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MUNICIPAL DEVELOPMENT FORUMS: MODEL FOR THE IMPROVEMENT OF LOCAL PRODUCTIVE SYSTEMS

FOROS DE DESARROLLO MUNICIPAL: MODELO PARA LA MEJORA DE LOS SISTEMAS DE PRODUCCIÓN LOCALES

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ABSTRACT

This article attempts to open the debate on a territorial development perspective that fixes the interest in organized territories that are characterized by the existence of a community with a local identity, politically and administratively regulated. We conceive these territories as subjects of development promotion interventions. For this we propose a model for the creation of Municipal Development Forums, which with the participation of local actors, can generate a tailor-made Local Development Program. The development program will consider a diagnosis of the productive profile of the territory and its relationship with the characteristics and origin of goods or services consumed at the municipality. Based on the diagnosis, the causes of the decoupling between the local production system and consumption needs can be detected. And with this, find a way to readjust local production systems to meet the demand for goods and services of the inhabitants, generating new companies and encouraging local consumption.

KEY WORDS : self-sufficiency, local development; local identity, municipalities, development forums.

RESUMEN

Este artículo intenta abrir el debate sobre una perspectiva de desarrollo territorial que fija el interés por territorios organizados que se caracterizan por la existencia de una comunidad con identidad local, regulada política y administrativamente. Concebimos estos territorios como sujetos de intervenciones de promoción del desarrollo. Para ello proponemos un modelo para la creación de Foros de Desarrollo Municipal, que con la participación de los actores locales, puedan generar un Programa de Desarrollo Local a medida. El programa de desarrollo considera un diagnóstico del perfil productivo del territorio y su relación con las características y origen de los bienes o servicios consumidos en el municipio. A partir del diagnóstico se podrán detectar las causas del desacoplamiento entre el sistema productivo local y las necesidades de consumo. Y con ello, encontrar una forma de reajustar los sistemas productivos locales para satisfacer las demandas de bienes y servicios de los habitantes, generando nuevas empresas e incentivando el consumo local.

PALABRAS CLAVE: autosuficiencia, desarrollo local, identidad local, municipalidades, foros de desarrollo.

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1. INTRODUCTION

A new perspective of the role of the municipalities is proposed. They will be in charge of territorial development from a model that includes the creation of Municipal Development Forums which, with the participation of the local agents, generate a Local Development Programme (Del Giorgio Solfa and Girotto, 2015).

The participation of the productive sectors of each municipality will be fundamental among local agents. It is expected that, from the coordination of the municipality, these sectors become the driving force of the local development.

This proposal intends to carry on the conception of "Human Development", understood as the possibility to generate opportunities for its inhabitants in the territory, so that they can not only satisfy their material needs, but also the spiritual ones. That is to say, taking into account the three components of the human development rate: quality of life, longevity and knowledge level (UNDP, 1996).

This methodology will be applied in territories over 5,000 and below 30,000 inhabitants, considering a maximum tolerance of 10%. This proposal is projected to be applied in municipalities with territorial development potential, which have a balanced and important internal consumption, but where progress is hindered by the proximity of one or more political jurisdictions of a larger productive scale that are regional administrative. The described population rank is where we can find the factors that contribute to the described situation.

Generally, the greatest economic flow and the productive investments are in the most important cities of a region. Therefore, the proposed model encourages a uniform development in every territory of the region. It is supported that, if municipalities took this perspective into account, a fairer and well-balanced regional economy would be attained.

It is necessary to bear in mind the notion of development on a human scale, which is "concentrated and supported in the satisfaction of the basic human needs; in the generation of increasing levels of self-reliance; and in the organic articulation of human beings with nature and technology, of global processes with local behavior, of personal issues with social ones, of planning with autonomy and of Civil Society with the State." (Max-Neef et al., 1986, p. 47).

