

Realized for the World Urban Forum of Cairo (Egypt) in november 2024
on the theme "It All Starts at Home: Local Actions for Sustainable Cities and
Communities"

Working group summary
2023- 2024

SOLIDARITY: RETHINKING TERRITORIAL COOPERATION, A MULTISCALE APPROACH





For this 12th edition, the French partnership for Cities and Territories (PFVT) has relied on and extended prospective works gathered across the years. The following elements are based on recommendations and projections for 2050, produced by the group which previously worked on “Cross-border and territorial cooperation”, in preparation for the last Forum in Katowice, in 2022. Relying on these projections, and together with international experts, youths and all other parties involved, we’ve agreed on a desirable future which includes key steps to make solidarity and cooperation possible, in French and in Lebanese territories.

Previous recommendations to recall:

A system of inter-territorial networks

- Going from the European Urban Agenda to a true territorial European agenda

Acknowledged cross-border living areas

- Enabling access to health in cross-border areas
- Common management of water resources
- Smart electrical cross-border networks

A societal and democratic cross-border deal to be a global cross-border strategy

- Educating people about cross-border topics and Europe
- Defining euro-regional circumscriptions with their own elected representatives



Editorial

Supported by the French Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs, the French national federation of urban planning agencies (FNAU) has efficiently coordinated, through organizing the French partnership for Cities and Territories, the participation of French urban stakeholders to the next World Urban Forum (WUF), to take place in Egypt in November 2024.

This action translated concretely into the creation of several work groups, among which focused on “Cooperation and Solidarity” matters. This booklet draws from the results of their work. The French urban actors who took part to this group met at regular intervals, and they’ve

produced operational recommendations based on their highly valued expertise to feed the French advocacy at the event. In their recommendations, they particularly emphasized the issues behind local solidarity, the importance of structuring networks, and the evolution of action areas to access essential services.

I wish to address my warm thanks to all the members of this group for the work they have done. I also wish to address my salutations, in a more general way, to the external actions led by local government bodies and their partners.

Frédéric CHOLÉ

Delegate for local authorities and civil society
French Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs



Contributors

Co-pilots

- Eric Huybrechts, Manager of International affairs at Institut Paris Region
- Brigitte Bariol-Mathais, General Delegate, FNAU

Keynote Speaker

- Houda Odeimi, in charge of Development and Coordination, United Cities Lebanon Technical Office of Lebanese Municipalities

Partners



Coordination

- Brigitte Bariol-Mathais, Fnau / PFVT
- Carla Doncescu, Fnau / PFVT
- Maïa Martin, Fnau / PFVT
- Pierre Martinet, Fnau / PFVT

Translation

- Marie Medevielle





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Introduction

Demographic projections forecast an increase of 2 billion more people on Earth, combined with an ageing population overall. This dazzling growth is concentrated mainly in urban areas, especially in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia.

As urbanization accelerates and large cities expand, the challenges related to urban sprawl are becoming increasingly complex. Natural resources, already under significant strain, are facing even greater pressure, heightening existing vulnerabilities. The climate landscape for the coming decades won't be defined in Paris, Brussels, Washington, or Beijing, but rather in Cairo, New Delhi, Jakarta, and other similar cities. These nations are currently following a development trajectory similar to that of industrialized countries, heavily reliant on fossil fuels. We can't rightfully dictate developing countries how to lead their development. However, a real opportunity is emerging to cooperate with these nations, by supporting them into choosing different, alternative, and more resilient paths than the ones chosen by developed countries. We can draw precious lessons from some experiences led beyond our borders. Multi-scale cooperation has become a mandatory mean to face the future challenges which go beyond national borders.

Public policies are often meant to apply to circumscribed territories, at the scale of local government or of states. Yet rethinking local cooperation involves drawing away from those limited frames and going beyond our usual administrative limits. Cooperation between international stakeholders promotes knowledge, resources and best practices exchanges on how to tackle such challenges in a holistic way. This is why such cooperation actions are thought about, here, to apply to the local, national and regional levels, as well as the global level, in order to be a tool against inequalities.

