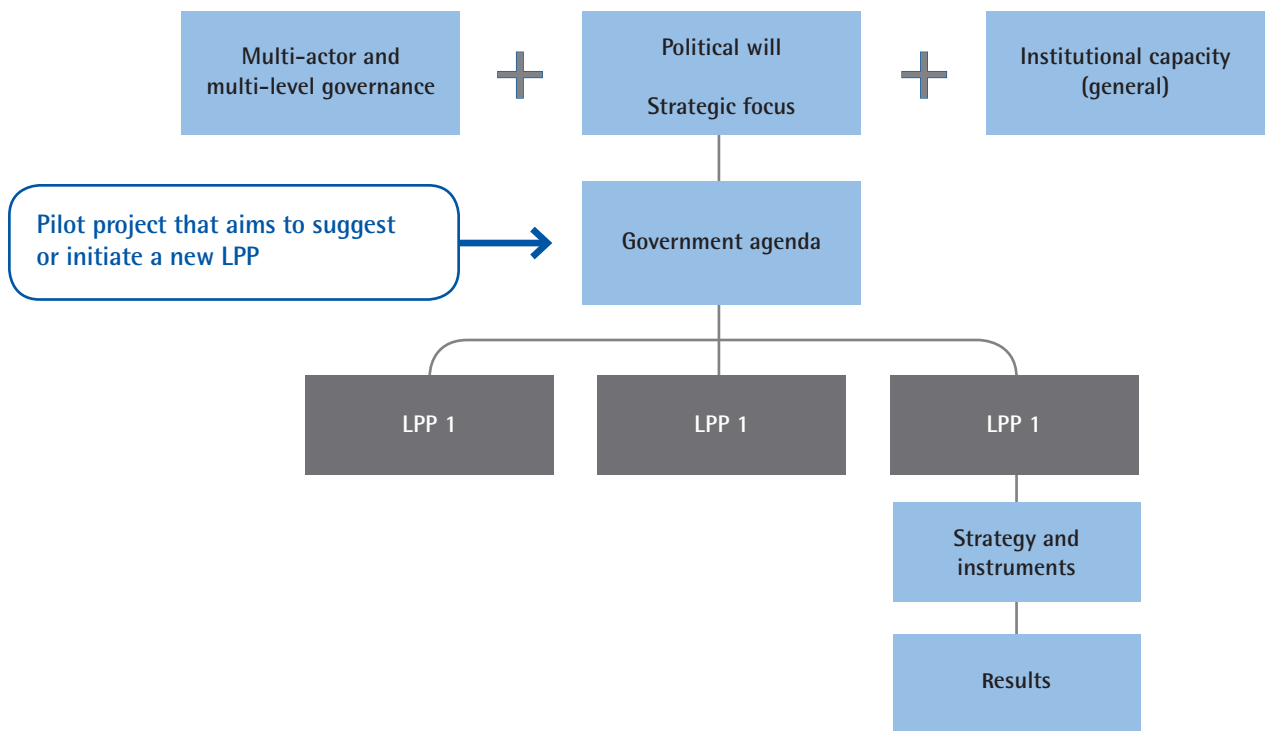
### 3.4. Design focused on contributing to the launch of a new LPP

The two previous sections dealt with strengthening existing LPPs. We now examine the case of cooperation between local governments in the form of a project whose medium to long-term objective is the possible inclusion of a new LPP that has not existed as such until now in the government agenda of one of the partners. (See chart 4.)

In this case, the project has been designed as a first experience for the 'receiving' institution in a field where it has no previous experience, or that it has not considered until now as an area in which it could create and apply a LPP. Beyond the immediate results, the project aims to: (1) raise awareness of the issue among municipal managers and experts; (2) generate a first specific experience in this field; (3) identify the institution's structural and staffing needs, if it plans to pursue the LPP in question in the future; and (4) in certain cases, begin creating or implementing the mechanisms and instruments that will be necessary in the future.

The following table (*Fronteras turísticas* project) illustrates this situation.

Chart 4



<p><b>PROJECT: FRONTERAS TURÍSTICAS (Tourism borders)</b></p> <p>Coordinator: Province of Frosinone (Italy)</p> <p>Territory: Purmamarca (Argentina), San Pedro de Quemes and Calacoto (Bolivia), Tarata (Peru)</p>	<p>The border areas included in the project have, until now, been considered marginal and without any important economic activities. The project aims to create a tourist corridor between the municipalities in the territories in question, with components of local economic development and the promotion of cultural identity.</p> <p>The project activities centre on achieving the main objective (develop tourist routes in the area), but also lay the foundations for the future creation and implementation of a common public policy for tourism development shared between the local institutions that are partners in the project.</p> <p>The actions included in the project effectively encompass these different aspects:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Identifying and promoting tourist sites and empowering the community.</li> <li>2. Signing agreements between local governments, coordination with private stakeholders and other levels of the Administration, and setting up a network with civil society organisations.</li> <li>3. Establishing themed tourist routes in supra-municipal territories ('Salt desert', 'Llama route', 'Quinoa', 'Museums and colonial houses', etc.).</li> <li>4. Creating the tourism brand 'Camino Andino' and publicising it at trade fairs.</li> <li>5. Running capacity-building workshops for local staff.</li> <li>6. Creating a common platform and drafting a joint strategy for tourism development throughout the entire area.</li> </ol>
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As we can see, this pilot action reinforces the local institutions involved in the project and it leads them to create a joint strategy for tourism development, which could be seen as the first step towards a genuine common public policy.

In this regard, it could be said that the project *Fronteras turísticas* firmly aims to contribute to implementing a new local public policy that did not previously exist.

It should be stressed that the specific role of decentralised cooperation in the project has been important: the Province of Bolzano (Italy) shared its experience of ecotourism which strengthened local identity (promotion of local products and materials, revitalising symbolic elements and features of local identity, etc.), staff were exchanged between the project partners and these people also received technical training.

Generally speaking, “in territories whose authorities have scant resources and/or very limited institutional powers, public policies can develop from specific projects or actions. For example, the creation of a business incubator in itself does not count as a policy, but other actions may originate from or around this initiative, eventually forming something more integrated and significant, basically, a public policy. For this to happen, it is vital that the action of a project, even though it may initially be isolated or partial, clearly forms part of a political and strategic vision”.

A slightly different case to the previous example is that of the PACEF project, which is detailed below. This project aims to launch a LPP designed to boost female employment, and it has managed to bring together and open up dialogues between the departments in charge of employment and gender issues.

<p><b>PROJECT: COVENANT ON CAPACITY-BUILDING FOR FEMALE EMPLOYMENT (PACEF)</b></p> <p><b>Coordinator: Region of Sicily (Italy)</b></p> <p><b>Territory: Government of the Central Department (Paraguay)</b></p>	<p>At the time this project was launched, the government of the Central Department (territorial subdivision) of Paraguay had not yet launched a public policy aimed at stimulating and promoting female employment. However, the Departmental government was interested in starting to create and implement a local public policy on this matter, and this is the reason why the URB-AL project was launched; a project considered as an experience and possible springboard for future projects.</p> <p>Specifically, the PACEF project was designed to act directly on the level of female employment by creating Human Capital Offices. These are in charge of identifying job offers and requests and passing this information on to women, carrying out capacity-building actions, and, at the same time, paving the way for the inclusion of this issue in municipal agendas and creating the necessary institutions for carrying out the corresponding actions.</p> <p>In particular, the project covered:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Creating Human Capital Offices.</li> <li>2. Defining municipal agendas on gender, based on the Departmental agenda.</li> <li>3. Providing technical assistance for defining the Department's and municipalities' budgetary items</li> </ol>
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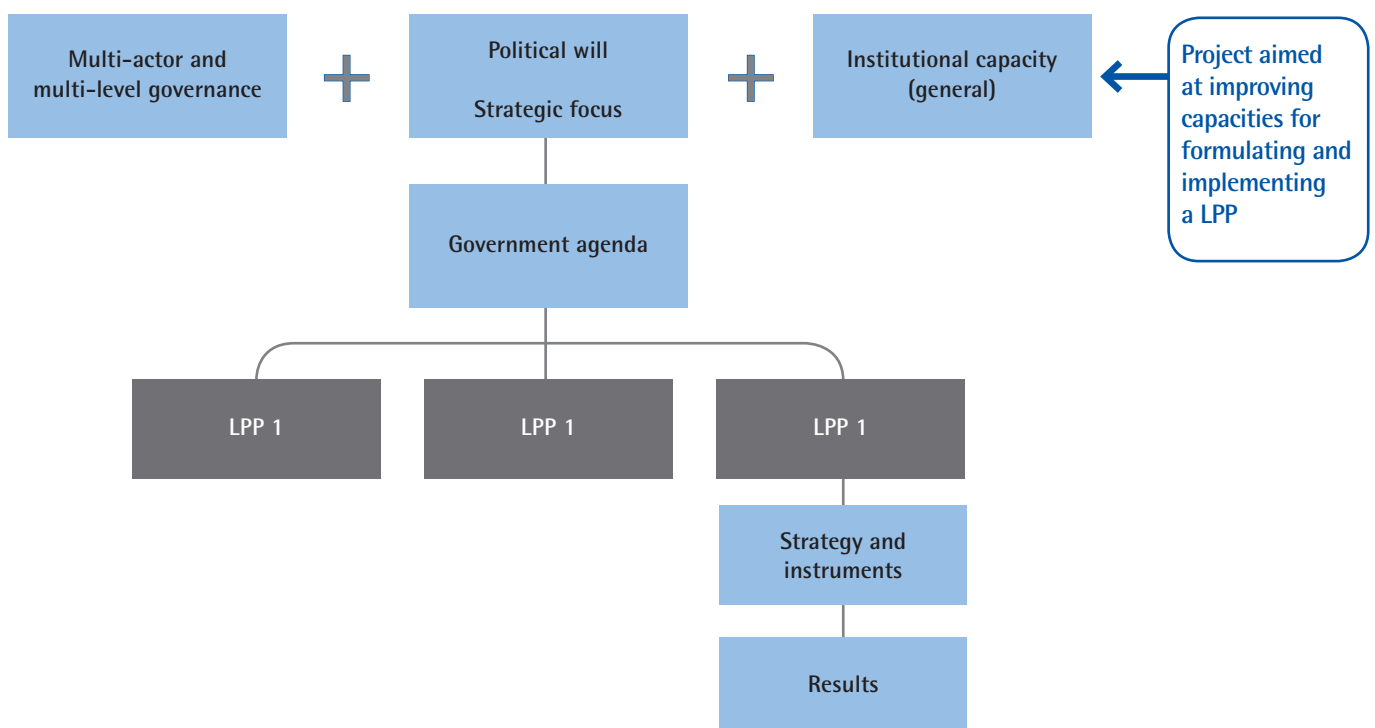


