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THE INCREASE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENTS' SOFT
POWERS IN LATIN AMERICA THROUGH THE EUROPEAN
UNION'S DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation aims to understand the origins and motivations for development policy between the EU and Latin America and the extent to which they have influenced the increase of decentralised cooperation among the local governments of the region, as well as the design of local inclusion policies, especially in the area of labour inclusion, to tackle informality, inequality, and climate neutrality. Thus, this dissertation will seek to answer the following research question: Does the European Union's development policy in Latin America support the creation of soft power in local governments and the local governments' key role in driving the strategies toward labour inclusion policies aimed at tackling and reducing informality and inequality and achieving climate neutrality? And if so, in what ways?

Derived from the literature review and theoretical framework studied, the main hypothesis that has guided this dissertation is that the internationalisation of LGs could be a soft power tool to foster and develop collaboration between LGs from different countries and continents to improve local public policies and the horizontal and reciprocal cooperation between them.

Keywords: European Union; Latin America; development policy; local governments.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AGCID	Chilean Agency for International Development Cooperation
AL-LAS	Euro-Latin American Alliance of Cooperation between Cities
CELAC	Community of Latin American and Caribbean States
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
DG	Directorate-General
DiT	Development in Transition
ECLAC	Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean
EBRD	European Bank for Reconstruction and Development
EIB	European Investment Bank
EU	European Union
EU-SA	European Union strategic autonomy
EUGS	EU Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy
FIIAPP	International and Ibero-American Foundation for Administration and Public Policies
FLACMA	Latin American Federation of Cities, Municipalities and Associations of Local Governments
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GNP	Gross National Product
HDI	Human Development Index

LA	Local Authorities
LAC	Latin America and the Caribbean
LICs	Low-Income Countries
MDGs	Millenium Development Goals
MFF	Multi-annual Financial Framework
MICs	Middle-Income Countries
NDICI	Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument
OCO	Office of Coordination and Orientation
ODA	Official Development Assistance
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PCD	Policy Coherence for Development
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
TEU	Treaty on European Union
TFEU	Treaty of the Functioning of the European Union
UCLG	United Cities and Local Governments
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNOSSC	United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation

INTRODUCTION

In an era characterised by growing global partnerships, the soft power wielded by local governments has become a pivotal force in shaping diplomatic relations and fostering international cooperation. This dissertation seeks to explore the rise of soft power among local governments in Latin America, with a particular focus on the influence exercised through the programmes of the European Union (EU). The motivation behind this topic stems from the evolving dynamics of international relations, where sub-national actors - particularly local governments- play an instrumental role in fostering socio-economic development, cultural exchange, and political dialogue.

After participating in an internship that involved working closely with EU programmes aimed at strengthening local governance, and working in the Latin American region, I was exposed to the intricate web of relationships set up between European and Latin American municipalities. Drawing upon these experiences, and on subsequent research, this thesis aims to shed light on the ways in which EU programmes empower local governments in Latin America. Primary sources, including interviews with key stakeholders, legal documents, and academic articles have been instrumental in understanding the diverse perspectives of those involved in these dynamics.

The research adopts a multi-faceted approach, incorporating both primary and secondary sources. Secondary sources include scholarly works and policy analyses, offering a comprehensive understanding of the broader implications of development programmes and global context. Primary sources involve interviews with officials from local governments and experts on decentralised cooperation for development, providing nuanced insights into the workings of collaborative programmes.

The relevance of this research lies in addressing critical knowledge gaps concerning the impact of EU programmes on the soft power of Latin American local governments. By examining the motivations, challenges, and outcomes of such collaborations, this study contributes to the academic discourse on international relations and regional governance. Moreover, it holds significance for policymakers, offering insights that can inform future diplomatic strategies and development initiatives.

The overarching goal of this dissertation is to provide a comprehensive analysis of how EU programmes contribute to the increase of soft power among local governments in Latin America. By uncovering the mechanisms and dynamics involved, this research aspires to contribute valuable insights that can guide future initiatives, strengthen international partnerships, and promote sustainable development in the region.

The subsequent chapters will delve into the historical context of EU-Latin America relations, the specific mechanisms through which soft power is exercised, case studies illustrating successful collaborations, challenges faced by local governments, and potential strategies for maximizing the impact of EU programmes on soft power dynamics. Through this exploration, the dissertation aims to highlight the evolving landscape of international relations at the local level and its implications for global diplomacy.

CHAPTER I. LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

1.1. The European Union's development policy

1.1.1. Objectives and legal framework

The European Union's institutions and Member States are one of the leading donors of development assistance and cooperation globally (COM, Directorate-General for International Cooperation and Development, 2018: p. 16). As is laid out in Article 2 of the Treaty of Lisbon, the European Union (EU) is founded on values that seek to guarantee the inviolability of human dignity, the protection of human rights, the equality and freedom of its citizens, a representative democracy, and a structure based on the rule of law. This framework offers a basis for the EU to build and promote its aims within its borders and with the rest of the world. Article 4 of the Treaty of the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) gives the EU the competence to conduct a common policy in the area of development cooperation, along with Article 208 of the TFEU, which states that the reduction of poverty and, ultimately, its eradication, is the primary objective of the EU's development policy, in addition to setting the requirement for the Union and its countries to fulfil the commitments made in the context of international organisations. In parallel, Article 21(2)(d) of the Treaty on European Union (TEU) shows that the EU seeks to foster sustainable economic, social, and environmental development while preventing the further depletion of global natural resources and creating peaceful, just, and inclusive societies. This includes the assistance of populations, countries and regions that might be facing natural or man-made disasters and promoting multilateral cooperation and global governance.

According to Gavas and Maxwell (2017), the EU's initiatives in the framework of development cooperation also include measures in the realm of collective action. In other words, these EU initiatives are shaping shared rules or spending pooled money in ways authorised by its Member States and intended to help them achieve their objectives. As the literature demonstrates (Gillinson, 2004: p. 587), collective action is always difficult and tends to be uneven in terms of burden-sharing. Even where common interests exist,

collective action can fail. At the same time, states' interests sometimes are not present and yet cooperation does take place (Nabers, 2005: p. 587).

Global challenges have prompted the EU to act strategically to modernise its policy frameworks, setting priorities for aid and other development instruments, and refining institutional mechanisms for coordinating actors. These include harmonisation strategies such as the Policy Coherence for Development (PCD) agenda, and coordination strategies such as joint programming, budget support and earmarking (Bodenstein, et. al. 2017: p. 443). As Sachs and Schmitt-Traub (2014) state, the most important feature of the changing global development policy environment is the growing importance of problems that can only be solved by collective action. Two types of collective goods can be identified: the one consisting of rules, governance mechanisms and regulations that drive international cooperation and economic exchange, and another related to global public goods, which require direct investment, mostly from public resources. In the first case, the rules refer to the structure and cooperation needed to guide policy and implementation, for example, the international trade regime. In the second case, global public goods could be climatic stability, international peace and security, humanitarian responses to wars and natural disasters, and public health provision. Here, the reduction of inequalities requires cooperation and coordination among stakeholders from all levels: states, multilateral, and non-state actors, in addition to investments from governments (Sachs and Schmitt-Traub, 2014: p. 443).

Development is one of the four main strands of the EU's external policies, leading European institutions, and EU Member States to become one of the main donors in terms of development assistance and cooperation, as well as to show the importance of collective action. Responding to the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the European development policy has committed to fostering sustainable development and stability in developing countries, based on the fundamental principles laid out in European treaties, agreements, and strategies. In 2017, the EU adopted the European Consensus on Development structured around the key aspects framing the 2030 Agenda: people, planet, prosperity, peace, and partnership. In this sense, the EU works towards increasing development effectiveness, and the impact of the limited resources

development cooperation can offer through better policies, defined objectives based on partner countries' needs, and coordinated aid (European Commission, 2017).

Since the establishment of development cooperation as an area of focus, Africa has remained a key priority for the EU. In March 2020, the Commission and the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy launched their vision for strengthening the EU's partnership with Africa in a Joint Communication labelled 'Towards a Comprehensive Strategy with Africa'. They proposed to deepen cooperation in five key areas: green transition; digital transformation; sustainable growth and jobs; peace and governance; migration and mobility (European Commission, 2021a: p.11). For Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) the focus is varied, including extending 5 SDGs to remote areas, as green bonds, greener transport systems, clean hydrogen energy, and better health infrastructures.

The last years have shown many developments in the EU's response to global challenges. Most notably, we should consider the strategies developed under the scope of the Department of International Partnerships of the European Commission. They presented the Global Gateway, a strategy to boost smart, clean, and secure links in digital, energy and transport, and to strengthen health, education, and research systems through the allocation of a budget of up to 300 billion euros in investments between 2021 and 2027. This budget is meant to consider the needs of partner countries and ensure lasting effects for local communities and will be delivered through a Team Europe approach, that is the unification of the EU, EU Member States, and the financial and development institutions, such as the European Investment Bank (EIB) and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) (European Commission, 2021c).

By taking a closer look at the investments under the Global Gateway, approximately 70 percent of projects for Latin America focus on renewable energy and digital services, for instance, the work on critical raw minerals such as lithium and copper, the promotion of clean hydrogen and the launch of green bonds. While a Just Transition Energy Partnership has not yet been created with any LAC country, the region has a clear role in the EU's strategy towards leading the energy transition and the digital transformation (Fenkel, 2023).

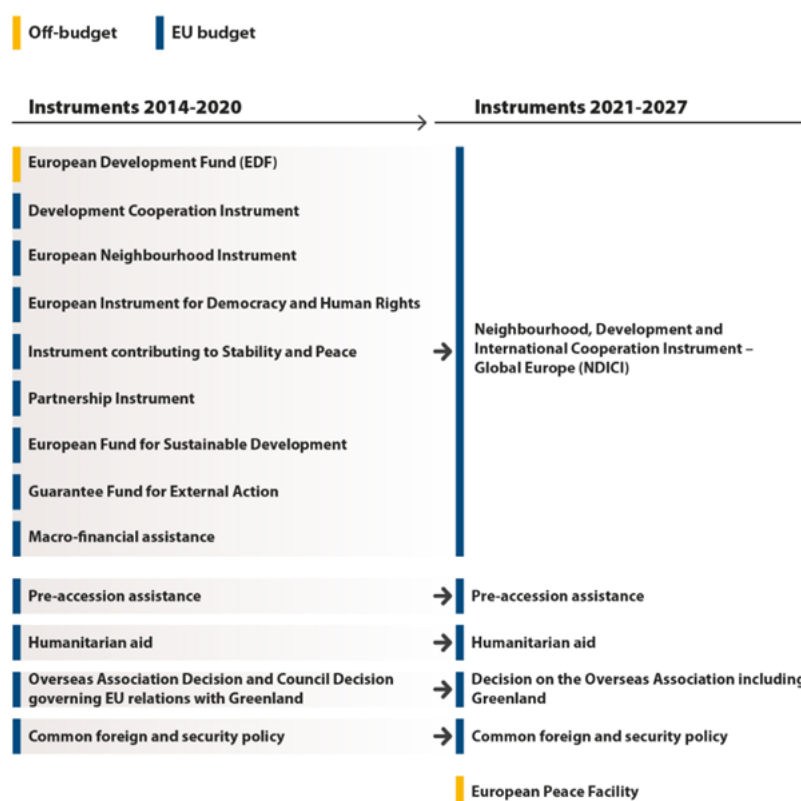
1.1.2. Financing and specific instruments

The European budget is disbursed according to the EU's public policy goals, to retain the consensus of European Member States, regions, local authorities (LAs), and citizen organisations, as well as to foster the role of the EU as a global actor by sharing values and standards. At the heart of the EU's budget, we find the Multi-annual Financial Framework (MFF), representing the package structure that characterises the EU's spending for each policy area in the following seven years, after the approval of the Council and the European Parliament. Many external factors can influence the decisions that are reflected in the budget. In the recent years, Brexit, the tail of economic and migration crises, as well as the global impact the COVID-19 pandemic has had on the EU influenced the priorities, as well as the time it took to take financial decisions (European Commission, Directorate-General for Budget, 2021: p. 6).

In particular, the MFF for the period 2021-2027 commits to a budget of 110 billion euros for the heading "Neighbourhood and the World". This section of the budget is divided between the Neighbourhood, Development, and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI) - Global Europe, humanitarian aid, the Instrument for Pre-Accession assistance, the Common Foreign and Security Policy, overseas countries and territories, and the European Instrument for International Nuclear Safety Cooperation. The NDICI - Global Europe promotes international cooperation with partner countries. The implementation of the budget requires the promotion of EU values and the pursuit of specific objectives, such as the eradication of poverty, the promotion of peace and democracy, sustainable development, and the fight against climate change. Additionally, the implementation of the budget shows a greater focus on least developed countries and requires that at least 25 percent of the budget is allocated to neighbouring countries and 36 percent to sub-Saharan Africa. Additionally, 93 percent of all funds must go towards official development assistance, 30 percent towards climate-related projects, and 10 percent must address migration and forced displacement. The total budget for this instrument is made up of 79.46 billion euros plus an approximate amount of 1.13 billion euros from reflows from the European Development Fund (European Commission, Directorate-General for Budget, 2021: p. 48).

On the other hand, the EU announced the previously mentioned (See: sub-section 1.1.1) Global Gateway strategy, with the expected mobilisation of 300 billion euros in investments between 2021-2027 as a re-packing of previously committed funds. This new strategy draws from the EU MFF financial tools, particularly, the NDICI - Global Europe integrates most external financing instruments (European Commission, 2021c). Through this strategy, the literature observes that the EU is reinforcing the narrative of Team Europe, acting together outside its borders as a coherent and influential global actor with a strategic governance model that centralises the EU’s global action under the NDICI (Ricart & Otero Iglesias, 2022). As previously mentioned, the NDCI - Global Europe is the instrument of the MMF focusing on the allocation of the EU budget to fund external actions. As we can see in the following Figure 1.1., previous funds from the MFF for the period 2014-2020 have been merged into the NDICI citing additional efficiency and flexibility as the reasons. In Figure 1.1. we can also observe other funds besides NDICI available for external action.

Figure 1.1. EU instruments for external action (2014-2020 vs. 2021-2027)



Source: Pouwels, 2023: p. 3.

The NDICI is divided into geographic areas –the European Neighbourhood, sub-Saharan Africa, Asia and the Pacific, and the Americas and the Caribbean– and thematic lines, divided as follows: human rights and democracy, civil society organisations, peace, stability and conflict prevention, and global challenges. The countries in LAC both benefit from the geographical funding as well as from the different thematic funds (European Commission, Directorate-General for Budget, 2021: p. 48). The geographical funding tailored for LAC addresses the region’s specific needs and developmental challenges, acknowledging its unique socioeconomic context, cultural diversity, and historical background. This approach allows for nuanced and context-specific interventions that are directly aligned with the priorities of the LAC countries. Simultaneously, the thematic funds within the NDICI offer a targeted and versatile mechanism to address cross-cutting issues and global challenges that extend beyond geographic boundaries. By tapping into these thematic funds, LAC countries can access support and resources dedicated to crucial areas such as human rights and democracy, civil society organisations, peace, stability, conflict prevention, and responses to global challenges. These thematic funds provide an avenue for LAC nations to engage in collaborative initiatives that transcend regional distinctions and contribute to broader global objectives. The dual benefit arises from the synergy between geographical and thematic funding. Geographical funding ensures that LAC countries receive tailored assistance that considers their unique developmental needs, fostering region-specific growth and resilience. On the other hand, thematic funds offer opportunities for LAC countries to participate in global efforts addressing overarching challenges, fostering collaboration, knowledge exchange, and adopting of best practices (Altrogge, 2021; DG DEVCO, 2020).

The main goal of the NDICI is to help countries to overcome long-term challenges in their path towards development and contribute to the advancement of the 2030 Agenda, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Paris Agreement, ratified by the EU in 2016 (Pouwels, 2023: p. 4).

The largest amount of NDICI budget is allocated to sub-Saharan Africa, with 37 percent of the total funds, representing approximately 29 billion euros. In comparison, the European Neighbourhood receives 24 percent of the funds, with 19,3 billion euros, while

Asia and the Pacific receives 11 percent of the budget, representing approximately 8,4 billion euros. Finally, the Americas and the Caribbean receive the smallest percentage, with 8 percent of the funds, approximately 3,3 billion euros (Pouwels, 2023: p. 4).

Table 1.1. NDICI coverage for the years 2021-2023 for the Americas and the Caribbean

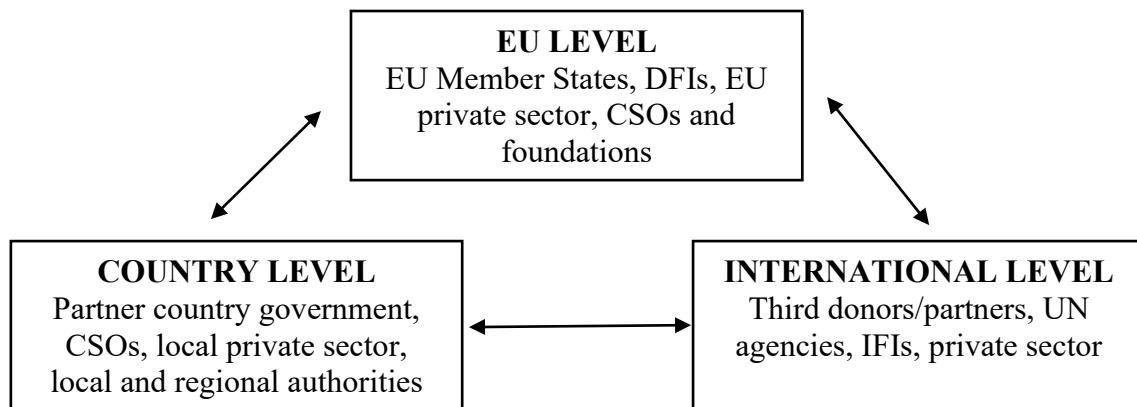
Region	MF	Committed 2021	Committed 2022	Budget 2023	Total 2021-2023	% of MF
The Americas	1.842.698.988	258.061.403	272.147.592	340.741.091	870.950.086	47,3%
The Caribbean	845.000.00	111.500.000	106.496.899	101.491.378	319.488.277	37,8%
Subtotal LAC	2.687.698.988	369.561.403	378.644.491	442.232.469	1.190.438.363	44,3%

Source: Information provided by DG INTPA in Pouwels, 2023: p. 5.

Looking closer at the funding Latin America and the Caribbean receive from the NDICI outlined in the table above (Table 1.1), we can see that Latin America and the Caribbean is divided between the Americas and the Caribbean, and the Americas are receiving the larger amount of funding. The allocated budget still pales in comparison to the amounts allocated elsewhere, with the Americas and the Caribbean representing less than 6 percent of the budget allocation for geographic programmes. In comparison, the rest of the budget is allocated as follows: 48% for Sub-Saharan Africa, 32% for the Neighbourhood, and the remaining 14% for Asia and the Pacific. For the Americas and the Caribbean, the allocation has tended to be lower when it comes to European cooperation due to the region generally being made up of multiple medium-income countries, prioritising more “urgent” development needs in other regions of the world.

The EU delegations acting as representatives of the EU across the world are key actors in the programming of funding at country level. As we can see in the following figure (Figure 1.2.), the flows of coordination involve consultation at country level, EU level, and international level, with joint programming between each.

Figure 1.2. The EU Delegation consultation process coordinating across three levels or clusters



Source: UCLG & PLATFORMA, 2021: p. 26.

1.2. Latin America: partnership with the European Union towards development

1.2.1. The bi-regional strategic partnership

While the European Union and Latin America and the Caribbean were connected previously through trade relations and relevant exchanges such as the San Jose Dialogue in 1984, the bond between regions was further strengthened in the 1990s. With the first bi-regional Summit between the EU and Latin American and Caribbean States (LAC) in 1999, both regions established a strategic partnership that is still present today, furthering the opportunities for political dialogue, development cooperation and economic agreements. Since 2011, the 33 countries of LAC would be referred to as the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) in the context of the bi-regional meetings with the EU. The Rio Declaration (1999) stated shared values, a common history, as well as a strong political will as the motivating factors to strengthen the links between both regions. This partnership would act as the foundation for collaboration towards achieving common objectives, among which the EU and CELAC Heads of State and Government highlighted: strengthening representative and participatory democracy and individual freedom; the rule of law; good governance; pluralism; international peace and security; political stability; and building confidence among nations.

