

The Capacity for Power of Local Governments in the Area of Development: A Position Analysis of Minas Gerais, Brazil, starting in 2003

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Abstract

This paper explores how recipients of development cooperation can leverage the benefits of international agreements with international organizations and OECD nations. Departing from the "donors-beneficiaries" dichotomy, which has long dominated the system of international cooperation for development, this paper argues that the higher the level of professionalization of the beneficiary, the greater its ability to influence the terms of the cooperation in accordance with its own needs. The case of Minas Gerais reveals that a well-oriented development strategy together with a mature organizational structure were crucial to establishing an active partnership with the World Bank and the French province of Nord-Pas de Calais.

Keywords: active partnership, decentralization, development projects, international cooperation.

* Article received on June 18, 2013; final version approved on April 4, 2014.

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Acronyms

| | |
|------|--|
| CAS | Country Assistance Strategy |
| FEAM | State Foundation for the Environment (Fundação Estadual do Meio Ambiente) |
| GDP | Gross Domestic Product |
| IBRD | International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (later: World Bank) |
| IDCS | International Development Cooperation System |
| INDI | Institute of Integrated Development of Minas Gerais (Instituto de Desenvolvimento Integrado de Minas Gerais) |
| NGO | Non-Governmental Organization |
| OECD | Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development |
| PMDI | Integrated Development Mining Plan (Plano Mineiro de Desenvolvimento Integrado) |
| RAI | Minas Gerais State International Cooperation Network (Rede de Articulação Internacional do Estado de Minas Gerais) |

INTRODUCTION

Until recently the prerogative of international cooperation was considered to be a predominantly central government concern, but such interaction is now widespread on a subnational level. This readjustment in the focus of international cooperation politics from central to local government, a dynamic known in the literature as "decentralized cooperation" or "paradiplomacy," has increasingly been incentivized by multilateral forums, as well as by local governments that aspire to an international presence.¹

In order to stress the need to rethink international cooperation for development based on a regionalized logic and in pursuit of local government support, in 2007 the European Union published the reference document "Supporting Decentralisation and Local Governance in Third Countries" (European Commission 2007). This document indicates that the reduction in the scale of projects favors coordination of the resources used by them while increasing the level of interaction with beneficiaries, which facilitates project internalization and even reformulation of the public policies necessary for efficient implementation. In summary, the report indicates that "decentralization and local government are considered as a fundamental part of the broad-based strategies of democratization and good government"² (Salles 2009).

Accordingly, cooperation at the subnational level brings projects closer to the beneficiary population and thus enables a better and broader understanding of local needs so that resources can be applied qualitatively, thus aiding strategic project management. This form of cooperation for development has been developed by international agencies as "good practices" through pilot projects that were successfully executed and, in turn, employed as models that went on to inspire new decentralized cooperation initiatives.

On the one hand, decentralized cooperation provides new opportunities for local agents, establishing itself as a strategy for promoting development initiatives. But, on the other, the international integration of local agents may give rise to a series of external elements that interfere not only with the setting of the agenda, but also with the implementation of local public policies. As a result, the network of institutions and actors involved in

-
1. Decentralized international cooperation is understood here as cooperative interaction between domestic federal units (municipalities, states, federative units, provinces, regions, and departments, etc.) and foreign subnational entities and international organizations. Authors such as Barreto (2005) and Massiah (2006) find that the practice of decentralized cooperation occurs between autonomous and democratic authorities, and that flexibility and decision-making on decentralized international cooperation agreements must observe the interests of the local population.
 2. Translation by *Apuntes*.

this process is rendered still more complex and dynamic. In the case of Brazil, local governments seeking to receive international development aid are required to obey the rules established by national legislation. Receipt is also dependent on the non-objection of the federal or central government to the signing of international loan agreements and the observance of national diplomatic directives when international cooperation agreements are established with foreign authorities. In addition to this, local governments must comply with a series of conditions set by international agencies that, in many cases, entail institutional reform, the review of existing policies, or the formulation of new policies (Salles 2009).

In this context, the objective of this paper is to understand how local governments have positioned themselves in the setting of this local-international agenda, taking into account the restrictions and conditions put in place by international agents. To this end, we present a brief history of international cooperation for development in order to understand the power structure in which its practices are inserted. The hypothesis proposed here is that the area of development presents opportunities for local governments to seek out extra funds and solutions to its domestic limitations, and hence these institutions behave in different ways to reach their development objectives (Ribeiro 2008: 122). The result is that, much of the time, the behavior adopted creates the prospect of success in international cooperation projects.

In light of the power structure in the field of decentralized cooperation, we propose an analysis of how local governments position themselves as either active or passive agents in local agenda-setting; in the case of the former, they act in a participative and promotional manner, exercising control over the environment and the cooperation project, while in the latter, they keep apart from international cooperation and are mere subjects of the decisions of international organizations or foreign governments that promote development.

Following this theoretical analysis, we present a case study on the position taken by the Brazilian state of Minas Gerais in the context of decentralized international cooperation for development, based on the relationship between this state and the French region of Nord-Pas de Calais, with which it has "Twinning" and "Cooperation" agreements, established in 2008 and 2009, respectively, and with the World Bank in loan negotiations. To this end, we analyzed how Minas Gerais behaved in response to proposals for decentralized cooperation projects: as an active or a passive agent in the promotion of local development.

THE FIELD OF DEVELOPMENT

At the end of the Second World War, the mobilization for development aid intensified primarily as a result of two factors: cash flows and U.S. influence. The first was a function of the difference in productivity between the United States and other countries, which necessitated the export of capital to poor countries to prevent a crisis like that of 1929 (Montúfar 2001). The second reason was underpinned by postwar ideology, as those countries under the influence of the United States leveraged international aid as a means of opposing the dominion of the Soviet Union. Thus, cooperation for development was understood as a form of assistance and involved asymmetrical relations between the North, which possessed resources and power; and the South, which lacked the resources needed to reach the levels of development in the western countries of the North.

