Chapter I

South-South Cooperation after BAPA+40: necessary alliances and complex challenges*

Ever since its origins towards the end of the Second World War, International Cooperation has mostly been a State matter. In times of a lower population, high mobility costs and predominantly rural and poorly articulated societies, relations and commitments between countries were conducted from the capital cities.

The developing world’s heterogeneity increased then as a result of the appearance of alliances and networks in emerging markets; regional stakeholders with global ambitions; rural migration into the cities alongside with the increase of innovation and productivity; and the development of information technologies. Hand in hand with these changes, new stakeholders such as the private sector (in terms of philanthropy and industrial pacts), civil society, academia and sub-national/local governments, started gaining prominence on this global conversation.

This chapter’s main thesis is that globalization dynamics have boosted networks among stakeholders which, since the 20th Century’s last quarter, have been exchanging with the States in Ibero-American debates about development. Efforts to develop new means of collaborative work between the States and these stakeholders result in new types of alliances which management instruments are still being designed. These alliances are increasingly necessary, since these stakeholders can contribute, each with their own responsibilities and capacities, to the solution of development problems.

The 2030 Agenda adds a financial dimension to the acknowledgement of these contributions: the development of solutions to face the 17 Sustainable Development Goals’ (SDG) challenges will require to double the efforts and the available financial resources for the promotion of development.

South-South and Triangular Cooperation principles are suitable to build horizontal associations among several stakeholders which will enable them to face this challenge. This has been stated in guideline documents of the Ibero-American space, such as the 2nd Ibero-American Cooperation Quadrennial Plan of Action, passed in November 2018 during the 4th Ordinary Meeting of Ibero-American Heads of Cooperation, which took place in Guatemala.

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I.1

BRIEF CHRONOLOGY OF THE EMERGENCE OF NEW STAKEHOLDERS IN IBERO-AMERICAN DEBATES ON DEVELOPMENT AND AT A GLOBAL LEVEL

The development of collaborative work modalities in the Global South, which favor technical exchanges and mutual learning amongst partners over financial flows, has been a constant during almost 70 years. Simultaneously, new types of stakeholders, all with distinctive and individual objectives and organizational arrangements, have formed international networks and have emerged as the States’ interlocutors in international fora. In this process we identify, at least, seven clear milestones.

The first milestone in this process is the Bandung Conference, held in April 1955, summoned by the recently independent Nations of Africa and Asia as a consequence of the increasing polarization caused by the Cold War and Neo-colonial threats. This Conference lay the foundations of a different economic, technical and cultural cooperation which was the bedrock for the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (NAM).

The second milestone was the United Nations Conference on Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries, which took place in September 1978 and generated the renowned Buenos Aires Plan of Action (BAPA). This document consolidates South-South Cooperation as an acknowledged cooperation modality, independent of Official Development Assistance (ODA). BAPA was explicit about principles such as respect for countries’ sovereignty, no interference in internal affairs, solidarity in international action, commitment to peace and horizontal relations between participating partners, all essential and inherent conditions of both South - South and Triangular Cooperation.

During the following years, political and environmental difficulties were outlined in the Brundtland Commission Report (1987) titled “Our Common Future”, requested by the United Nations, which suggests the concept of sustainable development for the first time. The reaction to this report was a catalyst for the third milestone in the development of new stakeholders and narratives in global debates: The Conference on Environment and Development of Rio de Janeiro, held in June 1992. Environmental, citizen and entrepreneurial movements were summoned to this event, which had an unprecedented mediatic impact thanks to satellite communications and to the state of shock that the recently disintegrated Soviet Union had provoked.

Since then, the idea that certain development challenges must be addressed at a regional and global scale gains strength, highlighting societies’ and environments’ interdependence. International Cooperation consolidates itself as a useful mechanism to act at this scale and for the articulation with Civil Society Organizations and the private sector (initially under the title of Corporate Social Responsibility), in matters such as: the promotion and defense of Human Rights; the development of knowledge networks and good practices; the promotion of nutrition and food security; the access to medicines and vaccines; and environmental management and water treatment.

