NETWORK OF YOUNG SOCIAL INNOVATORS OF AFRO-COLOMBIAN BLACK COMMUNITIES

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1. Ideation [„Ideas"]:

Today, advances that are identified in terms of political and civic participation with Afro-Colombian communities, do not respond to initiatives proposed by national governments instead are, in most cases, the result of processes of struggles and mobilizations organized communities to demand participation and respect for their territorial rights. These requirements and organizational processes have enabled the creation of laws which reflect the multicultural and multiethnic country and participation policies to ensure the representativeness of the social group and respect and reserve of theirs territories, arisen in the law 70 1993.

The foregoing is because the social characteristics of the ethnic peoples and Afro-Colombians specifically, from their worldview are totally different from other social groups, therefore any government initiative can be assumed as the option of general application to the Colombian population, as already provides the constitution of 1991: "The State recognizes and protects the ethnic and cultural diversity of the Colombian nation" (Art. 7), implying that they should opt for community consultations before to implement projects that may infringe their rights and cultural practices, it is well known that the context changes dramatically from one social group to another.

In this regard, we note that the Afro-colombian population has a host of socio-cultural practices which are embedded particularities such as identity, land, biodiversity, traditional practices, relevance ethnic customs and worldview etc. Consequently these particulars have variables that lead to their sustainability and conservation of renewable

and non-renewable resources, in order to generate welfare states and to generate development their own land. Also, can be clearly see that the problems suffered by the Afro-Colombian population, loaded with historical burden of the commodification of African man in America exploited, as it may show that even today, Afro-Colombian people feel that national governments are timid in the fulfillment of their commitments to tending towards social equality, despite this crisis of governance.

This is how young people have opted for creating organizational processes that enable them to develop regional strategies and national development aimed through their claim autonomous processes, making use of their special status legitimized in the aforementioned laws. However, these initiatives have been characterized by organizational disruption and lack of empowerment of young Afro-Colombian black leaders of our country, by making ever deeper the gap between active participation and the scope of the resiliency of these communities.

For the settlement of this problem, we rely on the report of the "National Young Afro Colombian Black Communities, Raizales and Palenqueras" (2013), which was supported by the Ministry of Interior of the Republic of Colombia, and the plan development of the Presidency of the Republic: "National Development Plan 2010-2014: prosperity for All", in addition to the experience of one of our group mates, who had the opportunity to participate in this meeting and who is immersed in the different problems of the Afro-Colombian community, being an active member of this.

Thus, we propose the creation of a knowledge network, made up of young leaders and social innovators black Afro-Colombian communities. All this, in order to promote and strengthen organizational and participatory processes for equity in communities of the Colombian people. According to figures provided by DANE (2005), approximately 10.5% of the Colombian population identifies as Afro Colombian, within which, youth are the 27.5% of the community. So the knowledge network would have great potential to respond to different needs of the community, whose problem would be formulated and managed by their own young.

According to the UNESCO approach in the International Bulletin "CONTACTO"[1] of 1999, it was established as one of the key premises for the new millennium that the curriculum must be inclusive from training strategies associated with Educational Technology because "Our students carry home heavy texts full of disconnected facts that neither educate nor motivate them. It is a credit to science teachers that their students even learn something. No matter how 'scientifically accurate' can be a text, if it provides either teachers or students the kinds of help needed to understand and apply important concepts therefore fails in its objective. "

It is for this reason that the proposed network aims to involve individuals of African descent community participation processes, using as pretexts, projects that arise from their own expectations and their realities and everyday contexts, where through reflection and the incorporation of knowledge in solving problems, we will impact positively in two ways. First on the solution of local problems with the participation of members of the community and be visualized this in the answers given, and second, the generation of leaders in change processes in their community, that in many cases have suffered from marginalization and racial issues for purely geographical matter in a country with a high tendency to governmental centralization.

This not only approach to achieve the technological artifacts (technological literacy) but would ensure that individuals approximated the three interdependent dimensions of this: knowledge, ways of thinking and the ability to act,…, managing to provide people with the tools to participate assertively in their environment with arguments and rationale[2].

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[1] http://www.apetega.org/lomce/documentacion/Dosier%20pol%D0%B1ticos/5.2_La%20Educaci%D0%B2n%20Tecnol%D0%B2gica%20y%20el%20siglo%20XXI_UNESCO_1999.pdf

[2] National Research Council, 2002.

