

TREATING COVID-19 AT THE STATE LEVEL AND HORIZONTAL LEARNING: BUILDING CONTINUOUS TRAINING AND KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT

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ABSTRACT: COVID-19 released unforeseen challenges to the public sector, forcing institutional organization criteria to be flexible, develop nonexistent competencies, along with continuous training means, transversal innovation and an adequate management of knowledge to achieve a systemic impact. We require arbitrated cultural devices that activate transversal collaboration, integration mechanisms and continuous training that focuses on a networked government organization. In this paper, I analyze devices that resemble communities of practice (CoPs) and network; informal mechanisms that –if properly managed– allow permanent cross-training among peers, complement knowledge creation, organizational and knowledge integration, as well as the advancement of explanations regarding what to do and what would be the most appropriate instruments to achieve. These devices should validate their own merit. I embark from a conceptual perspective and in regards to their use to face crisis scenarios. The pandemic and post-pandemic setting require horizontal and integrative procedures that allow presenting proper solutions. The important feat is to take advantage of the full potential generated by connected knowledge.

Keywords: *communities of practice. networks. knowledge management. cross-cutting teams. integrated know-ledge base*

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Managing the pandemic opens questions regarding some areas within bureaucracy. Resources and personnel cannot be squandered in dysfunctional areas, with lifeless programs that resemble ‘geological layers’ of unfertile soil. Currently we need to stack in one column all the government’s capacity to face this catastrophe; since many areas face COVID-19 with scarce human and economic resources.

There has been a serious transformation in areas such as health, education, social security, transportation, social development, etc. We have witnessed the solidary behavior of some who perform tasks far from their roles and competences, but not from their human values, that have generated an unusual multisectoral public-private and intergovernmental collaboration. Nonetheless, it is not sufficient. We require the incubation of competences from the learned experiences –achievements as well as errors– and structure the ‘lessons learned’.

The entire public sector is learning ‘on the way’. The problem is that in this experimental field there is little margin of error due to the situation and the partisan confrontations in our increasingly polarized societies.

With so many new policies to implement today it is not possible to maintain the comfortable hypertrophy of some sectors and the overloads and shortages of others. Flexible and multifunctional ways must be welcomed, particularly where resources and competent personnel is scarce and are at the forefront of the fight. Our anachronistic formal structures should be reconverted beyond the usual agreements and resistances. For example, many universities are committed to producing medical instruments and protective utensils such as facemasks. Even though it is not their usual function, they do it. Therefore, conceptually we must consent for informal actions to go beyond the formal ones and adapt our structures, functions and capacities. As we will see with ‘hypertext organizations’ (Graph 1).

Public officials and their organizations need to be accelerated ‘learners’ and prevent any loss of the knowledge acquired in the process including good practices. If some of the improvisations put in place became a public health risk and were seen as a catastrophe, the innumerable new situations prognosticate a tsunami if we do not manage our collective knowledge through usable and transferable records for the public endowment and future stakeholders.

This scenario, does not allow for mistakes justified by lack of prior knowledge. There is no time to resort to traditional training, which has been ineffective. Competencies must be fulfilled –in record times– to respond to these new multifunctional requirements. Learning bases are found in the experiences lived where successes and failures can be collected. It would be a

mistake to sacrifice the achievements and errors only in the memory of their makers. This confronts us with methodological problems regarding how the newly acquired knowledge can circulate and have immediate impact among the new entrants. For this reason, training organizations and areas responsible of specific functions should adopt methodologies to transfer knowledge and the generation of competences. We will present examples that focus directly on these knowledge transfers to highlight that it is possible to do it.

A successful proposal regarding the identification and collection of knowledge and transfer rests on how close it is with those who manage the crisis, having a record-keeping of this management and the pedagogical impact of these experiences. It is important to provide feedback so that the specific practices can be replicated in other cases and thus provide solutions to the crisis from governments that are fully functioning and systemically enriching themselves.

To meet this context, we analyzed horizontal training experiences carried out through CoP's, which have become Learning Communities, and Networks that complement each other. Our framework resides in knowledge management schemes in order to capture, formalize and transfer them, and establish procedures and practices that are identified as effective.

