

Editorial

Socio-cultural management at the People's Council level for local development

Gestión sociocultural a nivel de Consejo Popular para el desarrollo local

Gestão sociocultural em nível de Conselho Popular para o desenvolvimento local



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The interest in sociocultural aspects in development studies arose from the need to gradually shift from a vision centered on the economy to one that perceives it as a multidimensional process. In this way, other profiles such as the institutional or the environmental reached a relevant role in the last decades of the last century. In turn, this paradigm shift was accompanied by "an epistemological shift that considers not only the material and tangible elements, but also the intangible. Culture and human spirituality as key elements of development" (Arias Guevara, 2018, p. 20).

This laid the foundations for an alternative management model in which culture, participation, gender, equity, heritage and identity impose a particular way of conceiving development from a more humanistic perspective. In spite of this principle, the sociocultural dimension still shows not inconsiderable asymmetries in comparison with the rest of the dimensions, which limits the integrality required to achieve the goals of human progress on a sustainable basis.

However, in recent years, interest in this dimension has been gaining ground as it is committed to a critical, reflective, participatory and transformative stance in the face of society's problems. Morín López (2019), Soler Marchán (2020), Rodríguez Basso et al. (2021), Martínez Casanova (2022), Drake Tapia (2022) and Frías Martí (2022) share this criterion, taking into account the capacity of

the sociocultural to generate processes of change not restricted to a reductionist conception of the cultural or sociocultural.

For Martínez Casanova (2022), sociocultural management consists of "a modality of intervention, characterized by the mobilizing and transforming management that is done with sociocultural resources", which "can be done fundamentally in and from cultural or non-cultural institutions and communities". The latter does not reduce the sociocultural field to the network of entities in charge of acting in the artistic-cultural field, but also to the rest of the sectors of society, such as the economy. Categories such as social economy, orange economy, cultural industries, have one of their bases in the sociocultural as an added value in the circuit of generation of goods and services.

Similarly, Borges Machín (2018) shares this criterion from the point of view of the cultural as a reservoir of resources, with specific management modalities, by focusing on "a logic of planning, organization, direction, collaboration, mediation, concertation and control of actions, with a multidisciplinary, multilateral and participatory approach", with an inclusive and social equity character.

Hence, modalities such as promotion, animation and sociocultural intervention in the university environment through the intercultural approach, with a transversal axis in the training of human resources and educational praxis (Julca Guerrero et al., 2023) or the model of self-management for local development at community level (Merchán Ponce et al., 2024), are raised as tools with proven impacts on institutional and micro-local transformation.

The background of these experiences dates back to the tradition accumulated in Cuba since the 80's and 90's of the last century, around community work, not without latent distortions. Among the most representative are the actions aimed at raising the quality of life of the population in vulnerable neighborhoods through integral transformation workshops; the national meetings of experiences; the work of heritage rescue in the main cities of the provinces of Havana, Camagüey and Santiago de Cuba, just to cite a few examples, have been results from which methodological proposals were derived with lines of action aimed at sociocultural development and its social praxis from the formative processes, organization, management, leadership and governance, in addition to integration and social diversity.

In all of them, as a common element, the relevance of the community sphere stands out, beyond the municipality, as an ideal scale of development. A space, where the sum of its parts reaches its

most complete expression in the Popular Councils, in which there are forms of social organization whose limits are set by the subjectivities of the subject that inhabits it on the basis of a high degree of consensus and perception of belonging and cohesion. Translated into blocks, neighborhoods and lots, they mobilize the conscious activity of the population in order to meet common objectives and goals. These characteristics capture the essence of what is understood as community, an organism in which conscious and committed participation reaches its maximum expression.

Recognized as a component of the ecosystem of key development actors, the community is the focus of those resources, not only financial and economic, but also socio-cultural, namely those that contain a historical-cultural and symbolic value as a result of practice, materialized in institutions and artistic and heritage entities, bearers of "values, behaviors, principles and meanings" (Morín López, 2019) as well as "traditions and daily cultural practices, accumulated knowledge, levels of commitment" (Martínez Casanova, 2022, p. 566), which are reserves of social and cultural capital with feasible potential to be exploited within the productive and value chains present in the territories. In terms of local development projects (LDPs), these include these resources in some way, beyond any typology.

