

Intercommunality:
*The success story
of CODENOBA, Argentina*

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Management
of Social
Transformations



Intercommunality: the success story of CODENOBA, Argentina

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1. Introduction

1.1

Summary

In the early 1990s, the productive consortia of Buenos Aires Province were developed to encourage the productive reconversion of the province's hinterland and to find common solutions to shared problems. The Consortium for the Development of the North-Western Part of the Buenos Aires Province (CODENOBA), is one of 13 such consortia and is itself composed of nine districts. The consortium was established in 1994 in response to massive flooding affecting 70% of the intermunicipal territory. The whole of CODENOBA's territory encompasses almost 10% of the area of Buenos Aires Province and a population of 230,000 people. CODENOBA's primarily agricultural economy accounts for nearly 4% of the province's GDP, and over the years the consortium has augmented and diversified its activities through promoting local agriculture, handicrafts and culture.

Yet, despite the member districts' political will to collaborate within an intermunicipal structure, at the outset CODENOBA lacked the legal or methodological tools to define regional action and suffered from the absence of an integrative regional policy project. It also suffered from the absence of administrative, technical, legal and financial institutions necessary to execute regional development projects. CODENOBA statutes did not establish sources of financing, and initially the consortium did not receive any endowment or permanent subvention from the national or provincial authorities to ensure intermunicipal project implementation. In the second half of the 1990s, CODENOBA received substantial aid from the national government. However, there are no relevant records because the consortium lacked the administrative culture needed to generate a usable record-keeping system. Overall, the districts had not been able to

achieve their goals because of the immobility of the consortium's structure in relation to regional action.

In 2003, CODENOBA authorities requested the MOST Programme's support in institutional consolidation and in the development of implementation methodologies. Having established contacts with CODENOBA authorities through the *Grupo Hábitat y Sociedad* (GHS), an urban and regional planning office formerly part of UNESCO's City Professionals programme. MOST agreed to provide technical assistance on an exceptional basis and to treat CODENOBA as a pilot project. To carry out the project, the MOST Programme requested the technical support of the Scientific and Technical Assistance of France. France's national experience in intermunicipal issues could have been for CODENOBA a unique source of knowledge on three levels: from a political and administrative point of view, from a philosophical perspective, in order to design regional planning tools and strategies.

Initial missions and questionnaires reaffirmed the need to strengthen CODENOBA on an institutional basis and to define decision-making processes and regional development objectives. Project associates contributed a total of 142,000 Euros to the project between 2002 and 2005.

Diagnoses by the aforementioned groups identified detrimental perceptions that CODENOBA was perceived as a structure without a plan that worked more as a *network* than as an intermunicipal authority. The municipal councils had no representation in CODENOBA because the consortium was perceived as a "*club for mayors*". The diagnoses also underlined the absence of a central location equally accessible to all district members, the absence of a coordinated response to regional problems such as floods, the absence of effective communication between the districts, the need for capacity-building on how to work as an intermunicipal team, large disparities in the organizational capacities of the districts as well as in their knowledge of their own communities, a system of roads that needs to be modernized and that does not meet the economic needs of the region, an abandoned railroad network, if reinstated, could improve the speed and reliability of transportation and promote economic development, insufficient health and education facilities, large-scale migration of youth from rural areas.

Among the strengths, the diagnoses underlined that CODENOBA may be an opportunity for its members to get to know one another and to exchange experiences, its under-utilized economic and human resources

are a potential asset, an intermunicipal structure is taken more seriously when dealing with regional planning and regional interests because it “represents the needs, anxieties, demands and plans of a region”. There are also great aspirations for achieving a new democracy where common interests are defended over partisan interests. The intermunicipal structure may be a good option.

Working with Local Authorities to strengthen CODENOBA

Work with CODENOBA was carried out in two phases: (1) construction and approval of the project, and (2) project execution. Phase One, begun in December 2002 and concluded with CODENOBA’s final project approval November 2003, entailed several missions including one in which the CODENOBA President participated in a seminar in France on intermunicipal planning.

During Phase Two, each CODENOBA district was required to organize a workshop. The América Workshop (25-26 March 2004) allowed the socio-economic and institutional evaluation begun in January 2004 by the Grupo Hábitat y Sociedad and the Coopération française to be presented. The results of the evaluation highlighted CODENOBA’s weaknesses as well as its socio-economic potential. For the first time, CODENOBA produced a diagnosis about the region as a whole. Benefiting from such a study showed that the use of reliable information was not only important for the conception and planning of the region, but also for the creation of new work methodologies that would gradually build an intermunicipal project and work culture.

The workshop in Nueve de Julio (29-31 March 2004) was of a more political character. Following a work plan proposed by the experts that welcomed representatives of the municipal councils and established a precise methodology for policy formulation, the mayors decided to pursue the restructuring of CODENOBA. The following was decided: (1) Drafting **technical reports** on 2 or 3 themes in order to prepare for the decision that was to be made in 2004 about the inter-municipality’s main actions. The objective, to be attained in 6 months, is to provide the districts with the elements to develop coherent and clear initiatives in relation to a specific theme. The purpose is to transform ideas into real regional projects so that districts develop an intermunicipal project culture. (2) To form a think



tank on CODENOBA with the objective of **rewriting the statutes** and writing the rules of procedure in conformity with the laws of the Province. (3) To write a charter of intentions to be signed by the mayors and establishing the main orientations of the regional policy.

The Trenque Lauquen Workshop (8-9 June 2004) found that the reorganization of CODENOBA's institutional structure was central to the consortium's success, and subsequently the mayors in attendance drafted a declaration laying out the consortium's main objectives and established a body to revise CODENOBA's statutes. During a fourth workshop in August 2004 in Alberti, statutes were discussed and approved. A summary workshop took place in May 2005 in Carlos Casares. The internal rules of CODENOBA were approved. The intermunicipal assembly was created.

Methodology for formulation and execution of projects

The purpose was to contribute to the formulation and execution of modest projects that could be implemented. CODENOBA's authorities selected to encourage the promotion of culture, sport, tourism, and economic development. The objectives selected follow the line of CODENOBA's previous policy. In the past, CODENOBA had already recognized the need to diversify the consortium's domain of intervention, especially in relation to culture. The objectives were also a way to highlight the work that was being done in these areas.

Considering that CODENOBA did not have a plan where medium-term objectives could be identified, the authorities decided to start working on the implementation of modest projects that were possible to implement in a small period of time and that could make CODENOBA known to civil society. The work was divided into three phases: (1) Inventory of the projects on the identified subject areas (April-June 2004). (2) Proposal and selection by the local authorities of the projects to be implemented (June-July 2004). (3) Implementation of the projects chosen by the Mayors (July-August 2004).

In order to accomplish the established objectives, it was first necessary to identify, within the still informal structure of CODENOBA, the key actors. Even though CODENOBA had an executive organ (the Mayor's Council) and a coordinator, the task consisted of stimulating and coordinating the working groups and of establishing a methodological order.

The inventory of projects and ideas required the creation of technical reports as well as an introduction to project methodology. The period between April and June was dedicated to field work, to the synthesis of the technical reports and to the election of a coordinator for each domain of intervention or *áreas*.

This work resulted in the presentation of projects during the Trenque Lauquen workshop. The *áreas* coordinators showed their expertise as well as their intention to transform CODENOBA into a solid intermunicipal structure. A synthesis of the expected results as well as of the proposals was also presented. The month of June was consecrated to drafting the three projects chosen by the mayors.

Another significant aspect of CODENOBA comes from the work carried out before the official launching of the project. During this period, an effort was made to familiarize the actors involved with intermunicipal issues as well as with the institutionalization of instruments that favour the sustainability of development projects. This resulted in the enhancement of each member's claims and points of view, the organization of seminars and workshops for the mayors, local officials and municipal councillors from the Buenos Aires Region and Province, a socio-economic and institutional diagnosis about the potential and the weaknesses of the intermunicipal structure, a coalition of the international, national, provincial and local institutional actors that supported the intermunicipal project.