This example clearly shows that the Human Capital Offices are the first step towards recognising the issue of promoting female employment as one of the strategic elements to be included on local governments' agendas. On its own, the project does not cover all the necessary elements for launching a genuine LPP on this issue, but it does pave the way for this to happen. The success of the project will determine whether the participating local institutions are aware of all the implications and decide to create a stable LPP to promote female employment or not.

### 3.5. Design aimed at helping to strengthen the local institution to improve all of its LPPs

The previous sections have shown how a specific project may contribute towards consolidating an existing LPP or encourage the launch of a new one. These considerations generally refer to sectoral policies (economic promotion, environment, urban planning, finance, education, health, etc.).

Chart 5



As we have seen above, cooperation between local governments can also have a more general aim of strengthening the local institution so that it is better prepared to develop a series of sectoral LPPs. (See chart 5.)

If we refer back to chapter 1 of this guide, we see that this institutional capacity encompasses a whole range of elements, from strategic planning to the ability to raise the funds to finance its LPPs.

This highlights the need to strengthen local institutions so that they are capable of designing, planning, financing, executing and evaluating their public policies on a local or territorial scale.

Based on this, we can identify the different fields in which to establish international cooperation focused on more general aspects (strategic planning, local public finances, quality and transparency in the local Administration, monitoring and evaluation systems, citizen participation mechanisms, etc.) and not on those of a more sectoral nature, i.e., linked to each sector and each specific public policy.

Two examples taken from the URB-AL III Programme help to illustrate these observations:

<p><b>PROJECT: INTEGRATED LAND MANAGEMENT</b></p> <p><b>Coordinator:</b> Municipality of Puerto Cortés</p> <p><b>Territory:</b> Four municipalities in Honduras and Guatemala</p>	<p>The municipalities of Puerto Cortés, Tela and Omoa (Honduras) and Puerto Barrios (Guatemala) have raised the need to consolidate and improve some of the basic instruments for creating and implementing diverse sectoral public policies. These are the instruments that enable the physical and legal control of territorial aspects.</p> <p>Specifically, the URB-AL project aims to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Create and launch a land registry.</li> <li>2. Provide the municipalities with a Geographical Information System (GIS).</li> <li>3. Draft development plans with a territorial focus on the four municipalities.</li> </ol> <p>These instruments are indispensable for putting various local public policies into practice such as, for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>/ Regularising properties and the population's legal guarantees.</li> <li>/ The fiscal and revenue policy.</li> <li>/ The territorial management policy and, in particular, the policy governing water resources in this sea-land zone.</li> <li>/ The risk management policy.</li> <li>/ The environmental policy.</li> <li>/ The local economic development promotion policy.</li> </ul> <p>In this regard, we are basically talking about general capacities and competences and not sectoral ones, and a key element that conditions or limits a series of policies created by the local institution in question.</p>
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<p><b>PROJECT: RIVER LEMPA TRI-BORDER AREA ASSOCIATION</b></p> <p><b>Coordinator:</b> Mancomunidad Trinacional Fronteriza Río Lempa</p> <p><b>Territory:</b> All the municipalities involved in the project</p>	<p>This project is based on the idea that neighbouring municipalities, despite being administratively separate territories, share very similar needs and characteristics and face problems that can only be tackled effectively and comprehensively on a tri-national level and together as a group.</p> <p>Specifically, the project established associations of municipalities (<i>mancomunidades</i> in Spanish) made up of border municipalities in three countries, in order to carry out urban and territorial actions (with a strong element of managing solid waste).</p> <p>The central areas of the project are: (1) to delegate the operation of the municipalities' services to the <i>mancomunidades</i>, and (2) to create joint policies as an association to make these services sustainable, coherent and comprehensive.</p> <p>In this case, the project helped to provide the municipalities involved with shared structures designed to improve the planning and implementation of common LPPs.</p>
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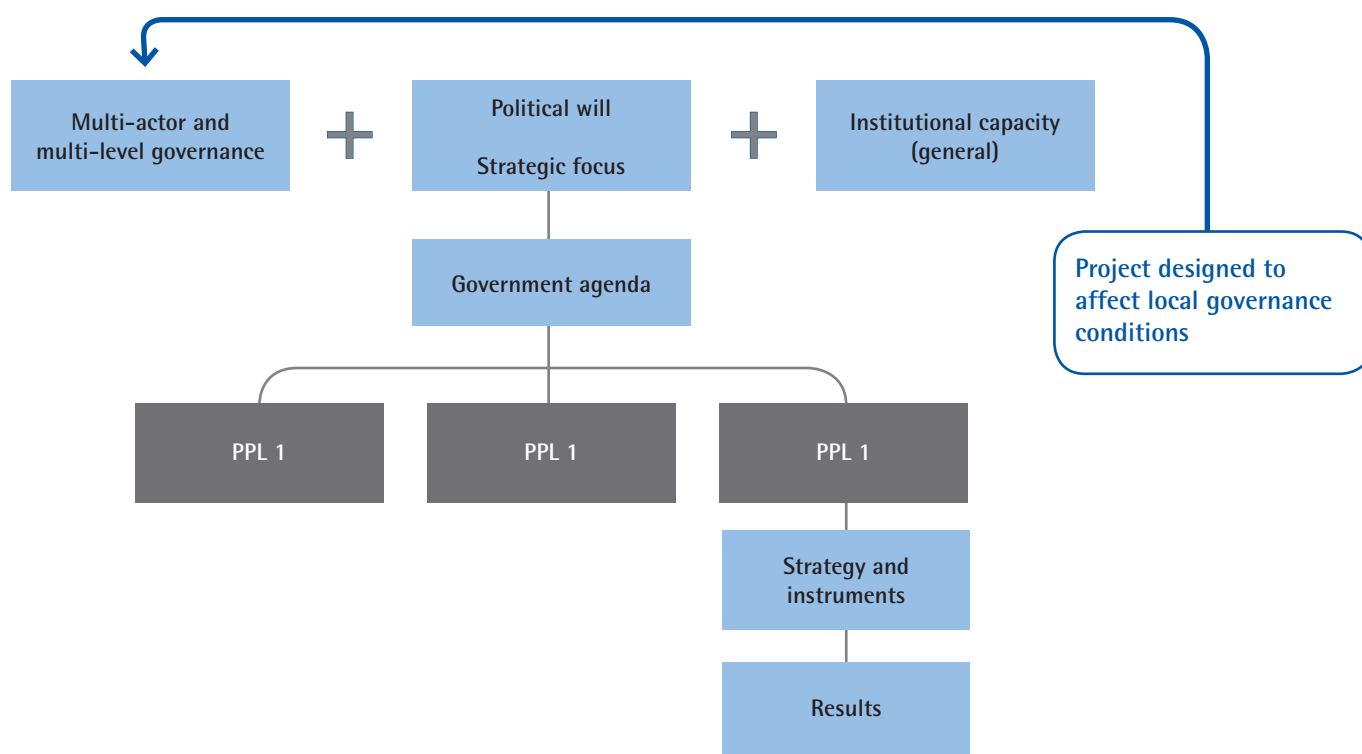
Furthermore, it should be stressed that it is not just technical or administrative strengthening that allows the local institution to carry out its tasks more efficiently, but it can also include a qualitative improvement, focused on consolidating and deepening local democracy. Cooperation can and should address these political aspects equally, as they permit strong coordination between local government actions and civil society and other stakeholders. This leads us on to the next section, in which we discuss the issue of local governance.

