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THE COMMUNICATION OF INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION AND DEVELOPMENT IN PIEDMONT

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Abstract

This work, which is part of the European project "Network communication for development", deals with the communication of international cooperation and development in the media of Piedmont.

The goal is to offer a snapshot of how local media address the issues of international cooperation and development that can provide elements to reflect on which are the strengths and the weaknesses of the information landscape in Piedmont.

The research focuses on the coverage of issues related to international cooperation and development in local newspapers distributed in Piedmont and in the evening edition of the Regional news program on RaiTre. The discussion also uses the information collected through a questionnaire to editorial staff working in Piedmont that aims at understanding how they organize the communication of these kind of issues.

Introduction

This paper presents the first data on the presence of international cooperation and development in the local media of Piedmont.

The research is part of the EU-funded project "Network communication for development". The leader of the initiative is the Federación Catalana de ONG para el desarrollo (85 member organizations), based in Barcelona, together with the two partners: the Consorzio delle ONG Piemontesi and RESACOOOP, the coordination of the Region of Rhône-Alpes based in Lyon (the latter consisting of several NGOs but also by French local authorities and universities).

The project has three main objectives: 1) to establish a network of journalists and media professionals for development, 2) to improve the quality of local news about international cooperation and development and the Millennium Development Goals and 3) to enhance the skills of the people in charge of communication among the members of the three regional platforms. The analysis presented here participate to the achievement of the second objective and will be completed by November 2013.

This paper is organized as follows: first, we will discuss the results of the research carried out in the local papers of Piedmont, then we will show the data about the Regional Newscast of RaiTre and, finally, we will present the first results of a questionnaire to editorial staff working in Piedmont.

Local newspapers

Local newspapers in Piedmont have a strong journalistic tradition, rooted in the territory. Local newspapers reach their readers with thousands of copies by postal subscription and on newsstands, with a high readers loyalty rate. Readers bases mainly consist of territories inhabited by 80 to 150 thousand people.

The spread of local newspapers in Piedmont reaches a total of about 600,000 copies a week, with an actual readership of more than 2 million people out of a total of approximately 4 million and 400 thousand inhabitants. Since the local newspapers are in majority weekly or bi-weekly, they remain more days in homes and they can thus be read by more than one person. This aspect highlights one of the most important features of local press, which is to be primarily in-depth newspapers, in contrast to the steady stream of information coming from the other media.

The analysis was conducted by querying the database of the Piedmont Region "MenteLocale", a storage platform of printed Piedmont developed by the Press Office.

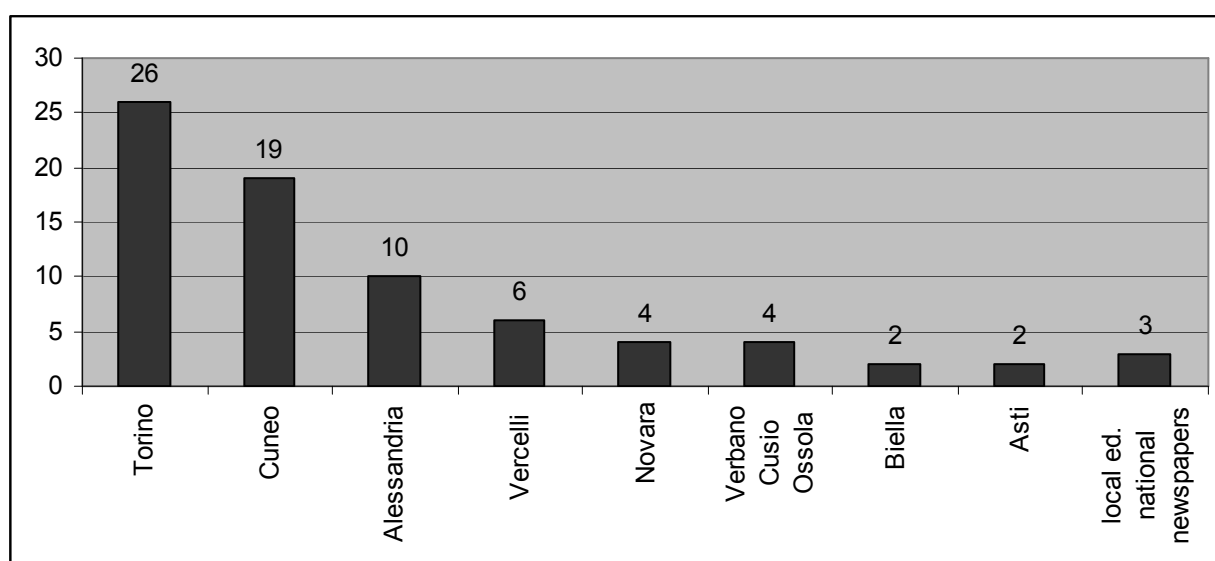
The list of newspapers consulted shows a geography of Piedmont extremely interesting from the point of view of the vitality of local journalistic system (see Graph 1).

