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Title: Community Economic Development and Social Economy in Latin America: Key Themes and Methods

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100 Word Abstract:

In spite of, or perhaps because of, the particular problems and challenges Latin Americans encounter, there is a rich and diverse variety of experiences in the region that seek to improve the well-being of the region’s growing urban populations and increasingly marginalized rural populations. Since CED and social economy conceptual frameworks have mostly been developed in the global North, this paper explores how Latin American community development experiences fit into these conceptual frameworks by identifying key themes and methods of CED and social economy practices implemented in the region. The findings presented are based on an exploratory research, undertaken over four months in 2011, which research methodology was based on literature review.

Extended Abstract

This paper presents the findings of an exploratory research undertaken with the main goal of identifying key themes and methods of Latin American Community Economic Development (CED) and Social Economy experiences. The research methodology was based on literature review using references from academic journals as well as reports published by NGOs.

The resurgence of CED and the social economy is related to the failure of the dominant neo-liberal capitalist development model to equally benefit all people (Filion, 1998; Graydon, 2004; Veltmeyer, 2001a). The roots of CED and social economy strategies can be found in the struggles of excluded citizens to achieve a more sustainable and equitable development at the community level (Lewis, 2004). CED and social economy alternative development approaches refer to several strategies that are based on diverse theoretical perspectives of promoting bottom-up forms of development (Graydon, 2004). Both, CED and the social economy, take multiple forms and implement different strategies, thus it is difficult to enunciate a singular exact definition that would comprise their numerous forms, aims, and practices.

This research has adopted a broad definition for each of these alternative development approaches that include the different conceptions of CED and social economy. Moreover, a number of interrelated guiding principles, which recognize social economy and CED's contextual nature and their many practice variations, have been utilized to identify CED and social economy practices. In this manner, CED is broadly understood as a community-based and community-directed process that explicitly

combines social and economic development by promoting the well-being of communities. CED initiatives are guided by the following four general principles:

- *Community-based/Place-based Development*: the local community is the basis of CED processes, and local people themselves are the main agents for development.
- *Participatory Development*: participants of CED experiences are involved in decision-making processes.
- *Sustainable Development*: CED experiences recognize the interrelationships between economic, social, and environmental issues.
- *Asset-based Development*: CED initiatives adopt an appreciative asset-based approach to community development.

On the other hand, the social economy is broadly understood as encompassing diverse organizations and enterprises that, not belonging to the public or the private for-profit sectors, aim to generate social and economic wealth by integrating vulnerable population in the production of goods and services. Social economy organizations operate according to the following four general principles:

- *Participation*: the members, users, or beneficiaries of the social economy have the opportunity to be either the owners of the organization or to be actively engaged in democratic decision-making processes.
- *Solidarity*: relationships among members of the organization are based on solidarity, especially in regards to the equitable distribution of work, productive factors, and wealth generated.

- *Voluntary association*: people freely get involved in social economy organizations on a voluntary basis.
- *Social cohesion and collective identity*: social economy organizations have a collective dimension in that people and/or groups work together to meet their own needs or those of others.

During this research, thirty-two Latin American experiences were collected and systematized in order to identify key themes and methods. These experiences were systematized in summary sheets with a format that allows not only organizing the different type of experiences according to central themes, but also cross-referencing items to observe relationships between the features (i.e. context, type of initiator organization, CED principles, type of social enterprise organization, and methods) of these experiences. The following seven broad key themes have been identified as crucial to understanding Latin American CED and social economy practices:

1. *Farmers' Development*: many Latin American CED and social economy experiences focus on the development of the peasantry, which is one of the most excluded, oppressed, and marginalized social groups in the region. Within farmers' development thematic group three principal sub-themes have been identified: 1) Policy advocacy processes; 2) Producers' associations; and 3) Fair Trade ventures.
2. *Community-Based Natural Resource Management*: in response to the loss of biodiversity in the region many Latin American CED and social economy initiatives seek to integrate biodiversity conservation and socioeconomic development by engaging communities in natural resource management.