1.2

Preliminary aspects and institutional structure of the project

In 2003, the authorities of the intermunicipal structure CODENOBA requested the support of the MOST Programme in order to contribute to the institutional consolidation of the intermunicipal structure and to set up a methodology for the formulation and implementation of regional interest projects.

Contact with CODENOBA authorities was established through the *Grupo Hábitat y Sociedad* (GHS), an urban and regional planning office which had been part of the UNESCO *City professionals* project. Between 2003 and the official launch of the CODENOBA project in March 2004, the GHS, UNESCO and CODENOBA started to work together at the region's

request. They developed methodological adjustments to the project which was finally implemented under the name: *Institutional consolidation of the Consortium for the development of the north-western part of the Buenos Aires Province (CODENOBA)*.

The MOST Programme decided to provide technical assistance to CODENOBA on an exceptional basis. CODENOBA became a pilot project for the MOST Programme. Two identification missions in 2003 and a questionnaire sent to the mayors and to the city councillors of the nine districts showed the need to strengthen CODENOBA from an institutional point of view. In order to do this, it was necessary to define, through a preliminary dialogue, the decision-making process and regional development objectives.

The problem was as follows: despite the districts' political will to work together within an intermunicipal structure, CODENOBA did not have the legal or methodological tools to define regional action. The districts had not been able to achieve their goals because of the structure's immobility in relation to regional action.

To carry out the project, the MOST Programme requested the technical support of the Scientific and Technical Assistance of France. France's national experience in intermunicipal issues could have been for CODENOBA a unique source of knowledge on three levels:

- ▶ from a political and administrative point of view,
- ▶ from a philosophical perspective,
- ▶ in order to design regional planning tools and strategies.

As a matter of fact, the French Embassy in Argentina had been supporting for several years other incipient intermunicipal experiences in the provinces of Neuquén, Mendoza and Jujuy. This was carried out with the support of the *Observatoire des changements en Amérique latine* (LOCAL) and the *Institut des hautes études de l'Amérique latine* (IHEAL), Université Paris III-Sorbonne Nouvelle. Thus, LOCAL, the French Embassy and UNESCO agreed on a cooperation programme in which experts sent to Neuquén, Mendoza and Jujuy would also participate in CODENOBA.

Since February 2003, the Policy and Cooperation in Social Sciences Section of UNESCO's Social and Human Sciences Sector, has been working jointly with the elected authorities of CODENOBA and the experts of the Scientific and Technical Assistance of France to strengthen the Consortium's institutional capacities.

2. Context

The productive consortia of the Province of Buenos Aires were created between 1992 and 1993 to encourage the productive reconversion of the province's hinterland. The objective was to generate greater solidarity in order to find common solutions to common problems.

From a conceptual perspective, these clusters of districts received different names such as *productive corridor* or *productive consortium*. *Corridor* represents an intermediate territorial unit between the Province and the bordering districts. *Corridor* can also mean transportation flows and exchange, which enable territorial organizations to be established.

According to specialized research, the associative strategies started informally in the production field without the participation of the provincial government. As the participative process became institutionalized, the productive consortium emerged and defined the activities to be implemented in an area of "common growth". However, *consortium* is often used instead of *corridor* and *vice versa* as the former Buenos Aires Governor Eduardo Duhalde explained in 1998: "One day, we realised that our Province had another aspect, other divisions. Some spoke of 'Common growth areas', others of 'corridors' or productive consortia. Different terms were used to signify a spontaneous phenomenon (...), districts agreed to carry out jointly projects beyond the municipal framework". At the same time, some intermunicipal structures were named *Development council* or *Productive development council*. In the case of CODENOBA, both terms were used indiscriminately.

2.1

The localization of CODENOBA

The CODENOBA consortium is located in the north-western part of the Buenos Aires Province. When created in 1994, it was composed of 10 districts. After the withdrawal of the district of Carlos Tejedor, the remaining district members of CODENOBA are: Alberti, Bragado, Carlos Casares, General Viamonte, Hipólito Yrigoyen, Nueve de Julio, Pehuajó, Rivadavia and Trenque Lauquen.

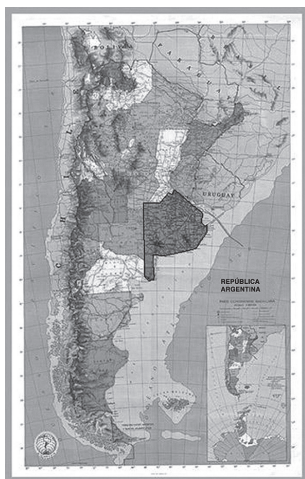
Composed of 250,000 inhabitants, the CODENOBA territory represents almost 10% of the area of the Buenos Aires Province. The consortium's economy is mostly agricultural accounting for nearly 4% of the Province's GDP.

In the beginning, the districts decided to join forces following the floods that affected 70% of the intermunicipal territory. As the former Mayor of Nueve de Julio, Oscar Ormaecha, declared, "the flood brought us together".

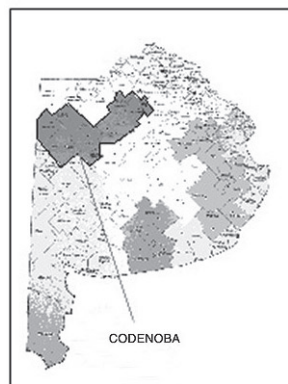
Gradually, the consortium diversified its activities through projects promoting local agriculture, handicrafts and culture. However, CODENOBA suffered from the absence of a regional policy project which could integrate existing initiatives and isolated efforts. It also suffered from the absence of administrative, technical, legal and financial institutions necessary for the execution of regional development projects.

1. Consejo Productivo del Nor-Este
2. Consejo Productivo del Nor-Oeste
3. Consorcio Productivo del Salado
4. Consejo Productivo Buenos Aires
5. Consejo Productivo de Desarrollo Regional. Región Cuenca del Salado
6. Corredor Productivo del Atlántico

Map 1



Map 2



Map 1: Localization of the Buenos Aires Province in Argentina

Map 2: Localization of the CODENOBA consortium in the Buenos Aires Province

2.2

Background and need for change

Within the previously described context, CODENOBA functioned as follows:

- ▶ **An Administrative Council** composed of the mayors of the member districts who elect the president, vice-president and secretary of the consortium. The Administrative Council is also called the *Mesa de Intendentes* or the Council of Mayors.
- ▶ A **coordinator** nominated by the mayors but paid for by the Ministry of Production of the Buenos Aires Province, acts as a link between the provincial administration and the authorities of CODENOBA. The coordinator *“acts as an intermediary between the provincial public administration with the political participation of the mayors from the associate districts (...), he ensures the convergence of interests between the province and the districts (...), he ensures the allocation of the provincial, municipal and even national financial resources”*.⁷

7. De Lisio et al. *Op. Cit.*, p. 28

The statutes of CODENOBA prescribed a wide range of functions, but did not establish sources of financing. The consortium did not receive any endowment or permanent subvention from the national or provincial authorities that would ensure the implementation of intermunicipal projects. During the second half of the 1990s, following informal communications maintained during the development of the project, CODENOBA received substantial aid from the national government. However, there are no records of the projects developed or of the amount of resources obtained because the consortium lacked the administrative culture needed to generate a record-keeping system that could be consulted.

The results of the questionnaire sent by UNESCO in June 2003, as well as the diagnosis made by the *Grupo Hábitat y Sociedad* and by Beatrice Melin from France's *Coopération scientifique et technique*, highlighted CODENOBA's strengths and weaknesses.

