

The role of cooperativism in local development: realities and perspectives

El papel del cooperativismo en el desarrollo local: realidades y perspectivas

Tania Vargas Fernández

Centro de Estudios de Dirección, Desarrollo Local, Turismo y Cooperativismo (CE-GESTA). Facultad de Ciencias Económicas y Empresariales. Universidad de Pinar del Río "Hermanos Saíz Montes de Oca". Cuba. Email: tvargas@upr.edu.cu



The consolidation of the cooperative sector in Cuba, taking as a reference the experience accumulated at the international level, as well as the good practices achieved by the agricultural sector, constitutes an aspect of vital importance for the achievement of sustainable economic development at the local level.

Cooperative enterprises, as actors of local development, play a decisive role in the economic and social transformation perceived by the territories, from the production of goods and services and the satisfaction of the social needs of members, managers, workers and their families and society.

The State's relations with cooperatives occupy an essential place and therefore have a decisive influence on the socio-economic activity of these entities and of society as a whole. In this sense, it is necessary to design and implement policies that are based on the territorial perspective, from the appropriate strategic administration, for the sake of an

efficient management of local development (Marín, 2015).

In an increasingly globalized world, local development unfolds as a present and viable alternative for those territories that are committed to its implementation; whenever the articulation of the different local actors, the use of endogenous and exogenous resources, citizen participation, among others, are considered as fundamental pillars. It is necessary that they lead to substantial changes in the economic, social, natural and political-institutional order, which supreme end is the improvement of the quality of life of the local population.

In contrast to the criteria that prevailed for a long period over the "[...] ideal of a planned society that implied the elimination of any initiative that did not come from the central State...[where]... the local initiative was considered disintegrating by planners who loved coherence and uniformity" (Arocena, 1995), in recent years, a large number of researchers, experts, institutions, bodies and organizations, from coincident and

diverse approaches, have pronounced themselves in relation to local issues (Guzón, 2006).

Most of the authors who, from a capitalist development perspective, focus on the issue of local development, base their models on the incentive of small enterprises from different approaches and support programmes for entrepreneurs, conceiving the role of the government as a promoter of private initiative.

Local development in Cuba should be conceptualized as a process that activates the economy and dynamizes local society, which through the use of existing endogenous resources in a given territory, is able to stimulate and promote economic development, creating employment and wealth and putting these in function of improving the quality of life and the satisfaction of the ever-growing needs of local communities. It is a process through which local governments establish initiatives and promote efficient and effective economic activities, in coordination with all political and social agents, in joint projects that decisively influence the productive sector, encouraging them with the main objective of redesigning the socioeconomic structure of the locality, in order to move from primary levels to secondary levels, tertiary development and thus increase productive values and management efficiency, which should contribute to raising social effectiveness (Lazo, 2002).

In this issue of the journal *Cooperativismo y Desarrollo* (COODES), readers will be able to access scientific articles by national and foreign authors, which cover a variety of topics, the common thread of which is local development. Topics such as: integration of international cooperation to the process of implementation of local development strategies, added value to agro-productive chains, management of rural tourism as a function of local

development, support to the private sector from the university management of knowledge and innovation, continuous improvement for the internal competitiveness of Ecuadorian small and medium enterprises, networks of collaboration in innovation for development, Ecuadorian public policies and their relationship with small and medium enterprises, economic culture and training of human resources for development, comprehensive risk management and insurance with a cooperative social management approach, and management of training in the Cuban socioeconomic context, with a focus on cooperative social management, and management of training in the Cuban socioeconomic context are addressed.

While it is true that "local development is not limited exclusively to local economic development" (Torres, 2016), the role of productive actors in promoting a favourable local economic environment should not be denied, while taking into account the natural, cultural, social, political-administrative and institutional aspects of the respective territorial scope. In this sense, a group of articles of this issue analyzes the role of small and medium enterprises, public and private, as dynamizers of the processes that are managed at the local scale, contributing to the elevation of the standard of living of the population.

The authors who have approached the topic of local development, from different approaches and edges are several: Arocena (1995); Lazo (2002); Guzón (2006); Boffill (2010); León (2013); Alonso and Bell (2013); Núñez et al. (2014); Becerra and Pino (2014); Pérez and Díaz (2014); Torres (2016).

