Interview
PAULO OLIVEIRA

● FNP

1 How do you view the "southern learning process" and ii) associated international platforms and actors?

Paulo Oliveira: What we are living now – we have seen a paradigm shift, or change. We have lots of cooperation with cities, I know because I work for an association of cities as an international advisor for the Brazilian national association of mayors. My job is to put Brazilian cities in contact and promote dialogue with cities abroad. And then these cities agree on an agenda and we cooperate through different methodologies. One is the peer-learning methodology. For each cooperation there is an opportunity, there is a different draw. For a long time, but not that long because decentralized

cooperation is not a very old phenomenon, in Brazil I would say it started about 20 years ago. In the cities, we started with French and Italian cooperation. In Brazil we don't have laws or legislation that allow us to establish this cooperation, but as we already had some protocols established with the French and Italian on cooperation between cities, we could move forward on projects.

To be where we are now – South-to-South – we started not in a North-South, what I was telling you was North-South with Italy and France. Actually, something that we will probably discuss a lot this week is actually what is the technical answer to "What is South-South"? Sometimes we can understand that South culture in Europe can be South. It depends what is South. Who is South? But we can say that we had this paradigm change and we started cooperating through triangular cooperation. This was Brazil with France – this is the first initiative – in benefit of African cities. This call was launched in 2010-2011 and lots of Brazilian cities showed lots of interest in this cooperation and they did projects together. A Brazilian city with a French "collectivité" would write a project together to benefit an African city. There were about 20 or

30 project proposals submitted but the money to fund these proposals wasn't very much, so only two projects were selected. One was with the city of Guarulhos and the city of Saint Denis, benefitting the cities of Maputo and Matola in Mozambique. So this is the very first kind of South-South but it really wasn't South because France was there. So with a French technician, with a Brazilian technician going together to Mozambique to improve their public policy. The theme of this project was management of solid waste. We had another project selected that brought together Fortaleza with Lyon benefiting a city in Benin, Porto Novo, which focused on historical heritage restoration. So this was the very first step of what began to start in Brazil as South-South cooperation. It was a change from North-South to South-South. There are some good things about triangular cooperation and there are some bad things as well. The good point is that we had the exchange of three experiences: Brazil, France and Mozambique. The bad point is probably at that time French people were not very open to learning with other cultures. The relationship between the technicians didn't work so well together. Part of it was a culture problem. I can't really define what happened.

But it was good because it was the very first step. As I said earlier, we don't have a law to enable us to establish collaboration. What I mean is that Brazil as a city cannot put money on a project when we don't have laws in place for that. In addition, when you make the request to send a Brazilian technician to another country, the city hall cannot understand why we would spend money on that when there is no law established allowing that. We therefore need the calls to write projects and to get the projects approved and have the funds in place to fund it. So otherwise it is just a memorandum of cooperation. So the cities had the very first opportunity respond to a call for projects with the federal/central government putting money on it, so this was very good for cities. Just one or two years after, in 2012, we launched the South-South Cooperation call. There were Brazilian cities cooperating directly with any other city in the Southern hemisphere. This was very good and we are still finishing the last project from this round of calls that lasted two or three years. We had another project with Mozambique, the city of Xai Xai cooperating with a city in Brazil, Vitoria on the theme of territorial cooperation and integration. We also had cooperation between a city in Brazil (Canoas) and a city in Argentina (Móron) on the theme of citizen security, on how the citizen can feel safe/comfortable in the city. Cities try to cooperate with other cities who face the same kind of challenges. These were very good initiatives as they bring cities together directly to collaborate together. The ABC, the Brazilian Agency for Cooperation, also puts a lot of money on this kind of cooperation.

ii) I think that our job at FNP is to function as a platform, its role is to animate cities, to help them coordinate, to highlight what they are doing. You need an association to coordinate the work with other organizations, like UCLG or associations in Mozambique to make the words become an "act", otherwise it is just a politician's document. It's good to have another actor understand not just what one city is doing, but what a group of cities are doing to have results.

2 **Do we need to formalize a specific platform of south-south cooperation? If so, how would this be best organized at city, regional and international levels? ii) How can UCLG best help in this?**

Paulo Oliveira: Yes, a platform is needed. UCLG can play a coordinating role. UCLG has Committees and Working Groups and there is a lot of knowledge there. I think they should indicate what they are doing in the CIB, and some other activities, like South-South learning. In the CIB we have already talked about making the CIB space more a space of exchange of best practices of management of national and local governments. It would be a public space to exchange know-how and knowledge, a place for South-South discussions or something bigger like decentralized cooperation. The Committees could also be part of the platform or Observatory – to do research, produce studies, and talk about what they are doing. The Observatory could help in many ways. It could provide a platform for mayors associations and LGAs to exchange their experience.