The research was carried out in the following newspapers:

- Province of Alessandria (AL): *Ancora, Monferrato, Nostro Giornale, Novese, Panorama Novi, Panorama Tortona, Piccolo, Popolo, Vita Casalese, Voce Alessandrina.*



- Province of Asti (AT): *Corriere Astigiano, Gazzetta di Asti.*
- Province of Biella (BI): *Biellese, Eco Biella.*
- Province of Cuneo (CN): *Bisalta, Bra Oggi, Corriere Alba, Corriere Bra, Corriere Saluzzo, Corriere Savigliano, Cuneo Sette, Fedeltà, Gazzetta Alba, Gazzetta Saluzzo, Guida, Idea, Idea Sport, Nuovo Braidese, Piazza Grande Fossano, Provincia Granda, Saluzzo Oggi, Saviglianese, Unione Monregalese.*
- Province of Novara (NO): *Azione, Corriere Novara, Novara Oggi, Tribuna Novarese.*
- Province of Verbania (VB): *Eco Risveglio Arona, Eco Risveglio Ossola, Eco Risveglio Verbano, Prealpina.*
- Province of Vercelli (VC): *Corriere Eusebiano, Corriere Valsesiano, Gazzetta, Notizia Oggi Borgosesia, Notizia Oggi Vercelli, La Sesia.*
- Province of Torino (TO): *Canavese, Corriere Chieri, Corriere Moncalieri, Corriere Sportivo, Cronaca Qui Torino, Eco Chisone, Eco Mese, Gazzetta Canavese, Luna Nuova, Mercoledì, Monviso, Nordovest, Nostro Tempo, Notizie Comune, Nuova Periferia Chivasso, Nuova Periferia Settimo, Nuova Voce, Nuovasocietà, Risveglio Canavese, Risveglio Popolare, Sentinella Canavese, Sprint e Sport, Valsusa, Vita Diocesana Pinerolese, Voce Canavese, Voce del Popolo.*
- National newspapers with local editions: *Il Giornale, La Repubblica, La Stampa*¹



Graph 1: Nr. of newspapers/ province

Methodology

The digital archive *MenteLocale* collects the pages of newspapers that regularly send the material in pdf format. The database allows users to search pages by selecting from one to three textual units (key words), which can be searched by combining three Boolean operators "and", "near" or "not". The limited amount of search fields, it should be remembered, does not allow to refine that much about the query string. However, the method of investigation allow the definition of quantitative flows that, once defined, may be repeated, giving rise to significant trends.