“In the wider Atlantic Space, the Union will expand cooperation and build stronger partnerships with Latin America and the Caribbean grounded on shared values and interests.” (European Commission, 2019: p.1). This quote from the Global Strategy for the European Union’s Foreign and Security Policy is one of many declarations of intention made by the Union to strengthen the partnership with Latin America and the Caribbean. However, this attempt aimed at strengthening the bi-regional partnership is still a work in progress. Ahead of the EU-CELAC Summit held on July 2023, the European Commission published a new agenda to establish that the European Union’s goal will be to strengthen and modernise the strategic partnership with LAC through a series of key proposals that include reinforcing political engagement, boosting bilateral and regional trade agreements and, most notably, enhancing cooperation through the Global Gateway investment strategy. In the words of the European Commission’s President, Ursula Von der Leyen: “*Today, the EU–LAC strategic partnership is more important than ever*” (European Commission, 2023: p. n.d.). The expectation was to centre the agenda on opportunities to assist the green and digital transition.

While the partnership between both regions has been maintained through many areas, including technical cooperation, trade agreements, and ministerial and informal meetings, among many other opportunities for dialogue, the last bi-regional Summit before 2023 was held in 2015. The 2015 encounter produced two Declarations and an Action Plan, under the concept of a common future where the European Union, Latin America and the Caribbean would work together for prosperous, cohesive, and sustainable societies. The focus of this last Summit was centred around strengthened political dialogue, modernised economic ties, the reinforcement of the cooperation on peace and security issues, as well as the cooperation on all-encompassing issues such as climate change and the development agenda (EU-CELAC Summit, 2015a, 2015b, 2015c).

The third EU-CELAC Summit, taking place in 2023 was originally planned to take place in 2017, however, it was cancelled after what some authors (Diaz-Rodriguez, 2019) characterised as a reveal of the difference in position between countries from both regions in the face of political crises surrounding the protests in 2017 in Venezuela, where Heads of State from LAC countries showed an opposing view to that of the EU. Diaz-Rodriguez (2019) argued that the bi-regional partnership also suffered some weakening due to a lack

of a concrete strategy that went beyond a narrative intention of collaboration and turned into action. In this sense, two contrasting perspectives seem to emerge: on the one hand, the consideration that the EU-LAC relationship is strongly sustained on shared values, political dialogue, and a common strategic vision for the future (González Sarro, 2020: p. 1160); on the other hand, the regional differences are many and the EU's approach has failed to gain a regional perspective, relying instead on bilateral agreements and discursive commitments that are not a priority for the European Union's foreign policy (Tremolada Álvarez, 2013: p. 207). Regardless of the prevalent truth about the bi-regional relationship, the new EU-CELAC Summit is presented as a renewal of intentions to revive the strategic partnership as part of a relevant segment of the Union's foreign policy. Recently, this intention was made clear by ministers of both regions with declarations after an informal meeting on December 14, 2020, where they expressed their will to intensify the bi-regional dialogue, as well as the financial support allocated in December 2021 towards post-COVID recovery under the NDICI - Global Europe (Kraft, 2022: p. 3).

Between July 17 and 18 2023, the Summit set the stage for the presentation of the EU-LAC Global Gateway Investment Agenda (GGIA), which includes more than 135 projects focused on four pillars: the green transition, a digital transformation, human development, and health resilience and vaccines. This gives a clear picture of the European agenda for the relationship with Latin American and Caribbean countries in the years to come, with an expected investment of €45 billion until 2027. Some of the projects focused on accelerating a fair green transition focus on pursuing energy transition and strategic autonomy with the development of renewable sources, such as wind, solar and renewable hydrogen, as well as the accessibility and quality of the energy supply. This reaffirms the commitment of the EU to reach alternative sources of energy from their dependency on Russian gas, and the revival of their partnership with the LAC region could represent a key advancement. Within the efforts towards a green transition, other areas that will take precedence include working towards zero-emission mobility by the upgrade of public transportation systems and fostering e-mobility, climate financing to aid in the transition towards sustainable sources of finance, and the investment in critical raw materials and joint value chains. The focus on an inclusive digital transition prioritises the investment on 5G and last-kilometre connectivity, the support of focused

projects to make digitalisation more accessible, as well as the promotion of digitalisation measures in public administration, health services, and education (European Commission, DG for International Partnerships, 2023).

When it comes to human development, the main investment seeks to target education, vocational trainings, and skills development, showcasing the importance of improving educational spaces as well as the creation of decent jobs and formal employment. Among the announcements made during the Summit, the Commission also presented the “Inclusive Societies” EU programme for Latin America and the Caribbean, intended to tackle inequalities, reduce poverty, and enhance social inclusion and cohesion in the region. Investments in the resilience of health systems are the fourth and final pillar, with the key step of ensuring the local manufacturing of vaccines, medicines, and health technologies to ensure regional strategic autonomy (European Commission, DG for International Partnerships, 2023).

1.2.2. The future of the EU-CELAC relations

Academics have centred their focus on the new critical junctures that characterise the current relationship between the European Union and Latin America. A recent article by José Antonio Sanahuja –a specialist in EU-Latin America relations and development cooperation–, sets out to answer the question of what rationality this bi-regional relationship responds to in the context of the various transformations the European continent is undergoing; most notably, the war in Ukraine and the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic. In this sense, Sanahuja proposes three elements that need to be included in the future of the EU-LAC relationship to reformulate their bond: the revitalisation of democracy, the search for greater strategic autonomy, and a recovery that encompasses a social, economic (productive and digital), and ecological transition - or “triple transition”, as the author refers to it (Sanahuja, 2022: p. 16).

To reach this assessment, the article partly bases itself on discourses of key figures, such as an address made by Josep Borrell, the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy since 2019, at the Munich Security Conference in 2022. In his speech, Borrell highlights “the power of speech”, alluding to the importance of shared narratives to build common objectives and rationalities (Sanahuja, 2022: p. 14). The

author validates the importance of the EU-LAC relations by highlighting that both regions have wide, complicated agendas that need to converge to maintain democratic values and multilateral norms in the face of polarisation, erosion of trust within the citizenship, inequalities in the access to public services and policies, among others. However, the main argument to be considered is that the renewed EU-LAC relationship can reinforce the “strategic autonomy” of both regions (Sanahuja, 2022), a concept we will further develop in the following section (1.3).

The Declaration of the EU-CELAC Summit 2023 promised to reaffirm the intentions of strengthening the bi-regional strategic partnership through dialogue and cooperation, as well as reinstating the Summits every two years to revise the shared commitments made (EU-CELAC, 2023: p. 10). The EU recognised the need to explore alternative criteria beyond Gross Domestic Product (GDP) to define the eligibility of countries to access financing, a claim that has been brought forth by Latin American institutions and that will be further discussed in section 1.3. According to the declaration, other criteria such as climate vulnerability, can improve debt sustainability, promote economic stability, and reduce external indebtedness (EU-CELAC, 2023: p. 6). However, the hope to pursue these shared ambitions that was placed upon the revival of the EU-CELAC partnership came upon unexpected obstacles, particularly surrounding “irreconcilable differences” about Russia’s war in Ukraine. During the Summit, both regions struggled to reach a joint declaration, with some parts hoping to strongly label Russia’s aggression as extreme while others preferred to just declare their concern (Gijs & Moens, 2023). A shared commitment to foster cooperation was reached, as can be seen in the final Summit declaration, emphasising the *“friendly relations between our peoples irrespective of the differences in our political systems and taking into consideration the differences in our economic and social or development levels. Inspired by our shared values and guided by the principles enshrined in the UN Charter, we will work together to shape our common future”* (EU-CELAC, 2023: p. 2).

The European Union has shown a renewed interest in Latin America, as demonstrated in the previously cited official documents and declarations from key actors, such as the European Commission’s President, Ursula Von der Leyen. The complex international scenario requires Europe to reassess its international presence, to create *“a European*

Union that aims to have a greater geopolitical impact on a global scale must necessarily strengthen its partnerships with the countries with which it shares agendas in the multilateral sphere” (Altrogge, 2021: p. 6). In this sense, some sources highlight the importance of diversifying energy sources for the EU, not only in the context of the war with Ukraine, that problematised the dependence on Russian gas, but also considering the importance of maintaining green transition targets. A study by the Elcano Royal Institute (Escribano & Urbasos Arbeloa, 2023) that analyses energy relations between Latin America and the EU highlights the opportunities for diversification that Latin America can offer the EU, and this can represent an opportunity for the EU to further reinforce the potential of cooperation on hydrogen and transition minerals. This is due to the prominence of renewable resources in Latin America and the pre-existing presence of European businesses in the region that could facilitate future partnerships. The focus for the EU would be on investment as well as industrial and technological cooperation, competing with the interests of other actors such as China. However, the authors (Escribano & Urbasos Arbeloa, 2023) consider that there are some relevant obstacles to an energy transition at the bi-regional stage. These include a lack of consistent energy policies in Latin America and the threat of protectionist initiatives in the region that could prevent fluid cooperation. To overcome these limitations, the EU will require long-term strategies towards decarbonisation and frameworks for partnerships. As can be seen with the previously mentioned Global Gateway, a scheme created to mobilise up to 300 billion euros in investment funds in partner countries, the EU has clear goals in re-awakening new and existing paths towards geopolitical and economic advances.

1.2.3. Mutual perceptions of the EU and Latin America

Institutions as the Friedrich Ebert Foundation, Nueva Sociedad and Latinobarómetro conducted a survey in 10 different countries (Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Mexico, Uruguay, and Venezuela) to understand the Latin American perceptions of the European Union’s agenda in the international scenario. They targeted 12,000 individuals of legal age with secondary education or higher, residents in Latin America (Romero et. al., 2022: p. 3). Regarding the EU’s global influence over the next five years, respondents consider the EU an influential global actor, with 69 percent recognising the Union’s strategic autonomy and its position as a centre of international

power. The survey identified a fragmented perception of international leadership, where there is no longer a single region perceived to dominate all areas of action. Instead, the results showed a differentiation between global leadership in the area of military and defence, in the economic-technological area, and a third normative path focused on values. First, the U.S. is still perceived as a more relevant actor when it comes to military and defence; secondly, China's importance is highlighted in the economic-technological area; and finally, the EU is perceived as the main reference point when it comes to shared values. However, while the EU's leadership is not as clear when it comes to security and technological advancement, they are considered as leading agents in the protection of the environment, the defence of human rights, and the fight against poverty and inequality (Romero et. al., 2022: p. 8). Among respondents, extreme poverty and climate change were listed as the two main concerns, showing an alignment in the citizen's concerns and the EU's perceived ability to institute positive change. Additionally, the survey also showcased that half of respondents prefer the EU when it comes to international cooperation, setting the stage for opportunities to share the EU's experience on the development of green and sustainable solutions and the population's well-being.

In parallel, a survey was conducted at the request of the Directorate-General for International Partnerships to assess perception of development cooperation of EU citizens. The survey was conducted in the 27 EU Member States between February and March of 2022 with 26,511 respondents. Approximately 89 percent of respondents recognise the importance of partnering with countries outside the EU to reduce global poverty. A similar focus is observed when tackling climate change, with 89 percent of respondents hoping for a green transition both in the EU and within non-EU Member States (European Commission et. al., 2022b).

1.3. Main theoretical concepts

This section contains the main theoretical notions tackled in this dissertation, among which the following concepts can be highlighted: development, development in transition, soft power, strategic autonomy, place-based policies, territory, inequality, income inequality, graduation and gradation, decentralised cooperation, among others.

Amartya Sen (1988) has made an important contribution to the concept of development, problematising the complicated difference between economic development and economic growth. Firstly, the author considers that an expansion of economic means must contribute to the living conditions of people. Previous conceptions of development focused on increasing the gross national product (GNP) and total employment. In contrast, Sen introduced what he called a capability approach, where the process of development depended on enhancing people's capabilities to function, thereby expanding their real freedoms, and going beyond the availability of commodities. This was considered the most influential tool to standard economic frameworks for poverty, inequality, and human development. The first United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Report on Human Development opened with the premise that “*people must be at the centre of all development*” (UNDP, 1990: p. 1). This assertion started a new way of thinking about and measuring development, creating a profound impact on development policies globally. Replacing the GNP with more complex measures was not a simple task and, for this reason, the Human Development Index (HDI) was created as an alternative to the GNP, concentrating on longevity, basic education, and minimal income. The 2010 Report observes that year after year, there has been substantial progress in many aspects of human development. Most people are healthier, live longer, are more educated, and have more access to goods and services, and yet inequalities have grown within and between countries, and production and consumption patterns have increasingly been revealed as unsustainable (UNDP, 2010: p. 1).

For the UN, the concept of development includes numerous aspects and has changed over time. The first paragraph of the Agenda for Development adopted in 1997 states that “*development is a multidimensional undertaking to achieve a higher quality of life for all people. Economic development, social development, and environmental protection are interdependent and mutually reinforcing components of sustainable development*” (UN General Assembly Resolution 51/240, 1997: p. 1). Nowadays, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted by all United Nations Member States in 2015, provides a shared blueprint for peace and prosperity for people and the planet. At its heart are the 17 SDGs, a call for action in a global partnership that seeks to end poverty and hunger, increase the quality of education and health, reduce inequality, spur economic growth, and tackle environmental issues related to climate change and the preservation of

natural resources. Local and regional governments play a key role in the achievement of the 2030 Agenda through the localisation of the SDGs. This refers to the process of translating the goals of the 2030 Agenda to local contexts to leave no one behind, and account for the contribution of local actions and strategies. This considers the relevant action of local and regional governments to assist in the implementation and monitoring of the localisation of SDGs to tackle global challenges through local undertakings (European Commission, Urban Data Platform Plus).

According to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), decentralised cooperation actors have adopted new concepts and principles of development cooperation, such as the notion of development effectiveness, as opposed to aid effectiveness. In 2011, the Busan Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation formally recognised the subnational level as development actors, calling for the implementation of four main principles: i) ownership of development priorities by developing countries, ii) focus on results, iii) inclusive development partnerships, and iv) transparency and accountability (OECD, 2018). The Busan Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation highlighted that openness, trust, mutual respect, and learning lie at the core of effective partnerships in support of development goals. Development effectiveness principles could provide guidance for subnational actors to improve their policy environment and strengthen their partnerships with diverse actors at local and national level to deliver on agreed development results. Building on the crucial role of cities in contributing to the SDGs, the G20 Development Working Group elaborated the “G20 Rome High-Level Principles on city-to-city partnerships for localising the SDGs” in 2021 (as can be seen in Table 1.2).

Table 1.2. Ten G20 Rome High-level Principles on City-to-city partnerships for localising the SDGs

1.	Territorial Approach	Promote city-to-city partnerships to enhance the implementation of a territorial approach in responding to and recovering from the COVID-19 pandemic, reducing vulnerability to climate change.
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2.	Multi-level Governance	Strengthen multi-level integrated governance and coordination for greater effectiveness of city-to-city partnerships and more demand-based initiatives, while considering local and regional contexts and responding to the specific needs of different geographical areas and governance systems, as appropriate.
3.	Rural-Urban Connectivity	Enhance rural-urban connectivity, and co-operation, including between primary and intermediary cities, including through past G20 work on infrastructure.
4.	Data and Indicators	Encourage local and regional governments to exchange approaches and practices in mainstreaming SDGs indicators into planning and policy documents at all levels of government and produce disaggregated data towards strengthened context-specific analysis and assessment of territorial disparities in collaboration with national governments, which could also support countries in developing their Voluntary National Reviews.
5.	Monitoring and Evaluation	Considering different national and local contexts, develop monitor and evaluation (M&E) indicators towards a result framework for evidence-based city-to-city partnerships, documenting their impact and providing recommendations to optimise those partnerships.
6.	Peer-to-peer Learning	Focus on mutual benefit, peer-to-peer learning, support, and review in city-to-city partnerships, including the exchange of knowledge on sustainable urban planning and capital investment planning.
7.	Capacity Development	Support capacity development and build local managerial capital and skills for effective, efficient, and inclusive city-to-city partnerships implementation.
8.	Stakeholder Engagement	Engage all relevant stakeholders to implement territorial network modalities of city-to-city partnerships towards the achievement of the SDGs, including by establishing partnerships with the private sector.

9.	Financing	Call on local and regional governments to develop effective financing and efficient resource mobilisation strategies and instruments in collaboration with national governments as appropriate, through existing mechanisms to support the implementation of the 2030 Agenda through city-to-city partnerships, including by integrating the SDGs in budgeting processes.
10.	Digitalisation	Develop strategies to build human, technological, and infrastructural capacities of the local and regional governments to make use of and incorporate digitalisation best practices in city-to-city partnerships.

Source: G20 Development Working Group (2021) in OECD, 2023: pp. 9-10.

Furthermore, the key conceptualisation of soft power must be referenced, first coined by Joseph Nye in 1990. The author observed the changing tides of foreign policy and how the use of “power”, as the more traditional concept where objectives are obtained through coercion and payments was no longer the only force in the international scenario with increasingly interdependent countries and higher costs in disrupting said interdependence. Instead, the author noted that the instruments of power were becoming less coercive, racing towards more diplomatic interactions among states. In this sense, the concept of soft power aims to look beyond tangible resources, to introduce an analytical framework that presents the ability to co-opt instead of coercing, to shape preferences in your favour through cultural appeal, shared ideology, and institutions (Nye, 1990: p. 167). The origin of this concept is fundamental in the field of international development since it entails the sharing of values and ideals across borders to foster the achievement of common goals and the strength of strategic partnerships. This space for the recognition of interdependence is contrasted by the importance of the strategic autonomy of regions, particularly in the more complex international scenario of the current years. As the term suggests, EU strategic autonomy (EU-SA) is a concept that was coined by the EU to refer to its capacity to act autonomously in strategically important policy areas. The European Parliament considers this to mean that the EU can obtain its political and/or economic objectives through its capabilities, without being dependent on other countries, and while

still acting in reflection of its democratic values (Damen, 2022). Considering the current international context with the consequences of the war in Ukraine, gas dependencies, and geopolitical competitions within the U.S. and China, among many other complex realities, the concept of strategic autonomy would bring the EU as well as other regions –in this case, LAC– the possibility to reinforce their agency and represent their interests in a multilateral context of international cooperation.

Additionally, Sanahuja (2022: p. 16) refers to the maintenance of social and economic development levels that are in alignment with current sustainability standards without relying on a competition for geopolitical power, but by pursuing a common vision towards development that prioritises democratic values. In this sense, the OECD and the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) have both formulated the concept of Development in Transition (DiT). Through the observation of new economic contexts and international transformations, DiT proposes a new narrative of cooperation based on an understanding and an adaptation to the new global complexities, creating a better mapping of the conditions of development different countries and regions are exposed to. In this sense, the OECD (2023b) observes that DiT seeks to build a mechanism that designs better policies, practices, and partnerships for international cooperation. In parallel, the ECLAC's Facility for Development in Transition (n.d.) has developed pillars to promote this new narrative for development cooperation, which include the creation of an improved mapping of the conditions of development in different countries, new metrics to measure development that aren't just based on income and new strategies that bind national strategies with a multilateral approach. In this sense, all forms of cooperation must have a multilevel nature, considering South-South cooperation, triangular cooperation –commonly referred to as cooperation dynamics that involve three roles: a beneficiary partner, a pivotal partner, and a facilitating partner, as will be defined and discussed more in depth in Section 3.3.2. –, and horizontal cooperation among different government levels.

In this respect, it is important to consider the existence of policies that are used to directly target the context they will be implemented in. According to David Neumark and Helen Simpson, place-based policies refer to “*government efforts to enhance the economic*

performance of an area within its jurisdiction, typically in the form of more job opportunities and higher wages” (Neumark and Simpson, 2015: p. 1197).

Most notably, the conceptualisation the EU took to understand place-based policies comes from a report by Fabrizio Barca (2009), Director-General at the Italian Ministry of Economy and Finances at the time of the publication. In the report, the author assessed the effectiveness of the European Union’s cohesion policy and elaborated an agenda to meet the EU challenges and expectations related to the reform of the cohesion policy with a place-based approach for the period post 2013. This report was a trail blazer for its inclusion of the territorial dimension, contributing important considerations on how European development policies should not interfere with national or local practices but work towards a common vision, aiming at enhancing the potential of all people, thus, increasing efficiency, while including everyone regardless of their location, prioritising social inclusion. Even before the Barca report, Ladd (1994) distinguished a subset of place-based policies or strategies that the author labelled as place-based people strategies. These are policies that are geographically targeted but with the intent of helping disadvantaged residents, for example, by revitalising a downtown business district including real-estate development or initiatives to help strengthen an industrial cluster in a region. Place-based people strategies can be contrasted with people-based policies that try to help the disadvantaged without consideration of where they live (Ladd in Neumark and Simpson, 2015: p. 1199).

