

ACADEMIC ARTICLE

A CASE STUDY OF LOCAL COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND CITIZEN PARTICIPATION IN CUBA: A COMPREHENSIVE NEIGHBOURHOOD TRANSFORMATION APPROACH

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Abstract

The comprehensive neighbourhood transformation approach of planning in the Havana Historian's Office is a case study of local community development in the capital of Cuba. The study is justified by its relevance and timeliness of the issues found in community development and its implications in people and place wellbeing, especially in the most disadvantaged sectors of Cuban society. It seeks to analyse the improvement of life conditions in achieving social inclusion, citizen participation in community. A theoretical analysis of community development and local development within a community capital approach is provided. The experiences of the comprehensive neighbourhood transformation workshops constitute an important contribution to the local/community development process. The use of endogenous resources for managing human, social, political, natural and cultural capital ensures sustainable community development and innovative methodologies for community planning.

Keywords: community development, local development, citizen participation, holistic, comprehensive, social inclusion

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Introduction

The comprehensive neighbourhood transformation approach of planning (*taller de transformación integral del barrio*; TTIB) in the Havana Historian's Office is a case study of local community development in the capital of Cuba. The study is justified by its relevance and timeliness of the issues found in community development and its implications in people and place wellbeing, especially in the most disadvantaged sectors of Cuban society. This study seeks to analyse the improvement of life conditions in achieving social inclusion, citizen participation and the extent of the community transformations.

From a theoretical viewpoint, the analysis is based on theories of community development and local development within a community capital approach. In Cuba, community development is viewed as a methodology and practice which contributes to the comprehensive development and harmony of the population, specifically in the psychosocial aspect, with an emphasis on their participation (Ander Egg 1986). Local development is viewed as a sustainable, systematic, growing, equitable, and environmentally friendly process that occurs within a local/regional area. It aims to strengthen its economic, social, and cultural dynamics, as well as the correlation between these dynamics, and respond to the community and region's demands (Guzón 2006). The community capital framework informs the analysis of community and economic development from a systematic perspective, identifying resources and types of capital assessment and impact (Emery and Flora 2006).

The case study is structured around some considerations regarding community development, local development, and community capital in order to define the scope of the analysis. The contextual aspects allow us to understand the development and scope of the experiences explored in the use of TTIB in the Havana Historian's Office. Finally, the work done highlights the methodologies adopted, the community capital used, and the results obtained with an emphasis on social inclusion and citizen participation.

The documents utilised are historical archives, among them, references related to the issues, manuscripts, annual reports and audiovisual materials complemented by primary sources, such as experts' interviews and community observations.

Some Reflections on Community Development, Local Development, and Community Capital

There is an important historical milestone in the evolution of the concept of Community Development which occurred during the post-war period. This is viewed in the stances taken by old major cities regarding its colonies and in

theoretical developments of United States academics. This is also evidenced later on when the United Nations embraces this concept as a goal for its international work.

These theoretical developments highlight a combination of important elements: the participation of community members, the collectivity of social action, the improvement of people's life and conditions, responses to community social needs and demands, community organises to meet and achieve goals, and the modification of attitudes and practices that threaten the community culture. These developments also showcase the diversity of shared social, economic, cultural, and environmental goals which are consistent with the different dimensions that make up the physical-environmental, economic, social, political, and cultural space in Cuba today. Furthermore, it highlights the diversity of the stakeholders implicated in these processes: NGOs, government organisations, universities, and special interest groups. Some authors point out other significant features: psychosocial interaction, social cohesion, and a sense of community belonging (Sánchez 2005), promoting solidarity and agency among the people (Bhattacharyya 2004), and contributing to healthy ecosystems, social equality, and empowerment (Fey et al. 2006).

In the Latin American region, expert Ezequiel Ander Egg (1986) defines community development as a methodology and practice that contributes to comprehensive and harmonic development, specifically in psychosocial aspects, common needs and interests, identity, personal relationships, culture, and an emphasis on community engagement. Others define community development as: the basis for community self-management and self-determination (Fals Borda 1978); the psychology of freedom, which proposes the need to develop people's ability to react decisively under oppressive circumstances (Martín-Baró 1986); community psychology, which highlights psychosocial phenomena, such as participation, commitment, problematisation, denaturation, and awareness, all factors that contribute to a greater incidence in social change and problem solving issues that affect communities, with an emphasis on participation and commitment (Montero 2004); community action participatory research, a framework that allows us to gain collective knowledge and at the same time transform social reality (Fals Borda 1993); and popular education (Freire 1976), which, with its basis in concrete reality, legitimises popular knowledge, encourages collective learning and dialogue based on popular participation and prominence.

The topic of local development emerges toward the end of the decade of the 1970s, when it becomes necessary to explain other ways of development that qualitatively exceed all other previous ones. We begin hearing about 'developing local initiatives or Local Development as an alternative to a crisis, designed to mobilize human potential through local actions in different communities' (Cárdenas 2002).

It is not until the beginning of the decade of the 1980s that local development strongly unfolds, spanning social cultural diversity of modern complex societies. The proposal of local development does not itself constitute a general framework for exercising a new form of governing a nation, but it does provide, within a broader developmental model, perspectives on recovering an area and the location's potential for improvements (Hernández 2004). Along with the development process itself, it has also been marked since its beginning by an emphasis in proposals made by economists, and the local economic development approach becomes the dominant strategy in regional development during the eighties.

There are vast reflections in specialised literature stemming from theorists such as Vázquez Barquero, one of the greatest speakers on regional European orientations; Francisco Albuquerque and institutions such as the World Bank which have prioritised the economic dimension of development; and the United Nations Developmental Programme, which offers a human and sustainable perspective on development. In Latin America regions where the growing popularity of the local concept is accompanied by the debilitation of the Government as a driving force for development, the power of civil society, and the search for identities and new utopias, as well as the cultural aspect as a key for rethinking globalism, advocates are searching for a more comprehensive proposal on development that considers multiple dimensions.