In this context, organizations such as the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (referred to hereafter as the World Bank), the UNDP, and UNCTAD were set up with the aim of promoting worldwide development, thus cementing the status of international aid as a new mechanism with which to structure economic order after World War II.³ In parallel, developed countries started to formulate their own international aid policies, and established their own bilateral cooperation agencies.

Gradually, international cooperation was able to count on more and more multilateral and bilateral organizations that were committed to technical assistance policies and funding programs catering to underdeveloped countries. Thus, from the 1970s onwards,⁴ the concept of cooperation evolved, losing its essentially assistance-driven character, which was exclusive to the bilateral political strategy of the major powers, and acquiring a developmental connotation marked by the consolidation of the so-called IDCS.⁵ According

3. In this period, the promotion of development was intrinsically linked to economic growth and the stabilization of economic and trade relations between countries, with a view to guaranteeing international peace by avoiding new economic crises.

4. According to Amado Cerro (1994), the 1970s is regarded as the "decade of development," with the emergence of an egalitarian philosophy that was conducive to a new type of cooperation: technical cooperation between developing countries and the strengthening of multilateral aid institutions. For Unceta (2003), the 1970s was marked by the synthesis of two complimentary paradigms, developmental and humanist, giving rise to a central focus on basic human needs and the attempt to reduce social inequalities through economic growth and modernization.

5. According to Bruno Ayllón, "the International Development Cooperation System is a network of public, private and civil-society institutions that promote international cooperation for development. The IDCS is made up of many organizations of different natures, positions, and functions, which include international agencies, governments and public institutions from aid donor and recipient countries, NGOs, business corporations, and other civil society entities. These organizations comprise a network that, in a more or less coordinated fashion, shapes the IDCS" (Ayllón 2006: 7). Translation by *Apuntes*.

to Montúfar, "from the start of the 1960s, a new definition of development took shape as a result of a different perception of the international system, centered first on the notion of interdependence and then on globalization"⁶ (Montúfar 2001: 252). This period marked the high point of international cooperation in terms of pace, will, scale, and results (Cervo 1994: 40).

Since then, the international cooperation system has become increasingly complex, given the plurality of agents, objects, rules, and values that comprise it. For example, the agents of international cooperation may be individuals, nation states, multilateral agencies (World Bank, United Nations, etc.), subnational states, and non-governmental entities (associations, foundations, companies, and NGOs) that act on the national and the international stages (Salles 2007). Thus, there is no single definition of international cooperation, much less of its *modus operandi*.

Recognizing this complexity, this study will analyze the patterns of interaction constructed between the actors in this system, especially local agents. On the one hand, international cooperation for development enables disparate contact between the local and the international spheres by allowing different actors to share a single purpose: to exchange resources oriented towards that objective, and to devise efficient mechanisms that sustain cooperation practices (Salles 2007). On the other hand, this same dynamic can be read as a "field of power," where interactions are marked by political visions and positions that not only differ, but are in conflict, and vary in accordance with the accumulation of economic, linguistic, social, and technical power by the agents involved.

Given the above, we will use the concept of "field of power" proposed by Pierre Bourdieu as inspiration for the construction of an analytical framework of development practices. According to Bourdieu (1983), the concept of "field" refers to a social space that obeys more or less specific social laws in which the agents interact around a common object. The field is, above all, a relational space in which the actors, institutions, discourses, and moral forces occupy positions that are relative, differentiated and, frequently, in conflict. It is important to note that care should be taken when approaching the concept of "power," as there is no consensus on its use in the discipline of international relations.

In keeping with the sociological approach to international relations, we understand that the material capacity of agents matters insofar as it guarantees a position of superiority over peers in international society. However, military and economic capacity are not enough

6. Translation by *Apuntes*.

to determine the interplay of forces and the dynamics that develop in this arena. In this perspective, the exercise of power is not only tied to material possession or to formal political arrangements such as the sovereign state, but can be manifested in the widest array of social fields, including interactions between subnational governments located in different parts of the globe. As Ribeiro notes, the field of development reaches agents with different power capacities and different interests, and institutions constitute important parties in this field. This is expressed "specifically in the disparities that exist between, say, the actions of the World Bank and those of a small NGO in India"⁷ (2008: 111).

Ribeiro (2008) also points out that cooperation for development implies a coming together of insiders and outsiders located in a field of development, and that these agents possess different power relations, given that the initiatives associated with development programs are rooted in significant inequalities of access to technical and financial resources. Of course, the relationship established between cooperants, regardless of legal structure, assumes the existence of an asymmetry in that the resources and conditions with which each are equipped so as to cooperate are unequal. In the case of financial cooperation, this inequality of power is clear, given that cooperants distinguish between donors and beneficiaries: donors are those who hold the resources that the beneficiaries need to fulfill their objectives (Salles 2008).

In this sense, nation states, subnational entities, international agencies and NGOs - to cite some of the main IDCS actors - structure their local strategies, negotiate, and cooperate in setting the local development agenda through the exchange of resources and experiences based on a common frame of reference. This relationship of exchange, which goes beyond cooperation, tends to be long-lasting and is thus governed by formal and informal rules that restrict the behavior of the parties.⁸ These are the rules that guide the expectations of the actors involved in terms of their gains and losses in the exchange. Accordingly, asymmetry is also manifested in the creation, selection, and legitimization of the rules that are valid for the configuration of exchanges (Salles 2008). When a cooperation agreement is under negotiation, the cooperant will have room for maneuver in responding to these rules and negotiating for resources according to the importance of its position of power in the interaction. The difference in this regard between donors and beneficiaries is marked by the capacity of the donors to decide on the most relevant local development policies and how resources should be applied, with the beneficiary left with little choice but to accept.