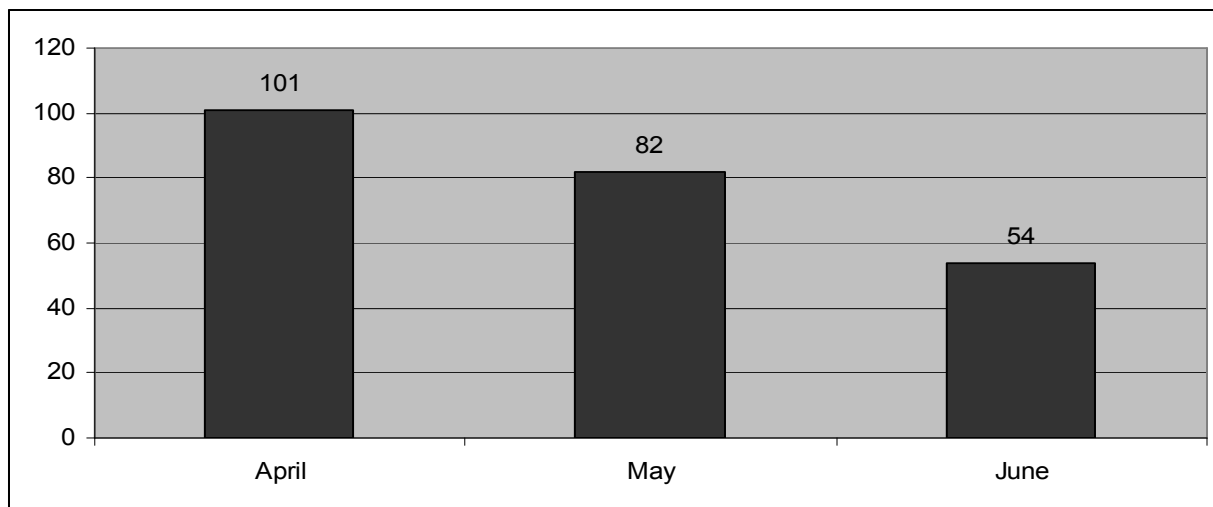
Results

The research was divided into two phases. The first one has detected the frequency with which, in the period between April 1 and June 30 (2013), articles have appeared with at least one of the keywords selected: *cooperazione internazionale* (international cooperation, 85), *cooperazione e sviluppo* (cooperation and development, 200), *ONG* (NGO, 80), *internazionalizzazione* (internationalization, 158), *umanitari/o/a/e* (humanitarian, 353). In this way we collected 877 articles in total. In the second phase, all articles have been read to verify their actual relevance to the topic

¹ *Il Giornale* and *La Repubblica* have regional editions, while *La Stampa* has a local issue for each of the 8 provinces of Piedmont, each with its own pages. Therefore, in this paper, articles published by the various provincial editions of *La Stampa* will be counted among the articles published in each province, while the articles of *Il Giornale* and *La Repubblica* will be kept separate.