Within the context of the EU (European Commission and CILS, 2015: p. 2), place-based policies target relatively disadvantaged areas eligible for regional development aid. In 2007, the first Territorial Agenda showed that European politics had moved from cohesion-oriented to competitiveness-oriented rationalities (Davoudi, 2020: p. 2). According to this, the best way to reduce spatial inequalities is to concentrate investment in places that can generate high returns and eventually trickle down and reach others. The EU Cohesion Policy 2014-2020 called for the adoption of a place-based approach to ensure the effective delivery of the Europe 2020 strategy through a greater awareness of the territory. While some instruments -such as the Integrated Territorial Investments and the Community Led Local Development- provide a specific framework for implementing some of the place-based principles, notably integration of sectors and territorial dialogue,

its implementation remains a challenge, in particular in some policy areas traditionally place-blind (such as for example energy, R&D, education). The Territorial Agenda 2030 “A future for all places” underlines the importance of the place-based approach to policymaking because it will contribute to territorial cohesion. It is based on horizontal and vertical coordination, evidence-informed policy-making, and integrated territorial development. It also addresses distinct levels of governance (through a multilevel governance approach) contributing to subsidiarity, and ensures cooperation and coordination involving citizens, civil society, businesses, research and scientific institutions, and knowledge centres. Thus, its objective is to enforce the territorial potential related to place-based territorial capital, knowledge, and assets and it will contribute to long-term development and competitiveness for places (European Commission, 2021b: p. 6).

Followingly, the Barca (2009) report went beyond its original scope relevant for the logic of the European Union, since the empirical evidence from the report had relevance for other countries and international institutions. Barca argued that persistent economic shocks in regions with poor institutional management could lead to local development traps, hindering collaborative citizen behaviour and resulting in defensive institutional responses. This framework, particularly relevant for the case of Latin American countries, undermines the ability of subnational governments to rise above top-down or centrally coordinated programmes. For this reason, a place-based regional policy such as the ones Barca (2009) envisioned would assist in creating more coordinated and collaborative actions. Thus, regional policy can be used to foster local development, as (McCann, 2023: p. 20) described. In this sense, we can refer to the Joint Communication of April 2019, titled "European Union, Latin America, and the Caribbean: Joining forces for a common future" that provides a basis for ongoing and future agreements between the EU and individual LAC countries or sub-regions, thereby actualizing their shared vision and the place-based policies comprised.

On the other hand, LAC has a long history regarding territorial development policies which have experienced various changes over time. The ECLAC states that the purpose of territorial development policies is a function of the issues they are intended to resolve. *“Each society, at different times in its history, identifies those issues, and experience and*

scientific knowledge suggest the means to address and resolve them. The means take different forms: policies, plans, programmes, and projects” (ECLAC, 2019: p. 21).

Therefore, territory is a key concept for development in LAC, and there are many definitions of territorial development. Sergio Boisier (1998) states that to work towards development, the territorial environment is key, and that different administrative and legal formulas of the commune, the province, the region, and the country will affect the quality of the territory and determine the development of relevant social structures (Boisier, 1998: p.5). In this sense, we can refer to the ECLAC’s conceptualisation of territorial development, which can be understood as *“a state – and a process – in which social ownership of the space, unity of its parts, and due respect for and exercise of the right to diversity of the components of a State are all fulfilled”* (ECLAC, 2019: p. 23). In LAC, there are many diverse concepts around development, and alongside territorial development, including local development, endogenous development, and bottom-up development, which have generated the specialisation of academic and political institutions regarding the different categories as if they were independent (Boisier, 2001: p. 6).

The concept of inequality is multidimensional and, thus, encompasses many definitions, along with the difficulty in accurately measuring it due to inexistent or insufficient data. Academics and institutions commonly refer to inequality as a phenomenon of unequal or unjust distribution of resources and opportunities among members of society, however, there are cross-cutting economic, social, and territorial aspects that overlap and diversify the dimensions of inequalities a population can be subjected to (Koh, 2020: p. 269). With economic inequality, we can observe the differences between individuals’ or groups’ positions within the economic distribution regarding income, consumption, or wealth (European Commission, Directorate-General for International Partnerships, 2022: p. 8). Income inequality is strongly interconnected with social inequality, affecting access to health, education, housing, and other key public services. Access to power and decision-making, exposition to environmental risks and access to natural resources can also be susceptible to inequality (political and environmental inequality). For Latin America, the concept of income inequality is particularly relevant, since the top 10 percent of the population captures 55 percent of national income, while the bottom 50 percent of the

population only captures 10 percent of national income (European Commission, Directorate-General for International Partnerships, 2021: p. 3-4) which leaves the population in a context of high inequality at the same time as low growth. The UNDP (2021) describe this as a trap in which countries in LAC have higher levels of inequality than countries in other regions with similar levels of development, with social indicators below the expectancy for their average income level. Among many other institutions, the OECD has described this phenomenon as a middle-income trap, urging the region's countries to prioritise several policy areas in order to overcome current inequality rates, including: *“policy actions to improve the rule of law, the taxation system, access and quality of education, investment, access to finance and economic diversification, and reduction of gender gaps”*, as stated by Ángel Gurría (2017), the OECD Secretary-General between 2006 and 2021.

A recurring issue in the realm of cooperation for Latin America and the Caribbean occurs within the scope of “graduation”, meaning that certain countries reach a higher level of income and no longer qualify for sources of financial assistance to support their development. ECLAC supports a focus on “graduation” instead, in which financing instruments are available for all countries in gradual phases (ECLAC, n.d.). In this sense, Alicia Bárcena, Executive Secretary of the ECLAC between 2008 and 2022, urged for the use of a multidimensional vulnerability index for middle-income countries (ECLAC, 2021). This is due to the fact that since the definition of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the Monterrey Consensus in 2002, the Rome Declaration on Harmonisation in 2003, and the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness, among others, development cooperation has prioritised Low-Income Countries (LICs). In the case of LAC, where most countries fit the category of Middle-Income Countries (MICs), they were no longer targeted by official development assistance (ODA), or government aid that promotes and specifically targets the economic development and welfare of developing countries (González Sarro, 2020: p. 1142).

The scope for concrete cooperation among local authorities on practical issues of mutual interest has expanded since the City Summit held in Istanbul in June 1996. Partly because of the Summit, cities are fulfilling their role in combating the root causes of poverty and providing sustainable economic and social development as the political entities closest to

the needs of local communities (UN-HABITAT, 2002). In 2001, the publication of a document from UN-HABITAT (UNCHS, WACLAC, 2001), “City-to-City Cooperation” allowed cities to become increasingly more recognised as key players in the globalizing world and for international cooperation, which now includes the adoption of broad-based participatory planning and management, networking, and the horizontal exchange of knowledge, expertise, and experience. In this sense, decentralised cooperation is defined by the European Commission as “publicly and privately funded aid provided by and through local authorities, networks, and other local actors” (Commission of the European Communities, 2008: p. 3).

Another useful conceptualisation was published by the municipality of Barcelona, considering local decentralised cooperation as a set of official development cooperation initiatives which seeks to stimulate the capacities of territorially based actors and promote more participatory development under the leadership of local authorities (Zapata, 2007: p. 95). Without denying the existence of a type of practice that preserves some elements of the conception of cooperation as "aid", local decentralised cooperation was considered as cooperation based on the principles of multilateralism, mutual interest, and partnership. Through this, local governments could pursue to add value to their activities by focusing on their areas of competence (Zapata, 2007: p. 97).

The following table shows some of the elements that are often considered when classifying decentralised cooperation:

Table 1.3. Criteria usually used to classify decentralised cooperation

Criteria	Considerations
By type of actions	Depending on the scope of the actions conducted, one can speak of one-off actions, projects, or programmes. They can also be classified as formal and informal (depending on whether there are contractual relations).
By theme	According to the sectoral scope of work.

By type of actors	According to the nature of the institutions (local governments, associations, states, NGOs, central governments, international organisations, etc.).
By the number of actors	Bilateral (two actors, e.g., twinning) or multilateral (in networks, forums, coalitions).
By objectives	According to the type of work it aims to do (dialogue, collective visibility, lobbying, political pressure, technical exchanges, coordination).
By geographical scope	Local, territorial, cross-border, bi-national, regional, continental, global, etc.
By form of management	According to the nature of the institutions (local governments, associations, states, NGOs, central governments, international organisations, etc.).

Source: Del Huerto Romero (2005) in Zapata (2007: p. 97). Translation by the author.

Table 1.3 above allows us to characterise decentralised cooperation according to two main groups of links: institutionalised and informal. Institutionalised relations can be bilateral (between two local governments) or multi-institutional. In turn, within the groups, several types of relations can be identified: among the bilateral ones we find twinning, projects between two local governments and relations between associations of municipalities; and in the plural-institutional relations, networks, and projects with more than two institutions involved stand out. It is worth mentioning that, beyond institutionalised relations, the role of informal relations, which are difficult to quantify but of significant importance, stands out. In terms of management methods, types of initiatives, instruments and areas of work, there is no single model of local decentralised cooperation (Zapata, 2007: p. 99).

CHAPTER II. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

This chapter outlines the type of research undertaken and describes the research approach and methods, highlighting the subject of the study and discussing the procedures that have been put in place to guarantee the rigour and reliability of findings.

This dissertation's **overall objective** is to understand the origins and motivations of development policy between the European Union and Latin America, and the extent to which they have influenced the increase of decentralised cooperation with the cities of the region, as well as the design of local public policies for social inclusion, especially labour inclusion policies that aim to tackle and reduce informality and inequality and achieving climate neutrality. To this aim, the study seeks to answer the following **research question**:

Does the European Union's development policy in Latin America support the creation of soft power in local governments and the local governments' key role in driving the strategies toward labour inclusion policies aimed at tackling and reducing informality and inequality and achieving climate neutrality? And if so, in what ways?

To answer this research question, the **specific objectives** of the dissertation are:

- **SO1.** To determine the characteristics of development cooperation for the European Union and Latin America.
- **SO2.** To track the evolution of the European Union's support to decentralised cooperation in Latin America over time.
- **SO3.** To identify possible changes to the Euro-Latin American dialogue to improve the quality of public policies promoted in the two regions.
- **SO4.** To compare the evolution of decentralised cooperation through the analysis of two critical case studies in Latin America, over two different periods.
- **SO5.** To determine whether the implementation processes of decentralised projects show whether the model of decentralised development cooperation has affected the soft empowerment of local governments, and if so, how.

- **SO6.** To identify innovative mechanisms that could contribute to solving global problems -such as labour inclusion policies to tackle and reduce informality and inequality, and climate neutrality- from the local level.

Considering that Local Governments (LGs) are directly concerned with the 2030 Agenda, not only by Goal 11, which is specifically focused on sustainable cities and communities but also by the vast majority of the SDGs, as effectively achieving them will depend on a large extent on progress made in urban spaces, this dissertation will consider the following **hypothesis**:

The internationalisation of LGs could be a soft power tool to foster and develop collaboration between LGs from different countries and continents to improve local public policies and horizontal and reciprocal cooperation between them.

To test the hypothesis and determine an answer to the research question, the analysis was built based on the following steps:

Literature review. An extensive review of literature and primary documents from the European Commission was conducted -including treaties, reports, and joint communications- and other institutions, such as the UN, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), among others.

Comparative case studies. This process involved the diachronic analysis and synthesis of the similarities, differences, and patterns across the two selected Programmes: URBAL III and ADELANTE. In this way, I sought to find points in common regarding causal questions - how and why particular projects and overall programmes or policies worked or failed, and whether there were changes in the scope of the programmes. To do this, I used both qualitative and quantitative information and triangulated primary and secondary data from various sources, such as documents and reports from projects, interviews with stakeholders, and literature review. As the literature suggests (Yin, 2003: p. 4) the use of multiple case studies allowed to contrast the results of each programme studied, considering the complete context within which the cases took place.

Qualitative interviews. Eight semi-structured interviews were conducted with European and Latin American stakeholders who are experts on decentralised cooperation (see: Annex 1. Qualitative interviews). The following questions were used as a guiding questionnaire during the semi-structured interviews with stakeholders:

1. In your opinion, what was the evolution of decentralised cooperation between the EU and Latin America, and do you think there has been a significant improvement/change?
2. How big was the influence of decentralised cooperation on the improvement of inclusive public policies in local governments in Latin America?
3. In your opinion, does decentralised cooperation assist in the creation of local governments' soft power? If so, does this lead to an improvement in the implementation of projects or in the public policies that are generated?
4. In the different cooperation projects, were there impact evaluations? Ongoing evaluation? And was the use of social cohesion indicators useful?
5. In your experience, what were the most successful or relevant cases?
6. In your opinion, will decentralised cooperation continue to be a relevant strategy for the European Union?
7. How do you see Latin America's interest towards Europe in decentralised cooperation in the near future?
8. What do you think were some of the lessons or innovations that emerged from decentralised cooperation in Latin America? For example: participatory budgeting, strengthening the right to the city, etc.

The semi-structured interview approach was selected to cover a wide range of topics and allow for input from the interviewees (Yin, 2011: p. 135). The previous questions were used as a starting guide, however, follow-up questions and adapted questions emerged during the interviews according to the respondents' answers, time constraints, and unexpected topics that were brought up during the conversation. Interviewees were contacted by email starting in July 2023. Interviews were conducted online through communication software (in particular, Zoom) in August and September 2023 and lasted between 20 and 50 minutes each. The interviews were recorded after the participants were asked for their permission and agreed to be recorded, to respect their privacy. The

interviewees were also asked if their names and professional information could be cited in the development of this dissertation. The registered calls were later transcribed verbatim. Since the interviews were conducted in Spanish, the resulting answers were translated into English by the author to be able to process the information. The results of the semi-structured interviews will be discussed and summarised in depth in Chapter IV.

Through the analysis of the cases and the conclusions drawn from the interviews, the aim is to articulate the empirical information with the theoretical framework developed in Chapter I, constructed to address the proposed research problem, and validate the proposed hypothesis.

Regarding the data analysis process, the qualitative data from interview transcripts was organised, classified, and examined to identify significant patterns that emerge by grouping content into concepts and relationships, to find meaningful insights for understanding the phenomenon under study. The interpretations from the case study comparison and the relevant information shared by interviewees will be analysed in conjunction.

CHAPTER III. DECENTRALISED DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION IN PRACTICE

In this chapter, we will explore the global challenges and failings and/or limitations of traditional means of direct cooperation -based on vertical transfers of aid- that originally led to an expansion of cooperation types to seeking more horizontal approaches. Followingly, we will see the key instances where the European Commission formally recognised the relevance of local governments and how this established the building step in advancing towards new ways of bi-regional cooperation for the European Union and Latin America. Finally, the analysis and comparison of the URB-AL III and ADELANTE programmes will allow us to understand the types of cooperation available and the concrete results obtained from each of them. This will allow us to understand the formats of cooperation the programmes implemented in the region utilise, and it will aid us in approaching why there was a slowing down in the most recent decade in the cooperation between the European Union and Latin America.

3.1. Global changes and limitations of development cooperation supported the decentralisation of methods

The processes of traditional development cooperation, either bilateral or multilateral, have shown certain limitations in the topics it can address or an insufficient scope to face global challenges. This has led to the reconsideration of objectives, agents, and instruments, as well as the roles that local governments should have in the approach to international cooperation. In turn, this has guided the promotion of decentralised cooperation, offering practices of development cooperation that prioritise a horizontal and reciprocal approach, and that involves actors at different levels. International development cooperation emerged as a practice centred around the States, based on what has been labelled as North-South flows of cooperation where we can find a Northern or developed country acting as a donor or giver of technical assistance to a Southern or developing country (Gutiérrez Goiria et. al., 2022). This first intervention logic emerged from vertical and assistential dynamics and continues to be relevant in direct cooperation relationships since the necessity of financial support is undeniable in various cases (Fernández de Losada, A. 2020: p. 21). It was conceptualised as a transfer system with

the emergence of a hierarchical divide of the world, also commonly referred to as the Global North and the Global South. This does not rely so much on a geographical divide, but more so on the socio-economic and political characteristics of the countries addressed. The essence of this divide stems from historical processes of colonisation, exploitation, and power imbalances that have shaped the trajectory of nations across the world. Historically, during the colonial era, certain regions of the world, primarily in the Northern Hemisphere, embarked on imperialistic endeavours, exploiting the resources and labour of other regions, located in the Southern Hemisphere. This historical legacy laid the foundation for a global system characterised by economic disparities, technological gaps, and political inequalities. The conceptualisation of development cooperation as a transfer system reflects the acknowledgment of this historical context. The Global North, consisting of economically advanced and technologically developed countries, became synonymous with the providers of aid, expertise, and resources. In contrast, the Global South, comprising nations with a history of colonial subjugation and economic exploitation, became the recipients of development assistance. This hierarchical structure reinforced the notion of a developmental divide, where the North assumed a position of influence and the South sought support for economic, social, and political progress (González & Macías, 2020).

However, other types of considerations necessarily had to emerge while relevant actors became aware of the disadvantages of relying solely on the dynamics of donors and beneficiaries when considering the development of regions. For this reason, other forms of cooperation began to take relevance, prioritising peer-to-peer, horizontal partnerships that can create mutually beneficial relationships by prioritising the exchange of knowledge, the sharing of experiences, institutional and operational capacity building, and highlighting technical cooperation in addition to the financial aspect. These changes in focus do not come without resistance, as the actor who has the means to finance a programme, project or action of international cooperation might have priorities in mind that differ from the rest of the actors but has the advantage of being able to set the agenda. This has opened the stage for associations of local and regional governments to actively engage in development cooperation through their international cooperation agencies as well as networks of cities that enable the promotion of decentralisation as a policy with relevant effects at the local and regional levels (Fernández de Losada, 2020: p. 21). As

we can see in the following table (3.1), the types and formats of development cooperation can take many forms, incorporating South-South and triangular flows as well.

Table 3.1. Types of cooperation for development

Format	Type	Approach	Channel	Flow	Type of intervention
Direct cooperation	Partnership	Vertical	Bilateral or multilateral collaboration agreements	North-South South-South	Transfer of aid (projects, funding, resources, etc.)
		Horizontal (peer-to-peer)	Bilateral or multilateral collaboration agreements	North-South South-South Triangular	Political advocacy Knowledge and innovation management Technical cooperation Learning Pilot projects
	Networks	Conventional	Affiliation (with membership fee)	North-South South-South Triangular	Political advocacy Knowledge and innovation management Pilot projects
		Multi-actor	Affiliation (with membership fee)	North-South South-South Triangular	Political advocacy Knowledge and innovation management Pilot projects
		Ephemeral alliances	Non-institutional	North-South South-South Triangular	Political advocacy
Induced cooperation	Partnership	Horizontal (peer-to-peer)	Grants through participation in calls	North-South South-South Triangular	Pilot projects
Indirect cooperation	Support for third parties (NGDOs,	Mediation	Grants through calls	North-South	Projects

	third sector, activism, universities, private sector, etc.)				
Education for global justice	Direct action	Coordination	Bilateral or multilateral collaboration agreements	North-North South-South Triangular	Political advocacy Critical citizenship
	Support for third parties (NGDOs, third sector, activism, universities, private sector, etc.)	Mediation	Grants through calls	North-North	Political advocacy Critical citizenship

Source: Fernández de Losada & Llamas, 2023: p. 31.

Addressing the pending topics crucial for effective cooperation involves navigating challenges such as the rapid increase in global population and the simultaneous urbanisation trend, particularly notable in Latin America, where approximately 80 percent of the population resides in cities (ECLAC, Regional Observatory on Planning for Development in Latin America and the Caribbean, n.d.). These demographic shifts underscore the need for decentralised governance structures, acknowledging the limitations of central governments in managing political and economic changes. The evolving landscape calls for enhanced public participation and good governance, with sub-national governments becoming pivotal in representing and engaging citizens. The territorial dimension emerges as a critical factor in tackling major challenges, including environmental issues, food security, economic vitality, and the localisation of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). To achieve successful local development, institutional coordination facilitated by local authorities becomes paramount in addressing these pressing issues.