2. Intervention [„Prototyping and piloting"]

Methodology

The methodology proposed for the formation of a knowledge network of young social innovators in the Chocó's Afro-Colombian community, consists in the application of a dual organization model -functional and virtual- of knowledge networks. First of all, it is essential to understand that knowledge networks (KN) are multidisciplinary groups of people and / or institutions that are associated to investigate and / or develop projects with social impact, for which they mutually work on improving the quality of academic and scientific work, in the creation and strengthening of cooperation and resource utilization, and enabling the free flow of information between different social groups. The KN usually take the form of groups of researchers with diverse expertise, grouped to exchange, share and transfer information and knowledge through interaction in a technology platform.[3]

In order to construct a KN with these guidelines, we propose to implement a model of organizational structure comprising two dimensions: the functional grouping of its members and the consolidation of a virtual space for the KN. The first component starts with a process of open call to form the group of active members of the network, which then get subdivided according to various research topics according to the focus of the KN, which *form clusters research*, which in turn may have different research topics oriented towards a common goal, thus *constituting research centers or groups*.[4]

Similarly, we proceed to the formation of a core of communicators dealing with design strategies that enable the dissemination of the knowledge produced within the network and to coordinate it to ensure compliance of the objectives and to control activities. Around this core there is an entity or group of persons who are responsible for managing interdisciplinary groups, thus ensuring good guidance and motivation research in each cluster. Thus, it is intended that all network components interact with each other, and become public knowledge generated in the network. Finally, we
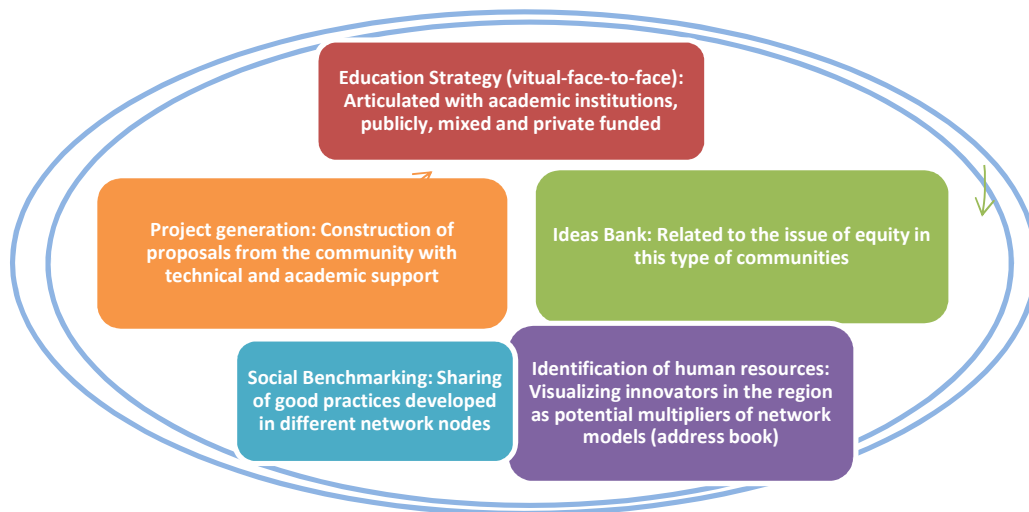
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[3] Castañeda Pérez M. Aspectos teórico-conceptuales sobre las redes y las comunidades virtuales de conocimiento. Acimed 2005;13(6). Available in: <<http://bvs.sld.cu/revistas/aci/vol13_6_05/aci02605.htm>> p. 10.

[4] Ibid., p. 13.

propose to establish the objectives and rules of the KN according to the characteristics and needs of its members, of the core and of the organizations to which they belong, as long as they target the knowledge generation and its dissemination.[5]

The second component of KN construction is intended to promote the organizational development of the network by forming a virtual platform, which will provide a range of tools and services that support and enable network users the generation and acquisition of information and knowledge. First, we seek to develop *information tools* that integrate all the resources that provide information about the community and offer *documents* relating to the subject matter covered by the KN. Second, we pretend to develop communication tools that allow the members *communicate synchronously or asynchronously*, and make possible the transfer of knowledge. Finally, we aim to design a *series of interactive information services* addressed to the members of the network, including electronic publications and sending news by mail.[6]

Thus, the implementation of a knowledge network would incorporate interrelated variables that meet the goal of augmenting, creating, sharing and visualizing the knowledge of the Afro-Colombian communities of the Pacific Region, specifically the Colombian Chocó. Below is listed the first steps to implement the proposal.