Finally, it is important to emphasize that, following Boisier (2001), the concept of territorial development is understood as one related to the idea of container, rather than content. It is understood that, even though every portion of the earth surface is territory, not all territories are important from a developmental perspective (Moncayo, 2002). Therefore, the aforementioned author differentiates among "natural territory", composed by natural elements and free from any human intervention; "equipped territory" or "intervened territory", where man has already built transport systems (though very poor), infrastructure (such as dams) and even extractive production activities (such as mining camps) and "organized territory" characterized by a community with local identity, politically and administratively ruled (Boisier, 2001). These territories take part in promoting development.

2. TERRITORIAL DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL

2.1. Municipal Development Forums

In order to establish the proposed development territorial model, the creation of a Municipal Development Forum (MDF) is presented in every territory which has the pre-established requirements.

These Forums, boosted and administrated by each municipality, are constituted by representatives of the main local actors such as: associations or chambers of commerce and industry, technical and commercial education establishments, university centers, NGOs related to the productive and working sector, etcetera (Cordero, 2018).

The municipality will be in charge of carrying out the notification and coordination of all the necessary activities for the design, implementation and evaluation of the Local Development Programme (Del Giorgio Solfa and Girotto, 2016).

2.2. Local Development Programme

The main objective is –from the Municipality Development Forum operation- to generate a Local Development Programme (LDP) in order to achieve, through the implementation of different projects, an improvement of the living conditions of the inhabitants of the municipality. This improvement will be achieved by strengthening the productive system through the substitution of goods and services obtained outside the territory.

The LDP will be conceived understanding Local Development as an endogenous process carried on in small territorial unities, as the previously defined, to promote economic dynamism and a better quality of life of the population (Buarque, 1999 and 2002; Arroyo, 2008).

Local Development –as it is here thought and supported- intends to rebuild the necessary social relationships structure in order to lay the foundations for the constructions of an identity and common projects (Del Giorgio Solfa, 2015; Del Giorgio Solfa and Sierra, 2016). As José Luis Coraggio (2006) says: "The sense of the development is not given; it is, and has to be, a collective construction." This is why particular definitions will only be recognized once the social group had reached such a maturity and solidarity that it permits the formulation of projects and the establishment of a community priority.

2.3. Diagnosis of the territory productive profile

To design and implement the LDP, it will be necessary for the MDF to carry on, at an early stage, a diagnosis of the territory productive profile and its relationship with the characteristics and the origin of the goods and services that are consumed in the municipality. Besides, it will be necessary to analyze each existing productive sector.

From the diagnosis, the causes for the separation between the local productive system and the consumption needs of the inhabitants will be detected. This diagnosis will consist of three main phases: 1. Analysis of the productive system; 2. Study of the demand of the local inhabitants; and 3. Analysis of the flight of consumption.

2.3.1 Analysis of the local productive system

The analysis of the productive system of the involved territory is essential to know, inside each

sector, which goods and services are produced, their processes and the intervening resources characteristics. It is also important to determine the pointless productive capacities of the system. It also results necessary to know the interrelations among the different productive systems and their link with the rest of the local actors.

2.3.2 Study of the territory inhabitants' demand
One of the keys to achieve local development, based on endogenous productive strength, is to know, as detailed as possible, the inhabitants' goods and services needs in a certain territory. In this way, the obtained results will permit, when possible and necessary, to readapt the local productive system to satisfy the detected needs internally.

2.3.3 Analysis of flight of consumption
It is important to determine in which cases goods and services demand is satisfied outside the municipality as well as to unravel which are the reasons that originate and promote these practices.

This situation that we call "flight of consumption" may be due to the following causes: 1. Lack of goods or services within the territory; 2. Provision of internal goods and services of inadequate quality compared to those offered outside the municipality; 3. Disadvantages of credit facilities; 4. Less accessibility and variety of goods and services.

In general, we can say that when inhabitants' demands of a certain territory are not produced internally, it is due to the following reasons: Lack of knowledge of the characteristics of local demand; 2. Inadequate productive know-how; 3. Deficit of funding to strengthen the existing productive systems or to promote the creation of new enterprises.