As part of the second World Urban Forum to take place in Africa, this working group has primarily focused on issues relating to developing countries, especially countries from Africa, the Mediterranean area and the Arab world. If we want to support a collective understanding as well as cohesive actions on how to trigger the transition and step away from "business as usual", we must agree on collective messages to be shared and passed on during international debates addressing solidarity.

How can cooperation actions become levers to fight social and local inequalities, and support adaptation? What tools can we promote to support such actions?



PART 1: COLLECTIVE CHALLENGES

Cooperation actions that exist at all levels allow for collaborative projects that take into account local specificities and highlight the importance of building partnerships to fight environmental, social and territorial inequalities.

Reducing local disparities to face vulnerabilities

Growing urban and economic inequalities

The current economy, being more and more defined by its financialization, increases the dysfunctions of city production processes. Unequal access to resources, to essential services (housing, water & sanitation, transportation, energy, education, health) and to opportunities create deep divides, as we see with the polarization of already developed neighborhoods in strong contrast with the growing number of informal neighborhoods which are excluded from economic mechanisms. In this context, mutualizing resources, sharing expertise and implementing collaborative actions can help to create fairer and more resilient environments.

Digital tools; both decreasing and increasing inequalities

The digital transition can be perceived through the rapid evolution of innovative tools, and this situation emphasizes the importance of linking this transition to solidarity values. Such convergence gets accomplished when digital tools improve people's access to essential services and resources. This however inevitably implies fighting gaps that exist in terms of access and digital competence. Moreover, in Europe, cooperation must imply to closely knit together the digital and ecological transitions.

Shared resources, a cause of local conflicts

Natural resources are rarefying (water, biodiversity, etc.), and we should legitimately acknowledge them as common goods. They've strongly deteriorated through time, due to conflicts triggered by their usages. Today, these resources are still too often handled as private goods. To manage them properly, we need a collective and cohesive approach for the stakes which relate to their legal regulation and status, if we want to prevent vital resources from becoming less and less available and triggering local tensions and future vulnerabilities.



Territorializing international commitments at the local level

Struggling to build a horizontal approach

Integrated participation allows to shed a light on alternative governance approaches, for citizens and decision-makers to plan their territory in concertation and thereby draw away from more traditional vertical approaches. By encouraging the various stakeholders involved to directly collaborate, horizontal processes stimulate inclusive decision-making and co-created solutions, and thus helps to reflect the real needs of the parties involved. Choosing for a participatory approach stands at the heart of any cooperative process.

Strengthening local capacity: the necessary ground to build cooperation

Asymmetric relationships between states and local governments often result in communication difficulties. Training local representatives and municipal agents should be central because the governance modalities used by local authorities have a decisive impact on how projects get implemented, especially when the central government is dysfunctional. Appropriating more adaptive and flexible tools is crucial to avoid copy and pasting solutions, and to dare be disruptive instead.

Supporting the development of networks

Adjusting action frames to local realities

With new life models and lifestyle emerging, we see a redefinition of relations, with borders fading away. The world's metropolization provides an opportunity to think beyond administrative limits, supporting a refreshed take on our ways of life, which makes for a starting point to envision the needs and expectations of cooperation. This is why we must adapt cooperation actions to local realities and to specificities on the ground. "Copy-and-paste" models have proved inefficient, thus showing the importance of not projecting western conceptions of urban planning and of social life onto other countries, if we want the partners involved to be able to implement suitable and viable projects.

A lack of synergy between the various local expertise

Expertise-based partnerships are cooperation tools which foster innovation and help creating lasting projects, to move toward a shared future. Confronting and coordinating experiences helps identifying collective reflections and highlighting common goals. Structuring local cooperation networks is thus a mean to connect territories, and to promote inspiration and expertise sharing. Thanks to their partnering position and their neutrality, urban agencies play a role in connecting actors to concretize projects. These agencies connect state institutions, private and public stakeholders and local government bodies. They thereby support the integration of various administrative levels and help with the implementation and monitoring of public policies at local and national levels.