It is not intended to highlight a single approach, but rather identify useful responses based on prior experiences. Our objectives point to how to integrate a government in a transformation processes, and foster learning in new and complex contexts, and how these new approaches are transferred to public officials rapidly.

This complexity requires new visualizations and practices. Vital to remember Mc Luhan (Mc Luhan and Powers, 1995, p. 149) when he states that the world behind us hinders us as a reference. We must not look through the rear-view mirror because this diminishes our ability to observe new scenarios. We must identify, the accomplishments and errors without preconceptions, and transfer the teachings immediately. In the pandemic's management, and certainly in the post-pandemic, our present's learnings are a privileged source of new forms of management to face the present and future contexts' challenges.

CONCEPTUAL APPROACH OF PEER TRAINING MECHANISMS: COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE AND NETWORKS

We address first conceptual aspects, followed by implementations, and finally we discuss their usefulness.

In a community of practice (CoP) its members develop their competencies in a specific practice through the construction, exchange and pooling of a repertoire of resources. This allows to generate an environment for shared behaviors. Networks, on the other hand, enable mutual negotiation from different specializations (Coherendet and Creplet, 2001).

TABLE 1. DIFFERENCES BETWEEN NETWORKS AND CoP'S

	Objectives	Agents	Cognitive activity	Recruiting guidelines	What maintains the Community united?
Networks	Mutually negotiated specialization	Heterogeneous	Knowledge exchange	Mutual trust	The need to access complementary knowledge
CoP's	Skill and competencies improvement regarding a specific activity	Homogeneous	Gained knowledge over a specific activity. Passing along the best practices	Members select themselves	A common passion for an activity

Source: Cohendet, R. et al. 2001

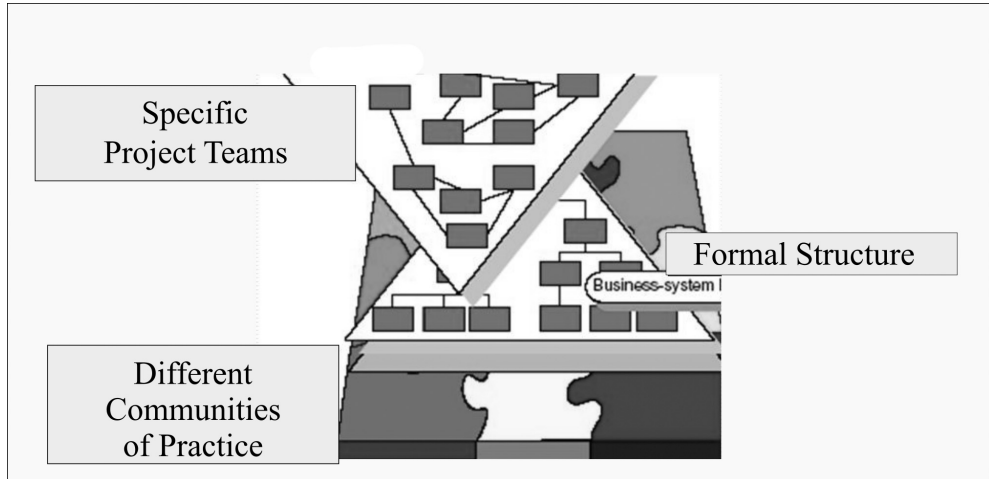
There is a long tradition –and achievements– regarding the development of CoPs and networks used to face institutional transformations, integration of institutional areas, consensus for the implementation of policies, generation of protocols through collaborative mutual support to learn about specific practices.

Both CoPs and complementary networks historically appeared as an effective approach to handle unstructured problems and share knowledge peripherally to the traditional structural boundaries. They created another way of conceiving ‘institutionalities’: having informal integration models and bureaucratic models coexist together, where the former provides dynamism to process the context and the latter a rapid response. These interrelations, formal structures subsist supplied by the production generated by their members

through the different communities and networks, intertwined diffusely and cross the organizational territory.

To solve problems in an efficient manner –at any given moment– we place in the foreground and alternately the type of structure needed: be it teams, formal structures, CoP’s or networks. These alternations are characterized as ‘hypertext organizations’ (Tuomi, 1999).

GRAPH 1. HYPERTEXT ORGANIZATIONS



Source: Adapted from Tuomi, 1999.