In April 2000, during the First South Summit in Havana, the Group of 77 (G77) member countries highlighted South-South Cooperation as an important instrument to strengthen Third World countries’ economic independence and to advance on the achievement of their own development as well as one of the means to ensure their equal and effective participation in the reconfiguration of the new economic world order. Economic and technical cooperation among developing countries has become an essential component of mutual relations between Southern States and an important tool to promote the exchange of ideas, initiatives, knowledge, technical improvements, abilities and experiences in a wide range of sectors.

The fourth milestone is the Millennium Summit held in New York in September 2000 which, after the evaluation of the United Nations’ role in the 21st Century, proposed eight Millennium Development Goals (MDG) addressed at eradicating poverty, promoting education and gender equality, reducing child mortality and the impact of diseases, improving maternal health and ensuring environmental sustainability. Although innovative and ambitious, the Millennium Agenda was criticized for a number of reasons: developing countries did not take part in its design; goals were poorly interrelated; there were no common disaggregated indicators and no follow up methodology; there was no implementation strategy at a sub-national level; and there were few bridging mechanisms with non-governmental stakeholders. Many of these criticisms boost the debates on aid effectiveness during the following years.

In Paris (2005), Accra (2008) and Busan (2011), ODA starts adopting certain guiding principles which already oriented South-South Cooperation
since BAPA: appropriation of development interventions by the beneficiary partners; alignment with national development strategies; harmonization of instruments and practices between the different partners; focus on measuring the impact of interventions and transparency and accountability for the use of resources. These events also witnessed an increasing and informed incidence of Civil Society Organizations (CSO) whose experience in project execution and analytical capacities due to academic work press for a greater transparency and inclusion in the whole sector.

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The fifth milestone is the qualitative leap of Ibero-American Cooperation in the end of the first decade of the 2000, neighboring the thirtieth anniversary of BAPA. There are three key aspects which stand out in this scenario: the issuing in 2007 of the first edition of the Ibero-American General Secretariat (SEGIB) Report on South-South Cooperation in Ibero-America; the creation in 2008 of the Ibero-American Program for the Strengthening of South-South Cooperation (PIFCCS), and the celebration in 2009 of the United Nations High Level Conference on South-South Cooperation in Nairobi, where, among other aspects, the principles of technical cooperation are reinforced and updated. These events reveal the determination of the Global South to take advantage of lessons learnt and of its own dynamics in the search for development.

The sixth milestone is the 2030 Agenda, constituted by 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in September 2015. This Agenda was developed after an unprecedented multi-level consultation process, which promoted the implementation of several global associations between different stakeholders working together to intensify the exchange of good practices on resources mobilization issues; transparency and responsibility for development; development in contexts of conflict and fragility; data measurement and generation, among others; and the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP-21) held in December 2015 in Paris.

Regarding the development and cooperation agenda, the seventh and most recent milestone is the Second High-level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation, held in Buenos Aires in March 2019; also known as BAPA+40 due to the commemoration of the fortieth anniversary of the Buenos Aires Plan of Action. This event reaffirms in its recommendations the 1978 principles and the Nairobi (2009), Paris (2015) and Addis Ababa (2015) progresses. Furthermore, it contrasts these principles with the current context and places them in a new game board: the debate is not only about technical cooperation, respect and no interference in post-colonial contexts, but also about the recognition of the academia, the private sector, civil society and local governments as legitimate and necessary stakeholders to make human kind permanence in this planet sustainable.

I.2
THE CURRENT CONTEXT: GLOBAL CHALLENGES WITH IBERO-AMERICAN FEATURES

After the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, there seemed to be general consensus, in many Ibero-American countries that representative democracy and market economy were the best means for political and economic organization of our societies. Although the region had always counted with renowned references of alternative models, during the first two decades of the 21st Century numerous countries have re-evaluated these consensus and this sets new global challenges.

New technological innovations take place in different areas such as the design of materials, construction techniques, telecommunications or the generation and processing of information of every sector of the economy; all these aspects constitute what is considered to be the “Fourth Industrial Revolution”. In addition, the creation of new innovation opportunities implies transferring production forces (offshoring) and, in many cases, the automatization of processes, resulting in an employment decrease.

A redefinition of development priorities is necessary. The most significant global consensus of the last two decades have been developed around two
main issues: overcoming extreme poverty and the mitigation of and adaptation to climate change. As mentioned before/above, both subjects gain great relevance in the Millennium Agenda (2000-2015) and in the 2030 Agenda (2015-2030).