Changes worldwide are inextricably linked to modifications in the way we conceive policies to better target communities and respond to new emerging challenges. In this sense, the potential for development cooperation taking different forms is varied and rich

in results. The literature (Gutiérrez Goiria et. al., 2022: p. 13) considers the relevance of maintaining a multilevel approach necessary to address global challenges effectively, emphasizing the integration of international, national, regional, and local levels. This can include a participatory, multi-stakeholder approach, which contemplates processes towards cooperation that are more inclusive, horizontal, and reciprocal, fosters interactions between public and private entities, and gives a space for co-creation and dialogue between civil society, non-governmental organisations, migrant communities, educational institutions, and other groups. This sets the scene for the incorporation of broader visions of the future for a specific location. On the other hand, the decentralisation of development cooperation can bring forth limitations that were not present in traditional, vertical models, starting from fragmentation when seeking agreements and coordinated action amongst diverse stakeholders, with individual interests and responsibilities. When it comes to the allocation of funds the involvement of several stakeholders can complicate processes, either at the administration stage or through the high competition between diverse groups of actors. The literature also highlights issues in the evaluation of decentralised cooperation processes because of the difficulty in collecting sufficient and relevant information, which hampers the effective monitoring and learning outcomes despite the potential of the initiatives (Gutiérrez Goiria et. al., 2022: p. 15).

If we reflect on the challenges that Latin America faces, the OECD's 2019 report on the Latin American Economic Outlook -published before the COVID-19 pandemic's devastating effects- already pointed out that economic growth and socio-economic advancement had weakened since 2011, showing lower labour productivity, increasing levels of poverty and inequality, leaving populations in positions of extreme vulnerability. Even though the 2019 report recognises that in some areas there is outperformance of expectations concerning life expectancy, primary education coverage, social connection and air quality, there are new trials that emerge for Latin America as development challenges arise cyclically. This interpretation considers there are certain development traps that the region can fall into if it doesn't take advantage of international cooperation and increase capacities at the domestic level with concrete policy actions that move countries towards achieving greater inclusion and sustainable development. Some of the development traps the OECD (2019b) considers are, firstly, a productivity trap, where

countries of the region have focused consistently on primary and extractive industries since the early 2000s, limiting the LAC countries' participation in the global value chains. Additionally, the OECD describes a social vulnerability trap, where persons move out of poverty into increasingly vulnerable middle classes that survive on cycles of low-quality jobs, poor social protection, and volatile income. The institutional trap refers to the expansion of the middle class with rising social aspirations that go unanswered by a lack of institutional capabilities to finance better public services and raise tax revenues. Finally, an environmental trap befalls Latin America due to numerous economies being material and natural resource-intensive, making high-carbon growth hard to abandon. In the 2022 OECD Development Centre's Latin American Economic Outlook, achieving a green and just transition is the central focus. This thematic focus, while necessary, represents a weakness for Latin America since the countries of the region do not possess a unified voice when it comes to negotiation at the international level. According to the OECD (2022), the need for greater regional cooperation might favour policy implementation and coordination. However, this showcases different perspectives between the European Union and Latin America, where one values the benefits of integration, and the other maintains a plurality of groups with interests that can be complementary or competing.

3.2. The European Commission's recognition of local actors

The recognition of local and regional governments as relevant actors who contribute towards international development has not always been a given fact. Within the European Consensus on Development, published in 2006, the EU states in Article 16 that it encourages an increased involvement of national assemblies, parliaments, and local authorities. In 2007, the EU would go on to launch instruments that could offer new frameworks for decentralised cooperation, such as the Development Cooperation Instrument and the European Development Fund (Smith, n.d.: p. 6). The same year, the European Parliament adopted a key resolution regarding local authorities, acknowledging them as actors for development. Through this, the European Parliament not only showed recognition of local authorities' role in development cooperation but also urged the European Commission to support their actions through financial means (European Parliament, 2007). Additionally, a thematic strategy paper was adopted for the 2007-2010

period under the framework of the NSA-LA programme. This was presented in the form of a paper that highlighted the importance of local governments for development at the local level. In particular, the NSA-LA programme remarked that the local governments are closer to citizens, thus, having more relevant experience regarding the provision of services, (education, health, water, transport, etc.), building democratic institutions and effective administrations. Most relevantly, the role of local authorities can create long-term strategies for the creation of inclusive societies with their role as politically legitimate actors that can build confidence and mobilise other key actors (European Commission, 2008: p. 5).

In 2013, the European Commission formally recognised via a communication to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions the importance of local authorities in EU partner countries as key stakeholders for enhanced governance as well as the fundamental role of local authorities in achieving more effective development outcomes. This declaration was made because local governments are closer to citizens and hold relevant influence in the mobilisation of societies. Additionally, good governance at a local level is indicative of more equitable outcomes and is necessary to achieve sustainable development goals and poverty reduction. The deep understanding of local contexts gives local authorities more power in activating change and in protecting vulnerable populations and communities in natural resource-rich areas or fragile, crisis-prone situations (European Commission, 2013: p. 4). At the same time, the Commission recognised the obstacles in empowering local authorities, which might not have adequate levels of autonomy, capacity development, and financial resources (European Commission, 2013: p. 2). In the face of these difficulties, the Commission would prioritise a territorial approach with a bottom-up long-term dynamic, to benefit the work at the local level and to support decentralisation processes.

The 2013 communication highlighted, in particular, the allocation of sufficient resources according to national legal frameworks; the increase of capabilities of local authorities, including transparency and participation beyond personal skills and institutional means; the support of sustainable urbanisation to accompany the needs of citizens in highly urbanised areas; and the creation and instrumentalization of associations of local

authorities as the structures that can advocate for and lobby in favour of local authorities' interests as well as create platforms for coordination and dialogue. During the following years, the European Commission has incentivised decentralised cooperation to some extent by supporting the actions of networks and key spaces to motivate dialogue and new alliances that positively influence the international agenda of development cooperation by bringing new perspectives and giving a voice to different communities. Among the most relevant examples of active networks today it is important to highlight the United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG), a global network that represents cities and local, regional, and metropolitan governments and their associations. Metropolis is another relevant actor, forming a global network of major cities and metropolitan spaces that seeks to elevate the voice of metropolises and foster global cooperation. In turn, C40 is another global network of mayors of 96 cities that are united in action to confront the climate crisis, with a mission focused on increasing the availability of green jobs and increasing sustainable employment opportunities through an inclusive, collaborative approach.

The Ibero-American Centre for Strategic Urban Development (CIDEU) is a network with 150 partners, including local governments and collaborating entities -such as universities, research centres, planning institutes, municipal associations, municipal companies, development councils, etc.-, that seek to apply a culture of urban strategic thinking that anticipates changes with a long-term vision. This approach seeks to build sustainable and inclusive cities along with multiple actors to improve people's quality of life.

Between other actors, it is important to also mention the International and Ibero-American Foundation for Administration and Public Policies (FIIAPP), an actor of the Spanish and European development cooperation system, which works to strengthen public administrations, with a special focus on Latin America, Africa, and the European Neighbourhood. They support institutional change processes as well as the design of local public policies by mobilising public sector expertise and generating spaces for exchange to facilitate peer learning. FIIAPP's strategic sectoral and regional priorities are driven by the global agenda in the areas of climate change, migration, diversity, and gender equality, addressing all of them as cross-cutting issues, in particular gender equality.

Similarly, ICLEI - Local Governments for Sustainability is a global network with approximately 2,500 local and regional governments committed to sustainable urban development. Through their mission, ICLEI seeks to influence the creation of policies on sustainability and drive actions at the local level for low-emission, nature-based, equitable, resilient, and circular development.

In September of 2022, the European Commission signed framework partnership agreements with five associations of local authorities that will be in force until April 31, 2026. These include the Association Internationale des Maires Francophones (AIMF), the Commonwealth Local Governments Forum (CLGF), Platforma/Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR), the United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG), and the United Cities and Local Governments of Africa (UCLGA). The Commission highlights that this initiative represents significant support for local and regional governments and their associations, considering them *“key partners for the EU in its external action because of their role in driving sustainable and inclusive development in a way that creates more opportunity for all and leaves no one behind”*, as the Commissioner for International Partnerships, Jutta Urpilainen, stated (European Commission, 2022: p. 1).

In the press release announcing this initiative, the Commission also highlighted these partnerships would *“strengthen the voice of EU local and regional governments and their associations in EU development policy and global agendas; enhance the engagement of EU local and regional governments and their associations in decentralised cooperation, focusing on EU priorities and the Sustainable Development Goals, in partnership with peers in partner countries; improve current practices in decentralised cooperation, through efficiency and innovation; raise awareness and build the capacities of local and regional governments and their associations as governance and development policy actors; and strengthen the capacity of associations of local authorities to coordinate the voices of all partners, create synergies, and add value as a network, ensuring good governance and sustainable partnerships”* (European Commission, 2022: p. 1).

3.3. Decentralised cooperation programmes - case studies

In this section, the focus is on two cases of decentralised cooperation between the EU and Latin America to observe if the centrality of local governments and regional spaces presents an improved strategy for approaching a just digital and green transition as well as the fight against inequalities, and whether this will be a more prominent strategy in the near future.

While there are many relevant examples that could be tackled, focusing on two programmes allows to delve deeper into their details within the scope of this dissertation. The case selection took into consideration the availability of official reports and literature, the possibility to interview experts who had been involved or are currently working in the direction or implementation of the cases, and covering different periods that allow us to observe the evolution of decentralised cooperation between the European Union and Latin America in different periods. Additionally, the relevance of the URB-AL Programme was mentioned as a relevant instance of bi-regional cooperation in most of the interviews conducted for this dissertation. For this reason, in the next two sections, we will take a closer look at the URB-AL III and the ADELANTE programmes and their main goals and impacts, to later analyse a specific project implemented by each programme. As we will further discuss in the following section, the URB-AL Programme was active until 2013 while the ADELANTE Programme's first phase began only two years later, in 2015. The European Union launched a second phase in 2021 that is still being implemented today. The case studies will assist in observing a wide period and understanding the changing priorities in programme creation and implementation between the European Union and Latin America.

3.3.1. The URB-AL III Programme

URB-AL was a European Commission programme that focused on obtaining an innovative approach to decentralised cooperation between local authorities from the European Union and Latin America. It acted as a tool for increasing the potential of bi-regional cooperation between Local Governments and improving the quality of the public policies being implemented in key areas, such as democratic governance, gender equality, social cohesion, local economic development, and the fight against climate change. In

both its first phase, which began in 1996, and its second phase, which began in 2002, the programme's general objective was *"to develop direct and lasting links between local authorities in Europe and Latin America, for the acquisition, dissemination, and application of 'best practices' in the field of urban policy"*. However, the specific objectives differed. For the first phase, they sought support for concrete actions for the orderly development of cities and local authorities; the creation of thematic networks of cities or local authorities from both regions; the exchange of experts; and the establishment of common projects. For the second phase, the specific objectives were: to strengthen local authorities' capacities for action in the social, economic and cultural development of urban areas, including the implementation of collective facilities; to develop the structural capacities of local authorities, in particular through the training of human resources; to promote partnership between local authorities and representatives of civil society; to develop the capacity for action of small and medium-sized towns and cities (SMEs) in the context of the internationalisation of their relations; to promote European and Latin American local development "good practices" while respecting their local specificities (OCO, 2013a: p. 15).

In its third phase, URB-AL III (2009-2013) aimed at giving an impulse to local public policies that contributed to increasing the degree of social cohesion at the subnational level. With 1.8 beneficiaries and a total non-refundable budget of 64.4 million euros, the Programme was composed of 20 cooperation projects implemented in 74 Latin American territories by an Office of Coordination and Orientation (OCO). In this case, the OCO was a consortium formed by the Barcelona Provincial Council, the International and Ibero-American Foundation for Administration and Public Policies (FIIAPP, Spain), the Tuscany Region and the Interregional Observatory for Development Cooperation, OICS (Italy), the Municipality of San José (Costa Rica), the Municipality of Bogotá (Colombia) and the Province of Santa Fe (Argentina).

According to the Observatory for Decentralised Cooperation (n.d.), 131 local public policies that contributed to fostering social cohesion in more than 500 Latin American municipalities were generated or strengthened within the framework of URB-AL III. The Observatory (n.d.) also pointed out that one of the main achievements of URB-AL III in the Latin American region was the consolidation of processes that could act as reference

models for subnational governments that aimed at promoting social cohesion. In this sense, the innovative aspect of the programme relied on going further than one-off projects that looked at short-term implementation and impact towards the promotion of public policies that also strengthen local institutional capabilities as well as offering a response to citizens' needs. Furthermore, general, relevant results highlighted by the Observatory of Decentralised Cooperation include the creation of a common Euro-Latin American language and agenda on social cohesion, the capacity for multilevel and multisectoral articulation, political-institutional advances, the construction of networks, and the development of new instruments to improve local public management.

The programme was structured into two lots. Lot 1 finances the 20 projects that are implemented at the local level in 5 levels of intervention, productive-occupational, institutional, territorial, civic and social, defined to increase the main focus of the programme on increasing the local levels of social cohesion. Each project was structured around European-Latin American partnerships of 5 to 7 partnerships, all non-state bodies. On the other hand, lot 2 was focused on financing the coordination and orientation of the programme (OCO, 2013a: p. 16). The objective for this third phase (2009-2013) would be to “contribute to the degree of social and territorial cohesion within local and regional entities in Latin America”, with the specific purpose of consolidating “...in a limited number of cities and territories of Latin America and based on partnerships and exchange of experiences, social cohesion processes and policies that may become reference models capable of generating debates, and of indicating possible solutions to the sub-national governments of Latin America that wish to stimulate social cohesion dynamics” (OCO, 2013a: p. 15).

After two previous phases of the programme, URB-AL III sought to offer continuity to the key positive aspects developed in the two previous phases. Namely, this third phase pursued the enhancement of the capacities, performance, and results of local governments, to potentiate them as agents that can take on the initiatives in their public agenda and generate public value. Additionally, the programme sought to create projects that complemented pre-existing local policies, while encouraging participating local governments to incorporate relevant issues in their agenda, as well as prioritising the long-term impact of all public policies (OCO, 2013a: p. 13). The programme also encouraged

the direct involvement of participants to guarantee they appropriated the implementation of the projects and were able to achieve sustainable results, although, we will later discuss if this is a goal that was fully or partially achieved. They encouraged the construction of networks for Euro-Latin American dialogue at the sub-national level, and the use of the experience from these projects to support the development of other enriching local public policies in the region (OCO, 2013a: p. 14).

URB-AL III also aimed at bringing innovative aspects to its implementation. In this sense, the focus on social cohesion was a direct response to the bi-regional policy agenda at the time of the creation of the programme. Additionally, the programme attached considerable importance to the role of local governments in the generation of social cohesion, seeking to provide the tools for local governments to contribute to the achievement of social cohesion objectives, and leaving behind theme-based networking to foster more fluid dialogue. The programme, according to the coordinator of the “Institutional Innovation” project in the Province of Santa Fe, Argentina, mentioned that the programme acted as an introduction to a regional debate regarding what social cohesion entailed, since *“before URB-AL III there were no references to social cohesion and thereafter there was internal debate on social cohesion and the concept appeared in dialogues with the citizenry because the concept was also being conveyed publicly through presentations and in seminars”* (OCO, 2013a: p. 29).

Most relevantly, for the 2009-2013 period the programme set the goal of eliminating geographical biases that were present in the previous phases, incorporating countries that were not part of the programme before. They also aimed at the financing of longer-lasting projects and encouraging the involvement of European agents from countries other than Spain, even though it remained the country with the most local presence (OCO, 2013a: p. 15-16). It is fundamental to also highlight that the profile of participating institutions and territories changed greatly in the third phase of the programme, both for the EU and for Latin America, with a significant reduction in the mobilisation of public administrations of territories with populations of 100,000 to 250,000 and small populations of 10,000 to 50,000, along with an increase in the participation of intermediate agents, changing the previous “local nature” of the programme. It is notable to mention that a relevant change from previous programmes is that URB-AL III

increased the presence of semi-urban and rural territories (OCO, 2013a: p. 21). This is interesting to note, since as we mentioned in the previous section (3.1) the populational distribution of Latin America is urban, with approximately 80 percent of the population residing in cities.

The following table (Table 3.2), extracted from the Final Report of the URB-AL III Programme, helps to observe the concrete results of all 20 projects that were implemented in the 2009-2013 period, including the figures of direct and semi-direct beneficiaries, persons trained, and jobs created. In the category of training, we could find trainings on the policy cycle (formulation, implementation, evaluation, and sustainability), as well as themed sessions on environment, gender, local economic development, and citizen participation. Several activities were also focused on capacity building to increase local management capacity, including courses addressed to technical and institutional staff as well as training addressed to elected representatives of Latin American sub-national governments to increase leadership skills.

Table 3.2. Main impacts of the URB-AL III Programme

Categories	Cumulative figure
Direct and semi-direct beneficiaries	1,791,949 persons
Indirect beneficiaries (population of the territories intervened in Latin America)	74 persons
Municipalities with impact	500 municipalities
Agents that have participated in the Europe and Latin America Programme	160 agents
Public policies promoted or strengthened	131 public policies
Persons trained	23,446 persons
Jobs created	1,613 jobs
Work on construction, restoration, and recovery of sites	389 sites

Source: OCO, 2013a: p. 22.

Concretely, the sectors of intervention were structured under the previously mentioned five dimensions of social cohesion: productive and occupational, social, territorial, civic and institutional. Under the productive and occupational dimension, the OCO considered the opportunity to have access to employment and enjoy the benefits of economic growth with equality as a requisite for individuals or groups to fully play their role in society. Therefore, this dimension encompasses policies and actions aimed at the creation of employment and an inclusive labour market, vocational training, the promotion of entrepreneurial culture and cooperatives, the creation of companies, the formalisation of economic activities, the competitiveness of the existing business fabric and the commitment to innovation, business associations and production chains, the creation of structures to support and promote entrepreneurship in public bodies and intermediate entities, the creation of support structures for the participation of emigrants and co-development linked to remittances, and financial instruments to support entrepreneurial initiatives. The social dimension considers the access of all individuals and groups to universal basic services, independently of their socioeconomic status, as well as the guarantee of public safety. In this sense, this dimension considers policies that target the provision of basic social services (education, health, water, sanitation, waste collection), the coverage and/or the quality of social services, the public-private cooperation and complementarity in the provision of basic services, innovation in service delivery and application of low-cost technologies, promotion of public safety, and the promotion of transversal policies for the eradication of violence (OCO, 2010: p. 14).

Within the civic dimension, the programme set out to build active citizenship under the consideration that the feeling of belonging to a community and identifying with it is fundamental to achieving a cohesive society, linked to the possibilities of participating in the definition of public policies that affect citizenship. This is why this sphere includes cultural policies of identity and citizen ownership, citizen participation, cross-cutting gender policies, policies for multicultural integration, and policies for youth. In the territorial dimension, on the other hand, the focus was on reducing territorial imbalances, understood as the presence of territorial tensions due to differences between areas of the same city, metropolitan agglomeration, or region. These differences can relate to urban quality, economic, demographic, environmental, etc., which can lead to problems of inequality if the territories in question develop at different rates. For this reason, this

dimension focuses on policies of urban integration, social urbanisation, and improvement of the quality of peripheries, spatial planning policies, territorial management models with an integrated approach, and cross-border cooperation (OCO, 2010: p. 15). Finally, the institutional dimension considers the need for institutional strengthening and local fiscal policies, providing a framework for intersectoral strategic planning policies for social cohesion, capacity building of local institutions, the creation or consolidation of institutional mechanisms for public-private consultation for local or regional management, and the articulation of the different levels of municipal-regional-national decision-making (OCO, 2010: p. 16). These dimensions were spaces of action to consolidate and promote public policies towards social cohesion. The European Commission considered that the concept of social cohesion required “processes of an integral nature” (OCO, 2013a: p. 25) and, for this reason, the programme was structured with a multi-sectoral approach, tackling multiple dimensions at once with a cross-cutting focus (OCO, 2013b: p. 11).

If we take a closer look at the figure below (Figure 3.1) we can observe how the programme defined the key components of social cohesion, namely, (1) equal opportunities and inclusion; (2) a good level of coexistence within society, sub-divided into (2.a.) a sense of belonging and (2.b.) recognition of others; and (3) a good degree of confidence of the citizenry, sub-divided into (3.a.) participation and (3.b.) legitimacy of the local government.

Figure 3. 1. Components of social cohesion



Source: OCO, 2013a: p. 89.

The relevance of social cohesion within the programme was a direct response to the priorities the European Union set out for Latin America, as established in the Article 6 of the financing instrument for development cooperation. This document defined five priorities or areas of cooperation for 2007-2013, with the first one being the promotion of social cohesion as a shared goal and policy priority, involving fighting poverty, inequality, and exclusion. This remarked the importance of social welfare and tax policies, productive investment for more and better jobs, policies to combat discrimination and production, consumption and trafficking of drugs, and improvements in basic social services, in particular health and education. The following four points prioritised encouraging greater regional integration; supporting the reinforcement of good governance and the protection of human rights; supporting the creation of a common EU-Latin American higher education area; and promoting sustainable development in all dimensions (Regulation (EC) No 1905/2006, Article 6).