7. Translation by *Apuntes*.

8. It is worth noting that the cooperation agreements or contracts signed to promote international cooperation for development are set up as formal mechanisms that connect the parties. These instruments establish commitments and forms of control, and must guarantee that potential controversies can be resolved (Massiah 2006).

According to Montúfar, this condition means that decisions made by international cooperation for development should be based on technical and political planning. He notes that this practice must obey both the rules established by local legislation and the bureaucracies of foreign partners, whether they be international organizations, countries, or subnational entities (2001: 246). Montúfar also states that the asymmetry in international cooperation for development benefits recipients once they possess the state structures and trajectories as well as the economic and social processes that are modeled and transformed by international aid for development and, in addition, when they institutionalize rules and principles that favor their integration into the international system (2001). Authors such as Ribeiro (2008) and Garesché (2007) already have noted that the asymmetrical relationship between cooperating agents must be dissolved (and even, in some cases, overcome) so that the beneficiaries achieve greater autonomy when they participate in the planning processes for their own development projects, and, consequently, improve their understanding and assimilation of the transformations that will take place as a result of the activities to be carried out. For these authors, this is the only way of attaining a more balanced and harmonious IDCS.

DECENTRALIZED INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

In its "decentralized" dimension, international cooperation is also a phenomenon that emerged following the Second World War, when local governments in Europe - especially those in France, which were active coordinators of this new form of interaction - signed twinning agreements, principally with German local governments, in order to promote peaceful coexistence and the reconstruction of Europe (Massiah 2006). At that time, the twinning agreements had a strong cultural and political character while decentralized cooperation had the overarching aim of maintaining peace in the postwar period. However, from the 1970s, the interdependence created by globalization in different fields combined with the evolution of the concept of cooperation (from an assistance-driven to a developmental approach) to elevate the nature of the agreements to another level. At that point, local governments, as they acquired greater autonomy, recognized the importance of international issues in their day-to-day processes and saw decentralized cooperation as a means of overcoming their regional limitations, whether economic, technological, social, or others.

From then on, the international participation of local governments has been increasingly evident in practice. This has led to an increase in the literature on the subject, which it sometimes refers to as "decentralized cooperation," and at other times as "paradiplomacy." Despite the difference in the terminology, it can be seen that the essence of both names is quite similar. Barreto (2005) understands paradiplomacy as "the set of international actions

carried out by non-sovereign governments"⁹ (Barreto 2005: 1). This concept is very similar to that proposed by Mingus:

[...] Sub-state governments' involvement in international relations, through the establishment of formal and informal contacts, either permanent or ad hoc, with foreign public or private entities, with the aim to promote socio-economic, cultural or political issues, as well as any other foreign dimension of their own constitutional competences. (Cornago, 1999: 40)

For his part, Massiah (2006) analyzes the French definition of the term "decentralized cooperation" in the legislation of that country:

Decentralized cooperation includes the set of international cooperation actions carried out by way of agreements with an objective of common interest by one or several local authorities (regions, departments, municipalities, and municipal associations) on the one hand, and one or several foreign authorities on the other, in the framework of their mutual competences. (Massiah 2006: 326)¹⁰

Massiah also notes that "decentralized cooperation is solely defined on the basis of its actors and not its purpose or content"¹¹ (Massiah 2006: 326).

From the definitions provided, it is possible to assert that international cooperation for development opens up spaces for decentralized development, or paradiplomacy, by introducing new forms of interaction in international relations. In so doing, it signals the emergence of new actors, including international organizations and subnational entities. Recognition by local governments of the opportunities available in the international sphere for the promotion of regional development (Keating 2000 cited in Barreto 2005; Vigevani 2006) leads to the pursuit of cooperation experiences with local governments in other countries and with international organizations. Thus, the motivations of these local governments in seeking out international cooperation are pragmatic; that is, they are associated with pressing development needs, with a special emphasis on trade, investment, technology, the environment, tourism, and social and cultural matters (Duchacedk, cited in Vigevani 2006: 5).

The intention of local governments is thus to promote development by exploring complementarity with partners facing similar problems, with a view to joining forces to

9. Translation by *Apuntes*.

10. Translation by *Apuntes*.

11. Translation by *Apuntes*.

arrive at solutions more easily. In addition, they explore opportunities alongside international organizations that offer assistance programs for local development projects. Therefore, decentralized international cooperation is consolidated as an increasingly common practice in the field of development and can be understood as a form of cooperation that corresponds to the IDCS (Ayllón 2006). This marks a shift in the promotion of cooperation for development towards local and regional planning (Fischer 2002), given that it is more viable to address local interests than broad-based, large-scale interests. This factor acts as a strong incentive for decentralized international cooperation. As stated earlier, the increase in the flows of decentralized cooperation stems from the interest of local governments in exploring opportunities within the international system, though this trend is also explained by the fact that institutions such as the OECD have come to recognize the importance of implementing human needs-related development projects in delimited areas. Indeed, according to Fischer, the:

[...] fundamental principles of durable development strategies are: (I) human needs, in such a way as to guarantee long-term beneficial effects for marginalized groups; (II) a shared long-term commitment, within relatively delimited spaces and times; and (III) a global and integrated process that reconciles economic, social and environmental objectives, allowing for regulation and arbitration mediated by negotiation.¹² (Fischer 2002: 5)

Massiah (2006) proceeds from the assumption that decentralized international cooperation must comply with certain criteria in order for development to be achieved, with this criteria forming the basis for integrating the local population into cooperation projects that must be justified as being in the public interest. The author maintains that for a durable development strategy to be achieved, it is necessary to take the regional level into account, which means prioritizing micro-projects geared towards local needs. To this end, the local actors must understand the development project to be implemented regionally, at the same time as it is the targeted community whose circumstances will be modified, and success is conditioned on the local population's understanding that the transformation that results from the project will be positive and tangible (Ribeiro 2008; Massiah 2006).