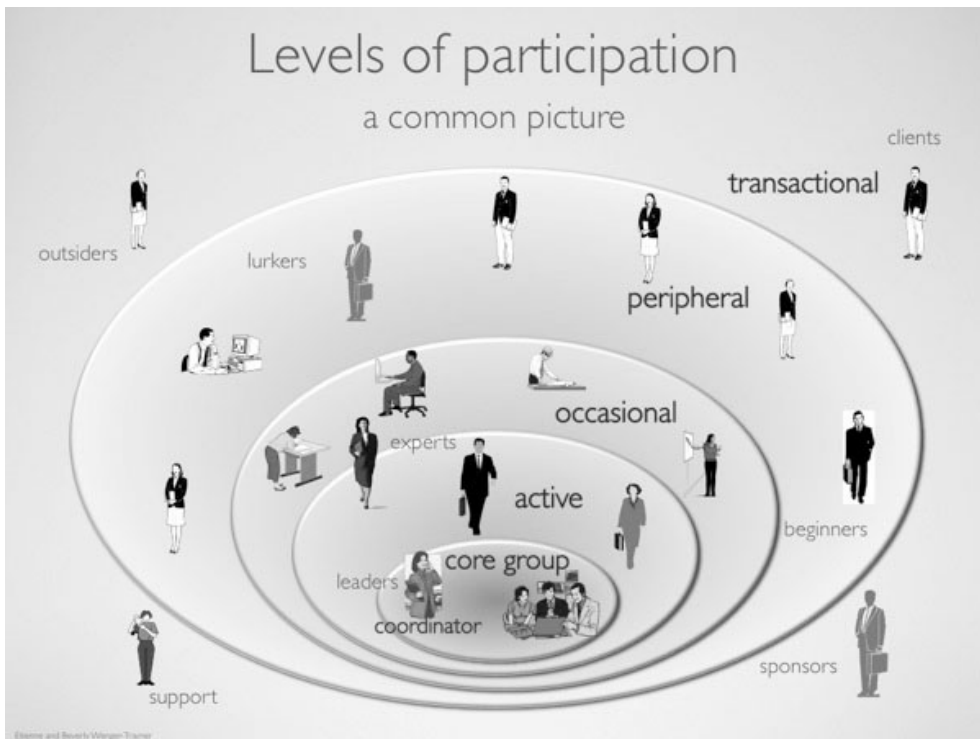
Hypertext organizations allow for ‘border meetings’. These generate cognitive dissonances that can nourish problem solving and innovation instances. Here members of two or more CoP’s combine their capacities to exchange different practices and trigger knowledge processes within each area, through their ‘border practices’, and advance towards the formation of complementary knowledge networks.

In these processes artifacts and tools are shared. These bridges have prospective because they allow for communities, institutions and individuals to confront differences, experience ‘cognitive dissonances’ between their own practices’ and of others. They incorporate new resources, themes, languages and behaviors. They can include entrepreneurs, developers, officials, academics, NGO’s, etc. The roles and insertion are variable, as CoP’s practitioners, members of an institution or part of a network of complementary knowledge.

The generation of new competencies in this pandemic implies methodological problems regarding how the emerging knowledge in this environment can flow with an immediate impact on public employees and stakeholders involved in the public service. Traditional training methods are not suitable for these challenges. Thus, training organizations (and specific immediate response areas) must adopt methodologies to transfer knowledge and generate competences speedily, and in this paper, we include several experiences.

We highlight that joining CoPs is voluntary. This means different levels of participation that may not be constant. However, and even with this instability, they are very much capable of generating social learning dynamics (Lave and Wengers, 1991).¹

GRAPH 2. SOCIAL LEARNING AND LEVELS OF PARTICIPATION WITHIN CoPs



Source: Wenger, 2011. Retrieved from <https://wenger-trayner.com/resources/slide-forms-of-participation>.

¹ It is likely that 'voluntary' does not apply in the case of the transversal teams in Colombia, which is the last case discussed in this article.

Every new member learns from a veteran member in an environment of participation in the practice in question. In the case of the newcomer, their participation develops from the periphery until they reach full integration.