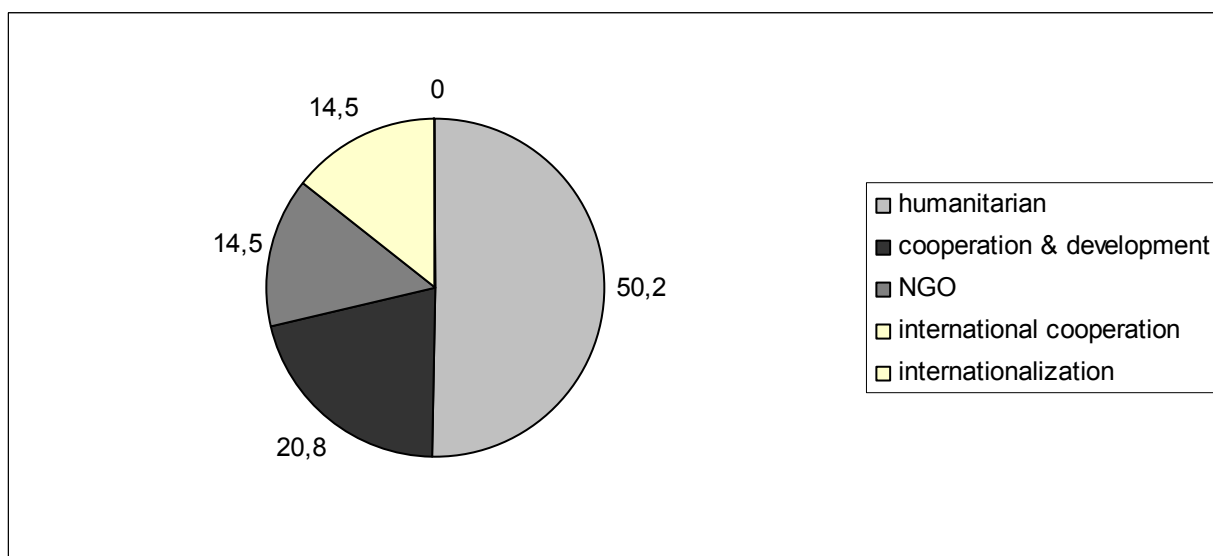


under investigation. Once the analysis was completed, it emerged that there are 237 articles related to the topic of this study². The presence of the articles varies over time: in April were 101, to May 82 and June 54 (see graph 2).



Graph 2: number of relevant article/month

From the reading of the collected material emerges as, among those used, the keyword 'humanitarian' is the one that collects the largest number of articles (50.2%), followed by 'international cooperation' (20,8%) and 'development and cooperation' (14.5%) and 'NGO' (14.5%)³. No article on topics related to international cooperation for the development was instead found by using the term 'internationalization' (see graph 3). The fact that 'humanitarian' in its various forms appears to be the most used word in the articles confirms that the term humanitarian ended up becoming an overused adjective [1] used both to create emotional involvement and to legitimize external interventions [2]. Other keywords are evidently being too technical and specific and therefore of limited use to outside their specific field.



Graph 3: relevant articles/ keyword

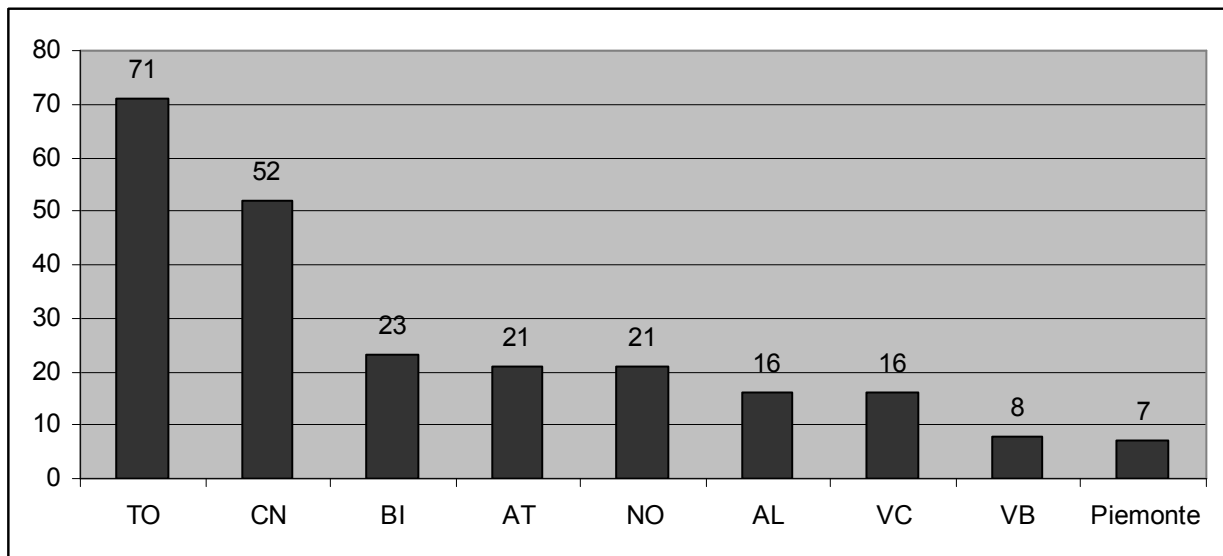
The number articles by province (Alessandria 16, Asti 21, Biella 23, Cuneo 52, Novara 21, Torino 71, Verbania 8, Vercelli 16, Piedmont 7), on the one hand, reflects the disparity between provinces in terms of number of newspapers, with Turin and Cuneo which are clearly distinguishable. On the other hand, it reveals how some provinces - in

² The value is calculated net of the cases (34 in total) in which the same article has been identified using multiple keywords.