### 3.6. Design focused on improving local multi-actor and multi-level governance

As the final possible case, we now look at the design of a project whose main objective is to improve conditions of local governance, i.e., the relationships that are established between the local public institution and the other actors in the territory. (See chart 6.)

It is possible to design a project that is explicitly focused on improving these aspects at the municipality or local institution's general level. This is the case, for example, of the Provincial Strategic Plan project in Santa Fe (Argentina) which is presented below. There is also the option of designing a project situated in a specific sector but the aim of which is to experience changes in local governance in this sector, and which later proposes to capitalise on this experience and spread it to other sectors.

Chart 6



What is also interesting in this project is the fact that it helps to accelerate and support the rollout of LPPs on regionalisation and participative strategic planning in the provincial government. In this case, the political will to instigate a provincial strategic plan predates the launch of URB-AL III, and the project is designed to provide more resources for provincial LPPs. In this regard, it is similar to the projects described in section 3.2., although in this case it is not a 'sectoral' policy but a series of general and cross-sectoral LPPs, which affect the entire sphere of local governance.

What stands out about this case is that the project is not limited to providing the provincial government with more financial resources, it also mobilises the contributions of the partners in the project in terms of knowledge and know-how in the area in question. There has, for example, been an interesting exchange of interns and experience in this field between the partners.

<p><b>PROJECT: PROVINCIAL STRATEGIC PLAN</b></p> <p><b>Coordinator:</b> Province of Santa Fe (Argentina)</p> <p><b>Territory:</b> Five regions in the province of Santa Fe</p>	<p>Since 2007, the province of Santa Fe (Argentina) has been working on a public policy of regionalisation, decentralisation, strategic planning and citizen participation, which aims to bring an end to the centralised and not very participative model that has characterised the previous type of governance.</p> <p>This new policy was designed before the launch of the URB-AL project, but this project provides solid support to effectively put this policy into action and therefore achieve a qualitative change in the form of local governance.</p> <p>The specific support provided by the project consists mainly of:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Training public officials on strategic planning and participative processes.</li> <li>2. Creating and maintaining a Regional Strategic Planning Council in each of the province's five regions.</li> <li>3. Establishing a system of citizens' assemblies in each region (on a regional and micro-regional scale) to serve as participation spaces.</li> <li>4. Building indicators of regionalisation.</li> <li>5. Promoting regional brands and designations of origin.</li> <li>6. Equipping civic centres.</li> <li>7. Organising city congresses.</li> </ol> <p>As we can see, this project hopes to have a direct impact on local governance conditions, in particular aspects of citizen participation and collaboration with other local stakeholders. It could therefore be cited as a good example that illustrates the argument of the present section.</p>
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### 3.7. Implications for monitoring and evaluation mechanisms

Briefly reviewing these design options, it can be clearly seen that, depending on the level of intervention chosen, the project has different objectives. In the first case (design aimed at boosting the results of an existing LPP), the objectives could be expressed in terms of specific actions (or the reduction of planned timeframes for implementing a government programme). However, in other cases the objectives must be formulated in more qualitative terms (processes, increased capacities, institutional changes, etc.).

It is important to bear in mind that this, in turn, implies that the formulation of the expected outcomes will also be different and, as a result, it will involve selecting the relevant indicators in each case in order to monitor and evaluate the project. We can see that changing the goals of cooperation (placing the emphasis on LPPs and institutional strengthening and not on simple tangible results) requires seeking other methodologies and instruments that are operationally and conceptually suited to a new philosophy of cooperation between local institutions.



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## 4. Leveraging a specific project to progress towards genuine LPPs by strengthening the local institution

The previous chapter describes how it is possible to focus the design of a project that aims to cooperate in order to strengthen and consolidate LPPs. A series of examples taken from the URB-AL Programme has shown that local institutions have a whole range of options available and they can influence different levels, from the simplest (help boost the results of an existing LPP) to the most complex (help to improve conditions of local governance, encouraging collaboration with economic and social stakeholders and citizen participation in the creation and monitoring of LPPs).

Chapter 3 concentrated on the design phase and suggested the options that local governments have when the clear objective of their cooperation is to support LPPs and generate the corresponding institutional strengthening.

Chapters 4 and 5 refer to the implementation phase of the project, and cover not only those projects that are designed from the very start as support plans for LPPs, but also and above all include specific projects, that are not linked to LPPs. We now look at this last scenario, which is very common today, involving local institutions that are cooperating in a 'traditional' way (i.e., through a specific project that makes no explicit reference to an existing LPP or to creating a new one), and we ask ourselves what local governments can do if they want to take advantage of this existing project to move towards a LPP approach.

It is in this particular area that the OCO has accumulated a great deal of experience by monitoring and advising local governments through what is known as 'step 1', which aimed to link the projects approved within the framework of the URB-AL Programme with LPPs. Our goal is to utilise and systematise this experience to help interested local governments.

In fact, and along the lines of what we have discussed until now, the OCO has been able to verify that local governments which effectively decide to consolidate and improve their LPPs can take very interesting advantage of the specific projects they already have, and obtain different effects heading in this direction:

/ A first block of possible effects is linked to re-situating the specific project in the framework of the LPPs and developing its full potential to support these LPPs and strengthen the local institution.

/ The second involves utilising the specific project as a lever to achieve more general changes in the area we could call local governance, i.e., in the field of citizen participation, cooperation with other local actors and in coordination among the different levels of the Administration.

These two blocks of effects are linked and form part of the LPPs, just as we have already defined and described. However, for operational reasons, we will identify and discuss them separately. The technical and management aspects will be discussed next, while chapter 5 is dedicated to the

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more political aspects connected with participation and inter-institutional coordination.

Before continuing any further to describe the changes that need to be introduced into the way of approaching and managing projects, we should indicate that we are focusing, in this guide, on international cooperation projects, but many of the observations we formulate could equally be applied to these types of projects as to in-house projects that do not benefit from outside funding.

#### **4.1. Reviewing the objectives of the project and considering other types of results**

A specific project designed without any reference to existing or developing LPPs usually has objectives such as covering certain unmet needs among particular groups of the population, building specific infrastructures or facilities or providing material and equipment.

In all of these cases the implicit or explicit point of reference are criteria of short-term effectiveness: the project proposes specific tangible results that are easily verifiable, and its success depends solely on the speed and efficacy with which it achieves these results.

If the aim is to turn this project into an element to support a LPP (existing or in construction), the local government needs to change its perspective and identify the project's potential medium and long-term contribution, beyond the immediate results, and how it could help strengthen or launch a LPP.

Thus, the questions to be asked are:

/ How can the project be included within the framework of an existing LPP and reinforce it?

/ In what way could the project help to consolidate the local institution in the medium and long term?

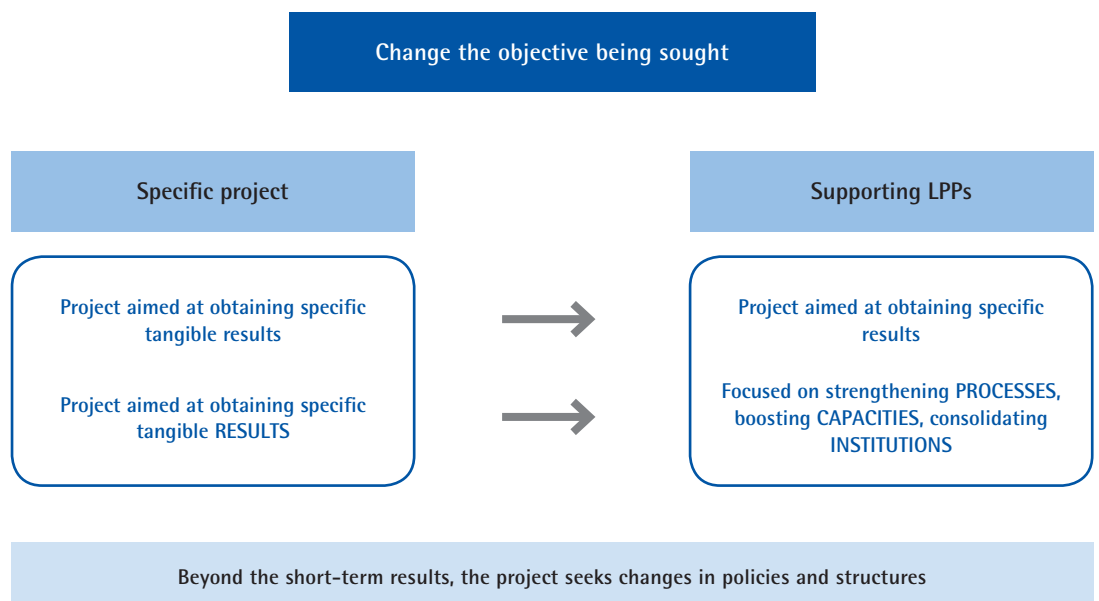


- / What does it offer as a specific replicable or extendable experience, to meet the territory's social needs?
- / How can it contribute towards building the local staff's capacities and strengthening their existing skills?
- / How can it serve as a pilot experience for possible processes of citizen participation or collaboration among stakeholders?
- / How will it influence the quality of local democracy?