Among CODENOBA's institutional weaknesses:

- ▶ CODENOBA was perceived as a structure without a plan that worked more as a *network* than as an intermunicipal authority. It was perceived as a weak tool for communication with no real power and it lacked a clear definition as well as a solid administrative and legal foundation. One of the consequences of this situation was that projects often failed because they lacked appropriate supervision.
- ▶ The municipal councils had no representation in CODENOBA because the consortium was perceived as a *club for mayors*. The answers to the questionnaire showed that it was necessary to democratize CODENOBA and/or increase the participation of municipal councils. Participation of all the political actors favours the exchange of ideas and a greater sharing of joint resources: "All of the opinions from all of the representatives should be heard".

Among the technical weaknesses:

- ▶ The absence of a central location equally accessible to all district members.
- ▶ The absence of a region-wide project.
- ▶ The absence of a coordinated response to regional problems such as floods.

- ▶ The absence of effective communication between the districts. The information is not distributed once it arrives in a certain district. Not all members have access to the Internet.
- ▶ The need for capacity-building on how to work as an intermunicipal team.
- ▶ Large disparities in the organizational capacities of the districts as well as in their knowledge of their own communities.
- ▶ A system of roads that needs to be modernized and that does not meet the economic needs of the region.
- ▶ An abandoned railroad network that if reinstated could improve the speed and reliability of transportation and promote economic development.
- ▶ Insufficient health and education facilities.
- ▶ Large-scale migration of youth from rural areas.

Among the strengths of the region:

- ▶ CODENOBA may be an opportunity for its members to get to know one another and to exchange experiences.
- ▶ Its under-utilized economic and human resources are a potential asset.
- ▶ An intermunicipal structure is taken more seriously when dealing with regional planning and regional interests because it *“represents the needs, anxieties, demands and plans of a region”*. According to the respondents to the survey, *“the national or provincial governments should contribute to the growth of these structures because they are one of the principal alternatives we have for overcoming the current crisis”*.
- ▶ There are great aspirations for achieving a new democracy where common interests are defended over partisan interests. The intermunicipal structure may be a good option.

Based on the facts listed above, the following work methodology was established:

The total budget allocated to the project for the period 2002-2005 is 142,000 Euros distributed as follows:

- 1.** Conception and coordination of the project, 56% of the total amount.
- 2.** Expertise and establishment of Argentine territorial executives: 28%.
- 3.** Project administration: 15% of the amount.

3. Working with local authorities for the institutional strengthening of CODENOBA

Work with authorities of CODENOBA was divided into two phases:

- 3.1 Construction and approval of the project
- 3.2 Execution of the project

3.1

Construction and approval of the project

December 2002:

First exploratory mission

February 2003:

Second exploratory mission

July 2003:

Mission of the *Coopération scientifique et technique* of France

November 2003:

Thanks to an invitation by the Ile-de-France Region, CODENOBA's President, Enrique Tkacik, took part in a 15-day seminar on *Intermunicipal issues and the Ile de France region's experience*.



President Tkacik at the Ile-de-France region headquarters

November 2003:

Final project and approval by the authorities of CODENOBA.



First Forum of Municipal Councils and legislators of CODENOBA. Presentation of the project to CODENOBA's councillors and deputies.

Execution of the project

Before launching the project, Béatrice Melin and the *Grupo Hábitat y Sociedad* carried out a socio-economic and institutional diagnosis of the CODENOBA region.

Each of the CODENOBA districts had to organize a workshop within the context of the programme for cooperation.

Activities N° 1 and 2:

Workshops for the official launching of the project. América: 25-26 March / Nueve de Julio: 29-31 March

The América Workshop (25-26 March) allowed the socio-economic and institutional evaluation begun in January 2004 by Béatrice Melin and the Grupo Hábitat y Sociedad to be presented. The results of the evaluation highlighted CODENOBA's weaknesses as well as its socio-economic potential.

For the first time, CODENOBA produced a diagnosis about the region as a whole. Benefiting from such a study showed that the use of **reliable information** was not only important for the conception and planning of the region, but also for the creation of **new work methodologies** that would gradually build an intermunicipal project and work culture. As mentioned by Alicia Puig, representative of the Trenque Lauquen municipal council "*being aware of our weaknesses is probably our biggest strength*".

Later on, Mr Tomasi and Mr Muscat explained specific aspects of the French intermunicipal experience. Immediately after, with the aid of the experts, the mayors decided to discuss the evolution of CODENOBA and the regions' policy priority for the future. The mayors and municipal councillors participated in a debate from which the following conclusions may be drawn:

- ▶ The meetings at Rivadavia, organized mainly to discuss the **institutional reorganization** of CODENOBA, were considered **historic**.
- ▶ The meetings at Rivadavia showed that it was necessary to **elaborate a political project** around the themes underlined by the diagnosis as fundamental for CODENOBA: culture, sport, health, tourism, floods and safe drinking-water.

The workshop in Nueve de Julio (29-31 March) was of a more political character. Following a work plan proposed by the experts that welcomed representatives of the municipal councils and established a precise methodology for policy formulation, the mayors decided to pursue the restructuring of CODENOBA. The following was decided:

► To create a **Committee for technical monitoring** composed of a permanent delegate from each district, the coordinator of CODENOBA and *Hábitat y Sociedad*. With the cooperation of Marie Salaün, intern from the Institut des hautes études de l'Amérique latine, the Committee will have to fulfil three major tasks:

1. Drafting **technical reports** on 2 or 3 themes in order to prepare for the decision that was to be made in 2004 about the inter-municipality's main actions. The objective, to be attained in 6 months, is to provide the districts with the elements to develop coherent and clear initiatives in relation to a specific theme. The purpose is to transform ideas into real regional projects so that districts develop an intermunicipal project culture.

2. To form a think tank on CODENOBA with the objective of **rewriting the statutes** and writing the rules of procedure in conformity with the laws of the Province.

3. To write a **charter of intentions** to be signed by the mayors and establishing the main orientations of the regional policy.

Towards the end of the Nueve de Julio workshop, the Mayors of CODENOBA decided to employ Béatrice Malin for three more months. In an agreement signed with the representative of LOCAL/IHEAL, Jean-François Claverie, CODENOBA undertook to pay Ms Melin's services, accommodation fees and travel expenses. The French Embassy provided Ms Melin with a return air ticket and health insurance. In addition, Marie Salaün from the Institut des hautes études de l'Amérique latine worked as an intern for CODENOBA. She coordinated priority projects with the aid of area coordinators.

After the workshop, the Mayor of Carlos Casares, Omar Foglia, offered to install CODENOBA's headquarters in one of the town hall's rooms.

Activity N° 3: 8-9 June 2004.

Definition of the principal policy objectives for CODENOBA

Following the planning of activities established by the project for the institutional consolidation of CODENOBA, the city of Trenque Lauquen hosted the third workshop on 8 and 9 June 2004. The workshop brought together mayors, municipal councillors, municipal technicians, representatives from the *Coopération technique et scientifique française* (Béatrice Melin, Marie Salaün and Olivier Guyonneau) and a UNESCO consultant (Nicole Maurice).

The objective of the seminar was to present the diagnosis carried out by intermunicipal teams on culture, sport and tourism. Marie Salaün from IHEAL coordinated the mission.

After the presentations, Olivier Guyonneau led a debate on the “*Formalization and formulation of policy decisions inside intermunicipal structures*”.

While the discussion about the documents concentrated on the issue of the intermunicipality’s political and administrative internal structure, the debate focused on CODENOBA’s structural deficiencies. It exposed CODENOBA’s incapacity to develop projects of regional interest (or even sub-regional interest) as well as its inability to implement decisions made by the intermunicipal political and administrative institution.

The confirmation of this reality, supported by the Mayors, led to the following conclusion: CODENOBA was created formally in 1994, but the inadequacy of its statutes has not allowed it to develop any action of intermunicipal interest during its ten-year existence. To strengthen CODENOBA’s institutional structure it is not only necessary to provide the consortium with supplementary human, technical and financial resources, but also and most importantly, to **reorganize the consortium’s institutional structure**. This reform has to result from an intermunicipal consensus among the member districts about a common political objective.