3. *Alternative Income-generating Activities*: there are countless CED and social economy experiences in Latin America that focus on the development of social enterprises that undertake alternative income-generating activities. In this research, four key alternative income-generating activities have been identified: 1) Community-based sustainable tourism; 2) Women groups' social enterprises; 3) Artisans' social enterprises; and 4) Waste-pickers/recyclers' cooperatives.
4. *Non-Monetary Economic Activities*: non-monetary economic activities refer to economic activities in which production and distribution of goods and services depend on reciprocity. This research has highlighted two types of non-monetary economic activities: 1) Community work groups, and 2) Barter clubs/Community currencies.
5. *Workers-Recovered and Self-managed Enterprises*: Workers-recovered enterprises refer to factories/enterprises that workers decide to take over with the goal of self-managing production when the owners declare bankruptcy or abandon their factories. This phenomenon has emerged in Latin American cities in response to economic crisis and structural unemployment.
6. *Participatory Budgeting*: processes by which citizens, either as individuals or through civic associations, contribute to decision-making over a municipal budget have expanded in Latin America.
7. *Housing Strategies*: increasing CED housing experiences that seek to offer affordable housing and housing improvement options to different groups of urban poor can be found across the region.

Table 1. Summary of the Features of the Compiled Latin American CED and Social Economy Experiences

Themes	Sub-theme	Country	Name of the Experience	Context	Type of Initiator Organizations	Participants	Main CED Principle	Type of Social Enterprise (SE)	Methods	
Farmers' Development	Policy Advocacy	Bolivia	Policy advocacy process	Rural	Local indigenous farmers' organization	Farmers (members of the organization)	Participation; Asset-based; Sustainability	N/A	Organization of workshops and congresses; exchange of ecological agriculture experiences	
		Bolivia	APECO	Rural	Local farmer's organization	Farmers (members of the organization)	Asset-based; Community-based; Sustainability; SE	Non-profit Association	Participatory methods; Formation of leaders; 'Farmer-to-farmer' capacity-building	
	Producers' Association	Costa Rica	ACAPRO	Rural	Local farmer's organization	Farmers (members of the organization)	Asset-based; Community-based; Sustainability; SE	Non-profit Association	Self-management; Capacity building	
		Mexico	UCIRI	Rural	Local NGO (Catholic roots)	Farmers (members of the organization)	Asset-based; Community-based; Sustainability; SE	Cooperative	NGO accompaniment; Farmer-to-farmer; Self-management; Participatory decision-making	
	Fair Trade	Nicaragua	Aldea Global	Rural	Local farmer's organization	Farmers (members of the organization)	Asset-based; Community-based; Sustainability; SE	Cooperative	NGO accompaniment; Participatory decision-making; Self-management; Farmer-to-farmer approach	
		Bolivia	Kaa-Iya del Gran Choco	Rural	Local indigenous organization /International NGO (Environmental)	Indigenous communities	Sustainability; Participation	N/A	NGO accompaniment; Participatory research; Lobbying and participation in local govt.	
	Community-Based Natural Resource Management	N/A	Ecuador	Loma Alta	Rural	International NGO	Indigenous communities	Sustainability; Asset-based	N/A	NGO accompaniment; Participatory research; Education
			Brazil	Mantiraua	Rural	Local NGO	Indigenous communities	Sustainability; Asset-based	N/A	Integrated Conservation and Development; Collaborative-management; Participatory Rural Appraisal
		Panama	Narganá de la Kuna Yal	Rural	National Government	Indigenous communities	Sustainability; Asset-based	N/A	Collaborative-management	
		Bolivia	Chalalan Ecologe	Rural	International NGO (environmental); Development Financing Org.	Indigenous community	Community-based; Sustainability; SE	Community-owned	NGO accompaniment (capacity building); Collaborative planning; Self-management	
Brazil		Prairie do Campo Verde	Rural	Local NGO (Development)	Residents of the community	Community-based; Asset-based; SE	Cooperative	NGO accompaniment (capacity building); Participatory planning; Self-management		
Mexico		Venavilla	Rural	National NGO	Members of the coop.	Community-based; Sustainability; SE	Cooperative	NGO accompaniment (capacity building); Participatory decision-making; Self-management		
Alternative Income-Generating Activities	Women Groups' Social Enterprises	Bolivia	CIMCI	Rural	Indigenous women's group	Indigenous women	Community-based; Participation; Sustainability; Asset-based; SE	Collectively owned SE	Empowerment (public and economic participation); Participatory research	
		Argentina	Casa Artesanas Nahuelpan	Rural	National Government, Local Government	Rural artisan indigenous women	Community-based; Asset-based; SE	Non-profit Association	Capacity building); Participatory decision-making	
	Artisans' Social Enterprises	Colombia	Women's Network	Rural	National NGO	Farmer women	Community-based; Asset-based; Sustainability; SE	Community-based SE	NGO accompaniment (capacity building); Participatory research	
		Brazil	COLIBRIS	Urban	National NGO	Members of the coop. (low income)	Community-based; SE	Cooperative	Capacity building (training and organization); Participatory decision-making; Self-management	
	Waste Pickers/Recyclers' Cooperatives	Bolivia	Tzazara Artisan Association	Rural	Local NGO (rural women development)	Members of the association	Community-based; Asset-based; SE	Producers' Association	NGO Accompaniment (capacity building); Participatory decision-making; Self-management	
		Colombia	ARB	Urban	National NGO (Catholic roots)	Scavengers / Informal waste-pickers	Community-based; Asset-based; Sustainability; SE	Cooperative	Capacity Building (NGO accompaniment); Self-management	
	Brazil	COMARP	Urban	Local Government	Socio-economically vulnerable population	Community-based; Asset-based; Sustainability; SE	Cooperative	Capacity Building; Self-management		