By looking at these examples, it is clear that the general effects of a project extend beyond the concrete results that were originally planned. Thus, the local government, as it begins to identify these possible effects, may realise that the most important objectives (from a LPP perspective) concern the medium and long-term changes that the project can contribute. They are not limited to obtaining specific tangible results, but are expressed in terms of strengthening processes, boosting capacities, transmitting experiences, consolidating institutions, etc.

In a somewhat simplistic way, it could be said that the tangible results sought in the short term should give way to an emphasis on the intangible benefits, in the medium and long term. (See chart 7.)

Chart 7



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It is likely that these hidden objectives have not been formalised or made explicit in the project document, and the monitoring and evaluation mechanisms do not include a system of indicators capable of recognising the intangible results of this nature either. Under these conditions, it is possible for the cooperation partner to limit its action to the formal management of the project, in accordance with the established procedures and depending on the tangible objectives originally defined in the project document. The local government should try to convince its partner and raise its awareness, making it understand the role the project could have in supporting some more important LPPs, without forgetting to also act, on its own initiative, to guarantee the best possible use of the project from a medium and long-term perspective.

This dialogue on cooperation objectives and methods will mature the institution's relationship with its partner, and perhaps enable future cooperation actions to be designed from the perspective of supporting LPPs (as described in chapter 3 of this guide).

#### **4.2. 'Internalising' the technical and financial management of the project to the maximum**

From a technical point of view, specific projects often involve a certain level of outsourcing or subcontracting of the implementation, which is entrusted to

a company or body that does not report directly to the local government. The results-based approach essentially seems to recommend that specialised personnel take charge of carrying out the project, counting on the fact that these external professionals will be better prepared than local staff to comply with quality requirements, deadlines, etc.

This vision of short-term efficiency becomes irrelevant when the project is designed to help reinforce local institutions and their public policies. In this case, it is both appropriate and desirable for local institutions to be involved in the technical handling of the project using their own teams, and that they benefit from the corresponding learning. Whatever may be lost, apparently, in terms of short-term efficiency, will be more than offset by the more long-term gains.

Regarding the administrative management of the project, similar observations could be made. A specific project is usually managed in an isolated and individual way, as a deliberately separate element to the local institution's normal operation. It usually has an ad hoc management structure with its own financial and human resources, and with the aim of guaranteeing that the project is executed within the agreed timeframe and is not subject to the possible limitations of the local budget. Furthermore, the project is often governed by specific rules for managing, monitoring, evaluating and justifying expenses, which generally correspond to the regulations imposed by the financing institution.

All these characteristics can be explained from the perspective of a specific project, centred on achieving concrete objectives that are unrelated to the local institution's other activities, and from a cooperation culture accustomed to prioritising efficacy and controlling the resources employed.

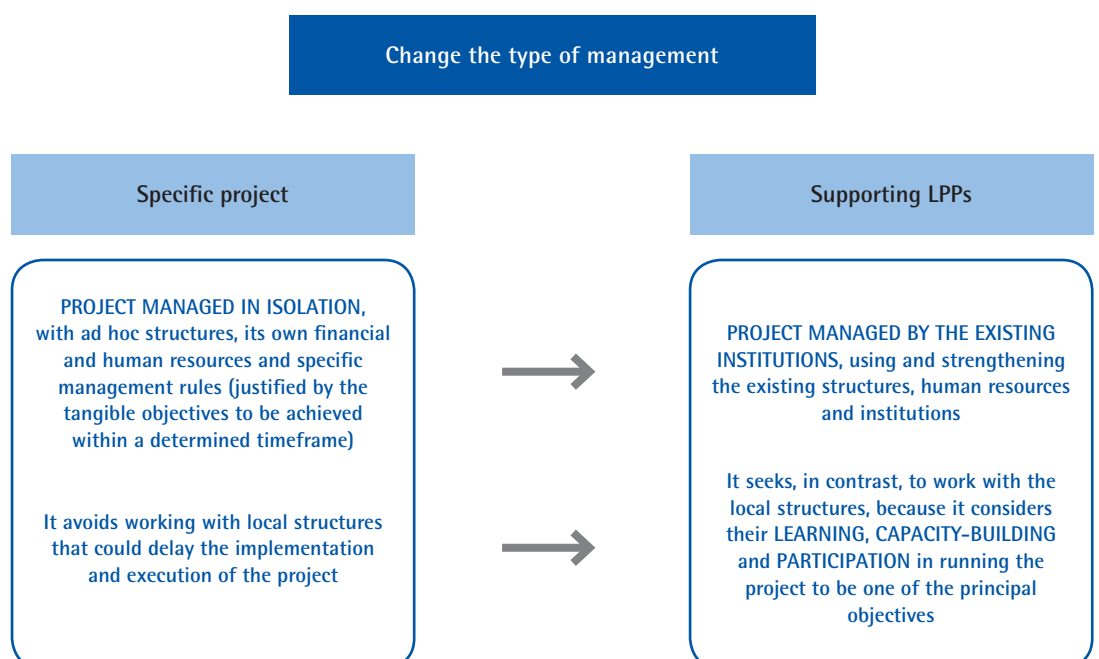
From the partnership perspective that we have presented and defended as a new philosophy of decentralised cooperation, the vision is totally opposite. The real objective is not primarily to achieve a specific tangible goal but rather, through this achievement, to consolidate LPPs and strengthen the local institution itself. As a result, the most important thing is that the local institution is able to directly manage the project and progress along the path to institutional learning, as capacity-building

for technical staff managing international projects and the participation of political leaders in the overall running of this type of cooperation become two of their central objectives.

Those in charge of managing projects should acquire this new experience, familiarise themselves with the monitoring and evaluation mechanisms and criteria in other countries, become used to the accountability requirements of certain sources of financing and, in general, be capable of comparing management systems and thereby gradually improve their own practices.

A clear example of this institutional learning, in the European case, is the spread of an evaluation culture that has

Chart 8



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been achieved through managing projects co-financed by the European Union. These projects have had to observe strict rules on this matter, while nationally funded projects are not even obliged to provide monitoring and evaluation reports.

Taking these observations into account, the local government must minimise the isolation of the project and integrate it as far as possible into the institution's regular management practice. (See chart 8.)

In this case, the fact that the project is already underway could also be a serious obstacle in the short term, and it is possible that it will be very difficult to modify the management rules that were established at the start. However, all efforts to adjust the project management to the existing local methods, avoid outsourcing and delegation to external companies and experts, encourage capacity-building for local staff and adapting foreign rules to local needs will all have positive effects in the medium to long term.

### **4.3. Reviewing the social sphere of influence and seeking to widen and extend the project's results**

A specific project aimed at obtaining tangible results usually defines its circle of beneficiaries rather rigidly and narrowly. Normally, the project does not take into account the broad scope of existing social problems in a territory, as it does not have the material and institutional resources to tackle them all. It limits itself to identifying a group of people who have a specific need (housing, drinking water, urbanisation, education, health, etc.) and to directly providing a solution to cover this need. It does not propose to identify the social scope of the problem or to find the most efficient solutions that could be acceptable for the public institution on a larger scale. It offers individual solutions, often employing exceptional instruments that are difficult to mobilise outside the strict framework of the project such as, for example, foreign financing or technology.

In contrast, the vision from the local public institution is completely different, as it is responsible for responding to citizens' needs by creating and implementing genuine public policies (in the sense indicated in chapter 1 of the present guide) that can be applied and carried out using the resources available (or obtainable at a reasonable cost) within the territory.

This clearly shows that the rationale behind a specific project can be very different to the rationale involving LPPs. To correct this, the local public

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institution should re-situate any one-off action within the framework of its public policy agenda, and evaluate this action according to its contribution to building one of its LPPs.

