

Strengthening Local Actor Capacities for Local Development Management from a Cultural Standpoint

Fortalecimiento de capacidades de los actores locales para una gestión
del desarrollo local desde la cultura

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ABSTRACT

Aim: Despite current advances, there is still a lack of understanding of culture as a valuable resource for local development management in Cuba. Therefore, strengthening local actor capacities is a strategic axis. Fundamental elements regarding capacity strengthening within the Local Development Program are explained from a cultural perspective.

Methods: This study was based on the methodology of generalization of experiences to collect data, as well as questionnaires, and document review.

Main results: Guidelines are suggested for future initiatives, in order to reinforce local actor capacities to design and implement strategies and projects with a multisector perspective, which integrates transforming actions of the local reality, creating a greater impact on the quality of life of the population, to be considered in their cultural context.

Conclusions: The need to tackle local actor training to achieve local development from a cultural standpoint, is corroborated.

Key words: culture; development; management; capacities; local actors.

RESUMEN

Objetivo: Pese a los avances, aún persisten manifestaciones de incomprensión de la cultura como un recurso valioso en la gestión del desarrollo local hoy en Cuba; por esta razón, el fortalecimiento de capacidades en actores locales constituye un eje estratégico. Se exponen elementos sustantivos acerca del fortalecimiento de capacidades en el marco del Programa de Desarrollo Local desde la Cultura en Camagüey.

Métodos: El estudio se apoyó en la metodología de la sistematización de experiencias para la obtención de datos, junto al empleo de cuestionarios y análisis de documentos.

Principales resultados: Se ofrecen pautas a tener en cuenta en iniciativas futuras, para fortalecer las capacidades de los actores locales en el diseño y ejecución de estrategias y proyectos con una visión multisectorial, que integre acciones transformadoras de la realidad del territorio, con mayor impacto en la calidad de vida de la población al tener en cuenta su contexto cultural.

Conclusiones: Se reafirma la necesidad de atender a la preparación de los actores locales, con vista a los procesos de desarrollo local desde la cultura.

Palabras claves: cultura; desarrollo; gestión; capacidades; actores locales

Received: 20/12/2018

Accepted: 27/11/2019

INTRODUCTION

The Goals of Sustainable Development and the 2030 Agenda, approved in a UN Session, in September 2015, aim to tackle people's dignity and equality through the participation of all sectors of society and States (Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean [CEPAL], (2016). Although the preceding goals were intended to reduce extreme poverty, the new agenda is not limited to it. Additionally, it

recommends focusing on the interconnection of the elements of sustainable development: economic growth, social inclusion, and protection of the environment.

The implementation of the 17 objectives and their 169 goals calls for a review of developmental practices until then. In that direction, fundamental elements like centrality of social actors, participatory character, and the construction of groups with common goals, which may set up horizontal relationships, in order to play their roles and agents of change, should be considered, as noted by Espina (2010).

This author also suggests recovering local spaces as strategic areas to achieve inclusive alternatives of social progress. In addition to it, she suggests the inclusion of the cultural dimension, both to preserve traditions and generate innovation possibilities through actions outside the traditional repertoires of development, as a human practice.

Culture is weighted as a fundamental dimension in developing management, and a necessary element for the welfare of people and communities. The General Assembly of the United Nations Resolution 65/166 on culture and development was approved in plenary session, on December 20, 2010. It is recognized as an essential component of human development, and a source of identity, innovation, and creativity of people and communities, empowering them to play a more active role in development initiatives.

Its presence will depend on the kind of development assumed. It is considered an "... integrated process of balance socially and territorially; a process of agreement among actors, with a strong vertical and horizontal articulation, but thinking and managing "from below"; i.e. by strengthening and empowering local actors" (Altschuler 2006, p.151). Identifying cultural factors that must become part of development strategies should not be hard; these strategies will translate into programs and projects to improve the life quality of individuals.

In that context, the local setting gains special significance, since it is a space for social proximity, where developing process are more palpable for individuals, groups, and communities. The chances to adapt the model to its characteristics are greater. In other words, its needs, expectations, institutions, and history, so the type of welfare desired can be defined by consensus. This is tightly linked to culture, understood as an integrated form of life.