PART 2: GUIDELINES FOR 2050

Two-way perspective: France - Lebanon

The PFVT "guidelines" are operational synthesis documents that rely on the outcomes of workshops and crossed perspectives held between French and international actors. They are structured around three axes of reflection, crossing topics: 1, Actors and governance; 2, Disparities and social justice, 3- Economical stakes and funding. These guidelines define the key steps to be implemented in the short-, mid- and long runs. Through these crossed perspectives (Mediterranean area, Africa, etc.), the guidelines define pathways to be followed by all (purple guideline), as well as specific pathways: for France (in blue), and for Lebanon (in pink), in order to reach the goals, set for a 2050 horizon.

The growth of cities calls for new management methods

With the demographic transition, we expect the world population to grow by 2 billion people, meaning a 25% increase, in parallel of the population growing older and older. This growth should mostly regard cities, especially in sub-Saharan and South Asian countries. The fast speed at which urbanization happens, especially in developing countries, means that we're facing a massive challenge. To address it, solidarity and local cooperation are essential. We see the need for support systems and for new tools to prepare for these issues.

Local specificities imply solutions with a great level of flexibility

Considering the local specificities and contexts of each place, the granularity of local territories should be taken into account when building cooperation projects, to make flexibility and adaptation both mandatory. Sharing experience and knowledge is a necessary step to highlight codependences and reciprocities. Such exchange supports a better knowledge about local metabolisms, with the goal being to improve data collection and promote capacity transfers. In Lebanon for instance, cooperation is one of the rare direct support tools of municipalities' actions.

