

Territorial understanding (*entendimiento*), participative process and territorial development: experiences in Latin America

The network www.territoriosposibles.org as part of www.territoriesnet.org

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Abstract:

The territorial understanding, the participative processes and the territorial development are three pillars of this new Latin American network, organized on the basis of five specific attachment lines: 1-problems and learnings, 2-concepts and views, 3-works and publications, 4-territorial knowledge, and 5-projects and thesis. Representative cases of forward edge are exposed in order of integrating them to a rising world-wide network taking advantage of the opportunities that Internet offers.

Keywords:

Territorial understanding, participative process, territorial development, networks, problems, learning.

Nowadays, territorial intelligence in Latin America is referred to the understanding of the territory and its places, with the participation of territorial actors – public, private, citizens – in order to promote territorial development in micro-regions and other with different problems, some of them urgent. This is the aim of the creation of this network.

I. Territorial understanding, participation and territorial development

It starts with a principle: concepts, methods and tools orientated to understand real problems expressed by the people. They contributed to clarify theoretical-methodological criteria which, at the same time, allow to define and development projects. In this way, the solution or at least, the search for solutions, are a source of territorial understanding, participation and development.

With a short trajectory in Latin America, the concept of **territorial intelligence** is *a priori* defined as the articulation of understanding (knowledge) and experience (know-how) in participatory (involving scientists, territorial actors, State, corporations and citizens) problem-solving settings. Somewhat more widespread, the concept of **territorial development** refers to setting-up actions required to transform awareness, actions and/or objects related to real problems – micro or meso-scales places or patterns of territorial occupation and appropriation – in given territories. In this research, **territorial intelligence** means knowledge, awareness and understanding of a territory's problems, processes, places and actors. **Territorial development** means integrating and applying principles of endogenous development and institutional development at a given place, assuming synergic interactions among all involved stakeholders.

The growing network is promoted under principles of transparency and cooperation, through the spreading of criteria, methodology and tools which are easy to use among different actors oriented to the territorial understanding, intelligence and development, as a support for tasks of diagnosis, observation, evaluation, monitoring and research – participative action. The perform of collective exercises using these theoretical-methodological tools, applied to different cases, always with

territorial actors, opens the possibility to offer contributions orientated to improve the definitions and extension of the territorial intelligence and the territorial development, and also to systematize experiences with severity and creativity.

II. The new network

The network www.territoriosposibles.org is a growing Latin America network, which nowadays is joining a worldwide network, www.territoriesnet.org. These networks are trying to assure that each region of the planet keep their specificity, and at the same time, be able to participate in the systematization of projects, problems, methods and tools in order to allow university students and non-university students to understand and make more intelligible the territory, and to be part of its transformation.

It is about a network of cooperation and Latin America complementarity which purpose is to reach, from the scientific and academic world, other fields like political-institutional, social organizations, non-profit civic organizations, business chambers, enterprises and citizens in general, concerning a wide range of topics and scientific systematized problems according to different criteria: processes, places, actors, transformation, valorization, appropriation and organization, among others.

Since March 2009, the website www.territoriosposibles.org will have five sections – problems, concepts, works, knowledge and thesis – with systematized activities and results in all cases. Nowadays, the work is being done with other groups of Europe, Africa and North America, forming a network of networks like a cooperative and complementary center of similar activities in the most diverse latitudes.

1. Why a territorial network between universities and other actors?

Because the universities and the technological-scientific organizations are in good stand to build a new knowledge starting from the work about concrete problems, projects, programs and actions where other actors who are not from the university are also protagonists.

Because knowing, understanding and being more conscious of our territories or *territorium*-land which belongs to someone – and of our places or *stlocus*-someone's or something's place – will help us make them more understandable, not only with the academic world participation but also with actors from the public and private sectors as well with ordinary citizens. From that on, because making them more understandable will make us offer more tools in order to operate and cooperate in countless transformations on consciences, in actions and objects of very different dimensions, nature and scale, territorial development sceneries in neighbourhoods, towns, municipal governments, rural areas, social groups, institutions and varied organizations.