Knowledge   network   in   Afro   communities of the Colombian Chocó

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[5] Ibid., p. 13.
[6] Ibid., p. 14.

Main obstacles

According to preliminary analysis of the context and target community, we identified the following obstacles that may affect directly or indirectly the development of the innovative proposal.

Few or weak communication channels: While there may be many proposals and individual or group interests, interaction and exchange of knowledge and experience can be reduced to small focus groups, characterized mainly by its geographical proximity or interests. The difficulty of the flow of information at the macro level (Chocó), would not allow the collective participation of the region, nor the possibility of building common interests or collective projects such as community.

Developing confidence levels: The department of Chocó in Colombia is full of social and economic problems. In recent years have been brewing a series of actions from different groups such as public, private, mixed institutions and NGO's, through we begin to know statistics and indicators of the social and economic problems of the region; also many of these actors have developed interventions in these communities in order to improve the quality of life (not always with impact or continuous results). Many times this "over-intervention" generates negative results, such as resistance or mistrust among communities in the inclusion of new activities and projects, which does not allow the development of methodologies and strategies of active participation of beneficiaries.

Similar projects and "unintegrated experiences ": Another element that could block the development of the proposal is the failure to identify or joint proposals identical or similar to the one we want to develop, creating competition that divides the intervention and directly affects investment of human and financial resources. Likewise, the failure to identify previous experience in the region or in similar communities, imply a construction job from scratch.

Lack of knowing historical background: For community development and social intervention is necessary to establish a timeline about different historical events in which it has been linked this type of population, it is impossible to make interpretations in the present and into the future when we have not a ==contextualization== of social and cultural backgrounds of the target communities.

Development and coverage of technological and communications infrastructure: The proposal presents as one of its cornerstones, the incorporation of ICT's and communication technological devices as a strategy for knowledge sharing and knowledge in communities with young innovators; however, if the region and the same members of the network have little or no access to these technologies, it is difficult to meet the minimum required for the development of a knowledge network.

Stakeholders and potential allies

The main stakeholders of this initiative can be identified into ==three broad areas==: the State -national government, provincial and municipal governments-, the international community -embassies, interstate agencies and INGO's-, and the civil society organizations -NGO's, grassroots organizations and universities-. In the first area, the national government may be a stakeholder in promoting the project, especially through the Presidency and the Ministries of Education, Culture and Interior with its delegated bodies, which constitute the allied institutions to the extent that in recent years have supported educational and development programs aimed at overcoming social inequality historically unequal regions of the country. Also, governors and mayors, in this case of the department of Chocó, can be considered as state agencies allies of this initiative, because they support local and regional initiatives to attend specific problems.

In the international community, there are in the first instance embassies of industrialized countries like the U.S., Japan and member countries of the European Union, that through funding for international cooperation for development, can become strategic partners for the promotion of the proposed project. With regard to interstate agencies,

the OAS, the IEO, UNASUR, UNESCO and ECLAC -the latter two associated UN organisms-, can provide technical and <u>financial support</u> to this project of social innovation. At last, among the INGO's that are emerging as potential allies of the proposal are ACDI / VOCA and the Ford Foundation, which is subsidized in part by the U.S. Government.

Finally, among the civil organizations that may emerge as partners in the intervention process of the proposal, we have all the domestic, regional and municipal –in Chocó- NGO's, who are interested in supporting projects focused on promote community development department Colombian population. Similarly, the Association of Community Councils and grassroots organizations of Chocó are considered one of the main allies for the impulse of this initiative because of their knowledge of the specific needs of Afro-Colombian communities of the department. Finally, the *regional public and private universities* as the Technological University of Chocó, and the national coverage universities as the National University of Colombia, can be key allies for project implementation, especially with the academic and research advice for the development of KN proposal.

3. *I*mplementation [„Implementation"]:

Supporters

Currently, there is a group of people and organizations who have tried to generate participatory and organizational processes and who are interested in creating and generating these initiatives. These are the products of the various debates that have taken place in the community.

- <u>Young leaders of Afro-Colombian black communities</u>, who live in the department of Choco, which are part of different community organizations.
- <u>Public sector institutions</u> such as the Ministry of ICT, Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Education, the Sena.
- <u>Private sector institutions</u> that are dedicated to supporting social innovation projects as NGOs, foundations, associations, etc.

- <u>Educational sector institutions</u> such as Universities, Ministry of Education of Choco department.

