

Construction of International Cooperation strategies: An inquiry into the learning experience

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Construcción de estrategias de cooperación internacional: una investigación sobre la experiencia de aprendizaje

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Abstract

The present research is the product of a collection of primary information in the context of the formulation of the International Cooperation strategy of the Municipality of Pasto, for the purpose of determining the path of construction of this process, its impact and challenges and, above all, the learning achieved through the participatory formulation of the International Cooperation strategy. The methodology of the research is of a qualitative interpretative study, which allowed to rebuild from the sight of actors the participatory formulation of the strategy of International Cooperation, rescuing the importance of participation in all levels, recognizing the team working and the generation of partnerships, trust and commitment in the pursuit of strengthening and sustainability of the process of internationalization of the Municipality. Finally, the research concluded with a series of reflections concerning the formulation of strategies for International Cooperation.

Keywords: International Cooperation, Development, learning, aid effectiveness.

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Resumen

El presente trabajo es el producto de una recopilación de información primaria en el contexto de la formulación de las estrategias de cooperación internacional del municipio de Pasto, con el propósito de determinar el camino para la realización de este proceso, sus impactos y desafíos y, sobre todo, el aprendizaje que se logra a través de la formulación participativa de las estrategias de cooperación internacional. La metodología empleada en la investigación se corresponde con la de un estudio interpretativo cualitativo, el cual permitió la formulación participativa de la estrategia de cooperación internacional, mediante el rescate de la participación en todos los niveles. Además se reconoce la importancia del equipo de trabajo y la generación de alianzas, la confianza y el compromiso en la búsqueda de fortalecer la sostenibilidad del proceso de internacionalización de la municipalidad. Por último, la investigación concluyó con una serie de reflexiones en torno a la formulación de estrategias para la cooperación internacional.

Palabras clave: cooperación internacional, desarrollo, aprendizaje, eficacia de la ayuda.

1 Introduction

International Cooperation, better known as International Development, is a recent topic of wide interest in international affairs. These terms first appeared in the middle of the 20th century, after World War II, to refer to a mechanism for reestablishing the new free trade relationships between developed and underdeveloped countries and the struggle of the United States and its allies to protect the Third World from communism. On January 20, 1949, Harry S. Truman made this remark: «We must embark on a bold new program for making the benefits of our scientific advances and industrial progress available for the improvement and growth of underdeveloped areas. The old imperialism —exploitation for foreign profit— has no place in our plans. What we envisage is a program of development based on the concept of democratic fair dealing» (Sachs 1992).

This marked the beginning of new policies on international affairs. International Cooperation is nowadays offered by official and non-official sources (Mattes and Rodriguez 2014). The official sources are governments and international organizations. They are distinguished as bilateral and multilateral. Bilateral cooperation involves two countries or the institutions of two countries. Relationships are formed between governments through their embassies, although in each country cooperation agencies or institutions take part to provide technical assistance (Ripoll and Ghotme 2015). On the other hand, multilateral cooperation involves public international bodies which offer multilateral cooperation with their own resources or with funds provided by member countries for specific programs (Acción Social 2007).

International Cooperation is defined by the local International Cooperation agency Social Action as «the aid to support the economic and social development of developing countries, for the transfer of technologies, knowledge, capabilities or experiences from countries and multilateral organizations. It is also well known by the term «Official Development Aid» (ODA), which is a global concept that comprises different types of aid, such as technical cooperation, scholarships, financial cooperation, humanitarian and emergency aid and food aid» (Presidencia de la República 2007). Over the years, International Cooperation has been transformed from a welfare relationship to partnership relationship (Ripoll and Ghotme 2015). Basic welfare was seen as a way of attacking an immediate problem, usually related to the lack of something due to slow develop as measured by the GDP or per capita income of a country. The transformation to a partnership relationship is seen as beneficial from a human development perspective, where the cooperation actors have a role as partners rather than as donors–recipients. This is a relatively recent change in the relationships between countries

and Colombia is searching for sustainable human development for its population and is looking for more than immediate assistance.

The process of International Cooperation in the Department of Nariño and the Municipality of Pasto is not a recent issue. Although, the Government agencies have been concerned about the development of the territory at an international level, the figures relating to its efforts in this area are not clear or officially quantified. The Presidential Agency for Social Action and International Cooperation released a report in August 2008 in which it stated that there were 110 ongoing projects in the Department of Nariño, with a total investment of over USD 41,042,258. The Municipality of Pasto, capital city of the department, is leading this process. In its effort to promote cooperation at the local level, the Municipality has begun the process of forming strategic alliances through decentralized cooperation —a concept introduced at the Lomé IV Convention of 1989—. This legal cooperation agreement between the European Union (EU) and the ACP (Africa, Caribbean and Pacific) countries allows economic, social and cultural organizations to present development projects in order to obtain funds under the Lomé Convention. Within this frame of reference, development aid has been channeled to various decentralized government administrations, autonomous regions, provinces, municipalities and/or communities.

With the presence of the United Nations Development Programme —UNDP—, Colombia joins more than 160 countries around the world in working to provide answers and solutions to diverse local-level needs, through different forms of intervention which are within the objectives of territorial development and with a view toward achieving the Millennium Development Goals by 2015. Among the UNDP programs there are a support program for local networks and thematic cooperation for human development (ART), and another program for reconciliation and development (REDES), which is based on the quest to transform conditions that are favorable to the conflict as well as to prevent harmful actions by promoting the principle that there is a need for the convergence of local, national and international efforts and technical and financial resources. Thus, the ART-REDES initiative recognizes that, in order to overcome the structural obstacles to development, joint efforts are required by all local, national and international actors that value an active role by local communities in development processes.

