

Editorial

## Local actors in the process of local development management in Cuba

### Los actores locales en el proceso de gestión del desarrollo local en Cuba

### Os atores locais no processo de gestão do desenvolvimento local em Cuba

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**F**or Torres Paez (2018), local development is a "process of social construction and structural change that, from an innovative territorial environment, develops local capacities to manage public policies, strategies, programs and projects aimed at taking advantage of endogenous and exogenous resources and harmoniously articulating national, sectoral and territorial interests, promoting economic, social, natural and political-institutional transformations in localities on sustainable bases and with active and protagonist citizen participation, in function of raising the quality of life of the population." This definition establishes essential elements in the local development management process, such as:

- The need to encourage citizen participation as a key factor for success
- Ensure the introduction of innovations to improve production processes, boost product quality and differentiation, and make the organization of business networks more efficient in the different territorial clusters where they are located
- The importance of external resources in the area's revitalization
- It prioritizes and respects the appropriate use of local resources (human, natural, technical, financial, material, technological, infrastructural) and pursues sustainable human development, rather than economic growth at any price
- The need to build or enhance capabilities in a broad sense is defined as part of the strategy

- Four dimensions of local development are defined that function in an interrelated and interdependent manner, which is a determining factor in achieving sustainable development: economic, sociocultural, natural, political-administrative and institutional
- The importance of articulating local interests with national and sectoral interests is discussed, taking into account that local societies and economies are integrated into the national economic system, as well as the need for concerted action among actors

The aforementioned elements make it possible to identify, as a necessary condition for increasing the level of local welfare, the existence of productive systems capable of generating economies of scale through the use of available resources and the introduction of innovations, so that local development based on local public management is determined by the forms of organization of production and economy in the territory. These forms are characterized by a network of actors that condition the processes of structural change, according to the ways in which their economic, social, political, cultural and legal relations develop.

In the case of Cuba, local development has become a public policy of strategic importance as a complement to the National Economic and Social Development Plan until the year 2030, as well as a central and articulating axis of the public agendas of the governments at the municipal and provincial levels. Based on this logic, which requires multilevel governance processes, progress can be seen in terms of overcoming the welfares vision of previous stages, betting on a culture of development and not of subsistence and adopting strategic decisions for the institutionalization of its (Díaz-Canel Bermúdez *et al.*, 2020).

In this process, it will be decisive that the actors of the territory ("individuals, groups or institutions which system of action coincides with the limits of the local society") maintain a fluid dialogue that allows them to establish consensus, generate a shared vision of the territory and manage resources. This articulation between local actors must be managed by the municipal public administration, which plays a decisive role as the main executive actor driving development at this scale.

This issue is even more important in view of the current stimulus to the formation of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises and non-agricultural cooperatives, which are integrated into the local productive network as dynamic agents of the local economy.

A fundamental issue is, therefore, to implement adequate measures to stimulate integration among the actors, so that they work in a coordinated manner to achieve common objectives, optimizing efforts and resources and achieving the desired scaling up of development management.

Four fundamental groups of actors are involved in this process: decision-makers, implementers, community and facilitators.

- Decision-makers are those with the autonomy to make decisions and design public policies that affect the local level (municipal, provincial and national government); they are in charge of managing the development process and have the challenge of ensuring that this management is carried out through the participation of all other actors
- Within the executing actors are complemented those of the business sector (state and non-state) and budgeted, responsible for implementing the objectives defined in each development program designed at the local level
- The community, as the decisive actor to whom all efforts are directed, participates in the design of projects, is a demander of resources, and is the recipient of the impacts of local development management, endorsing or rejecting the results
- Finally, facilitators, as those in charge of generating the conditions for reflection, decision making and action

These are the groups of actors that, based on their coordinated expression in the local context, have the capacity to generate, adopt and disseminate innovations that drive the processes and materialize the actions that determine the impact of local development management in the communities.

The success of the management process and the enhancement of endogenous and exogenous resources through the implementation of local development projects depends to a large extent on the links established among them. It is a system or network of horizontal and vertical relationships between actors, which is expressed in the implementation of coordination mechanisms for the articulation of interests, the optimization of management and conflict resolution, etc. This system of relations implies the protagonism and collective leadership of the governmental management, in order to achieve the expected synergies in function of the fulfillment of the objectives.

Based on the elements mentioned above, the following can be defined as the basis for the management of local development, based on shared management among all actors:

- Define as main objective: to work for the sustainable development of the community, through policies accepted by all actors
- Recognize the presence and interaction of different types of ownership and management and establish the leading role of local government as the main body that designs, coordinates and regulates local policies and strategies articulated with those of higher levels; therefore, it is vested with the highest authority to promote local development
- Promote capacity building of local actors, taking into account that, in terms of management, it represents a decisive variable in the effectiveness of the process
- To create spaces for dialogue, promoting the generation of changes and the construction of inter-institutional agendas that allow for a better approach to the needs, resources and aspirations of society and the local economy
- Establish strategic alliances between different actors, based on the construction of a shared vision, respecting the particularities and priorities of each stakeholder
- Design of mechanisms that connect individual work in the construction of the collective, and vice versa, working on the conviction that development strategies are materialized territorially from the integration of their own efforts. This requires, of course, intermediation instruments from the territories that enable the efficient use of available resources
- Definition of roles and responsibilities; to this end, the key actors to be involved in each development program are identified, strategies are defined for the mobilization and articulation of resources and actors, and the relationships between actors are established for each project, to which tasks are assigned according to their participation in the project

As a result of the functioning of stakeholder networks, each project generated at the local level must have the needs, desires, aspirations and expectations of the actors as a starting point and as a fundamental guide when making any type of decision or undertaking any action. In this case, people play a more important role than the investment capital that may have been provided.

At the present time, local development policy expands the protagonism and actions of local society and, above all, of public agents. This management style lays the foundations for the development of a series of values such as solidarity, equality, equity and democracy.

With the appropriation of these behaviors as part of a management culture, people become protagonists of change and responsible for the sustainability of the development process. Local

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development management is strengthened, and the community's cultural and social values are enhanced and developed.

Derived from the aforementioned ideas, it can be affirmed the capacities of local actors to tackle any development strategy; however, the effectiveness of these processes will depend, to a large extent, on the availability of financial and material resources and the possibility of accessing them in a timely manner, barriers that can also be minimized to the extent that inter-actor relationships are strengthened.

By way of conclusion, and summarizing the aspects discussed above, it can be seen the need to achieve the articulation of the network of local actors as a decisive element for the success of the local development management process, so as to optimize efforts and resources in order to improve citizen welfare.

Thus, *Cooperativismo y Desarrollo* journal invites you to enjoy the results in science and innovation shown in its current edition, with the hope that each article will awaken your motivation to find solutions to existing problems through the application of science and with the commitment to meet again.

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