Common guidelines

RETHINKING TERRITORIAL COOPERATION

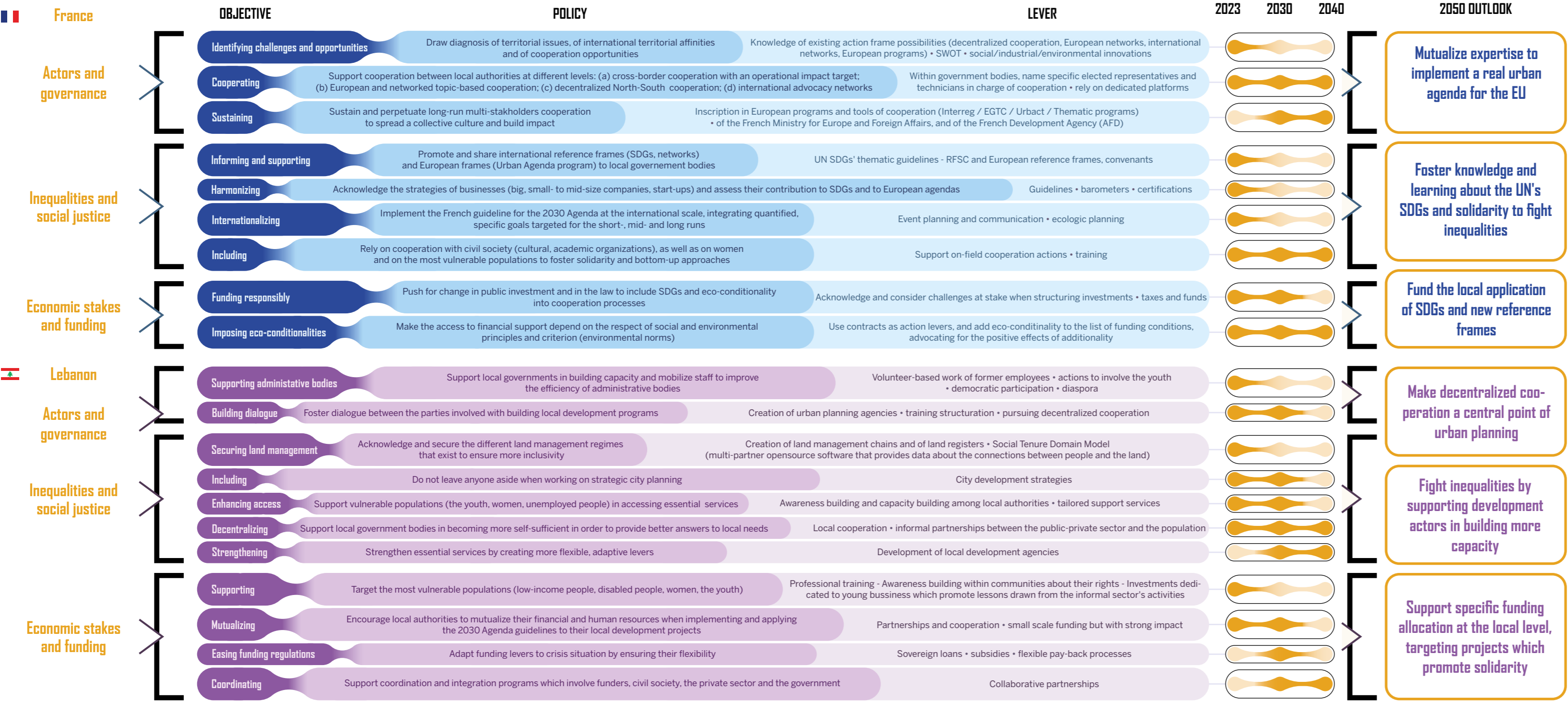


Actors and governance
Strengthening alliances and promote cohesive collaboration between different administrative levels

Inequalities and social justice
Applying supra-regional commitments locally, aiming for effective implementation

Economic stakes and funding
Support the allocation of funding for territorial policy at the hyperlocal scale

OBJECTIVE	POLICY	LEVER	2023	2030	2040	2050 OUTLOOK
Mapping actors	Set-up cohesive data collection and map out the actors involved	Observatories for statistics and qualitative data				Develop multi-scale, multi-sectors and multi-actors cities and territories
Empowering	Get elected representatives involved and enable them with tools to engage with cooperation	Decentralized cooperation • international networks (Covenant of Mayors, etc.)				
Building capacities	Refocus project development on users by including them to decision-making	Mandatory qualifying trainings, technical and engineering support • long-term knowledge exchange between peers				
Including	Refocus project development on users by including them to decision-making	Participatory governance (debates with local communities, including the most vulnerable populations)				
Consulting	Strengthen the role of independent institutions to create relays between experts and institutions and involve new actors into local governance	Partnership building with independent institutions to foster experts-politics-society interfaces				
Analysing	Analyze the impact of cooperation projects by connecting their indicators to reporting data	Strategic assessment and impact analysis of environmental, social, economic regulations				
Sharing	Support decentralized cooperation and knowledge exchange at the regional level	Mutualize resources (human and financial) and use R&D units to support local governments (data, diagnosis)				
Tackling cross-border topics	Define collective cross-border measures to mutualize the management of cross-border regions	Planspiel methodology • cross-border observatories				
Reporting	Impose transparency and accountability to public administration bodies	Development of e-services and e-governance to improve transparency and management within administration bodies while keeping physical • in-person services accessible				
Territorializing	Territorialize SDGs and international agendas (Agenda 2063, New Urban Agenda)	Local and sub-national "review report" • digital platforms (RFSC)				Fight inequalities through stronger solidarity alliances
Training	Train local authorities on SDGs and on international agenda commitments to promote cohesion	Mandatory qualifying trainings and awareness building				
Developing services	Improve service access for people living in rural areas and fight the divides between rural and urban areas	Reciprocity contracts • e-services				
Improving water access	Make water access a cooperation priority	Collaboration with water agencies to optimize actions and target needs • training of decision-makers about water usage conflicts				
Improving housing access	Support solidary land management to foster inclusive affordable housing and to increase the population capacity to build resilience	Housing coops and solidary land management programs to develop collective land/housing ownership				
Assessing	Standardize the SDG-based notion of impact assessment	Impose impact assessment both to the public and in the private sectors				
Choosing funding allocation	Allocate international funding to local cooperation projects	European neighboring areas • urban planning agencies • funding for technical and financial support				Allocate funding to the local level, to support inclusive and sustainable local development
Funding essential services	Standardize public development funds for essential services (water, waste, transportation, energy)	Set up the 1% rule requiring from French local authorities to dedicate 1% of their budget to essential services provided by international authorities				
Supporting local authorities	Set-up international and national financial institutions to support local governments	Develop organizations such as Caisses des Dépôts, Bank of Territories and the World Fund for City Development				
Securing funding	Enable cities to access funding and secure loans through national and international mutualization tools	locally-based Agence France				
Supporting vulnerable populations	Enable small projects, non-solvable populations and vulnerable populations to access funding (women, youth, indigenous, minorities, etc.)	Micro-finance (credits, insurance, sparing accounts, transfers) and alternative need-matching funding sources (diaspora remittances, tontines) supported by accounting and management trainings				
Building and developing capacities	Strengthen the municipalities' capacities to apply for funding	Technical expertise and financial engineering throughout all the development steps of urban planning projects (concepting, fundraising, structuration)				



