

Financing Local Development Projects through Decentralized Cooperation in Yopougon (Cote d'Ivoire)

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Abstract

Between 2000 and 2011, the military-political and civil crises undermined the implementation of various local development projects in Côte d'Ivoire. After crises, funding difficulties became even more acute. Decentralized communities, which have already been faced with shrinking budgets since 1980, are struggling to meet the needs expressed by local people. Faced with such a reality, decentralized cooperation would seem to be an effective and appropriate approach. However, this approach remains unknown and unexplored by the majority of elected officials in Côte d'Ivoire. The objective of the article is to show that in the Abidjan District Municipality of Yopougon, decentralized cooperation has made it possible to finance and implement development projects at the local level.

Keywords

Decentralized Cooperation, Côte d'Ivoire, Local Development, Financing, Investments, Yopougon

1. Introduction

Financial resources are an important part of local development for decentralised communities. They are defined as the propensity of territory to take advantage of exogenous margins of manoeuvre and endogenous resources to set up a local dynamic. Decentralized cooperation contributes to the establishment of such a local dynamic. Decentralized cooperation is, in fact, a set of programmes of actions carried out abroad by regions, departments, municipalities, and their groupings. These are actions of economic and cultural promotion, humanitarian and emergency aid, loan placements, etc. according to the guidelines of the French Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs (2006). Decentralised cooperation is thus

carried out by means of assistance or exchanges of experience between local structures committed to it in order to strengthen know-how in the exchange of experience in international action (Denechaud, 2007).

Since the world economic crisis of the 1980s, whose adverse effects still severely impact development projects in Africa; decentralized cooperation has gained notoriety and is tending to become institutionalized. In Senegal, for example, the legislator gave it a legal basis in Law 96-07 of 22 March 1996 on the code of local authorities. This law recognizes the right of local authorities (region, commune, and rural community) “to undertake cooperative actions that give rise to agreements with local authorities of foreign countries or international public or private development organizations” (Article 17 of Law 96-07 of 22 March 1996). This institutionalization is reinforced by decree No. 2003-666 of 25 August 2003 of the code of local authorities which gives a legal basis for said cooperation (in its Article 336). In Burkina Faso too, regulatory and legislative texts provide a framework for decentralized cooperation. This is Law No. 055-2004/AN of 21 December 2004 on the General Code of Local and Regional Authorities relating to agreements (Article 123 to 126 of Law No. 055-2004); twinning (Article 127 to 129 of Law No. 055-2004) and the community of municipalities (Article 130 to 133 of Law No. 055-2004). The same is true in the Central African Republic, where bills have been submitted to the nation’s elected representatives for years on decentralized cooperation (Denechaud, 2007).

In Côte d’Ivoire, the Estates General of Decentralization, held from 15 to 18 January 2007 in Abidjan (*The Acts of the Estates General of Decentralization and Local Development, 2007*), report that elected officials in Côte d’Ivoire have only a rough vision of the mechanisms for financing projects through decentralized cooperation, with the exception of the twinning partnership. However, the documentation is very long-winded in this area and the debates on this subject are going well from one country to another depending on whether we are in South-South or North-South cooperation. For some, decentralized cooperation is a tool for boosting local initiatives in the face of dwindling financial resources of decentralized communities (Bondo & Balikwisha, 2013). For others such as Yatta (1998), and Gilly and Perral (2002), local authorities that do not mobilise sufficient own resources to meet the expectations of the population can use them. Whereas elected officials in Côte d’Ivoire limit themselves to simple twinning actions between northern and southern municipalities (Gilly & Perral, 2002). This state of affairs would be due to the lack of knowledge by these elected officials of the mechanisms for submitting projects within the legal framework of decentralized cooperation drawn up in 2012.

Yopougon (**Figure 1**), our reference framework is a local authority that stands out from the crowd.