3 **How do you think the learning and cooperation process can be tuned or calibrated to best benefit developing countries?**

Paulo Oliveira: I think that local leaders, especially in developing countries, know very little about the existence of decentralized cooperation. I know because sometimes I have the opportunity to speak to Brazilian mayors and they really don't know it exists, or even those who have heard of it don't know how it works. I try to inform them with an example of the city of Rio de Janeiro, where we have a "lift" that connects the city to the slum in the mountains. This lift came about because of the UPP, which meant that public policy could reach the slum and improve it. The lift was meant to improve the slum. The mayor had learned of a similar approach used in the city of Medellin, so they applied it to Rio de Janeiro, and this is decentralized cooperation, it doesn't have to go through central government. For some things you have to go through central government, but to improve public policies such as this, we didn't have to do that. That's why we need to help this learning process to be adapted or calibrated to developing countries as best we can.

4 **What can your city or association teach other cities? Where does your city or association need to learn most from other cities? How do you effectively transfer technical knowledge?**

Paulo Oliveira: We had a long project with UCLG that brought together the mayors' association of Brazil (FNP) and the mayors' association of Mozambique (ANAMM), and it also involved a lot of other organizations, including UN Habitat, ILO, GIZ and other institutions, but also academic institutions that together tried to understand the greatest difficulties facing Mozambican cities. We were very proud of the results of this project. From the beginning to the end things worked well. The first thing was to establish the governance of the project, bringing together all of the institutions to think of the cities, bringing together all of the technicians from both sides. There were six cities from Brazil and eight from Mozambique. We really involved all of the Brazilian and Mozambican mayors, who dedicated their time to making trips, attending meetings, visiting cities, etc. Once we had the politicians on board, things could happen. They had the attitude: "Let's do it!" Imagine Brazilian technicians coming to Mozambique for one week away from the office, away from the family. They had to get the approval of the mayors to spend this week away. But when the technician gets back to Brazil, he has to catch up on his work, brief a number of people on what is happening in Mozambique. It's not just a trip, it's to approve public policy. He stays a week but has to leave instructions in place, based on a plan they developed together, that will be followed. The technicians from both sides put their hearts into this work. Mozambican technicians who made technical trips to Brazil to see how things were done were enlightened to see the work in place. They tried to understand how things happen to take that knowledge and skills back home.

The same happened with Brazilian technicians who developed strong ties with Mozambican technicians, even spending their free time together. Politicians and technicians were working well together. For decentralized cooperation, this is a very nice example of a lot being done through a city with a network of cities. Cooperation took place between Brazil and Mozambique, but also Brazil/Brazil cooperation and Mozambique/Mozambique cooperation.

5 **What are your big successes and why were these initiatives so successful? What are the lessons for the south-south and triangle learning and development agenda? How can your best practices for innovation be turned into learning opportunities?**

Paulo Oliveira: This project to improve the institutional capacities of local authorities in Brazil and Mozambique is an example of a big success. Other countries were also interested in replicating the approach in their countries. The project finished in July and we are still trying to find a way to keep it going in the future. We asked mayors in Brazil what they would like to do in the future, and they indicated they would like to maintain this cooperation. During this project a number of mayors changed in both countries but the project was so well built that all of the new mayors accepted to continue on with the project.

Part of the success of the project comes down to the fact that that the two countries share a lot in terms of culture, language, food, most of this to do with the fact that they were both Portuguese colonies. In Mozambique they watch Brazilian Telenovelas. Both cultures are very open and ready to adapt.

6 **Do you have case studies or methodologies that demonstrate: i) processes that are effective; and ii) the effective building of capacity?**

Paulo Oliveira: I'll refer to the Brazil and Mozambique example again, which involved a unique methodology involving a large number of very different cities. We can use it as a learning tool on how to improve the methodology for future projects. From this project, results in the city of Motola led to participatory budgeting that involved citizens in the definition of priorities of public investment. From an after-project methodology, one of the lessons learned for improvement would be discussing more with cities and making the process more transparent. Cities need to make the decisions, it gives them more ownership of the project, they feel like they are the owner. I believe even for UCLG it was a new experience in peer-learning. We would like to continue with these networks of cities, mayors, UCLG, the technicians, academics and other institutions. We learned that cooperation is about understanding each other's differences, accepting them and adapting where you need to.