

The **BOTTOM-UP** approach towards Local Economic Development (LED) from A to Z

By Eduardo Palavicini *



- A**ttitudes that favour participation of local actors in the development process are a central feature.
- B**alances local interests towards sustainable development.
- C**ollaborative links within the private local sector are built.
- D**emands interaction among social, public and private sectors.
- E**mpowerment and capacity building policies are core instruments of the LED toolkit.
- F**lexibility within local development processes is seen as a necessary response to continuous changes in national and global contexts.
- G**eneral public interest in the well-being prospects of their community and locality is fundamental.
- H**ails the importance of the principle of subsidiarity.
- I**nnovative ideas from the design of participatory development plans to the introduction of new local economic activities are the norm.
- J**udges its success by constant monitoring, evaluation and revision of development goals and outcomes.
- K**nowledge building through mechanisms of cooperation and coordination.
- L**ocal could refer to the geographical area comprising the jurisdiction of the lowest level of governmental administration; however, the main idea is to gather and propel the benefits of citizens' proximity to decision-making processes which have an impact on their quality of life.
- M**akes the best of available local and external resources with a long term perspective.
- N**etworking with relevant external agents is essential.
- O**bjects the thought of industrialisation as the sole economic development path and of urbanisation as a deterministic outcome of economic development.
- P**romotes the creation and consolidation of entrepreneurial attitudes and aptitudes.
- Q**uality of people's life improvement instead of good-looking economic statistics is its ultimate motivation.
- R**ecognises local weaknesses and challenges as well as local strengths and opportunities.
- S**trategic thinking is fundamental when designing LED plans.
- T**ransparency and accountability are encouraged by citizens' proximity and local actors' ownership of the development process.
- U**nderstanding thoroughly the local circumstances and characteristics (e.g. social, economic, geographical, political) is a prerequisite to successfully combine bottom-up LED tools with complementary traditional ones.
- V**agueness is a characteristic of the top-down approach to achieve local development goals because it lacks the feature of embeddedness prevalent in the bottom-up perspective.
- W**orking together within a framework of formal and quasi-formal institutions contributes to consolidate the local social capital and assures the sustainability of the development process and its outcomes.
- X**quantity of experiences documented all over the world show that the bottom-up approach do enhance people's living conditions in both lagging behind and already wealthy localities.
- Y**oung perspectives like this risk being disregarded, confused or even manipulated; therefore a good level of understanding is needed before analysing its effects or trying to embrace it.
- Z**eal to embrace the bottom-up approach requires to be accompanied by a high level of compromise and hard work of local agents along the development process.

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