Taking these elements into consideration, representatives from the *Coopération française* and UNESCO reminded participants that the workshop’s principal issue was to make CODENOBA a real tool for concerted regional development, capable of achieving its expectations and of becoming a reliable representative in the eyes of provincial, national and international institutions.

For this to happen, mayors needed to confirm by the end of the workshop their common objectives, express their aspirations concerning CODENOBA and establish the actions to be carried out within a determined period of time in order to provide CODENOBA with the institutional structure necessary to fulfil its objectives.

During the second day of the workshop, the mayors met privately and drafted what has been called the “*Declaration of Trenque Lauquen*”. The Declaration determined CODENOBA’s principal objectives and established a commission for the revision of the statutes. The Commission was coordinated by María Marta Gelitti, legal adviser for the mayor’s office in Bragado, in cooperation with Béatrice Melin, and was composed of representatives from each of CODENOBA’s member districts.

Extract from the Declaration of Trenque Lauquen:

(...) We have decided to create the Commission for the Revision of the Statutes (...) whose mission is to present in a 60-day period a proposal of the statutes in conformity with the law and the following objectives (...):

- ▶ *Economic regional development;*
- ▶ *Human and social development;*
- ▶ *Development of culture, history, sports and tourism in the intermunicipal region;*
- ▶ *Protection of the environment;*
- ▶ *Development of intermunicipal public services.*

Within the context of these objectives, strive for the region’s sustainable development (...).

In July 2004, Hector Cagliero, from the Carlos Casares district, was named project manager of CODENOBA with the support of the Buenos Aires Province. Horacio Dinse, from the district of Casares joined CODENOBA’s technical team.

Activity N° 4: August 2004.

Approval of the new statutes by CODENOBA's authorities

This workshop took place with the participation of Jean-Marie Martinez, Director General of Community Services of the intermunicipal structure of Dracénie (France). The objective of the workshop was to study one by one the articles of the statutes proposed by the Commission.

The main progress made so far includes:

- ▶ The creation of CODENOBA's headquarters.
- ▶ That the decisions are to be made by a majority of the members of the executive organ.
- ▶ An assembly of delegates or a deliberative assembly was created as the representative organ composed of members from municipal councils. The Assembly will be a consultative organ and will contribute to the drafting of declarations, dispositions and recommendations. The Assembly's functions are: to join the process of intermunicipal integration; to approve the annual budget and the annual declaration of the general policy; to examine and approve the expense account presented on 31 March 2004 by the Executive; to ask for information reports; to give recommendations and suggestions about the evolution of the intermunicipal process; to approve requests for membership made by other districts; and to consider requests for cancellations or requests for withdrawal made by member districts.
- ▶ The President of CODENOBA is obliged to present a yearly Declaration of General Policy to the Assembly.

Activity N° 5: October 2004.

Approval of the new structure (currently in place) and of the revised statutes by the municipal councils

Activity N° 6: May 2005.

Summary workshop



The Mayors of CODENOBA during a workshop that took place in the city of Alberti (August 2004). In the centre (with glasses), expert Jean-Marie Martinez, Director General of Community Services, Dracénie, located in the Department of Var, France.

4. Methodology for the formulation and execution of projects

4.1

Objectives

At this stage, the purpose was to contribute to the formulation and execution of modest projects that could be implemented. Marie Salaün was responsible for encouraging and coordinating projects considered a priority by CODENOBA's authorities and related to the following themes: culture, sport, tourism and economic development.

The objectives selected follow the line of CODENOBA's previous policy. In the past, CODENOBA had already recognized the need to diversify the consortium's domain of intervention, especially in relation to culture. This resulted in the creation of ExpoCodenoBa.⁸ The objectives were also a way to highlight the work that was being done in these areas.

Considering that CODENOBA did not have a plan where medium-term objectives could be identified, the authorities decided to start working on the implementation of modest projects that were possible to implement.

8. A cultural event launched in 2003 with the purpose of promoting regional handicrafts and musical expression. The initiative became real through the creation of a travelling regional market where artisans and musicians from the region could meet.

The principles of the new policy

As mentioned above, the objective was to develop projects that could be implemented over a small period of time and could make CODENOBA known to civil society. The work was divided into three phases:

1. Inventory of the projects on the identified subject areas (April-June 2004).
2. Proposal and selection by the local authorities of the projects to be implemented (June-July 2004).
3. Execution of the projects chosen by the Mayors (July-August 2004).

Methodological analysis

In order to accomplish the established objectives, it was first necessary to identify, within the still informal structure of CODENOBA, the key actors in each area. Even though CODENOBA had an executive organ (the Mayor's Council) and a coordinator, the task consisted of stimulating and coordinating the working groups and of establishing a methodological order.

The inventory of projects and ideas required the creation of technical reports as well as an introduction to project methodology.⁹

The period between April and June was dedicated to field work, to the synthesis of the technical reports and to the election of a coordinator for each domain of intervention or *áreas*.

This work resulted in the presentation of projects during the Trenque Lauquen workshop. The *áreas* coordinators showed their expertise as well as their intention to transform CODENOBA into a solid intermunicipal structure. A synthesis of the expected results as well as of the proposals was also presented.

The month of June was devoted to drafting the three projects chosen by the mayors.¹⁰

9. This introduction began during the initial meetings of the working group, with a power point presentation about project methodology and with the distribution of the technical reports. The purpose of the reports was to initiate regional actors in reflecting on the future of CODENOBA.

10. The first projects to be completed and submitted to the Mayor's Council were the sports and cultural projects. The project on tourism was sent in August.

Proposed changes

As a result of international cooperation intervention, CODENOBA was progressively organized and modified. Difficulties appeared on the ground, when trying to strengthen the working groups and render them accountable as main actors in regional development.

The objective was to end the “culture of secrecy” by establishing systematic communication between the actors. Internal management improved through information (sending meeting reports, etc.) and the application of transparent action. It was also important to break the binary UCR/PJ¹¹ model, to establish equal participation, and to get the various actors to participate in the construction of projects.

The implementation of intermunicipal projects faced the following difficulties:

- ▶ Argentine legislation does not encourage the formation of intermunicipal structures. Decentralization measures distribute competences, but not provide for financial resources. As a result, the districts do not have the resources necessary to finance their development. Resources are distributed in an arbitrary manner according to dependency relationships between the districts and the provinces and in response to political purposes. In order to encourage the necessary national transformation, the consortia have to achieve a degree of coherence in the activities undertaken. They also need to convince the provincial and national governments of their willingness to change.
- ▶ The “caudillismo”, reflected in the attitudes and discourses of the political leaders, is another obstacle for the development of intermunicipal structures. Thinking in terms of region, general interest and solidarity continue to be very difficult. However, in order to achieve a region-wide vision of the future, it is imperative to cross political and administrative boundaries. For this to happen, Argentine political culture must change.
- ▶ Another obstacle is that projects have no continuity, there is no culture of working in a written form, and people do not respect verbal agreements.¹²

11. UCR: Unión Cívica Radical or Radical party.
PJ: the Justicialista or Peronist party.

12. Often, people call to confirm their participation in a meeting, but the day of the meeting, only a few representatives are present.

5. Proposed policy implications

The objective of the proposal was to reorganize and strengthen CODENOBA through the implementation of a policy that would at the same time support the intermunicipal structure and guarantee local and regional sustainable development.

The year 2003 was an occasion to develop research according to the necessities of the region and to adjust the methodology proposed by the international technical support before the launching of the project in March 2004. France's *Coopération scientifique et technique* had already participated in bilateral France/Argentina projects and gave technical advice to several intermunicipal structures, and its intervention was of particular interest to the project. The systematic organization of capacity-building workshops, the presence of interns, and UNESCO's involvement made the diffusion of the interventions possible. As a result, it was easier to train members of the intermunicipal executive, legislators from each of the districts, and local officials from different cities and *áreas*. CODENOBA played an important role in capacity-building before and during the implementation of joint projects accepted by the Executive.