The incorporation of the cultural dimension to local development requires understanding of complementarity connections of the economy, social equity, and environmental balance. Internationally, several actions have been implemented to broaden this perspective. One relevant example is the establishment of the World Decennial for Cultural Development declared by the United Nations Organization for Education, Science, and Culture (UNESCO) between 1988 and 1997.

An important outcome of the plan of action is the Report *Our Creative Diversity*, in 1995, issued by the World Commission of Culture and Development, created in 1992. This document claims that “culture is not an instrument of material progress: it is the end and goal of development, understood as the sense of realization of human existence in all its forms and scope”. (Carranza, 1999, p.31). Cuba was not apart from the ideas stated in the report; hence, it may be inferred that the Cuban debate in the late 90s has been influenced by it.

Some basic contributions to the analysis of the link between culture and development were provided by Hart (1982, 1996, 2000), Martinez (1998), and Carranza (1999), whose works have been fundamental for this analysis in the Cuban scenario. Culture is in the center of modern political economics. Understanding it functionally, as a provider of human development to the highest spiritual levels, is an unavoidable duty. Achieving it, means placing social justice as an essential core of processes (Martinez, 1998).

Carranza (1999) says that considering development as a cultural conception does not exclude technical and economic considerations on macroeconomic balances, sectoral proportions, market regulations, models of accumulation, and so forth. On the contrary, it is important to implement them from realities, values, and aspirations of the large population majorities, where development processes are to take place.

Despite the encouragement of these and other valuable ideas, nationally and internationally, culture is still missing in the center of development planning. The current developmental practices of Cuban municipalities are not the exception. This shows the existence of bias in understanding development from a multidimensional perspective. Culturally speaking, strengthening the capacities of local actors oriented to management of the same process is a strategic axis.

According to Guzón (2006), every local development strategy demands qualitative changes, where awareness of efficient use of endogenous resources favors life quality improvements. This acquires more relevance when culture is assumed as a valuable resource, whose tangible and intangible nature needs specific knowledge that allows for better use of design and implementation of changing actions. Hence, it is necessary to promote learning environments and socialization of knowing how, in terms of managing that particular resource, as the basis for strengthening capacities.

This paper deals with this topic, stemming from the systematization of the experience in three Camagüeyan municipalities, in the Program of Local Development with a Cultural Perspective (PDLC), funded by International Cooperation¹ and led by the Center of Exchange and Reference of Community Initiatives (CIERIC), a Cuban non-governmental Organization (NGO), belonging to the National Association of Cuban Writers and Artists (UNEAC). Their aim is to identify substantial aspects related to the strengthening of local actor capacities within PDLC.

It shows partial results from a broader study centered on the creation of a system of actions that favors the capacities of local actors in the design and implementation of strategies and projects with a multi-sector vision that integrates culture as an endogenous resource, in actions that transform the local reality with a greater impact on the quality of life.

The cultural dimension and its implication in the Cuban context has been studied by authors like Linares (2006), Alvarez (2008), and Peñate (2012), who can be considered basic for this research. Their views do not deal with the insertion of culture as a resource, based on strengthening the capacities of local authors as an indispensable condition, ensuring an active role in process management in the municipalities.

Moreover, concerning the topic of capacities in the actions of local governments, the contributions of Pérez (2010), Graces (2012), and Torres (2014), are relevant. However, more recent research done by Martínez (2018a, 2018b), Isalgué (2017), and Galindo and Hernández (2013), have stressed on the analysis of the cultural dimension of local and community development processes.

DEVELOPMENT

The second decade of the TWENTY-FIRST Century in Cuba presented municipalities with unequal capacities to face the challenges of decentralized local development, backed by their own competences and efforts, to help with socioeconomic transformation of their territories, and the ensued welfare of the population. This takes place amidst an increase of autonomy in terms of decision-making, concerning the use of local resources and demands of greater diversification of development actions that transcend the areas of agriculture and services.

These circumstances call for a legal framework that favors the appearance and management of innovating initiatives; a concerted strategy that articulates different local actors which can contribute to a more participatory process, which is in keeping with the demands and necessities of the population; and a cultural approach that brings sense and sustainability to the process.