³ n this case values are calculated including all keywords found in the articles, then n = 271.



particular Asti and Biella - have a significant number of articles about international cooperation and development in relation to the number of newspapers published. Similarly, one can observe a lack of attention to these issues in the regional editions of *Il Giornale* and *La Repubblica*. The limited presence of articles on these titles may be due to the fact that, since they have to cover the news from the entire region, it is more difficult for news on international cooperation for development or on NGOs to respond to so-called "substantive criteria" [3] of newsworthiness that define the importance that a news can have: the type of actors involved, the geographical proximity, the number of people involved, the possible future developments. The more geographically limited is the area covered by a newspaper, the greater is the possibility that news stories get visibility on its pages.



Graph 4: number of relevant articles/ province

The section where most of the articles are is the *Cronaca Locale* (Local News), which collects 60.7%, followed by the pages of *Cultura e Spettacoli* (Culture and Shows) with 12.6%. All other sections, including *Attualità* (Current, 2.9%), *Esteri* (Foreign News, 2.9%) and *Economia* (Economics, 1.2%), have a very limited number of articles. This fact, together with data about the occasion of the article - which in 73.4% are originated by events - even very small - on the territory (eg fundraising concerts, book presentations, ethical markets), on the one hand, confirms the fundamental importance of the geographical proximity of the events or people involved as a means of access to the pages of local newspapers. On the other hand, it could explain the absence of the use of stereotypes in the articles examined, in addition to being an indicator of poor specialization of journalists dealing with themes related to international development cooperation: a factor that could push to treat that generically in the pages of report local and "to follow" simply the flow of events in the area, with little attention in deepening the news.

We also found that in 46.4% articles there are references to specific countries or areas: the majority of them uses generically the term Africa (22.7%), while the most mentioned country is Mali (14.5%), followed by Kenya (6.3%), Burkina Faso (5.4%), Brazil and India (4.5%), Ethiopia, Nepal and Tanzania (3.6%). The other countries or areas have very few references. This result, on the one hand, shows how journalists tend to use generic geographical references ('Africa') instead of precise indication of a country and, on the other hand, it points out how the emergency in Mali has been present in local newspapers.

The result of the study on the visibility of the articles shows that they are in majority of small size (35.4%) or medium (33.3%). The fact that the largest number of items do not bear the signature of the author (64.9%) and that the majority of them are of small or medium size would seem to suggest the direct use of press releases by the newspaper. To find a reply to that hypothesis, we crossed the data regarding the items with greater visibility, those that are big sized and high-cut, which is 19.8% of the total. Of these, only 17% is published without signature. This result seems to confirm the hypothesis that for the items with poor visibility into the page newspapers tend to make use of texts already written, while news to which is dedicated more space tends to be processed by the journalists of the magazine.

In this analysis, it is important also to highlight the presence of some of those that can be considered "best practices" for the communication of issues related to international development cooperation and the actors involved in it. Actually, the study showed the presence of local newspapers that host sections on topics such as business associations, cooperation and the South of the world: *L'Eco di Biella* (Biella) has the heading *Associazione della settimana* (The association of the



week) and *La Bisalta* (Cuneo) 'Cuneo-Associazioni' (Cuneo' Associations), *Cronaca Qui Torino* (Torino) hosts 'Volontariato e solidarietà' (Volunteering and solidarity), while *La Voce del Popolo* (Torino) has 'Sud' (South). It is an important element of context as it is indicative of a certain opening of journalism that contributes to the creation of a relevant frame in the communication of these issues and that therefore may constitute a good practice useful for the purposes of improving the quantity and quality of the communication of issues related to cooperation and development and its actors.