ART is an International Cooperation initiative that coordinates programs and activities of diverse United Nations organizations: UNDP, UNESCO, UNDFW, UNOPS and others. This initiative promotes a new type of multilateralism, in which the United Nations system works with governments, favoring active participation by local communities and social actors from the south and north. The acronym ART stands for: Articulation of Territorial and Thematic Networks of Cooperation for Human Development. In Colombia the

ART program is called ART-REDES. REDES is a UNDP program in Colombia that specializes in the promotion of human development strategies and peace construction in armed conflict contexts. ART-REDES came to the city of Pasto at the end of 2007.

The purpose of this qualitative inquiry is to gather and document information that can be helpful in understanding the implications of International Cooperation in a small city of a developing country: Colombia. The study focuses on the Municipality of Pasto and the joint construction the Municipality's International Cooperation strategy: «Pasto Open to the World». The study will draw upon the experiences and understandings of the participants involved in constructing the strategy in relation to their interactions with International Cooperation agencies and the insights gained in the participative process of elaborating the strategy.

The study is important because it examines and documents the participative construction of the International Cooperation strategy «Pasto City Open to the World», which offers a strategy development model in Colombia within the national ART-REDES program of the UNDP. It is noteworthy that this is the first time that the Municipality of Pasto has devised a strategy directed towards International Cooperation, and therefore the findings of this study will serve in the future as a starting point for further research and the updating and systematization of the strategy. More specifically, this study has the potential to have a positive impact on the researchers, the subjects, and the society in the following ways: the stakeholders will have the opportunity to provide feedback about the strategy, to learn from the experiences of others, and to obtain a better understanding of International Cooperation in the territory, insights which can be used by the Municipal Task Force to improve and redirect the Annual Operating Plan. The society may benefit from the conclusions of this research, given that this is the first time that the City is building a joint strategy, and from acquiring an understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of this process.

2 Literature review

2.1. Global scenario

The literature found on International Cooperation, international development and, more recently, the topic of aid effectiveness is basically produced and edited by international development organizations (Ripoll and Ghotme 2015), such as the United Nations System —UNS—, the World Bank —WB—, the European Union —EU—, the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean —ECLAC—, Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation —APEC—, and the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development

—OECD—. Some other sources are the International Cooperation initiatives and agencies of different countries, such as the Japanese International Cooperation Agency —JICA— and the Swedish International Development Agency —SIDA.

The International Cooperation system was born out of the ruins of the World War II, when the United States used its aid funds to help rebuild Europe. In the late 1990s, donor governments and aid agencies began working with each other and with developing countries to harmonize their work in order to improve its impact. More recently, aid effectiveness has been driven by three additional factors. First, the need to simplify and rationalize the complex system of aid administration and reduce transaction costs. Second, demands from citizens of donor countries for greater discipline and accountability in the administration of aid by their governments. And third, a sudden awareness of the serious democratic and legitimacy deficit in the present aid architecture, dominated as it is by donor countries of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the World Bank and regional development banks (Tandon 2008, par. 8).

The Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness essentially formalized the relationship between development partners and aid recipients by explicitly outlining the roles and responsibilities of both parties and strengthening country ownership of the development process, ensuring the alignment of development partner support with national priorities, ensuring harmonization of donor procedures and country systems, managing resources on the basis of agreed results and using information to improve decision making. Ensuring mutual accountability in relation to resource flows and results achieved through the implementation of national business strategies encouraged almost all countries and the most important international organizations to adhere to the Paris Declaration (see table 1).

African Development Bank	Arab Bank for Economic Development in Africa
Asian Development Bank	Commonwealth Secretariat
Consultative Group to Assist the Poorest (CGAP)	Council of Europe Development Bank (CEB)
Economic Commission for Africa (ECA)	Education for All Fast Track Initiative (EFA-FTI)
European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD)	European Investment Bank (EIB)
GAVI Alliance	Global Fund to Fight Aids, Tuberculosis and Malaria
G24	Inter-American Development Bank
International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)	International Monetary Fund (IMF)
International Organisation of the Francophonie	Islamic Development Bank
Millennium Campaign	New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD)
Nordic Development Fund	Organization of American States
Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)	Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS)
OPEC Fund for International Development	Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat
United Nations Development Group (UNDG)	World Bank

Table 1

International Organizations adhering to the Paris Declaration and AAA

Source: Development Co-operation Directorate (DCD-DAC)

Retrieved from http://www.oecd.org/document/22/0,3343,en_2649_3236398_36074966_1_1_1_1,00.html.

The United Nations system and cooperation activities form part of the reform process launched by the Office of the Secretary-General. The United Nations System has embarked on a review of its entire array of technical cooperation activities in an effort to increase the effectiveness of the programs financed by official development assistance, provide greater clarity, increase the flow of information and improve coordination between the United Nations Secretariat, including the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, and the regional commissions, funds and programs that fulfill a role in this area, such as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) (United Nations News 2005, section B, par. 1).

2.2. Latin American scenario

With respect to Latin America and the Caribbean, the distribution of official development assistance in regions and countries remains highly unequal (see figure 1). The group of least developed countries accounts for 31.8% of assistance and heavily indebted poor countries receive 31%. Sub-Saharan Africa, the leading destination of Official Development Assistance (ODA), received 40.8% of bilateral flows in 2004. In that same year, Africa and Asia accounted for 82% of net assistance, while Latin America and the Caribbean received 10.9%, close to the level received in the previous year (10.7%). This proportion is similar to the 9% observed in the 1990s, but lower than the figures recorded at the beginning of the present decade (12% in 2001). Haiti is the only country in the region classified as one of the least developed countries. All the other Latin American and Caribbean countries have higher per capita income levels than those of other regions in the world; hence the significantly

