

2012  
Vol. 5 Nº 1



UNIVERSIDAD  
**EAFIT**<sup>®</sup>

Abierta al mundo

ISSN: 2027-2340

# Revista de Negocios Internacionales

DEPARTAMENTO DE Negocios Internacionales

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Twinning Agreements, a decentralized international cooperation tool towards the strengthening of the south-south cooperation: The current case of Antioquia (Colombia) and the provinces of Jalisco (Mexico) and Minas Gerais (Brazil).

Revista de Negocios Internacionales. Vol. 5 Nº 1 - Enero - Junio de 2012 - Pp. 83 - 101

# **Twinning Agreements, a decentralized international cooperation tool towards the strengthening of the south-south cooperation:**

## **The current case of Antioquia (Colombia) and the provinces of Jalisco (Mexico) and Minas Gerais (Brazil).<sup>1</sup>**

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FECHA DE RECIBIDO: 30/11/2011

FECHA DE ACEPTADO: 20/01/2012

### **Abstract**

Transformation of the approaches to international cooperation, variations in local traditional management and different process of internationalization of cities and regions have given rise to the concept of twinning agreements or sister cities. These accessible mechanisms of local entities for international participation and engagement have modified the structure of global relations between regions leaving as a consequence, the addressing of local challenges from its international dimension. This study considers the perspective of twinning agreements as elements responding of current trends of decentralized cooperation. Indeed, the present research is based on the analysis of three provinces Antioquia (Colombia), Minas Gerais (Brazil) and Jalisco (Mexico)

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<sup>1</sup> For the selection of the provinces, the criteria were based primarily on the current situation at Dirección de Internacionalización (Direction of Internationalization) where the processes regarding international cooperation are run within the Government of Antioquia. Thus, the provinces of Jalisco and Minas Gerais were selected according to their formal expression of interest on the establishment of cooperation agreements with Departamento de Antioquia since 2010, as well as on the future benefit results for Antioquia, after previous meetings held with representatives of both regions.

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regarding the existing awareness of the Brazilian and the Mexican province to establish cooperation ties with Medellín (and Antioquia).

## Resumen

La transformación de los enfoques de la cooperación internacional, y las variaciones en el manejo tradicional del proceso de internacionalización de ciudades y regiones han dado origen al concepto de acuerdos de hermanamiento o de ciudades gemelas. Estos mecanismos permiten acceso a entidades locales a la participación internacional, y a raíz de este compromiso han modificado la estructura de las relaciones globales entre las regiones. Esto supone un direccionamiento de los problemas locales y su dimensión internacional. En este estudio se considera el punto de vista de los acuerdos de hermanamiento, como elementos que responden a las tendencias actuales de la cooperación descentralizada. En efecto, la presente investigación se basa en el análisis de las tres provincias de Antioquia (Colombia), Minas Gerais (Brasil) y Jalisco (México).

## Key words:

Internationalization of cities, Twinning agreements, Sister cities, Colombia, Medellin, Antioquia, Mina Gerais, Jalisco.

## Palabras clave

Internacionalización de ciudades, acuerdos de ciudades gemelas, hermanamiento de ciudades, Medellín, Antioquia, Jalisco, Mina Gerais

## Introduction

International interactions, in where States and multinational corporations used to take the most relevant roles, have been deeply pressured and modified by the actions taken by regions and territories within a globalization framework that have seen the importance of having direct international connections with their similar entities worldwide.

Certainly, the phenomenon of globalization emphasized the importance of international linkages and raised new relations between international and domestic processes.

Therefore the cities, a major nodes of relations, exchanges and production, become the places where the globalized and developed economies are settled(Jordan &Simioni, 1998)" (Huerto Romero, 2004:231). Thus, global scenarios facilitating cooperation networks between sub-national entities are becoming the perfect spaces for the promotion of regional development.

Hence, the strategy of internationalization of national sub-units has emerged in hands with the increase of their direct participation within the international cooperation system – eased by the decentralized cooperation - and the building of networks of cities around the world (Huerto Romero, 2004), meaning the incorporation and improvement of local management content and goals regarding its positioning and insertion into the international relations arena.