According to Iglesias (2015), many authors differentiate between community and local, viewing the local concept from a regional point of view which constitutes a limiting position since it only takes into account the place where it is created. Although it is believed that local development is not synonymous with the return to roughly-merged utopian communal ways, local and community are not mutually exclusive, because the community concept is a way of thinking about processes of deep social change with democratic decision making 'from the bottom up'. From this perspective, community would seek to strengthen the so often weakened social place, recognising the importance of a subjective and identifying dimension in emancipatory processes, also attempting to build spaces for dialogue and citizen debate in public areas (Iglesias 2015). For these reasons, the analyses presented in this paper uses the term 'local/communal', which integrates both concepts.

Another important concept is the community capital framework, which is of a systematic, comprehensive, and holistic nature, and in which seven types of capital are identified: natural, cultural, human, social, political, financial, and physical capital (Tarpeh 2017). These capitals are used by the community to achieve its goals of social and environmental improvement. From a methodological perspective, this approach is considered an analytical tool to comprehensively analyse the community development work, identify assets and resources

existing in the community, the type of capital investment, and the ways to coordinate interactions among each capital, as well as to determine the effectiveness of the processes directed at social transformation through the development of community capital. (Emery and Flora 2006): Most important this approach considers the interactions among them and the resulting impact, in terms of economic security, social inclusion, and healthy ecosystems (Emery and Flora 2006; Flora, Flora and Gasteyer 2016).

The Context: Local and Community Development in Cuba

Communities in Cuba played an important role, both as a support system and as leaders in the execution of community transformations, campaigns, mobilisations, and social movements since the triumphed of the revolution in 1959. During the economic crisis and special period of the nineties, the importance of this scenario has been rescaled, as a result of the limitations of basic resources to solve many economic and social problems and the increase in population and activities that take place during this time (Uriarte 2002). Consistent with this reality there are two important facts: the creation of People's Councils² (1988–91) local governing bodies that coordinates the community actions and structures, and the establishment of the Departmental Group for Cuban Community Work (1996), whose aim was to strengthen collaboration between community organisations and entities.

The leadership roles of the community organisations during the economic crisis of the 1990s have been highlighted by different authors. Uriarte (2002) highlights the social support provided by these organisations, Dilla (1998) points out the rise of the 'neighbourhood movement' with horizontal networks on a community level and participation of different stakeholders.

2 The People's Council is a local representative entity of the People's Power vested with the highest authority to perform its duties. It is a governing body comprised of regional delegates chosen by the population, among which a president and two vice presidents are appointed, and representatives of community entities – health, education, community services, among others, and political and mass regional organizations. It includes a specific territorial boundary, supports the Municipal Assembly of the People's Power in the performance of its duties and facilitates greater knowledge and assistance to the needs and interests of the residents of its action area. The first People's Councils were created as an experiment in 1988, mainly in towns and government seats of rural territories that had lost its status as a municipality under the new Political and Administrative Divisions. In 1990, this experience is extended to 93 areas in the City of Havana and the following year used in the entire country, both in rural and urban areas, through Legal Decree No. 91 (www.parlamentocubano.cu/index.php/consejos-populares).

From then on, community development in Cuba has been characterised by its revitalisation, diversity and wealth of experiences according to its aims and methods, the plurality of stakeholders and social structures involved in them, and the coexistence of tendencies that reveal different levels of social participation, all within a scenario of increasing social complexity (Zabala 2009). Community transformation is expressed through the proliferation of community projects and programmes influenced by innovative ideas and proposals; sociocultural development programmes led by cultural promoters and community culture centres; the extension of the TTIB in the capital; the comprehensive community work experiences in locations throughout the country; the rise of the women and family guidance centres and other experiences from the local development. The wealth and diversity are confirmed by the role of people involved, methodologies, and the approaches of management and social participation of its citizens. Among the methodologies identified are: popular education, community–action–participation research, social interventions, sociocultural animation, mapping and planning, self-management and appreciative inquiry. There are multiple stakeholders and social structures involved, such as social, cultural and educational community organisations and institutions, local government, cultural promoters, nongovernment organisations (NGOs), with formal and informal leadership roles. These organisations have multiplied and support for them is coming from local government through education and training and they are valued and given great importance in the community.³

There are social participation tendencies that coexist within the different levels in the centralisation of the country as characterised by a societal development process. A predominant tendency is the popular citizen participation at the community level that defines or carries out social policies centrally designed by the state. These tendencies emerge from the masses of communities in need and have been carried out with the support from the local people councils. Similarly, during the same time, we see the impact and successes of health care, education, culture, arts, popular participation, and other programmes, whose success proved how important this type of citizen participation is to ensure success in the social transformation of a neighbourhood or community. For example, the

3 Different centres and associations are highlighted in this work, among which are: the ‘Graciela Bustillos’ Centro de Información y Educación (CIE) in the training, outreach, promotion of community and educational experiences through popular education; the Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Center in the teaching of popular educators and training and backing of grassroots projects; and the Centro de Información y Referencia Iniciativa Comunitaria (Information and Community Initiative Reference Center; CIERIC) in training management groups.

historian of the city mobilised thousands people from all over the country to participate in these weekly events as a way to improve citizen participation. Another important lesson in citizen participation emerges after the special period during the nineties crisis in Cuba with the rise of communal experiences and local governance and participation, mainly influence by Latina America approaches. Both tendencies are interrelated and complement each other; on the one hand, the centrally designed social plans and programmes are only validated and carried out successfully if they have popular participation, and high impact in the community, such as the Health Care Family Physicians and Nursing Programme,⁴ the cultural and education centres, and the women and family guidance centres,⁵ all supported by regional social policies and programmes that have a broad institutional and financial backing by government.

