COMMUNITY ACTIONS: AN AGENCY TOPIC FOR HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

Purpose of the study: The objective of the study is to unveil the qualities that community actors in the city of Armenia-Quindío-Colombia have and enhance in the exercise of their community action.

Methodology: The methodological approach of this research is qualitative-interpretative and cross-sectional. The investigation was carried out with eight community actors of an urban commune of the city of Armenia-Quindío-Colombia through semi-structured interviews, which focused on the meaning and significance of their community action. The interviews were conducted, and answers of the participants were analysed through a matrix in Excel.

Main Findings: The study has identified that human agency is made up of Transparency and commitment, internal qualities in the subjects that allow them to act as community agents, by directing their actions towards a civic exercise and therefore as a contribution to human development.

Applications of this study: The results of the study can be useful for the analysis of the performance of social actors in various contexts. The study will also be of help for the policymakers at local and national levels, to develop programs that strengthen the social skills of this group, as well as support in work where one wants to analyse the configuration of human agency.

Novelty/Originality of this study: This research has examined the meaning of Community actions from the perspective of human agency. The originality of this research, when compared to the previous works on the same topic, lies in the identification of the qualities that form the agency in a population group, comprising of a widely diverse group of community actors. Besides, it also provides direction for future research in this area.

Keywords: Agency, Commitment, Community, Human Development, Social Actor, Transparency.

INTRODUCTION

In Colombia, community organizations represented by “Communal Action Boards” (CABs) are recognized by the Political Constitution of Colombia of 1991 (Article 38) concerning community action organizations developed extensively in Law 743 of 2002 (Republic of Colombia). According to this law, they are defined as a civic, social, and community management organization with non-profit motive, of a solidarity nature. They also have legal status and equity, integrated voluntarily by the residents of a place who join efforts and resources to seek a comprehensive, affordable, and sustainable development based on the exercise of participatory democracy.

The CABs are represented by members of the same communities and are called community leaders, members, or dignitaries of the CAB; in other cases, social actors (Urengo & Rodríguez, 2019). CAB being a non-profit organization, these people carry out their community work without receiving any remuneration either from the community or from the State. They are people who are permanently in charge of the management and care required by the people belonging to their respective zones. They also attend and mediate between the community and the public or private institutions that reach their communities (Sánchez & Vargas, 2017; Malqvist, 2018; Alonso et al., 2018). These organizations are called in other countries as neighbourhood boards or neighbourhood organizations (Ihrke & Johnson, 2004; Lee, 2017).

The selfless action and the exercise of the community actions of these subjects call our attention to how they conduct their activities on behalf of their communities. Assuming that the main objective of the CAB is to improve the living conditions of the community, a quality that is innate in them makes them distinct from all the neighbours who are not willing to face agreements and disagreements from the community (Sánchez & Vargas, 2017).

This representation and action, exercised by community actors, can be seen as a contribution to the human and social development of the community, as well as to local development (Mempel-Śnieżyk, 2013; Sánchez & Vargas, 2017), which can be analysed from the agency that is found in those subjects. In this context, human development is referred to as people and not to objects (Max-Neef et al., 1986), furthermore, human development takes economic aspects as a means and not as an end to achieve the development of society (Sen, 2006). Thus from the development point of view, the agency is one more element that contributes to human development that implies acting in freedom, as a capacity to choose and pursue one’s own goals, and at the same time to impact the world (Sen, 2006).

Studies in this field of knowledge are based on different disciplinary perspectives (Castrillón-Correa et al., 2020). They also address the analysis of human behaviour in various population groups such as children, youth, parents, and teachers, among others. This analysis is done through assessments, self-perceptions, what they receive, and what they contribute.
to relationships (Bühler-Niederberger & Schweittek, 2014). There are other studies that reflect that the agency has a relationship with beliefs, values, aspirations, ways in which their actions influence other people (Firat, 2016; Mary & Young, 2018; Duncheon & Relles, 2019; Mehdipour, Shalbaf, & Gholamali, 2018; Preston, 2019).