Privileging the cultural dimension of local development may be translated into the promotion of actions to diversify territorial economic actions through proper use of cultural potentialities supported by traditions, natural resources, trades and crafts, built heritage, and everything that can be part of the local identity. It can be achieved without sacrificing fundamental social and cultural objectives to favor the preservation of culture and identity.

A new economic growth possibility is opened by this sector; however, culture must not be limited to be a mere instrument, it should be seen as a tool to make this growth possible. Economic progress must respond to permanent materialization of human welfare that relies on contextualized needs, demands, and aspirations, resulting from culture.

This position has been theoretically dealt with by authors like Sen (2004), Appadurai (2004), and Max-Neef, Elizalde, and Openhayn (2010), and by the paradigm of sustainable human development, encouraged by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP, 2010), whose Reports on Human Development associate culture, capacities, and development.

Sen (2004) notes that the “supposedly cultural oversight” of economists started with A. Smith, John S. Mill, and A. Marchall, and states that “... cultural dimension requires a deeper examination within the analysis of development” (p. 37). This implies a

“relativization” of this concept, according to the local needs and deductions of welfare for a society that embraces the model proposed. This owes to the existence of other aspects with a cultural nature that also have a variable-scale influential strength of progress in different countries.

Sustainable Human Development recognizes the need of a model based on a more comprehensive, humane, and sustainable view of development. Consequently, it admits the importance of considering and measuring other important aspects of social welfare, beyond the distribution of income. The interpretation of the concept of capacity within this vision of development is a core aspect to shed light on a different way to social progress.

The formation of capacities, and increased and broadened opportunities for all people is assumed as the ultimate purpose of human welfare. This context requires stressing the theoretical proposal of development at a human scale, by Chilean economist Manfred A. Max-Neef, and associates A. Elizalde, and M. Hopenhayn. They acknowledged the absence of integrality and insufficiency of the then economic and social theories. This is a qualitatively higher leap into the contextualization of development.

In essence, they claim that the condition of a theory of human necessities for development, by virtue of which “the best process is that which helps increase the quality of life of people, will depend on the possibilities of humans to satisfy fundamental human needs satisfactorily (FHN)” (Max-Neef, Elizalde and Hopenhayn, 2010, p. 25). They are interwoven and therefore, interact.

This paradigm is a valuable contribution because it refers to the role of culture, though indirectly. It acknowledges that FHNs are the same in all cultures and historical periods, which vary throughout time and cultures, as the way or means used for human satisfaction. The choice of quantity and quality of meeting actors is an aspect, which is widely influenced by culture’s assessing role. Accordingly, the cultural dimension of development is related to the propagation of actions to increase the access possibilities of required meeting actors, depending on specific social contexts.

The fact that FHNs are acknowledged as having a dual character (lack/potential), may be used as the basis of a more participatory effort, as they encourage commitment, motivate, and mobilize. Likewise, social welfare, depending on this conception of

needs, is related not only to goods and services, but also to social practices, forms of organization, political models, and values that enrich the term. The above may be used as a theoretical referent so that governments, organizations, and institutions are able to materialize the premise of placing humans at the core of developing processes.

It can be inferred then that strengthening the capacities of local actors, oriented to local development management with a strong cultural basis, means greater attention to their incorporation in process planning. This sets a range of contributing opportunities, not only from the traditional cultural sector, but also from other areas connected to it, such as education, health care, public services, urban development, tourism, companies, etc.

The topic of capacities is dealt with in the literature as development of capacities or institutional strengthening, alternately. The UNDP (2009) notes that capacities are the means to plan and accomplish, thereby creating capacities as the way to achieve such means. Its approach is distinguished by the transforming character of the process:

So that an activity reaches the level of capacity development, there must be a change that generates and offers a backup from within, throughout time. This kind of transformation goes beyond task completion, and it rather refers to a transformation of mentalities and attitudes (UNDP, 2009).

Hence, which actors should be encouraged and empowered to ensure effective transformations? The response may be found in the contributions made by Arocena (1995), in terms of decision-making (political-institutional); specific techniques (expert-professional); field actions (people and their active expressions).

In the context of this research, capacities are,

Those abilities and attitudes-skills that require strengthening through knowledge acquisition, and which are further translated into actions to decide and apply the new knowledge in different situations and scenarios. There are two key elements for their understanding: i) they take and grow from three levels which are reciprocally influenced: a favorable surrounding, organizations, and people; ii) it is not carried out in void spaces. (UNDP, 2009, pp. 9-17)

The second element stresses that to be useful, it must be rooted in some broader development goal: a strategy for national development, a plan for social or economic empowering, or an initiative associated to a particular topic, such as local development management with a cultural component.