The municipality covers 153.4 km² or 7.4% of the 2079 km² area of the Abidjan District. It is the commune of the most populous of Côte d’Ivoire, with more than 2,000,000 inhabitants and 51% women; 49% men and 56% young people under the age of 20 (RGPH-2014). Since 2011, the collateral effects of the post-electoral

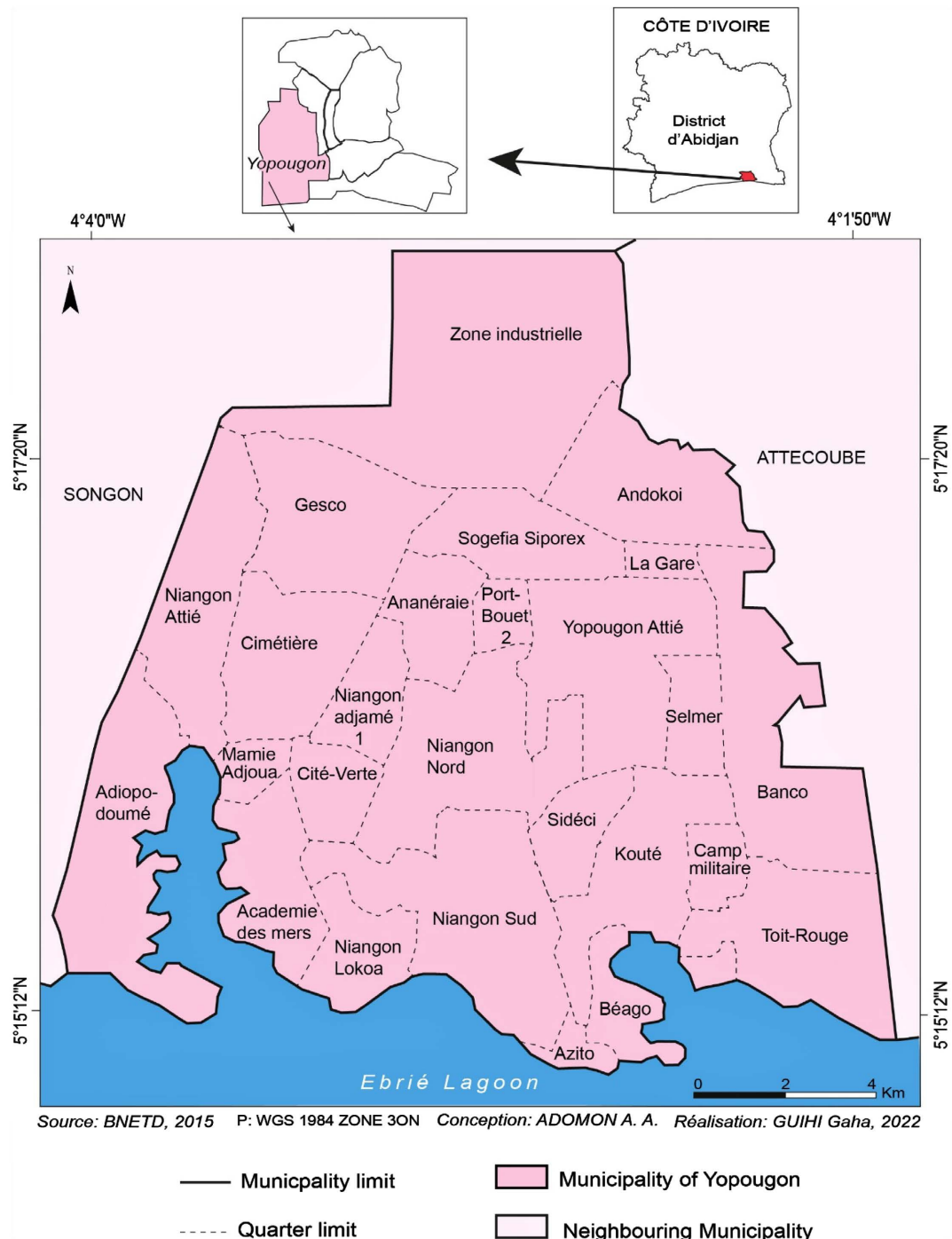


Figure 1. Geographic location and framework presentation.

crisis have been visible in this “bastion of the party of ex-president Gbagbo”. There is a glaring lack of equipment and infrastructure, the lack of potable water supply, fraudulent connections to SODECI, anarchic electricity connections, the absence of urban health centres, approximate management of household waste, etc. (Adomon, 2015; Adomon, Beba, & Gogbe, 2018). After the crisis in 2011, everything still has to be redone here. This requires substantial finan-

cial means.