In these studies, the CABs are not incorporated as a population group of analysis in which the agency is addressed. It is for this reason that the present analysis focuses on community actors of the city of Armenia- Quindío- Colombia, who have different socioeconomic characteristics identified through their educational levels and social stratum. Allowing this population group to be more socially diverse, where all of them carry out actions in favour of the benefit of their communities and the collective welfare, which draws attention in the present study to answer the main question: What are the personal qualities that the community actors possess in the formation of their agency?

The reason as mentioned above, this study presents a synthesis that helps the argumentative development of the article summed up in the following: The agency is made up of qualities of the subject that conducts his /her actions towards a citizen exercise and therefore a contribution to human development.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The human agency, thought from the actions of the social actors, is located in a dimension of development referred to the subjects (individual or collective) and their qualities. This capacity considered as a category of human development (PNUD, 2016), shaped by the multiple dimensions of human life, not only from the material necessities but from the individual and social realization as forms of life, considering the “subject” as the centre of human development (PNUD,1990). Max- Neef et al. (1986) propose that development must be referred to as people and not objects. Sen (2006) places the human being as the centre and primordial end of development in all his fields, where the conception of development related to welfare is not identified with the utility nor with the satisfaction of preferences, but with agency and freedom to achieve goals and personal ends. In this way, he emphasizes people as moral entities who decide, choose, and exercise freedoms to achieve human and social development.

Therefore, focusing on the agency as a category of human development (PNUD, 2016), allows analysis and measurement from various aspects, since a single approach with its indicators is not enough to withhold all aspects of the subject to establish levels of human development as a whole. It is for this reason that the present study starts with recognizing the importance of agency in subjects, as a field of study necessary for understanding and practical inquiry. This concept of the human agency has been developed in various disciplines addressing elements that characterize human beings to their actions and also relating to their context of growth.

Several interdisciplinary theories approach and analyse the individual, his being, and becoming human from the agency point of view (Yurén, 2013; Zavala & Castañeda, 2014; Stoecklin, 2018; Bauman, 2002; Sewell, 2006). Other theories that deal with the agency are Giddens’s (1995) theoretical project “[Theory of Structuration” in sociology. Pick’s “Theory of Empowerment” (Pick et al., 2007) in psychology. Bandura’s (1989) “Social Cognitive Theory”, which includes aspects of social psychology, and Sen’s (2006) economic and philosophical thought from his “Approach to Freedoms and Capabilities”.

In the specialized literature, studies have been consulted from various disciplines that show the use of the concept of agency and its utilities, to explain from psychological aspects, the changes and subsequent life moments of people when facing a precarious retirement (Vogelsang et al., 2018). In the same way, analysis of health practices incorporating or assuming the need to promote agency in communities and localities as a strategy to generate healthy environments to improve health conditions is found in Malqvist (2018). Self-care of patients with various diseases (Vega et al., 2015; Gutiérrez et al., 2018); evaluations of state programs to overcome poverty, generally with marginal populations in Chile (Bivort, 2005), and in Mexico (Pick et al., 2007; Pick & Ruesga, 2006) have also been found.

Other research has incorporated the approach of freedoms and capabilities to analyse aspects of education and about families (Ramos, 2017). Palacio (2014) analyses the family as an agency for the formation of human beings, recognizing that Sen’s approach connects people’s capabilities, which develop in their respective environments. Others have found the relevance of the concept of agency in education (Zavala & Castañeda, 2014; Arnold & Clarke, 2014). According to Martin (2016), the school contexts define a person’s agency as their relative position in an immediate conversation as being responsible for an action. In urban and rural communities, Boni et al. (2018) explore the reasons why people value being part of a community, along with the collective capabilities that expand through community participation.