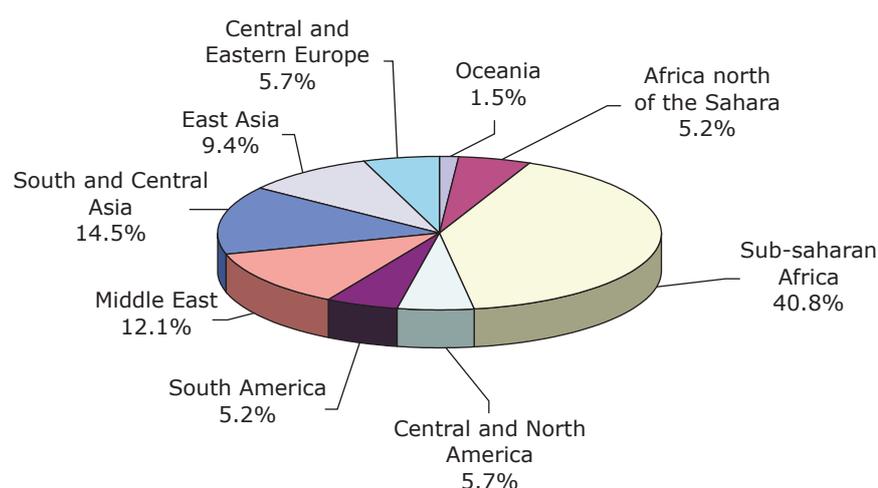


Figure 1

Distribution of Net ODA flows by Region 2004

Source: Statistical database of the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), December 2005.

lower levels of ODA inflows into the region compared with Africa or Asia. If income distribution indicators are taken into account, however, the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean continue to show the worst statistics in the world, and the social panorama continues to be highly unsatisfactory.

However, «the United Nations system and cooperation activities show significant progress made in strengthening regional cooperation and in pursuing greater economic and social integration among Latin American and Caribbean countries» (The United Nations 2009, par. 1). In this framework, there are many points of view about this continent. For instance, the ECLAC-AECID Program stresses the importance of performing a comparative study of the economic impact of institutional changes that have occurred since the independence of Latin American countries, with the aim of contributing to the «understanding of the historical process of economic development of young Latin American nations, a tool that helps to build the capability for analysis and design of the institutional and macroeconomic development policies» (CEPAL-AECID 2009, par. 1). There are other important International Cooperation actors, such as the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency —SIDA (Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency 2009)—, which is responsible for implementing the development work strategies developed by the Swedish Government. SIDA's operations are carried out by four departments: Long-Term Program Cooperation, Conflict and Post-Conflict Cooperation, Reform Cooperation in Europe, and Development Partnerships. Each department contains a number of teams that are responsible for implementing strategies for a country or region determined by the Swedish Government.

The European Union has had an important and considerable role in the past, present and future of Latin American and Caribbean countries. History shows the existence of a strategic partnership since the first bi-regional summit in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil in 1999. These countries and the European Union are natural allies linked by strong historical, cultural and economic ties. They cooperate closely at an international level and maintain an intense political dialogue at all levels —regional, sub-regional (Central America, the Andean Community and Mercosur) and bilateral—. (The main subjects in bi-regional dialogues are macroeconomic, and financial matters, the environment, climate change and energy.). «Figuring prominently in bi-regional dialogues are the macroeconomic and financial matters; environment, climate change and energy; science, research and technology; migration; and, finally, employment and social affairs» (European Commission 2009, section 3). In future programming, operations of this kind will have to be focused on the region's priorities. Three areas of regional activities have been identified for the period 2007-2013 on the basis of regional needs and the lessons drawn from past cooperation, which will need to be made sufficiently

visible. The three areas have been chosen to tackle the following regional challenges: firstly, Social cohesion to consolidate the social fabric by, *inter alia*, reducing poverty, inequality and exclusion and cooperation in the fight against drugs; secondly, Regional integration and economic cooperation; and thirdly, Human resources and mutual understanding between the EU and Latin America (European Commission n.d., summary section, par. 12).

In the regional context, Asia-Pacific Cooperation is a new window of opportunity for our countries. Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation —APEC— is the premier forum for facilitating economic growth, cooperation, trade and investment in the Asia-Pacific region. APEC is the only inter governmental grouping in the world operating on the basis of non-binding commitments, open dialogue and equal respect for the views of all participants (Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation 2009, par. 1).

Japan, through JICA, and the Government of China have a growing interest in the region (McCarthy 2010). In Latin America, JICA focuses on three major development sectors: climate change and the environment, infrastructure development for sustainable economic growth, and poverty reduction. It reflects the Japanese Government's focus on addressing the country's environmental issues. In the region, the agency promotes the use of alternative energy including solar, geothermal and hydroelectric power. It also helps recover and protect threatened natural resources such as the Andean glaciers and the Amazon tropical forest (Wainer 2009, section 2).

2.3. National scenario: Colombia

Colombia has implemented the International Cooperation Agenda, which seeks to advance on the following five fronts: thematic orientation; improved coordination, alignment and harmonization of cooperation in the country; strengthening of the regional capacity in the management of International Cooperation within the framework of the National System for International Cooperation; development of new sources and modes of cooperation; strengthening of the supply of technical cooperation. The National Government believes that International Cooperation plays a fundamental role as a complement to the national effort and commitment aimed at social equality, environmental protection, institutional strengthening, peace building and the promotion of peaceful coexistence.

With respect to Gender equality, UNDP promotes gender mainstreaming in their programs, projects and studies. Roles, responsibilities and opportunities are differentiated in ongoing relationships between men and women in the interests of both public policies and development actions. In Colombia, according to

the National Institute of Legal Medicine and Forensic Sciences, 60% of households witnessed incidents of psychological violence against women on a casual basis and 46% of patients presented severe psychological violence. 20% are physically battered by their partner, 16% occasionally, with 4% and 6% reporting that they have been sexually forced by a partner. In addition it was observed that the higher the educational level, the lower the incidence of all forms violence (Departamento Nacional de Planeación 2005, p. 16). This means that it is necessary to take action against inequality and discrimination in access to development opportunities, and to promote full participation by women. Identification of the specific needs of women and men constitutes a fundamental strategy for human development.

