

It Takes Two to Tango

Modalities and benefits of the collaboration
between universities and local governments

Kelly Henao

Daniel Samoilovich

Columbus Association

Sara Hoeflich

United Cities and Local Governments

Ciudad de Panamá, 22 de octubre de 2018





A study on the modalities and benefits of collaboration between universities and local governments, prepared in the context of the ***Erasmus + CityLab project: Engaging Students with Sustainable Cities in Latin America***

It aims to understand the conditions in which this collaboration is developed and its impact.

The heterogeneity of cases and their contexts help to understand the factors of success and the obstacles of collaboration. It is not intended, in any way, to offer a model, but to present some hypotheses and points of reflection that might help city and university leaders to improve their current collaboration.

A questionnaire was applied to 80 institutions in Latin America (most of them) and Europe.

The list of the universities interviewed is the following:

Universidad Austral de Chile, Chile
Universidad de la Sabana, Colombia
Instituto Tecnológico de Costa Rica
Universidade de Aveiro, Portugal
Universidad Rovira I Virgili, España
Universidad de Talca, Chile
Universidad Nal. Autónoma de Nicaragua
Universidad de Caldas, Colombia
Universidad de Buenos Aires, Argentina
Universidad Nacional de Córdoba, Argentina
Universidad Simón Bolívar, Venezuela



GM

Geoff Mcfetridge

The most interesting responses were selected to develop 20 in-depth interviews with university officials and, in some cases, local governments authorities.

Antwerp University, Belgium
Université de Technologie de Compiegne, France
Instituto Tecnológico y de Estudios Superiores de Monterrey, México
Universidad Iberoamericana, México
Pontificia Universidad Católica de Valparaíso, Chile
Universidad Autónoma de Yucatán, México
Universidad de Sonora, México
Universidad del Salvador, Argentina
Universidad Minuto de Dios, Colombia

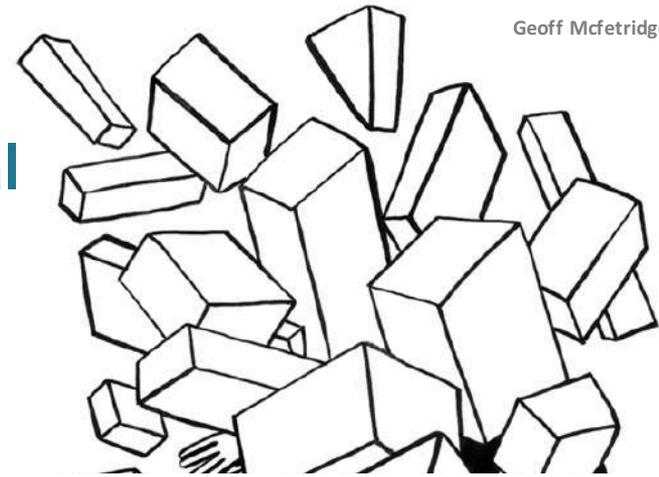


Origin of collaborations: individual or institutional initiatives?

Regional Universities that are born with an impact mission in the territory are more open to this type of collaboration.

- The interest of local governments authorities is greater when the region is facing a reconversion process for which it does not have yet the necessary human resources. They are often medium-sized or small cities.
- In many situations, collaboration responds to the need of local governments to outsource certain functions (administrative logic), but in others,
- Also, to enable the acquisition of greater powers and resources (political logic).

We identified **Five types of situations that stimulate the interest of the local government authorities to cooperate with the University:**