Judging from this study, strengthening capacities focuses on individuals and groups conceived as working teams, and their abilities for action. It places this process in relation to the surrounding, as well as the organizational levels, as dimensions comprising their actions. The utilization of the term strengthening assumes the existence of a set of latent installed capacities, which need to be enhanced in order to broaden and diversify the actions of local actors within culture and development.

All the above validate the creation of a Culturally-Based Local Development Program (CBLDP) in Cuba, between 2014 and 2016, which was a pioneer experience in the utilization of cultural resources of the participating municipalities. The objective was to foster higher spiritual values in the people and the local economy, through projects that mixed the interests of citizens with their potentialities, and the characteristics of the context. In practice, they were able to contribute to collective and individual transformations, as well as to local development.

The CBLDP was intended to strengthen the capacities of local actors, as distinct subjects of local development, whose competence includes the design and implementation of strategies and projects, where culture must play a key role in the quality of life of all beneficiaries of social progress. This particular role is characterized by a limited or inexistent vision of the main decision makers in the municipalities and provinces, in terms of potentialities. There is also little clarity around the link culture-development, since the latter is fundamentally considered as a complex social process guided by culture, and provides it with a dual character as the means and end of development.

These elements confirm the need to conduct studies that deepen the above-stated issue, whose results may be introduced in practice for local development in Cuba, through qualitative and quantitative changes, in the use of the cultural potential of municipalities at different moments of such process management.

It is important to know how to perform transformations. This knowledge is centered on the reality to be transformed, which would be impossible to change if the subjects

implementing initiatives, (as direct agents or decision makers) that pave the way to deal with the purposes dealt with, are not ready for the action. The analysis of this paper is focused on that direction.

Strengthening capacities of local actors in the frame of CBLDP A systematization proposal in Camagüey

The CBLDP was implemented in three Camagüeyan municipalities: Céspedes, Guáimaro, and Camagüey. The selection included the participation of several actors, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1- Selection criteria of Camagüeyan municipalities for CBLDP

Céspedes	Guáimaro	Camagüey
Strengths		Weaknesses
Historical and cultural memory		Reduction in the feeling of belonging of people
Tangible and intangible heritage		Poor participation of people in the projects
Rooted traditions associated to agriculture and cattle raising		Insufficient information on actor-government coordination
Skilled human capital		
Strengths of the institutional fabric		
Experience of community work and cultural projects		

Source: self-made, based on information supplied in the records of CBLDP activities in the province of Camagüey.

The strengthening of local actor capacities was not only focused on how to design the document of the project that sets the guidelines to perform all actions. Other topics were included as well, such as equity, management models, proper gender approach, and positive solution to conflicts.

The training course was delivered to members of the local governments (part of the Administration Councils, and the presidents of municipal Assemblies of the People's Power in the municipalities), executives and specialists of the Central Bodies of the State (Culture, Education, Health care, Labor, Sports, Economy, and Planning, Finances and Prices, Physical Planning, Statistics Office, and the University with its municipal venues. These actors made the coordinating groups and managers, the Methodological Advisory Teams, and municipal technical teams.

Other participants were cultural promoters, art instructors in Houses of Culture and schools, neighborhood officials and their integrated community work groups, presidents of people's councils, community leaders with no responsibility in any

organization, government, cooperative, and self-employed workers, as well as retirees and housekeepers.

Several levels of management were set up to implement the initiatives suggested in the program. The first was associated to the condition that to define an initiative that promotes local development through culture, it is important to have a diagnostic, inventory or record of problems, and the causes that generate them in a particular location. Therefore, the municipality should be the starting point that facilitates the union of the population and the similarity of interests, aspirations, and modes of life that stimulate the joined search of collective solutions.

Each territory decided what, how, and where their initiative would be implemented, which may be corroborated by observing the variety of types and ways of deploying projects.