The complementation of these tendencies does not mean that these processes are exempt from tensions and contradictions arising mainly from the lack of coordination between actions undertaken in communities, the prevalence of regional approaches and the tendency to extend and generalise the strategies designed centrally without adequately weighing the heterogeneity and diversity of existing conditions in local development areas. Despite these contradictions, there is a consensus regarding the need for both tendencies, because even though many problems may be solved with the community's own resources, incentivising its creativity and participation, there are still needs that require solutions involving resources and services outside of the community.

Generally speaking, the results of both of these tendencies favour the inclusion of people and communities in the development of a social local project. In the first case, popular engagement on a community level defines and carries out social policies designed centrally by the State. The processes developed constitute an essential element of the Cuban Government's social policy and strengthens the dominant ideology. In the second case, community development approaches favour local development in addressing specific situations, such as social inclusion in community organisations and programmes; the prevalence of individual and collective participatory experiences, as well as the strengthening

4 Health education and prevention activities are performed in these clinics intended for families and their members. Among its fundamental activities is the Mother Infant Program, which provides preferential health assistance to expectant mothers and children. It also provides sexual education activities and encourages healthy lifestyles.

5 The women and family guidance centres engage in social skills activities and educational programs designed to strengthen new family roles, reinforce gender equality awareness within the family, education on responsible parenting, creating values and cultural identity and developing a nutritional culture.

of community identity, which consequently strengthens the development of the social local project.

According to Uriarte (2002), five characteristics identified the initiatives of community development in Cuba:

they are small and geographically well-defined areas; possess a holistic and comprehensive vision of the neighbourhood; use planning methodologies for community engagement; prioritise efforts that can be pursued with community resources, supplemented by minimal support from local governments and/or international NGO's, and include training to increase skills at a community level.

(Uriarte 2002: 54)

Sustainable development in Cuba begins to emerge within a general framework of the growing interest in development issues. Thus, the use of concepts such as human local and regional and sustainable development, is encouraged by government (Arias and Labrada 2009). The emergence of local community development is associated with the beginning of a decentralisation period of Cuba government's role in providing financial resources to satisfy the socio-economic needs of the population. During this period there is an increase in the breakdown of social fabric and in the growth of subjectivity associated with the decay of characteristics of social consciousness, a rise in individualism, and apathy, indifference and the legitimisation of every day social indiscipline manifestations (Caño 2000). Furthermore, the emergence of local development is associated with the search for alternatives to unexplored forms of development, among them the increase of local level intervention for the country's economic survival and its subsequent development, which gave greater authority and autonomy to local governments (Melero 2012).

In addition, Íñiguez and Ravenet (2006) concur with other Cuban researchers in that the local dimension emerged strongly during the nineties as an opposition to growth of globalisation. The local economic development approach, is fostered as part of processes of selectivity of production, the weakening of the Government's actions in improving people's living conditions and the increased in the decentralisation of government. Local development then is introduced as a result of a need to reverse the decay in social behaviours and increase the well-being of the people within its regions (Íñiguez and Ravenet 2006).

Tabares et al. (2017) provides another view of the emergence of local development within the context of the 1990s crisis and territorial inequality, concentrated in rural regions and different neighbourhoods; which gave rise to a significant exodus of the population to the country's capital. During this time the Cuban Government introduce local developmental policies to give more

room for community development participation at a local level. As a result of this process they decentralised and redistributed the state government's duties to local governance, which led to the creation of the People's Councils (Tabares et al. 2017).

At the beginning of the century another interesting moment in local and community development in Cuba emerges to address the different aggravated social problems; new social development programmes were deployed in areas of health, nutrition, education, culture, employment, and social security ascribed to the tendency of popular participation at a community level that defines or carries out social policies designed centrally by the Government. As a result, new stakeholders such as teachers, arts instructors, social workers, municipal university campuses, among others emerged onto the community scene. It articulated to a lesser or greater extent the experiences with community development that existed previously.

Recently, the 'process of updating the Cuban economic model', has focused its interest on the local-community development level. The Guidelines for Economic and Social Policy of the Party and the Revolution approved in 2011 highlight the need to strengthen local participation of citizen engagement and management in the regions as a way to solve many of the country's problems and it ratifies the principle of equality as an essential pillar of the Cuban social model. The new policy approved in 2017 confirm these views: it proposes developing complementary activities at a medium or lower scale, which contribute to local development and productive linking with main companies and defines human development, equality and justice as strategic axes of the Cuban social model).⁶ In both cases, an emphasis is placed on local development focusing on community and quality of life, building new projects with a comprehensive approach to addressing natural disasters and risk management.

Although vast experience are gained from community development and current policies favouring a decentralisation government processes for decision making, there are still tendencies that limit community/local development, among them: the disconnect between social and institutional programmes developed simultaneously in communities, poor coordination among stakeholders due to the prevalence of a sectorial focus, the persistence of a centralist and top-down culture, the limited systematisation and evaluation of community

6 For more information, see the following documents: *The Guidelines of Economic and Social Policy of the Party and the Revolution* (Havana: Communist Party of Cuba, 2011); and *Conceptualizing the Cuban Economic and Social Model of Socialist Development: National Economic and Social Development Plan until 2030; Proposed Views of the Country and Strategic Industries* (Havana: Communist Party of Cuba, 2016).

development experiences; in addition to the lack of focus on equity in local development agendas.

