

My time with Mesopartner



The founding of Mesopartner is for me closely related to our move to Argentina and working in development. Since finishing university in 1991, I have worked continuously in areas related to local and regional development in my home country Germany and other European countries. My special relationship with Spain, where I studied and worked, created an affinity with, and interest in, Latin America. Mesopartner gave me the opportunity to extend my work experience far from home.

We have already been living for ten years in Argentina and I travel frequently around the region. In the beginning, especially living in the city of Buenos Aires, I saw a lot of similarities with southern Europe. This is easy to explain, because large parts of the local population are decedents from Europe. Until the middle of the 20th century Argentina was one of the most developed countries in the world and the hope for numerous migrants from Europe. Having lived now for a while in Latin America, I became more aware about the developmental challenges, such as the large disparities between rich and poor, the uncontrolled growth of megacities, poverty and informality. At the same time, I appreciate a more relaxed lifestyle, which emphasises collective values and values more indigenous roots reflected in the concept of 'good living'.

Usually my work consists of projects, where I work with different clients and assignments in parallel. This also requires a lot of travelling, alternating with periods in my home office. This type of work has the advantage of providing many experiences and realities in a short time, but it often becomes stressful coordinating various tasks and people. At the same time, I also experience continuity, since nearly for a decade I have been working with specific clients such as the Technical Cooperation of the German National Metrology Institute (PTB) or the Universidad San Martín (UNSAM) in Argentina. Also from time to time I return to a country where I worked before, and meet with local colleagues and stakeholders, which makes visible a broader development process beyond the short-term programme and project. Looking back on the situation ten years ago, I recognized a lot of capacity and institution building in Latin America. The countries here are not only economically better off, but have also increased their self-esteem.

Living in a developing region helps me to understand better the needs of the people. In many situations I now see the world from a southern perspective, which helps me to facilitate understanding between the International Donor Community and the beneficiary countries. An additional advantage of being a Mesopartner is that I have direct access to our partners and associates living and working in both hemispheres. Within our firm we practice daily so-called South-South and Triangular Cooperation. Mesopartner makes it possible to live as a global citizen and work for a better world. This really satisfies me.

Ulrich Harmes-Liedtke (uhl@mesopartner.com)