Despite the different obstacles encountered (existing political culture, the decision-making process, administrative issues or local models of management), the technical assistance of the MOST Programme-UNESCO/*Coopération scientifique et technique* has been a valuable contribution. The international cooperation helped overcome the operational immobility that affected CODENOBA districts.

issues as well as with the institutionalization of instruments that favour the sustainability of development projects. This initiative resulted in:

- ▶ The enhancement of each member's claims and points of view.
- ▶ The organization of seminars and workshops for the mayors, local officials and municipal councillors from the Buenos Aires Region and Province.
- ▶ A socio-economic and institutional diagnosis about the potential and the weaknesses of the intermunicipal structure.
- ▶ A coalition of the international, national, provincial and local institutional actors that supported the intermunicipal project. The partnership with the *Coopération scientifique et technique* of France through the *Institut des hautes études de l'Amérique latine* (IHEAL) was especially important. It favoured expert intervention and suggested methodological adjustments to interventions in a territory.
- ▶ A number of agreements, policy and technical choices that resulted in the implementation of various activities. These agreements were achieved because of the participation of the *Coopération française*, its experience, work methodology and the intervention of its experts and interns. The coordination exercised by the MOST Programme and the contribution of the interns complemented this intervention. It was also possible to establish a plan for familiarization, training and action with the districts. At the same time, the almost permanent presence of experts and interns favoured the creation of mixed working groups composed of municipal and provincial technicians and focused on the administrative, legal and institutional reorganization of CODENOBA. The international cooperation also benefited intermunicipal project formulation for regional and local development. Simultaneously, international (IDB, *Coopération française*), national and provincial organizations were contacted and asked to provide financial support. The Ministry of the Economy from the Buenos Aires Province made a financial contribution to the functioning of the technical support.

5.1

Lessons learned and prospective analysis

We can extract valuable lessons for intermunicipal policy implementation by analysing the tendencies that marked Argentina during the last decade

and the experience of CODENOBA. These lessons, however, have to be analysed in relation to various factors: the country's political and administrative culture; the lack of technical experience; increased unemployment; a negative economic context; and a decentralization process that did not apply to the transfer of resources.

Several aspects of CODENOBA's experience can be analysed

1. The process put in place for consolidating the intermunicipal structure demonstrated its capacity to institutionalize new forms of organization and internal management (executive and legislative) that provide local and regional development with a solid foundation. Factors such as the systematization of the process, the technical international cooperation, and the institutional reorganization were fundamental for the experience. The implementation of legal and administrative instruments, as well as the participation of experts, professionals, and interns was also important. As a result, it was easier to establish a methodology for the development of activities and for decision-making.

2. With the support of the intermunicipal structure, local leaders have the possibility of negotiating agreements and financial resources with the national and provincial governments. For this to happen, local leaders need the support of a local coalition that favours regional initiatives and concerted negotiation strategies. The search for appropriate policy and adequate funding requires transparent agreements and effective lobbying strategies.

3. A number of national and provincial policies may contribute to the consolidation of the process begun by the international cooperation. In order to consolidate the institutional progress achieved during the first phase, it is necessary to implement strategies for the formulation of joint projects and to identify the advantages that may result for the districts and the region. If the district or region lacks the capacity to face complex projects, it is possible to consider an external intervention. The intervention should be supervised by one or two cities and develop under a specific framework. The implementation of these projects is important for the production of human resources and the creation of an appropriate meeting place for local actors and citizens.

4. Concerning the lack of resources, it is important that local governments obtain control of the resources they receive, for example, over the “benefits tax”.¹⁴ These resources could be invested afterwards in inter-municipal projects and territorial development. A national debate around this issue is possible, but should be supported by an inter-provincial coalition.

It is unrealistic to expect a transfer of power from the provinces to the districts. In fact, the tendency is to increase provincial powers. Even though provincial governments have prepared laws that seem to encourage an increase in local or intermunicipal power, in reality these laws produce an increase of provincial power and resource control. This problem also exists when transferring local or municipal power to the intermunicipal structure and in their relationship with civil society. Additionally, a decentralized context of cooperation offers the opportunity to participate in regional development projects and to receive the necessary resources for their implementation.

5. International technical support was a key factor in the revitalization of the intermunicipal structure. With the purpose of creating a region-wide model of institutional consolidation and territorial intervention, the international team shared its expertise and provided technical assistance on local problems. Its experience and ability to face the difficulties that emerged while implementing the project resulted in the use and incorporation of new models of local intervention. Thanks to this experience, we are able to confirm that it is important to create a solid political and technical counterpart capable of defending its own institutional progress and of incorporating the knowledge and practices acquired.

Even though there exist numerous examples of processes of regionalization and of political and economic decentralization in Latin America, the implementation of a democratic culture of management will require several years of work. The regionalization processes are part of a global debate on territorial decentralization. To recognize these tendencies is to understand political contexts, formulation of public policy, and cultural conditions for change as an articulate group of institutional practices that generate new regional development tools.

14. Impuesto sobre los beneficios.

Potential obstacles and problems

To avoid predictable risks during implementation of the project and of the policy for institutional consolidation, the local coordinator and the technical assistance team (Grupo Hábitat y Sociedad/MOST Programme-UNESCO) brought together a number of problems encountered by CODENOBA and similar projects in other contexts. An important addition to this job is the experience that the *Coopération française* has had in France (similar projects within different contexts) and Latin America, especially in several of the Argentine provinces over a 10-year period.

The risks that may appear during the development of a project have been classified into three different groups:

- 1.** Political terms and institutional instruments – legal (*Ley Orgánica de Municipios*) and administrative.
- 2.** The lack of a joint work culture (there is no confidence in the development of common projects).
- 3.** Traditional instruments for municipal management and local technical capacities (new modalities of intermunicipal management).

Considering the political, social and technical context of CODENOBA, several predictions have been made about the possible manifestation of the

previously-mentioned problems. Given that the project's main objective was to reorganize the consortium's existing organization for the promotion of regional development, a series of workshops were organized (training-familiarization-debate). The workshops were geared towards mayors, municipal councillors and local officials from different member districts. Throughout the development of the different stages of the project and with the results of the socio-economic and institutional diagnosis, it was possible to determine, together with the intermunicipal Executive, what were to be the central aspects of the project:

- ▶ A structural transformation of CODENOBA's performance.
- ▶ Adaptation of the organizational structure to new roles acquired at intermunicipal level.
- ▶ The institutionalization of new modalities of functioning.

During the debates and exchanges developed during the first phase, experts from the *Coopération française* proposed several ways to approach the institutional issues. As a result, it was possible to reach an agreement on the work agenda and to establish two sectoral objectives. The objectives had to be attained through action intended for cooperation and capacity-building seminars, since it was important to benefit from the best human resources available in the districts. The objectives were the following:

- ▶ To strengthen the existing intermunicipal structure through the approval of new statutes and annexed documents (Charter of Intention and Rules of Procedure).
- ▶ To favour the formulation of intermunicipal projects and to encourage new methods of management (culture of results) with the purpose of attracting financial resources (international, national or provincial).

In relation to problems concerning the organizational culture, we consider that the workshops on familiarization allowed difficulties to be approached from the management level but did not produce radical transformations because of the long tradition of centralized management that exists in Argentina. The transformation of the organizational culture is a long process and can only be achieved on a daily basis with the implementation of intermunicipal projects and the agreements they require. Thanks to international cooperation, the actors involved in CODENOBA acquired a new vision for their region and the elements necessary for the construction of that vision. It can be assumed that: "*a public policy has to go beyond*

5.3

Potential consequences

a government term (...) strengthen our capacities of planning together (...) work together to achieve the objectives, act together in relation to strategic and priority conceptions (...) debate common funding and the use of existing budgets".¹⁵

Even though civil society participation during the consolidation of CODENOBA was mentioned several times, it was not a highly debated issue. The experts from the *Coopération* addressed the subject when referring to the new statutes and *"the charter of intentions that should include the strategic lines of the project"* (in relation to the Executive). The Deliberative Assembly did not discuss civil society participation either. Not one instrument for citizen participation was established.