At the same time, Cuba possesses many strengths to boost community development, a very strong Cuban social project among them, equality and social justice; the social participation of its people; the human capital created throughout several decades; the existing social capital in communities made up of social organisations, different institutions, local governments, municipal universities, local citizen participation and governance support; strong cultural identity and traditions in every neighbourhood; and the solidarity of the people as an ethical and practical principle which has sustains and enriched the daily life in the communities.

The cornerstone of this design is undoubtedly the citizen's participation and leadership of communities and towns in identifying and solving local existing problems through a holistic and comprehensive approach. The TTIB team emerges as a comprehensive neighbourhood approach to transforming the communities.

The Cuban Experience with Comprehensive Neighbourhood Transformation Planning Workshops

The comprehensive neighbourhood transformation workshops (TTIB) are multi-disciplinary teams that were created as an experiment for the transformation of old Havana in 1988. The workshops were created by the Group for Comprehensive Development of the Capital,⁷ for the purposes of improving people's living conditions, urban education, developing the local economy, conserving and protecting the environment, strengthening the social service industry, the community development process and the identity and traditions of deprived communities. In this regard, Gina Rey, a prominent urban planner, and one of the directors, states:

One of the most transcendental initiatives of the Group was the proposal for the management model for community development entitled 'Comprehensive Neighbourhood Transformation Workshops,' which made possible to practice top-to-bottom planning, with strong leadership roles from community engagement and functioning at the same time as conventional administrative structures.

(Rey 2001: 4–5)

7 This group was established in 1987, with the purpose of planning the city's development with a more comprehensive view and to improve the quality of life of the people living in the different areas of the capital, based on direct popular engagement to solve the problems that affect them the most. This group is assigned to the Provincial Assembly of People's Power of Havana and designs strategies for urban planning and management using participatory methodologies.

In order to fulfil their goals, the planning Workshops identify existing problems in the area, mobilise community participation and manage necessary resources. The planning workshops were composed of experts in multidisciplinary teams: architects, sociologists, psychologists, social workers, teachers, construction technicians, historians, among other experts, preferably residents of the area that became the centre of community transformations with the leadership and ability to self-manage with the goal to improve life in the community (Rey 2001).

The premises for creating the community planning workshops were to build ‘comprehensive neighbourhood transformation workshops’ in order to express their creative, experimental nature and their goal of comprehensive improvement. The creation in each neighbourhood with a permanent multidisciplinary technical team made up of community members provided relative autonomy of the Workshops work focused on communal self-management. It provided advice to the local government as formal and informal leaders’ foster collaborative partnerships with academic, research, and developmental centres and institutions of higher learning’ (Rey 2001: 8).

The structure of the Workshops took into account three categories of urban areas; central, intermediate and peripheral⁸ where there is a concentration of problems accumulated both on the physical and social planes; as well as the selection of places where community initiatives have been developed with community participation.

The first three workshops were established in the Atarés neighbourhood (Cerro municipality), Cayo Hueso (Central Havana municipality) and La Güinera (Arroyo Naranjo municipality),⁹ which all share vulnerable conditions due to their problems related to poor conditions of housing and other social problems. The first two workshops are located in the central area of the capital while the last one is located in its periphery, so problems related to lack of utility services are added to the list. They are also distinguished by their rich historic and cultural traditions and their sense of neighbourhood identity.

8 Central: old decaying areas; Intermediate: precarious areas within the reinforced city; Peripheral: urbanization and precarious housing areas, and areas of new formal development.

9 Regarding the experience from some of these workshops – Atarés and La Guinera – several articles may be read from Dávalos Domínguez, Roberto: *Desarrollo local y descentralización en el contexto urbano*. (3er taller de desarrollo urbano y participación) Universidad de La Habana, Facultad de Filosofía e Historia, Departamento de Sociología, Diciembre 1998.

Since the inception of the Popular Council experiment, the Workshops have worked closely with these organisations of the local government.¹⁰ In fact, many argued that the experience of the TTIBs is characterised by ‘a new participatory and decentralized approach to working at a community level’ (Chapottín 1998: 105–6), served as a basis for creating the People’s Councils. At the request of local municipal governments, the experience started in the three neighbourhoods and extended to 12 neighbourhoods throughout Havana as the capital of Cuba and then in 1998, the government agreed to extend it to 20 neighbourhoods, which continue to operate today. According to Rey (2013), six of them are located in the centre of the city, eight in the intermediate area, and six in the periphery and two of these are operating in new neighbourhoods and four in informal settlements. Marianao is the only municipality that has a TTIB in each of its six People’s Councils. Table 1 shows the total of existing workshops, the municipalities where they are located, and the year they were established.

The comprehensive neighbourhood transformation workshops’ initial purpose were to improve the living conditions of its people, provide urban education for children and young people, strengthening community identity and developing the local economy. A special mention should be given to La Guinera workshops, which was able to build several buildings through the construction brigade movement and projects developed on their ‘own efforts’ by several workshops, especially Cayo Hueso and Atarés, in order to eliminate citadels,¹¹ modifying structures and the technical and structural status of these buildings.¹² It is worth mentioning that the systematic improvement of the Workshops’ working teams has been a permanent point in its development, organised as a strategy for skills training.

The creation of community centres by the workshops has allowed the work to transformed to the entire community. These spaces allow the work done by the workshops to be extended, socialising its experiences and favour community engagement, which is all drawn from the community’s needs and resources. Among the activities performed in these centres are cultural, artistic, sports and

10 Although there is not an exact correspondence between the neighbourhood and the popular council – in fact, there may be more than one neighbourhood within these People’s Councils, the TTIB work in close coordination with People’s Councils.

11 Overrun mansions made up of several bedrooms that operate as independent housing and where originally there was no space allocated for sanitary facilities, bathrooms, or kitchens.