The objective of the article is to show that in this municipality of the District of Abidjan, decentralized cooperation has made it possible to finance and implement development projects at the local level. This article sheds light on the legal and institutional framework for financing through decentralised cooperation in Côte d'Ivoire. Gives an overview of the municipal investments made in Yopougon as part of the decentralized cooperation between 2015 and 2021. Then finally opens up avenues for reflection on this approach to financing local development.

2. Method

The method of work is based on a qualitative and quantitative approach focused on documentary research that is the administrative accounts and the primary budgets of the City of Yopougon between 2015 and 2020. This made it possible to list the municipal investments financed from decentralized cooperation by identifying the financial partners of this decentralized cooperation. In addition, field visits were conducted in April 2020 and September 2021 to verify the effectiveness of investments. During these observation visits, unannounced and informal interviews were held with officials of the Technical Service and the Town Hall Socio-cultural Service. Some populations of the neighborhoods of Gesco, Koweït, Toits Rouges, camp Militaire and Sogefiha interviewed provided information that facilitated our approach in the analysis. The information collected and processed is as follows.

3. Results

3.1. Decentralized Cooperation in Côte d'Ivoire: A New Institutional Incentive Framework since 2012 but Little Known

Since 1987, cooperation relations between the Franche Comté de France region and the Côte d'Ivoire mountainous west region have existed as a result of spontaneous initiatives in the absence of any legal framework. They were just twinning partnerships.

Today, these forms of partnership take the form of a real local public policy shared between communities, on a real dialogue between elected representatives. Indeed, the advent of new paradigms within the framework of decentralized cooperation at the international level offers the authorities the prerogatives to be recognized as competent actors in the field of local development in a dynamic of decentralized cooperation. They must be able to grasp the challenges of decentralized cooperation for their local development action. It is in this context that the Ivorian State taking the full measure of this role will initiate in 2012, a dynamic of grooming the texts of decentralized cooperation by strengthening the legal framework following the estates general of the decentralization of Abidjan in 2007 (*The Acts of the Estates General of Decentralization and Local Develop-*

ment, 2007). In this regard, Law No. 2012-1128 on the Organisation of Local Authorities decentralization of 18 December 2012 remains innovative in terms of decentralized cooperation. This law now gives elected officials the legitimacy to establish external partnerships to boost local development. These legal provisions abrogate the principle of the State's constitutional monopoly on decentralized cooperation. They are:

- Articles 133 to 136 of Chapter XVII entitled "Decentralized cooperation and agreements between territorial communities" of Law No. 2012-1128 of 18 December 2012 on the organization of territorial communities;
- Law No. 95-610 of 03 August 1995 determining the regime of inter-communal organization;
- Articles 49 and 50 of Chapter IV entitled "Cooperation" of Ordinance No. 2011-262 of 28 September 2011 on the general organization of the State Territorial Administration;
- Decree No. 84-17 of 11 January 1984 laying down the rules relating to twinning;
- Of Order No. 225/AE/Cooperation of 13 September 1989 establishing a Council for the Coordination of Decentralized Cooperation.

In order to harmonize the operational and institutional framework with that of the French-speaking area, the Ivorian State has established an institutional anchor since 2012 that allows it to frame the operational mode of decentralized cooperation (Ministry of State, Ministry of the Interior for Security, 2013). These include the Directorate General for Decentralization and Local Development (DGDDL) and the Interministerial Committee for Twinning and Cooperation (CIJC).

The DGDDL is responsible for the promotion of decentralized cooperation; the implementation and monitoring of the policy of decentralized cooperation as initiated by the Government; the preparation, in liaison with the services of the Ministry in charge of foreign affairs, contacts and meetings between elected representatives of Ivorian and foreign local authorities; the organisation of the search for partnerships for the benefit of local authorities; the carrying out of prospective studies aimed at identifying new partnerships in decentralised cooperation; the monitoring of technical and financial support granted to local and regional authorities in the framework of decentralised cooperation; the framing, strengthening and development of existing partnerships in decentralised cooperation and the preparation of periodic reviews of decentralised cooperation policy.