Besides, Ramírez et al. (2016) carry out the estimation of the agency index in the department of San José de Cúcuta-Colombia, based on the demographic and socioeconomic factors of the population under study, using the capabilities and freedoms approach.

On their part, Biggeri et al. (2017) argue that the core of human processes is found in local capacities and the development of capacities. They also identified it in the relations between community and capacities, from the sustainable territorial evolution centred on people. This framework can help examine the different processes implemented at the community level. This finding was proved in a case study applied to a Community Based Rehabilitation (CBR) program implemented in the districts of Mandya and Ramanagaram in the State of Karnataka,
India. Mempel-Śnieżyk (2013) reaffirms this by highlighting the importance of local actors for local development in Poland.

Finally, Tonon (2018) states that the particular relationship between capacities and communities has been little studied and recognizes in Sen’s capability to approach the importance of identifying freedom as an essential principle of development. This principle constitutes a theoretical proposition to evaluate different aspects of development and social life. Furthermore, it highlights the value of groups, recognizing the fact that people live in groups: families, communities, or neighbourhoods. In turn, Urquijo (2007) from the analysis of Sen’s approach of capabilities relating the concepts of agency and agent concludes that it is significant to include the agency in the list of human functions to think about its relevance in human development.

Analytical considerations of community life, precisely those related to social, community, or local actors, have characterized their activities and the role they play in their community (Mempel-Śnieżyk, 2013; Lee, 2017). Also, Rauschmayer et al. (2017) analyse collective actions as an example in the use of community currencies, focusing their analysis on the capabilities approach. To understand the reasoned exercises from the human agency point of view, subjectivity and reasons stating their actions have not been researched previously, which may allow understanding their social activity from the meaning of the common good (Bauman, 2002) and the community work they do.

METHODOLOGY

The methodological approach of this research is qualitative-interpretative and cross-sectional. This approach allowed revealing the individual experiences of the actors who narrate their experiences, actions, and perceptions of acts as subjects/agents. In terms of Ricoeur (2001), this shows that human action, if freed from its agent, acquires independence similar to the autonomy of a text. It leaves a trace, a mark, and is inscribed in the course of things, and becomes an archive and a document. Thus, it identifies the qualities of the subjects that provoke its action in the world and its context of development.

Data collection was carried out by employing semi-structured interviews to know the opinion and perspective of the participating subjects, concerning their experiences and situations, lived as community actors, which allowed them to reveal their beliefs, values, attitudes, actions around their community performance.

The current research was carried out during four months, where eight individual interviews, systematically and rigorously, were completed with duration of 45 minutes. The interviews were conducted in Spanish, and the responses were translated to English assuring the originality of the responses. These interviews focused on the meaning and significance of the community actions carried out by the subjects participating in the study. Notes were taken, and interviews were recorded, which were later transcribed to keep the fidelity of the participants’ expressions.

The interviews were conducted, and answers of the participants were analysed through a matrix in Excel. This approach allowed the researchers to find out coincidences in responses, and the different arguments on the topic addressed. Instead of fragmenting the expressions in categories, repeated issues emerged, and this allowed interpreting and understanding the sense of their actions, the qualities that configure the agency in the community actors.

The participants of the study were selected deliberately. This qualitative study involved eight (8) community actors of an urban commune of the city of Armenia-Quindío- Colombia. These actors work as Presidents of Communal Action Boards - CABs - (the CABs are community organizations of neighbourhood representation) and people who exercise their activity as councillors, belonging to 12 neighbourhoods that are organized and with representatives from CABs. This particular commune was selected for its diverse population and its socioeconomic strata in the same territory. This meant having heterogeneity in the group of interviewed actors. The ages of the actors were between 19 and 70 years, from various educational standards (from the basic primary one to professional and specialist levels), which facilitates the expressions on the experiences of its performance in the community.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Total actors consulted: 8</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Socioeconomic stratum</th>
<th>Educational level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Community actors in the city of Armenia-Quindío</td>
<td>Councillors: 2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>University Student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>President of the Community Association</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Specialist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Presidents of the Community Action Board - CAB: 5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Professional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Professional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Basic high school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Basic Primary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Basic Primary</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** Author analysis
RESULTS/FINDINGS

In the current study, the social actor who works in community contexts is defined as a subject that acts and provokes changes in his or her surrounding world (Sen, 2006). The subject/agent acts based on his or her internal aspects or qualities, recognized by the interviewers through their expressions, reasons, and meanings, are presented below.