(Continuation) Table 1. Summary of the Features of the Compiled Latin American CED and Social Economy Experiences

Themes	Sub-theme	Country	Name of the Experience	Context	Type of Initiator Organizations	Participants	Main CED Principle	Type of Social Enterprise (SE)	Methods
Non-monetary Economic Activities	Community Work Group	Bolivia	Pirwa	Rural	Grassroots community organization	Poor members of the community	Community-based; Asset-based; Sustainability; SE	Collectively owned SE	Participatory decision-making; Non-monetary economic exchange
		Argentina	El Prosumidor	Urban	Grassroots community organization	Unemployed and underemployed	Community-based; Asset-based; Sustainability; SE	Alternative community markets	Self-management (Participatory decision-making); Capacity Building
	Mexico	Tiangulis Tlatoc	Urban	National NGO (Popular development)	Network of producers, servers, and consumers	Community-based; Asset-based; Sustainability; SE	Alternative community markets	NGO Accompaniment (capacity building)	
Workers-recovered and Self-managed Enterprises	N/A	Argentina	Union Papelera Platense	Urban	Factory workers	Workers of the factory	Participatory; Asset-based; SE	Cooperative	Self-management; Participatory Decision-making
		Venezuela	INVEPAL	Urban	Factory workers; National Government	Workers of the factory	Participatory; Asset-based; SE	Joint cooperative	Co-management (State-workers)
		Brazil	CIPLA	Urban	Factory workers	Workers of the factory	Participatory; Asset-based; SE	Workers-run SE	Self-management; Participatory Decision-making
Participatory Budgeting	N/A	Brazil	Porto Alegre	Urban	Local Government	Citizens of Porto Alegre	Participatory; Asset-based	N/A	Capacity Building; Participatory Planning
		Peru	Villa El Salvador	Urban	Local Government	Citizens of Villa El Salvador	Participatory; Asset-based	N/A	Participatory Planning
		Chile	San Joaquín	Urban	Local Government	Citizens of San Joaquín	Participatory; Asset-based	N/A	Participatory Planning
Housing Strategies	N/A	Bolivia	Notre Foyos and Chaco	Rural	UN Development Fund; National NGO; Local Governments	Women of the communities	Participatory; Asset-based	N/A	Capacity Building; Participatory Planning
		Uruguay	Nuevo Amanecer	Urban	Cooperatives	Members of the coops.	Asset-based; Participatory; SE	Cooperative	Mutual help; Self-management; Participatory Decision-making
		Costa Rica	FUPROVI	Urban	National Government; International Development Agency; National	Low-income citizens	Asset-based; Participatory	N/A	Social Production of Habitat and Housing; NGO accompaniment (Capacity building); Participatory decision-
		Brazil	Dielena	Urban	Local Government	Low-income citizens	Asset-based; Participatory	N/A	Participatory decision-making; System of mutual help

Some trends can be observed regarding several characteristics of Latin American experiences. Although some of the key themes are undertaken in both rural and urban settings, some of the key themes have greater incidence in urban contexts, while others are more relevant in rural environments. Regarding different types of project initiator organizations (i.e. community groups, NGOs, and governments); it also appears that certain types of project initiator organizations have a greater tendency to focus on specific themes than others. Similarly, there is a correlation between the themes and the main CED principle that experiences are based on.

Regarding the methods employed in these experiences, however, even though some particularities can be observed, there are no significant differences depending on the context, types of project initiator organizations, and main CED principles. The broad range of Latin American CED and social economy experiences use similar methods to organize communities and attain their goals. These methods are generally based on participatory decision-making processes and mechanisms, NGO accompaniment and capacity building, as well as self-management approaches.

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