The ICJC is responsible for encouraging twinning activities and approving decentralised cooperation projects. This committee chaired by the representative of the Ministry in charge of local authorities is composed of representatives of the Ministries in charge of foreign affairs; of the economy and finance; representatives of the Ministries concerned by the specific nature of the projects included in the twinning dossiers to be examined.

With legal tools, decentralized communities can now freely establish contacts or even partnerships with other foreign local authorities. However, these initiatives are accompanied by conditionalities such as the fact that the government must be systematically and regularly informed of external action; initiatives must respect the rules set by the aforementioned legislative and regulatory provisions and must not interfere in any way with the country's foreign policy as is the case in France. This new vision suggests a methodical approach in the organization of international relations services and their practices.

3.2. The Outline of a Financing Procedure in the French-Speaking Area through Decentralized Cooperation

When there is an agreement between a northern and a southern community, it is called decentralized cooperation. Beyond the formality common to all cooperation projects, there is a great diversity in the modes of intervention of those who involve services and associative partners with appropriate skills in the steering and implementation of the project. In the Francophone space, funding a project follows six mandatory steps.

Step 1: It consists in building a commitment (Prerequisite to any decentralized cooperation project). This requires clarifying the motivations for wanting to cooperate and involve the actors in the process. Therefore, it seems important that the approach be presented, discussed and carried out by other actors of the territory (organizations, hospitals, churches, etc.) so as to be the manifestation of a real will of the essential forces of the territory. It is then necessary to identify the stakes of the territory, that is to say those on which decentralized cooperation can be a lever. Finally, identify what the territory can contribute to its counterparts in a decentralised cooperation relationship of mutual interest.

Step 2: This is the step of looking for potential partners for the continuation of collaboration between partners. It is done through:

1) Mobilising networks of local actors (Diasporas, churches, civil society organizations, political parties, etc.) virtually all of these players in the territories have international networks in which there are elected officials and officials from communities in northern countries who must be identified, use and nurture to create a spirit of ongoing relationship research with potential partners.

2) Involvement in networks of local authorities. These networks are great matchmaking tools that need to be more valued than they are right now.

Step 3: This is the step of the relationship requires elected officials and other actors carrying out the approach (technicians, actors of the territory) to know how to present themselves and to know how to present the territory, its expectations and its assets. In other words How to present your project to make it attractive, engaging. This requires an argument that makes it possible to explain: the motivations for wanting to cooperate; the characteristics of the territory and its actors; the issues on which decentralized cooperation would be an asset and finally the possible contributions of the territorial community and its territory to

its northern counterpart.

Step 4: It is a question of knowing how to initiate the relationship. This relationship requires to be linked between several people, between people of different statuses (elected officials, technicians, actors of the territory) to build a collective portage but also to prevent the risks of personal monopolization of the relationship. These are the people we call support actors whose role is to support local communities in the implementation of their development projects. Depending on their competence, these actors provide technical assistance and advice or financial support.

Step 5: Surround yourself with maximum guarantees to sign agreements. The elaboration of the convention of decentralized cooperation comes as the conclusion of this phase of knowledge, of political dialogue between elected representatives to put on the table the motivations, verify their compatibility, and identify the respective stakes to cooperate, set priorities...

Step 6: Proceed to actions. From there, it is possible to move on to the prioritisation of actions, the setting up of project files, and the search for additional funding to make operational the implementation of the decentralized cooperation relationship.

Thus, the actors intervene according to two main modes of financing either through financial support for international solidarity actions implemented by other actors; or through a contractual partnership with a “twin” community. Decentralised authorities can benefit from multilateral financing either through the State or through the Networks and Platforms of local authorities.

✓ Financing through the State

For the government of the country of the applicants to take this into account in the files to be presented to the donors solicited, the municipality should express the need for funding to their supervisory authority. It is in this context that the financing granted takes the form of loans with conditionalities for the municipalities. Since Law No. 2012-1128 of 18 December 2012, funded programmes no longer have their roots solely in a Technical Ministry in charge of decentralization; municipalities can have direct access to multilateral funding channels.

✓ Financing through networks and platforms of local communities

Such cooperation provides multilateral funding for the benefit of the communities that are members of these networks and platforms. These networks and Platforms of local authorities promote the mobilization of international technical and financial support, based on the implementation of integrated programs. It is at this level that micro-projects for local development receive modest financial commitments and free services. Because here, effective economic alliances are forged. It is in this context that communities like Yopougon have benefited from a number of investments since 2015.