Finally, in order to comprehend the significance of the case study, it is essential to have in mind that international cooperation within the research framework of decentralized cooperation and twinning agreements is included in the concept of South-South cooperation. This notion has gained prominence in the global development policies based on their discussion in the Accra Agenda for Action and also as a result of being an important opportunity to strengthen South-South cooperation as a mechanism for horizontal learning and promoting the development of national capacities (Sanin: 2009).

The concept of decentralized cooperation includes all the activities made by the non-centralized actors (both governmental and nongovernmental) at the global sphere (...), in fact given that those who perform these activities are commonly local governments, decentralized cooperation is usually attached to those activities that connect local governments with other international actors (Velasquez, 2009). Thus, decentralized cooperation is the framework that engages the actions developed by local and regional governments to adequately direct resources to the specific needs of the territory.

Historically, Ruiz Alanis (2009) takes as a starting point the first African Conference on Global Intercommunal Cooperation, held in Dakar, Senegal, in 1964, when twining agreements were recognized as an instrument of fostering decentralized cooperation (Ruiz Alanis, 2009). This tool was mainly used to avoid conflicts within the post-war decolonization period or to be mechanisms of direct aid (or what it is known today as ODA, official development assistance). However, the dynamics changed as the cold war ended and the globalization started to spread knowledge, people, ideas and trends, mainly coming from the west, that made the international relations more interconnected and therefore, more complex. Definitely, “globalization increases and intensifies the competition between urban economies has pushed city governments to adapt to the demands of the globalized world” Saenz, 2008: 6). In that sense, the greater interdependence and interconnectivity between political and economic spheres of each States and their diminishing absolute power in a process of “de-nationalization”, a concept that reflects the loss of sovereignty of States due to the increase exchanges of globalization. Indeed, as Paula Saenz (2008) affirms, local governments have been

inserted into global economic networks, due to two main facts; first the necessity to ensure competitiveness and productivity, and second, their obligation to address serious problems of socio-economic polarization and environmental sustainability. Moreover, nowadays it is not only an international exchange what modifies states interactions, the increased complexity of international relations has led to the emergence of new and more plural actors, to the widespread of democratic and decentralization processes around the world, to the revival of political and social dynamics at the territorial level, and to the development of new insights regarding development. The latter, Huerto Romero (2004) states, permitted the redefinition of the classic approach to international cooperation, and in consequence, decentralized cooperation started to be taken as the new way to manifest this changed in cooperation and transference of knowledge trend. These regional or cross-border exchanges, often, are powerful vectors for cultural dialogue, stability and peace and for regional integration at local levels.

This scenario of decentralized resources coming into the sub-national territories, municipalities and other institutions and local and international organizations play a significant and more independent role, in fact as Beltrán (2007) assumes "the first thing that matters is that large cities (at least the main cities of a country) are actors in the global economy." Hence, a specific category of horizontal decentralized cooperation is formed in which sub-national units interact with each other. In that sense, it is vital for local development, to give to those municipalities and territorial entities the capability to assume the role of managing the scopes and means for its development through international cooperation. Meaning, it is necessary that national governments and institutions promote the empowerment of local units of their single processes of development and growth. As stated by *Accion Social* (2010), the Colombian Agency for International Cooperation, it is imperative to word towards the strengthening of the capacities of local and national actors to organize the demand of the territories and implement a territorial approach to achieve the principles of effective cooperation.

Within this perspective of decentralized cooperation, twinning agreements emerge as a tool of supporting and enhancing municipal necessities and engaging international sub-units. The latter as twinning agreements foster international interactions through direct mechanisms that, although do not involve transference of capital resources, it paves the path to the creation of networks of strong cities making clear local common necessities at a national and international.

In the other hand, however, according to the European Think Tank FRIDE 2008, decentralized international cooperation has its own limitations, such as dispersion in the form of multiplication of small efforts, the proliferation of small projects,

often fragmented in geographic areas distant from each other and do not always have continuity in time and last but not least the accountability for those who do not have the training and human resources.

The experience of Mexico, according to the External Relations Secretary, regarding its public effort to promote, control and institutionalize the use of twinning agreements is a good case practice to Colombia, because as a result, Mexican Provinces have took advantage of the international possibilities in hand with a mechanism that permits a more fluid and supported process with a higher possibility of beneficial outcomes. Hence, this possibility of interacting with international counterparts and develop local projects as a result of international alliances, stresses the necessity of the creation of a governmental strategy towards the implementation of sub-national international agreements.