Family violence is a serious social and public health problem that poses an obstacle to development and represents a clear violation of human rights. In Latin America, between quarter and more than half of women reported having been abused by their partners, and between 5% and 20% of adults reported having been victims of violence (Shader and Sagon 2000, p. 4).

Regarding environmental scope, the environment and natural resources are the basis on which all economic, social and cultural rights rest. There are 114 million hectares of continental forest cover. Colombia has around 55 million hectares covered by forests, which support a large percentage of the country's species diversity, which in turn represents 10% of global biodiversity, and Colombia is home to about 1.5% of the world's forests (Ministerio de Medio Ambiente, Vivienda y Desarrollo Territorial 2001). The causes of deforestation in the country are, in order of importance, «the expansion of the agricultural border and colonization (73.3%), timber production (11.7%), consumption of wood (11%), forest fires (2%) and illicit crops (2%)» (República de Colombia 1996, p. 5). UNDP cooperation in Colombia takes a local development approach, taking account of the complexities of work progress and potential reconciliation in the territories. Local development, conceived as the outcome of cooperation between local and external actors, involves three main interconnected parts: governance, organization and productivity (Arboleda, Petesch and Blackburn 2004).

2.4. Local scenario: Pasto (Nariño)

The Department of Nariño is the setting for a worldwide pilot program that joins two UNDP programs: ART and REDES. According to Antonio Zurita's analysis in the magazine *Observa*, the ART strategy started in 2005, within the *Hub for Innovative Partnerships* framework. From then until the end of 2009, the ART initiative worked with 17 country programs in Latin America, Africa, Asia and Europe. Colombia has participated in this initiative, but Nariño has joined the ART and REDES programs. The ART Initiative includes:

Strategic Guidelines for International Cooperation, CI Working groups, Resource Management, Local Economic Development and Governance. The REDES (NETWORKS) Program includes Support for local capacities for peace, Alliances/Networks-Tables, Political agendas (population, issues [strategic needs]), Public Political Incidence and State Responsiveness.

The structural problems in our county include the presence of several outlaw groups; poverty and exclusion; recruitment of youth by outlaw armed groups; the increase in illicit crops; aerial spraying with glyphosate; disrespect for the medical mission; threats to teachers in rural municipalities; threats to victims, organizations, civic organizations, leaders, organizations of displaced persons, human rights organizations and international organizations such as UNDP, IOM and NRC; targeted killings; confinement; restriction of freedom of movement; limited humanitarian aid access; landmines; gender violence; and forced inland migration.

«For the study, a poor person is one who in 2009 received (in exchange for work) less than US\$140 a month, and an indigent person is one who in 2009 received less than US\$60 a month for work performed» (Los índices de pobreza y de indigencia en Colombia 2010, p. 5). The main economic activity in the municipality, with 56.1% share, is trade, an activity that does not generate any added value, does not require skilled personnel and employs on average fewer than 5 employees in most of the establishments. The main problems of the Municipality of Pasto are: Safety and coexistence, Recruitment of children and youth by illegal groups, Revenue generation, Population in situations of forced displacement (forced



Figure 2
Municipal task force worktables

inland migration), Gender/job access, politics, leadership, training, sexual and reproductive health and Youth/access to education, prevention, sexual and reproductive health, job opportunities, leadership. Taking the above into account, 9 agencies and seven international NGOs are working within Nariño's Inter-agency Standing Committee (IASC) framework. Most of them are based in Pasto City.

According to the 2009 annual report of the Office of International Affairs the following areas are working with the support of International Cooperation:

Executing Agency	Topics
Save the Children and the Norwegian Refugee Council	Education, Youth, Population in forced displacement situations
UNICEF, the RET, the Norwegian Refugee Council	Childhood, Adolescence and Youth
The RET	Education, Youth
UNDP	Institutional strengthening, Rights and Development, Gender, Youth, Inclusive economic development, Safety and coexistence, political strengthening, public policy
ADAM Program-USAID	Infrastructure for the forced inland migration population
IOM	Migration, infrastructure

Table 2
Relevant topics of current International Cooperation in Pasto

3 Research methodology

3.1. Research approach

The current study has been undertaken within the framework of qualitative research, and addresses the global, regional, national and local conceptualization of International Cooperation. Taking into account the complexity and scope of the topic, the Municipality of Pasto (Colombia) was chosen as a case study. This is based on a qualitative research methodology, which is «used primarily in the social sciences and is based on sustained cross-cutting theoretical principles of phenomenology, hermeneutics, and social interaction» (Briones 1988, p. 75). It uses non-quantitative data collection methods in order to explore social relationships and describe reality as experienced by study participants.

The data collection method used in this study involved interviews, which is «an excellent technique for gathering information, and is a piece of social interaction» (Suárez 2001, p. 152). The interview process, in which a series of probing questions intended to obtain further information about the subject matter that are

posed, was suggested by Kerlinger (1983). The interview begins with very broad questions and gradually evolves with questions about specific aspects of interest. This qualitative research study proceeded in 3 phases:

1. Indirect sources: documentary information was gathered from the following sources: the International Cooperation strategy of the Municipality of Pasto «Pasto Open to the World», UN documents and references, a review of the literature produced by the International Cooperation Agency for Colombia Social Action, newspapers, books and references regarding International Cooperation.
2. Direct sources: semi-structured individual interviews were conducted with 13 participants. These interviews were audio-taped to ensure accuracy.
3. An analysis of the interviewees' answers in relation to the International Cooperation strategy of the Municipality of Pasto: «Pasto Open to the World».

3.2. Selection of subject

Private information must be individually identifiable to constitute research (Suárez 2001, p. 64). The group was recruited through: Direct invitation to persons in charge of offices or organizations. The study asked for the collaboration of the people who supported the construction of the international strategy, and it received positive responses from 13 persons.