In this regard, a specific project could be interesting and productive for a LPP if it offers, for example, some innovative solutions that could be extended by the local institution or replicated with other cooperation contributions, or if it helps to test and compare technical solutions that could be developed later. In fact, it is at this point that we begin to see that specific projects can be used to support a LPP.

An example taken from the URB-AL Programme:<sup>7</sup>

The PACEF project, mentioned above, is a good example of expanding an area of influence by creating replicable instruments. In Cochabamba, the project has participated, in particular, in the design of municipal charters with the aim of including a gender approach in them. This allows the creation of instruments to support the process that will regulate public policies at the municipal government level, which will then be able to replicate this model in a standardised way through the Association of Municipalities in the Province of Cochabamba (AMDECO). Furthermore,

the project actively participates in designing the methodologies and tools that will be applied in the process of decentralisation that the country is undergoing, in which the project leads the creation of the gender proposal in the framework of the Departmental Autonomy Statute. According to the project coordinators, *“the project’s influence spreads over a wider territory that is the province of Cochabamba, through the creation of the Departmental Autonomy Statute, at the same time as it actively participates to disseminate the charters to other municipalities. This synergy is achieved through inter-institutional working meetings”*.

From the point of view of a local government concerned about its LPPs, a specific project does not so much serve to resolve the needs of a narrow group of beneficiaries as it does to prepare, facilitate or enrich the solutions that the local government will have to put in place to respond to the needs of its population. Basically, in the first of these two alternatives, the local government would have to multiply the cooperation projects to really address the problems of its population, as each project covers a limited number of people. On the other hand, in the second, the project is an instrument for developing and enabling a responsible action by the public institution in the form of a LPP.

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7 Example quoted from the Programme Progress Report: [http://www.urb-al3.eu/uploads/documentos/informe\\_de\\_avance\\_de\\_programa.pdf](http://www.urb-al3.eu/uploads/documentos/informe_de_avance_de_programa.pdf)

A clear example is the case of the reconstruction of homes after a natural disaster such as an earthquake or flood.

In a specific project within traditional cooperation, the aim is simply to deliver a certain number of homes. In the same circumstances, a project designed to support LPPs would propose providing the local government with the technical and organisational capacity necessary to create and launch a local public policy of reconstruction. Its content, established by common agreement, could focus, depending on the cases, on urban planning to redesign the affected areas, developing affordable construction models using local materials, capacity-building for municipal staff, creating dynamics of participative self-construction, or any other aspect that the local government considers necessary for addressing, in an organised and responsible way, the situation of its population.

Through this last example we can clearly see that the content and orientation of a project are transformed depending on whether it focuses on an immediate specific result or whether, on the contrary, it aims to contribute elements for building or consolidating a public policy in the medium or long term. (See chart 9.)

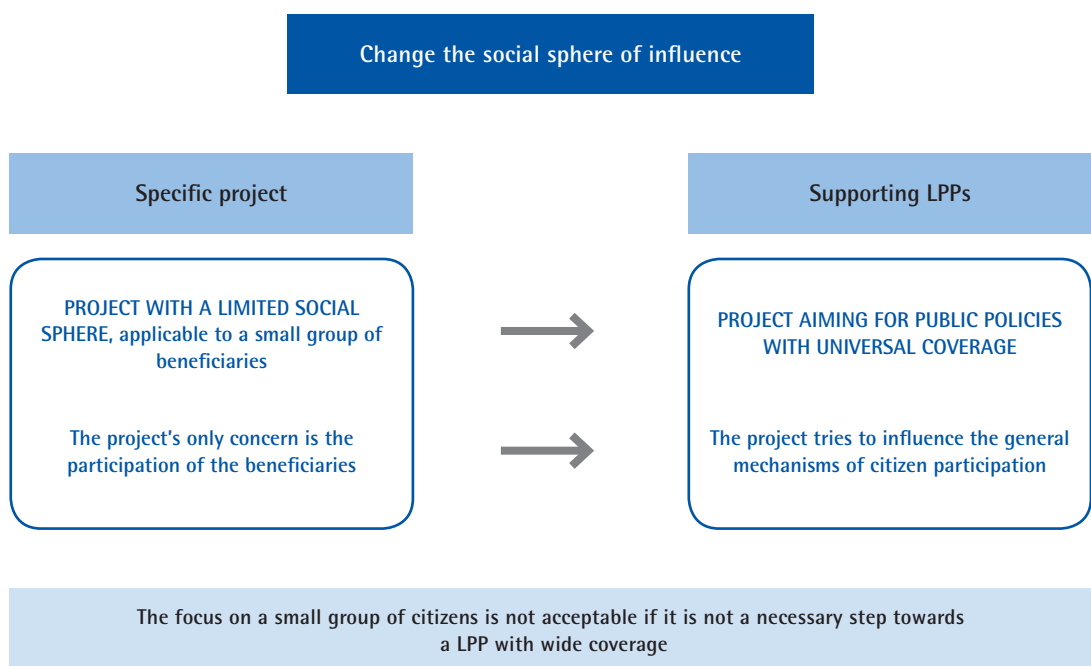


Chart 9

#### 4.4. Institutionalising the project's contributions and making them last

One of the most obvious defects of specific projects is their ephemeral nature. Once the actions have been finalised and the results obtained, the project dissolves and leaves no further imprint on the territory. The innovations introduced during the rollout, the new institutional mechanisms and the political benefits obtained during the course of the process usually vanish very easily.

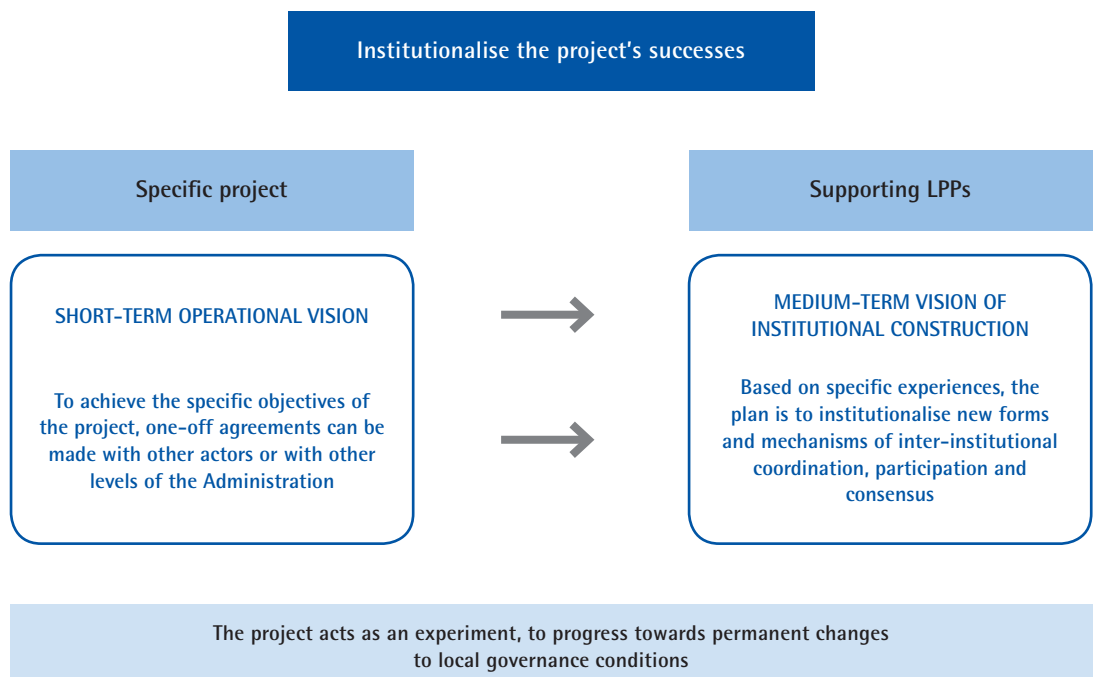
In contrast, to turn a specific project into an instrument for consolidating LPPs, it is useful to make these intangible achievements irreversible and sustainable. A good indicator, in this regard, is the

degree of institutionalisation obtained. If the organisational and methodological elements the project has generated have been adopted by the local institution or have found a financing route beyond the project, this provides the right conditions for them to be permanently incorporated into the local functioning and for the project's achievements to last over time.

Some examples taken from the URB-AL Programme Progress Report:

The implementation of some projects has prompted the executing public administrations to create internal units that did not previously exist. In the case of the *Fronteras turísticas* project, a planning and projects unit has been created which will

Chart 10



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remain installed in the municipalities after the external aid ends. Other projects have generated multidisciplinary management units that also plan to continue working after the URB-AL Programme intervention is finalised. This is the case of the Municipal Assembly of Popular Power in Central Havana, in the framework of the Urban and Territorial Participative Management project, in which a new body has been set up that, for the first time, brings together urban engineers and social professionals to manage the domestic mobility plan.

