



Strengthening capacities for RTD: institutional innovations in territorial governance¹

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Executive Summary

The text that follows offers a tentative, initial approach to the issue of strengthening capacities for Rural Territorial Development (RTD) from the perspective of institutional innovations within territorial governance. The document places emphasis on some of the many institutional innovations within the territorial area, driven forward by the initiative of their participants, and it focuses on the most visible and substantial of these: development plans and systems for harmonisation and consultation within territories, participatory budgets, local government associations or commonwealth of municipalities (mancomunidades) and local alliances for territorial development.

To deal with all the forms used to promote the participation of traditionally excluded sectors –given their number and diversity– is a task beyond our scope. It is also extremely complicated given that many are not even fully documented, and when they are there is a tendency towards recommending “what should be done”, rather than a procedural approach that adequately combines description and analysis from a critical perspective.

Due to the fact that the participatory and collaborative “arrangements” implemented have become “politically correct”, and taking into account that the understanding of the concepts that sustain them can have multiple

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interpretations, the challenge involved is even greater and the possibility of providing a meaningful answer increasingly more difficult.

In spite of these factors and the risk of “failing in the attempt”, the present text, which offers a first, tentative approach, has been organised in four sections. The first of these offers some notes on governance, RTD and participation, focusing on the latter as regards the different responses to the democratic and socio-economic “deficit” (a kind way of describing inequality) that is prevalent in our region today and is directly related with territorial governance.

The second section briefly reviews (as we have indicated) some of the more visible and frequent institutional innovations throughout the continent’s territories (participatory planning and budgets, municipal associations and multi-actor alliances). The third section underlines certain aspects to be taken into account within the process of strengthening capacities, in consideration of territorial governance. In the fourth section we will show a range of useful tools for the development of such capacities, concluding the report with a final section that offers recommendations, in consideration of an appropriate programme or system.

While drafting this text we have come up against certain limitations that need to be considered. A significant part of the processes described have not been systematised, most of them have only been reviewed partially, and the requirements of capacity development are only superficially dealt with.

The various “recommended” tools and available comparative analysis, offer a strong normative inclination (what should be done) and are rarely based on specific cases and practices. The first draft of the text has been enriched by contributions from participants of a workshop organised by Rimisp in Quito. Any limitations within the text are the sole responsibility of the authors.