All the same, taking into account the asymmetries - material or otherwise - that structure the different positions of power in the field of development, it is worth asking to what degree the local governments that interact with international agents are more or less vulnerable to this structure of power, in terms of adapting to the rules and conditions applied by these agents as strategies for development. Given that local governments possess less

12. Translation by *Apuntes*.

financial, technical, and political resources than a central government, these agents tend to be subject to the decisions of international organizations or foreign governments that promote development. In this case, if there is no convergence between the demands of local government and the offers of the external agent, it would not make sense to cooperate, as this would mean the imposition of the donor's agenda upon local populations.

For Ribeiro (2008), the factor that determines the stance of local governments in setting the decentralized international agenda is, precisely, the local population's understanding of its own development projects. The fact that foreign agents, whether international organizations or public authorities, are in a position to plan the development path of another society in and of itself suggests an asymmetrical relationship. Although this effect on local agents is not always manifested in the same way, Ribeiro (2008) contends that there are two ways of behaving in response: as a passive or an active subject. The passive subject is the result of a decentralized cooperation approach in which the conditions for development are imposed in an authoritarian manner, without taking into account local structures; this passive subject is, in the words of the author, "subject to developmental imperatives."¹³ In this case, the local population does not feel that it has control over the project and tends to resist it, and the prospects for the community to understand and feel involved in the project are low.

The active subject is integrated into a more participative approach to decentralized cooperation for development. In this case, foreign agents express concern for local structures and the local population recognizes common benefits and interests in the development project proposed by the foreign entities; consequentially, in many cases, the local population becomes an agent of development. It has been found that the development projects that adopt the participative approach tend to be more successful than those that prefer the authoritarian approach (Ribeiro 2008: 122). The imposition of development strategies by donor countries on recipient governments is one of the main causes for the failure of development projects, since one of the principles for coordinating these projects in the sphere of international cooperation for development is the appropriation of the projects by beneficiaries; when this occurs, the local actors feel that they control their environment, and they recognize and appreciate the effects of the project (Furlan 2005; Massiah 2006).

Even though there is an increasing tendency to understand the participation of international actors in planning decentralized cooperation for development as being partnership-based, asymmetries remain evident in the interactions generated, given that it is impossible to

13. Translation by *Apuntes*.

overlook the differences in power between those with access to a diversity of resources and those who benefit from this relationship. However, the literature points to the emergence of a new concept of decentralized cooperation for development as a means of establishing more balanced strategic cooperation relationships (Garesché 2007). This approach proposes that certain decentralized cooperation projects should not be regarded as an asymmetrical relationship, but rather as a relationship through which the actors pursue mutual interests and gains in a collaborative fashion. Garesché (2007) suggests that these projects seek to move beyond stereotypes such as North-South, center-periphery, and donor-beneficiary, once the positioning established is no longer asymmetrical but harmonious, with the actors establishing strategic relationships based on mutual interests and rooted in reciprocity and not on the concept of aid.

Decentralized cooperation thus contributes to the emergence of new types of interactions in the IDCS and, consequently, of different types of positioning by international actors in response to these relations, whether they are passive or active subjects or reciprocal and symmetrical cooperation agents.

On the other hand, some positions on decentralized cooperation are more efficient than others (Keating 2000), even if this assertion does depend on the cooperation subject and context as much as it does the actors involved. As Keating notes, decentralized cooperation "is a new game and regions are learning it gradually as they go along." (2000: 1)

After theoretical analysis of decentralized cooperation for development and the stances that can be taken by international actors on cooperation opportunities, we will now turn to a case study of the Brazilian state of Minas Gerais as an actor within the IDCS system, with the goal of understanding how this state behaves in the construction of its local development agenda in partnership with international agents.

MINAS GERAIS AND THE SUBNATIONAL ENTITIES: THE CASE OF THE AGREEMENT WITH NORD-PAS DE CALAIS

The state of Minas Gerais is a Brazilian state that engages in considerable international activity, as is evident in the various bilateral cooperation agreements it has executed with subnational entities in other countries, as well as loan agreements entered into over the years. The first cooperation agreement between the state of Minas Gerais and another subnational entity - the Japanese province of Yamanashi - dates back to 1973.¹⁴ This was

14. The document signed was the "Twinning Agreement between the State of Minas Gerais and the Province of Yamanashi" (Acordo de Irmandade entre o Estado de Minas Gerais e a Província de Yamanashi).

a twinning agreement that encompassed several areas, including economic development, education, health, and culture.

Later, from the beginning of the 1990s, there was an intensification in the search for – and the receptiveness of – new international partners. Moreover, because the INDI was the driving force behind the agreements, there was a firm emphasis on promoting economic development between both parties.¹⁵ In 1999, the Office of the Special Advisor for International and Ceremonial Affairs was created in the office of the governor of state, with the objective of “assisting the governor in the formulation and implementation of state policy on international relations, and the coordination of international relations training processes” (Assembléia de Minas 1999).¹⁶ This office monitored the actions planned in some of the cooperation agreements in partnership with the INDI, mainly by participating in and receiving trade, scientific, and cultural missions.¹⁷ In 2003, the Office of Special Advisor for International and Ceremonial Affairs was superseded by the Sub-Secretary for International Affairs, located in the State Secretariat for Economic Development (Assembléia de Minas 2003b). The aim of this office was to “plan, organize, direct, coordinate, execute, control, and assess sectoral activities on behalf of the state, related to opportunities for investment, rendering external financing viable, and promoting businesses that are of interest to the state on the international stage”¹⁸ (Assembléia de Minas 2003a); this entailed a series of competencies that were adapted to two areas of activity: international relations and foreign trade, institutionalized through the creation of superintendencies. The Superintendency of Foreign Trade (Superintendência de Comércio Exterior) focuses its activities on promoting the Minas Gerais business community on the international market, and providing support to those who wish to engage in export as a business strategy. The SRI is tasked with promoting international cooperation between the state of Minas Gerais and multilateral and bilateral organizations and foreign subnational entities. This prompted the creation of the RAI, whose purpose is to “seek out international opportunities and