Decree Law 33/2021 of the Council of Ministers on the Strategic Management of Territorial Development, in Article 16.1, defines LDPs as those that mobilize "...a set of resources, efforts and actions, with their own identity to transform an existing situation into a desired one, which contributes to the development of the territory where it operates, and impacts on the quality of life of the population" (Council of Ministers, 2021, p. 1298).

Intrinsically, these efforts and actions are managed with a well-defined purpose, which implies from the project's identity that, depending on the purpose for which they are conceived, the will, creativity and sense of belonging of the subjects involved, as cultural resources, come into play. Not a few projects have failed or have not been sustainable because these inputs have been left aside, since they are a *sine qua non* condition of a process whose success is guaranteed throughout the life cycle of the project.

The inclusion of socio-cultural LDPs, identified in article 24, paragraph b), of the aforementioned decree, related to:

"...the increase, diversification and quality of social services provided to the population, in line with approved sectoral policies, related to human behavior and

forms of social organization; include elements of popular culture in the territory, the promotion of values, the promotion of a sense of belonging, the conservation, rehabilitation and increase of local cultural heritage" (Council of Ministers, 2021, p. 1300).

In this definition, this type of undertaking is recognized from the legal point of view, a turning point at the level of public policies by responding to a claim at the country level that offers a diversity of opportunities in terms of financial and material resources, in addition to collecting in its essence what defines this type of project, however, it does not escape from a partialized definition where the social and cultural are conceived in a fragmented manner and that is reflected in practice, in the divorce that exists between the multidimensional development as a pillar of socioculture.

To cite just two examples, the first, in the economic-productive LDPs, can the knowledge, traditions and ancestral experiences of the Cuban peasantry be separated in the area of food production or construction materials or, in those of an environmental nature, the values of the population in the sustainable or non-sustainable use of natural resources? The answer to these questions may seem to be a tautology.

The necessary articulation between these types of projects with the consequent diversification of their impacts constitutes one of the solutions that, beyond all restrictions, make it possible to solve diverse problems such as ensuring their sustainability on the basis of the articulated participation of political and mass organizations, self-employed workers or agricultural and non-agricultural cooperatives, key actors declared in the aforementioned decree law, through the implementation of methodological tools such as Integrated Community Work and Popular Education.

In certain fields of action such as social prevention, corporate social responsibility, social economy, local governance, training of trainers, stakeholder coordination, social communication, environmental education, local tourism and gender equity, significant results have been obtained at the territorial level within the LDPs through the enhancement of cultural resources. The commitment to the development of sustainable local tourism in the municipalities of La Palma, Güane and Viñales is an example of how the use of agroecological inputs can stimulate value chains with the capacity to generate exportable goods and services with ample possibilities of attracting foreign exchange at the border.

Other initiatives through the PDLs, Finca Tierra Brava and Patio de Milagros, in Los Palacios, join these initiatives with innovative practices in terms of active participation of women, youth and older adults in rural environments, which guarantees the full exercise of rights through decent employment, equity and the possibility of cooperative involvement in the development of their districts. Its favorable effect on the sense of belonging has an impact on the reduction of adverse social phenomena such as migration from the countryside to the city or devaluation of trades related to rural culture.

In short, sociocultural management in any of its methodological modalities, whether animation, promotion or intervention, to be possible, is based on the aforementioned resources. Being a multidimensional process, it confers on it, in terms of development, a relevance in all its areas by placing culture in its broadest sense as a transversal axis. Cuba's National Economic and Social Development Plan 2020-2030, with its respective macro-programs, is one of its expressions, as it does not reduce its strategic purposes to Human Development, Equity and Social Justice.

Those corresponding to Government, Institutionalism and Macroeconomics conceive a totalizing vision of the diverse components of the Cuban political and economic system, by understanding as part of its components the levels of integration and social cohesion based on a solid participation and well-being of the population in its different spaces of socialization.

The macroprogram on Productive Transformation and International Insertion, by including among the priority sectors the improvement of the quality of life of the population or that of Science, Technology and Innovation, with its proposals for the improvement of human capital capabilities, cross-cutting competencies and new knowledge, coincides with the essential purpose of Human Development, Equity and Social Justice, by placing as its main objective the integral development of human beings in their racial, gender, generational, sexual, religious and territorial diversity, a basic condition for making this goal a reality through a socio-cultural management committed to achieving all possible justice in correspondence with the objectives of sustainable development.

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