This sample was selected so that all sectors of the Municipality of Pasto were represented in the research. As mentioned, this study is divided into 3 areas that provide insight into the Municipality in its different aspects. It also takes into account some aspects public and private entities and civil society. The respondents were chosen taking into account individuals and institutions who have participated continuously in the construction of the Strategy and who have examined the content of the strategy, in order to ensure the achievement of the results that are consistent with the purpose of this research. Thirteen people representing institutions and organizations were interviewed to obtain personal and institutional information about the Strategy. Approximately 30 persons and institutions participated actively in the construction of the strategy, of which about 15 were the most reliable and important contributors to the Strategy.

3.3. Data collection

Five groups of stakeholders were involved in the construction of the strategy. Most of them represent not only their particular interests, but the interests of citizen groups in the City of Pasto as well.

No.	Institution	Type	Gender of the interviewed
1	Chamber of Commerce	Private	Female
2	San Martin University	Private	Female
3	UN	International Organism	Male
4	RET	NGO	Male
5	Norewegian Council of Refugees	NGO	Male
6	Territorial Planning Council	Civil Society	Female
7	Corpominga	Civil Society	Male
8	Suyusama	Civil Society	Male
9	Arca de Noé	Civil Society	Male
10	Gender Office	Public	Female
11	Force Inland Migration Office	Public	Female
12	Youth Office	Public	Female
13	Office of International Affairs	Public	Female

Private Sector: Pasto Chamber of Commerce, San Martin University-School of Finance and International Affairs.

International Organizations: United Nations Development Program.

NGO's: The RET and the Norwegian Council for Refugees.

Social Sector or Civil Society: Territorial Planning Council, Corpominga, Suyusama, and the NGO Arca de Noé.

Public Sector: Office of International Affairs, Gender Office, Youth Office, Force Inland Migration Office.

Table 3

Description of the Actors

All of the 13 participants were able to speak and declare their perceptions about the strategy, for the first time they were asked on what they want from cooperation rather than just accepting any aid that appeared from the organizations.

Quantitative measures were not made in order to fulfill the objective of the study that was to understand the learnings rather than just quantifying the International Cooperation through the particular investment or number of projects that each institution made during that time.

4 Results

4.1. Development plan and subject population

The participants affirmed the importance of the strategy for International Cooperation and its direct relationship with the Municipality Development Plan. About the formulation process, I think that the success of this process was that it was not made into a strategic process of cooperation that was parallel to the department's public policy definition process. I believe it was a good practice to develop it to accompany the public policy development plan of a four-year administration, which has its own resources and budget allocations, its own people in charge in the government secretariats in City Hall, and to identify some concrete subjects which

Pasto wished to administer cooperatively. Then the assessment is positive because of that, because it was taking advantage of the Colombian cycle, it obtained high participation and legitimating level of the document and the assessment in Pasto is positive because it prioritizes things that are really interesting, of interest for purposes of cooperation, like gender, youth, displacement and some concrete and important subjects. In this respect, we think that it is a model that can serve as the framework for the new ways of cooperation that exist in the world and we can think about copying it and promoting it on an international scale (Participant «D». Personal interview April 8, 2009).

Given this, the local policies should focus on complying with common goals that will have a positive impact on the zone. The international and municipal cooperation strategy focuses its task on three areas (youth, gender and the inland migration population), and for the work in these areas it establishes a whole action plan that embraces several economic, politic, social and cultural points of view. Also, I forgot about the environmental issues, which are among the strategic issues in Pasto, on a municipal scale, taking into account the high level of biodiversity that we have in the localities (Participant «H». Personal interview April 22, 2009).

4.2. International Cooperation focus

The interviewees were clear about the new panorama that the Strategy envisions, which tries to bring a new focus to International Cooperation, changing the old paradigm of donor-recipient. This process tries to invert the cooperation logic a little. What happens normally is that the cooperation defines the territorial priorities, and not the other way around. The aim is to align cooperation a little, to coordinate it better and to increase the impact of cooperation on the territory (Participant «G». Personal interview April 22, 2009).

The new International Cooperation paradigm allows for rescuing and learning about the local potentialities for setting up a knowledge dialogue, which most of the time is vertical, from issuer to recipient, and it is changed by a horizontal dialogue where the important thing is the feedback, an exchange that takes into account the context, the knowledge of the region and its dreams, wishes and necessities. I think that in this respect the strategy is very important (Participant «L». Personal interview May 14, 2009).

4.3. The UNDP's ART-REDES Program

Some participants acknowledged the support of the UNDP's ART-REDES program, and the fact that the Pasto strategy enjoys the technical leadership of an International Cooperation agency. This allows for synergies, coordination and communication among stakeholders in the exchange of knowledge to pursue a shared

territorial vision. «Some important alliances were made, like the alliance with the UNDP's ART-REDES Program, which has a lot of experience in the field of International Cooperation with municipalities» (Participant «K». Personal interview May 14, 2009).

This united effort has allowed for the strengthening and optimization of both local and International Cooperation resources. It has been a while since some social organizations and others from International Cooperation agencies such as UNHCR, UNDP, and the Norwegian Council for Refugees have thought about how to optimize the resources that International Cooperation organizations contribute to the Municipality and the region in order to provide better service to this area (Participant «L». Personal interview May 14, 2009).

4.4. Planning versus execution

The planning processes at the local level must be carried out taking into account the resources and the actual capabilities, so as to ensure the effective implementation and sustainability of actions. When are we going to see how much of this planning is implemented and executed, generating actual and calculable impacts in the territories, where are these planning processes developed? That's a very different thing and that's worrying. «[...] That in turn serves to strengthen social organizations in the territory, communities that will ultimately benefit from the implementation of these projects and thus will be able to go forward in what we have called the construction of a sustainable region, otherwise called sustainable human development» (Participant «L». Personal interview May 14, 2009).