## Methodology

As the present study involves the approach to a social issue through the revision and comparison of the characteristics and specificities of a certain group of provinces Antioquia (Colombia), Minas Gerais (Brazil) and Jalisco (Mexico), we can conclude it is based on a qualitative methodology. This methodology has the particularity that its results are always translated into conceptual insights that have the highest level of accuracy and fidelity possible according to the studied reality.

Indeed, as this study was done mainly by gathering information from different sources as reports of international cooperation workshops, research papers, governmental webpages, reports of international organizations, among others, in order to comprehend the given reality, the qualitative methodology also makes a point as its objective is the description of the qualities of a phenomenon looking for a concept that can embrace a portion of reality.

On the other hand, Duverger and Seltiz classify the research methods according to its explanatory capacity and the sophistication of its procedures. In consequence there are three levels of research studies: exploratory studies, descriptive studies and comparative causal studies. In this case, the descriptive study is the one that fits our research as it primarily target the description of social or educational events in a given spatial and temporal circumstances (Labarca:48). Moreover, this study shall also be included into one category of descriptive studies that is the Case Studies in which “their purpose is to deeply investigate the phenomenon that constitute a life cycle of that unit” (Labarca: 49). This research was based on the analysis of the gathered information in order to get strategic information in order to have a coherent spot regarding Antioquia’s position related to twinning agreements.

## Evidences

The processes of democratization, decentralization and structural reform within countries, coupled with the phenomenon of globalization, have generated an increment in the international interaction moving towards to a phenomenon in which sub-national units have acquired their own participation in the international arena with their peers in other countries, and they are building new scenarios for national and local development (Ruiz Alanís, 2009). As in the present analyzed case, regional provinces now are willing to take advantage of international possibilities and want to learn and be benefited by international good case practices and resources. In that sense, interactions are growing as necessities become even more complex and the resources more scarcely. Decentralized cooperation, in turn, is only a mechanism available for those provinces and territories that, from a public strategy, defined an internationalization process coherent with their situation and specific requirements.

Decentralized cooperation began in the afterwards of World War II mainly in the form of twinning agreements. As the situation demanded, the main issues involved on the agreements were aimed at "building bridges of understanding and confidence between peoples of nations which had been at war" (UNPAD, 2008), based on the primarily necessity of avoiding a new global confrontation. It was only until the first African Conference on Global Intercommunal, Cooperation held in Senegal, in 1964, that twinning agreements were actually recognized as instruments for fostering international decentralized cooperation. Since then, decentralized official cooperation was defined as a form of local interests and expectations projection, which may have a political, economic or social background, regarding particular situations of a given sub-national territory (Ruiz Alanis, 2009).

Currently the objectives of decentralized cooperation are broader than the traditional twinning agreements for avoiding conflicts. Issues such as community development - with a focus on meeting basic needs, municipal capacity development, and social awareness- and education for development, are on the current agenda for most of the developing nations of Latin America. As a result, decentralized cooperation became a modern vehicle (or even, in some cases, an extra tool) for regional governments to achieve international competitiveness as it allows the territories to address specific needs for the improvement of the welfare of the population and the promotion of economic and social development.

Moreover, decentralized cooperation is nowadays considered as one of the key strategies for achieving the Millennium Development Goals<sup>3</sup>, thus, it is seen as a tool for creating mutually rewarding cooperation ties that can foster sustainable development not only as a North-South relation, but also south-south cooperation links between developing countries worldwide. The latter is confirmed by the International Cooperation and Investment Agency of Medellin (ACI), which recognizes that “decentralized Cooperation is set on two basic lines of action: promoting the best and increased efficient human and sustainable local development, and applying the most creative forms of participative and direct local democracy.”

## **Twinning Agreements: A decentralized cooperation tool**

The XXVI General Assembly of the United Nations in 1971 addressed the subject of “The Twining of cities as a means of international cooperation” on the Resolution 2861. This resolution stated that “twinning cooperation mechanism represented exceptional value, because it put in contact between countries, not just local leaders, but entire populations”. Besides, the document stressed that “international cooperation of local communities can play an important role in the union of peoples”. As a result it considered world inter-municipal cooperation as regular complement to the cooperation between states (Secretary of Mexican External Relations).