3.4.1.2. The emiDel Project

The “emiDel Project – Local development and emigration in Latin America” was one of the 20 projects funded by the European Commission under the framework of the URB-AL III Programme, active between January 2009 and June 2013, with a total budget allocated for its development was of 2,950,000 euros. It was coordinated by L’Hospitalet City Council of Barcelona, Spain, and it was implemented in three locations in Latin America: La Paz (Bolivia), Santa Tecla (El Salvador), and Canelones (Uruguay). The Municipality of Barcelona also acted as a project partner.

The justification of this project for receiving funding from the URB-AL III programme underlines the relevance of the action in these cities. Firstly, it is due to the need to link urban development with the construction of local productive capacities and with the objective of social cohesion. In this sense, the adoption of local economic development strategies aimed at fostering entrepreneurship is one of the cornerstones of the cities’ governance. On the other hand, the migratory phenomenon between Latin America and Spain is highlighted. In their submission for subvention, L’Hospitalet (2008) stresses that, since 2000, Spain has gone from being a country that sends emigrants to a receiving country. By 2008, Spain had evolved from a percentage of less than 2 percent immigration

to more than 10 percent, representing approximately 4 million people. This undoubtedly requires a response at the state level, but there are also areas of local cooperation as a way to promote co-development for the countries of origin and better integration for the receiving societies. In this sense, the project would aim to take advantage of the European cities' experience in the field of urban economic regeneration to replicate models in Latin America.

As we can see in the official document of the OCO (2013b) detailing the main achievements of the programme, the emiDel project's general goal aimed to develop training models for Latin American local governments so that they could base themselves on the European experience in this field to create a structure of local economic development units that encourage private initiative. In turn, the specific goals were two: to develop the capacity of local governments to help and promote entrepreneurs, to boost local economic development; and to develop training experiences and technical assistance that make the productive investment of entrepreneurs in local municipalities viable by increasing the value of remittances from Latin American emigrants to Europe. As we can see in this case, the knowledge exchange seems to prioritise the Latin American localities learning from the European experience, however, there doesn't seem to be a logic of mutual learning in this peer-to-peer cooperation where European local governments are more focused on transferring knowledge and capacities to the beneficiaries.

The OCO (2013b: p. 25) identified relevant achievements of this project, including more than 9,071 direct beneficiaries across all partners, and 150 municipal employees who received training in economic development after taking the "Local Economic Development" course offered at universities in the partner countries. Additionally, 150 entrepreneurs received training in drafting their business plans, with 30 prizes awarded to the best plans in La Paz, Bolivia. 440 entrepreneurs also received personal technical assistance, and 5 centres were set up to support entrepreneurs in improving their skills through the new facilities and services and foster local economic development.

From 2010 until the end of the programme, 74 percent of the participating territories received technical assistance from the Orientation and Coordination Office to assist with the implementation of the projects (OCO, 2013a: p. 31). Additionally, the OCO promoted the capitalisation of the best practices from the 20 projects of the programme. This was

pursued through thematic clustering urban and regional integration, territorial competitiveness, integrated waste management, and cross-border cooperation. These four thematic clusters allowed participants to identify common issues and practices depending on the interest of each partner and the characteristics of each region. In the following table (3.3) we can observe how these clusters were divided into the core areas of intervention of the projects:

Table 3.3. Core areas of intervention of the projects by thematic cluster

Thematic cluster	Core areas of intervention
Territorial competitiveness and innovation	Political institution/governance
	Infrastructure
	Social capital
	Technology
	Product innovation and quality
	Financing of development
Integrated solid urban waste management	Political institution/governance
	Environmental: global and territorial conservation of natural capital
	Social and cultural
	Economic: sustainable development of productive activities
Cross-border cooperation	Political institution/governance
	Planning and horizontal governance
	Improving quality of life
	Improving integration processes
Urban and territorial integration	Political institution/governance
	Community and citizen participation
	Recovery of degraded areas
	Enhancement of policies for territorial management, territorial land use and planning
	Social inclusion and fighting violence

Source: OCO, 2013a: p. 46.

It is worth noting that in the case of the emiDel project, the integrated local development system of Santa Tecla, El Salvador was identified as a best practice in the cluster of territorial competitiveness and innovation. To give context to this initiative, we can refer to a report that focuses on the systematisation of the management of local economic development initiatives in Santa Tecla (Contreras López, 2015). Firstly, the initial factors that were identified as problems to be addressed in the area included: the search for a solution to the municipality's business sector needs; the provision of technical advice and training (mainly for micro and small entrepreneurs and women); the provision of food security in rural areas; the generation of information for decision-making; and the creation of links and alliances between different actors. During this initiative, the project consolidated the "Santa Tecla Activa", inspired by a similar initiative in Zaragoza, Spain. The main goal was to address the needs of the municipality's business fabric in four areas: (1) business development, (2) employability, (3) rural economic development, and (4) the creation of an Economic Observatory. The project created a development centre that provided comprehensive services in the promotion of employment, support for entrepreneurs and the strengthening of companies.

The emiDel coordinator from L'Hospitalet, Spain, Manuel García, stated that "*one of the main lessons we have learnt from the emiDel project is the need to create climates, scenarios and qualifications that promote the development of social capital, of its social productive skills, and local productive and social entrepreneurial skills. Because it is not possible to see a way towards social cohesion without a production project*" (OCO, 2013b: p. 1). This is reflected in the results of the project in Santa Tecla, El Salvador, which included: the installation of equipped offices; the creation of a team of people working in the areas of investment, the Economic Observatory and an Employment Service; the formation of the Local Economic Development Promotion Committee (CIDEL); the mobilisation of resources to ensure the sustainability of the initiative, in particular, the payroll of permanent employees and basic services was paid with municipal funds and arrangements were made with foundations, ministries and international cooperation for technical advice, training, donations in kind or funding; the diagnosis of the productive fabric of a shopping promenade; 415 people, entrepreneurs and traders trained in different areas through the efforts of this office; advice for the organisation of two cooperatives ALAMPYMES and ECOTALLERES.

The project coordinator, Manuel García, also highlighted that “*all the activities promoted by the OCO have helped us to develop the talking points for our partners and place greater emphasis on the need for changes in how to approach public policy and in the components it should have. They have also helped create awareness that public policies that help strengthen social cohesion should be encouraged at a local level*” (OCO, 2013a: p. 31). In this sense, we can see how the overall goal of the programme was to take a territorial approach to development to assist in the establishment of multi-stakeholder governance, benefiting citizen participation and involving different actors in the territory in public actions.

Among the challenges faced by the third phase of the URB-AL III, the main one the OCO cited was to ensure the continued success and sustainability of the accomplishments and outcomes. These strategies included connecting local governments with various stakeholders, such as social and private sectors and other government levels, to ensure continuity. The collaboration among local governments was key to addressing the instability often caused by changes in regional governments and to include the program's supported policies in municipal budgets. Another challenge was to achieve the capitalization of the programme's experiences to showcase its achievements to promote new agreements between territories and facilitate possible replication among URB-AL III actors. The programme concluded that the process of systematization and dissemination should extend beyond the programme and benefit all territories interested in implementing public policies that promote social cohesion through decentralized cooperation projects. The most significant challenge was finding new ways to support the continued success of decentralized cooperation programmes that focus on influencing public policies and achieving medium and long-term impacts. The URB-AL III community recognised the need to prioritise cooperation between territories and facilitate relationships among actors in the same region. In this sense, they mentioned the relevance of combining North-South cooperation modalities with South-South cooperation initiatives, the establishment of thematic networks, and the greater involvement of Latin American local governments both as recipients and as drivers of cooperation initiatives (OCO, 2013a: 101).

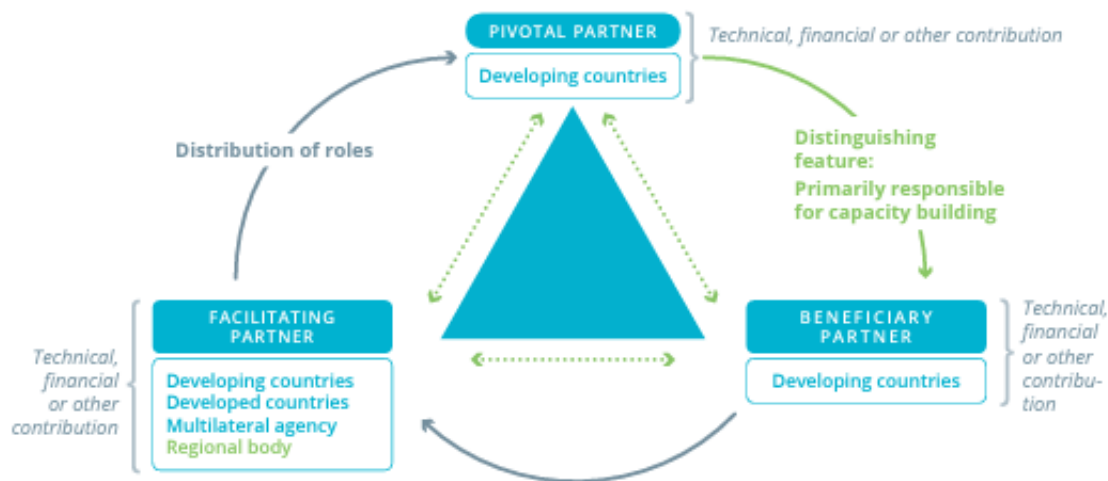
The key point of URB-AL III's final reflections was the identification of the need to position decentralized cooperation as part of the external action of local governments and to see it as an opportunity in the current context. The Programme's framework lacked the development of comprehensive diagnostics that identify needs but also the strengths of the municipality or territory that may be of interest to other local governments. These diagnostics should enable the creation of city strategic plans where external action is a part of them. It was also considered important to have baseline data and a strategic plan to optimize the actions carried out, whether through participation in cooperation projects or thematic networks between territories. In conclusion, sustaining the achievements of URB-AL III and decentralized cooperation between the EU and Latin America requires moving beyond a project-centric approach and adopting a comprehensive and strategic perspective that influences local public policies. This transition towards decentralized cooperation as a genuine local public policy is crucial, given that these dynamics arise from development cooperation programmes (OCO, 2013a: p. 103).

3.3.2. The ADELANTE Programme

In this section, we will explore the ADELANTE Programme. It was comprised of a first phase between 2015 and 2020, and ADELANTE 2, a second phase was launched in 2021 based on the lessons learned in the previous edition. This was presented as the "European Union's flagship programme for triangular cooperation. The United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation (UNOSSC) defines the dynamics of triangular cooperation as Southern-driven partnerships between two or more developing countries supported by a developed country or countries or multilateral organisation(s) to implement development cooperation programmes and projects (UN, 1995, TCDC/9/3). Within this framework, the UNOSSC considers this a mutually beneficial exchange since countries belonging to what is commonly defined as the "South" -and is conceptually aligned with the definition of "developing" countries- are the ones that "require financial and technical support and expertise" of their Northern counterparts -considered as developed countries, with higher levels of institutional capacity, experiences and successful lessons learned-. According to UNOSSC, the process of triangular cooperation should be "led and owned by Southern actors". In this sense, the well-known dynamics of South-South cooperation, which are based on cooperation for development faced by two or more developing countries through

exchanges of knowledge, skills, resources and technical know-how and regional and interregional collective actions, differ from the triangular cooperation efforts mainly in the financing opportunities of the involvement of Northern partners (UN, 2016, SSC/19/3). The ADELANTE programme recognised the broadness of this definition, considering triangular cooperation as an initiative to focus on the role of the country that receives support, highlighting a mutual sharing of experiences, knowledge and resources (ADELANTE, 2020: p. 13). The ADELANTE programme prioritises the use of triangular cooperation with specific roles for each participating partner, as we can see in the following Figure 3.2:

Figure 3. 2. Frameworks of roles within triangular cooperation



Source: ADELANTE, 2020: p. 14.

As the figure 3.2. shows, these dynamics establish the figure of a beneficiary partner, which acts as the focus of the financial or technical support; a pivotal partner, in the shape of another developing country that assists the process; and a facilitating partner, in the role of a traditional bilateral or multilateral donor. With regards to the budgeting of the projects, the EU generally contributed more than 70 percent of the budget, while the pivotal partner generally makes the remaining contribution, as well as taking on management responsibility.

With a budget of 10 million euros, the ADELANTE programme's first phase was launched to identify and promote horizontal relationships between countries of Latin

America and the Caribbean and Europe “in order to strengthen the exchange of knowledge and leverage the capacity of all its partners to provide solutions for the sustainable development of the region, and to fund projects under the principle of shared costs” (ADELANTE, 2020: p. 20). The programme was structured around 8 triangular cooperation projects implemented in 18 countries of Latin America and the Caribbean. Their implementation involved the participation of numerous actors, with organisations, municipalities, or sub-national entities. ADELANTE (2020) prioritised the design of simple structures in format, length, thematic areas and procedures to mimic the experience of bilateral cooperation while supporting South-South cooperation in the region. This was presented as an innovative mechanism which, depending on the source consulted, can be contested as we will later explore more deeply when we assess the contribution of the qualitative interviews conducted.

Whether this can be considered innovative or not, we can rely on the lessons learned published after the completion of the programme’s implementation to observe the positive aspects of ADELANTE. Most notably, regarding the relevance placed on peer learning, capacity building and financial support. Regarding the thematic areas of the programme, ADELANTE (2020), centred its projects on economic development and support for production, food security, social inclusion, the evaluation of public policies and, in one case in particular, the homeless population. In general, both the EU and triangular cooperation efforts in the region hoped to address and support the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, mainly, with regards to SDG 16 (peace, justice and strong institutions), SDG 1 (no poverty), SDG 10 (reduced inequalities), SDG 5 (gender equality), and SDG 17 (partnerships to achieve the goals).

It can be highlighted as a relevant goal of the programme that the collaborative aspect among partners seems to be a central aspect of the projects as well as an objective from the start. As was mentioned during our theoretical framework (chapter I), countries in the Latin American region often fall under what is referred to as the “middle-income trap”, where they have higher levels of income per capita measured without consideration to the unequitable distribution of wealth, co-existing with high levels of inequality. Global resources for development policy are reduced in comparison with other periods, and the priority of funding goes to countries with lower levels of income, leaving LAC excluded

from the systems of international cooperation. The ADELANTE programme took this into consideration and sought to prioritise triangular cooperation as a means to maintain cooperation schemes where the region needs it the most. The assessment of the programme's lessons published in 2020, after the first hit of the COVID-19 pandemic, had an optimistic vision of the future regarding the bi-regional cooperation towards development, claiming that “over time, a more symmetrical, horizontal cooperation space is being strengthened, in which beneficiary partners and donors have a greater sense of ownership and can jointly benefit from such cooperation” (ADELANTE, 2020: p. 12).

During implementation, ADELANTE pursued the creation of a multi-actor model that was based on a participative approach, on the exchange of knowledge and joint learning. The results framework of the programme highlighted: (1) the support of the national cooperation agencies of the LAC region and the different public actors involved in regional development cooperation; (2) the mobilisation of additional funds for development cooperation, creating incentives for other countries in the region to participate in development activities with their neighbours; (3) the promotion of regional integration by opening up new spaces for regional dialogue on common issues and problems; (4) the maximisation of the impact and effectiveness of development actions in a systematic way, drawing on the knowledge and experience of the beneficiary countries and the EU in the LAC region (ADELANTE, 2020: p. 23).

In parallel, the OECD (2019) generated a toolkit to identify, monitor and evaluate the added value of triangular cooperation, which used the ADELANTE experience as a pilot test and addressed the lessons to be learned with regards to triangular cooperation, namely: (1) that EU triangular cooperation should include a working group with national authorities responsible for international cooperation in the region, aimed at fostering leadership among beneficiary partners and identifying the most relevant strategies for establishing triangular partnerships in each country; (2) that a good project design is key to having successful triangular processes; (3) that EU triangular cooperation should serve as a toolkit that enables the coordination of different triangular frameworks, in accordance with the characteristics of the initiative and the local context in which it is implemented; (4) that it is important to move towards mutual accountability that serves as a horizontal

dialogue between partners, geared towards achieving results; (5) and that triangular cooperation is appropriate when mutual benefits are recognised and weighed.

The use of triangular cooperation does not come without limitations, and the ADELANTE programme recognised three risks they could face. First, the presence of a partner acting as a donor would represent a break in the intention of horizontality and reciprocity of the programme between partners and local actors from Latin America and Europe. The ADELANTE (2020) final assessment of the programme's results claimed that this risk can be avoided due to the benefits perceived by triangular cooperation being able to access a larger volume of resources. If we consider the progress made since the start of the century, interviewee 4 sees an improvement in understanding decentralised cooperation, shifting from verticality to horizontality, as well as *“the recognition of decentralized cooperation as a well-respected modality by the international community”*. However, the interviewee 4 also recognises different modalities in more recent years and acknowledges there is a lack of tools to fully understand yet the effects the pandemic has had. In particular, she believes, *“there has been a step back in terms of external support - fewer resources, more targeted programmes, more closed, different from what existed before”*, and she highlights that some programmes like URB-AL, that finished in 2013, could be considered more autonomous, while identifying more influence of the national governments in programmes currently being implemented, such as EUROsocial+ or ADELANTE. This reflects changing trends in the decentralised cooperation for development between Latin America and the European Union. Interviewee 1 observed a shift in this sense, with networks currently directing their cooperation efforts *“...on operational functions, programmes, support for human resources, support for advocacy processes, and communication, but very little goes to actual activities. It's a shame, and what I see is a regression in the idea of decentralisation”*.

This context can also be prejudicial in the sense that since a partner is providing the financial means, they can bestow privileges to preferred partners, and thus, establish a hierarchy among countries. In the opinion of the ADELANTE (2020) team, this can be outweighed due to the possibilities of preferred partners taking on the role of donors themselves and, ultimately, strengthening the cooperation process in the region in general by recruiting and preparing new partners themselves. There is a need for clear strategies

in the long-term to avoid the befall of a third risk, in the form of certain preferred developing countries ending up with the sole role of funders, instead of benefitting from possible assistance of the cooperation for development dynamics. For this to be under control, there is a need for consistent strategies, active participation, and the country's political commitment to maintaining their international engagement and internal and external partnerships.

3.3.2.1. Project DIALOGAS - Inclusive Development in Latin America: A Great Opportunity for Governments and Social Actors

In this section, we will observe the project “DIALOGAS – Inclusive Development in Latin America: A Great Opportunity for Governments and Social Actors”, one of the 8 projects implemented during the first phase of the ADELANTE Programme. It was implemented in 12 Latin American countries: Argentina, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, and Uruguay, with the coordination of the Chilean Agency for International Development Cooperation (AGCID). The total budget was 635,580 euros, out of which 504,014 euros came from the European Union's contribution -approximately 80 percent of the total budget-. The overall objective of the project was to strengthen the effectiveness of poverty alleviation programmes and improve education at the regional level. In this way, it considered the increasing levels of extreme poverty in the region and pursued the specific objective of promoting transversal and socio-emotional skills to facilitate the entry and permanence of the most vulnerable populations in the education system and workforce (ADELANTE, 2020: p. 45).

As part of the ADELANTE programme's commitment to a multi-partnership model with a participative approach, the DIALOGAS project significantly contributed to this aim. DIALOGAS, focused on Inclusive Development in Latin America, particularly emphasising the awareness, promotion, and utilization of Transversal and Socio-emotional Skills.

The main objectives of the DIALOGAS project were:

- To strengthen the regional process of articulation of public institutions committed to the implementation of policies and programmes for the improvement of transversal and socio-emotional competencies in vulnerable, young, and adult populations, in order to reinforce the processes of inclusion and social cohesion;
- To favour the sharing of best practices that have been developed in the region, with specific attention to the pedagogical dimension both in educational contexts and in relation to vocational training;
- To identify a set of measurement instruments and specific pedagogical tools that are consistent with the different contexts of application (training systems, primary or secondary education, certification in a work context, guidance for employment, citizenship spaces) and verify the possibility of building, in a consensual manner, an instrument applicable at regional level (ADELANTE, 2019a: p. 4).