12 See the documentary *Por un deseo (By a Wish)* (dir. Ernesto Pérez Zambrano; GDIC 2016) specifically related to the ‘Intervención comunitaria en viviendas sociales’ (Community Intervention in Social Housing) project in the La Ceiba neighbourhood.

Table 1 TTIB Workshops per municipality and Year Established

TTIB	Municipality	Year
Atarés	Cerro	1988
Cayo Hueso	Central Havana	1988
La Guinera	Arroyo Naranjo	1988
Pocitos Palmar	Marianao	1989
Pogolotti	Marianao	1990
Zamora Cocosolo	Marianao	1990
Santa Felicia	Marianao	1990
Alamar	East Havana	1990
Los Angeles	Marianao	1996
Libertad	Marianao	1996
Príncipe	Plaza	1996
El Canal	Cerro	1996
Ceiba-Kohly	Playa	1998
Buenavista	Playa	1998
Alamar Este	East Havana	1998
Párraga	Arroyo Naranjo	1998
Balcón de La Lisa-Arimao	La Lisa	1998
Cubanacán	Playa	1998
Vedado-Malecón	Plaza	1998
Jesús María	Habana Vieja	2000

Source: Personal research from Rosa Oliveras, 'Twenty Years of Inspiration', *Boletín del grupo para el Desarrollo Integral de la capital* 14 (43) (2008)

recreation activities, training courses, educational programmes, computer classrooms, audiovisual rooms, workshops, and clubs.

According to Miren Uriarte (2002), the economic crisis of the nineties introduced some changes to the work accomplished by the TTIB workshops, which had an initial emphasis on solving housing problems. According to this author, the work done by the workshops includes many other projects:

- ✓ Construction: refurbishing homes, schools, medical clinics, and other public buildings.
- ✓ Environmental: recycling of solid waste and reforestation campaigns.
- ✓ Small-scale economic development: arts and crafts workshops, video projection centres, women's employment training and computer classes.
- ✓ Social service activities: organisation of youth clubs, mothers' groups, self-esteem groups for women and extracurricular programmes based on local cultural manifestations.

However, Gina Rey (2013) explains that the workshops' expanded because the technical teams and community members were prepared to make larger positive impact in society such as assisting the most vulnerable at risk groups in the community. Consequently, they included training for these community members to become more engaged in developing the local economy and rescuing cultural traditions. One of the workshops' founders, Susana Chapottín (1998), acknowledges the expansion of the workshops with specific attributes of each region, pointing out the development of urban agriculture, strengthening social fabric, protecting and preserving the environment and the work with senior citizens as points of pride.

One underlines task of the success with the workshops, was building horizontal relationships among social organisations, entities and different members of the teams, which contributed to addressing the neighbourhood's specific problems through coordinated efforts in a more productive way.

After celebrating the 20-year anniversary of the first workshops, its mission was revised collectively to 'promote urban and social development in the community through institutional and organizational engagement, and through a participatory planning process' (Oliveras 2008: 4).

Another pioneering workshop is the Atarés workshop, which has done extensive social cultural, educational, and prevention work. They began a women's self-esteem workshop, operating since 1996, which is considered a yardstick on the issue of violence against women in the country (Oliveras 2008), because it confronted many of the existing problems in the community, such as a patriarchal culture of violence. This workshop promotes caring for the family and the children through formative and cultural events to rebuild community identity. One of its founders, states:

Workshop specialists, during the Strategic Community Plan, documented the needs, motivations, habits, customs, traditions, and history, along with elements that comprise the communal identity in improving preventive and social output, which allow to increase quality of life to the members of the community by involving them in ending violence against women and families.

(Barbón 2008: 8)

The workshops use an exceedingly participatory approach in their work. The achievement of social transformation in neighbourhoods is undoubtedly linked to citizen participation and community empowerment from a comprehensive participation point of view. According to Rebellato (2005), to be part and have sense of belonging, commitment and responsibility, collaboration and decision making power is transformative. This participation aims at a social transformation

process at many sociocultural levels: ‘Participation has been defined in two ways: an instrument or road to transform living conditions and a way to modify people’s behavior, values and lifestyles’ (Dávalos 2004: 96).

Many workshop specialists have graduated from basic training courses from the popular education with the Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Centre. They have worked together in developing popular Distance Learning courses (FEPAD) and are part of the Cuban Network of Popular Educators Councils, which coordinates different programmes for members, according to age, gender, occupation, vocations interest throughout the entire country and adopts Popular Education as a reference in its social practices.

The TTIB workshop movement is characterised by the use of participatory methodologies, specifically in the preparation of strategic communal Plans. The main purpose is to meet the needs the community through the use of endogenous resources, which ensures the sustainability of a development processes. Its mission is ‘to elevate the quality of life of the public through comprehensive transformation with popular participation so the community can achieve progressive social improvement’ (Pérez, Hernández and Mondéjar 2008: 28).

This methodology requires careful preparation, from a collaborative diagnosis of the neighbourhood’s problems and needs by defining its priorities based on real solutions, possibilities, community’s potential, resources and strengths, as well as opportunities and threats for solving the problems at hand. As a result, they developed practical transformation proposals for the community. In the strategic planning of the TTIB’s mission and strategic goals of the neighbourhood transformation, an action plan is defined, including strategic points and an action plans. The scope of the community participation and transformation with specific responsibilities are assigned with a time table and budget (Chapottín 1998). This methodology includes actions steps for monitoring and evaluating the results of the transformations done in the community.