In terms of feasibility, there are five types of intervention, depending on whether the projects are managed in-house or not, and on whether the skills of the community’s techniques are mobilized or not. These are:

Type 1: Steering and monitoring of cooperation actions carried out by the services of the community, and mobilizing the expertise of the community or territory.

Type 2: Steering and monitoring of cooperation actions carried out by the services of the community, not mobilizing the expertise of the community or the territory

Type 3: Steering and monitoring of cooperation actions conducted in partnership with an association, and mobilizing the expertise of the community or territory

Type 4: Steering and monitoring of cooperation actions conducted in partnership with an association, not mobilizing the expertise of the community or territory

Type 5: Multi-community cooperation: management often delegated to a head of associative network, pooling resources, and sometimes skills.

3.3. Investments Made in Yopougon between 2015 and 2020 with Financing from Decentralized Cooperation

In Yopougon, decentralized cooperation is a strategic means of local development. This strategy is materialized by the signing of various agreements between the municipality and foreign partners. Thanks to a partnership through the Ivorian government and the Japan Agency for International Cooperation (JICA), the municipality of Yopougon has managed to rehabilitate and build various basic infrastructures. This municipality also received support from the European Union in the framework of the socio-cultural and sports project called PARCS. In particular, the realization of socio-cultural and sports activities and the rehabilitation of infrastructure: construction of playgrounds and sports on public spaces. The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) has facilitated the rehabilitation of the municipal library located in the “allocodrome” of Niangon, the rehabilitation of the offices of the town hall in the Semler district, the adjoining town halls of Niangon Texaco and Red Roofs, and especially the supply of equipment of the communal radio “Radio Yopougon”. **Table 1** is an overview of the investments made through decentralized cooperation between 2015 and 2020 in Yopougon.

Table 1 shows that the aid and financial support provided by the development partners enabled the municipality to build infrastructure and equipment in several areas. The priority areas are among others: the Socio-economic sector (1st position) supported by Mauritian and French partnerships; the Roads and miscellaneous networks sector (2nd position) supported by Japanese and French partnerships; the education sector (3rd position) supported by a Japanese cooperation; the Socio-cultural and Leisure sector (4th position) supported by the European Union and the American Agency for International Development (USAID). Finally, the supply of office equipment and equipment supported by USAID (5th position).

Table 1. Municipal investments made and financed through decentralized cooperation between 2015 and 2020 in Yopougon.

| Municipal investments | Localization | Cost of achievements in (€) | Sources of funding | Prioritized by amount invested |
|---|---|-----------------------------|--|--------------------------------|
| Socio-economic | | | | |
| 1) Building of a hyper market (Mall of Yopougon) | In front of Ficgayo Square (city centre) | 27445841.2€ | Mauritian Group SCI Émergence Plaza | |
| 2) Building of a wholesale and retail market with 4000 stalls | At the Gesco | 38119223.89€ | Debt Reduction and Development Contract (C2D) Côte d'Ivoire-France | 1st position |
| 3/Building of neighbourhood markets | Niangon and Military Camp | 304953.79€ | | |
| Miscellaneous | | | | |
| Network Roads VRD) | | | | |
| 1) Building of paved roads (600 m) | Banco 2 and Andokoi | 686146.03€ | Project-JICA (Japan International Cooperation Agency) | 2nd position |
| 2) Building of a 2.7 km 2X2-lane boulevard | From Koweit to Niangon | 6009075.82€ | French Development Agency (AFD) | |
| Education | | | | |
| Rehabilitation of primary schools and building of basic infrastructure | SOGEFIHA 6 (Station 40); EPP Palmeraie (Port-Bouet 2) | 68614.6€ | apan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) | 3rd position |
| Socio-cultural and leisure | | | | |
| 1) Building of playgrounds and sports areas on public spaces | Place CP1; Station 47 (SOGEFIHA); BAE land (Toits Rouges) Space Timotel (Niangon Sud) | 38119.22€ | European Union (PARCS: Socio-cultural and Sports Project) | 4th position |
| 2) Rehabilitation of the municipal library (Philip Carter III) | Niangon situated in allocodrome | Not available | United States Agency for International Development (USAID) | |
| Modernizing the administration | | | | |
| 1) Rebuilding of administrative offices and renovation of the wedding hall | Municipality | 89961.37€ | USAID Support | 5th position |
| 2) Rehabilitation of the annexed town halls and equipment of the communal radio | Niangon Texaco and Toits Rouges | 106733.83€ | USAID Assistance | |

Source: 2015-2020 Administrative Account and Primary Budget.