Céspedes Yaguarama Cultural Complex

Short description: The proposal consisted in the rehabilitation of sound recreational areas where the cultural values of the location can be promoted. It is focused on the recovery of a facility by improving its physical conditions to hold recreational and cultural events that bring full satisfaction to the inhabitants.

Guáimaro: Social and cultural renovation of the Agricultural Fair

Short description: the general objective of this initiative was to strengthen cattle raising traditions, in keeping with popular traditions, and the idiosyncrasy of the inhabitants. In that sense, a number of fair events were planned, which included several recreational-cultural and instructional choices, higher frequency of rodeo competitions between provincial teams or different cooperatives (credit and services, agricultural production, etc.), and state companies in the municipalities; and to encourage craft fair events that generate income for local development (cattle and culture).

Camagüey:

Nuevo Mundo Media Complex

Short description: To create a media complex that fosters interaction of spectators with state-of-the-art technology, from access to information and knowledge, to consumption of media. This multicultural space generally displays media to the public, though other related manifestations can be accessed through different events.

Vitroarte: Preservation of Glass and Metal Art Heritage in the historical center of the city of Camagüey

Short description: a proposal to conduct preservation of the art heritage made of glass and metal (AHGM) in the historical center of Camagüey, by promoting knowledge of the trade. This activity is necessary to rescue and save heritage, and as a source of employment. The actions comprised the promotion of preservation strategies, the restoration of trades, and social care.

The members of the managing groups of each initiative were the objects and subjects of transformation, people responsible for representing their identity, modes of life, spirituality, and ways of communication. It was the best way to be considered and to ensure participation, which is the basis of credibility needed, demanding a real and viable project. No person can know his or her territory better, or has the opportunity to mobilize and organize the population as subjects with the capacity to transform their reality better than the leaders and inhabitants of these territories.

Although the proposal for the program included foreign specialists² (as trainers and sponsors), and local decision makers (cultural executives, provincial and municipal governments, and UNEAC), as a guarantor of municipal feasibility diagnostic. They not only accompanied and advised the managing groups in each project, since the best engaged, prepared, and trained participants to acknowledge problems and potentialities are the ones living in the location. Hence, they are the main force in charge of running and organizing the location, in accordance with their habits, costumes, and identity.

Methodology for systematization of the Experiences applied under CBLDP, in Camagüeyan municipalities

“The systematization of experiences produces significant knowledge and learning, which ensure control of the senses of experiences, understanding them theoretically, and orienting them toward the future, with a transforming perspective”. (Jara, 1998, p. 10). This study considers the contribution to theoretical reflection with knowledge produced directly by concrete social practice.

This methodology makes possible the association of processes with their context, and confronts practical actions to the theoretical assumptions that inspire them. In that sense, it contributes to the theory with something that belongs to it: explanations about

the change of processes. In that sense, it not only means understanding situations, processes or social structures, but also learning how they are produced.

The current study is based on the referent of Jara (1998) in his work *Para Sistematizar Experiencias* (To Systematize Experiences), in which the following steps are included:

1. The starting point;
2. The initial questions;
3. Recovery of the process experienced;
4. The underlying reflection;
5. The target points.

This article is a glimpse at strengthening capacities of local actors in the context of CBLDP in the province of Camagüey, but it mainly focuses on the third step. It was detailed as:

- 1) Objective: to identify favoring and blocking aspects during local actor training for local culturally-based development management.
- 2) Object of systematization: the experience of CBLDP in the municipalities Cespedes, Guaimaro, and Camagüey.
- 3) Systematization axis: strategic line *strengthening the capacities of local actors for local development*.

The arrangement and classification of data relied on the information gathered from the documents reviewed³, and the results of the survey conducted to a sample of local participants from the municipalities under the study. A number of recurring items were observed after the data analysis, their presence or absence show their favoring or blocking nature in terms of strengthening capacities around three key scenarios of the process: training, agreement, and technical support⁴. Table 2.