This consistent coordination is placed on local members of the community participating in the workshops’ activities. The reasoning behind this premise suggest that by including different members from local governments, community-based institutions (municipal health, culture, education, housing, and athletic authorities, among others) and social and religious organisations, universities, international agencies, NGOs, formal and informal leaders, is possible to complement the necessary knowledge, experience and resources required to operate the workshops. As such, this methodology contributes to strengthening community self-management and decentralisation processes, increases community popular participation, and strengthens the horizontality of the participation among local members.

Developing the process includes holding participatory workshops in the People's Councils within the neighbourhood by engaging them, using different techniques¹³ to collect the information necessary in order to identify the main problems and needs within the neighbourhoods (Melero 2012).

Therefore, training is fundamentally important to this process. Workshop members, along with municipal representatives, were trained to carry out plans and then they turn key by training community leaders and other stakeholders. They also worked hard to train and provide technical advice to local governments¹⁴ and other community stakeholders (Oliveras, Mesías and Romero 2007). In the case of the People's Power delegates, issues related to community development and preparation for the accountability processes are highlighted. The training process have been characterised by their systematicity of actions, which has allowed for projects to continue regardless of the member term renewals which take place every two-and-a-half years during the elections of the People's Power delegates.

Among the important stakeholders and collaborators, the relationship with universities and other academic institutions as anchors has been essential for collectively shaping competencies, skills and designing strategies:

The Workshop's technical team plays the role of the spokesperson between the neighbourhood and outside institutions, which allows for advanced ideas to be introduced. Consequently, they promote collaboration among academic institutions, research centres and non-government organizations focused on community development.

(Rey 2001: 7)

Another relevant aspect in the work done by the workshops is their role in managing awareness. According to Arias & Labrada (2009), this is proven by identifying awareness of existing problems and the goals of the community strategy, its location and production within the community itself and the socialisation of knowledge. The most discussed issues are related to its work, strategic community planning, project management, community work, popular education, social and interpersonal communication, conflict management mediation, group coordination, facilitation techniques, leadership, dialogue for local development, participatory design, urbanism, gender focus, environmental education

13 Among the different techniques used are the Risk and Resource Maps and the DAFO Matrix.

14 A successful experience in these training processes is the school of the People's Power Delegates in the Eastern Havana municipality. See Zambrano, *Por un deseo*.

and local historical research (Pérez, Hernández and Mondéjar 2008: 26). One significant finding is that Women tend to be of majority as they played a significant leadership role in developing the workshops.¹⁵

The Experience of the Havana Historian's Office in the Community Development Efforts

The Havana Historian's Office was founded in 1938 by Dr Emilio Roig de Leuchsenring¹⁶ (1889–1964) with the purpose of rescuing, protecting and restoring the city's historic monuments and historical sites. Restoration of the historical area remained for decades and improved significantly with the work of Dr Eusebio Leal Spengler, who in 1967 became the City of Havana Historian, which is currently the highest authority for the comprehensive restoration of the Historical Centre. It is currently an institutional power house that manages the restoration, revitalisation, and protection of the Havana Historical City Centre.

The Old Havana Historical Centre of Havana is located in a region that includes architectural ensemble and system of fortifications characteristic of a significant historical period and a model for human settlement representative of Cuban culture. The majority of it refers to the city's founding site, the Villa de San Cristóbal de La Habana. The Historical Centre is part of the Old Havana municipality comprising 214 hectares, 3,500 plots and 3,370 buildings (Pérez2008).

The Old Havana Historical Centre is a rich region in tradition, celebrated every 16 November, as the anniversary of the Villa de San Cristóbal de La Habana, located next to the kapok tree which stands on the side of 'El Templete'. Religious and popular customs are rekindled, such as the Holy Friday procession along the Amargura Street from the San Francisco Plaza to the Santo Cristo del Buen Viaje, the canonry parade for the Día de Reyes, (three kings day) and the ones that are most notable expressions of the Afro-Cuban religious syncretism:

15 See Zambrano, *Por un deseo*.

16 Prominent Cuban intellectual and journalist, he was named Historian for the City of Havana in 1935, a position that was initially assigned to the Mayor's Office and one year later was adopted by the Municipal Department of Culture. The office functioned as an autonomous municipal agency, located in the Municipal Palace, until it was moved in 1947 to the Lombillo Palace in the Cathedral Plaza and became part of the Department of Education, Roig de Leuchsenring and the Office's work included the publication of several books and articles on the history of Havana and the Cuban struggle for independence, book fairs, the organization of libraries and homage paid to enlightened foreigners and Cubans.

the community feast of Eleggúa (one of the four Orishas of the Santería religion) and the Merced Festival on 24 September, which is when a large number of believers of these traditions dressed in white and they walk around the historical centre as a symbols of pride and culture. Old Havana shows its more universal nature in culturally rooted traditions, such as rolling tobacco or the dispensing of the most typical Cuban drinks, the mojito and the daiquiri. Along with these heritage values, there are several problems in these neighbourhood: an aging population, inadequate housing conditions, insufficient social services for senior care, and a stable flow of migrants from other provinces outside Havana.¹⁷

Since the restoration of the Capitanes Generales Palace, the historian office compiled documents and collections and located the city's historical original papers throughout the decade of the seventies. In 1978, the Old Havana Historical Centre was declared a National Monument by the local government, and since then it began to develop popular awareness of the city's cultural values and its historical significance and legitimation. Many historical articles appeared in the press, a series of conferences were held to disseminate historical research and tours to places of interest were given to visitors about the importance of the historical centre. This initiative gave rise to the television programme *Andar La Habana (Walking through Havana)* and subsequently *Rutas y Andares (Paths and Trails)*, a cultural and educational programme for the Cuban family during the summers for free.¹⁸ Thousands of Cubans from all the providences came to learn about their heritage.

