

REVIEW

Local governments on the global stage: proposal for Santa Rosa (La Pampa)

Gobiernos locales en el escenario global: propuesta para Santa Rosa (La Pampa)

Rodrigo Mauro Giraudo¹

¹Universidad Siglo 21, Licenciatura en Relaciones Internacionales. Argentina.

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: the paper addressed the growing phenomenon of the internationalization of local governments in the context of globalization. It pointed out that, far from being an end in itself, this practice represented a strategic tool for local development. The city of Santa Rosa, capital of La Pampa, had lacked a coherent international policy until now, which justified the development of a comprehensive proposal linking international action with sustainable territorial development.

Development: internationalization was analyzed as a cross-cutting public policy that allowed subnational governments to connect their needs with global opportunities. Following Mariana Calvento, it was argued that this policy responded to decentralization processes in the context of neoliberalism and the fiscal crisis. In addition, the concept of local development was examined from a perspective that went beyond the mere notion of economic growth. The contributions of Daniel Arroyo, who highlighted the evolution of the municipal role towards more active functions, and Fabio Quetglás, who linked development to the construction of citizenship, understood as effective participation and the expansion of rights, were revisited.

Conclusions: it was concluded that municipal internationalization should be conceived as a city project, based on a lasting institutional strategy that enhances the territory's capacities. The proposal called for the coordination of local networks, resources, and actors to generate an inclusive development model with an impact on the quality of life of the population of Santa Rosa.

Keywords: Internationalization; Local Development; Subnational Governments; Citizenship; Cooperation.

RESUMEN

Introducción: el trabajo abordó el fenómeno creciente de la internacionalización de los gobiernos locales en el contexto de la globalización. Señaló que, lejos de constituir un objetivo en sí mismo, esta práctica representó una herramienta estratégica para el desarrollo local. La ciudad de Santa Rosa, capital de La Pampa, careció hasta el momento de una política internacional articulada, lo cual justificó la elaboración de una propuesta integral que vinculara la acción internacional con el desarrollo territorial sostenible.

Desarrollo: se analizó la internacionalización como una política pública transversal que permitió a los gobiernos subnacionales conectar sus necesidades con oportunidades globales. Siguiendo a Mariana Calvento, se planteó que dicha política respondió a procesos de descentralización en el contexto del neoliberalismo y la crisis fiscal. Además, se examinó el concepto de desarrollo local, desde una perspectiva que superó la mera noción de crecimiento económico. Se retomaron los aportes de Daniel Arroyo, quien destacó la evolución del rol municipal hacia funciones más activas, y de Fabio Quetglás, quien vinculó el desarrollo con la construcción de ciudadanía, entendida como participación efectiva y ampliación de derechos.

Conclusiones: se concluyó que la internacionalización municipal debía concebirse como un proyecto de ciudad, basado en una estrategia institucional duradera, que potenciara las capacidades del territorio. La propuesta planteó articular redes, recursos y actores locales para generar un modelo de desarrollo inclusivo,

con impacto en la calidad de vida de la población santarroseña.

Palabras clave: Internacionalización; Desarrollo Local; Gobiernos Subnacionales; Ciudadanía; Cooperación.

INTRODUCTION

In the context of growing global interdependence, local governments have acquired an increasingly relevant role on the international scene. The internationalization of municipalities, a growing phenomenon since the end of the 20th century, has ceased to be an exception and has become a strategic necessity. Far from being an end in itself, this opening to the outside world is a key tool for local development, as it allows channeling opportunities for cooperation, financing and institutional learning that strengthen the capacities of the territories.

Within this framework, this paper is based on the premise that the internationalization process should be understood as a cross-cutting public policy, anchored in the needs and potential of the territory. As pointed out by the AL-Las Project, no local government can fully exercise its functions without establishing international links. The city of Santa Rosa, capital of the province of La Pampa, has not so far developed a systematic strategy in this field. For this reason, a comprehensive approach is proposed here that articulates the international action of the municipality with a perspective of sustainable and inclusive local development.