It will be necessary to establish, in every municipality, in which of the aforementioned situations the flight of consumption originates. When the diagnosis stage finishes, taking the obtained information into account, MDF will be able to propose strategic actions which lead to readapt the local productive system to satisfy the analyzed demands.

2.4 Re-adaptation of local productive systems: goods and services self-sufficiency and productive system strengthening

A posteriori, the local productive systems will be readapted in order to satisfy the resident's demands for goods and services and to generate new enterprises from available resources, encouraging local consumption. This territorial development model aims to move towards goods and services self-sufficiency, to generate new jobs and to promote effective and efficient use of local resources (Del Giorgio Solfa and Girotto, 2015).

To reach these goals, it is vital to prevent inhabitants from satisfying their consumption needs in neighboring municipalities when they could be solved locally, strengthening their own productive system. From another perspective, we propose to establish, from each productive sector, which goods and services could be produced with the already existing technologies and to take advantage of the operating capacity to substitute products that come from other municipalities.

3. CENTRAL POINTS OF THE PROPOSAL

This model of territorial development is structured on the creation of Municipal Development Forums (MDF) and the generation of Local Developmental Programmes (LDP).

Within this LDP, projects aligned with the following strategies will be designed and implemented: contribution to the adoption of local identity; improvement of the local productive system; generation of new enterprises and new jobs; and the promotion to consume good and services produced within the municipality.

3.1. Adoption of local identity

This is a central theme to create a local territorial development. Local identity, as it is understood, implies sharing the philosophy, the culture and the values which symbolize o represent those inhabitants who live in that territory (Arroyo, 2008). To reach a local collective identity it will be necessary, at the diagnosis stage, to analyze all those already recognized cultural elements, either within or outside the municipality, which characterize it. In relation to these cultural elements, a selective and hierarchical analysis will be done to prioritize those cultural values which show certain relation among themselves or identify with an idea of unity, which, at the same time, will serve to adopt a strategically defined local identity.

This identity which provides meaning to the municipality should be taken into account to the creation and implementation of the LDP, which will also include projects serving the execution and strengthening of the LDP.

3.2. Improvement and growth of the local productive system

This is a central theme to favor self-sufficiency municipal goods and services. To achieve this, it will be necessary to develop the local productive system strengthening each productive area, included those productive units of goods and services installed within the territory.

Taking the diagnosis results as a point of departure, the productive characteristics and needs blocking the potential of growth will be analyzed. For example, a productive unit that manufactures certain goods and also has the technologic and human resources to produce other goods currently made outside the territory.

Analyzed the local productive system, it is possible to design and apply strategies grouped by productive areas within LDP to improve its operation as well as to detect those areas where new productive enterprises may develop.

3.3. Generation of new productive enterprises and jobs

This theme is based on the idea that local development helps to solve unemployment problems and economic disorganization, mainly caused by deterritorialization, by means of local procedures (Cuervo, 1998).

Therefore, once the limits to improve the already productive municipal system have been found, it will be necessary to promote the generation of new productive enterprises that satisfy goods demands and local services which, for different reasons, have not had a solution within the territory yet.

This strategic line will include projects which serve to the generation of new productive enterprises to satisfy the internal demand of goods and services. These will also be grouped by their productive sector and, in some cases, when necessary, will boost new areas which have not been developed yet.

Organizing productive enterprises by areas favors synergic exploitation of knowledge in order to strengthen the use of technology as well as the available resources to create dynamic productive areas.

As a hierarchical criterion for potential productive enterprises, it will be prioritized, firstly, those generating more and better jobs and, secondly, those contributing to create local identity.

Projects to promote these new enterprises may consist of subsidies, financial loans, goods (movable property or immovable property) or training.

3.4. Promotion of good consumption and services produced in the local area

For the proposed model to work efficiently, it is necessary, when possible, the consumption of goods and services produced in the local area. Therefore, as a final stage of this proposal, this strategic line will have those projects that promote local consumption.