The planning exercises are important to the extent that they allow to the development of a course of action. However, the leadership in the implementation of the measures is of vital importance. «On many occasions we are up to here with planning and strategy documents» (Participant «J». Personal interview May 11, 2009).

4.5. Impact and challenges of the International Cooperation strategy

Impact

The formulation of strategies for International Cooperation at the local level can generate a series of reflections on the impact that these participatory exercises generate at the local level, in areas such as empowerment, sustainability, and the perception of actors, among others. «I think that the impact can be great to the extent that we keep aiming to prioritize populations related to groups and subjects that are going to be worked on» (Participant «E». Personal interview April 16, 2009).

The perception that the actors have towards International Cooperation is crucial, considering that the joining of forces and capabilities can develop cross-cutting actions on various fronts. This strategy, working appropriately, implemented in a proper way, can generate a series of social, economic and cultural changes that can allow the municipality to move forward, not only because of the enhancement of investment resources, which can be invested to address many aspects of the different problems, but also because it can generate another way of thinking, which allows for different views and broadens perspectives about how to tackle and to manage the solution to these situations (Participant «D». Personal interview April 8, 2009).

However, it could be said that there are some actors (for whom International Cooperation is synonymous with money) who believe that the Municipal Administration must undertake the challenge of changing the paradigm to one of cooperation and support, under which the true subjects, beneficiaries and actors are local. Money is always needed, and there are so many needs, especially by the country. «The urban side can defend itself, right? Let's not say that it has few needs, but [...] the country needs it much more and International Cooperation, I think, is willing to participate in those processes» (Participant «C». Personal interview April 8, 2009).

Unarguably, the synergy of actions in the field of International Cooperation is crucial and when formulating a strategy in a participatory way this challenge is increased because it must first take into account strategic stakeholders and value their contributions and their ability to harmonize with their peers. I think it is pertinent that this strategy must promote some activities or self-sustainable programs, because the fact that we can't count on International Cooperation to provide us with that kind of self-knowledge and self-management. Maybe if the resources come, they could be used for a specific purpose, but when they are exhausted, maybe the situation would be the same. Then, more important than generating these kinds of programs or projects is the capacity of local empowerment that can be established in the sectors and the capacity of self-management and self-sustenance of the programs and projects that can be led by the population groups that were prioritized (Participant «H». Personal interview April 22, 2009).

In the same line of analysis, one of the actors who has been present during all of the phases of the formulation of the municipal strategy mentions that the impact is that cooperation by definition is very broad: «There are many actors (bilateral cooperation actors, de-centralized cooperation actors, technical cooperation actors, actors that come with very few resources, others that come with more resources), and if the cooperation is left to free will, what happens is that it becomes very fragmented for the territory, and what it does is to fragment the territory more. Then the question lies

in bilateral relations, without being clear about the frameworks that exist, and while that can be responsive to the very individual needs of some populations, more structural transformation processes and coordination processes that have more impact are not being proposed... That's the challenge: that cooperation should not only respond to individual populations and urgent needs, but that it should start to respond in a more strategic way to those population needs, and that implies that it is not only an exercise in cooperative programs and projects, but that it should be involved in a much broader framework of sustainability, such as public policy, transformational processes, etc., etc.» (Participant «G». Personal interview April 22, 2009).

Finally, it is vital to recognize that among the impacts any kind of action which is implemented by joint efforts of characterization; planning, management and execution is always focused on improving the living conditions of a population. «As such, we will show that we can work in coordination, we work hand-in-hand with many organizations, and that if it works, another potential impact is that we start to minimize all the needs of the population, above all the targeted one, and we achieve an improvement in the quality of their lives. These are things that we can say will be achieved through the implementation of the strategy, based on the needs of the Municipality and its population» (Participant «K». Personal interview May 14, 2009).

Challenges

The actions that seek to generate a change in the social reality of a community should be continually subjected to evaluation, review and adjustment. International Cooperation strategies are not immune to this process, and it is therefore necessary to include in the research a section on the actors' views about the challenges faced by Pasto implementing a tool such as the International Cooperation Strategy. «I think that a very big challenge is to generate the political will at the local, regional and national level, to really be able to give the strategy the boost that it needs, in such a way that it can really be implemented» (Participant «D». Personal interview April 8, 2009).

One of the challenges most highlighted by the participants is the need to develop effective actions for addressing the needs identified by the strategy: «The challenge I see at this time is that of obtaining the acceptance of this document by cooperation agencies in different embassies and governments, and of ensuring that it will be received in the spirit with which it was formulated, so that it is not treated as just a pretty document to be filed, with good information and that's it, but rather that its strategic lines, the strategic projects that the secretaries have given priority are given real importance, in the sense that they are projects susceptible of

International Cooperation and that we can work with allies» (Participant «M». Personal interview May 27, 2009).

However, the challenges cannot be reduced to this: «It is necessary that the actions that have been implemented so far can be replicated in other areas; what is sought is that the strategy will serve as an excuse to continue to build inter-institutional platforms to work on a number of issues in a number of populations, and to involve the cooperation actors [...] as a management tool, as the strategy is an instrument of inter-institutional coordination» (Participant «G». Personal interview April 22, 2009).

Another obvious challenge is to empower local actors to obtain International Cooperation in their territories, in this way continuing with the construction of cooperation strategies and even public policies of cooperation that are contextualized and that respond to the needs and challenges of the territory. «It is quite important to find the region's comparative and competitive advantages, but at the same time not only to find them, but also to have each Pastusian learn about and understand them, and that is how one starts to transmit them, when one is really convinced that the region is really competitive, that productivity within the region can be effectively stimulated, that its culture can be stimulated, and its idiosyncrasies; then, when the Pastusians are convinced of that, we will manage to position ourselves effectively and we will really confront the world. That, I think, is the biggest challenge» (Participant «F». Personal interview April 21, 2009).