To support this proposal, key theoretical contributions are taken up again. Mariana Calvento⁽¹⁾ highlights that subnational international policy is the vehicle through which local governments seek to insert themselves strategically in the global scenario, connecting demands of the territory with external resources and networks. This vision is complemented by the concept of local development, as put forward by authors such as Daniel Arroyo and Fabio Quetglás. Arroyo describes its historical evolution, highlighting the shift from a focus on basic services to a conception that combines economic growth with social inclusion. Quetglás links development with the construction of citizenship, understood as the strengthening of rights, capabilities and democratic links between inhabitants and the State.

In this sense, this article seeks to lay the theoretical and strategic foundations to promote an international policy in the city of Santa Rosa that strengthens its local development, enhances its institutional capital and promotes an international insertion consistent with its territorial particularities.

DEVELOPMENT

The theoretical framework, the integrating axis of all the work which will not only give coherence to it, but will also allow us to correctly determine the perspectives that adjust to the manifest interest of the work, is made up of categories and concepts that we need to develop.

We refer to the process of internationalization that has been gaining strength at the end of the last century, to the notion of local development that has also been evolving and where the local government must be a central actor in this process by virtue of its competencies, proximity and the knowledge derived from such a special situation; and above all to the link between both since we present the proposal of internationalization of the city of Santa Rosa as a fundamental part of the strategy to achieve the development of the same.

First, we will refer to the phenomenon of internationalization, which we have already mentioned, but with Mariana Calvento⁽¹⁾ we will make mention of a particular aspect of it and we will argue that the external participation of sub-national entities is a local public policy that materializes the strategy of such government in the field of international relations. Within the framework of a local development strategy, this external action must be an essential component if such strategy is to be comprehensive and face the multiple challenges presented by a complex, interdependent and changing international system.

In our country, and following the aforementioned author, this scenario was configured as a result of the articulation of various processes at the global, regional and national levels. Globalization and the hegemony of neoliberalism at the international level modified the role of the National State, with the consequences that at the domestic level local governments had to face decentralization policies operated by the central government, in a context of fiscal adjustment and socioeconomic crisis, without having the necessary tools and capacities. This generated in many local governments the necessary impulse to innovate in actions, even if for many they are of a defensive nature, oriented to the search for contacts and funds abroad. However, as pointed out by the AL-Las Project:

“Today, a local government cannot fully exercise its competencies, provide public services, promote its productive capacity or develop the model of city or territory it wishes to promote, without entering into a dynamic of relations with actors abroad.”

Thus, international action is not an end in itself, but a means to empower the territory and its population. The ultimate objective should be to improve the living conditions of the population living in its territory. Therefore,

this paper argues that the international action of the Municipality of Santa Rosa,⁽³⁾ should be materialized in a cross-cutting international public policy, defined by the community of Santa Rosa as a strategic tool when thinking about the development of the city and the region:

“It is argued that the international action of subnational actors is materialized through the Subnational International Policy defined as the tool of local governments that deals with promoting their international insertion, allowing them to take advantage, articulately, of the opportunities of the foreign context with the needs of the territory”.⁽¹⁾

In relation to the concept of local development, we will take some ideas put forward by two different authors but which we consider to have a complementary vision.

First, we will point out the postulates put forward by Daniel Arroyo who makes an interesting historical journey regarding the evolution of the notion of local development. A relatively new concept that, with its challenges and conditioning factors, shares the historical framework and a development parallel to the internationalization process. This author makes a brief overview that begins in the 1970s, when the central role of public policies was established at the national or provincial level, and the municipality was not imagined as a generator of such policies. They were administrators who were mainly associated with the provision of services, mainly lighting, sweeping and cleaning (ABL). In the 1980s, the central axis of thought shifted to the local level: it would be the sphere in which to find solutions to many problems and in which to discuss policies for the generation of employment, promote inclusion, etc. In the 90's, a new conception of the municipality gained strength: the idea that it is much more than just “ABL” to become a “social service company”: it has to take care of what the market does not take care of and be its complement, to go where the market does not reach because it is not profitable. Finally, after the year 2000 and after the 2001 crisis, Arroyo points out that another clearer concept is gaining strength, which implies promoting the productive development of a locality at the same time as the quality of life of its people and which can be defined as follows: development is understood as economic growth with social inclusion.⁽⁵⁾