Therefore, when managing a specific project, it is important to be able, as soon as possible, to identify the elements of the project that could be spread to or replicated in other areas, and attempt to integrate them into the programme containing all the planned municipal actions. (See chart 10.)

## Summary

Let us recall some tangible changes that, resulting from a specific project, can represent an institutional consolidation and reinforce or facilitate LPPs:

- / Greater involvement by the local institution in the technical and administrative management of the project.

- / Decision to expand the planned scope of the project or to replicate it on another scale.

- / Local institution's adoption of systems and instruments first used in the framework of the project.

- / Creation of new permanent administrative units which are included in the institution's organisational structure and designed to last beyond the duration of the project.

- / Changes to the institution's operational rules and methodologies.

- / Advances in intra-institutional cooperation: new mechanisms for information and collaboration among departments.



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## 5. Leveraging a specific project to progress towards genuine LPPs by improving local governance

A specific project does not always include mechanisms for participation and collaboration. A project of this type may, intentionally or not, tend to avoid these mechanisms to protect itself from potential delays in the implementation or possible deviations or transformations of the initial content.

In contrast, a local government that wants to expand and consolidate the scope of its public policies is interested in using an ongoing project as an example or pilot experience of participation and consensus, considering that these two elements not only lend the project legitimacy, but also strengthen the series of LPPs put into practice by the local government.

In fact, a specific project usually provides an excellent terrain for an experience of this type, owing to its visibility, social and political importance, the resources it has access to and the institutional support it receives. The project has the disadvantage of being ephemeral, but at the same time it has the advantage of being an extraordinary event that can be leveraged, because it can achieve things that are difficult to accomplish under normal circumstances. It could be used as a testing ground and also as a perfect showcase for new, or until now minority, social processes aimed at public and private local stakeholders, organised civil society or the general public.

A project that receives foreign funding and support can also arouse the political and institutional interest of the regional or State authorities, help to involve them

in the success of the project and obtain important decisions or changes in inter-institutional relations.

Below we attempt to identify some of these aspects, analysing the relationship that can be established, respectively, with citizens, civil society organisations, economic and social stakeholders and the different administrations.

### 5.1. How to make the project an exercise in consolidating citizen participation

As previously indicated, specific projects do not always involve citizen participation and, when they do, they tend to create ad hoc mechanisms for participation limited to the circle of beneficiaries and to the strict objectives of the project. Thus, only occasional consultations are made with the primary aim of lending the project legitimacy, and not of helping to validate and reinforce the existing mechanisms for citizens to participate in and control the decisions being made.

In contrast, as seen in chapter 1, when the original intention is to build and reinforce LPPs, citizen participation is one of the fundamental elements and one of the specific characteristics of public policies in the local arena. Therefore, in this case, the project must prioritise the use and revitalisation of existing mechanisms and processes of participation for the local

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population. If these systems do not exist, and if the project has to create new spaces or channels, they can play an important role as pilot experiences, and the local authorities (once the positive results in this specific case have been proven) must carefully consider the possibility of making these mechanisms widely available and gradually institutionalising them.

According to the URB-AL Programme Progress Report:

The generation, boosting and/or strengthening of citizen consultation and citizen participation mechanisms highlight the adoption of a public policy approach more in tune with the vision of the Programme, and demonstrates a change of mindset regarding the Programme. Being one of the central aspects in most of the interventions, almost all of the territories have created or strengthened participation spaces. These include councils, forums, committees and other coordination and discussion bodies. Participation is also reinforced by other mechanisms, such as workshops, exchanges and different types of spaces where information and guidelines are shared.

In fact, in some cases participation is not seen as a working method or accessory, but as a core objective of some interventions. Some projects that stand out in this regard are *Innovación Institucional*, *Gente Diversa*, *Gente Equivalente*, *Habitar Goes* and *Gestión Urbana y Territorial Participativa*, in which participation is an inherent aspect of the interventions and forms the backbone of the actions.

In a period when Latin American democracies are being consolidated and, at the same time, society is suffering disenchantment and a loss of confidence in the transparency and effectiveness of representation mechanisms, these attempts at 'co-responsibility' with citizens could become new laboratories for more advanced democratic practices.

Promoting citizen participation in the framework of a project also has a salutary effect on the population involved.

The specific experience of new forms of participative diagnosis and systems of bottom-up decision-making empowers the population and brings about a change in the relationship with the local public Administration. In these circumstances two alternatives may arise. If the local government does not have a clear LPP on developing citizen participation, it may be tempted to curb this dynamic and limit it to the strict confines of the project. Alternatively, if citizen participation forms part of its strategic options and is explicitly mentioned in its government agenda, the local government will be willing to accept and strengthen these changes of attitude and mentality, which could obviously generate a greater demand for participation in strategic decisions, together with greater transparency and better accountability.

It is significant that the URB-AL Programme Progress Report indicates that these "exercises in local democracy" have also generated "a change in the citizens' mindset regarding cooperation

Chart 11.  
Leveraging a project  
to consolidate citizen  
participation

Stages	Content	Observations
1	Pilot experience of citizen participation carried out within the strict framework of a project	To really be valid, it needs close monitoring and great transparency and public dissemination
2	Evaluation of the experience. Assessing the processes followed and their potential for replication	The evaluation itself must be participative and should include all the actors involved
3	Formulation of proposals for improving the existing processes or establishing new mechanisms for citizen participation	
4	Approval of changes by the local government	The opinion of existing advisory bodies is gathered beforehand
5	Inclusion of the changes in the LPP on citizen participation and in the government agenda	

policy, which has gone from considering useful cooperation as that which provides tangible benefits for the community to that which supports other aspects such as, for example, mechanisms for incorporating citizens into public planning and management”.

As an indication, the above outline could be proposed in order to move from a specific participation exercise to a possible transformation or improvement of the local government’s policy on citizen participation.

As we have seen, the first two stages mentioned fall within the project’s activities. In contrast, the following stages are those which reflect the will to take advantage of the project experience to improve the local public policy on citizen participation.

## 5.2. How to leverage a specific project to coordinate and reinforce organised civil society

This aspect is very closely linked to the citizen participation mentioned in the previous section, but it warrants special attention because an important part of international cooperation directly concerns and mobilises these types of institutions and organisations. Non-governmental cooperation, as well as sectoral cooperation between universities and educational centres or between hospitals and health centres, is generally carried out between civil society organisations, outside cooperation between local public institutions. Thus, non-governmental organisations usually work with their counterparts in the south, which they consider as the priority recipients of their cooperation.

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The work carried out between civil societies on both sides can be a very important addition to decentralised cooperation and, in certain cases, a highly valuable element of democratic control in the relation established between public institutions.

So, to obtain participative and inclusive local public policies, it is necessary, in each case, to carefully study how the work of the local institution and that of organisations and groups created by citizens can be coordinated within the framework of the project.

This will allow two fundamental aspects to be clarified: (1) the specific nature of the roles that must be played by the public institution and by civil society organisations; and (2) the possibility of these actions complementing and reinforcing each other.

Cooperation projects between local public institutions are starting to involve certain bodies in their activities. As an example, the UNE Inclusive and Participatory Local Development Strategies project has created the Advisory Council 21, made up of representatives of the different stakeholders and which has generated new dynamics and links with, for example, universities, which is a situation that did not previously exist.

Likewise, the EMIDEL Project, which was mentioned earlier, has also facilitated agreements between universities in Spain and Bolivia regarding postgraduate courses on local development.

These examples illustrate the start of a new dynamic, in which local governments assume the leadership of cooperation but associate and integrate representatives of civil society in the territory into this process.

### **5.3. How to work with public and private local actors on a project**

In addition to representatives of civil society, there is also an interest in and need to involve the territory's main social and economic stakeholders in this new form of local cooperation. To do this, we could ask ourselves if an existing project could be used to take the first steps in this direction.

Although this possibility might not have been explicitly considered from the outset, the local government can in fact try to link local actors' initiatives to an existing project, converting it into an opportunity to make specific progress in the area of public-private collaboration.

As a starting point, the active participation and collaboration of these actors may be necessary or even vital to the success of the project. Thus, we frequently encounter the possibility of inviting certain local actors to become involved in the development of the project or in some of its activities. This timely and pragmatic justification can enable a real experience of multi-actor

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coordination to be carried out, which may in fact generate a dynamic process representing a first step towards organised and lasting collaboration between the local public institution and the relevant local agents and economic stakeholders.

To begin this process, the local government can first mobilise municipal corporations or public institutions (universities, teaching and research centres, hospitals, etc.), and gradually expand this dynamic, in concentric circles, to the rest of the territory's private stakeholders.