Graph 2 presents the different levels of participation. At the center (core group), we find the closest and most committed people, along with the most connected and influential. Beyond the limit of the central circle are those most connected with said circle (those who have knowledge of what happens within the general context). They can control the flow of information: what is shared and what is not. On the periphery, we have those who are not committed-connected but have the potential to be a source of new information and fresh ideas (Kaufman, 2012, p. 123).

From historical experience, both CoP's and networks complement, among other issues, informal learning structures, but may require formalized mechanisms, reliant to the set objectives.

These methodologies are not unique. We do not reject other ways of responding to uncertain contexts, but those incorporated as magical assumptions 'of what solves everything'; such as Innovation Labs when they do not generate systemic impact.

Our proposal is to develop a knowledge management framework. That helps what specific areas within the public sector –responsible of managing pandemic issues– produce or identify, is available to all other sectors, on different types of platforms where interactions and conclusions are documented. Thus, facilitate similar interventions. This would formalize and make it possible to share the existing knowledge through this tool. Figure 3 illustrate the Integrated Knowledge Base used by the Canadian government.

This approach has a long international adoption history.² It began in the Anglo-Saxon world, spread to our region, as is the case of Spain (Barrera-Corominas, 2018). Then other Latin American countries gradually incorporated it.

Argentina played a relevant role in its implementation. To respond to the 2002 crisis CoP's and networks were part of the government's actions (Kaufman, 2005, 2006, 2007). In the midst of the current pandemic (COVID-19), the government bolsters this approach. The documents of 'INAP 2020 Annual Management Meeting' (INAP, 2020), highlights the incorporation of CoP's approach in the training courses.

² The number of experiences within the English-speaking world underscores the use of these training methods. *The Encyclopedia of Communities of Practice in Information and Knowledge Management*, coordinated by Coakes, E. and Clarke S., includes an article regarding the development of CoP's in Argentina (Falivene and Kaufman, 2005).

EXPERIENCES OF COPS, NETWORKS AND KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT

MINISTRY OF NATURAL RESOURCES, CANADA (NRCAN) AND OPSPEDIA

An experience regarding knowledge transfer and integration through CoP's/ Networks took place in Canada at the Ministry of Natural Resources (NRCan).³

NRCan intended to integrate areas that had functioned separately and were incompatible with each other. Such problems are common within any initiative to modify government structures, essential to face new contexts such as the pandemic and post-pandemic.

An *ad hoc* team was established to provide an integrative solution and modify the established cultural guidelines, develop an institutional corps and thus achieve inter-area collaboration practices. That team proposed creating a Wiki. The existing CoP's were housed in the Wiki with the help of internal social networks.

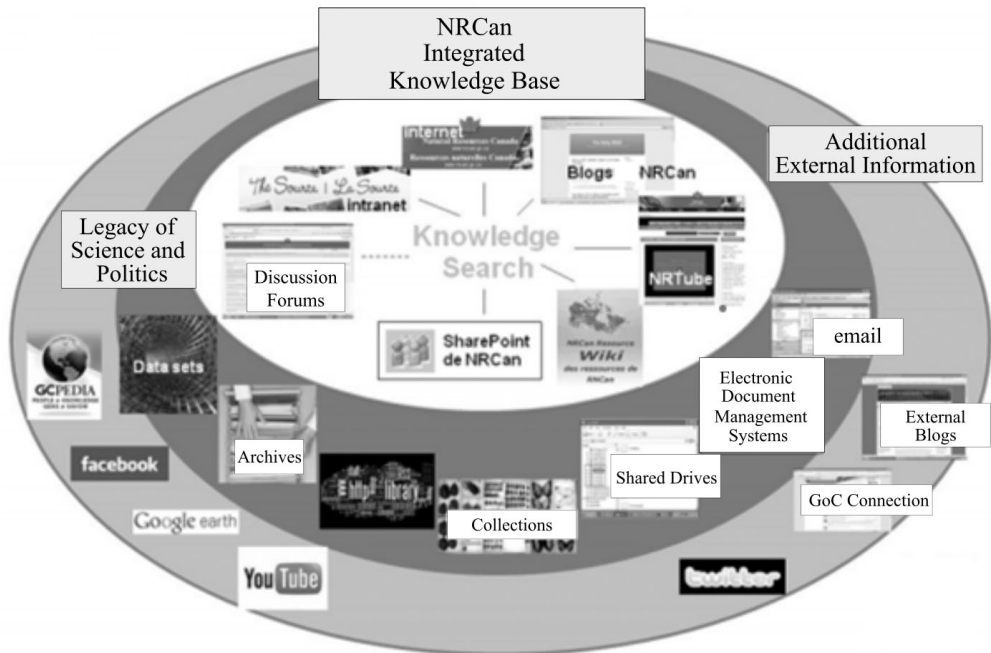
CoP's and networks are relevant in Canada to assemble formal structures since they cannot integrate by themselves. Through these morphologies they complete formal institutionalized training instances. They believe that this combination can ensure peer learning, influence new skills, and generate innovation circles in real time. In 2010, we researched this experience in Canada.