Unsplash - Wonderlane





PART 3: RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1

Observation: The mismatch between international initiatives, national policies, and local priorities, often stemming from top-down approaches, frequently hampers the effective implementation of projects at the local level.



Adapting international, European and regional commitments to the local realities

- Encourage states to develop “local 2030 Agendas” in order to territorialize their goals
- Strengthen cross-cutting/vertical cooperation through collaborative, open data, multi-actor and non-state platforms.
- Mutualize capacities to limit costs and to strengthen local cohesion

Territorial COP in Guadeloupe, 2023 (FRANCE)

The launching plenary of the ecologic planning territorialization program took place on November 14, 2023. All parties involved (Guadeloupean elected representatives, State departments, local governments’ representatives, companies, non-profit organizations) engaged in a conversation to define a shared and coherent guideline meant to make Guadeloupe more equipped and more resilient to face climate change.



Recommendation 2

Observation: Most national and international financing systems in place today struggle to effectively engage local authorities, often due to their inflexibility in adapting to changing circumstances. These local entities, constrained by limited human and financial resources and restricted access to capital markets, remain underutilized within the current financing frameworks.



Strengthening and implementing more flexible international funding mechanisms, targeting everyone

- Identify non-sovereign funding sources to help cities access financial resources without increasing national debt levels
- Allow for more flexible funding rules for funding allocated to local governments (for instance, FICOL, by the French Development Agency), to make processes more adaptive to local needs.
- Provide micro-finance solutions to make room and include the households usually excluded from the traditional banking systems; Rely on both international and local guarantee funds, going beyond mere cash transfers, to encourage local banks to provide loans.

French Local Authorities Financing Facility (FICOL), 2014 (FRANCE) Piet ute coriaecaecea

The French Local Authorities Financing Facility is a financing tool of AFD which allows to fund development projects implemented by French local authorities in the context of their international partnerships. Its goal is to support the local development of foreign local authorities, and to promote French expertise in order to share good social and environmental practices.

Recommendation 3

Observation: Investments are primarily focused on the "formal" city rather than the "informal" areas. While these initiatives and funds support international cooperation for basic services, they don't promote cross-sector interventions in these neighborhoods, thereby excluding a significant portion of the population from the benefits of such cooperation.



Acknowledging, including and making use of informality in cooperation actions

- Accept and acknowledge informal neighborhoods and their importance by making them a part of urban strategies (urban planning programs, priorities, etc.)
- Plan cooperative projects towards informal neighborhoods with the communities, rather than for them.