During the project implementation, a series of seminars and workshops were conducted, bringing together experts from across Latin America, the Caribbean, and Europe to collaborate on various topics related to socio-emotional competencies, creating instances of dialogue and interregional collaborative work. This led to the design and pilot implementation of a psychometric scale for the assessment of emotional regulation (ADELANTE, 2019a: p. 8).

DIALOGAS reached the conclusion during the compilation of results and best practices of the project that including socio-emotional cross-cutting competencies in inclusion policies not only promotes better conditions for achieving more successful academic, personal, and professional trajectories but also fosters healthy behaviours throughout the life cycle. In this sense, the absence of these competencies constitutes a strong element of social disadvantage, adding to other contextual factors. Particularly in Latin America and the Caribbean, there is significant inequality in skill development opportunities among population groups and regions. This inequality in the distribution of skills is particularly evident among individuals of different socioeconomic levels. It can be asserted, therefore, that as socio-emotional cross-cutting competencies enhance the personal and social development of individuals across life stages, their development and strengthening at the level of public policies will promote better opportunities for social, educational, occupational, and healthcare inclusion for the population. DIALOGAS'

distinctive scope involved fostering joint reflections on the application of skills and knowledge within each country, encouraging collaborative problem-solving through methodological tools. By facilitating impactful participation and fostering connections within and between nations, DIALOGAS created a foundation for increased influence in shaping public policies. Notably, in Guatemala, the project has successfully advocated for the inclusion of persons with disabilities in benefiting from Transversal and Socio-emotional Skills, overturning prior exclusionary practices (ADELANTE, 2020).

When identifying the project's lessons learned, the agencies implementing the project recognised the importance of reviewing the project formulation at the start and at key points during the implementation. DIALOGAS initially defined as a starting hypothesis for the achievement of the expected results that there would be no extreme changes in the institutional referents or in their priorities. However, changes of government in the region and, to a large extent, of the officials and technical referents in the institutions involved, created changes in the interest and commitment to the theme of the project. Ultimately, this impacted the project's proposals and initiatives requiring DIALOGAS to adapt during the implementation phase. This is of particular relevance due to the strong networking component the project envisioned, for which the involvement of all participating institutions was essential. While the project identified clear successful elements and good practices, in particular, with the creation of National Technical Tables for the institutional articulation of socio emotional competences and the creation of evaluation instruments, obstacles such as government changes should be considered from the start. This is important in order to allow for risk mitigation strategies and to ensure that the key goals of the project do not change in the short-term to adapt to changing authorities (ADELANTE, 2019b).

3.3.2.2. The second phase of the ADELANTE Programme and the current implementation

The second phase of the ADELANTE programme: ADELANTE Triangular Cooperation Window European Union – Latin America and the Caribbean 2021 – 2024, also referred to as ADELANTE Window or ADELANTE2, represents a continued commitment to fostering sustainable development and cooperation in Latin America. Building upon the

successes and lessons learned from the initial phase, ADELANTE Window emphasizes the importance of a multi-stakeholder approach and participatory methodologies in addressing the region's complex challenges. This phase seeks to deepen collaboration between the European Union and Latin American countries, placing a strong emphasis on inclusivity, innovation, and capacity-building. By expanding partnerships and engaging diverse actors, ADELANTE Window aims to further strengthen the impact of development initiatives, ensuring they are tailored to the specific needs and contexts of the participating countries (ADELANTE2, 2021).

In the current implementation of ADELANTE Window, key thematic areas include inclusive economic development, social cohesion, and environmental sustainability. The programme continues to leverage the expertise and resources of various stakeholders, including governments, civil society organizations, and local communities. Through its focus on transversal and socio-emotional skills, ADELANTE Window strives to empower individuals and communities, fostering resilience and sustainable development. The ongoing implementation reflects a dynamic and adaptive approach, responsive to the evolving socio-economic and environmental dynamics in Latin America and underscores the European Union's commitment to fostering positive change in the region (ADELANTE2, 2021).

Within the ADELANTE Window 2022 Initiatives, a total of 82 activities were conducted, reflecting a strong interest and demand for study visits, seminars, workshops, and consultancies. These activities align with the essence of Triangular Cooperation, emphasizing the sharing of knowledge and experience. Notable components include studies and courses, which have yielded valuable outcomes, contributing to the overall scope and quality of the Initiatives. Most of these activities were conducted face-to-face or in a hybrid format, facilitating a richer exchange of knowledge and expertise and strengthening the Partnerships. Locations varied, with a considerable number of activities taking place in Latin American and Caribbean countries such as Colombia, Peru, Bolivia, Mexico, and the Dominican Republic, as well as in Spain. The funds allocated through the ADELANTE Window were managed by ADELANTE/DG INTPA/EU, with logistical coordination overseen by each Partnerships' coordinating entity. The activities engaged a total of 5,344 direct beneficiaries, primarily representing social entities,

national public entities, private entities, and academic or research centres, with strong participation from countries such as Colombia, Bolivia, Mexico, Cuba, and the Dominican Republic. The geographic approach of ADELANTE Window 2022 is influenced by the nationalities of the Partnership member entities, shaping the locations of activities and the distribution of direct and final beneficiaries across Latin America, the Caribbean, and Europe (ADELANTE2, 2022).

In turn, the ADELANTE Window 2023 has implemented 13 triangular cooperation partnerships involving 70 different types of entities across 22 countries from Latin America, the Caribbean and Europe. Among these, the 2023 implementation has been shaped by the participation at large of public entities at the national and subnational levels. The scope of activities (87 in total for the duration of 2023), reinforced triangular cooperation's essence in sharing knowledge and expertise, developing study visits, seminars, workshops, and consultancies, targeting 3.350 direct beneficiaries across all 13 initiatives (ADELANTE2, 2024).

Looking towards the future, ADELANTE2 envisions that triangular cooperation can generate a wider range of financing for development that enables knowledge sharing and capacity building to pave the path towards 2030 and assist in the progress towards the achievement of SDGs. They consider that the global community needs to catalyse resources and foster strategic partnerships, which can be an added value for triangular cooperation. For this reason, in the next year of activity, ADELANTE2 will strengthen its analytical support component, to promote analyses and studies that deepen the knowledge on triangular cooperation and its potential contribution to development cooperation and to the strategic relationship between the European Union and Latin America (ADELANTE2, 2024).

3.3.3. URB-AL III and ADELANTE experiences in comparison

The comparison of the two programmes discussed, URB-AL III and ADELANTE, serves the purpose of observing the changing scope of programmes in Latin America. While both programmes aimed to strengthen cooperation between the European Union and Latin America, the third phase of URB-AL specifically pursued working on a priority matter for both regions: social cohesion. In this sense, URB-AL III sought to contribute to

increasing the degree of social and territorial cohesion within local and regional entities in Latin America. As this was the third phase of the programme, there was a recognition of geographical biases that were present in previous phases. For this reason, the participation in URB-AL III of subnational authorities from Bolivia, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Paraguay, and Peru was encouraged to balance earlier phases with less targeted areas. The URB-AL III Programme sought to increase the presence of semi-urban and rural components. While in its second phase, 117 out of 136 participants were urban-type municipalities (86%), in URB-AL III 34 of the 74 territories intervened in Latin America are urban territories (46%). This left a larger focus on rural and semi-rural areas with 9 rural areas (12%), 12 mixed territories (16%) and a further 20 territories composed of small cities that have an urban function in a rural area. Through this change, the final phase of the programme sought to increase the articulation of local governments.

In turn, the ADELANTE Programme focused on decentralised cooperation and triangular cooperation between local authorities in Latin America, the Caribbean, and the European Union. ADELANTE aimed to enhance the role of local governments in development processes, promote cooperation initiatives and strengthen partnerships. It emphasised building the capacity of local authorities to engage in international cooperation and contribute to sustainable development goals.

URB-AL III also counted with a much larger budget than ADELANTE, with 64.4 million euros destined for the implementation of URB-AL III projects in comparison to the 10 million euros destined for ADELANTE.

After the end of the URB-AL III's implementation, there were request for replicability in the region from other levels of government that were answered through agreements or covenants. Additionally, sustainability measures were developed. For instance, local authorities involved in the projects participated in a sustainability course to prepare continuity measures, the institutionalisation of work meetings with other regional agents, and the creation of mechanisms for citizen participation. Meanwhile, ADELANTE2 capitalised on the dynamics of triangular cooperation, seeking to create partnerships, in addition to building a body of knowledge and good practice. Due to the more reduced scope of ADELANTE2's actions, as well as a more limited budget and time period for

the implementation, the Programme recognises that its strengths lay on its triangular knowledge sharing approach in order to generate new knowledge. However, there are more limitations to apply this new knowledge during the implementation period of ADELANTE2's initiatives. For this reason, the measurement of the effectiveness of the Programme focuses on the capacity building among the partnership member entities and the strengthening of the partnerships themselves. The impact of the initiatives is described in four aspects: continuity of partnerships, the application of the knowledge generated through capacity building, the contribution to the 2030 Agenda as a whole, and the future outlook. The ADELANTE Window will propose an ex post analysis during 2025 to assess its impact (ADELANTE2, 2024: p. 11).

CHAPTER IV. THE EVOLUTION OF DECENTRALISED DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION AND FUTURE PATHS TOWARDS THE SOFT EMPOWERMENT OF LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

Some authors (Gutiérrez Goiria et. al., 2022) argue that the relevance of decentralised development cooperation lies in the fact that nowadays more actors and key institutions are seeking to distance themselves from the traditional vision of development cooperation that relies on the donor-recipient dynamic, allowing for a greater potential for technical cooperation. This is due to the fact that decentralised cooperation and the actors at the sub-state level have a greater knowledge of the issues affecting the citizenry and could share their experience and problem-solving strategies. At the same time, and as with all far-reaching phenomena, it comes with limitations. In this case, decentralised cooperation can suffer from coordination methods, a lack of resources, or a lack of appropriate transparency and monitoring instances. On the other hand, the relationship between the European Commission and Latin America is a strong and long-standing one since they share varied ties in the cultural, social, economic, and historical realms. Additionally, there seems to be an ever-present interest in maintaining a shared path towards development that increases even more whenever challenges faced by either region resurge. However, some sources consider that the relevance of the regional efforts towards decentralised cooperation has diminished to a marginal point over the last decade (Fernández de Losada, 2022: p. 1). This perspective can be attributed to the reduction or the elimination of certain programmes that substantially supported decentralised cooperation between the European Union and Latin America, such as the third and last phase of the URB-AL programme (2009-2013) (Fernández de Losada, 2020: p. 18).

The following sections contain the main issues approached during the interviews as headings.

4.1. The evolution of decentralised cooperation between the European Union and Latin America

When considering the evolution decentralised cooperation has taken between the European Union and Latin America, two perspectives emerged during the interviews with the consulted experts. Firstly, some experts have found common ground in identifying a slowdown in activity levels and bi-regional interaction. As local governments face a changing landscape of collaborative efforts, recognising this trend would allow stakeholders to collectively address challenges and explore opportunities to revitalise decentralised cooperation initiatives. By fostering a shared understanding of the current situation, various actors from both regions could develop collaborative strategies and implement measures that would revive the momentum and effectiveness of decentralised cooperation, ensuring its continued impact on shared goals and sustainable development.

Indeed, there is no single answer to respond to these concerns since, as interviewee 1 pointed out, each region will evaluate from its own perspective and, thus, might have a more positive or pessimistic overview than the other depending on the factors that they assess. For instance, interviewee 1 remarked that the European Union has refined the mechanisms and instruments to facilitate cooperation now. However, directly with Latin America, *“there are currently five or four international agreements between the European Union and large city networks. For example, in the case of Latin America, we access those resources because we are part of UCLG. So, there is a percentage for FLACMA, and another for Mercociudades. However, other networks in the region do not have access to European Union resources because they are not part of UCLG. So, if you look at it from the European Union's perspective, it is probably an administrative evaluation, and there may have been progress on their end”*. In this quote we can find references to three active networks of cities, namely, UCLG, United Cities and Local Governments; FLACMA, the Latin American Federation of Cities, Municipalities and Associations of Local Government; and Mercociudades, a network of South American local governments. If we consider the regional perspective of Latin America after the implementation of sizeable programmes such as URB-AL, the experience of bi-regional cooperation between the EU and Latin America appears to be more limited in comparison, according to the interviewee. Interviewee 8 agrees in this sense, highlighting that there

are still initiatives for decentralised cooperation, but it is “...more of a political effort at the European Union level to engage with international networks of local governments, such as UCLG, AIMF, and Platforma. Agreements for collaboration have been signed with these networks, and there is financing for them, but it is more about advocacy and policy than decentralised cooperation”.

The second perspective is represented by interviewee 3, who remarked that while there has been a significant change in the last decade when it comes to the types of cooperation that involve both the European Union and Latin America, this does not necessarily mean that cooperation stopped happening, it's just taken on different modalities as the programmes we have previously observed. Perpetuo highlighted that “one thing is to have a programme with 8 thematic lines, with many projects under each line. Another thing is to have isolated projects not anchored under this programme framework. The completion of URB-AL meant a weakening of this strategy of linkage between the EU and Latin America. This does not mean that this cooperation did not happen. It did happen, with significant projects”. In this sense, it can be considered that while the bi-regional cooperation might not take on more ambitious, large-scale EU-Latin American programmes, cooperation continues to happen with individual projects. The interviewee 3 refers to personal experience when mentioning projects such as Urban-LEDS, a global project implemented by ICLEI and UN-HABITAT and funded by the European Commission using multilevel action to accelerate low-emission development and climate resilience across more than 60 cities worldwide (ICLEI, n.d.). There is a clear and ever-growing interest, for instance, in the implementation of initiatives related to climate change mitigation. In this sense, interviewee 3 highlighted the continued relevance of other types of cooperation focused on individual projects taken on by individual countries as well, mentioning that “this is the case of Germany, which plays a very important role in European cooperation at the subnational level in the region and complements the strategy of the block itself, with its specific interests and topics that respond to German interests... The profile changes a lot, but in some way, there is a reduction, but it remains a very important area for the international cooperation of subnational governments in the region”.

The conclusion of the URB-AL program's last phase in 2013 coincided with a pivotal moment for the European Union, as the importance of local authorities in fostering more impactful development outcomes was officially recognised through a relevant communication (European Commission, 2013). This recognition underscored the critical role played by local governments in driving effective and sustainable development initiatives. As the URB-AL programme concluded its activities, this acknowledgment marked a turning point in EU discourse, emphasizing the need to empower and engage local authorities as key actors in the pursuit of comprehensive and people-centred development strategies. The ensuing years saw increased attention and emphasis on local governance structures, laying the foundation for subsequent initiatives that sought to harness the potential of decentralised cooperation for achieving shared developmental objectives.

As highlighted in Chapter I, the absence of any reference to local governments in the 2023 EU-CELAC Summit is notable. Moreover, the Multinational Financial Framework (MMF) for the period 2021-2027 indicates a discernible reduction in resources allocated to the region compared to previous periods. While there is some acknowledgment of local governments, their significance appears diminished when contrasted with the Commission's 2013 communication emphasizing the transformative role of local authorities. Furthermore, the current landscape of EU-funded programmes available to Latin America is characterised by more stringent limitations in terms of objectives, budget, and operational scope. Considering the five partnership agreements, that will be in force until 31 April 2026, that recognise the contribution of local and regional governments to the design and implementation of policies that are required to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, in particular for making cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable (the European Commission has signed framework partnership agreements with five global associations of local authorities: the Association Internationale des Maires Francophones (AIMF), the Commonwealth Local Governments Forum (CLGF), Platforma/Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR), the United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG), and the United Cities and Local Governments of Africa (UCLGA) As there is no partnership directly linked to Latin America, cities could present themselves through the partnership with UCLG, participate in the City to City programme or in calls for proposals made through

the European delegations in their country. The region's access to resources is constrained primarily to the United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG), sidelining other networks within the region from participating in these initiatives.

The agreements will further support the role of local authorities and their associations in formulating policies to promote local, regional, and global level sustainable development and formalise a set of common interests and objectives. These include enhancing the engagement between the European Union and local and regional governments and their associations in decentralised cooperation, fostering the localisation of the Sustainable Development Goals, raising awareness, and building the capacities of local and regional governments and their associations as governance and development policy actors at the international level. Also, strengthen the capacity of associations of local authorities to coordinate the voices of all partners, create synergies, and add value as a network, ensuring good governance and sustainable partnerships, including with the European Union.

Particularly on the relation between the European Union and Latin America, interviewee 5 believes that *“the European Union... invested in researching and understanding what this phenomenon of decentralised cooperation was and tried to conceptualise it, also trying to see how it could fit into the mechanisms of cooperation that the European Union and others have”*. However, a decade later, interviewee 5 considers that not much progress has been made in terms of the relevance local governments have in the European cooperation efforts. However, cities *“have their own cooperation initiatives, but perhaps a bit outside of the institutional framework offered by the European Union or by donors. I also see that local governments are increasingly forming networks... But I also wonder if this proliferation of networks doesn't make them lose weight when it comes to lobbying”*.

Interviewee 6 recognises the upward trend of decentralised cooperation since the concept emerged until the early 1990s, when *“...the European Union heavily emphasized this approach. After the 1990s, there was a sort of explosion in some regions of the world, where I feel that Latin America was one of the first regions to embrace and adopt this proposal”*. However, this was followed by what interviewee 6 referred to as a decline in more recent years that could be attributed to political changes at the national level. Most

notably, he states that “...changes in planning periods involved a noticeable drop, as European programming often aimed to reduce expenditures in recent years. The difficulties in terms of financing, including external factors, such as participation in different calls for proposals, as well as sustaining memberships, can also be challenging. It is common for these networks of cities or intermediate governments to involve membership fees, which are often paid nominally by many participants, but the financial commitment is low, usually around 30 percent. Sustaining these structures can be somewhat complex”. The struggles that local authorities experience seem to still be present today, particularly when it comes to financial constraints. Work at the local level has been cited to be an effective method towards impactful change, however, it doesn't always show the expected results since “...it remains often underfunded and with not enough support, including the political one, in the medium and long term.”, as mentioned by Antonella Valmorbidia, Executive Director of the European Association for Local Democracy (ALDA, presentation at the Committee of the Regions documentation centre, 2019). Even though the European institutional support for decentralised cooperation aided in formalising the definition of the concept and supporting the establishment of terms and objectives, the relevance of local authorities is not present for the European Union as it was a decade ago, when they published the aforementioned communication of the importance of local authorities in EU partner countries as key stakeholders for enhanced governance.

The most recent document outlining the European Union's strategy to strengthen its partnership with LAC does not make a single reference to cooperation with subnational structures (EU-CELAC, 2023). The budget allocations have been reduced as well, with interviewee 8 considering that: “Now, there is only a non-mandatory recommendation that will not be measured, monitored, or enforced. It suggests that European Union embassies around the world should work with local governments to the extent of their capabilities and desires”. This will mean a decline in decentralised cooperation, with reduced budget lines. Interviewee 7 also referenced this significant slowdown at the territorial and budgetary levels when it comes to decentralised cooperation in the region, and emphasises the need to increase efforts, work more in collaboration with other European institutions or networks and with Latin America to advocate for the next Commission's programming.

As we can see, the experts' opinions on the slowdown in decentralised cooperation are somewhat divergent. Some acknowledge the ongoing presence of individual projects promoting cooperation, along with the challenges of sustaining networks, others emphasise the decline resulting from shifts in political priorities and budget allocations, indicating varied perspectives on the future of EU-Latin American decentralised cooperation. Overall, these perspectives reveal a significant evolution in decentralised cooperation, marked by changing trends over time. Presently, however, there are limited opportunities for EU cooperation programmes, with a more focused approach on specific themes, particularly in the realm of climate change mitigation. Challenges include difficulties in coordinating and advocating for the collective interests of Latin American local governments, stemming from fragmentation across multiple networks and a lack of a unified agenda.

4.2. The influence of decentralised cooperation on the improvement of inclusive public policies in local governments in Latin America

Relevant sources such as interviewee 8, consider that *“there has been a political shift in Europe towards the centre-right, with policies more focused on the market economy and less emphasis on international solidarity”*.

Related to the clear need to create a strategy that prioritises the creation of inclusive public policies, it has been challenged with political turnovers and changing interests both in Latin America and in the European Union. Interviewee 2 highlighted the importance of programmes such as URB-AL to open the debate on the importance of horizontal cooperation. Nevertheless, the interviewee also considers that the European Commission has shifted its focus towards the Global Gateway, prioritising businesses, and investments. Thus, programmes of the scope of URB-AL have a transformative impact, not only in shaping international cooperation dynamics but also in fostering a shift towards inclusive public policies. However, the evolving focus of the European Commission towards global business priorities poses a challenge to sustaining the emphasis on horizontal cooperation and the vital role of local governments in shaping collaborative frameworks.