NRCan created the Integrated Knowledge Base in order to share experiences, knowledge and learning (Graph 3). This initiative inspired others like the Wiki that housed the entire Canadian federal government (GCPedia), as well as the provincial and local level. At the provincial level, it was possible to investigate OPSpedia, a collaborative web environment development by the Ontario provincial government to better organize the offer of public services (Kaufman, 2012, Chapter two).

In the center, we have the internal social networks, accessible through a Login. The shaded ring around it is the information reservoir (archivists and officials responsible of managing documentation and archive operations). Here archivists and document makers attend the programs described in that middle ring. The outer ring is for open social networks. The intermediate ring orders and links the interior and exterior rings, manages information and knowledge, allows transferring information from the inner circle and incorporates what is generated outside the institution.

³ Kaufman, 2012, documented this experience after observing *in situ* these developments, gathering information and interviewing public officials.

GRAPH 3. INTEGRATED KNOWLEDGE BASE



Source: NRCAN Integrated Knowledge Base (Kaufman, 2012, p.117).

Knowledge management also captures organizational memory: agendas and minutes; employee feedbacks; documentation of specific projects, etc.

Internal social networks interact through tools used by an extensive set of CoPs created with the governmental purpose of gradually integrating internal silos in order to achieve what is known as the ‘Network Government’.⁴ Those networks have functional similarities to YouTube, Twitter, LinkedIn, blogs, Facebook, etc.

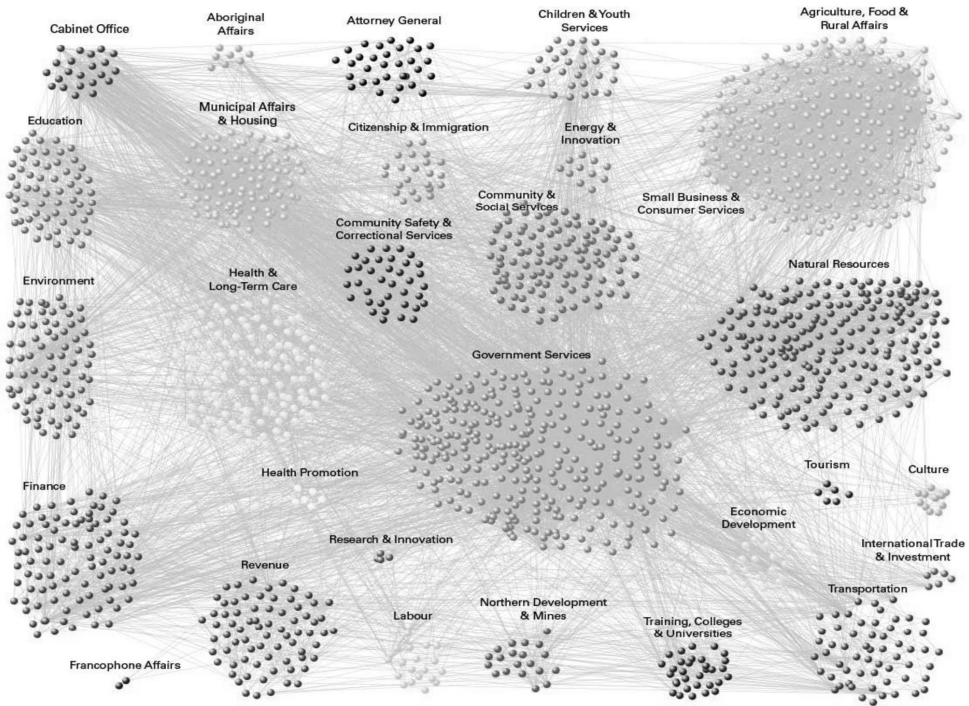
In this experience, as well as others, innovation is central, in a framework of inter-institutional integration that should dilute bureaucratic silos. Such is the case of the Innovation Laboratory created for Ontario Public Services (OPSpedia), and focuses on:

1. Timely Investigations: Crucial to make sure they develop the right initiatives.
2. Trials/Tests: If new tools and techniques are identified, it is very important to carry out internal trails.

⁴ A ‘Network Government’ is defined following the decree 450/009 from Uruguay: “...in the network of links between organizations, through which services are provided, activities are managed and shared objectives are pursued. The network resulting from these links, transcends the borders of public institutions and intertwines with society, creating the foundations of a connected society”, (Oszlak and Kaufman, 2014, p. 171).

3. Learning: Sometimes trials are successful, others not. Each initiative is recorded ‘in detail’ (what happened). This compilation is used to inform other projects along the same lines. The best project is, eventually, a collective enterprise.
4. Expansion: If warranted, the benefits of the trails must be shared throughout the organization.

GRAPH 4. CONNECTION BETWEEN OPSPEDIA'S MEMBERS THROUGH CoP's AND NETWORKS



Source: Chartier, 2010, p. 22; Kaufman, 2012, p. 126.

Innovation as a collective enterprise to be shared by all, responds to the expectations of a systemic impact of experiences, accompanied by transversal forms of social learning.

Graph 4 shows the transversal integration connections operated in OPSpedia and the other cases, such as the Argentinian forums and the Colombian transversal teams, to be discussed later.

ARGENTINA AND ITS TRANSVERSAL FORUMS IN THE FACE OF THE 2002 ECONOMIC CRISIS

For Argentina CoP's were identified as 'transversal forums', similar to the perspective of 'transversal teams' in Colombia, although without the support in social networks, due to the time in which they took place.

The origin of these transversal forums can be traced to the Dialogue Table, integrated by the Argentinian government, the United Nations and the Episcopate. The Table's purpose was to convey different social organizations and national leading sectors and reach agreements and solutions on issues regarding Argentina's bankruptcy that distanced the country from the international arena due to non-compliance with its debts and had its population in extreme impoverishment.

Specifically, on its public issues, some recommendations emerged. INAP (entity with specific work linked to educate and train the public sector) established operating rules that set the institutional foundations for the subsequent transversality relationship of some forums. One of the most important was incorporating informality (as a counter-bureaucratic mechanism) in the design of public policies. This informality was necessary given the absence of minimal resources to operate normally, such as lack of paper or ink for printers. INAP's decision to operate as a potential articulator was added to this framework. It is highly relevant, as previously reported, that 20 years later INAP itself develops a similar training strategy in the framework of the current pandemic.

Those forums remained until 2015 under the name of 'Digital Agenda'.⁵ At its inception (2002) institutional agreements were made to achieve the creation of sectoral and transversal forums that were born under the general objective to: '...articulate and develop networks...'; the latter emerged from the identification of 'macro-processes'. These processes should serve to train; exchange and ponder; strengthen daily management by having updated information on the themes they were responsible; provide specific training; exchange acquired knowledge and experiences; and prepare a diagnosis of the situation and proposals for future actions.

The identified macro processes (which ran across the entire national public administration) had different focal points (governing bodies). These bodies together with INAP, were responsible for conducting the different forums. Examples we can highlight are: 'Human Resources' headed by the National Office of Public Employment; 'Public Statistics' within the National Institute of Statistics and Censuses (INDEC, in Spanish), 'Documentation and Information Management', directed by the Documentation Centers of the Ministry of

⁵ We suggest reading 'Encuentro anual de Gestión INAP 2020' (INAP, 2020).

Economy and INAP; and lastly, ‘Information Technology’, directed by the National Office of Information Technology (ONTI, in Spanish).