2. People and territory, in focus

Though the network is generated from the universities and from technological-scientific organizations, there will always be people involved in each problem, in each project and in every intervention. Public servants, citizens, businessmen and organizations, are always triggering or trying to trigger a process of change somewhere: a neighbourhood, a school, a club, an agricultural community, a community, a municipal county, a ministry, an organization. Without people there is no change. The territory and the places are born from the existing relationship with the land and objects and someone. There is no territory without someone, and no one's place without someone. The identity is a palimpsest of decades or centuries, which pops up anytime and everywhere. It is necessary to listen to others in order to make better things happen, to promote a territorial intelligence that contributes to give to entity to the territorial development. More than a self-centered university, it has to do with a university opened to people and territories.

3. Which are the pillars?

Valuing, ownership, organization, communication and projection, worked and analyzed with scientific rigour, make the fundamental milestones of the network and of every project. It is all about actors of each project praise those things necessary to value through agreements, to take the projects over and where time and resources will be devoted in its organization. Communication as an open discussion-communication – with more actors will allow the widening of every project basis. It will be necessary to promote the projection and the vision of future among the actors when needed. Welcome to the Network world of solidarity: lots of nets are working towards this aim, thousands of groups are

working today this way along all the latitudes and thousands of people are conscious that they themselves want to do it. The new world Network www.territoriesnet.org works not only to make those actions come true, but also to create an integrating hub, a big virtual space where every experience is present with its identity, its place, and where each and every one would be able to reach.

III. What is it offered?

Today www.territoriosposibles.org offers five sections, which are shown in its front page in order to start building and nurturing collectively territorial intelligence, real problems and project developments. Summing up it has to do mainly with three things: 1- problems and learning, 2- concepts and views, 3- works and publications, 4- territorial knowledge, and 5- projects and thesis.

1. Problems and learning

It deals with portal section, where, systematized, real problems and project development appear within the network framework and also external projects with its institutional and organizational origin. Similarly, results of seminars from different universities and already accomplished are published having in mind those who are interested in them.

2. Concepts and views

In this section of the portal results from a first stage of analysis and interpretation of 540 notions about territory – and a new stage is opened oriented to systematize four questions: What is understood by territory, by place, by territorial intelligence and development?

3. Works and publications

This is a portal section where research and other kind of work related to the topic are being offered with the intention to contribute to the nature of the issue. A systematization of the topics is under consideration to be done in brief.

4. Territorial knowledge

Thematic maps are published here. They are classified according to real territories (land use, population, etc.), legal territories (urban and territorial codes), thought-out territories (places, regions) and possible territories (proposals and projects). In each case minimum criteria is recorded about systematization and institutional belonging.

5. Projects and thesis

This front page is a more open one, in the sense that criteria to define our thesis are offered, not only territorial ones, but also a wide range of topics. At the same time it is planned to classify the projects of thesis based on area of interest. Results of performed seminars will be documented for those purposes among different universities.

How to join us? *Territorios Posibles* in a Latin American network inter-institutional, inter-group, and inter-actor which tries to put into practice a principle: keep the identity for each institution, organization, group or actor fostering cooperation, complementary and integration. Each one can join the network sending his/her contributions to lugar.innova@presi.unlp.edu.ar or to territoriesnet@mshe.univ-fcomte.fr mentioning any of the five sections from the net portal.

Problems, Concepts, Work, Knowledge and Thesis, while respecting the minimum criteria and requirements offered in the website the Internet.

IV. Experiences in Latin America

Regarding the experiences in Latin America, it has the purpose of knowing how interdisciplinary university groups work with several actors immersed in concrete projects, and also, to recognize problems, learning processes, as well as theoretical methods and tools in each of the projects.

As an example four different cases are offered, three of them take place in Argentina and the other one in Guatemala. Due to lack of room only the first data basis is included, which is being at present object of analysis and interpretation together with other projects. Moreover, a more complex second data basis is being done, defining useful criteria with the purpose of replicability with

scientific procedures and creativity in very different projects. It is about systematizing experiences with the aim to evaluate achievements and to improve projects progressively.