According to the existing literature, twinning agreements are not precisely documents but situations in which sub-national units, either region, provinces or cities, interact at the international level in order to exchange experiences that improve their international insertion and their access to different sources of global resources. Twinning is basically a tool used by regions in order to address their specific and unique necessities through international mechanisms.

As twining agreements are derived of specific local interests, it remarkable to note that above that twinning also responds to different motivations speaking of the desirable region to have a twinning with. According to Luna and Ballesteros (2005) research on twinning agreements of Mexican regional units, there are four (4) main motivations that produce the constitution of twinning agreements, however as these categories included comprehensive reasons to establish this international

3 The Millennium Development goals are the main focus on the international cooperation funds and projects worldwide. Among other targets, the Millennium Development Goals aims at promoting commitment to good governance, development, and poverty reduction through partnerships and collaboration.

agreement, they are taken into account for the present research. In that way, historical motivations arise when twinning regions have past bonding ties, as in the case of many agreements between Latin American regions with Spanish regions. Social motivations appear when regions have a common community phenomenon they prefer to address together in order to prove some benefit for both territories, as the case of the cooperation of Colombian regions and Mexican States to address violence and conflict consequences. Additionally, economic motivations are those that come when regions engage twinning to have commercial networks that are necessary to improve the territories, like the case of Minas Gerais and its twinning agreements with provinces of Argentina that allow it to improve commercial ties. And finally, convenience strategic motivations are those that arise when regions or cities are twinned as a need to establish cooperation mechanisms of various kinds, as a clear example are the twinning agreements of both Jalisco and Minas Gerais with Asian regions and developed countries from which they have access to up-to-date technology and to a potential market.

The importance of these motivations for the present research is basically of its strategic linkage with its use, as these are reasons to establish a twinning agreement that can strengthen and facilitate the process of interaction with other region. Moreover, as the following description notice, both Jalisco and Minas Gerais, have clearly defined the objectives of their twinning agreements and although it is not clear that they have established a specific set of motivations, it is clear that they select the twin region not by chance but after a process of analysis and strategy set up.

## **Twinning Agreements in the selected provinces**

Due to the nature of Gobernacion de Antioquia in Colombia as a public entity and also the counterparties of Jalisco and Minas Gerais, the main concept regarding international cooperation will be *Public Decentralized Cooperation*, which is defined by the Decentralized Cooperation Observatory for European Union and Latin America, “the set of international cooperation actions that perform or promote local and regional governments”. In fact, as the present research involves the analysis of the three provinces, then be submitted a description of the situation of twinning agreements in Antioquia, Jalisco and Minas Gerais in order to get the general view of each province.

### **Antioquia (Colombia)**

For over a decade, political, economic and social issues have allowed Medellin and Antioquia to move forward within the context of international cooperation

and, according to the ACI, to be an active region within the National System of Cooperation<sup>4</sup>. Indeed, the historical conditions of armed conflict and violence in the region have pushed the entering flows of resources that have allowed to develop parallel projects of education and poverty mitigation in the territory. Yet, as the necessities of the region become more complex, effective coordination, guidance, monitoring of the actors and intervention strategies are required to be modernized and adjusted more frequently.

According to an interview made to the current Director of Internationalization and the literature review, Antioquia does not have any twinning agreement with a similar hierarchy international territory. Nonetheless, some municipalities of Antioquia have established international cooperation ties with their international pairs.

**Table 1 shows some of the current international agreements signed by municipalities of Antioquia.**

MUNICIPALITY	INTERNATIONAL PROVINCE	FOCUS OF THE AGREEMENT	DATE
Medellin	The Dominican Republic	Transparency in municipal management, social planning, tourism and environment.	August 2010
Bello	San Nicolás de los Garza, Mexico	Promotion of trade, investment, industry development and tourism.	February 2010
Medellin	Monterrey, Mexico	Not available	September 1996
Santa Fe de Antioquia	Trujillo, Spain	Promotion of cultural tourism	October 2005
Medellin	Bilbao, Spain	Strategic urban planning.	June 1998
Santa Fe de Antioquia	Cadiz, Spain	Promotion of culture	Not available
Guatape	San Juan del Puerto, Spain	Promotion of tourism, local management	Not available
Medellin	Fort Lauderdale, United States	Not available	1961

4 The system aims to provide a comprehensive and permanent dialogue among government entities at the national and local sources of cooperation and social organizations, promoting decentralization and the development of information channels of double track.