Local TV news : TgR Piemonte

TgRegione of Piedmont (TgR) is the regional television news broadcasted on the national broadcast Rai 3, produced by the Regional Newspaper. It constitutes the main means of television news for the region's inhabitants.

Methodology

The analysis of TgR examined the main edition of the newscast, that of 7.30 p.m., in the period April-June 2013.

The survey was conducted in two phases. The first was developed through a keyword search (using 'international cooperation', 'development and cooperation', 'internationalization', 'NGO', 'humanitarian') in the database of Teche RAI in Turin, where all the services of all editions of the TgR are archived by keywords. It was decided to use the same keywords used for searching the local papers both because it was considered were those that could better identify relevant services for the diagnostic study, both because this allows to create dialogue between the results obtained in the two samples.

In the second phase, to deepen the research, the entire 7.30 p.m. edition has been watched in the first week of April (1-7), the second week of May (6-12) and the third of June 3 (17-23) to check the presence of services relating to the topics of interest to this study that had not emerged by keywords. In this way it is possible, on the one hand, to check the possible margin of error given by the use of keywords and, secondly, to verify the possible presence of relevant topics eventually excluded from our survey.

Results

The conduct of the two stages of the inquiry TgR of Piedmont did not reveal any services related to the issues of international cooperation and development. This lack of data is in itself an important result and must be taken into account for the achievement of the specific objectives of the project "Network communication for development."

This result, as previously written about the newspapers with regional editions, can be explained by the low appeal of news related to international cooperation for development and the actors involved in it than other types of information considered most relevant at the regional level.

Local editorial staff

After having examined the communicative products, the study focused on the communication actors that operate in Piedmont to understand how they are organized, whether and how they deal with the issues of international development cooperation and how they evaluate their contribution in the communication of these issues. To do this, more than 250 newsrooms in Piedmont (including the press, internet, radio and TV) were contacted via email to answer to an online questionnaire for which they received a reminder to fill once a week for a month, from June 24 to July 18. So far, 16 answers have been received.

Methodology

The questionnaire is structured in a first part of questions designed to reconstruct how the editorial staff is organized, followed by a more specific part focused on the subject of this research, which asks how often are published news related to the international development cooperation, if there are people specialized in these issues, and which sources are used for this kind of news.

Results

Although this part of the research is still going on, we try here to sketch the partial results obtained from the small number of responses obtained so far.

As for the journalistic routine, the data collected so far confirm what was observed in the study of the newspapers: the majority of editors who claims to treat, even infrequently, information concerning Co-operation and Development (14) does so especially in the section of Local News (5), 3 in Economics, 2 in Foreign News, one has a special section, one uses the Front Page, one in the section 'Society', one in Politics .

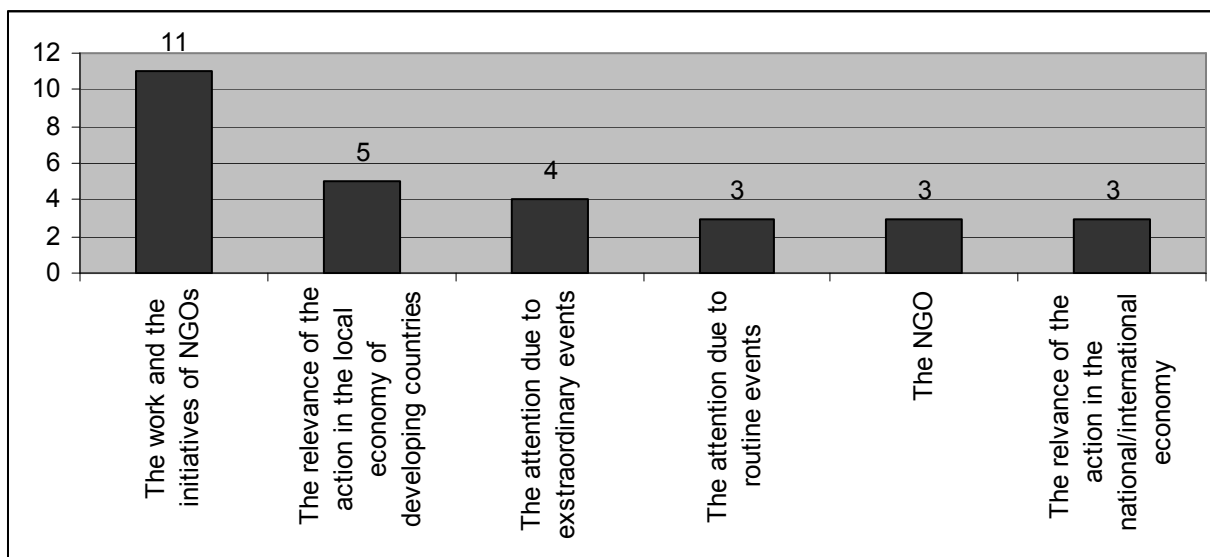
In addition, four say they feature at least a specialist on issues related to international cooperation and developing countries: in two cases it is a collaborator, in one case it has an internal editor who is specialized in this area and in one