In 1981, the Cuban Government allocated a budget to restore the Historical Centre and charged the Office in leading the First Five-Year Restoration Plan (1981–86). In 1982, the Historical Centre was recognised by the UNESCO as a World Heritage Site. In 1993, a policy called Legal Degree 143 issued by the Government Council acknowledged this important sector as a Priority Area for Preservation, granting legal backing and the tools to lead a sustainable development project. The project was supported and administered by the Government Council, with the ability to collect a special tax which contributed towards the restoration of the city. They created a new system and private administered through an organisational structure to serve the tourist industry, real estate,

17 See statistical figures and projects for the benefit of seniors at the Old Havana Historical Center (OHCH undated) and the population and housing census of 2012 (OHCH 2015).

18 Since 2018, this initiative has extended to include different municipalities and important places in the city, for example, Plaza de la Revolución, Regla, Miramar, Cojimar and other relevant centres, such as the Quinta de los Molinos, the Universidad de La Habana, and art schools, among others.

hotels, paladares restaurants (family restaurants), new entrepreneurs and the third sector. It has the power to plan, manage and be self-sufficient for the entire historic district. In 1995, the local government passed Resolution 2951 and proclaimed the Historical Centre an ‘Area of High Significance for Tourism’.

Among the most general goals of the Historian’s Office are: maintaining the residential nature of urban spaces, in an environment that directly links the people to works of restoration, preventing imbalances in the tertiary sector, gentrification, spatial segregation or social exclusion, the ‘freezing’ of the historically populated area and ensuring environmental sustainability (Leal 2004). The strategy for attaining these goals combines sociocultural intervention with economic self-management for raising financial resources.

In 1994, the Master Plan for Comprehensive Revitalization of Old Havana is developed as a methodological guidance to introduce a comprehensive and multidisciplinary approach for intervening in the Historical Centre of Havana. The management model that has been applied and updated since that moment, integrates culture and human development as the core concept of focus. Eusebio Leal is the creator, carrier and transmitter of cultural patterns and leader of the process.

The Master Plan is aimed at restoring, fully developing and sustaining the Havana Historical Centre. It safeguards the national Cuban identity through cultural research, promotion and development. It equips the region with technical infrastructure and utilities to ensure operation consistent with contemporary needs and its self-funded comprehensive development strategies allows for the investment in heritage to be recoverable and productive.

The work done by the city’s Historian’s Office is ‘essentially human’, because it aims at improving living conditions for the entire resident population, protects the environment, culture, heritage, values, and is accessible and central to the region with an emphasis on vulnerable groups. Among the broad and diverse works performed by the OHC along with the heritage restoration are:

- ✓ Children’s social and educational programmes, such as “open classrooms spaces” to improve environmental conditions in primary schools and to encourage children to adopt the cultural heritage; The Jose de la Luz y Caballero Student Centre, promotes art education, civic education, environmental and scientific education, creative Workshops; cultural programmes for children and young people in student centres, libraries among others.
- ✓ The Doña Leonor Pérez Maternal Home for comprehensive support for pregnant women; the Senén Casas Regueiro Children Rehabilitation Clinic for children with disabilities; the Santiago Ramón y Cajal Geriatric Centre; and the daytime Senior Centre in the old Belén Convent to care for senior citizens.

- ✓ Training young people as qualified workers at the Gaspar Melchor de Jovellanos Vocational School, who then get involved in heritage restoration as workers in the restoration of the Historical Centre, guaranteeing a source of employment for young people.
- ✓ Housing repair and construction programme for seniors, highlighting the restoration and construction of the San Isidro neighbourhood.
- ✓ Sociocultural education through a network of schools, museums, libraries, and cultural centres, which contribute to the recovery and promotion of cultural traditions through widespread of programmes in mass media.
- ✓ The development of guilds: Embroiderers and Weavers Sisterhood of Belén, the ‘San Eloy’ Congregation of Silversmiths and Goldsmiths and the Old Havana Carpenters and Shoemakers. These are NGOs that work to protect traditions and crafts, allowing for the inclusion of families of different ages, such as housewives, retirees and people who are self-employed, around a common goal of mutual support, community solidarity and the revitalisation of their family economy, while engaging in work to benefit the community.
- ✓ The creation of the San Gerónimo University College of Havana in 2007 as an additional branch to the University of Havana with a degree in Preservation and Management of Cultural Historical heritage with four main profiles: Museology, Archeology, Urban Management, and Sociocultural Heritage Management, as well as certificates and Master’s degree programmes. The College meets the professional education and cultural needs related to heritage preservation and identification of the nation’s cultural historical heritage. It graduates archaeologists, specialists in managing urban heritage, curators, specialists in cultural promotion, museum and cultural centres directors, researchers, and specialists in socio-community support. At the helm of the College is the Historian of the City of Havana, Dr Eusebio Leal Spengler, Dean of the College (EcuRed, Encyclopedia Cubana).

In addition to this important work, there areas of culture, sports, environmental policy, supporting the local economy, entrepreneurs, as well as strengthening citizen participation in community planning processes to revitalise the region.

According to Leal, the social programmes designed in the country take on a special meaning in the Historical Centre. Old Havana is where excellence meets practice. In addition to restoring decayed buildings of great cultural value, improving physical and environmental conditions of the educational schools unquestionably influences the quality of learning, and awakens a love for learning for students and teachers (Leal 2004).