In fact, the information regarding twinning agreements of the different municipalities in Antioquia is neither organized nor complete on any of the governmental web sources (at the regional or local level). Hence, the gathered information was not easy to compile and in comparison to the other provinces involved, this is an enormous disadvantage not having a clear awareness of international cooperation activities related to twinning agreements over the whole territory; not only for technical purposes of accountability for the key performance indicators<sup>5</sup> (KPIs) but also for taking advantage of all the opportunities coming from twinning agreements such as exchange of good practices, increase of investment, international recognition, among others. Nevertheless, it is important to have clear that this situation does not mean Gobernación de Antioquia has any relation with international counterparts, because also as an outcome of the present research, there are a considerable number of projects within the territory that are executed with international cooperation resources coming mainly from multilateral organizations, such as United Nations, World Bank and Interamerican Development Bank in fields like poverty alleviation, food safety, childhood, among others.

On the other hand, after the verification of the current twinning agreements of Gobernacion de Antioquia, another issue is revealed: Medellin is the municipality that has the highest number of twinning agreements in the region. Hence, the capital city of Antioquia is evidently more positioned at the international level and even more recognized on the international cooperation field than Antioquia; the latter is shown in the number of international events held in Medellin, the number of international committees coming to the city, the number of international networks that the city belongs and likewise the national recognition of Medellin's activities and institutions (ACI) for the promotion of the international cooperation<sup>6</sup>.

## Jalisco (Mexico)

The State of Jalisco has strengthened its international position through eleven twinning agreements and three cooperation agreements with various key states, provinces, regions or countries for the development of the Jalisco's society.

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5 Key performance indicators help an organization define and measure progress toward organizational goals, in the case of Departamento de Antioquia, KPIs are settled on the Development Plan of each 4-year governmental period and must be accomplished and registered on the integrated quality system for public access OMEGA.

6 As a clear example, Medellin will be the home of the IV Meeting of Decentralized Cooperation of Accion Social, from 14 to 15 April 2010.

Additionally an important fact to be noticed is that Jalisco is the Mexican State which has the highest number of international cooperation agreements.

According to official information gather from the Government of Jalisco webpage, there are four main categories in which Jalisco's twinning agreements are based:

- Economy - Environment - Culture - Urban Planning – Health.
- Research and Training in IT - Information Technology - Rural Development.
- Business Cooperation - Regional Development - Education –Tourism.
- Family Development and Women - Historical Heritage - municipal Development.

Jalisco, in turn has established twinning agreements for historical, economic and convenience motivations as the latter categories evidence. In that sense, Jalisco has strategically used this decentralized cooperation tool as a means of strengthen its international visibility and its internal development.

Certainly, the level of international positioning of the Mexican province of Jalisco is remarkable, not only by the fact of spreading its international connections around the world (only 34% of the total twinning agreements are settled with Latin American countries) but also the information is clearly identified and classified, which permits a higher level of accountability and control.

**Table 2 describes the type of agreements signed by the Province of Jalisco**

NUMERALIA DE ACUERDOS INTERINSTITUCIONALES			
	Hermanamientos	Convenios que no son hermanamientos	Totales
Estatal	8	54	62
Municipal	24	4	28
Totales	32	58	90

Source: Secretary of External Relations of Mexico 2010.

Jalisco, between the three selected provinces, is the region that has the highest number of twinning agreements. Certainly, this fact responds not only to an internationalization regional strategy but to a public policy regarding twinning in Mexico which is executed through the Mexican Program of Sister Cities and Decentralized International Cooperation. This national strategy under the umbrella of the Law on Treaties Celebrations, aims to frame the inter-institutional agreements of Mexican provinces with other international provinces or agencies.

## Minas Gerais (Brazil)

For the government of Minas Gerais, Sister Provinces are considered those that establish agreements with the State of Minas Gerais determining the common desire to expand and develop fraternal cooperation. Those agreements are based on the principles of quality and mutual benefit, both should promote friendly exchanges and trade contacts between their respective peoples, and develop cooperation in the areas of science and technology, sports, culture, public health and education (Secretary of Economic Development of Minas Gerais Webpage).