The concept offered by Torres (2016) is one of the most current in Cuba. This author defines local development as: "the process of social construction and

structural change, which from an innovative territorial environment and led by local governments, develops capacities to manage public policies, strategies, programs and projects oriented to take advantage of endogenous and exogenous resources, promoting economic, social, natural and political institutional transformations in the localities on sustainable bases, with an active and protagonist citizen participation, in function of elevating the quality of life of the population".

This process of activation and structural change of the local economy basically promotes the use of endogenous resources as a basis for development, but this does not deny the importance of the participation of actors who use and promote activities based on exogenous resources, including foreign capital. The importance is that the weight and role of each one of them be adequately combined, as sources that generate jobs and wealth at the territorial level. In this sense, the proposed program for the integration of international cooperation to the process of implementation of local development strategies, carried out in this issue, takes on special importance.

On the other hand, there are articles that emphasize the role of training management and training in terms of

development, which is very much in line with the policies established by the country's top management, endorsed in the Cuban economic and social model.

A very topical research presented as part of this issue is the one related to collaborative networks in innovation for development. It highlights a new methodological procedure, which uses collaboration as a unit of analysis and measurement to know the knowledge networks established in the development of innovations and allows identifying data from innovations that make it possible to describe some innovative scenarios, as well as certain linkage mechanisms established in endogenous developments.

As an alternative to neoliberal development, the aim of this research is to strengthen local resources, activating productive forces and promoting economic development, while at the same time encouraging social, natural and political-institutional development.

This issue of COODES tries to show, from the academy, a vision about the main topics that are debated today around the role of cooperatives in local development, showing a group of realities (achievements and dissatisfactions) and perspectives to reach for later stages.

REFERENCES

Alonso, A. y Bell, R. (2013). *Desarrollo Territorial a Escala Local*. La Habana: Editorial Universidad de La Habana

Arocena, J. (1995). *El desarrollo local: un desafío contemporáneo*.

Venezuela: Editorial Nueva Sociedad/CLAEH.

Becerra, F. y Pino, J. (2014). "Desarrollo socioeconómico local en Cienfuegos. Mediciones a escala municipal y estrategias de

- transformación desde el territorio". En: Pérez, O. y Torres, R. (comps.). *Miradas a la economía cubana: desde una perspectiva territorial*. La Habana: Editorial Caminos.
- Boffill, V. (2010). *Modelo general para contribuir al desarrollo local, basado en el conocimiento y la innovación. Caso de aplicación Yaguajay*. Tesis en opción al grado científico de Doctor en Ciencias Económicas. Sancti Spíritus, Cuba.
- Guzón, A. (2006). *El desarrollo local en Cuba. Retos y perspectivas*. La Habana: Editorial Academia.
- Lazo, C. (2002). *Modelo de Dirección del Desarrollo Local con enfoque estratégico. Experiencia en Pinar del Río*. Tesis presentada en opción al grado científico de Doctor en Ciencias Técnicas. Universidad de Pinar del Río "Hermanos Saíz Montes de Oca", Cuba.
- León, C. (2013). "El municipio y los procesos de desarrollo local en Cuba". *Economía y Desarrollo*, Año XLIV, Vol. 150, No. 2, julio-diciembre. Facultad de Economía. Universidad de La Habana, Cuba.
- Marín, I. (2015). "La gestión pública y el desarrollo del sector cooperativo en Cuba". *Revista digital Cooperativismo y Desarrollo*. Vol. 3, No. 2.: 117-125. Disponible en: <http://coodes.upr.edu.cu/index.php/coodes/article/view/97>
- Núñez, J. et al. (2014). *Universidad, conocimiento, innovación y desarrollo local*. La Habana: Editorial Félix Varela.
- Pérez, D. y Díaz, M. (2014). "Municipio y desarrollo local: continente y contenido. Apuntes en pos del perfeccionamiento del régimen jurídico municipal en Cuba". *Revista Digital GUCID*, año IV, No. 43, La Habana, Cuba.
- Torres, C. (2016). *Modelo para la gestión de políticas territoriales de desarrollo local a escala municipal en Cuba*. Tesis presentada en opción al grado científico de Doctor en Ciencias Económicas. Universidad de Pinar del Río "Hermanos Saíz Montes de Oca", Cuba.



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License

Copyright (c) Tania Vargas Fernández