15. At the start of the 1990s, the government of Minas Gerais signed a series of technical cooperation agreements, all of which had a bearing on its area of competence; examples include: “Cooperation Agreement between Minas Gerais and Brandenburg, Germany,” 1993 (Acordo de Cooperação entre Minas Gerais e Brandemburgo, Alemanha); “Twinning Agreement between Minas Gerais and Cordoba, Argentina,” 1993 (Acordo de Irmandade entre Minas Gerais e Córdoba); “Cooperation Agreement between Minas Gerais and Piedmont, Italy,” 1993 (Acordo de Cooperação entre Minas Gerais e Piemonte); “Twinning Agreement between Minas Gerais and the Province of Jiangsu, China,” 1996 (Acordo de Irmandade entre Minas Geria e a Província de Jiangsu; China, 1996); and “Cooperation Agreement between Minas Gerais and Quebec, Canada,” 1996 (Acordo de Cooperação entre Minas Gerais e Quebec).

16. Translation by *Apuntes*.

17. The archives of the State Secretariat for Economic Development contain a series of documents that detail the numerous missions sent and hosted by the state of Minas Gerais, including visits to/from Quebec, Brandenburg, and Jiangsu.

18. Translation by *Apuntes*.

manage international cooperation projects for the economic development of the state of Minas Gerais"¹⁹ (Assembléia de Minas 2005).

The SRI is the body responsible for promoting international cooperation and performs this role by connecting internal demands with opportunities offered by the international development system. As a result of its activities, a network was formed by the Minas Gerais state secretariats, which act as the local links for international cooperation and are responsible for submitting urgent demands to aid in the search for and creation of new international partnerships and strengthening those that are already in place.

The "Twinning Agreement" signed with the French region of Nord-Pas de Calais was constructed within this context of linking internal demand with international supply (Governo de Minas Gerais e de Nord-Pas de Calais 2008). As noted above, decentralized international actions by subnational entities are required to respect diplomatic relations between nations, and Brazil has strong ties with France, as evidenced by the numerous bilateral international agreements signed by the two countries.²⁰ It was these ties that created the opportunity to negotiate a partnership between the subnational entities in question.²¹ In 2007, the region of Nord-Pas de Calais, through Brazil's Office of Federal Affairs (Subchefia de Assuntos Federativos) – which answers directly to the president, the French Embassy, and the honorary French consulate expressed an interest in close cooperation with the state of Minas Gerais on the basis of their shared interest in the mining sector.²² After receiving this offer, the SRI mobilized the RAI to search for local agents (state secretariats) interested in promoting cooperation based on the similarities between the actors.²³

In late 2008, the "Twinning Agreement" was signed, establishing bonds of friendship between both parties, establishing the cooperation target areas, and expressing a commitment to sign a future "cooperation agreement with an agenda that details the partnership actions in the regions" (Governo de Minas Gerais e de Nord-Pas de Calais 2008).²⁴ This commitment makes sense, given that it was the state of Minas Gerais

19. Translation by *Apuntes*.

20. See the website of the Brazil's Ministry of Foreign Relations for a list of the international agreements between Brazil and France <http://dai-mre.serpro.gov.br/pesquisa_ato_bil>

21. In the text of the cooperation agreement signed in Belo Horizonte on April, 2009, it is expressly stated that the instrument was drawn up in accordance with the protocol and the framework agreement on decentralized cooperation between the governments of France and Brazil on February 12, 2008.

22. Interview with the cultural attaché of the French Embassy in Minas Gerais.

23. Interview with the International Relations Superintendent at the Minas Gerais State Secretariat of Economic Development.

24. Translation by *Apuntes*.

that first expressed a wish to sign a twinning agreement, which strengthened relations between the parties, while the government of Nord-Pas de Calais expressed the need for a cooperation agreement, detailing the areas chosen for cooperation.²⁵ Accordingly, in 2009, against the backdrop of the Year of France in Brazil (Ano da França no Brasil) celebrations, the "Cooperation Agreement between the State of Minas Gerais and the Region of Nord-Pas de Calais" (Acordo de Cooperação entre o Estado de Minas Gerais e a Região de Nord-Pas de Calais) was signed, which establishes the provisions to be followed by both parties in the context of cooperation (Governo de Minas Gerais e de Nord-Pas de Calais 2009a).

The areas of interest selected in the "Twinning Agreement" and detailed in the "Cooperation Agreement" were established through long-running negotiations between the two parties, in which geographical distance was overcome through correspondence via email, teleconferences, and international missions.²⁶ Moreover, to set the agenda for the following two years and to cement cooperation relations, the First Forum of Actors: Nord-Pas de Calais and Minas Gerais (I Fórum dos Atores: Nord-Pas de Calais e Minas Gerais) was held during three days in October 2009, with the participation of specialists from both sides, to discuss areas of common interest established in the agreements. Below, we provide a brief description of the four areas set down in the "Technical Cooperation Agreement," accompanied by an analysis of the parties' interests in each of the items on the agenda.

The first common area of interest established was the recovery of areas degraded by mining. The state of Minas Gerais expressed an interest in negotiating this issue through the FEAM, in consideration of the similarities between the parties on the mining issue. Nord-Pas de Calais is a mining province and implements rehabilitation projects in degraded areas. This is also true of Minas Gerais, where mining is a prominent economic activity and land recovery policies are pursued (Governo de Minas Gerais e de Nord-Pas de Calais 2009b). The cooperation proposal can be broken down into seven areas: a) post-mining management; b) assessment of waste rock dumps; c) historical and cultural preservation of mining activity; d) methodology for identifying and recovering contaminated sites; e) legislation; f) economic instruments; and g) indicators (Governo de Minas Gerais e de Nord-Pas de Calais 2009c).