As we have seen, seeking this multi-actor coordination under the leadership of the local public institution extends beyond the scope of the project, and can be an objective in itself and an area in which to develop a specific LPP on participation and coordination with stakeholders, closely linked to issues of local development, creating employment and social inclusion.

In the URB-AL III Programme, as indicated in the Progress Report, "there is a wide variety of examples in this regard, although the most noteworthy are those projects whose goals include revitalising the territory and creating employment. In the case of the project *La basura sirve*, in Lago Agrio (Ecuador), Arica (Chile) and Cuenca (Ecuador) there are public-private agreements between associations and companies that purchase waste that has been separated by the municipality, something that according to its coordinator: 'is an experience of

political-institutional coordination that has arisen through the project and which is extremely interesting".

In turn, several working groups have been set up in the framework of the COCAP project that bring together the different actors in the three territories.

These working groups are spaces for debate and formulating ideas in which the principal actors (Administration, society and the private sector) involved in a specific productive area participate.

We should remember that to unleash the full potential of this participation and for the project to be inserted as a key instrument for carrying out this policy, it would obviously be useful if, right from the start, it were selected, discussed and agreed with the interested stakeholders, and that these agents were involved in the monitoring and evaluation, as indicated in chapter 3 of the present guide.

Another interesting example is the PACEF project, mentioned earlier, which is based precisely on coordinating inter-sectoral pacts to promote female employment in the different territories where it is implemented. The project involves building a system of cooperation and coordination among diverse public and private actors and academia in order to form relations based on collaboration and trust among local public institutions and the territory's businesses.

Interestingly, the public-private collaboration initiatives launched by public institutions have an important

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impact on the companies themselves. As indicated in the Progress Report, “the change of mentality has also had an impact on the territorial stakeholders, particularly on private businesses which, in some cases because of a lack of custom, have shown a resistance towards working with the municipalities, but as a result of the interventions carried out have become aware of the benefits that can be reaped by both sectors”.

An example can be found in the PACEF project, whose coordinator argues: “There was resistance from them towards working with the municipalities but that has disappeared; before they worked in isolation from labour demands, but now they are much more involved. This business–public relationship is an outcome generated by PACEF”.

Thus, a specific project, well utilised, can end up becoming a valuable element in the gradual construction of a policy of multi-actor collaboration, provided that the platforms or spaces for consensus established during the project can be maintained, in one form or another, beyond the duration of the project.

#### **5.4. How the project can become a lever for change in multi-level governance**

Finally, we must think about how a cooperation project can contribute towards improving relations between the different levels of the Administration.

Without necessarily being an explicit objective in itself, carrying out a cooperation project frequently gives rise to an exercise in multi-level governance, and this specific experience helps to improve the existing atmosphere between the different public actors.

The project basically offers a series of actions to be carried out and a framework of intervention in which different levels of the Administration can (and, often, must) participate. It is a practical opportunity for meetings, negotiations and agreements between administrations, not in an abstract and theoretical way, but focused on a specific aim. The progress made, in this case, in the area of communication and coordination between these administrations may pave the way for better institutional collaboration in the immediate future.

In this situation, the strength of the project is that it imposes greater effective coordination between the administrations of the different territorial levels and sectoral areas in order to achieve specific objectives. What begins as a pragmatic necessity within the framework of a specific project can, therefore, become a lever for unlocking breakdowns in

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communication, or for proposing the feasibility and need for these different levels of the Administration to move towards multi-level governance.

Therefore, to take full advantage of this phenomenon, the local institution must be very careful to optimise the project's potential impact on multi-level governance and, in a broader sense, on the conditions of local governance in general. To do this, it must first analyse the institutional relations (public-public and public-private) that the project is going to need and/or generate. With this in mind, the project's political leaders must always maintain a dual perspective and concern: (1) the implementation and results of the project itself, and (2) the utilisation of the project as a means of introducing (in the medium and long term) new practices among the municipal and territorial public and private stakeholders.

On a technical level, those in charge of the project should strive to make it an opportunity to get the teams in different administrations working together, and to ensure that these teams directly experience an interest in collaborating, with each person making their own specific contribution such as, for example: knowledge of the local situation and the needs of the population, in the case of local staff, and a general overview and comparison with other territories, in the case of provincial, regional and national staff.

Some projects in the URB-AL III Programme have taken steps in this direction, whether by formulating a proposal or forming an official part of inter-sectoral working groups from which they generate an impact. This is the case of the Local Policies on the Prevention of Violence in Marginal Urban Areas project, coordinated by the state of Pernambuco (Brazil). In this project, the territory of Paysandú (Uruguay) collaborated with the Ministry of the Interior through a Coordination Committee on Citizen Security, created and promoted by the national government

In the political sphere, the project leaders need to know how to share the project's success with the different administrations that have collaborated in one way or another. They must emphasise that the project's success was largely due to the fact that the public institutions worked together, and that this same philosophy could be applied to other issues or actions, with very favourable results.

It is only in this way that the project can have a 'demonstration effect' and make an impact on inter-institutional collaboration practices.

In the URB-AL III Programme, the Progress Report states that "the institutionalisation of inter-sectoral collaboration committees between departments, between the public and private sectors (territorial agents) and between different levels of government is a common characteristic of several projects. For some territories this represents an important political-



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institutional progress, given that before the Programme they either did not exist, or if they did exist, the implementation of the interventions has added content and strengthened them”.

Experience shows that many URB-AL projects have resulted in multi-level coordination actions, with the aim of generating synergies, having a direct impact and participating in spaces for designing supra-local policies.

For example, in connection with solid waste, the *La basura sirve* project in the territory of Surco (Peru) works with the Environment Ministry or Secretariat to coordinate with national policies on environmental management. In the same project but in Cuenca (Ecuador), links have been established with the Public Health Ministry to guarantee vaccinations and medical care for recycling workers, and with the Education Ministry, which collaborates, for example, by opening child care facilities at night for the children of recycling workers.

To reiterate, the most important thing is that these experiences of coordination among administrations are not limited to the lifespan of the project, but instead become stable and permanent. In fact, the project is an opportunity to experience processes and methods of coordination and provide a tangible demonstration of their usefulness and effectiveness but, beyond the project, there must be a shared political will to continue along this path. This does not only depend on the local institution, but the local government

should take maximum advantage of the ‘institutional openings’ that are generated during the course of a project.

For example, in the PACEF project, the local governments did not hesitate to extend the membership of the working group to include other national institutions, which has allowed the project’s scope of influence to be widened.

Another noteworthy inter-institutional effect of a project is that the partners, after carrying out the planned actions together, see the need to continue collaborating in a more stable and broader manner, and that this materialises in permanent forms that may range from setting up territorial platforms or alliances to creating associations of municipalities (*mancomunidades*) and new supra-municipal administrative figures.

This has been the case of the Integrated Land Management project in Puerto Cortés, which has led to the creation of an association of municipalities that had not initially been planned.

Similarly, the *Fronteras turísticas* project has resulted in the creation of a joint management office and contributed towards institutionalising a stable alliance between the participating municipalities. This new institutional figure has decided to promote and expand the project’s activities, seeking new sources of financing and entering grant competitions (such as, for example, a new project presented at the EU call for proposals for non State actors, dedicated to the issue of local governance).



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Likewise, the URB-AL Programme Progress Report records the opinion of the coordinator of the *Fronteras turísticas* project, according to whom “thanks to multi-level coordination it was possible to consolidate regional alliances and support from central governments for providing resources for direct beneficiaries in order to promote tourist services, and support and assist the project’s objectives”. As indicated, the key elements here are: “that the central government of Peru, through its Tourism Ministry, has joined the project and got involved in the development of the Andean Aymara region as a whole; the central government of Bolivia, through its Culture Ministry, Foreign Ministry and Tourism Ministry, supporting the project’s partners; and the support of Bolivia’s Rural Development Ministry through the project VALE, which works in coordination with the project”.

In the opinion of the representative of this project, “No other sub-national municipality has achieved this level of coordination and positioning in central government institutions. We are being invited by our partners in the central government to participate in national and international events, such as the coordination and generation of border projects to improve the quality of life of these areas’ inhabitants”.

Another remarkable dimension of a project’s multi-level influence is its possible impact on regulations or laws that clearly exceed the local level, and which sometimes reflect a change in higher-ranking public policies.

Regarding regulatory aspects, some URB-AL III projects have promoted or approved new laws, as was the case of the COCAP project. In the framework of this project in the province of San Juan, a regulation was approved that made the project statutory, thus enabling it to manage community funds. According to its coordinator, “This did not exist in the province, and it enabled the Ministry of Economic Development to take the project on as its own”. Furthermore, also in San Juan, a draft bill has been drawn up to create a financial agency thanks to the URB-AL project. According to the coordinator of this project, “for the first time the province will have its own agency that will facilitate access to credit for small producers, who are currently outside the financial system, reduce costs and redirect resources”.