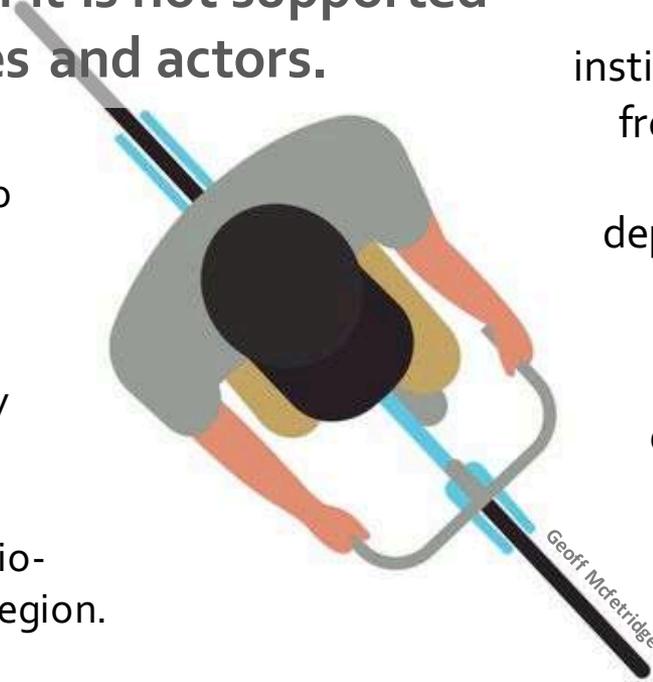


- a socio-economic crisis,
- approval of new regulations or policies, for example, regarding sustainable development goals and their compliance at the local level,
- the development of public policies with financial incentives,
- the desire to innovate in the planning processes and in the design and implementation of projects;
- the interest in addressing social requirements (employability, equity, accessibility, mobility, etc.).

In general, cooperation does not begin with a strategic plan if it is not supported by specific experiences and actors.

When the **private sector** is also involved and the relationship becomes triangular. The private sector gains competitiveness, the university acquires greater relevance and legitimacy, and the **local government** improves the socio-economic sustainability of its region.

When cooperation is based on these three pillars, it is more likely to transcend possible political changes and achieve a greater impact on the territory.



On the side of the **universities**, the leadership of these kind of collaboration come from the institutional level (Principal's team) or from the academic units or support structures. To a large extent, this depends on the institutional culture.

In many of the analyzed cases, there is a sum of partial initiatives until the institution integrates all such partial efforts into a strategic cooperation plan encompassed generically within its "third mission".

"Revolving doors", with interchangeable roles that allow them to communicate with academia and local politics with equal efficiency play a fundamental articulating role.

A particularly interesting aspect is the role of the staff that hold a position at the local government and at the same time are linked to academic activities of the University.



Environment and territory: characteristics of the Cooperating regions

In **larger cities**, governments and universities share common problems of cities (mobility, waste, water use, regeneration of urban spaces). In this context, the concern to develop an "intelligent specialization" arises.

In **small or medium-sized cities**, the most fertile territories for a cooperation between the local government and the universities arise from the need of a reconversion, in general by the decline of a productive activity, typically primary.



Geoff Mcfetridge

Specific interventions with a direct impact, such as development of tourism, technological development linked to the creation of jobs, urban planning and even issues directly linked to the objectives of sustainable development: solid treatment, water management, mobility, urban planning, etc. Among the actions of a more global nature, tasks are related to the revision of regulatory plans, monitoring of investments, development of human resources at municipalities and development of strategic plans.

AREAS OF INTERVENTION



The characteristics of the territory might have an impact on the type of strategy that makes possible the collaboration.



©GH Geoff Mcfetridge

Cities with lower GDP, but growing	Cities with equal or greater GDP in growth situation
Cundinamarca, Colombia	Tarragona, Spain
Caldas, Colombia	Córdoba, Argentina
Los Ríos, Chile	Buenos Aires, Argentina
Maule, Chile	Antwerp, Belgium
V Región, Chile	Ciudad de Mexico, Mexico
Aveiro, Portugal	Zapopan, Mexico
Oise, France	Yucatan, Mexico
	Sonora, Mexico

Four types of situations can be identified:

- Cities with lower GDP, and in a situation of decrease.
- **Cities with lower GDP, but in growth situation.**
- **Cities with equal or greater GDP in growth situation**
- Cities with equal or greater GDP in a situation of decrease.

Scope of interventions: human and financial resources

Collaborations achieving an impact have always count on resources from the public or private sector. In many cases, the University and the local government have come together to cover project financing.

In other cases, both organizations have responded together to a national call for a competitive fund, a European or an international fund.