25. *Idem.*

26. The archives of the Office of Advisor for International Relations in the General Secretariat of the Governor of Minas Gerais (Secretaria-Geral da Governadoria do Governo de Minas Gerais) contain documents (emails and meeting minutes) that enable an analysis of the dialog between the technocrats responsible for drafting the cooperation agreements.

The second topic of interest established was the promotion of culture and heritage. This field, strongly linked with the recovery of areas degraded by mining, was identified by both parties as being highly relevant to achieving the sustainable development of the communities affected. One aspect to be explored in this field was the exchange of experiences related to the concepts of tangible and intangible heritage, as well as preservation strategies based on the inclusion of civil society in the discussions (Governo de Minas Gerais e de Nord-Pas de Calais 2009c).

The third area concerns research incentives, higher education, professional and scientific training, and innovation. Both parties had an interest in discussing activities in this area, given that there was consensus on the importance of training human capital for regional development. In this case, the actions are primarily oriented towards promoting research in the field of excellence of both regions, encouraging new partnerships between teaching institutions and poles of excellence, and promoting and facilitating academic exchange (Governo de Minas Gerais e de Nord-Pas de Calais 2009c).

The fourth and final area of common interest established in the agreement relates to environmental protection in terms of water, clean energy, and biodiversity. The topic also extends to international concerns in promoting sustainable development.²⁷ The actions taken are aimed at preventing environmental damage, fighting pollution, and supporting biodiversity. Accordingly, five focal-points were placed on the forum agenda: a) knowledge; b) biodiversity; c) water; d) renewable energy and climate change; and e) coherence in public policies and planning (Governo de Minas Gerais e de Nord-Pas de Calais 2009c).

As can be seen, the issues selected as focal-points for international cooperation are wide-ranging and reflect the consensus of both parties on their importance to planning development projects. Later, when establishing the work agenda, a summary was prepared of these broad areas as well as the points discussed in the actors' forum in order to develop them into projects and programs and to decide on the content, forms of implementation, financing conditions, execution schedule, and follow-up and assessment processes (Governo de Minas Gerais e de Nord-Pas de Calais 2009a).

This brief account of the cooperation relationship between the state of Minas Gerais and the region of Nord-Pas de Calais illustrates that the processes established were the product of a long-running dialog between both parties, who worked together and placed an emphasis on the similarities and the mutual interests involved. The first aspect worth

27. These concerns also were expressed in the various events staged to discuss the issue, such as the State of the World Forum.

noting is that despite this being a relationship between a developed and a developing subnational entity, which implies an asymmetry of access to financial and technological resources, there has been no evidence of power inequalities during the negotiation stages, when there could very well have been attempts to impose or resist certain items on the agenda. Rather, with respect to this decentralized cooperation agreement, it seems clear that Minas Gerais positioned itself as a reciprocal and symmetrical cooperation agent, which led to the establishment of balanced strategic cooperation relations. In consequence, the cooperation agreement was constructed collaboratively, based on the principle of equality of ambitions, or common aspirations, between both parties.

MINAS GERAIS AND THE MULTILATERAL AGENCIES: THE CASE OF THE CONTRACTS WITH THE WORLD BANK

For close to a decade, the Brazilian government blocked the state of Minas Gerais from undertaking projects financed by multilateral development banks, as it was believed that this state would not be in a financial position to take charge of external debt.²⁸ Certainly, the economic climate in 2003 was critical. The level of public debt in Minas Gerais exceeded the national average and public spending outstripped taxes collected, which aggravated the fiscal imbalance and the state's limited economic growth. In this context, Minas Gerais newly-elected governor, Aécio Neves, took part in a mission to the World Bank in Washington, D.C., to present his governmental strategies to the Bank's directors and request support for the initiatives contained therein.²⁹

Moreover, fiscal discipline and the reorganization of the public administration emerged as the main priorities in the first years of Neves's government, given that fiscal discipline amounts to nothing if an administration is both wasteful and inflexible. This led to the proposal of "management shock" as a means of aligning the improvement of public finances and of state government efficiency as a first step towards Minas Gerais recovering its capacity for competitiveness and development. At the same time, and not by chance, in 2003, the World Bank publicized its strategy for Brazil, which prioritized the encouragement of good governance as a necessary pillar of sustainable economic growth and the reduction of social inequalities in the country.³⁰

28. International financial cooperation established with international organizations is structured through loans at low rates of interest as a means of financing public policies in underdeveloped countries. Thus, loan procurement through development projects equates to a commitment with limits established by the Financial Responsibility Law (Lei de Responsabilidade Fiscal - 101/2000).

29. Interview with the Assistant Secretary for Planning.

30. On December 9, 2003, the World Bank released its Country Assistance Strategy (CAS) for the period 2004-2007.

This marked the beginning of a dialog between the World Bank and Minas Gerais, which lasted for six years until the first loan contracts were signed. In parallel to the achievement of these preliminary understandings with the state government, the World Bank supported the state's gradual development through reports on ongoing reforms, as well as delineating, alongside the government team, two programs that converged with its strategy for good governance and combating poverty.³¹

The dialog between the bank and the state began following Governor Aécio Neves's visit to Washington at the beginning of 2003, when the governor went in person to the bank's headquarters to explain the situation in Minas Gerais and to request an international partnership. From that point on, operations were led by a consultant to the World Bank who had already worked with Minas Gerais and who was very well disposed toward the state. This was a positive factor in the negotiations from the state's point of view. (Interview with the Assistant Secretary for Planning).