The exercise of community action: Self-views from the subjects

The community actors of this study, during the interviews, have resorted to the narration of their experiences and history of community life. Table 2 summarizes the reasons why community actors in one commune of the city of Armenia-Quindío- Colombia, exercise this social role.

Table 2: Reasons for Community actions of community actors in the city of Armenia-Quindío-Colombia

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Finding</th>
<th>Expressions of Presidents of the Community Action Board</th>
<th>Expressions of Councillors and ASOCOMUNAL of Tenth commune</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reasons for community exercise come from innate abilities.</td>
<td>“From a very young age, I liked working with the community” (Stratum 1-62 years).</td>
<td>“Since childhood, I liked to participate, not to run over vulnerable people. I like to serve, to be there to fulfil a mission” (Stratum 1, 19 years).</td>
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<td></td>
<td>“I am motivated to know what things can be done, I try to help build. One must have a vocation for service and time, satisfaction is very great” (Stratum 1, 66 years).</td>
<td>“They come from my mother’s roots, who was a great leader. That is where my interest, tastes, desire to work for the most vulnerable, and most needy communities come from” “I’ve always liked working in the social field; I have been doing community work for the last 40 years” (President ASOCOMUNAL. Stratum 5-50 years).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“That takes one in the blood because from a very young age I have heard and seen the suffering, where those who have the power abuse those who do not. This led us to struggle to defend our rights, manage our necessities, and overcome in these neighbourhoods. Exercising leadership, not for the personal gains but fighting for the infrastructure, for the social fabric that is slowly recovering. In reality, the work of a leader is not to speak but to perform” (Stratum 1, 42 years).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reasons for community exercise come from built skills.</td>
<td>“I like people to progress, to be active, to be able to develop and do some things, they named me perhaps they saw a leader in me” (Stratum 4, 56 years)</td>
<td>“I come from a family that has liked politics, like my grandmother and uncles and I never imagined that I was going to be a councillor, I didn’t look for it, people proposed it to me and I accepted it. It is to do more for the community. (Stratum 5, 19 years old)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the interest of the development of the community exercise, two reasons are identified from the motivations. Out of the six interviewed, the first reason sprouts from innate abilities. These abilities are from their desires, feeling the need to act in favour of needy. Also, to be attentive in taking up those issues that lie in their immediate development contexts, such as the neighbourhoods where they live. The readiness of some actors is based on their vocation to service, of time availability, of doing more than talking, being evident in concrete actions. When they express “it is something that is in their blood”, this can be translated as the motor, the enthusiasm that drives them to act in favour of the community. Expressions that coincide with the study by Sánchez & Vargas (2017) with CAB in another Colombian region, where those interviewed expressed that “leading a CAB, and especially working for the community, is something that should be innate, since not all the neighbours are willing to face agreements and disagreements of the community” (p. 210).

The second reason, from the remaining two interviewers, comes from skills built from their developments and life experiences. This precisely is because of their improvement and relationship with family life history, but with interest in participating in community affairs for the progress of their communities.

The recognition of the social situation made by these communitarian actors happens by referring to the ‘Other’ as the subject. This particular aspect is learned in the spaces of privacy and intimacy and later projected towards civic life. This feature takes place in a flow of reciprocal relations, with an ethical position of knowing how to coexist with the differences in the same space or territory, which constitutes a moral condition of citizenship (Villegas, 2008).