Interviewee 2 also states that the relationship between the European Union and Latin America in decentralised cooperation has played a pivotal role in fostering inclusive public policies within local governments across the Latin American region. Through collaborative efforts, knowledge exchange, and capacity-building initiatives, the European Union has contributed significantly to enhancing the governance structures at the local level. The sharing of best practices, innovative approaches, and technical expertise has empowered Latin American municipalities to design and implement inclusive policies that address the diverse needs of their communities. This partnership has not only strengthened the capabilities of local governments but has also promoted a more participatory and responsive approach to policymaking. The EU's commitment to decentralised cooperation has thus proven instrumental in catalysing positive transformations and advancing inclusive governance practices in Latin America's local administrations.

Interviewees 1 and 7, after having spent several years immersed in decentralised cooperation efforts, confidently assert that there are indeed numerous instances where European Union cooperation has significantly strengthened inclusive policies in Latin America. Through collaborative initiatives, knowledge-sharing, and capacity-building programmes, the European Union has played a pivotal role in empowering local governments across the region to craft and implement policies that cater to the diverse needs of their communities. The impact of these partnerships is palpable, fostering a more inclusive and participatory approach to governance. Interviewee 7 states that while challenges persist, the tangible successes witnessed over the years underscore the transformative potential of EU-driven decentralised cooperation in advancing inclusive policies and contributing to positive social change throughout Latin America.

For this reason, it can be summarised that while decentralised programmes hold the potential to contribute to the formulation of inclusive local public policies, they grapple with inherent limitations. Challenges include the difficulty of managing capacities and the susceptibility of the initiatives to evolving interests and priorities within governing bodies, both at the national and sub-national levels. These complexities underscore the need for a nuanced understanding of the interplay between political dynamics and the effectiveness of decentralised cooperation initiatives. On the other hand, it is also relevant

to highlight the benefits that cooperation with Europe brought to a high percentage of cities in Latin America. As interviewee 4 stated, prior to cooperation efforts with Europe there were no local gender policy areas, which were created in municipalities through cooperation projects with European local governments that were already working on local gender policy development. In this sense, interviewee 4 remarks that decentralised cooperation, especially during its period of dynamism and growth, has significantly contributed to various local policy areas in Latin American municipalities. And even though the momentum slowed in recent years, the bi-regional decentralised cooperation facilitated the creation of local policies and the exchange of replicable ideas. At the same time, ambitious programmes such as URB-AL, which sought to increase the levels of social cohesion at the local level, can encounter varied difficulties in measuring whether this impact was achieved. As interviewee 2 affirmed, “...when you talk about transforming public policy, you can't see the final result after just a four-year project”. From this, it can be drawn that measurable outcomes, such as whether employment levels have increased, how many people have been trained in a certain job skill, etc., are useful indicators to understand the success of an initiative but don't necessarily translate to the achievement of a more abstract concept, such as social cohesion. In this sense, interviewee 4 stated: “*There's often a misunderstanding and an undervaluation of the role of cooperation. Some expect cooperation to solve social problems that are not resolved by the States. However, a cooperation program can contribute and complement other types of policies but should not be expected to single-handedly resolve complex social issues. Social cohesion is a complex concept that takes time to assess*”. Interviewees 4 and 2, thus, highlighted that URB-AL had a particular impact beyond its specific goals, leaving a discursive, symbolic impact that shaped the narrative of Latin- American cooperation.

While the levels of relevance for decentralised cooperation may have varied, according to the opinion of the interviewees there is a significant and positive impact of decentralised cooperation programmes between the European Union and Latin America on enhancing inclusive public policies in local governments across the region. It aims to explore for the near future the tangible benefits and successes that may have resulted from these collaborations, shedding light on the transformative potential of such programmes

in fostering more inclusive and responsive governance practices within Latin American municipalities.

4.3. The creation of local governments' soft power through decentralised cooperation

As interviewee 2 stated, “*decentralised cooperation brought to the forefront the need for local public policies in international relations. When URB-AL was first established there was a significant global discourse on democracy and decentralisation. Decentralisation was not merely seen as a transfer of power but a way to create and finance more just and democratic cities*”. In this sense, URB-AL was one of the primary drivers of cooperation between Europe and Latin America at the local government level but also advancing the internationalisation of many local governments. Interviewee 2 shared that beyond the concrete changes that each phase of the programme may have brought -such as the creation of public policies- it raised awareness of the importance of international cooperation, encouraging many Latin American cities to become active parts of international dynamics. The interviewee also referred to the European level, where programmes such as URB-AL helped structure various cooperation models and frameworks that did not previously exist, since “*...it expanded the vision of cooperation beyond traditional centralist development cooperation to a form of cooperation between territories, emphasising the enhancement of territorial capacities*”. In many places, especially in Latin America, changes in political leadership often lead to significant turnovers in teams, including technical experts.

In this sense, we can also refer to the expertise of interviewee 6, who considers decentralised cooperation¹ is “*...influenced by the will of the current leader or leadership. Therefore, a group of subnational governments contributed significantly to the development of paradiplomacy and the sophistication of working models. But due to political changes at the national and local levels, other authorities took office who did not have the same profile or interest in paradiplomacy. In general, some subnational governments, especially cities, have maintained a substantial presence, while others have*

¹ During his interview, interviewee 6 referred to decentralised cooperation as “para-diplomacy”, which refers to the practices of conducting foreign policy at the subnational level (Chatterji & Saha, 2017: p. 1).

been subject to these political changes. Most cities have had a somewhat pendular behaviour". The insights provided by interviewee 6 shed light on the nuanced nature of decentralised cooperation. According to the interviewee, the trajectory and success of decentralised cooperation initiatives are intricately linked to the preferences and priorities of current leaders or leadership at both national and subnational levels. The interviewee highlights a key factor: the active contribution of a group of subnational governments has significantly shaped the development of paradiplomacy, introducing sophisticated working models. However, the dynamics of decentralised cooperation are not static, as political changes can usher in new authorities with differing profiles and interests in paradiplomacy. The interviewee emphasises the variable nature of subnational governments' engagement, particularly cities, which, despite maintaining a substantial presence, can experience shifts in their involvement due to changes in political leadership. This dynamic is characterised by what the interviewee describes as a somewhat pendular behaviour, symbolising the oscillation in commitment and engagement levels over time.

Interviewee 8 considers that *"the creation of soft power for local governments in Latin America through decentralised cooperation has emerged as a crucial aspect of regional development. By fostering collaborative relationships, knowledge exchange, and cultural understanding, local governments have effectively built soft power, enhancing their influence and reputation beyond traditional means. This soft power extends from the ability to attract investments and resources to the capacity to shape narratives and perceptions about their communities. Through decentralised cooperation initiatives, Latin American local governments have become active participants in international networks, promoting their unique strengths, cultural heritage, and innovative approaches to governance. This, in turn, not only bolsters their credibility on the global stage but also contributes to the overall socio-economic advancement of their regions."*

The cultivation of soft power in Latin American local governments through decentralised cooperation is instrumental in fostering diplomatic ties, economic growth, and cultural exchange. *"The ability to exert influence through non-coercive means allows these local administrations to forge meaningful partnerships, attract international collaboration, and address common challenges collectively"* states interviewee 4. As soft power continues to be a potent force in international relations, the strategic development of local

governments' soft power through decentralised cooperation becomes paramount for creating sustainable and mutually beneficial relationships that transcend geographical boundaries.

In parallel, interviewee 5 reflected on the differences between Latin American cities in comparison with other regions of the world. In Latin America, cities seem to have understood the potential of going global. In other regions of the world, this is less prevalent due to less favourable political, fiscal, and administrative decentralization frameworks, for instance, in Asia, where there's more concentration of power, or decentralised frameworks that still maintain a top-down approach, with less autonomy for local governments. There are cases of certain Latin American cities that can be considered as success stories, such as Medellin and Montevideo, because they are equipped with the resources to design and execute decentralised cooperation policies in a beneficial approach. In this sense, interviewee 5 reaffirms that this capability -or this soft power- of local governments already exists in the region, meaning that there is space for future strategies for the internationalisation of subnational governments.

4.4. The evaluations of the different cooperation projects

Interviewees 5 and 6 agreed that impact evaluations are not as common as they should be, because they require a significant investment in time and resources. There is a need for more rigorous assessments when it comes to impact evaluation. They require some time to pass after the implementation of a project to truly assess the impact, and there is a more present tendency to conduct evaluations too early in the programmatic cycle.

According to interviewee 2, the use of social cohesion indicators in UR-BAL III proved to be immensely valuable, providing a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the projects and the local actors involved. These indicators served as essential tools for assessing the strength and resilience of social ties, fostering a deeper insight into the intricate fabric of interpersonal connections. By leveraging these indicators, the programme was able to tailor interventions and the indicators facilitated the identification of key areas for social enhancement, enabling a more targeted and impactful approach to build and strengthening social cohesion. Moreover, they served as reliable benchmarks for evaluating the programme's success over time, offering valuable insights into the

evolving nature of social bonds between the local governments. Overall, the incorporation of social cohesion indicators significantly enhanced the programme's effectiveness, contributing to a more holistic and people-centred strategy.

Interviewee 8 remarked that social cohesion has been an important concept through the years related to decentralised cooperations, and nowadays is very important for networks as 100 resilient cities: *“It hinges on robust social ties characterized by trust and active participation among individuals within a community. It transcends mere positive relationships, encapsulating a profound sense of belonging and interconnectedness. This essence is contingent on the inclusive involvement of all societal groups in both formal governance structures and informal networks, fostering connections in everyday social exchanges.”* According to him, it is hard to discuss social cohesion, but *“The question for those of us involved in decentralised cooperation is: Are we doing what we set out to do in terms of social cohesion, and are we having the impact and success we set out to have?”*

4.5. The best practices and the most successful or relevant cases

For this section, a successful case can be considered as one in which transformational change has taken place, and positive development results have been achieved and sustained over time through the institutionalisation of programmes and projects within local strategies. This embodies the concept of institutionally sustained results, i.e. consistency of achievements over time. It excludes short-term transitory impact. Positive development outcomes are real and sustained improvements in the lives of people, households, and communities (UNDP, 2011).

Interviewees agreed that a common factor for the success of a program is the political will of the local governments involved, and the mutual exchange of knowledge between involved parts. However, interviewee 8 emphasised that while political will is necessary, the international action of a city is not the exclusive domain of its government. There needs to be a collaboration between all interested stakeholders; a conversation that includes academia, the private sector, the scientific community, civil society, and the media. Thus, it will ensure that it endures over time.

Citing the successful case of AL-LAS -an initiative that started as a project and went on to transcend the framework of the project to become the Euro-Latin American Alliance of Cooperation between Cities- interviewee 1, who acted as Technical Coordinator of AL-LAS, highlighted the importance of going beyond simply sharing best practices from cities involved. Instead, Knowledge sharing should involve in-depth methodologies and problem-solving, seeking to benefit not only its member cities but anyone interested in decentralised cooperation, leading to the creation of practical manuals; and advocating for local governments to occupy a place at the global table to ensure their participation in international affairs. In parallel, interviewee 6 also highlighted the significance of the AL-LAS project because of its role in strengthening capacities and trying to replicate certain innovations on a national or local level. Most notably, the interviewee mentioned the creation of a global task force to integrate local governments' interests into discussions on the 2030 agenda. The modifications in international city spaces such as this contributed to the construction of global cities and local governments.

On the other hand, interviewee 4 referred to specific cities that can be considered as successful cases of internationalisation, highlighting Medellin, Colombia, as a successful case due to its well-structured agency, capable technical team, clear policy design, and comprehensive data collection and monitoring. Montevideo, Uruguay, is also recognized for its success in establishing internationalisation as a state policy, with continuous commitment from different political administrations. In parallel, other cities experience less levels of internationalisation due to a lack of priority in the agenda, a disinterested political lead, or isolated actions that do not manage to constitute a defined internationalisation policy. Interviewee 5, additionally, discussed the challenges that emerged from the discontinuation of programmes that supported decentralised cooperation. After the last phase of URB-AL III, local governments have taken a more marginal role as beneficiaries despite the recognised value of decentralised cooperation and no space for its institutionalisation. In this sense, it is important to influence existing programmes to make room for decentralised cooperation modalities. The following step the interviewee identifies is to create concrete roadmaps into the integration -or re-integration- of local governments, by signalling the available instruments and the entry points that allow local governments to develop more defined lobbying strategies. Moving forward, **interviewee 6**, cited the importance of giving relevance to regional spaces such

as Mercosur, the Andean Community, and the Caribbean Community for sustained progress.

4.6. The decentralised cooperation's relevance as a strategy for the European Union and the interest of Latin America towards the European Union in the near future

According to some sources (OECD, 2020), the global COVID-19 pandemic has enhanced the protagonism of cities and local governments. This unprecedented challenge displayed the capabilities of subnational governments, both regions and municipalities, to manage crises and recovery efforts. Above all, this could be attributed to the asymmetric health, economic, social, and fiscal impact of the pandemic on different areas, highlighting the need for place-based strategies in response to respond to populations more affected than others. Some interviewees considered that the impact of the COVID-19 in Latin America has not been fully explored or understood yet. Interviewee 6 remarked that *“at the start of the pandemic, there was an important boost where figures like twinning, which had been somewhat overlooked, regained significance... There were some exchanges, but I feel that this revival remained rather limited. It was more of a one-off assistance measure in a crisis context. I did not observe a significant change in the overall content. Although certain issues, such as gender and care policies, were addressed, there wasn't much groundbreaking progress in terms of the mechanisms of international relations”*. Interviewee 8, in turn, considers the pandemic brought forth a trend of recentralisation towards national governments, with *“...some governments becoming more authoritarian, centralizing power in the capital, with local governments and non-central priorities being pushed aside”*. In this sense, interviewee 7, observes this trend towards centralisation is still a challenge in 2023, with a parallel increase in populism and extreme right-wing movements both in Europe and in Latin America. Challenging political scenarios can lead to a lack of trust in local governments and to a complete distrust in democracy and, according to the interviewee, to questioning decentralisation and its relevance in the agenda.

Looking towards the future, interviewee 2 considers that the slowdown that Latin American-European Union programmes have experienced are part of a larger trend where

the costs of decentralised cooperation are being discussed. *“Local governments are still considered as implementers of policies decided by others; they are not visible in forums...”*. Thus, interviewee 2 reflects on this aspect from the perspective of the EU, indicating that many programmes involve the funds going to EU delegations, which find it easier to provide funds to NGOs than to local governments for two reasons: there have been more cases of corruption at the local level, and local governments are sometimes at odds with national governments, creating implementation difficulties and conflicts of interest. Additionally, interviewee 2 states that, despite efforts to speak as equals, there's a lingering perception of Europe as a donor, and usually the one providing funding has more agency to set the agenda. While some progress is noted with countries like Brazil, Colombia, and Uruguay because of highly developed cooperation agencies, the dynamics of Europe as the agenda-setter persist. In this sense, while there is a need to set agendas with collective input and move beyond a beneficiary mentality, the outlook seems to be pessimistic for the future because of a lack of strategies to set off this change, especially in decision-making circles.

Furthermore, interviewee 6 agrees on the perception of diminishing possibilities for cooperation in the EU-Latin American relations. This does not mean that the European Union will cease to engage in political dialogue, cooperation, and trade with Latin America. For instance, in terms of trade, the European Union remains Latin America and the Caribbean's third-largest trade partner, following the United States and China (EEAS, 2022, n.d.). However, interviewee 6 remarked that the European Union has shown an increased interest in cooperation with civil society organisations and enhancing the civic space, lamenting that this tends to generate a competition with local governments in terms of funding instead of a enabling a framework for inter-sectoral cooperation.

“The internationalisation of local governments and cities is irreversible... The world is moving towards significant empowerment and urban democracy. The weight of urban centres in the world today is unprecedented compared to 50 years ago. Cities like São Paulo, Mexico City, Buenos Aires, Guadalajara, Monterrey, Córdoba, Medellín, and Cali, have a significant impact on the economy, on knowledge economy, on innovation, and more”. Interviewee 8 recognises the importance of urban centres as active participants in the global agenda, despite setbacks or changes in the types of cooperation

partnerships available. However, he also remarked that presence of local governments is sometimes questioned within existing international structures. Regarding the next steps for Latin America, it is fundamental to focus on raising awareness among local governments about the importance of decentralised cooperation and engaging in external affairs. Interviewee 8 shared the importance of developing clear international governance plans, with internal legislation and municipal regulations, considering there is still a lot of work to do for the region since internationalisation has been present in fragmented, or sometimes disorganised manners, without continuity between governing periods. In parallel, interviewee 8 considers that the European Union's short-term outlook doesn't show possibilities of having either funding or political support for cooperation with Latin America on these issues, as the EU-CELAC's lack of long-term commitments has shown.

In this regard, interviewee 3 emphasises the need for comprehensive efforts in the future of the bi-regional relationship between the European Union and Latin America, as there has been inequalities “...in terms of financial capacity, technical capacity to manage cooperation, the ability to understand the importance of cooperation itself at the social level, the capacity to achieve social and political mobilisation at the local level”. Therefore, interviewee 3 advocates for an increased effort in supporting the ecosystem for cooperation in Latin America to maximise the results in the territories via awareness raising, political training to improve the understanding at the public management level, technical training to better prepare human resources, and a continued cooperation with the local civil society, journalists, and academia.

4.7. The most important innovations that emerged from decentralised cooperation in Latin America

Decentralised cooperation in Latin America has sparked a range of innovative practices that have significantly impacted local governance.

When considering the most relevant innovations that emerged from decentralised cooperation in Latin America, each programme and project could create a relevant but distinct answer. However, interviewee 1 has stated that a common thread amongst all experiences has been the commitment to create and enhance strategic partnerships. This is a crucial element that can be considered the “*DNA of decentralised cooperation*”, and

fundamental to fulfil the aim of strengthening capabilities and managing knowledge for effective problem-solving and creating a baseline that goes beyond changing agendas and thematic interests. At the same time, interviewee 2 considers that the innovative element for European local governments in the context of decentralised cooperation was the discovery that there were indeed innovative processes of social change and politics in Latin America “...particularly in areas like gender, which has made more progress in recent years in Latin America than in Europe”. The interviewee 2 also cites tactical urbanism as a recent trend in Europe that has been inspired by Latin America, where it has been implemented for a long time. Other innovations include gender-focused budgeting, models of management involving the third sector in public services and working frameworks.

In parallel, interviewee 3 referred to innovations in the dynamics of incorporating an explicit designation of decentralised cooperation in two of the framework cooperation agreements between Brazil and European counterparts. “*The initiative was very interesting, creating a federative committee to manage it in Brazil with the participation of municipalities and States*”, interviewee 2 stated, highlighting the importance of the formalisation of decentralised cooperation as an official element of bilateral relationships -in this case between Brazil and France and Brazil and Italy-.

Furthermore, interviewee 5 reinforced the idea that innovation is happening at the local level, since “*cities are sources of many problems but also sources of innovation in local public policies*”. In this sense, decentralised cooperation is a tool that allows for an equal exchange of these policies in various fields.

According to interviewees 2 and 4, among the most noteworthy innovations is the introduction of participatory budgeting initiatives that has empowered citizens to actively engage in decision-making processes, ensuring that local priorities align with community needs. For interviewee 3, collaborative projects focusing on sustainable development, environmental conservation, and social inclusion have also emerged as key innovations, driven by partnerships between local governments and international entities. These innovations collectively reflect the transformative power of decentralised cooperation in enhancing transparency, civic engagement, and sustainable development across diverse communities in Latin America.

CONCLUSIONS

A meticulous analysis of relevant literature, a comparative study of programmes, specifically URB-AL III and ADELANTE, and in-depth interviews with eight experts in the field have enabled a comprehensive examination of the principal research question:

"Does the European Union's development policy in Latin America support the creation of soft power in local governments and the local government's key role in driving the strategies toward labour inclusion policies aimed at tackling and reducing informality and inequality and achieving climate neutrality? And if so, in what ways?"

This research has delved into the multifaceted dimensions of the EU's development policy impact on local governance in Latin America. The findings contribute to a nuanced understanding of how the EU's initiatives foster soft power creation, empower local governments, and drive strategies for addressing labour inclusion, reducing informality and inequality, and advancing climate neutrality in the region.

