

Article for the edition “*New Development Paradigms: Building Inclusive Societies in the Context of the 2030 Agenda*”

THE ROLE OF PLANNING IN THE QUEST FOR INCLUSIVE SOCIETIES

One of the principal challenges facing countries trying to achieve effective inclusion in the context of Agenda 2030 is planning and, above all, putting into operation the public policies that might reduce historical gaps in matters of sustainable development.

For over more than two decades, with the Copenhagen Declaration (1995), the First United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty (1997) and the Millennium Declaration (2000), countries have made a commitment to eradicating poverty and inequality. Nevertheless, there are today some 783 million people living below the international poverty threshold, with a daily income of 1.90 dollars. This population is mainly composed of women and children.

Against this background, the question arises: why have the many efforts by countries, multilateral bodies, philanthropic organisations, and others, not managed to overcome the challenges that are still causing concern in the world today? This could be the subject of a broad debate, involving many disciplines and with extremely interesting conclusions. In this article we will look at it from the point of view of planning.

A short article entitled *Inclusive Planning for Social Integration: A Short Note*¹ reminds us that the biggest challenge in achieving inclusive development lies in putting it into operation: “Although some efforts have been made aimed at integrating the process of inclusive policies, going beyond the participative process in vogue for several decades, now **our understanding of the process itself and of what is most important in making it operational continues to be a challenge.** One of the main limitations is the lack of national capacity to transcend the participative focus, that has been familiar up to now, to

¹ Sadeque, Syed Syed (s.a). **Inclusive Planning for Social Integration: A Short Note**, Social Policy and Development Division, United Nations .

include the so-called excluded groups, as mentioned above, and guarantee their full participation in the planning process, **as well as allowing their concerns to be programmed and incorporated into the planning process**”, (the highlighting does not appear in the original).

In the particular case of Costa Rica, making public policy operational is done through the 2019-2022 National Development and Public Investment Plan (PNDIP [*in its Spanish acronym*] 2019-2022). The objective of the plan is “to generate inclusive economic growth at national and regional level, in harmony with the environment, generating quality jobs, and reducing poverty and inequality”. This important planning instrument includes elements that help improve the inclusivity of public interventions, namely:

Intersectoriality, regionalisation and link with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The PNDIP has various levels through which policy interventions are coordinated that seek to help achieve the five major national goals, which are: economic growth, reducing unemployment, reducing multidimensional poverty, preventing the growth of inequality and reducing carbon emissions. These goals are in turn reflected in the goals of the seven areas defined by the President² and they have a direct and indirect link to the 17 SDGs. Of the 224 goals, around 63% have a link to Agenda 2030.

The National Evaluation Agenda. In addition, the 2019-2022 PNDIP has a National Evaluation Agenda (ANE in its Spanish acronym) which evaluates 16 strategic interventions for the Alvarado–Quesada Administration. Its purpose is to provide appropriate information to help improve the quality of the goods and services the public receives and contribute to better creation of public value.

Follow-up and monitoring. The PNDIP has a virtual space on the website of the Ministry of National Planning and Economic Policy (MIDEPLAN in its Spanish acronym), where

² Strategic Areas of Presidential Articulation: Innovation and Competitiveness; Infrastructure, Mobility and Land-Use Planning; Human Security; Health and Social Security; Education for Sustainable Development and Coexistence; Economy for Stability and Growth; and Territorial Development.

citizens can input follow-up and monitoring of how the goals are progressing. The monitoring is published every six months.

Goals specific to populations and territories. Specific interventions are drawn up for vulnerable people at territorial level. For example, one intervention in the area of Human Security seeks to “help with permanence in the formal education system of primary and secondary students in situations of poverty via conditional cash transfers, taking account of disabilities and indigenous peoples”, which is disaggregated for each of the country’s six planning regions and contributes to fulfilling SDG 4: “Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all”.

What more can be done in planning to promote inclusive development?

On this point, prospective territorial analysis becomes an ally of the offices and ministries involved in planning. Constructing future scenarios and prioritising decisions based on evidence can make the difference in terms of the successful implementation of a public policy. In particular, we must scale up the modelling capabilities, in statistical, econometric and other techniques, of the public servants who work in these agencies. We must look at the good practice of other countries, as well as the public policy innovation labs, and to this end international cooperation may help streamline peer-to-peer learning.