Efforts and Resources Required

- Prepare, discuss and jointly develop <mark>conceptual and contextual framework</mark> that allows researchers proponents network CHOCO link some leaders in the creation of the Network, which includes the problems identified and the strategies adopted.
- Do a <mark>pilot test</mark> about the knowledge network and monitoring, <u>through a regional call for the creation of this network</u>, to establish a coordinating group of territorial node, requesting support for the Ministry of ICT, the Sena and the universities who wish to support network.
- Identification and <mark>coordination with other guilds and youth networks</mark> that present similar needs and peasant movements and organizations, cultural organizations, environmental, etc.
- Search <mark>co-financing institutions</mark>, cooperation and collaborative networks.

The project will include the period between August 2013 and April 2014, at which time will involve the following phases:

Phases:

1. **IDEA:** Identification and characterization of the groups and topics of interest, among them the knowledge of information sources and technological cooperation, policy and legislation on knowledge networks.
2. **IMPLEMENTATION:** Identification of human, financial and technological local and national including a pilot test of knowledge and monitoring network.
3. **IMPACT:** Evaluation and impact analysis.

TIMELINE

PHASE	DATE	TOPIC	WEEKS
1. IDEA	August- 2013	Identification and characterization of the stakeholders between these sources of knowledge in information and technology cooperation, policies and legislation knowledge networks.	4
2. IMPLEMENTATION	October- September 2013	Identification of human sources, financial and technological local and national.	8
	November- dicember 2013	Search co-financing institutions, cooperation and collaborative networks	7
	January- february, march 2014	Pilot testing of the knowledge network and monitoring	11
3. IMPACTO	April 2014	Assessment and impact analysis	3

4. *I*mpact [„Scaling"] :

From the knowledge network to innovators ==youths experiences will be identified== about the analysis of organizational processes and training of Afro-Colombian communities, highlighting continually social innovation progress in ethnic communities, which have been preceded historically by organized process. In the other hand, knowledge network of Afro-Colombians' youth is going to ==strengthen the social interaction== and also is going to allow a ==permanent communication between nodes== that will be created to give dynamism to it.

The goal is going to be achieved through the use of ==new working-together methods== with Afro-Colombians communities, based on their geography and environment. Those methodologies included some ==innovation and change strategies== which to be implemented reach remote areas and headers of rivers, where some common consumer technologies do not work such as the Internet.

This will allow Afro-Colombian young from Choco department develop projects that produce real and positive impact on their territories which will be focused on present technology forms and mix knowledge education, use and suitability of culture and knowledge of external agents, which are understood as enablers and counselors.

In addition, this network will catch the youth attention to save their ==cultural heritage==, water, wealth, food, knowledge of adults and even reinterpreting and ==replication of knowledge== outside their territories of origin to enhance ethnic and territorial knowledge. This will allow the young people build an ==empowerment== based on innovative leadership training for Afro-Colombians in the near future may be part of the representative bodies of ethnic communities, developing an achievement-oriented thinking of the goals set by the team always seeking the common good.

Finally the strategies development will be based on the domain of communication and the possibility of education for the community, allowing inclusion for remote and therefore their participation. We believe that the knowledge network for the Afro-Colombian of Choco, be assumed as a challenge for social innovation and to the extent that the knowledge network is increasingly strengthened with the participation and empowerment of communities as the core of the network representation could be

replicated in other departments or even regions and not only Afro-Colombian communities but also of other ethnic communities.

Direct Effects

- <mark>Claiming of the proper</mark>

- Strengthening the social issue Youth

- Development of communication strategies

- Highlight the contribution to the young community

- Expansion of education opportunities

- Articulate youngest and organizations in different territories.

- Exchange of experiences with young people from nearby areas.

- Articulation with local and national government institutions.

- Articulation with local academies to strengthen the educational process.

- Articulation with local private companies to manage multiple resources support.

Finally: Try to assess, how realistic your plan may turn out based on a scale from 1 (very unlikely) to 10 (very likely to succeed).

In terms of realism, we can describe the project with an <mark>eight</mark>, considering that the project is framed within one of the topics discussed from the MDGs (Millennium Development Goals), specifically on the issue of equity as well as within the plan development of the Presidency of the Republic: "National Development Plan 2010-2014: prosperity for all", which projects the creation, development and strengthening of projects in the country's ethnic communities. Furthermore, there is already a group of young Afro-Colombian community leaders showing interest in the creation of strategies to manage the organization and participation from their land rights.