One of the most interesting Comprehensive Revitalization Workshop is the San Isidro Neighbourhood¹⁹. This workshop was established in 1996 as a part of the comprehensive approach from the City's Historian Office, with the purpose of implementing a neighbourhood intervention to improve environmental quality of life of the community and to foster social development of its residents. This was done in alignment with the protection, restoration, and recovery of heritage, legacy, and the sociocultural development of the community, as well as fostering social participation by the people (Collado, Mauri & Coipel 1996)

Another current experience is 'Santo Ángel por dentro' (Inside Santo Angel), a comprehensive developmental, local and community project that begins with the recovery, promotion, and spreading of the Santo Angel neighbourhood heritage. It includes programmes and activities for economic, social, cultural, environmental development, with focus on women, improving the quality of life and the well-being of community members (Iglesias 2015). There are many numerous successful examples in the Old Havana of local community development and collective participation by residents to improve living conditions, protect the environment, and above all else, elevate the level of social and economic conditions of all residents in the capital.

According to Jones and Silva (1991), the work undertaken by the Historian's Office to restore, preserve, improve quality of life of the people in the Historical Centre, could not have been done without building a local infrastructure, strong relationships and having a systems approach framework for dealing with communities at the local levels.

Community Capital Framework

Overall, the work performed by the workshops throughout Cuba and the Historian's Office has one important element and that its sustainability in creating its own resources over a period of time. This is supported by seven types of community capital pillars.

Human Capital

The workshops experts are technical teams with professional training focusing on developing knowledge, skills for physical and social transformation, leadership and management ability, with a multidisciplinary and comprehensive structure approach. The residency and/or coexistence in the community itself, ensures awareness of surroundings and communication with community through a

19 One of the most disadvantaged areas of the Historical Centre.

flexible operation. Stakeholders, community leaders and neighbourhood people are well educated and are healthy, a characteristic of the Cuban population. They ensure that their leadership has knowledge, wisdom, commitment, and work ethic. These characteristics are exemplified by Dr Eusebio Leal, along with the training of professionals at the San Gerónimo University College of Havana. Human capital plays a fundamental importance in terms of people development, heritage management and preservation as best sustainable practices in the district.

Social/Physical Capital

The workshops, from the existing social cohesion in the neighbourhoods, have favoured collaborating with community social organisations, academic institutions, research centres and non-government organisations focused on community development. They built social networks involving people, organisations, institutions, and government. They have created a solid system of relationships between the people and the different social and political organisations in the community. The differences lie in the greater engagement by the workshops in improving local governments and in being assigned directly to the Government Council for oversight. They have rehabilitated and repurposed thousands of historical buildings given new meaning and life to them.

Natural Capital

The natural capital neighbourhood resources have been used by the workshops to develop the local economy, despite still being limited; Rey (2013) cites as an example: the restoration of abandoned areas to create recreational areas, gardens, planting trees, as well as establishing centres to locally manufacture construction materials, however solving housing problems has been limited. The Old Havana territory which is focused on restoration and preservation applies rules, decrees, and laws to preserve and sustain the environment, which ensures protection of environmental resources and their use as assets in local/community development.

Financial Capital

There are significant differences between both experiences regarding this type of financial capital. In the case of the workshops, financial resources have been limited and local management of existing resources is characterised by government centralisation and sectorial use. However, Leal has secured international cooperation resources with NGOs to finance projects, which supports ways to solve many community problems. He secures financial resources since its emergence of the project from the Cuban Government, contributions from

international organisations and development cooperation agreements, hotels, real estate investments and donations, among others. They set up an economic development decentralised structure which allowed for the immediate investment of resources in social programmes, restoration, and in projects that generate wealth. According to Leal, they build an economic investment plan and strategy in heritage and land protection, which creates economic assets and incentives for self-sustaining of its own restoration. Leal had ample financial resources and the authority to self-manage.²⁰

Cultural Capital

In neighbourhoods with a strong traditional identity as well as those that are brand-new, one of the most important actions of the workshops is recovering cultural traditions, strengthening a sense of belonging and neighbourhood identity. For this purpose, restoration efforts and the spreading of local history have been carried out, along with educational measures with the youngest generations in pursuit of enforcing cultural values and a legacy of traditions. As a result, the acknowledgment and respect of the neighbourhood's values is retained. The Historian's Office community is rich in cultural life, traditions and rituals, possessing one of the country's most important cultural institutional networks, and casts its work toward people, which is the essence of cultural capital.

Political Capital

The workshops distinctly worked with the People's Councils, local government agencies, and municipal governments, promoting citizen participation and decentralised approach in their work. They have contributed significantly to raising participation of people at the local level, and engage citizens formally and informally, through an advisory decision-making process. Taking the dimensions of citizen participation as defined by Rebellato (2005), the political capital dimension is reflected in social transformation and empowerment of citizen participation. In this process community activists play a leading role in carrying out collective community leadership's projects.

The Special Comprehensive Development Plan (PEDI) of the Historical Centre in 2011, invited institutions and citizens from community to have input, a process which was referred to as open citizen community meetings. In both experiences, human and social capital interact substantially; it is precisely on the basis of human capital forged throughout six decades of Cuban Revolution that

20 Since the beginning of the current century, this authority has had some limitations, especially in business management.

these existing social networks were created in the neighbourhood. This strength has allowed for the discovery of innovative solutions to meet gaps in financial and construction capital, and strengthening cultural engagement in these areas. This is directly related to the people's interests, their social needs and future projections in search for a better quality of life, preservation and restoration of the neighbourhoods where they are located.

Discussion and Conclusions

The experiences of the comprehensive neighbourhood transformation workshops constitute an important contribution to the local/community development in Cuba. The use of endogenous resources for managing human, social, political, natural and cultural capital ensures sustainable development. In addition, the use of innovative methodologies for community planning and sociocultural management has been critical. Encouraging different degrees of decentralisation with local self-management, innovative proposals with social comprehensive scale on human problems and their solutions has contributed to the success of the workshops. Among the premises, human solidarity and social inclusion are the most fundamental characteristics that support this work, increasing quality of life of the Cuban people and support of its most vulnerable groups.

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