- Adapt the Oudin-Santini law (allowing French local authorities to dedicate up to 1% of their budget to a sector) to the essential services sector (water & sanitation, energy, transportation and waste management) in order to finance international solidarity actions in informal neighborhoods.

3ZERO Houses, 2021

Developed by ACTED (non-profit organization), these houses are collaborative spaces created to facilitate partnerships, innovations and local solutions led by local stakeholders. They are dedicated to building a 3ZERO world (Zero Exclusion, Zero Carbon, Zero Poverty) and they rely on three functions: connecting different stakeholders across and between territories; liberating human potential through capacity building; and promoting local innovations. Four 3ZERO Houses currently exist: in Manila (Philippines), Douchanbé (Tadjikistan), Colombo (Sri Lanka) and Yangon (Myanmar)

Recommendation 4

Observation: In cooperation projects, the lack of transparency and reciprocity is a major concern. Implementing contracts can help address resource depletion and environmental impacts by clearly defining the responsibilities of all parties involved.



Making the concept of "contracts" operational and incorporating eco-conditionality and reciprocity clauses into partnerships.

- Build a legal framework to support the implementation of monitoring and reciprocity mechanisms as well as mechanisms to check the eco-conditionalities of projects
- Establish local cooperation deals centered around the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) applied to local actions, by collaborating with organizations from the civil society, in order to concretize commitments at various scales.
- Use networks to share and spread actions, guidelines and expertise, so that the parties involved can evenly share the benefits and efforts of an action

The principle of eco-socio-conditionality, Nouvelle Aquitaine Région, (FRANCE)

Endorsed by regional leaders in 2023 following extensive consultation, this principle enables Nouvelle Aquitaine to link its funding to environmental, economic, and social criteria. These criteria will gradually align with regional public policies. This initiative is part of the regional roadmap for energy transition, NéoTerra, which aims to enhance environmental policies while addressing social inclusion and combating discrimination.





Recommendation 5

Observation: Although more than 10 000 cooperation projects were created involving close to 5000 French local authorities, local finance has never been a topic of cooperation until now. Besides, without more local capacities building, the impact of cooperation remains limited, regardless the field involved.



Developing the local funding capacities of local authorities through decentralized cooperation

- Support local authorities in their search for co-funding mechanisms, in order to support local projects through diversified financial partnerships
- Strengthen the technical capacities of local administrations thanks to specific programs meant to improve their capacity to manage their finances and to implement their projects efficiently
- Implement tools to monitor and manage spending, to help local authorities optimize the use of their resources and the transparency of their financial processes

Project call, “Finances locales”, in support of decentralized cooperation, 2023 (FRANCE)

In collaboration with the United Cities and Local Governments network (UCLG), the Delegation for the Local Authorities and Civil Society (DGTCIV) from the French Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs has launched the first call for proposals to support decentralized cooperation in the field of local finance, to accelerate the implementation of the UN SDGs. This call aims to encourage initiatives led jointly by French and foreign local authorities, which promote local capacity building in the field of local finance management.



The revitalization of the Rachid Karame International Fair of Tripoli

As part of the urban management and territorial development cooperation project, in partnership with the Urban Community of Dunkerque, the Municipality of Tripoli, the Municipality of Zgharta/Ehden, the French Network of Urban Planning Agencies, the Flandre-Dunkerque Urban Planning Agency (AGUR), and United Cities Lebanon/Technical Office of Lebanese Cities, with the support of the French Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs (MEAE), a contest on the revitalization of the Rachid Karame International Fair of Tripoli has been launched.

Objectives of the contest:

- Highlight the Role of Urban Agencies: Use of the Tripoli International Fair as an example of urban revitalization.
- Raise Awareness Among Youth: Inform young people about the endangered heritage in their territory.
- Empowerment: Allow young people to feel like active participants.
- Enhance Communication: Improve dialogue between young people and municipalities.

Participants, including primary school students, high school students, and architecture students, were invited to showcase their creativity through various forms of expression such as comics, text, and innovative concepts. This competition highlighted the capability of urban agencies to engage the community and encourage reflection and innovation in urban revitalization.