The concept evolves towards the notion that development is understood as economic growth with social inclusion, so there is a clear difference between development and economic growth, which is marked by GDP. By way of example, a given locality may have sustained GDP growth but, for it to be called “development”, it must also generate better living conditions. Not all productive activities generate local development.⁽⁶⁾

Fabio Quetglás states: “Development should be conceived as the scenario in which the “construction and expansion of citizenship” is possible, understood as the set of individual and collective rights and obligations that allow the individual and the community the greatest potential for realization, maintaining a link with public power based on democratically generated norms, ordered in the idea of plural coexistence and that are effectively fulfilled. As can be seen, such construction of citizenship implies rights and obligations, autonomous capacity and plural coexistence”.⁽⁷⁾

This author then links the notion of Development to the construction of Citizenship, understanding that this is not limited to a “formal status”, but also implies contributing to people’s capabilities. It also considers that local development is a multidisciplinary space for reflection on the relationships between Development and territorial environment conditions, and an approach to public policies aimed at generating conditions for building citizenship in a given territory, with the use of tools that increase economic competitiveness, social cohesion, environmental sustainability and innovative and adaptive capacity.

“The local government must be a central actor in a Local Development process, by virtue of its competencies, proximity and knowledge derived from such a special situation. Therefore, a good approach to Local Development implies knowing the normative powers of the local government, its economic and technical availabilities, and its relationship with the socioeconomic fabric”.⁽⁷⁾

CONCLUSIONS

The internationalization of local governments represents today a fundamental strategic tool to face the challenges of development in contexts marked by globalization, decentralization and the growing complexity of the international system. In the case of the city of Santa Rosa, the absence of a structured international policy evidences the need to promote a strategy that links external action with local development objectives, from an integral, participatory and territorialized perspective.

Throughout this paper it has been argued that the international action of subnational governments should not be understood as a complement or a prestige policy, but as a transversal instrument that allows articulating the opportunities of the global environment with the needs and capacities of the territory. As stated by Mariana Calvento⁽¹⁾, subnational international policy should function as a vehicle to insert the municipality into cooperation, financing and innovation networks, consistent with the objectives of local development.

In this sense, Santa Rosa’s internationalization process should be conceived as a public policy that transcends management changes and is based on a rigorous diagnosis of the local context, as well as on the articulation with key actors from the public, private, academic and community sectors. Joining international city networks,

creating an international management area and consolidating strategic alliances are essential steps to build a sustainable international insertion with a real impact on the quality of life of the population.

On the other hand, the concept of local development, taken up in this work from the contributions of Daniel Arroyo and Fabio Quetglás, makes it possible to understand that true development is not limited to economic growth, but involves social inclusion, strengthening of citizenship, environmental sustainability and capacity for innovation. Within this framework, local government emerges as a privileged actor, due to its proximity to the community and its knowledge of the territory.

Finally, Santa Rosa's internationalization proposal should be understood as a city project. It is not only a matter of linking up with the outside world, but of doing so based on a collectively constructed development model that will allow the city to position itself strategically in the world, without losing sight of local priorities.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

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AUTHORSHIP CONTRIBUTION

Conceptualization: Rodrigo Mauro Giraudo.

Data curation: Rodrigo Mauro Giraudo.

Formal analysis: Rodrigo Mauro Giraudo.

Research: Rodrigo Mauro Giraudo.

Methodology: Rodrigo Mauro Giraudo.

Project Management: Rodrigo Mauro Giraudo.

Resources: Rodrigo Mauro Giraudo.

Software: Rodrigo Mauro Giraudo.

Supervision: Rodrigo Mauro Giraudo.

Validation: Rodrigo Mauro Giraudo.

Visualization: Rodrigo Mauro Giraudo.

Drafting - original draft: Rodrigo Mauro Giraudo.

Writing - proofreading and editing: Rodrigo Mauro Giraudo.