Former consensus on authority are being renegotiated. Against all odds, the last decade has witnessed the return of many debates, which apparently seemed to have been solved, regarding the value of information for informed decision making (both at the governmental and at the individual level). Different groups are questioning the authority of traditional sources such as universities, think tanks, media or political parties, to describe social realities, proposing alternative interpretations.

The convergence of these and other aspects is modifying the public domain and forcing the State to respond to new contexts: public agendas expanding and becoming more technical in matters like climate change, the fourth industrial revolution and international value chains; the increasing complexity for coordination due to the atomization of the State in multiple entities with specific mandates; the acceleration of public events due to the immediacy of information in social networks, which reduces time for reaction and increases risks; decentralization; integration in regional organizations; as well as the appearance of new stakeholders and organizational schemes that, as has been mentioned before, compete with the State’s voice in international fora.

Together with these global challenges, many Ibero-American countries face structural obstacles such as:

**Scarce capacity to manage current migration flows.** Mixed migration flows, motivated by different aspects such as the deterioration of economic, political or safety conditions which can be affected by the impact of climate change, increase the demand for public services and impact on labor markets in transit and recipient countries.

**Persistent institutional weaknesses.** The prevalence of labor informality which presses salaries down and reduces the State’s fiscal base, the under-utilization of the economically active population, technological changes which have transformed the labor market and labor regulation processes as well as the different forms of fiscal evasion, are the major institutional weaknesses.

**Low investment in human resources.** Poor results in international evaluations are explained by two aspects: first, the reduction of the public sector’s investment in education; and, second: private sector’s investment in research and development is significantly less than in other latitudes. These also seems to contribute to the fact that there are less Latin companies qualified to innovate and compete internationally.

**Socio-political scourges such as high inequality.** Irregular income distribution, together with the coexistence of highly traditional industries and highly advanced industries in the same countries – sometimes even within the same communities – generates an increasing alienation of the economic level of different populations. The lack of equal rights hinders the full exercise of the citizenship of the most vulnerable ones when making decisions, exposing them to organized crime and drug trafficking actions or to be victims of police and judicial impunity.

Obstacles mentioned previously contribute to guide the work agenda of many of the countries in the region, both in South-South and Triangular Cooperation as well as in ODA. Their persistence in our pending "assignments list" (with local features) reveals at least two aspects: that these problems are rooted in complex economic, political and social relations; and that the international cooperation modalities and partners which have been implemented and have participated until now have not been enough to solve them.

**High dependence on commodities.** Basic extractive industries still have an important influence in the economies of the region, which makes us vulnerable to the external shocks generated by the variability of their demand and prices. The prevalence of basic industries also determines that the average added value of our exports, as well as the average productivity of our labor force, is less than in other regions.
1.3 WHAT LIES AHEAD: NEW HORIZONS, MORE PARTNERS

In light of the appearance of new challenges and the worsening of other long-lasting scourges, globalization and the progress of new communication technologies have enabled the constitution of new networks among stakeholders at an international level. The increasingly frequent calls to strengthen alliances and coordinate actions can be understood as an acknowledgement of the value that these stakeholders can add to scenarios which had been exclusively the domain of the State.

“Alliances for development” is the name we currently use to refer to this collaborative work to achieve the SDG through the exchange of knowledge, experiences, technologies and financial resources. The United Nations Agencies, Funds and Programs are key to materialize these alliances in South-South and Triangular Cooperation initiatives, given their experience in generating connections and articulating bilateral and multilateral financing.

Consequently, new areas of action are formed to respond to the four stakeholders:

**Decentralized, sub-national or local governments.** The territorial or local level is an essential setting for the effective and sustainable resolution of development challenges and objectives. Decentralized cooperation focuses on local governments and municipalities, and recommends exchange programs for local capacity strengthening and for the design and execution of projects for sustainable development. The modality of sub-national/local governments cooperation is called Decentralized Cooperation (or cross-border, when local territories share social realities despite being located in different sides of a national or state border). Its management raises questions about local government’s capacities to ensure the allocation of national resources, as well as about the continuity of projects when local governments change.