As can be seen, countries such as France, Japan and the States provide capital for the financing of local economic projects whose profitability is assured and the level of profit attractive.

4. Discussion

The data in **Table 1**, compared with those in **Table 2** from the work conducted by **Adomon (2015)** below, suggest that the needs expressed by the populations of Yopougon before the post-crisis elections were not taken into account by the municipal authorities, according to **Table 2 (Adomon, 2015)**.

The cross-analysis of **Table 1** and **Table 2** shows that the areas of Roads and Miscellaneous Networks (VRD) and Education are the main areas of intervention within the framework of decentralized cooperation. But these areas of intervention have already been the subject of attention by the municipal authorities in Yopougon before 2015 (**Adomon, 2015**). However, socio-economic investments occupy the 1st position in investments made through decentralized cooperation between 2015 and 2020 while this sector is relayed in 8th place by municipal authorities and the population before 2015 (**Adomon, 2015**). These examples are indicative of the fact that Ivorian communities, like Yopougon, do not yet master the mechanisms for obtaining financing from decentralized cooperation.

However, today, the areas covered by decentralized cooperation in the Francophone area are varied. These areas concern economic developments, the rural or urban sectors and several areas of competence and expertise of local actors such as education, culture and health. Today, decentralized cooperation has gone from logic of solidarity exchange to competitive strategies of coalition of actors (**Rozier, 2017**). Hence the need to control the mechanisms of access to finance. **Rozier (2017)** gives three essential elements that condition access to

Table 2. Prioritisation of the needs of the population and areas of intervention of the town hall before 2015 in Yopougon.

| Municipality of Yopougon | | | |
|-----------------------------------|------------------|---|------------------|
| Needs expressed by the population | Order | Areas of intervention privileged by the Town Hall | Order |
| Sanitation and public health | 1 ^{er} | Education | 1 ^{er} |
| Human promotion | 2 ^{eme} | Miscellaneous Network Roads (VRD) | 2 ^{eme} |
| Miscellaneous Network Roads (VRD) | 3 ^{eme} | Socio-cultural and leisure | 3 ^{eme} |
| Town planning and housing | 4 ^{eme} | Sanitation and public health | 4 ^{eme} |
| Security | 5 ^{eme} | Human promotion and employment | 5 ^{eme} |
| Education | 6 ^{eme} | Security | 6 ^{eme} |
| Public health | 7 ^{eme} | Town planning and housing | 7 ^{eme} |
| Socio-economic | 8 ^{eme} | Socio-economic | 8 ^{eme} |
| Socio-cultural and leisure | 9 ^{eme} | Public health | 9 ^{eme} |

Source: Single doctoral thesis (**Adomon, 2015**).

this type of funding:

1) National dynamics that make territories more economically competent and responsible;

2) The integration of local economic structures in a competitive and globalised system;

3) The appropriation by elected officials and technicians of these issues.

In this regard, Bondo and Balikwisha (2013) believe that decentralized cooperation today has a local public policy character that benefits local partner entities. Consequently, actions must be taken that respond to territorial issues by taking into account issues of citizen participation, issues related to the protection and presentation of heritage... In addition, each community by identifying the issues of the partners must be able to value them according to its own issues. In doing so, the investments made through the financing of decentralized cooperation will undoubtedly lead to the integration of local dynamics at the level of two partner communities. Because today, it is no longer enough to say only that funding is “granted” to foreign local communities without it having an effect back on the territory of the donor community.

5. Conclusion

The implementation of a decentralized cooperation relationship is a long-term project involving various actors from the local area. This approach is carried out by both local authorities and policymakers without whom the results cannot be perceived on the ground. Although the freedom of initiative granted to local authorities makes them play a significant role in decentralized cooperation, it is the political decision-makers who can ensure the stability of such a relationship.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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