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Historical analysis of local development in Cuba from the perspective of decentralization and participation

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ARTICLE SECTION

Historical analysis of local development in Cuba from the perspective of decentralization and participation

Abstract: The article outlines the antecedents of local development that were materialized in the search for an economic, social, and political model that begins to take shape with the triumph of the Cuban Revolution. The particularities of local governments are presented in our context and how, unlike the occurrence of real decentralization processes at the regional level, our country was increasingly oriented towards an excessively centralized model. At the same time, the emergence of the issue of local development in the 1990s and the initiatives generated because of the changes that took place during the indicated period are contextualized. The most essential contradictions and features that mark the debate over development and local governments in the current context are also offered. The possibilities that exist, from the territories and especially in local governments to promote local development processes, are valued.

Key words: Cuba, local government, crisis of Cuban society, decentralization.

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IDEAS CLAVE / HIGHLIGHTS / IDEES CLAU

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| <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Durante los años 80, el sistema político cubano presentaba un alto grado de centralidad, frente a las reformas del resto de América Latina.2. Las experiencias en desarrollo comunitario de los años 90, constituyen los antecedentes de las acciones en materia de desarrollo local posteriores.3. El desarrollo local en Cuba requiere dinamizar el papel de las PYME, el sector privado y la empresa estatal.4. Los gobiernos municipales pueden formular estrategias de desarrollo eficaces, gracias a factores de producción internos y recursos exógenos.5. La descentralización de las decisiones favorecerá el proceso de democratización de la sociedad cubana. | <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. During the 1980s, the Cuban political system was highly centralised, in contrast to the reforms in the rest of Latin America.2. The experiences in community development of the 1990s, constitute the background of the subsequent actions in the field of local development.3. Local development in Cuba requires boosting the role of PYME, the private sector and State enterprises.4. Municipal governments can formulate effective development strategies, using both internal production factors and external resources.5. The decentralization of decisions will favor the process of democratization of Cuban society. | <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Durant els anys 80, el sistema polític cubà presentava un alt grau de centralitat, enfront de les reformes de la resta d'Amèrica Llatina.2. Les experiències en desenvolupament comunitari dels anys 90, constitueixen els antecedents de les accions en matèria de desenvolupament local posteriors.3. El desenvolupament local a Cuba requereix dinamitzar el paper de les PIME, el sector privat i l'empresa estatal.4. Els governs municipals poden formular estratègies de desenvolupament eficaços, gràcies a factors de producció interns i recursos exògens.5. La descentralització de les decisions afavorirà el procés de democratització de la societat cubana. |
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EXTENDED ABSTRACT¹

In this work, the antecedents of local development that materialized in the search for an economic, social and political model that begins to take shape with the triumph of the Cuban Revolution are addressed. The peculiarities of local governments in our context are presented and how, unlike the occurrence of real decentralization processes at the regional level, our country was increasingly oriented towards an excessively centralized model.

At the same time, the emergence of the topic of local development in the 1990s and the initiatives generated as a result of the changes that occurred in the period in question are contextualized. The most essential contradictions and features that mark the debate for development and local governments in the current context are also offered. The possibilities that exist, from the territories and especially in the local governments, to trigger real processes of local development that count with the participation of local actors are valued.

Our study was based on a qualitative approach since it was intended to provide descriptive and analytical information about the structural changes that the Cuban economic model needs. The use of this methodological perspective allowed us, throughout the research process, to describe the interactive and interpretive dynamics of the facts or phenomena related to the problems of local development, as well as to understand what initiatives have been experienced in this field in Cuba.

It should also be noted that among the most important results of this work is that it provides an overview, from the triumph of the Cuban Revolution to the present day, on the different development strategies that have been implemented in the country in search of a development model that responds to the demands and needs of Cuban society.

Finally, as a product of the analysis of the results of this study, we reached the following conclusions.

The search for a national economy project has been characterized by different variants and execution methods. However, from the earliest stages of territorial planning until the 1990s, the State lacked a systemic approach to the development of localities due to the prevalence of highly centralized sectoral planning in the objectives of territorial ordering and construction. This practice does not know the territory, as an active factor in development in its high content as potentiality.

In other words, the Cuban economic and social model until 1990 progressively progressed towards the construction of a structural transformation model that reinforced the power of the State as leader of economic and social development.

However, the leading role that has been attributed to local governments, starting in the 1990s, has ensured the transmission of policies, programs, infrastructure and resources from the central level to the municipalities, allowing processes of accumulation of capital for national redistribution, guaranteeing equality and improvement of social indicators from a human development perspective.

Everything seems to indicate that local governments are destined to become the central agents of development in Cuba since their implementation has contributed to a more efficient administration of services, greater community participation in local affairs and

¹ Authors' exclusive translation.

the generation of dynamic dynamics. to favor practices (productive, cultural and social) that make them managers of development.

In short, we believe that the modernization process that is required of Cuban local governments requires a State that increases its capacity for strategic planning and management at different territorial and sectoral levels and fosters cooperation mechanisms among local actors. To achieve this purpose, certain basic requirements must be ensured, such as having participatory planning that gives priority to local authorities; the development of innovative models for management, production and services; and the launch of a permanent training process for local administrations adjusted to their demands.