On March 20, 2006, the first financial cooperation agreement, worth US\$ 35 million, was signed by Aécio Neves's administration and the World Bank, with the objective of financing non-reimbursable community investments that had a productive and social character and provided basic infrastructure to meet the needs of poor rural communities in the regions of Norte, Valle del Jequitinhonha, and Mucuri. One month later, on April 30, the Minas Gerais Development Partnership Program (Parceria para o Desenvolvimento de Minas Gerais) was approved, with the aim of financing actions to improve public finances, strengthen public management, and foster private sector development.³²

The progress assessments carried out for these two projects opened up the possibility of new technical and financial ventures with World Bank support. Thus, in 2007, negotiations were entered into to structure a funding program for the so-called "second generation of management shock," worth US\$ 976 million. The aim of this program was to guarantee an expanded scale and greater speed in the state's implementation of strategic actions, with a view to achieving results in the following areas: public sector innovation, private sector development, education, healthcare, and transport, in addition to offering safeguards related to socio-environmental issues, indigenous peoples, and population resettlement. It can be seen, then, that from 2003, the state of Minas Gerais was engaged in constant dialogue with the World Bank, whether on negotiating new projects or on the execution

31. Interview with the International Relations Superintendent of the Minas Gerais State Secretariat of Economic Development.

32. Interview with the international relations superintendent at the Minas Gerais State Department of Economic Development.

of ones that had already been approved. The amounts negotiated to date, close to BRL\$5 billion, are equivalent to approximately 6% of the GDP of Minas Gerais and attest to the considerable influx of World Bank resources into the state economy. These numbers reinforce the existing asymmetry in the context of international cooperation, in that these resources were essential in allowing Minas Gerais to overcome some of its deficits and promote investment, especially in infrastructure.³³

It is beyond the scope of this paper to provide a detailed description of these projects, much less an assessment of their impact on the economy or on the public policies of Minas Gerais. However, this study will explore, in broad outline, the process of negotiating these contracts and, more specifically, project formulation processes in order to ascertain whether the directives contained therein converge with local development strategies, as well as to identify the extent to which Minas Gerais can be considered an "active" or a "passive" agent, to use these previously constructed terms. In any event, the more Minas Gerais's World Bank-sponsored projects diverge from the strategies contained in the state's policies in order to comply with the conditions imposed by this external agent, the more passive an agent it will be deemed to be.

One element that would seem to be at odds with the state's policies is the effort made by the World Bank to include environmental policies in almost all of the projects financed. The Combating Rural Poverty Program (Programa de Combate à Pobreza Rural), for instance, amended its law in order to comply with the bank's concerns:

Art. 1 (Art. 5) of Law N° 14,364, of July 19, 2002, came into effect and was worded as follows: Art. 5 - The loan proceeds to which this law refers are intended for the funding of small businesses of a social, productive, or infrastructural nature in the municipalities in the area of influence of the Instituto de Desenvolvimento del Norte y Nordeste de Minas Gerais - Idene, in compliance with the technical, economic, financial, sustainability, and environmental criteria **to be jointly established by the IBRD and the state.** (Assembléia de Minas 2006; authors' emphasis; translation by *Apuntes*)

The new wording of the law that authorizes the financing of this program stipulates that all technical, economic, sustainability, and environmental criteria must be devised in conjunction with the World Bank. The need to clarify the obligatory nature of the bank's intervention in this area in a state law attests to the power capacity of this international agent to influence local agenda-setting, especially with respect to the state's environmental policy. In addition to this, other elements have arisen as "new"

33. Interview with the Assistant Secretary for Planning.

state policies. For example, in the Minas Gerais Development Partnership Program II, approved in 2008, the World Bank called for the state to implement a set of policies for the protection of indigenous communities. Previously, this action had not been included as a strategic priority of Minas Gerais; it was not even mentioned in the Minas Gerais PMDI (PMDI; Seplag 2003), and would certainly not have been implemented had it not been for the World Bank's intervention.

Thus, the power of the World Bank is expressed through the introduction of elements into the Minas Gerais public policy agenda that were not there previously. This means that, as well as enabling the influx of foreign capital, decentralized international cooperation has altered the course of public policy implementation in Minas Gerais.

Nonetheless, the inclusion of these elements on the agenda is not enough for Minas Gerais to be deemed a passive agent in cooperation. Moreover, with the exception of the policies to safeguard the environment and indigenous people, each of the remaining actions that stemmed from World Bank-financed projects were already part of Minas Gerais's policies prior to entering into negotiations with the bank, given that they were included in the PMDI. Indeed, on analysis of the projects financed by the World Bank, a strong convergence between the development strategies of Minas Gerais and the World Bank can be noted in terms of project objectives in the areas of public finances, public management, private sector development, fighting poverty, and improving healthcare and education (Salles 2008). The priority aims of the PMDI, in keeping with the management shock policy adopted by the government of Minas Gerais, converged with the concepts of macroeconomic management and good governance, which are pillars of the World Bank's country strategy for Brazil. Management shock appears in the PMDI as one of the ten priority objectives, in line with the stated need "to establish a new way of managing the state, reforming public finances, and seeking efficiency in government management, by means of an effective management shock"³⁴ (Seplag 2003: 88). On the other hand, the World Bank instructions cite good governance as the basis for development:

Macroeconomic stability and good governance are the foundations for an equitable, sustainable, and competitive Brazil. This includes, in particular, effective monetary and fiscal policy, structural reforms to reduce expenditure rigidities, measures to increase the quality of spending, as well as public sector management reforms, transparent and inclusive decision-making processes, and an effective justice system. (World Bank 2003: 18; emphasis in the original)

34. Translation by *Apuntes*.

The need to create efficient systems of innovation is another common point of the strategies of the World Bank and Minas Gerais.

A stronger **innovation system** is another key component of the growth agenda. Brazil is attempting to strengthen university research and its links with the private sector through (partially competitive) subsidies to research in selected areas. Further improvements are possible: a new Innovation Law now being sponsored by the government aims to spur progress in this area. (World Bank 2003: 16; emphasis in the original)

The big contribution of state government is surely the consolidation of a state innovation system that makes viable better articulation of skills based at universities, research centers and the state production system. (Seplag 2003: 96)³⁵

A number of additional converging elements between Minas Gerais and the World Bank could be cited by comparing the PMDI and the bank's strategy for Brazil with the analysis of projects funded by that international organization in Minas Gerais. All the same, for the purposes of this study, we will restrict ourselves to analyzing whether the convergences observed are due to Minas Gerais's limited power capacity to resist the World Bank's "development imperatives" or whether, conversely, they elucidate an active stance by the state in putting forward its development agenda.