The need to strengthen the relationship with the Buenos Aires Province was discussed several times because of the need to avoid confrontations when seeking funding at national level. In order to strengthen the relationship with the Province, broader participation needs to be encouraged on the part of the Direction of Municipal Affairs in intermunicipal projects. This is necessary because of the political and economic relationships that exist between the Province and more than one hundred districts.¹⁶

Within the framework of the project for international cooperation, it is possible to identify collateral effects from the approval and the expected results of the project in the regional-local territory.

► The establishment of an intermunicipal structure creates a space for inter-provincial actions, exchange of experiences, and sharing of methodologies of intervention with already existing or future interregional actors. This institutionalization promotes an integrative vision that surpasses each

15. These affirmations were made during the workshops with experts, mayors and municipal officials (Workshops at Rivadavia, Nueve de Julio and Trenque Lauquen in 2004). Fernando Silvestre, Buenos Aires 2004.
16. Argentina is a federal country. It is composed of 23 provinces that have considerable political and economic autonomy. Each province has the autonomy to determine through legal and administrative measures the institutional and economic relationship with the districts. The Buenos Aires Province accounts for 134 districts and 13,827,202 inhabitants. Source: Instituto Nacional de Estadísticas y Censos. *Censo 2001*.

district's interests and results in the development of region-wide public policies. At the same time, cooperation between territories offers institutions the possibility to communicate with European or Latin American cities where projects for regional-local development are also being implemented.

▶ With the strengthening of the intermunicipal political and technical structure as well as of the role of the Presidency, a dialogue more adjusted to the member districts' needs may begin between CODENOBA and the provincial government. In consequence, the identification of and access to financial resources may develop within more appropriate conditions.

▶ The commitment to create a plan and a framework for regional-local development requires the regrouping of common projects, the strengthening of technical capacities and the attainment of tangible and quality results. These conditions welcome the participation of strategic partners in regional projects, such as national and regional universities and research institutions, and favour exchanges with actors from the private sector.

▶ Some political effects are expected in the mid-term:

- (i) the access to national and international programmes and resources will stimulate competition between member districts for the regional leadership;
- (ii) other districts will develop a real interest in joining CODENOBA, as is happening today;
- (iii) coordination between municipal and regional action accompanied by wider civil society participation, (intermunicipal management) will probably improve urban planning and the quality of urban and rural life;
- (iv) stronger institutional and economic integration between regions and provinces will facilitate the implementation of political and technical cooperation.

▶ Municipal councils were integrated into the intermunicipal structure with the mission to exercise financial control and support the implementation plan. This modification constitutes considerable progress in terms of political and management culture: reporting the state of the field to the Assembly, a greater visibility of the intermunicipal management of projects and territorial actions and the respect of calendars and assigned budgets make the process more transparent to citizens and the provincial *Tribunal de Cuentas*.

5.4

Plans for implementation

► The implementation of new work instruments and the creation of new spaces for dialogue between mayors and legislators will encourage the development of agreements which suppose the abandonment of partisan attitudes. The positive impact of this experience encourages a long-term process with greater regional, local and national visibility. The intermunicipal experience is a tool for progress and enables territorial boundaries to disappear in favour of a region-wide vision.

The programme for the technical aid of CODENOBA was conceived by the International Cooperation (the UNESCO-MOST Programme and the *Coopération scientifique et technique* of France), with the initial support of a centre for local studies (Grupo GHS), to be executed jointly with the intermunicipal structure. The programme proposed restructuring CODENOBA'S institutional framework (statutes and annexes) according to the results of the socio-economic and institutional diagnosis. It also took into consideration requests for transforming CODENOBA into an effective intermunicipal structure with the capacity to conduct regional-local development. The need to improve the quality of urban and rural life was also taken into account. The solutions were proposed according to the political, social and economic context of CODENOBA and the capacity of the nine¹⁷ member districts to act as a technical counterpart for international cooperation.¹⁸

During the first part of the project, different stages were conceived and coordinated around the programme for cooperation and around the need to strengthen and institutionalize the intermunicipal structure. It was also important to achieve the objectives established by the proposed policy. Following the identification of needs and, in some cases, demands, it was jointly decided with CODENOBA that action relating to the socio-economic evaluation would be organized. The diagnosis had identified the strengths and weaknesses of member districts. The idea to develop the

17. In July 2004, Carlos Tejedor withdrew from the consortium. At present, CODENOBA is composed of 9 districts.

18. Cf. Mission Report presented by Béatrice Melin (IHEAL-Coopération Française). 24 August 2004

cooperation programme through workshops aimed at finding solutions for the following issues:

- (i) Training of elected officials and municipal officials.
- (ii) Consensus about the Charter of Intentions.
- (iii) Formulation of new statutes and rules of procedure.
- (iv) Development concerning the areas highlighted in the Charter of Intentions (sport and culture).
- (v) Provision of financial resources by the intermunicipal structure.

All of the stages were implemented differently and according to the established work agenda. We suppose that the difficulties that were encountered in relation to the members of the intermunicipal executive and in relation to the institutional context were linked to lack of experience with working in common (existing political and organizational culture) and to struggles for power between districts, despite their membership in the same political party. We also confirmed the need for greater support from the provincial government in order to promote a “state policy” (provincial) that would decrease the importance of internal local policy. This is important for the consolidation of intermunicipal structures capable of strengthening local processes and of ensuring the durability of regional and local development projects.

5.5

Replication and transferability

The model of territorial intervention through an intermunicipal structure as well as the global methodology used for the implementation of CODENOBA may be adapted to other contexts (replication). However, it is important to underscore that an exact copy of the model would be impossible as necessary adjustments have to be made according to the variables of the formulation and execution processes.

In the case of situations with a similar context:

- ▶ Analyse the region’s political, administrative, socio-economic and cultural context, especially the political and institutional relationship between the provinces and the districts.
- ▶ Identify existing capacities and strengths (including leadership potential) and make a diagnosis prior to the final formulation of the timetable.

- ▶ Study and incorporate other cases and consider their difficulties and successes when creating the methodology for the implementation of the project.

In the case of situations within different contexts:

- ▶ Adapt the implementation of an intermunicipal policy to the existing political will of regional transformation.
- ▶ Adapt the timetable and the training plan to elected officials (executive and legislative) and other local actors, with the purpose of reinforcing local capacities for the intermunicipal policy implementation.
- ▶ Benefit from previous CODENOBA experiences, recover historical and critical inter-municipality memory, analyse past institutional functioning and local/provincial political aspects in order to design the intermunicipal model.

6. Monitoring and evaluation during implementation

The project does not dispose at the moment of a system of monitoring and evaluation. In order to create a complete system of evaluation, it is necessary to establish a technical team for the monitoring, direction and registration of the different actions and their respective reports. The evaluation may be assigned to one of the district members of CODENOBA (operational decentralization) or to an external actor (university, research institutes, local NGOs).

6.1

Preliminary evaluation

A system of evaluation can be established during the different stages of the process in order to highlight the institutional progresses made and the region's political complexity. Through a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) analysis it will be possible to identify valuable, strategic information to be considered by CODENOBA and the international cooperation during the designing of the 2005-2006 plan.

Strengths

1. The decision made by the Executive to rewrite the administrative statutes of the intermunicipal structure is an important step forward for CODENOBA. From a political and technical point of view, the existence of such a document as well as its annexes (Charter of Intentions, rules of procedure, Directive Committee for monitoring of projects) create a more transparent

organizational framework for the different levels of functioning and allow the main intermunicipal objectives to be defined.

2. The incorporation of municipal councils with the legislative assemblies is an important innovation of CODENOBA's organizational structure. The municipal councils function as institutions for the financial support and control of CODENOBA. Because of this, the work of the intermunicipal executive acquires more legitimacy. In addition, the Assembly has the possibility of making recommendations and suggestions for the formulation of regional policies.