Geoff Mcfetridge

Financing is a decisive factor although not the only one, for the development of significant and sustainable initiatives. In general, such financing depends on the relevance of the proposed initiatives.

In several cases the financing of public or private international organizations acted as trigger for the collaboration.



GM
Geoff McIretridge

Its importance is triple:

- It gives access to freely available resources
- It is well known that international financing enhances the integration among diverse stakeholders around a common objective.
- The intervention of international financing organizations act as a "shield" against eventual political changes.

TRUST BUILDING



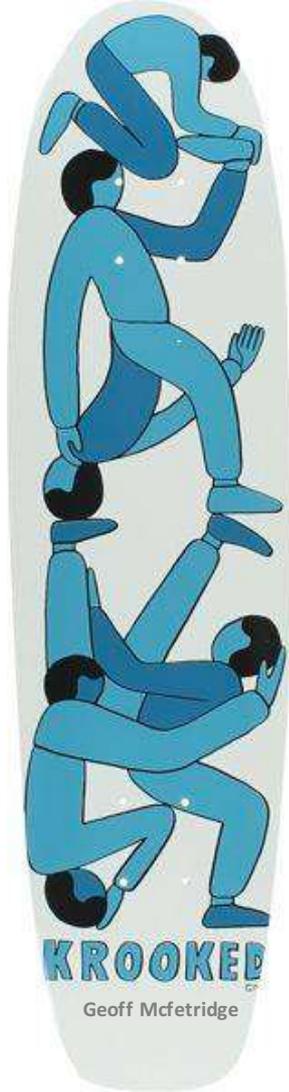
It starts from an initial nucleus and progressively new actors are incorporated thanks to an articulating role of the University

A decisive factor for achieving more extensive interventions. **Trust takes time but once it is achieved it allows stabilizing the collaboration and multiplying it on several fronts.** It also enables scalability.

As for initiatives on a larger scale, usually it becomes necessary to establish a specific organization. This institutionalization in turn helps to increase the scalability of initiatives.

Effects and Impacts of collaboration

The fundamental mission of the university is to generate *human resources*.



Beyond the concrete impacts of each initiative the collaboration brings more general benefits to **local governments**: the improvement of the profile of the region, the attraction of investments, the attraction or retention of population, a greater tax collection and development of productive activities.

Hiring of graduates in the local government, who often are familiar with local governments thanks to the completion of an internship;

The **private sector also benefits from a greater availability of qualified human resources**.

The training of human resources has an impact on the **encouragement of entrepreneurs, particularly significant in regions with relatively high youth unemployment rates**.

*Direct
impact on
public
governance*

Continuing education offer for local government officials or internship programs for professionals, in the long term, **becomes a fertile ground for the collaboration between both organizations.**



Disciplines prone to collaboration and interdisciplinary approaches

The disciplines most prone to collaboration are **architecture and urbanism, political science, public management, civil engineering, electronics and computing, sociology, economics and administration**. Other areas are related to the specific environment characteristics, such as **tourism, sustainable rural development, urban studies**.



An interdisciplinary approach is facilitated by some type of structure or unit capable of integrating or channeling the demands between the academic and support units within the Universities.

Synergies require an organization that favors them. In few cases a virtuous circle has been established between training, research, consulting and continuous training activities.

University legitimacy

In several of the cases, the local government takes advantage of the technical capacity, the legitimacy and the neutral role in politics that the University can play to stimulate participatory planning methodologies



Social impact of universities located in peripheral cities and neighborhoods has a stimulating effect on territorial development.

Universities that manage to establish substantive cooperation with local governments put their knowledge, skills and connections at stake.

Their *knowledge* is directly related to the quality of their academic resources. It is the "***Stimulated Academic Heartland***" identified by Burton Clark as one of the five characteristics of entrepreneurial universities (Clark, 1998).



Their *competences* are mainly of two types: technical competences and political competences (mainly linked to decision-making). Those universities that manage to put into play both kinds of competences, usually have a strategic vision and knowledge of the environment, backed by top management.

This is key when the University assumes a broker role of between different local, private and public entities.