case the tested claims to have more than one specialist in the field but does not specify what their classification. Among those that declared that they have specialists, 6 stated that they do not deal with these issues never or almost never, 3 admit they do not have sufficient resources to have them, while 2 claim that they do not consider necessary to have a specialist in this field.

Moreover, among those who responded to the questionnaire, 6 claimed to have hosted public awareness campaigns related to the issues of development cooperation promoted by cooperation actors at international, national or local level. In all cases they did it for free.

Regarding the sources of information used by newspapers, it is relevant to note that the vast majority of those who responded (11) said that, when they talk about international development cooperation, they mainly use as sources direct personal contact with the actor/s involved. The others declared to use press agencies or institutional sources of information (press, newsletters or websites of Ministry, Region, Province, City etc.).



Graph 5: Main focus of pieces concerning cooperation according to journalists (multiple answers were possible).

Among the questions posed to the editors was to describe in five words what for them is the international development cooperation. Figure 1 shows their answers.



Figure 1: Words describing cooperation and development according to local journalists



The responses collected so far show a mainly positive conception of international development cooperation by journalists Piedmont. The result, however, has to be confirmed at the end of this part of the study.

Conclusions

The analysis conducted so far aims us to draw a reflection on "communication for development".

Data show that the presence of news related to international development cooperation and its actors is in general a poor and mostly linked to events in the area. Furthermore, data collected from newspapers seem to suggest a lack of specialization of journalists on these issues although cases of thematic headings on some newspapers are a good example of how the presence of development and cooperation and of the actors involved in it can be improved on the pages of the newspapers Piedmont.

Actually, a better communication can create a favorable ecology for development programs by making development interventions more vernacular and thus facilitating interactions between the actors of cooperation (e.g. NGOs) and the public [4].

Notes

[1] See Medici Senza Frontiere (2004) "Documento introduttivo ai lavori del Workshop: Tra crisi umanitarie e azione umanitaria in crisi: lezioni apprese, nuove sfide e scenari futuri", Pisa, 25-26-27 novembre. Available online: http://www.medicisenzafrontiere.it/Immagini/file/azione_umanitaria/Atti-SantAnna.pdf

[2] Conoscenti, M. (2004), *Language engineering and media management strategies in recent wars*. Rome: Bulzoni Editore.

[3] Sorrentino, C. (2002), *Il giornalismo. Cos'è e come funziona*. Rome: Carocci.

[4] Inagaki, N. (2007) (Edited by), "Communicating the Impact of Communication for Development: Recent Trends in Empirical Research". World Bank Working Paper N. 120, Washington D.C.: The World Bank. Available online: http://www-wds.worldbank.org/external/default/WDSContentServer/WDSP/IB/2007/08/10/000310607_20070810123306/Rendered/PDF/405430Communic18082137167101PUBLIC1.pdf