3. The implementation of innovative intermunicipal practices. With the strengthening and development of the consortium, these dimensions of territorial management will become more transparent.

4. The organization of joint work between international cooperation and local officials for the fulfilment of the project's objectives. At the same time, the formation of mixed (French professionals and Argentine interns) and/or local working groups for the formulation and execution of common projects contributed to the organization of the work.

5. Considering the traditional and centralized model of regional development (national or provincial level), this model of local intervention is an example of a 'decentralized institutional construction' capable of guaranteeing the sustainable development of the region.

6. The systematization of the international technical assistance experience in order to propose a regional/local model of intervention and the implementation of intermunicipal policies.

7. Systematic organization of capacity-building workshops, seminars and debates for elected officials (executive and legislative) and municipal officials. Training will be the base of future intermunicipal projects. These methods permitted useful information to be distributed at municipal and intermunicipal levels.

8. The preliminary socio-economic and institutional diagnosis of CODENOBA provided information on each district's municipal profile and the technical proposal to be implemented according to the rules.

9. The new statutes established a shared and more democratic system of criminal and civil responsibility of the members of the Executive before the provincial *Tribunal de Cuentas*. This represents a change from the previous system in which the president of the consortium responded individually.

10. The methodological structure of the cooperation project was carried out in a way that enabled mistakes to be identified and corrected, and the work plan to be adapted accordingly. Thus national and international actors formed a coalition in support of CODENOBA which in turn gave rise to the Presidency of Argentina declaring the project to be of national interest.¹⁹

Weaknesses

1. The absence of joint experience in regional development. As a result, agreements and consensus about the implementation of joint proposals were more difficult to establish, especially in relation to the designing of strategies and public policies for development.

2. There are very few joint development projects that can test the legal, technical and administrative instruments that have been jointly drawn up and approved (CODENOBA/International Cooperation). There needs to be stronger political commitment on the part of intermunicipal legislative and executive authorities when negotiating budget allocations for specific projects.

3. The need to strengthen the local technical team, the project manager, and the coordinators of the working groups in order to formulate more ambitious development projects (weaknesses identified in the socio-economic diagnosis).

4. Even though the new statutes represent the mayor's political and administrative conception of CODENOBA and their local priorities, they still contain a centralized model that creates difficulties in applying horizontal models of work and responsibility. The statutes allow for an excessive concentration of work to remain in the hands of the presidency (carried out by the mayor from one of the districts). The deliberative assembly also has a weak role in the formulation of intermunicipal projects.

5. The need to create a plan for encouraging local/regional development and the instruments for the execution, continuity and sustainability of the projects in relation to the short presidential term established in the statutes (1 year). This would favour joint development management free from electoral terms of office.

19. Cf. the different reports presented by Nicole Maurice. MOST/UNESCO, 2003/2004.

6. During the consolidation phase, the institutionalization of the participation of civil society was not established. The participation of civil society in policy-making may contribute to the creation of new instruments for the control of public financing, may encourage transparency in public administration, improve local and regional conditions for governance, contribute to the partnership between the intermunicipal structure and the private sector and ease the tasks of the elected local officials.

Opportunities

1. The process made it possible to establish the conditions for the development of the region and to implement an organization. This is an opportunity for CODENOBA to develop its potential as an intermunicipal structure and to become the principal promoter of regional public policy. The changes made in the functioning and organization of CODENOBA as well as the participation of municipal councils in the intermunicipal assembly, strengthen this opportunity.

2. It would be important to benefit from the contribution made by international technical assistance, to develop an intermunicipal training plan. Capacity-building should not only be for technical teams, but also for municipal actors and civil society. This will allow for the implementation of projects with the participation of the private sector and citizens and will make the accessing of resources easier.

3. CODENOBA is an opportunity to include new instruments for citizen participation in decision-making processes as an element for good governance. The aim is to capture the needs and energy of civil society and apply them in regional development. As a result, the community will adopt the development plan as a way of improving urban and rural life.

4. The consolidation of CODENOBA may be used by national and provincial governments as a model for the promotion of intermunicipal development. At the same time, it may influence current debates about the need to strengthen existing and future intermunicipal structures.

Threats

1. One of the risks of the project is the lack of capacities to develop agreements and to achieve a consensus about public interests, as was apparent

at several stages of the process.²⁰ These modalities of non-management could have interfered with the development of the project and with the objectives set by CODENOBA and the international cooperation. Even though the principal aim of the institutional consolidation was to open existing political and administrative cultures to dialogue and deliberative discussions, it is through continuous intermunicipal intervention that decisions will be strengthened. There is also a need to face together political difficulties, unexpected problems in the decision-making process, faults in communication between districts and the lack of financial resources. This threat is at the origin of the tensions between intermunicipal requirements and district demands and can only be controlled by achieving a certain level of training in management and strategy. This requires a permanent dialogue between mayors in order to ensure the sustainability of the project. Negotiation skills, mediation and consensus are some of the concepts taught to European and North-American elected officials during training courses.

2. Owing to the way CODENOBA has functioned over the last decade, there are no written records of the projects developed. Following the intervention of the international technical assistance, some changes were introduced to the manner in which the executive administered the consortium (regular holding of meetings, agenda of activities, reports of meetings, and creation of a secretariat). A risk, however, may be identified and is reflected in the weak continuity of policies and plans and in the lack of instruments with which to record the history of intermunicipal practices, including the achievements, failures and results relating to development management. This risk should be considered by the executive during the next stage of the process. In consequence, a working group should be created to monitor projects and implement actions and thus ensure feedback for future projects.

3. As an institutional structure, CODENOBA can be considered important for the creation of a new organizational culture. This new culture ought to be directed to developing strategies and policies that favour innovation in

20. One of the obvious aspects of this situation was that the international cooperation had to act as mediator between the mayors because they were unable to overcome political, technical and personal problems. The executive did not take into account the fact that agreements are normally achieved after discussions within collegiate bodies.

6.2

Indicators

territorial management. In addition, to manage this kind of process requires not only political negotiations (supranational political support), but also the mediation skills necessary to implement proposals and projects. The very small role given to civil society threatens the sustainability of the project because there is no opportunity to benefit from its potential contributions and resources. This exclusion reduces the possibilities of interaction between the public sector, the private sector, and civil society and thus jeopardizes the sustainability of plans, programs and projects.

Quantitative and result indicators can be used to measure the proposals and action carried out by the international cooperation, including seminars, workshops and debates. However, in order to determine the degree to which the project has affected municipal institutions and civil society, qualitative indicators need to be implemented. Indeed, it should be established whether, and to what extent, civil society and the private sector know about the project. In addition, it is important to determine if they wish to participate in projects of local and regional development. A similar analysis, concerning the areas targeted by the project, should be made at the provincial level in order to establish the extent of coordinated action between the provinces and the intermunicipal structure. Unfortunately, the intermunicipal structure has neither information nor follow-up reports about this process. In general, districts have little experience in implementing systematic evaluations of their projects. An important contribution by the international cooperation would be coordination with a local actor (university or other) and the creation of a system for evaluating, monitoring, and directing projects as well as the construction of indicators.

6.3

Feedback

The intermunicipal structure is an appropriate context for local and international exchanges that require specific strategies and capacities in order to develop. According to the level of consolidation achieved by the Execu-

tive, it is possible to organize different facets of social and institutional feedback that generate new knowledge and strengthen the structure.

► The implementation of a system of evaluation would generate continuous feedback not only within the project (internal), but also within the member districts of CODENOBA (external). The information discussed during feedback would open up possibilities of developing technical exchanges with other intermunicipal structures.

► Another instrument for interaction may be found in the history of CODENOBA and its member districts. The initiative to work jointly should come from the intermunicipal Executive. This type of work would contribute to the cultural and sports projects currently in place and would render more visible the different actors and histories involved. This tool would be useful for the promotion of a shared municipal identity and, at the same time, would encourage appropriation of the project by the community.