Table 2- Elements associated to strengthening capacities that favor or block the process

Training	Agreement	Technical support
Courses, workshops, meetings	Training, support, follow-up	Systematicness, meeting spaces, formation, and dialog
Methodological tools	Systematicness, meeting spaces, formation, and dialog	Training topics
Communication	Methodological tools	Communication
Articulation (actors, types of management)	Training topics	Managing groups (formation, training, working)
Incorporation of government and decision makers	Communication	Courses, workshops, meetings
Leadership (yes/no)	Managing groups (formation, training, working)	Articulation (actors, types of management)
Vision of link culture-development	Articulation (actors, types of management)	Incorporation of government and decision makers
Quality of participation	Incorporation of government and decision makers	Leadership (yes/no)
Diversity of actors, opinions, and visions	Leadership (yes/no)	Vision of link culture-development
	Vision of link culture-development	Level of technical-specific knowledge (cultural management, economic, methodological, legal).
	Quality of participation	Prevalence of collective interests over individual interests, teamwork
	Prevalence of collective interests over individual interests, teamwork	Knowledge management

Source: self-made

Other elements that complemented the previous, and shaped the process, were identified as transversalizing the process:

- Levels of stability, support, commitment, understanding of participants in the managing structures.
- Local economic dynamics
- Legal frame
- Time of decision-making
- Diversity of actors, opinions, and visions

Direct benefits from strengthening capacities within CBLDP in the province were identified thanks to the criteria of local actors:

- Promotion of cultural values, socio-cultural dynamization, valuation of the heritage.
- Creation of jobs, income, cultural choices
- Knowledge management
- Ties with the population

The set of elements and benefits previously presented enable an interpretation of the process in terms of limitations, learning, and challenges, all of which provide general guidelines to consider for other similar experiences in different contexts.

Limitations, learning, and challenges in strengthening capacities of local actors

The instability of participants in different *ad-hoc* managing structures was one limitation identified, which shows little commitment to the process, and poor sensitivity toward the Program proposal. This was translated into a lack of support from key decision makers, both from the government and other institutions that form the bodies of the central administration of the state. This resulted from a narrow vision of the association culture-development, and the economist (productive) conception of local development, previously mentioned.

The experience in the province of Camagüey shows that the sensitizing efforts directed to key figures, like the deputy-president of Economy, from the Council of Provincial Administration (CPA), was essential to develop a program like this. When such sensitization is ineffective in key decision makers, actions do not progress much, and the results lack significance. All this can be seen in decision-making delays to guarantee a proper performance of the first phase of CBLDP.

Another attribute that poses strong limitations is the poor representativeness of the government as part of key decision makers in all the areas of CBLDP (training, management, work meetings, and dialog). Stemming from such representativeness, the governments assumed a recipient rather than a protagonist role, which should be more often played, according to the representative character of people's interests

within the bodies of the Cuban government, to conduct actions in all the dimensions of local sustainable human development. Additionally, the instability of the members of Municipal Technical Teams (MTT) had a negative impact on the joined efforts of actors, which is so necessary for this type of process.

Despite the context marking the experience of CBLDP, one element that significantly stalled the cultural initiatives was the rigid and halting legal frame of economic management. Although the country has widened the range of possibilities within the frame of economic update, the cultural sector has not received enough benefits from these measures. Culture is still considered a public expenditure, not an investment.

The inexperience of actions regarding the territorial economic dynamics caused delays in the execution of planned initiatives, due to a time lag in approval and inclusion in the annual budget of each municipality. This occurred, in part, due to the poor technical-specific knowledge concerning economic, legal, cultural management, and methodological aspects shared by local actors. Hence, it has become another limitation identified.

One example of new learning is the vision of culture-development, which is essentially defined by a look at culture as public welfare, a resource that can, and in fact does, transform socially with an impact on the human, economic, and environmental sides. The utilization of local cultural potentialities to foster development actions, favors that change of perspective, suggesting a cultural conception of process, which are significantly qualified by instruments as a socio-cultural strategy.

It is also important to note that this element stands out in relation to the analysis of the data gathered. It is thought of as a positive aspect to strengthen local actor capacities and management and coordination of development actions, and a narrow vision regarding the said link. It is the second main limitation in this kind of experience, and one of the big challenges of local development management from a cultural perspective.

In a similar position are the methodological tools, joined efforts (actors and economic management forms), and the inclusion of decision makers at different levels in the location. Although some of these tools are shared within the frame of CBLDP, they were particularly managed throughout this experience. The teaching here is that every process generates needs of specific technical knowledge by the local actors involved.