Self-definition as a Community actor

The participants of this study are Community Actors, Councillors’ and President of ASOCUMUNAL. They mainly identify themselves as enterprising, determined people, and positively define themselves, highlighting the capacity to manage. These convictions are based on knowing which doors to knock and where to go, as well as carrying out-group work. They describe themselves as noble in being able to understand the suffering of others, moved by the vocation of...
service, not aspiring to be politicians. They consider themselves to have a social sense because of the needs of the communities: “thrown forward, noble in every way: I do not like to see anyone suffer, whether they are hungry or cold because I am capable of taking off my clothes to give them to someone else” (CAB, stratum 1).

It also highlights the capacity to establish cordial relationships, supported by Transparency (demonstrating how things are done with honesty), perseverance and responsibility: “I define myself as a fighter, responsible, reliable, friendly because until now I have done things in the best way” (Councillor, stratum 5).

Despite the fact, the actors carry out different tasks in the commune from their positions, they all maintain in favour of the service to the community. Recognizing their sensitivity for community life, within the framework of the interaction of subjects with their social world, Calderón (2011) terms the work on subjective aspects that involve the vision of “Being a person” or “Work on oneself”. This conception is found as opposed to the recognition of the existence of the Others, without losing sight of the acceptance of the freedom of the Other (Urquijo, 2007).

All participants rated their work as good or excellent, based on their honesty, their management, the equitable distribution of the resources that reach each sector. They express their willingness to do the things that are needed, within the legal framework of their knowledge that govern their community activity. Among the interviewers, 80% of them express a skill acquired through their community practices. In their own words, “Although I have not studied. I know about laws”. Another 20% expressed that it was due to their professional practice and for belonging to the ASOCOMUNAL organization. Also, they mentioned that the organization has to be updated and at the same time train its members in the current regulations that govern them.

Meaning and course of Community actions

In Table 3, we find the narratives of the community actors about the meaning and significance of their role in the life of the community, and this is manifested in their interest to contribute towards the quality of life of people who belong to their territories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Finding</th>
<th>Expressions of the Presidents of the Community Action Board</th>
<th>Councillors and ASOCOMUNAL expressions of the Tenth Commune</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The social role played by the community actor is manifested in terms of contributing to the improvement of living conditions in their development contexts.</td>
<td>“It is not done, but one is born with instinct, it means liking what one is doing” (CAB, stratum 1). “Teach people that things can be done without weariness, teach the child to have a responsibility” (CAB-Stratum 4). “It is fighting for the needy, for the weakest, the helpless; to whom people close the doors, getting to the last to achieve it” (CAB, stratum 1).</td>
<td>“Fight for what is of interest in the neighbourhood and now in the commune” (Councillor, stratum 1). “Be a spokesman for the community before the Mayor’s Office” (Councillor, stratum 5). “It means a lot, to see the happiness of people when one collaborates with them, to see a smile in a person when they see what has been done” (Councillor-Stratum 1). “As a civic leader and lawyer, I liked social work, more than all the messages left to the leaders: it is not what they are going to give us, but, how are we going to project ourselves in our families and communities” ASOCOMUNAL President.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The daily experience of the social actors, in their community life contexts, has been impregnated with ethical and moral issues. Having been marked by these experiences, their reflection and decision as community actors have helped them in recognizing significant learnings that are connected to their work. In the words of an actor “The legalization of the neighbourhood, managing projects for paving the neighbourhoods’ roads and building platforms, building sewage systems, communal huts, and public lighting; with patience, perseverance, a vocation for service and time” (Councillor, stratum 1). “The relationship with the communities, knowing what the situations are, conflicts, thoughts, what they think, where we are going” (President ASOCOMUNAL).