► A space where intermunicipal, national and international structures are able to communicate is an effective way to access new knowledge and modalities of management. Establishing a systematic exchange between Argentine intermunicipal structures working with international cooperation,²¹ will tend to strengthen institutional facets directly related to common aspects of the international technical assistance. At the same time, an information network between municipal regions encourages the exchange of “best practices” on management of public policy directed to local and regional development.

► Finally, a decentralized, horizontal feedback mechanism could highlight best practices among CODENOBA districts in relation to successful projects and stimulate the relationships with “resource-cities” known for their success in the implementation of local policy and their exchange, management and capacity-building skills. Despite valuable experiences (“cities of reference” or “model cities”),²² this modality is rarely used in

21. At present, the *Coopération française* is working with intermunicipal structures located in the provinces of Jujuy and Mendoza.

22. In the case of CODENOBA, Trenque Lauquen has been acknowledged nationwide for the management of solid urban waste. Rosario (located in the Santa Fe Province) has been recognized internationally for successfully implementing public policies regarding decentralization, citizen participation, participative urban planning, and the management of joint projects (Latin America/ European Union).

6.4

Control

Argentina. Horizontal cooperation has two advantages. On the one hand, it contributes to the decentralization of activities and responsibilities because a city from the intermunicipal structure assumes the technical assistance of intermunicipal projects. On the other hand, it highlights one of the district's contributions to the strengthening of the intermunicipal structure.

The available documents regarding the "Project for the institutional consolidation of CODENOBA" and the results obtained during this stage (divided into three sub-stages), identify two levels for the control of the project and the plan of action: a local/regional level and a sub-national/provincial level. The project for cooperation also proposed external assistance for a future phase. An operative control, not yet defined, comes from the need to develop a system of evaluation and follow-up that will probably help create a methodology for monitoring the plans of action (capacity-building and drawing up instruments) and for continuous control of the project.

1. The local/regional level (legislative organ)

At local-regional level, control is exercised by the intermunicipal Assembly (statutes of CODENOBA). As the representative organ of CODENOBA, the Assembly ensures representation of the nine member districts and their diverse political orientations. The Assembly's main function is to approve the budget and the annual financial statement. It also controls the Executive and the financial plan. However, the Assembly does not participate in the formulation of intermunicipal policy or in its follow-up.

2. The sub-national/provincial level

According to the *Ley Orgánica de Municipios*, the *Tribunal de Cuentas* is a provincial organ in charge of controlling the resources assigned and/or authorized by the provincial government. It also controls the criminal and civil responsibility of the executive. The *Tribunal de Cuentas* does not take part in monitoring the plan of action.

Conclusions

The process for the consolidation of CODENOBA is still taking place. The process is still weak and may be interrupted at any moment given the challenge represented by the existing political culture.

In view of this challenge, a contribution by international cooperation to the development of projects at a regional and local level is essential. What is a project for the development of a region? For regional and local development, it is a group of objectives established jointly by the inhabitants of a district that reflect their vision of its development. The project becomes a strategy for the execution of projects and is finalized through a political agreement that reflects the commitment of the actors (Charter of Intentions.²³ Working with CODENOBA showed that not all actors are committed to the development of their region. It also showed that the project is a part of a development model,²⁴ a vision and aspiration for Argentina that seem not to have been defined by national, provincial or local authorities.

The second challenge is to develop a new administrative culture regarding access to public administration and its internal functioning.

- ▶ The members of public administration should be chosen according to competence and skill. Political orientation and party membership should not be important.
- ▶ A culture of written work within public administration should be developed. In general, public officials do not prepare for their meetings, take notes, write reports, establish objectives or have the habit of using email. In response to this situation, a system of precise rules that favour the circulation of information, transparency, consensus and continuity should be created.

The third challenge is of a democratic order. The concept of constructive debate was very difficult to accept. In general, people do not agree

23. Didier Minot and al., *Le projet de Territoire. Élaboration et conduite partagées d'un projet de territoire*. A document by l'École de Territoires. Sartrouville: La Bergerie Nationale et le Ministère de l'Agriculture et de la Pêche. 2001, 177 p.

24. Francis Morin, Director of l'École de Territoires.

with open confrontation. Indeed, they normally prefer not to speak and abandon the debate. This attitude not only produces political misunderstandings, but paralyses local and regional management. When an actual debate takes place, its consequences are more destructive than constructive because mayors do not trust one another.

Finally, local authorities should be more involved in the discussions about the region. They have an irreplaceable duty. They should alert public opinion as well as public and private actors about the urgent need to solve the regional crisis. Elected officials should take political risks, draw up plans and/or organize debates. Today, more than ever, local leaders should combine their thinking on the region's issues and should call meetings without fearing opposing views.

Policy Papers

1. *Searching for New Development Strategies – The Challenges of the Social Summit*, Ignacy Sachs, 1995.
2. *From Social Exclusion to Social Cohesion: Towards a Policy Agenda*, Sophie Bessis, 1995.
3. *Cybernetics of Global Change: Human Dimensions and Managing of Complexity*, M. Mesarovic, D. McGinnis and D. West, 1996.
4. *Multiculturalism: New Policy Response to Diversity*, Christine Inglis, 1996.
5. *Démocratie et citoyenneté dans la ville du XXI^e siècle*, Céline Sachs-Jeantet, 1997. (French only)
6. *Sustainability: A Cross-Disciplinary Concept for Social Transformations*, Egon Becker, Thomas Jahn, Immanuel Stiess and Peter Wehling, 1997.
7. *Nouvelles configurations villes-campagnes*, Ricardo Abramovay and Ignacy Sachs, 1999. (French only)
8. *Fight Urban Poverty: A General Framework for Action*, Denis Merklen, 2001.
9. *Domestic Democracy and International Democracy: Deficits*, David Steele, 2002.
10. *Rural labour migration in China: challenges for policies*, Zhan Shaohua, 2005.
11. *Intercommunality: The success story of CODENOBA, Argentina*, Nicole Maurice and Clara Braun, 2005.
12. *Anti-poverty Policies and Citizenry: The “Chile Solidario” Experience*, Julieta Palma and Raúl Urzúa, 2005.
13. *Illegal Drugs and Human Rights of Peasants and Indigenous Communities: The Case of Peru*, Carolina Navarrete-Frías and Francisco E. Thoumi, 2005.

14. *Illegal Drugs and Human Rights of Peasants and Indigenous Communities: The Case of Bolivia*, Carolina Navarrete-Frías and Francisco E. Thoumi, 2005.
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Management of Social Transformations (MOST)

Policy is the priority

While it still promotes international, comparative and policy-relevant research on contemporary social transformations, MOST is now emphasizing the policy and social research interface as its major *raison d'être*. Tackling the sustainability of social transformations is the programme's main task, which implies action at normative, analytical and strategic/political levels. It must concentrate on research of direct use to policy makers and groups involved in advocacy.

MOST's main emphasis is thus on establishing and interconnecting international policy networks with renowned social science researchers to facilitate the use of social science research in policy. This means bringing together basic research with those entrusted with policy formulation in governments, a variety of institutions, NGOs, civil society, the private sector and in UNESCO itself.

The MOST programme measures the impact of research on policy, conducts policy-relevant case studies, provides expertise in development initiatives and shares information on how to design research-anchored policy.

Tools for policy-making

The Policy Papers, dedicated to social transformations and based on policy-relevant research results of work carried out by MOST and by other sections of the Social and Human Sciences Sector (SHS), are intended for policy makers, advocacy groups, business and media.

SHS is seeking new ways of distributing knowledge to target groups, such as ministers of social development, ombudspersons, advocacy groups, UNESCO National Commissions and local authorities. It has prepared a new website for online knowledge management and meta-networking for decision-making and strategy. This knowledge repository will use innovative and refined search tools to facilitate access and intelligibility of complex research data for all potential users.