Mainly, campaigns to inform about goods and products produced in the municipal territory will be done. Besides, it is necessary to raise awareness about the importance of the consumption of local products and the development and support of the local productive system.

In addition, reduction of taxes and local rates may be provided to those inhabitants who consume products advertised by the municipality.

Another concrete measure to promote consumption is to grant subsidies and/or financial loans on condition that they are used for the acquisition of goods and services from local productive units.

Moreover, a system of buying within the municipality can be applied, that is to say, that all those supplies needed by the municipality, either for internal administration or public policies (health, social action, education, public works and public services, etc.), be acquired within the territory.

In this way, this strategy will serve to establish a developmental model based on employment generation and local identity construction.

4. CONTRIBUTION TO START-UP THE MODEL

To set up this local developmental project, it will be necessary to establish a methodology for the creation of Municipal Developmental Forums and to design, implement and evaluate the LDP from the participation of local actors coordinated by the municipality.

4.1. Methodology to start-up Local Developmental Forums (LDF)

To start-up the LDF, three stages are considered. At an early stage, the municipality will call the whole community (through sporting and cultural body leaders, traders, producers, churches, soup kitchens, schools, neighbors, etc) to reach consen-

sus on the territorial development guidelines and to involve the whole community in the working plan making process.

The notification shall be as broad as possible since local development results from the capacity of the social actors to mobilize in order to strengthen their potential, taking their culture into account, to define their priorities and to improve their competitiveness (Buarque, 1999 and 2002).

After several meetings, on municipal workshops basis, at a second stage, a directive board, chaired by the Mayor, will be formed with the most significant actors. The main function of this directive board is to head the design process, implementation and permanent evaluation of the LDP.

Likewise, discussion workshops coordinated by technical teams proposed by the directive board and designated by the municipality will be created. These discussion workshops shall analyze the municipal productive profile and readapt the local productive system.

At a third stage, once the analysis of the municipal productive profile has been made, proposals for LDP strategic guidelines (already explained in 3) will be developed.

4.2. Methodology for the Design and Start-up of the Local Development Programme

From the strategic guidelines established for the LDP (contribution to adopt a local identity, improvement of the productive local system, generation of new enterprises and new jobs, and the promotion to consume goods and services produced within the municipality) and the discussion workshops operation coordinated by technical teams, different projects on each of the aforementioned guidelines will be designed and implemented. Discussion workshops, along with technical teams, shall establish systems for monitoring and evaluating the operation of each of the projects throughout the development.

The directive board will be in charge of a comprehensive monitoring and evaluation of the LDP to make the appropriate changes.

5. CONCLUSIVE REMARKS

The purpose of this paper is to approach local development from an innovative perspective, emphasizing the creation of Municipal Development Forums to improve and increase the productive system, to generate new jobs, local identity and the consumption of goods and services produced within the municipality.

The aim of this local developmental model is to create goods and services self-sufficiency, to generate new jobs as well as an effective and efficient use of natural resources.

Therefore, throughout this proposal, local development is considered as the process of economic growth and as a structural change to improve local living conditions.

Within local development three dimensions are identified: 1. An economic dimension in which local businessmen help to organize local productive factors to be competitive in the market; 2. A socio-cultural dimension created by the values and institutions which will create the so-called local identity; and 3: A political-administrative dimension created by MDF to generate territorial

politics to favor local economy and boost local development (López, 1988).

It is believed that the implementation of this model in territories with the aforementioned characteristics and the necessary municipal management promotion will serve to improve local living conditions.

In this way, the debate for further discussion has been introduced. We hope the information above developed serves to further research or concrete implementations.

We are aware that there is still a long way to go and the parties and methodological proposals can be multiple. But it is necessary to show some of these ideas translated into concrete proposals that allow us to anticipate and project into the future.

We understand that the design of prospective projects has to be based on the development of new ideas that can envision new horizons. Perhaps this look will help to envision future research projects and new tests, which are based on anticipating that horizon of well-being expected for our societies.

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