The above said expressions reflect the same feeling in the learning that collective actions could contribute, focused on the management of processes, of resources, in the satisfaction of the work done for the mutual benefit. This same sentiment was identified in the study of Sánchez & Vargas (2017) involving CAB in projects of the hydrocarbon sector in Colombia. Also, the value of what it means to be part of a community coincides with the study of Boni et al. (2018). The testimonies that support the meaning of these community actions can be understood as part of the process of configuring the identity of these subjects as social actors, within the framework of their own stories and life experiences. This finding is similar to the configuration of the identity of teachers in European contexts (Mary & Young, 2018; Preston, 2019), who experienced situations of poverty, shortages, minorities, social exclusion, migration and assumed their experiences as important for exercising present actions in favour of Others.
DISCUSSION / ANALYSIS

From Sen’s Capabilities Approach (2006):

An agent is one who does things, as well as considers actions and results...this exercise of agency is the capacity that a person has in achieving his or her own goals and values, whether or not related to his or her well-being. Agency implies the ability to make decisions and act on one’s behalf, which becomes relevant due to its impact on the world.

As mentioned in the individual expressions of the social actors (results section), this work identifies actions that reflect values and qualities, which have clear social components. Similarly, this situation is found in the works of (Firat, 2016; Mary & Young, 2018; Duncheon & Relles, 2019; Mehdipour, Shalbaf, & Gholamali, 2018; Preston, 2019), where it is noted that the agency has a relationship with beliefs, values, aspirations, ways in which its actions influence other people, i.e., values play a preponderant role in its findings. For this reason, the community action, seen from the morality point of view of the community actors, and according to Urquijo (2007), refers to actions and moral codes, as apprehensions that prescribe individual and social good, and its transmission is done by socio-cultural learning.

This study identifies that community actors, in their behaviour, confirms the values of Transparency and commitment as qualities that shape the agency in them. In the work of McLean, Kate & Sved, Moin (2015) the agency was not shaped by values but by psycho-social characteristics such as identity building and (Sharp, 2014; Schoon & Lyons-Amos, 2016; Vogelsang, Shultz & Olson, 2018), connecting the agency with structural, cultural and life course conditions. According to the works of Duncheon & Relles (2019), the individual and collective agency is influenced by values such as trust, thus constituting a fundamental element in the construction of social relations and social capital.

In the agency formation, the qualities that this study has identified are:

First, the Transparency shown during their management, collective and clear decisions involving all members of organizations and communities, and guarantees laid on Transparency. These fundamental aspects of the actors are recognised by their communities to trust them and their representation. That is why the individuals who belong to the communities interrelate, based on what is offered to them and also what can be expected. This quality found in the community actors is related to trust (Simmel, 1958), reliability (Giddens, 1999), and at the same time to the guarantees of Transparency (Sen, 2006), which are elements of vital importance for an individual to freely and openly interact with the provided information. Sen (2006) also expresses that when this trust is seriously violated, the lack of frankness can negatively affect the lives of those who are directly involved including the third parties. These guarantees play a clear instrumental role in the prevention of corruption, financial irresponsibility, and unclean treatment. In connection with the above finding, Duncheon & Relles (2019) suggest that trust is a precondition for student agency. This particular element allows the students to trust any kind of information provided by their school, be it by flyers, information by third parties, or simply a presentation of a program. An example of such trust is when students believed in Jackson Magnet institution (a pseudonym) that had people ever ready to help them. The trust reported by Duncheon & Relles (2019) is the equivalent of the Transparency found in community actors.

Second, the commitment is found in the repeated expression of community actors, who maintain that the internal strength of their actions is “the vocation of service” (see Table 2.). This recognition of the existence of the Other be it in a community context or of the collective needs is what Sen (2006) calls commitment. This attitude of the subject is the conduct of selflessness, going beyond his well-being or his personal interest understood in the wide sense of the word. Here, one is even willing to make sacrifices for the sake of other values or the well-being of the community (even at some personal cost). This kind of withdrawal implies a commitment (and not just sympathy). This matter refers to making firm decisions to change a system that seems unfair to us, and hence any action that is taken is due to the commitment. There is something of our “being” contributing to the fulfillment of commitments because they are ours.