Likewise, a Municipality faces the challenge of, and should make a commitment to, replicating this exercise in other areas, thereby ensuring equitable development at a regional, national and even worldwide level. This would initiate not only further knowledge dialogues, but also improve and strengthen the current state of International Cooperation in Pasto. «I think the challenge involves the exchange of experiences, in addition to achieving synergies and coordinating joint work on cooperation with the Municipality» (Participant «E». Personal interview April 16, 2009).

Summarizing the views of several participants, we conclude that so these are two very important challenges that this strategy has, conjugating the planning perspective part, the reality perspective, of the community and obtaining in many cases immediate feedback. «This is a risk, because sometimes strategies need a little bit more time to obtain feedback and a clear assessment; but this challenge has to be taken into account and it should form part of the strategic approach in such a small city, because a strategy that is appropriate for Bogotá is not the same as one for Nariño, because a strategy for Pasto, which, if I am not wrong, has around 350,000 inhabitants, must have very precise and specific objectives, because impacts are going to be measured very specifically to determine whether or not the beneficiary population has been reached, and so

we cannot hide: it is a very concrete challenge, let's say» (Participant «A». Personal interview April 7, 2009).

Furthermore, the continuing participation of some actors in specific social groups should be encouraged, since this is necessary for teaching about International Cooperation management tools, bearing in mind that respect for the communities must be maintained and, therefore, within this dialogue, local authorities have a duty to approach and get to know the actors: «I see few representatives from the community. I see one or two, for the farmers, the indigenous, but there has not been much continuity. I suppose that the process is long and they have to pay for their travel expenses and it is more difficult from them, but it would be good to have more representatives» (Participant «C». Personal interview April 8, 2009).

5 Learning acquired from the participatory formulation of the International Cooperation strategy for local transformation

5.1. Communication and shared knowledge

Relationships among the members of a group determine the progress that can be achieved, based on synergies developed among different actors. In Pasto's case, participants of the civil society and the public and private sectors were part of the construction of the strategy. «The most important thing is to be able to unite ideas within very heterogeneous groups and to learn about all disciplines in the education field» (Participant «F». Personal interview April 21, 2009).

Critical reflection on shared vision

Building a shared vision requires strategic and critical thinking about a territory, beyond the individual interests of a few, and it requires a focus on the application of the common principles and values of a team towards the achievement of some goals. Tichy and Devanna (1986) say: «The vision is the ideal to strive for. It releases energy needed to motivate the organization to action. It provides an overarching framework to guide day-to-day decisions and priorities and provides the parameters for action».

«I think that the greatest thing learned from all this is that many personal egos were left behind and things were considered more as a whole, in order to build more for the City, for the Municipality and that we are thinking about something in common. I think that with the cooperation strategy that was constructed opportunities were given to different constituencies, to different

institutions that today are looking at the same goals, to somehow improve or contribute to the improvement of living conditions for Pasto inhabitants; some are thinking about specific groups but, definitely, everybody has the same goal» (Participant «E». Personal interview April 16, 2009).

According to Kotter (1990), while management produces order and consistency through planning, organizing and controlling, the leadership produces change and movement through vision building, aligning people and motivating. «At this time we have a global vision of what the Municipality is, because we are certain of what we want and what we need in the municipality at this time» (Participant «M». Personal interview May 27, 2009).

Team building

It is necessary to find common ground among the actors and to define what motivates each one to commit himself or herself to the process. This is necessary to ensure that they keep their institutional and/or personal commitments over time, bearing in mind the goals they wish to achieve, and to guarantee the sustainability of the International Cooperation in the short, medium and long term. «The biggest thing I have learned is that these coordination processes can lead us, or are leading us, to the construction of very much coordinated, structured and preventive answers. We are not just solving urgent problems, but we are also starting to tackle the reasons that cause the problems» (Participant «G». Personal interview, April 22 2009).

Leadership

A leadership process generates changes in people and organizations about their beliefs and perceptions (Wang and Thompson 2015). By interacting with other actors, leaders allow them to take an introspective look at their successes and difficulties (Taylor *et al.* 2015). «I think that when a territory starts to strengthen its social organizations and begins to qualify them politically, the levels of interlocution become better with the actors who are present in the region. I think that is a great thing I have learned and that in relation to International Cooperation it is necessary to understand that the territory is not an object but a subject. I think that is a fundamental point to be learned, for us and for them, too, because at this time the ways of seeing the world have been legitimized and validated, the way of seeing the territory, feeling it, appreciating it and its culture, and finally what we are, and that has begun to be important to the perspective of these cooperation actors today» (Participant «L». Personal interview May 14, 2009).

Critical reflection

Learning is the development of the capability to make constructive criticism in order to improve one's actions from a

different perspective, thinking as a territory and not as an individual. It was important to learn about the agreement's scope and to respect differences. «It is interesting to find the critics, it is interesting to establish debates again, the regional debate in favor of development, and I think that is one of the actions to rescue on the strategy structuring framework, to the extent that even though we already have a document, we must agree now on a regional discourse about how we can represent our region, how we can empower our region's assets and somehow negotiate certain processes and activities with the national actors and, in this case, with the International Cooperation actors» (Participant «H». Personal interview April 22, 2009).

Finally, the answer given by one of the participants summarizes the commitment to the shared vision of the strategy: «This responsibility belongs to each of the citizens of the city, and reflects how each of us is needed to be part of the solution» (Participant «B». Personal interview April 8, 2009).