Within the next months those work will be available in the network.

Figure 1: National Educational Map

Title of the project or program	NATIONAL EDUCATIONAL MAP
Main problem to be solved	Create a SIG available on the internet with the georeferentiation of the 43.185 educative institutions in the Republic of Argentina
Secondary problems to be solved, between 2 and 4	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Qualify all the units of educational statistics of the 24 national jurisdictions in order to get the project to work on its own in the short term, without the help of the University 2. Articulate the work group if the nation with the ones of the provinces 3. Solve the normalization of the cartography-base with the contribution of IGM and the normalization of the cartography-topic with the contribution of the university
Promoted by	National University of La Plata (Geography FAHCE) and MECyT Argentina (DiNIECE)
With the participation of	The 23 Province of the Autonomous Government of Buenos Aires, el IGM, el INDEC and other institutions
Year of beginning	2004
Year ended / in progress	2005 (with the University) In very good progress at the Ministry
Place carrying out the project	Country: Argentina Province/State/Department: all Municipality/s-Commune/s: all Aprox. inhabitant: 38.000.000 inhabitant
Which was the main learning from the experience? Mention between 1 and 3	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The appropriation of the Project by the national and provincial speakers 2. The training trail related to SIG, cartography and georeferential statistics by the national and provincial speakers 3. The circumstances in which with the decision of the authorities and with the will of the base of the pyramid, can produce transformations in consciences, actions and objects.
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Figure 2: Territorial development from the reactivation of a train

Title of the project or program	TERRITORIAL DEVELOPMENT FROM THE REACTIVATION OF A TRAIN
Main problem to be solved	To put in operation a train between seven and 30 places after the National Government decided to close it.
Secondary problems to be solved, between 2 and 4	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Reinstall the topic of the train reactivation after three decades in seven locations 2. To know if the train would be able to operate again: under what form – passengers, tourism, cargo – and which what management model 3. To strengthen link between communities, in occasions far away because of the reduction of the levels of accessibility and connectivity 4. To be awareness that doing something – to put in operation a train – could be a starting point to other actions for the territorial development
Promoted by	PDL Municipality Villa Elisa (Entre Rios) y Innova Place, National University of La Plata
With the participation of	Cooperation Saboya Solidary Country, seven local government, local railway referents, rice cooperatives, actors of the tourist sector, business people, neighbours and recently provincial authorities.
Year of beginning	2007
Year ended / in progress	In progress
Place carrying out the project	<p>Country: Argentina</p> <p>Province/State/Department: Entre Ríos</p> <p>Municipality/s-Commune/s: V.Elisa, S.Salvador, Caseros, La Clarita, Pronunciamiento, Arroyo Barú and 1°Mayo</p> <p>Aprox. inhabitant: 30.000 inhabitant</p>
Which was the main learning from the experience? Mention between 1 and 3	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To put in operation a train not only depend on a political decision or on a way to assure its economic viability 2. To put in operation a train also means to obtain agreement from the people, built links and trust between communities in order to face the change in the same direction 3. It is so important the endogenous development – in the involved communities – as the exogenous impulse, in this case of the Province, the Nation and other organizations which decide to impulse the project
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Figure 3: Communication in the Villa Zagala Community

Title of the project or program	COMMUNICATION IN THE VILLA ZAGALA COMMUNITY
Main problem to be solved	To improve the inter-neighborhood communication working in the maternal kindergarten and in the child-junior Football Club
Secondary problems to be solved, between 2 and 4	1. Prepare and qualify the neighbour working in the formation of a self-management maternal kindergarten 2. Prepare and qualify the neighbour working in the formation of a self-management Football "Liguilla" (tournament)
Promoted by	Teachers and parents of the community
With the participation of	Secretary of Culture of the Argentinean Nation and National Council of the Minor and the Family
Year of beginning	1986
Year ended in	2002
Place carrying out the project	Country: Argentina Province/State/Department: Buenos Aires Municipality/s-Commune/s: General San Martin, 380.000 inhabitant Aprox. inhabitant: Villa Zagala, 15.000 inhabitant
Which was the main learning from the experience? Mention between 1 and 3	1. Strategies in the experience planning 2. Application of many techniques to obtain the participation 3. Use of anthropological techniques in the development of the experience
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Figure 4: Urban problems in the ancient Guatemala