In a study carried out in two districts of the Hamedan city in Iran (Mehdipour, Shalbaf & Gholamali, 2018), commitment is found to be a fundamental value of the agency in the secondary school youth, as also noted in this study. Commitment refers to the subject’s action on himself or herself, which makes significant differences from the action of the community actors analysed in terms of unbiased behaviour in favour of the welfare of the Other.

These values can be the result of human willingness to follow conventions, to think, and act according to the established customs. This means, as expressed by the interviewers of this study, their motivation to carry out the community exercise comes from their family roots and also because they have seen what their parents and close relatives have done.

CONCLUSION

The findings presented in the study of community group actors of the city of Armenia, Quindío-Colombia, are focused on the following dimensions:

a. The identification of the formation of the agency allowing its delimitation,

b. The identification of what is to be an agent,
c. The action that community actors carry out if they are agents, and

d. Finally, the impact that they cause from the human and social point of view in the territories where they operate.

In the first place, the characterization of the agency is delimited by two qualities in the subject that acts in community contexts, such as Transparency and commitment. This leads them to carry out social actions aimed at obtaining well-being for Others, towards the transformation of the social world around them. Likewise, these qualities are complemented with a special ability acquired through their experiences towards the management of both material and training resources for their communities. This commitment strengthens the relationship and the trust placed in these actors as agents of development.

Another contribution of the study is to recognize that the aforementioned qualities have created a special condition in the community actor or in the subject/agent, which makes them different from the people with whom they share their life contexts in the community environment.

In addition to the above, it is concluded that a subject with an agency, characterized by the aforementioned qualities (Transparency and commitment) is an agent, who bets on the development process of the localities. Individuals such as those identified in the present study are unique or distinct in their contexts, and through their qualities transcend their actions in the world. Therefore, they stand out among so many people who belong to their community and whom people have chosen to be their representatives.

The performance under the qualities of Transparency and commitment, as expressed by the subjects participating in the study, makes them different from many people. There are others who despite having the same or better conditions of material life do not have these aspects in their being, as part of the motives and reasons that drive them to act for the achievement of collective well-being. This supports the thesis that “the agency in the individual is found in qualities that not everyone possesses.” The agency characterized by these qualities of the subjects carries out their actions towards a citizen exercise, therefore, as a contribution to the human and social development of their territories.

It is, therefore, the participants’ qualities are matters of moral performance, which leads them to think about the Others in each of their actions. This can be noticed when they mention their actions with Transparency, which implies that the subject in their behaviour shows honest attitudes that generate trust, security, support, confidence, and consistency in their way of living. All these attributes are found because their thoughts are reflected in their behaviour as observed by others. The credibility of the actor is established given the veracity of the information provided to the community, both for the processes and for the resources, he manages. Also, when it comes to making firm decisions to change a system that seems unfair to us, the actions taken are due to the commitment. There is something of our “being” contributing to the fulfillment of commitments because they are ours.

The act of “being” an agent is an effective contribution to the human and social development of their territories. Since, with the personal effort to contribute to the transformation of situations and collective needs, they really make an impact on the improvement of quality of life of their fellow citizens, strengthening community ties, generating alliances between members of the community. Likewise, they achieve synergies between the members who represent the different neighbourhoods that form the commune. Despite the differences in the socioeconomic strata, an integrated commune vision is identified towards the will to work as a team and to obtain better results for all. This leads to the conclusion that agency is not a matter of socioeconomic status, class or social position, but rather an aspect of the condition of human life.

LIMITATION AND STUDY FORWARD

The findings of this investigation are the result of fieldwork in a single commune of the city, with defined characteristics that represent a specific case. The researches though limited to one particular commune provide directions for future research amongst other population groups with different realities.

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