**Organized Civil Society.** The communities’ appropriation of development processes is key to ensure sustainability, efficacy and the real and complete achievement of development goals. Promoting a good quality participation requires a vibrant OCS environment which can facilitate dialogue between the public sector and society. An effective participation of civil society must revert the tendency to restrict the habilitating environment. This means it is necessary to strengthen civil security conditions (with responsibilities which concern the State and other stakeholders and community dynamics) and explore how different financial sources can affect civil society’s independent action, in a context in which the decrease of resources is undermining its capacity and its accountability processes.

**Academia.** The increasing need to count with more and better information regarding cooperation flows and the impact of interventions, demands the strengthening of International Cooperation knowledge management. New theories must support the study of current phenomena and the management of stakeholders, scopes and challenges. The academic contribution is also key to advance in the 2030 Agenda, from common scenarios to effective development management instruments.

**Private sector.** This stakeholder has a key role in society given its capacity to mobilize financial resources and its orientation to the efficiency of processes. From the Corporate Social Responsibility field, and many times collaboratively working with Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO), this sector has experience in the organization of pacts for collective actions around ideas such as fair trade, combat to labor exploitation in textile industries or in the chain values of products such as cacao or coffee. Nevertheless, increase innovation in cooperation for development will require the strengthening of alliances for development. This demands a greater assimilation of the concept of sustainable development as part of national and regional agendas, as well as the management of possible conflicts of interests and the risks of these institutions being captured by commercial interests.

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40 YEARS AFTER BAPA: A NEW PHASE OF SOUTH-SOUTH COOPERATION?

Although former pages have attempted to characterize a group of stakeholders which seem to be crucial to face future challenges, the region counts with years of experience in articulating actions with them. The next pages of this report will reveal the scope of this work.

BAPA+40 made specific calls to provide the optimal working conditions with South-South and Triangular Cooperation new stakeholders, which will improve the efficiency of both cooperation modalities through technical exchanges to, among others:

- Boost industrial companies and provide support to ensure food security and nutrition;
- Promote the development, transfer, dissemination and diffusion of ecologically rational technologies;
- Promote cross-border collaboration programs to develop practices which are more adjusted to these cross-border zones’ social realities;
- Strengthen public research institutions, academic institutions, study centers, knowledge networks and regional or thematic excellency centers;
- Mobilize more resources through collaboration with the private sector in cooperation projects and;
- Improve access to financing and the participation of a greater number of Civil Society Organizations, as well as improve the environment for the connection with social organizations and transforming processes.

Despite this progress, the challenge of the alignment of South-South and Triangular Cooperation with the 2030 Agenda is, one among many, which requires conceptual and political progresses from the Global South which are still being developed. Potential partners and modalities for South-South and Triangular Cooperation are not reduced to the matters which were exposed above.

In terms of cooperation modalities, we consider it is important to pay more attention to regional cooperation mechanisms, such as the Mesoamerica Project (PM). The PM experience is an example of a regional coordination mechanism which articulates countries, resources and professional and thematic networks for the development of a cooperation laboratory which amounts and horizons are more ambitious than those of traditional South-South and Triangular Cooperation. In other latitudes, initiatives such as CARICOM or MERCOSUR also display complex technical and political working mechanisms.

In relation to BAPA+40 call for a better management of alliances for development, there are still opportunities for regional complementarity. Much has been written about the importance of setting common agendas among different cooperation stakeholders in the region but there is a lack of information about the importance of looking for synergies amongst the multiplicity of spaces and mechanisms of programmatic, political or commercial coordination existing in Ibero-America.

In short, changes in the international context have modified the notion of development and its measurement. The integration of new stakeholders to Ibero-American debates on development and the redefinition of their role in international cooperation, are symptoms of these changes. As a reflection of these, cooperation among different stakeholders goes beyond an alliance for specific projects or for searching new resources for development. It is challenging to coordinate interests and heterogenous objectives with private companies, civil society, academia and decentralized governments to face development problems and current phenomena.

Complementing the progress achieved of traditional South-South Cooperation and aligned with its guiding principles, Triangular Cooperation is appearing as a useful modality to manage these complex arrangements of resources, timetables, interests and perceptions. Ibero-American countries have made important efforts in the last decade to systematize good practices of Triangular Cooperation management within the PIFCSS. In addition, work at a global level in the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the OECD, the Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation (GPEDC) or the Global Partnership Initiative (GPI), also account for the importance given by other regions to strengthen capacities to solve these cooperation dilemmas.