Title of the project or program	URBAN PROBLEMS IN THE ANCIENT GUATEMALA
Main problem to be solved	Recognize and systematize the urban problems of the Ancient Guatemala to offer contributions related to the urban and territorial organization to the Municipal Government
Secondary problems to be solved, between 2 and 4	1. Results from the great demographic growing: urban expansion, services insufficiency, incompatibility in the use of the soil, collapsed road network 2. Vulnerability and risk to settle in a volcanic region 3. Insufficient municipal finances for works related to urban development 4. Environmental contamination in particular: visual, vehicle steam, noise, solid waste
Promoted by	Municipality of the Ancient Guatemala
With the participation of	Civil Association Ixim and CEUR Urban and Regional Study Center of the USAC San Carlos of Guatemala University
Year of beginning	2007
Year ended / in progress	2008
Place carrying out the project	Country: GUATEMALA Province/State/Department: Sacatepequez Municipality/s-Commune/s: The Ancient Guatemala Aprox. inhabitant: 47.000 inhabitants
Which was the main learning from the experience? Mention between 1 and 3	1. The installation of the topic at the Municipality with contributions of the University was a significant factor for the growing approval of the Regulation of the Organizational Planning 2. The necessity of awareness of the insufficient weight assigned to municipal finances to public investment related to the urban development and organization 3. The different result of the link established between the University and the territorial actors, due to the fact that the generation of expectation not always have in the population the correlation with the expected changes
Contact	Mail/s: usaceur@usac.edu.gt Phone/s: (00502) 24767701 / (00502) 55624318 Website: http://ceur.usac.edu.gt Contact/s: Eduardo Velásquez Carrera, Néstor Arrivillaga, Ernesto Sitamul

V. How is it planned for the future?

Nowadays, the world web is being built www.territoriesnet.org taking advantage of the valuable experiences previous to the caENTI coordination action of the European Network of Territorial intelligence, placed in the University of Franche-Comté in Besançon and also present in other countries: Spain, Belgium, Italy, Rumania, Slovenia, Hungary and Taiwan, as an associated member. With the current caENTI Scientific Coordinator, the PhD Jean-Jacques Girardot and his group the generation of common results is being worked in our networks, as well as in the organization of a new annual get-together (forum) in networks coming from different continents with the purpose of promoting the development and growing of the core of networks within other institutions, groups and countries.

In our case, it is taken profit from the last seven years of work experience. Summing up it deals with the Users Club of the Public Administration from the Province of Buenos Aires (2001), the Cooperation and Complementarity network Metropolitan Atlas Buenos Aires (2003), the National Educational Map of the Argentinean Republic (2004), the SIOU Interactive Place of Urban and Territorial Organization from the Buenos Aires Province (2006) and the RET Net for the Territory Understanding (2007).

The new Latin American network *Territorios Posibles* was formed for the first time by the UdelaR (Republic University of Uruguay) and the UNLP National University of La Plata (Argentina). The established links within the last decade by our team CONICET-UNLP with several South American and Center American universities are used as a means of identifying new actors willing to join this network.

VI. Internet, intelligence and creativity

It has been recently expressed by Noam Chomsky:

If we don't do anything, within the next ten or fifteen years the Internet and the cable will be monopolized by the megacorporations enterprises. People do not know that it is in their hands the possibility of using the technological instruments instead of leaving them to the big enterprises. For that purpose, group coordination opposed to monopolization is needed by using technology with creativity, intelligence, and initiative to promote education for example.

While facing a world full of uncertainties, we are going through the time of a big opportunity: the chance of getting the University and the Scientific world closer to a very important part of Mankind who has frequently seen us within an academic bubble. Those networks of the internet that promote transformations into conscience, actions and objects will be powerful instruments of cooperation and complementarity for building without bubble distinctions, through little actions, great changes.

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