Their *connections* refer both to their access to national government instances, to other actors of the local environment, as well as to their international connections.



The latter are significant, when it comes to supporting the development of tourism or to obtain resources from international cooperation.

These connections constitute an asset for the articulating role of the University.

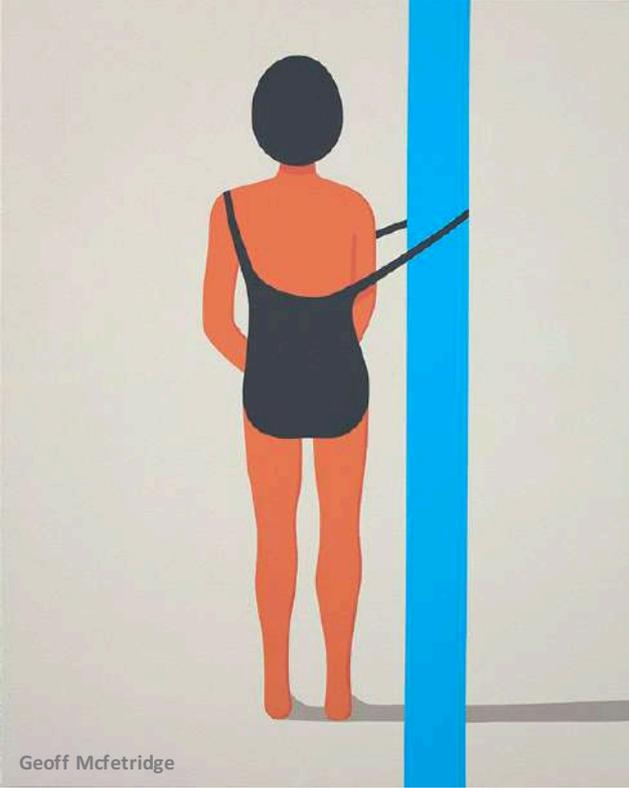
*Obstacles from the University and local government: **lack of political will and resources***

The main obstacle on the side of local government is the lack of political continuity, which limits the time needed to build trust.

In some cases, local government authorities are not fully aware of the challenges facing their environments and in these cases the University must invest itself to gain legitimacy and share analysis or concrete possibilities of progress.



Geoff Mcfetridge



On the side of the University three fundamental obstacles have been identified:

- **Insufficient openness to the environment** (with consequent disciplinary fragmentation);
- The **lack of flexibility of the pedagogical model** (which does not stimulate the participation of students in innovative collaborative initiatives with local governments); and
- The **lack of recognition** of the tasks carried out by the academics in the academic load and their progression in the career.

In general, strategies for linking and collaborating with the environment are not usually recognized within universities. Teachers who perform well do so by sacrificing work in teaching/research or filling all these requirements with great effort.

The development of **mixed structures** or at least with a representation of the external sector also plays a decisive role: technological incubators, sectorial technological centers, technological platforms. **This type of structure confirms the existence of an "expanded periphery", which, according to Burton Clark, characterizes entrepreneurial universities.**



Geoff Mcfetridge

The *environmental dimension* is an emerging theme of collaboration between universities and local governments.



The Universities can play a role stimulating with the results of their investigations the discussion on environmental issues in the political agenda. *University can support the development of the agenda of sustainable development goals, particularly those related to Climate Change.*



The University and its campus may constitute a laboratory of solutions and innovations.

The fulfilment of ambitious goals, as the Sustainable Development Goals, requires partnerships that also include private actors. **A common element in the cases analysed is that all the actors stop feeling that they preach in the desert: the real enemy is not globalization but isolation.** In particular, for intermediate and small cities the education sector can play a key role in the establishment and consolidation of an international strategy for local governments.

In Conclusion

Our analysis allows us to anticipate that they are predestined to consolidate and expand their collaboration. **Universities and cities have one element in common: they are organizations in transition that must reaffirm their contribution to greater challenges - equity, climate change, social mutations - and in this way reaffirm their legitimacy.**





It Takes Two to Tango

Modalities and benefits of the collaboration between universities and local governments

Thanks for your attention