All six specified objectives have been addressed throughout the analysis of decentralised cooperation between the European Union and Latin America. The examination of development cooperation characteristics has provided insights into the nuances of these collaborative efforts (SO1). The evolution of the European Union's support for decentralised cooperation in Latin America has been meticulously tracked over time, offering a comprehensive historical perspective (SO2). Two critical case studies in Latin America have been analysed over distinct periods to compare the evolution of decentralised cooperation (SO4). In parallel, this comparison allowed for the observation of best practices and knowledge sharing between the EU and Latin America to identify the policies and processes that guaranteed the positive impact of decentralised cooperation (SO3). The implementation processes of selected decentralised projects have been scrutinized to discern the impact on the soft empowerment of local governments (SO5). Lastly, innovative mechanisms to address global challenges, including labour inclusion policies and climate neutrality, have been identified at the local level (SO6). The fulfilment of these objectives contributes to a holistic understanding of the dynamics, challenges, and successes within the realm of EU-Latin American decentralised cooperation.

In line with the hypothesis, it can be asserted that the internationalisation of local governments functions as a soft power tool, fostering collaboration among local governments across diverse countries and continents. The strategic approach that recognises that the internationalisation of local governments serves as a tool of soft power, establishes a platform for the exchange of ideas, best practices, and innovative solutions, thereby contributing to the development of local public policies. Participation in international initiatives enables local governments to build horizontal and reciprocal cooperation, forming a network that extends beyond geographical boundaries. This interconnectedness not only facilitates the exchange of successful governance models but also cultivates a spirit of mutual understanding and solidarity. Through collaborative efforts, local authorities can collectively address global challenges, promote sustainable development, and reinforce the foundations of effective governance on both local and international scales. In essence, the internationalization of local governments catalyses creating a dynamic and cooperative environment that advances shared objectives and enhances the well-being of communities worldwide.

This dissertation concludes that the European Union's development policy in Latin America stands as a pivotal force in nurturing soft power within local governments, underscoring the region's unique strengths and fostering international collaboration. Central to this approach is the recognition of local governments as key drivers in the formulation and implementation of strategies aimed at labour inclusion. These policies not only address the pervasive issues of informality and inequality but also align with broader objectives such as climate neutrality. By prioritising the active involvement of local administrations, the EU's development policy establishes a foundation for sustainable growth, social equity, and environmental responsibility. Through these concerted efforts, the European Union is not only contributing to the advancement of Latin American societies but is also fostering a collaborative approach that transcends geographical boundaries and aligns with the shared global goals of inclusivity and climate resilience.

In summary, the main findings are the following:

- The perspectives shared by the interviewees illuminate the nuanced landscape of decentralised cooperation between the European Union and Latin America. The

diverse viewpoints highlight regional variations in evaluations, shaped by factors such as political shifts and evolving priorities. While the historical significance of Latin America as an early adopter of decentralised cooperation is acknowledged, current trends, including advocacy and policy emphasis at the EU level, suggest evolving dynamics in EU-Latin American partnerships.

- While interviewees acknowledge the evolving nature of cooperation modalities and the presence of meaningful projects, there is also a recognition of a notable shift in priorities. The conclusion of the URB-AL program in 2013 was a significant moment, emphasizing the crucial role of local authorities. However, recent trends, as reflected in the discourse and budget allocations of the EU-CELAC Summit, indicate a potential evolution in these priorities.
- Insights from other interviewees highlight the dynamic nature of decentralised cooperation, intricately linked to the preferences and priorities of current local political leaders. The variable engagement of cities, particularly in response to changes in political leadership, reflects the nuanced nature of these initiatives.
- Interviewees stress the crucial role of decentralised cooperation in promoting the internationalisation of Latin American local governments, contributing significantly to the creation of soft power. The focus on soft power extends beyond its instrumental role in attracting investments, also encompassing the shaping of global narratives through the participation in global fora, the creation of international networks, etc. This underscores the broader and multifaceted impact of such initiatives.
- The collaborative efforts, best practices, and successful cases underscore the importance of political will, knowledge exchange, and broad stakeholder collaboration.
- The comparison between URB-AL III and ADELANTE illuminates the evolving landscape of cooperation programs in Latin America. URB-AL III, focusing on social cohesion, aimed to address geographical biases by encouraging the participation of subnational authorities from specific regions. Notably, URB-AL III also increased its emphasis on rural and semi-rural areas, altering the territorial composition to enhance the articulation of local governments. In contrast, ADELANTE centred on decentralised and triangular cooperation, fostering

partnerships and empowering local authorities in Latin America, the Caribbean, and the European Union. While URB-AL III had a larger budget, ADELANTE capitalised on triangular cooperation dynamics to establish partnerships and cultivate a body of knowledge and good practices. Moreover, URB-AL III's post-implementation phase prioritised replicability and sustainability through agreements and initiatives, whereas ADELANTE focused on building enduring partnerships and knowledge exchange.

- The AL-LAS initiative serves as a notable example, evolving into the Euro-Latin American Alliance of Cooperation between Cities. Success stories like Medellin and Montevideo display the importance of well-structured agencies, clear policy designs, and comprehensive data collection in achieving internationalisation goals.
- Considering the relevance of decentralised cooperation, the impacts of the global COVID-19 pandemic underscore the resilience and crisis management capabilities of cities and local governments. Divergent views on the pandemic's impact highlight the evolving landscape, with challenges such as recentralisation trends and concerns about the costs of cooperation.
- Looking toward the future, reflections on the costs of decentralised cooperation and challenges in the EU-Latin American relationship underscore the need for recalibration and increased collaboration. The irreversible internationalisation of local governments, as recognised by interviewees, emphasises the importance of developing clear international governance plans and municipal regulations to navigate this evolving landscape.
- In discussing innovations, the commitment to forging and enhancing strategic partnerships emerges as a common thread. The transformative impact of decentralised cooperation is evident in innovations such as gender-focused budgeting, tactical urbanism, and participatory budgeting. These innovations collectively reflect the transformative power of decentralised cooperation in enhancing transparency, civic engagement, and sustainable development.
- In essence, while decentralised cooperation has undergone shifts in focus and intensity, it remains a critical element in EU-Latin American relations. The future trajectory may involve recalibration of strategies, increased collaboration with

European institutions, and a collective effort to advocate for the continued relevance of decentralised cooperation in the region. The insights from the mechanisms of institutionalisation and multi-level coordination of decentralised cooperation will enrich our understanding of the challenges, successes, and ongoing dynamics in the realm of EU-Latin American decentralised cooperation.

Related to the overall significance of the conclusions, the comprehensive exploration of the European Union's development cooperation in Latin America, and its impact on local governments, this dissertation yields valuable insights into the intricate dynamics of decentralised cooperation. Through the analysis of URB-AL III and ADELANTE, the study captures the nuanced evolution of programs, shedding light on shifting priorities, geographical considerations, and budgetary implications. The perspectives of expert interviews enrich the narrative, providing a deeper understanding of the challenges and successes in promoting decentralised cooperation. The examination of soft power creation, internationalisation, and innovative practices highlights the multifaceted contributions of local governments. Notably, the findings underscore the transformative potential of decentralised cooperation in fostering collaboration, shaping international relations, and influencing global narratives. The dissertation not only contributes to the academic discourse on development cooperation but also offers practical implications for policymakers, emphasizing the importance of adaptability, collaboration, and sustained support for local governments to effectively navigate the complexities of international cooperation in Latin America.

Finally, in the landscape of decentralised cooperation, particularly within Europe, the horizon of research is expanding to illuminate dynamic dimensions of collaborative governance. An emerging focal point centres on the influence of digital transformation on decentralised cooperation initiatives, investigating how technological progress can elevate communication, information sharing, and project management among local governments across the continent. Simultaneously, there is a growing interest in exploring climate-resilient and sustainable development strategies within the framework of decentralised cooperation. Against the backdrop of escalating concerns surrounding climate change, scholars are delving into how local governments can collaborate to implement effective policies that address environmental challenges and foster sustainable

practices at the grassroots level. This dissertation aspires to unveil innovative approaches that harness decentralised cooperation as a catalyst for resilient and environmentally conscious local governance.

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ANNEXES

Annex 1. Qualitative interviews

Interviewee	Position and area of expertise	Date and duration
1	<p>Their work experience has been developed in civil society organisations, national, departmental, and local government, subnational associations of municipalities and networks of cities. Since February 2013 they have been the technical coordinator of the Euro-Latin American Alliance for Cooperation between cities, AL-Las. Additionally, they have collaborated as a consultant for the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) and the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) in social inclusion projects and worked as a lecturer in public and private universities in Latin America and Europe. They have authored several articles and coordinated publications on their areas of expertise.</p>	<p>22/08/2023 49 minutes</p>
2	<p>Their previous positions include head of the office of development cooperation and head of the office of Europe and international strategy, both at the Barcelona Provincial Council. They have led and participated in projects on local development, the institutional strengthening of local governments, public policies, and social cohesion in several countries. They previously served as Director of URB-AL III Programme and as General Secretary of Metropolis.</p>	<p>25/08/2023 35 minutes</p>
3	<p>Executive Secretary of ICLEI South America. Previously was the Head of the International Relations</p>	<p>28/08/2023 21 minutes</p>

	Advisor of the Minas Gerais State Government, Municipal Secretary of International Relations of the Belo Horizonte City Council and was also a professor at institutions such as Ibmec, Fundação João Pinheiro and UniBH.	
4	Coordinator of City Networks. Directorate of International Relations/Municipality of Rosario, Argentina.	29/08/2023 36 minutes
5	Team Leader of the Thematic Programme for CSOs and local actors. Between 2015 and 2021, led the Roadmap Mechanism for civil society engagement, which supported more than 100 EU delegations. Has collaborated with UCLG in the development of advocacy and monitoring and evaluation tools on the role of local governments in development and has worked extensively with the international department of the Diputació de Barcelona and with the International Observatory for decentralised cooperation between the European Union and Latin America.	30/08/2023 45 minutes
6	Associate Research Fellow at UNU-CRIS. Previously, he has worked as Coordinator of ILAT at the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB) based in Ecuador, Head of Promotion and Exchange of Regional Social Policies at the Social Institute of MERCOSUR (ISM) based in Paraguay, Business Environment Advisor at the Regional Center for the Promotion of MSMEs (CENPROMYPE) of the Central American Integration System (SICA) based in El Salvador, and as a Coordinator of Value Chains Studies at the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (UN-ECLAC), at their	30/08/2023 46 minutes

	sub-regional headquarters in Mexico. In this position, has co-developed ECLAC's methodology for strengthening value chains which was applied in more than 20 value chains across Latin America.	
7	Has more than 16 years of experience in the field of international cooperation and is a specialist in EU-LA decentralised cooperation. After almost 10 years working in several Spanish NGOs as a cooperation project technician, for the last two and a half years has worked in the Coordination and Guidance Office (OCO) of the URBAL III Programme of the European Commission and the previous three years in the EU-LA Decentralised Cooperation Observatory (OCD). Currently works as a consultant with various organisations and public entities advising on international cooperation programmes or projects, such as the Diputación de Barcelona, the Government of the Federal District of Mexico, the Metropolitan District of Quito, the NGDO ACSUR Las Segobias or different Spanish Cooperation Funds.	31/08/2023 35 minutes
8	Since February 2020 they are the head of the team of experts of the TALD (Territorial Approach to Local Development) Instrument in the C5 unit (Cities and Local Authorities) of the European Commission's International Cooperation Agency (DEVCO). Since October 2016, they are the Director for Latin America and the Caribbean of the Global Network for Resilient Cities, Rockefeller Foundation. From 2012 to 2016 they were coordinator of the Euro-Latin American Alliance for City-to-City Cooperation, AL-LAs project, funded by the European Union. From 2009 to 2016 they were international advisor to the Head of	05/09/2023 45 minutes

	Government of Mexico City. In parallel to that role, they served as Regional Secretary for North America of the World Organization of the Major Metropolises, and as Regional Director for Latin America of the Global Fund for Cities Development.	
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GDPR FORM

POLICY ON PERSONAL DATA PROCESSING

[Art.13 of EU Regulation 2016/679 - General Data Protection regulation]

This policy is provided pursuant to art. 13 of EU Regulation 2016/679 (General Regulation on Data Protection, "EU Regulation"), in relation to personal data of which the University of Padova (the "University"), in its capacity as Data Controller, acquires during activity of scientific research developed within the project "The Increase of Local Governments' Soft Powers in Latin America through the European Union's Development Programmes" of the Department of Political Science, Law and International Studies (SPGI) of the University of Padova.

Personal data is processed fairly, lawfully, and transparently, as well as in a manner that safeguards the privacy and rights of all data subjects, as per what specified below.

TITLE: "The Increase of Local Governments' Soft Powers in Latin America through the European Union's Development Programmes".

DATA CONTROLLER: *Department of Political Science, Law and International Studies (SPGI) - University of Padova, Via del Santo n. 28, Padova, +39 049 827 4202*
dipartimento.spgi@unipd.it.

SCIENTIFIC COORDINATOR: Prof. Laura Polverari

PRIVACY INFORMATION:

1. Data protection officer
2. Sources and types of data
3. Purposes for data processing
4. How data is processed
5. Legal basis of the processing and type of provision
6. Audio and images
7. Data recipients
8. Data storage

- 9. Rights of the data subject
- 10. Exercising one's rights
- 11. Changes to the policy

1. Data protection officer

The Data Controller has its own Data-protection officer, who is appointed pursuant to Article 37 of the EU Regulation. The Data-protection officer may be contacted at privacy@unipd.it.

2. Sources and types of data

The personal data provided directly by the interested parties can be:

- a) Common data. Personal data, identification, and contact data (e-mail, telephone contacts);
- b) Career data. Data on the role played in the institution.

3. Purposes for data processing

Data is processed exclusively for carrying out all the activities related to the institutional, dissemination and public interest activities of the University. In particular, data is processed for the research purposes connected with the project “The Increase of Local Governments’ Soft Powers in Latin America through the European Union’s Development Programmes”.

The following are the specific research objectives:

- **SO1.** To determine the characteristics of development cooperation for the European Union and Latin America.
- **SO2.** To track the evolution of the European Union’s support to decentralised cooperation in Latin America over time.
- **SO3.** To identify possible changes to the Euro-Latin American dialogue to improve the quality of public policies promoted in the two regions.
- **SO4.** To compare the evolution of decentralised cooperation through the analysis of two critical case studies in Latin America, over two different periods.

- **SO5.** To determine whether the implementation processes of decentralised projects show whether the model of decentralised development cooperation has affected the soft empowerment of local governments, and if so, how.
- **SO6.** To identify innovative mechanisms that could contribute to solving global problems -such as labour inclusion policies to tackle and reduce informality and inequality, and climate neutrality- from the local level.

4. How data is processed

The data is collected through semi-structured interviews with interested parties carried out by interviewers. The University takes appropriate organizational and technical measures to protect the personal data in its possession, through appropriate security measures to ensure the confidentiality and security of personal data, in particular against loss, theft, and unauthorized use, disclosure, or modification of personal data.

The Data Controller does not resort to automated decision-making processes relating to the rights of the data subject on the basis of personal data, including profiling, in compliance with the safeguards provided for in art. 22 of the EU Regulation.

The data will be collected through audio recording (or videorecording in case of videoconference). The processing of data is carried out in such a way as to guarantee maximum security and confidentiality and can be implemented using manual, IT, and online tools suitable for storing, managing and transmitting them. The personal data collected are processed by Zoom, an application installed by the university technicians on the institutional and private pc protected by a password and assigned to the project manager and the project staff. The institutional and private pc are accessible only by staff members. The transcribed interviews are shared with interviewers through the university's sharing system based on the Google Drive suite, protected by the passwords of the individual interviewer and staff member.

The data gathered during the interviews will not be disseminated. In the event that the interview or parts of it should prove to be of particular interest, such as to justify its dissemination for the purpose of disseminating the results of the study, it will be published without any identification reference of the interested party, with indication only of the role covered by the interviewed, in order to guarantee anonymity.

5. Legal basis of the processing and type of provision

Legal basis of the processing is the execution of public interest tasks of research, teaching and the so-called “third mission”, of the University as defined by law, by the Statute and by internal regulations (pursuant to art. 6, par. 1, lett. f) of EU Regulation).

For special categories of personal data, the legal basis of the processing is based on your explicit consent (pursuant to art. 9, par. 2, lett. a) of the EU Regulation).

Since participation in the research is on a voluntary basis you are not formally obliged to provide data. On the other hand, if you wish to participate in the research, the processing of your personal data is indispensable; if you refuse to provide such data, you will not be able to take part in the research.

6. Audio and images

By participating in the project "The Increase of Local Governments' Soft Powers in Latin America through the European Union's Development Programmes" the interested parties expressly authorize the University of Padova and the Department of Political Science, Law and International Studies (SPGI) to use the audio (or video in the case of video-interviews) recorded during their own participation in the interviews for the project " The Increase of Local Governments' Soft Powers in Latin America through the European Union's Development Programmes", on the university computers. By signing the release, the participant grants all rights to use the audio as described above. This transfer is expressly intended free of charge.

7. Data recipients

The data may be communicated, exclusively for the purposes indicated in point 3, to University staff, students involved in the research and to collaborators, including self-employed ones, who provide support for the implementation and management of the activities envisaged by the research project.

The collected data are not normally transferred to countries outside the European Union. In any case, the University ensures compliance with the safety rules for the protection of the privacy of the data subjects.

8. Data storage

Personal data are therefore kept for the entire period necessary to achieve the research purposes indicated in point 3. Personal data may be kept even beyond the period necessary to achieve the purposes for which they were collected or subsequently processed, in compliance to art. 5, § 1 lett. e) of the EU Regulation.

9. Rights of the data subject

The following rights are granted to the data subject:

- a) right to access their personal data (art. 15 of the EU Regulation);
- b) right to amend or complete their data (art. 16 of the EU Regulation);
- c) right of cancellation (right to be forgotten), pursuant to art. 17 of the EU Regulation;
- d) right to limit data processing under the conditions set out in Article 18 of the EU Regulation;
- e) right to data portability, as provided for by art. 20 of the EU Regulation;
- f) right to object to the processing of their data in any moment (art. 21 of the EU Regulation);
- g) right to lodge a complaint with Italian Data Protection Authority (Garante per la protezione dei dati personali).

The interested parties can withdraw consent to the processing of their personal data at any time. Any withdrawal of consent by the interested parties does not invalidate the legal basis for the processing of personal data collected for the research purposes indicated in point 3. In this case, no further personal data of the interested party will be collected, without prejudice to use of any data already collected to determine, without altering them, the results of the research or those that, originally or following processing, are not attributable to an identified or identifiable person.

10. Exercising one's rights

In order to exercise their rights, the data subject may contact the Data Controller by writing to this certified e-mail address amministrazione.centrale@pec.unipd.it or to the

following e-mail address: dipartimento.spgi@unipd.it, urp@unipd.it. Alternatively, the data subject may write to: University of Padova, via VIII Febbraio 2, Padova.

The Controller shall respond within one month of the request, although this may be extended by up to three months should the request be particularly complicated.

11. Changes to the policy

Any amendments and additions to this policy are published in the privacy section of the department website at <https://www.spgi.unipd.it/privacy-policy>

DISCLAIMERS

I, the undersigned _____, born in _____ (____), on ____/____/____, resident in _____ (____), address: _____ n° ____, ZIP code _____, e-mail: _____, Tel: _____

as part of the participation in the survey developed in “The Increase of Local Governments’ Soft Powers in Latin America through the European Union’s Development Programmes” of the Department of Political Sciences, Law and International Studies,

I NOTICE

that the use, including the preservation of audio-video recordings takes place:

- a) completely free of charge;
- b) for the purposes and in the manner specified in the attached privacy policy in accordance with art. 13 of the 2016/679 EU Regulation;
- c) respecting the honour, reputation and decorum of the people portrayed;
- d) without the responsibility of the University in case of incorrect use by third parties of the published data.

I NOTICE

the University of Padova - Department of Political Sciences, Law and International Studies, pursuant to Article 96 and 97 of Law 633/1941 (copyright law), as well as Article 10 of the Civil Code, to

- record the statements made, speeches, reports, dissertations and related supporting material in the context of the interview using computerized, photographic and phonographic means;
- reproduce the aforementioned audio-visual recordings on any technical and multimedia support and disseminate them within the limits set by the information.

I DECLARE

that the authorization to make the recordings and subsequent reproductions and dissemination of the same is granted free of charge.

Place and date _____ Signature _____

I GIVE MY CONSENT

I DO NOT EXPRESS CONSENT

to the processing of my personal data for the purposes and methods specified in the attached privacy policy.

Place and date _____ Signature _____