**Table 3 describes the main components of the twinning agreements of Minas Gerais**

INTERNATIONAL PROVINCE	FOCUS OF THE AGREEMENT	DATE
Jiangsu, China	Science, technology, electronics industry, biotechnology, agro-business.	1996
Yamanashi, Japan	Electricity, agro-food industry, environment, mining, computer science, training.	1973
Quebec, Canada	Economic, scientific, technological and training, international competitiveness, industrial cooperation projects, technology.	1996
Queensland, Australia	Environmental sectors and foreign trade, management of water resources, mining sector and trade in iron ore and derivatives.	2003
Cordoba, Argentina	Environmental sectors and foreign trade, management of water resources, mining sector and trade in iron ore and derivatives.	1993
Piedmont, Italy	Strengthening international competitiveness.	1993
Daegu, South Korea	Strengthening ties with activities and initiatives in the planning stage.	1994
Brandenburg, Germany	Strengthening ties with activities and initiatives in the planning stage.	Not available

Source: Government of Minas Gerais, Secretary of Economic Development, International Relations.

From the gathered information, it is relevant to bear in mind that Minas Gerais has established twinning agreements with key countries around the world, responding to economic and convenience motivations and also with neighbor partner as the province of Cordoba in Argentina that could be related to strategic motivations as it are located in one of the most important trading partners for Brazilian products. Finally, subsequently of reviewing the gathered information, two main facts were acknowledged that exercise a direct influence over the impact of international cooperation within the region. First, it is necessary to promote a culture of

international cooperation that fosters a sense of responsibility in local development, consistently responding to global changes and to the basic element of sustainable development within the region. And second, management of cooperation of local governments and institutions shall be strengthen, understanding the cooperation as an integral and participatory process and not as an isolated institutional effort, in order to assure an outcome with a greater impact, more efficient and with a higher level of compliance with common regional goals.

## Discussion

Having in mind that the new trends aroused from international organizations putting decentralization of local governments as the main responsible for generating development, as the municipal level represents the basic cell because it is the political and administrative field closest to the demands of the community (Ruiz, 2009), the approximation of the new role of cities in the juridical national and international scenario is settled and modified according to the trends of cooperation and integration networks, creating triangular relations between the world, the States and the Cities (Beltrán, 2007). However, Departamento de Antioquia is not currently a complete engaged unit to the international system as the efforts made to achieve this objective have not been strong enough to guarantee an international addressing of local needs. This is contrasted to the situation in Jalisco, which is the Mexican state with the highest number of twinning agreements, and in Minas Gerais that has twinning agreements with important and developed cities around the world.

One important issue regarding the present research was the fact that the evaluated twinning agreements were proposed by the foreign provinces, Jalisco and Minas Gerais, showing a clear lack of interest from Gobernación de Antioquia to strengthen its internationalization process through the promotion of the process of twinning regions. Moreover, it is relevant to bear in mind that the Direction of Internationalization of Gobernación de Antioquia was also created until 2008, meaning that it has only two years of working time that have not been enough for the delimitation of the priorities of Antioquia regarding internationalization or cooperation.

In order to address better the local concerns, it is imperative to establish Country Directives to develop twinning agreements within the subnational units; this allow each province to have guides and directions when initiating international relations. Owing to the number and quality of twinning agreements of Minas Gerais and Jalisco, we can state that decentralized cooperation has become a state-province policy rather than a governmental policy, the latter is not present

at Gobernación de Antioquia in which the reality decentralized cooperation has not acquire the level of importance for development that it embraces.

Professionalization as one of the main requirements for an adequate process of internationalization through decentralized cooperation initiatives has emerged after the analysis of the cases of Minas Gerais and Jalisco, where there are specific units and people in charge of development cooperation strategies for the territory's development. In the case of Antioquia, there is not such entity at the regional level; nevertheless, Medellin, the capital city, does count on the ACI, which is the agency that has promoted since a decade ago cooperation, internationalization and investment for the city.

Additionally, although not explicit present in the literature review, the conformation of networks for the application, promotion and dissemination of practices of decentralized cooperation is a key element regarding the international positioning of the involved entities. In Antioquia, the case of la Red Antioqueña de Cooperación Internacional (created in 2000), has been used to this purpose acting as a regional strategy of networking of public, private and academic institutions influenced radically by the recognition of various civil society stakeholders as partners in policy formation at local, national, regional and global level and aimed at the strengthening of local capacities for decentralized cooperation. Nonetheless, the role of Gobernación de Antioquia within this network has not been pertinent as the guidance has been taken by the ACI, the latter reflects, once again, the leadership of decentralized cooperation has not been in hand of the regional authority but the local.