6 Discussion and conclusions

6.1. Discussion

In reviewing information about strategies for International Cooperation at the municipal level, it was discovered that there have been other experiences in the region that parallel those of the Municipality of Pasto. Given that cities are of different categories, the comparison is based on the methodology used by each of the processes. In Medellín, the Agency for Cooperation and Investment of Medellín and the Metropolitan Area (ACI) was founded in 2002 on the initiative of the Mayor of Medellín, based on the understanding that Medellín's development was closely linked to the future of the region. To bring it to life, an Association of Public Entities was created (made up of the Medellín Mayor's Office, Medellín Public Enterprises, and several companies of Medellín and the Metropolitan Area of the Aburrá Valley). Thus was created the first Decentralized International Cooperation Agency of Colombia (ACI 2009, p. 17). In Pasto, a collective strategy for International Cooperation was born, with methodological support from the UNDP's ART-REDES Program, under a shared vision of sustainable human development. It is more a process for the construction of the territory than an administrative institution.

In recent years, Medellín has prioritized issues like Fighting Poverty, Urban Development, Children, Peace and Reconciliation, Local Economic Development, Environment and Mobility, Education and Culture, and Gender. Pasto, turn, has concentrated all the efforts to work for a population strategy which has defined guidelines

addressed to three specific issues: youth population, gender, and forced inland migration through a shared construction strategy. The ACI manages internationalization processes from two functional areas: the promotion of business and investment, and International Cooperation supply and demand. The strategy «Pasto Open to the World», implemented through the Municipal Task Force and its worktables, is a living organization that nurtures the region's actors, and is a collective bet in favor of International Cooperation (Apps 1994, p. 67). Apps affirms: «Under rapidly changing conditions, skills and knowledge that work for today's organizations, often will not work for tomorrow [...]. Leadership is like a butterfly: one can examine all its pieces and even construct a replica, but the essence of the butterfly is its life, and this defies measurement or construct».

6.2. Conclusions

The globalization process is uncertain and the cooperation process demands a thorough review. A more inclusive and equitable globalization is imperative in order to confront the foremost globally shared inequalities and problems, including poverty and environmental degradation. The recognition of poverty as a cause and effect of the denial of fundamental rights, accepted in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, imposes a special obligation on the international community.

For Latin American and Caribbean countries, International Cooperation has many important characteristics in common with cooperation for development; the inclination of many donor countries toward countries with higher relative levels of poverty (mainly in Asia and Africa) has led to a reduction in the flow of non-reimbursable cooperation to Latin America and the Caribbean. The recent development of countries of the Latin American and Caribbean region has enabled many of them to provide more technical cooperation to other countries in the area, which has contributed to an expansion of South-South Cooperation, horizontal cooperation and triangular cooperation in the region. In the future we will realize that the current perspective of Latin America and the Caribbean is due, in practice to Haiti's case, based on the principles of cooperation effectiveness.

The construction of strategies for International Cooperation should serve as a transition to the paradigm of International Cooperation under which cooperation actors engage in a dialogue of knowledge, a horizontal dialogue, with critical reflection on the transformation of reality.

The formulation of strategies for International Cooperation should contribute to local development, understood as the development of capacities, and should be framed within the municipal development plan, which allows for managerial, administrative and financial support and the subsequent use of resources.

The actors' awareness of the paradigm change toward International Cooperation is of vital importance, since we need to understand that cooperation is not synonymous with financial resources, but also involves education, technical support, exchange of experiences, and partnerships, among other resources, which, though not quantifiable in monetary terms, do contribute to local development.

A study that seeks to rebuild a local process is of great value. However, studies of this size must transcend the academic world and must contribute to the construction of territories and regions, and local administrations that will use this tool should take into account the actors' feelings and knowledge. They are a valuable input for improving the processes. The formulation of strategies for International Cooperation can be organized and prioritized to facilitate the coordination of actors at the local, regional, national and international level in developing viable and sustainable proposals over time. The formulation of a strategy for cooperation should take into account that the processes of International Cooperation are not only bureaucratic, and that they have a significance that goes beyond the Government, since by having an installed capacity and a strengthened social fabric, the processes achieve continuity implicitly.

Local Governments have focused their interest on the quantification of resources, but not on the qualification that at the global level has resulted in the territory, and because of this, little effort has been invested in the characterization of the actions that could serve as a tool for cooperation in the exchange of experiences and the critical reflection on the construction of more supportive territories.

The initiatives that are developed by the territory should be promoted in a participatory environment to truly reflect local needs, so that actions leveraged with International Cooperation resources will not be undertaken out of context, or devoid of impact or sustainability. In this regard, it is important to empower communities, and to discover and create new leaders for local development.

For an action to have continuity over time, the actors must be empowered. Once they are sensitized to their realities and they are able to employ contextualized tools, they can define the guiding principles that will lead them in the transition to new models of local development.

To perform a qualitative analysis of the International Cooperation strategy is not an easy task, since the strategy is a recent addition to the public agendas of both the Municipality of Pasto and the Department of Nariño. The difficulty of obtaining relevant information in order to approach the study within a local and regional context makes it impossible to carry out a comparative analysis with previous studies. That is why that the literature used in this study comes from books, magazines, and national and international

newspapers. Also, the paper is a preliminary contribution that makes it clear that much remains to be done in the areas of research, data collection, systematization and exchanging experiences in International Cooperation matters.

One limitation that was found in the development of this study is the absence of a systematic formulation of the International Cooperation strategy of the Municipality of Pasto. The information used in this investigation was obtained by collecting the historical memories of the actors, which in some way affects the impartiality of the evidence, since their answers were conditioned by the roles they currently play as actors in society.

We are all called upon to be responsible for the destiny of our municipality. «Each citizen is called upon to be part of the solution and not of the problem, because one can hide behind the curtains, criticizing things, but when one push comes to shove, so to speak, one says: “I am a participative agent and I can do this”» (Participant «B». Personal interview April 8, 2009).

At a personal and academic level, one of my greatest satisfactions has to understand that democratic and participatory exercises, sponsored by a municipal government, can generate learning, identify leadership and allow for critical reflection about local development. Future studies could provide a quantitative analysis for expansion of research in the future.

7 References

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