Apropos, diagnosis, strategic planning, project management, feasibility studies, cultural management, equity gaps, cultural consumption, cultural industries, and group dynamics, can also be mentioned. Likewise, a set of concepts should be clarified and given a common purpose. These are basic trans-disciplinary concepts like culture, development (human, local, and community), participation (community, citizens), sustainability, cultural identity, cultural values, agreements, environment, and territory. All of them are known in a lesser or greater way by the diversity of actors that ought to integrate in the process, and therefore, can share, interchange, and be updated through their visions and opinions. From it, further learning can be acquired: the need of informed and diverse participation, where the collective aspect (teamwork) is given more significance than individual efforts, in order to make decisions in favor of a common good. Naturally, enhancing the channels and spaces available in the territory. In a different value scale, as learning, knowledge management, the ties with the people, and the existence or absence of leadership, emerge. Concerning leadership, two key entities must be enhanced: the government as a natural protagonist of development processes, and the cultural sector as the most specialized actor, within a cultural perspective. It is an opportunity of progress and social welfare.

The need of better understanding the local economic dynamics is revealed. One of them is the approval of the annual municipal budget, to be inserted in them organically, so that cultural initiatives can be effectively fostered. Another important aspect is permanent screening and monitoring of the legal frame in place in the country, which, limits the impact of such initiatives, and is under permanent change in light of the new constitution. However, its changing character must not occur at random, but through academic research and systematization of practices, whose impacts will be stronger, which is also a challenge.

Other significant aspects can be added, such as stable incorporation of decision makers and government, and the said leadership, the two presented as a way to ensure the accomplishment of positive results in local development management with a cultural perspective. Stemming from training actions, planning, execution, and monitoring of programs, strategies, and/or initiatives, the government and key decision makers of the territory must be present, to understand, make viable, mediate, reach

agreements, articulate, and conduct the process of development in question, thus privileging social management.

CONCLUSIONS

The analysis of local development with a cultural perspective in today's Cuban society has to cope with several aspects focused on the projection, decisions, execution, control, and evaluation of projected ideas. Analysis of the faculties of the Municipal Assemblies to influence on the destinies of their locations, in compliance with its essence to represent the interests of the people who elected it, the decision makers have the responsibility of promoting the required changes of mentality, attitudes, and spirituality of the population, seeking improvements in life quality.

Regarding the context of the municipalities studied, strengthening local actor capacities demands:

- Training local and community actors in aspects related to local development and their forms of projection and execution, methodological regulations, areas of action, contribution to the national economy, and identification of the potential of culture, which, according to territorial specificities, can contribute more to social welfare.
- Collectively-built conceptual frames on development and culture, based on exchanges of a diversity of actors, who according to their area of competence, are engaged in local development in every municipality.
- Contextualization of the projection of development defined for each territory, based on choices that include social topics that express demands enclosed in the life styles of their resident population.
- Close ties among municipal decision makers, community leaders, and the population, which are manifested in every moment of the cycle of development management, and may be translated into higher levels of citizen participation.

- Leadership scale-up of three key actors: the government, the cultural sector, and the university, as necessary conditions to conduct and mediate development processes with a cultural conception.
- Sensitization and support of deciding actors and experts, to ensure agreed management of sociocultural strategies and initiatives projected and inserted in broader frames of municipal development.

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Conflicts of interest and conflict of ethics statement

The authors declare that this manuscript is original and has not been submitted to another journal.

The authors are responsible for the contents of this article, adding that it contains no plagiarism, conflicts of interest or conflicts of ethics.

Author contribution statement

Axel Polanco Noy: Determinations of the theoretical rationale, development of measurement instruments, and control; analysis of results; redaction of the manuscript; and conclusions.

Maria Teresa Caballero Rivacoba: Development of measurement instruments; analysis of results; conclusions.

NOTES

¹The foreign counterpart were the European Union (EU) through the Embassy of the UH to Cuba, and the Swiss Agency for Cooperation to Development (COSUDE)

²Meaning CIERIC and COSUDE

³CBLDP records in the province: workshop reports from the municipalities, sheets of fostered cultural initiatives, memoirs of provincial workshops as partial assessment, reports of monitoring activities, actions taken, and remarks from the closing workshop in Camagüey.

⁴Categories of the methodological procedure designed by the authors to deal with strengthening capacities of local actors, oriented to local development management with a cultural scope.