It is noteworthy that the documents on which the development strategies of Minas Gerais and World Bank are based were formulated in the same period, which allows us to rule out the hypothesis that Minas Gerais's plan was devised in conformance with the parameters of the bank's current strategy as a condition for receipt of the desired resources. Nonetheless, it is no accident that Minas Gerais has prepared a strategy that is heavily influenced by the values and concepts of the World Bank. Exposure to the set of rules and values disseminated by international organizations was nothing new for the public administrators of Minas Gerais, given that national policy had already established a permanent dialog with organizations of this type, especially with the World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank.

Thus, this case allows us to affirm that the interaction established between Minas Gerais and the World Bank, despite the clear asymmetry of resources, was not marked by a strong conflict of interests or by divergent proposals. Of course, "the bank was very open to the

35. Translation by *Apuntes*.

proposals of Minas. The objective was not to create new things, but to solve problems in areas where impact is greater and greater visibility is achieved. The negotiation spaces were very flexible."³⁶ In the areas where Minas Gerais and the World Bank shared points of reference and values, such as the promotion of good governance and management shock, a partnership was possible in which Minas Gerais was an active agent in deciding the terms of the project. At the same time, in aspects that the government of Minas Gerais had not yet "internalized," such as the environmental and indigenous questions, the state was less willing to accept external determinants, even if avoiding them was impossible. In this regard Minas Gerais was passive in relation to the demands of the international agent.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

This study has attempted to discuss international cooperation for development in its decentralized dimension based on the structural aspects of the IDCS, such as inequality of access to financial and technical resources by collaborators and, as a consequence of this inequality, the different power capacities of the agents in setting the local development agendas. Given these elements, the IDCS is conceived of as a field of power in which the agents involved activate tangible and intangible mechanisms in the negotiation of development projects that benefit local policies. The greater the power capacity of the agents in this interaction, the greater the control by local governments over determining the object and the activities to be carried out within the terms of cooperation. In turn, the lower the power capacity, the greater the propensity of external agents in control of resources to affect the course of local development through the imposition of "development imperatives."

Based on this understanding, we reclassify cooperation agents as "active" and "passive" subjects, using the terminology of Gustavo Ribeiro (2008), problematizing the classification repeatedly employed in the literature to differentiate between donors and beneficiaries. In this conception, the distinction does not lie in the possession of resources, but in the power capacity of local government to dictate the rules of play; that is, to delimit the terms of the cooperation agreement or the development projects, taking into account the restrictions put in place by central government and by international agents.

On analyzing the case of the government of Minas Gerais, it is observed that both forms of cooperation - technical in the case of Nord-Pas de Calais and financial in the case of the World Bank - are modeled on agreements reached between these agents and the

36. Interview with World Bank project coordinator. Translation by *Apuntes*.

Brazilian government, which serve as a kind of "umbrella" that determines the country's development strategy. Nonetheless, in both cases, the government of Minas Gerais exercised a great deal of autonomy in relation to the government of Brazil in setting the terms of its cooperation. In the case of interaction with international agents, one also notes the capacity of the Minas Gerais government in proposing an agenda that converged with development demands not only in the Nord-Pas de Calais agreements, but also in the World Bank contracts, where intervention was clearly asymmetrical. However, despite the bank's intervention in environmental and indigenous policies, most activities included in the projects financed by the bank were also present in Minas Gerais's strategy.

Therefore, from the analysis of these two cases, it can be seen that Minas Gerais has acted as an active agent in setting its development agenda in the sphere of decentralized cooperation. We believe that this positioning is due to a series of elements observed in the international integration policy of the state of Minas Gerais in recent years. To begin with, the state has invested in incorporating international relations into its organizational structure; an example of this is the creation of the Sub-Secretary for International Affairs in the State Secretariat of Economic Development, which attests to the consolidation of the international arena as a means of promoting the state's development. Meanwhile, the Superintendency of International Relations was specifically created to coordinate relations between the state of Minas Gerais and multilateral and bilateral organizations and foreign subnational entities. Consequently, the state was equipped with a dedicated bureaucratic corps to develop international integration strategies covering all areas of thematic interest.

In addition to this, the implementation of the RAI project allowed the demands of state bodies to be systematized across a range of thematic areas, so as to put forward development projects that converged with local interests. Documents such as the PMDI, for instance, came to be utilized to propose international projects, since they contained the agreements signed by the government with the population and the goals to be achieved in the coming years. Thus, if the offers of international agents did not contribute to optimizing this clearly defined strategy, there would have been no point in embarking upon the cooperation.

Finally, it is worth considering the weight of the personal relationships established between local public administrators and the technocrats of international delegations. The organization of technical missions that preceded the signing of cooperation agreements and loan contracts was fundamental to forming bonds of trust and friendship between the agents responsible for project execution. These bonds, or, in the words of Gustavo Ribeiro, "instrumental friendships" played important a role in "rendering an unpredictable situation more predictable and in providing for mutual support against disturbing surprises from within or without" (Wolf, quoted in Ribeiro 2008: 115).

Thus, it can be seen that despite the asymmetry of material resources between, on the one hand, a local government such as Minas Gerais and, on the other, a subnational entity from another country such as Nord-Pas de Calais or an international agency such as the World Bank, it is possible for a local government to place itself as an active agent of decentralized international development and become a "development partner" in the terms discussed herein. To this end, elements such as a consolidated international structure and a well delimited development strategy were crucial to increasing the power and negotiation capacities of the state of Minas Gerais in negotiations with international agents.

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