Finally, we must stress that working on a project from a perspective of multi-level governance is what very often permits and encourages the project to be extended to other territories and replicated, which are points discussed in section 4.3. Thus, for example, the project in the province of Santa Fe, mentioned earlier, has been used as a model for Argentina’s central government planning area, and is being replicated in two more provinces, those of Buenos Aires and Corrientes.

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## Summary

Some tangible changes brought about by a specific project that may represent an improvement in local governance conditions are:

/ Agreements between the public institution and other local actors, which are translated into the creation of multi-actor platforms and consultation and coordination instruments.

/ Improvement in the level of citizen participation, with the constitution and later institutionalisation of councils, committees, forums or other informal mechanisms (spaces, workshops, etc.).

/ Better coordination between different levels of government: creation of new mechanisms for collaboration and cooperation between the central government and regional and municipal authorities.

/ Impact on the legal and regulatory framework on a supra-municipal level.

/ Creation of associations of municipalities and the constitution of territorial alliances.

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## 6. Final considerations: specific nature and reciprocity

The present guide has attempted to clarify conceptual elements and offer practical instruments for local governments that decide to focus their cooperation on consolidating LPPs and strengthening local institutions.

After providing an overview of LPPs and current decentralised cooperation (chapter 1) and detailing the guiding principles of local cooperation aimed at supporting and improving LPPs (chapter 2), we have seen, in particular, how a cooperation intervention could be designed with these objectives clearly established (chapter 3) and, meanwhile, how an existing project can be leveraged to move ahead in this direction (chapters 4 and 5).

### Revealing and highlighting the specific nature of cooperation between local institutions

When cooperation between local institutions moves away from the traditional approach, which centres on providing resources for specific actions, and instead shifts towards a vision of partnership focused on improving and consolidating LPPs, the specific and unique nature of cooperation between local governments becomes increasingly obvious.

Indeed, the method that consists of financing specific projects is a form of cooperation that we could call undifferentiated, which could be carried

out by local institutions or other international cooperation agents. The only thing that counts in this case is the volume of resources mobilised, which explains why, in this context, decentralised cooperation is relatively unimportant, given the chronic shortage of local resources. In other words, if the cooperation criterion is focused on the volume of resources, local governments cannot ‘compete’ with other sources of financing.

In contrast, cooperation based on institutional strengthening requires the specific competences of local public actors. These are the actors who have proven experience in supplying basic public services, managing the city, building local democracy and in managing local affairs generally. They are the ones that create and carry out public policies in all areas of the local government on a daily basis and who can transmit and exchange this know-how. Consequently, it is this type of cooperation that exemplifies the specific nature of local governments and which makes them truly irreplaceable as actors in international cooperation; it would be good if decentralised cooperation evolved in this way, placing increasing importance and value on the technical, organisational, institutional, social and political contributions, instead of just the tangible contributions.

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## Moving towards reciprocity in cooperation work

From the perspective we have outlined, and when local governments recognise each other's wealth of experience in managing local society, it should be possible to start thinking realistically about forming genuine partnerships and building progressive reciprocity.

Decentralised cooperation can, therefore, be considered as a horizontal two-way working instrument and as an activity for strengthening and mutual learning. These ideas have been widely developed on a theoretical and conceptual level in the work of the Observatory of European Union-Latin American Decentralised Cooperation, but until now it has been rather difficult to put them into action within the framework of the URB-AL II Programme.

It would seem that in the URB-AL III Programme we are now in a position to go a step further than simple conceptual reflection. It should be pointed out, in fact, that the OCO has detected several specific examples in which this reciprocity has occurred.

The URB-AL Programme Progress Report indicates that:

Furthermore, some projects coordinated by European actors have highlighted the benefit these actors reap from their participation in URB-AL III in terms of improving their own public policies. For example, in the case of the project *La basura sirve*, its coordinators state that their participation in the project has been a learning process for them with regard to waste management: "In this final phase there is also a very interesting exchange of Latin-American models towards Europe. Arezzo, in the seminars, for example, has also learned elements for managing waste".

Similarly, the coordinators of the PACEF project note that: "The region of Sicily has implemented the Capacity-Building Pact methodology and it wanted to experience its application in Latin America and improve it to see whether this experience could be exported".

We hope that these cases, and this entire guide, serve as a practical illustration and an incentive for local governments interested in taking further steps towards building specific and reciprocal local cooperation, aimed at consolidating LPPs, mutual learning and strengthening local public institutions.

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# Glossary

## **Association of municipalities (*Mancomunidad*)**

A supra-municipal administrative formula in which several municipalities voluntarily work together to manage certain services or implement specific policies agreed by consensus. The financing of this association is guaranteed by the municipalities that form part of it, according to the rules established by common agreement.

## **Decentralised cooperation**

In this guide, decentralised cooperation is understood as public decentralised cooperation, i.e., as cooperation carried out between local or territorial groups. This cooperation may involve civil society organisations and other economic and social stakeholders in the territory, but always under the leadership of the public institutions.

## **Government agenda**

The government agenda contains the topics and issues that local government leaders consider priorities and which they have decided to act on.

## **Intra-institutional cooperation**

Intra-institutional cooperation is a local public institution's capacity to make its different technical departments work together in coordination, instead of these departments acting in a compartmentalised way and limiting themselves to following their own sectoral approach.

In this regard, a cross-sectoral approach could be considered as a prerequisite for the institution to be able to tackle complex problems that require integrated LPPs or that involve various departments and sectors.

## **Local public institution**

In this guide the term is used to refer to a public institution responsible for managing and providing basic services and administering the population on a local or sub-national territorial level. This definition basically refers to municipalities (or city councils), but also includes associations of municipalities, counties, departments, provinces and regions.

## **Local public policy**

A series of coordinated and planned actions carried out by a local public institution, which are designed to resolve a negative situation (or improve an existing situation) that affects all or part of the local population, and which is considered to be a collective issue that demands the intervention of the public authorities. Thus, the public policy tends to accomplish one of the objectives of the government agenda. These actions must be carried out, or at least be led, by the local public institution, with the participation and collaboration of other actors.

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### **Multi-actor local governance**

The concept of local governance in this guide designates the way in which the local society is managed and decisions are taken in the common interest.

This includes not only formal political mechanisms, but also the processes of consultation and consensus that accompany them. Multi-actor governance emphasises the value and need for local authorities to encourage other local actors (universities, associations and civil society organisations, businesses, etc.) to participate in processes of creating and evaluating public policies.

### **Multi-level local governance**

Multi-level local governance refers to the need for the local government to establish permanent relations of collaboration and coordination with the other levels of the public Administration to address the local problems that require the combined intervention of the municipal and regional or national authorities. The existence of a formal and informal system of inter-institutional coordination allows LPPs to be better implemented, on condition that the institutions involved respect local autonomy and do not encroach on the local government's competence area.

### **Partnership**

A partnership is a non-hierarchical relationship established between cooperation actors when all those involved share a common interest, enjoy the same level of consideration and can participate actively in the decision-making process. This means in particular that the actors consider themselves to be partners and jointly responsible for the actions that are taken.

### **Public-private coordination**

This is understood here as an attempt by the local public institution to work with private companies and organisations to create and execute public policies, and/or carry out certain projects, seeking partnerships and specific collaboration methods with these actors.

### **Reciprocity**

In this guide, the word 'reciprocity' is used when the cooperation is not viewed as a one-way contribution, with resources sent from a 'wealthy' or experienced municipality to a 'poor' or inexperienced municipality, but rather as a two-way activity in which each partner contributes and receives something.

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### **Replicability**

A project can be called 'replicable' when the conditions allow this action to be reproduced in another territory or on another scale, or when the methodology used could directly inspire other actions by the local institution.

### **Sustainability**

In cooperation, sustainable actions are those which can continue to be maintained after the project has ended. As the project is often based on external contributions (financing, technology, know-how, etc.), there is a very high risk of its actions not lasting.

This is the reason for the concern and interest in finding a way to guarantee greater sustainability by building the capacities of local personnel, using endogenous technologies and seeking local financial resources.

### **Territorial alliance**

A territorial alliance is a strategic agreement between public and private stakeholders in a territory for the purpose of projecting it abroad, promoting certain activities or defending common interests. On an organisational level, this alliance could involve creating a new entity or be limited to establishing a space for collaboration among the participants.





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# 05

## Methodological guides URB-AL III

URB-AL III is a regional decentralised cooperation programme run by the European Commission, the aim of which is to contribute towards increasing the level of social cohesion in sub-national and regional groups in Latin America.

Led by Diputació de Barcelona, the URB-AL III Programme Orientation and Coordination Office's mission is to facilitate the implementation of the programme by providing technical assistance and support in the different projects in order to help achieve the programme's objectives.