Currently there are three main difficulties of the process international cooperation institutionalization in the region: the poor coordination among the diverse actors managing international cooperation within the territory, the lack of definition of the key priorities of the region and the lack information and apprehension of the contents associated to institutional requirements, policies and process of cooperation have let an outcome of disarticulation and multiplication of the same activities towards different objectives. This is translated into inefficiency in the use of capital and human resources.

However, and although it is not an initiative under the leadership of Gobernación de Antioquia, it is relevant to mention that currently Medellin, headed by the ACI, is in charge of the design of the Public Regional International Cooperation Policy for Antioquia. Under this approach, the construction of agendas of cooperation with joint and share visions has been justified. Nevertheless, as a public policy from Medellin with a Regional Approach it should integrate and strengthen partnerships and inclusion of new local actors capable of meeting the challenge of globalization through effective mechanisms.

Regarding the research question the main impact for Gobernación de Antioquia, after the process of information compilation and analysis, it is not precisely reflected in the future outcome arising from these agreements but in the possibility of establishing mature and strong international relations for the first time and to position Antioquia as a regional core for decentralized cooperation. The latter, due to the fact that Gobernación de Antioquia has established different international connections and associations to the implementation of projects and initiatives, however, it has not yet established concrete relations with an international peer. Therefore, the impact is basically the beginning of a coherent and serious progression of internationalization with two provinces that belong to the biggest countries of Latin America. Meaning that it is the perfect scenario for Antioquia regarding internationalization through decentralized cooperation as it would start with two relevant partners and would be based on strategic issues for the 3 regions.

## Conclusion

The success of twinning agreements initiatives have not been a sporadic phenomenon: they have become an instrument of cohesion and international exchange which keeps demonstrating enormous advantage through decades. After the realization of the present research it was clear the necessity of an increase of international networking for Antioquia if development is a core goal. In fact, the current trends of international cooperation, reduction of cooperation resources, new actors and modalities, focus of the effectiveness of aid, increasing role of the private sector and the civil society, search for coherence between commerce, investment, cooperation and debt (Accion Social), demand a more proper approach from the coming Governor of Antioquia<sup>7</sup> that tackles not only the specific necessities of the territory but also that build capabilities in order that those necessities are better addressed. Indeed, the next approach shall be defined working closely with the entities in charge of the territorial development such as the IDEA (Instituto para el Desarrollo de Antioquia) and ADRA (Agencia para el Desarrollo Regional de Antioquia) in order to define key sectors and priorities and to articulate efforts towards the same objectives.

Moreover, recognizing international decentralized cooperation as an effective means of capacity building, sustainable alleviation of poverty and human development, one of the challenges of Gobernación de Antioquia is to contribute

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<sup>7</sup> This year ends the current governmental period of the Governor Luis Alfredo Ramos Botero. Next period will be from 2012 to 2015.

to the strengthening of local structures in areas such as local management, urban governance, citizen participation, among others, in order to get a broader experience regarding decentralized cooperation apprehension and to take advantage of international opportunities for local realities.

For the improvement of the access to international resources through decentralized cooperation and twinning agreements, Gobernación de Antioquia must strengthen the strategic and normative aspect regarding international cooperation, meaning the necessity of establishing a framework for action and development of cooperation mechanisms. Furthermore, it is essential to articulate political and social will in order to coordinate social concerns with political capacities on the design of a clear and coherent cooperation policy.

The present research permits the recognition of decentralised cooperation as a means of allowing local actors to gain international or cross-border experience on the basis of exchanges between individuals and same-level authorities. Indeed, it makes a clear point in the fact that training of local staff, particularly in project management, is crucial. Moreover, it also makes evident that decentralized cooperation enables a more participatory development policy, taking into account the needs and initiatives of people and facilitating the enhancement of citizen participation in policies that affect them. Consequently, the strengthening of local capacities, particularly that of local authorities, must be conceived as a democratizing process promoting the active involvement of civil society and local populations and consolidation of the accountability processes and receptiveness of local authorities concerned,

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