Conclusion

To go beyond the traditional limits of our action frames, rethinking cooperation implies stepping away from spatial scales. The multiple kinds of partnerships that exist (South-South, North-South, cross-border, multi-scale, rural-urban) allow territories to mutualize knowledge and tools. On top of allowing to sustain cooperation, capacity mutualization helps harmonizing competence, and thereby helps to improve local territories' adaptation skills and reduce social and territorial inequalities.

If local authorities aren't trained enough, and don't grow sufficient awareness about how to use the tools they have at hand, they will face many difficulties. On the opposite, growing their new capacities to manage their territory and transform their vulnerabilities into

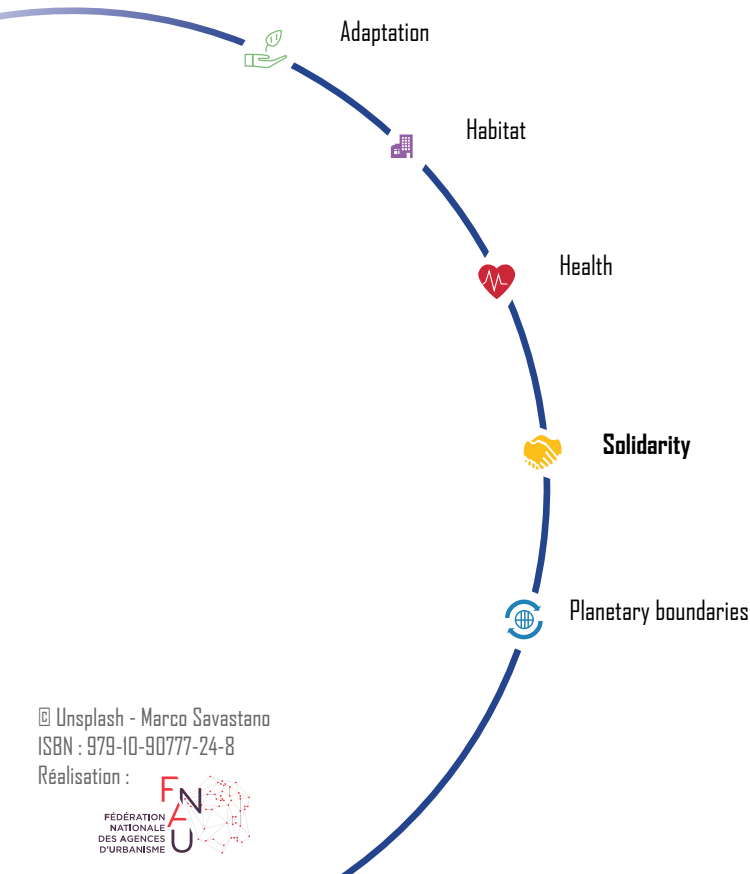
potentials will rely on flexible tools, adapted to their local specificities, such as micro-finance. Such solidarity tools should help grow more balance between territories.

Supporting and preserving inter-territorial cooperation thus implies to break away from domination dynamics, and to focus on the reciprocity of actions instead. Lifting boundaries between the national and local stakeholders involved with solidarity, and between the research, the civil society's NGO's, the unions and the public service worlds, reveals and highlights the community of interest that binds humans together – in order to build sustainable partnerships, and to compensate inequalities and spatial disparities.



P F V T

Launched in June 2011, the **French Partnership for cities and Territories (PFVT)** is a platform supported by the French Ministries of Europe, Foreign Affairs, Culture, and Ecological Transition and Territorial Cohesion. The PFVT is a multi-stakeholder partnership and think-tank meant as a hub to exchange and showcase the expertise of French urban development actors on an international scale. It involves almost two hundred organizations reflecting the diversity of France's urban expertise, helping to build a shared French vision based on exchanges and innovative, sustainable experiences. <https://www.pfvt.fr/>



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