ONTI carried out a forum, identified as ‘IT Managers Forum’, which survived along with others until 2015, allowed thinking in new ways about the Back Office with methods implemented by first world governments. Argentina was developing in parallel, similar experiences without knowing it. These were leading experiences in our region.

These forums had –among other tasks– to establish transversal consensus between organizations and generate inter-institutional networks. These ‘CoP’s/ networks’ forms were embedded in ‘Knowledge Management’ models that link ‘learning/innovation’ within organizational environments. Today, these models are the core of knowledge theories.

The following case we will describe is similar to that of Argentina, although bolstered by social networks.

COLOMBIA AND ITS TRANSVERSAL TEAMS TO MANAGEMENT OF COVID-19

The transversal teams practice developed by Colombia’s national government, constitutes an experience closely linked to the advancement of Open Government.⁶ Fernando Grillo, Director of the Administrative Department, explains that ‘...they sought to create working networks to facilitate communication and knowledge and experiences exchange between the leaders regarding their mission processes and support different entities within the Executive branch both the national and the territorial entities’ (3^o Conversatorio RAGA, 2020). These teams are not informal, since they are established by law.

They share on a daily basis the most recent decrees or resolutions and all information related to the guidelines issued by Colombia’s Presidency and the Ministry of Health and Social Protection to prevent COVID-19 risks of contagion.

It was in 2014 that Liliana Caballero, Director of Public Function introduced this modality to generate inter-institutional synergies promoting the Peace Accords. They were discontinued only to emerge again in response to the pandemic.

As of 2020, there are 12 national level Transversal Teams with 1,700 members; and 13 territorial level teams with 1,100 members.

6 3th RAGA Colloquium 2020 / 3^o Conversatorio RAGA 2020 Estado Abierto y Gestión del COVID-19: ‘Estado Abierto en Red en Colombia’, https://www.facebook.com/watch/live/?v=259032128582591&ref=watch_permalink&t=17222/5/2020. Including the documents presented by the speakers (Fernando Grillo and Fernando Segura Restrepo, both public officials).

TABLE 2. TRANSVERSAL TEAMS INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL LEADERS OF COLOMBIA

Transversal team	Executive branch entity	Leader within the Public Function
Legal Defense	National Legal Defense Agency	Legal Directorate
Technologies	Information and Communications Technology Ministry (MINTIC, in Spanish)	Information and Communications Technology Office (OTIC, in Spanish)
Acquisition	“Colombia Compra Eficiente”	General Secretary
Communications	Presidency	Communal Action Organizations (OAC, in Spanish)
Planning	National Planning Department	Institutional Performance General Office (DGDI, in Spanish)
General Secretaries	Public Function	General Secretary
Internal Control	Transparency and Public Function Secretary	DGDI
Legal	Legal Secretary, Presidency of the Republic	Legal Directorate
Citizens’ Service	Citizen National Service Program	Participation, Transparency and Citizen Service Office (DPTSC, in Spanish)
Management of Documents	National General Archives	General Secretary
Human Talent	Public Function	Public Employment Office
International Affairs	International Cooperation Presidency’s Agency	International Management Group
Subdirectors and Vice ministers	Public Function	Sub directorate

Source: Fernando Segura Restrepo.

Fernando Grillo comments:

We have taken advantage of the collaborative work tools that ICTs offer us to convene virtual meeting spaces. With the platform, ‘Public Officials Network’ we deal with the contingency. It houses virtual courses as the ‘Integrated Planning and Management Model (MiPG) and Integrity and Fight against Corruption’ (developed and led in conjunction with the Vice-Presidency and the Higher School of Public Administration-ESAP). This virtual space allowed us to formulate and redesigned strategy to construct communities of practice and learning in digital environments, within the framework of the

Knowledge Management and Public Innovation policy. (3° Conversatorio RAGA, 2020)

Fernando Grillo adds that the private sector was already using these forms to group workers and focus them to common objectives and thus increase the speed of decisions and perform them through multi-institutional and multi-level collaborations. This way they took advantage of the innovative experience of those who made. At the same time, these processes generated peer learning, not a minor achievement since training begins to be organized around current and urgent problems.

The same speaker sustains: “We have taken advantage of these good organizational innovation practices by transferring them to the public sector. In this way we achieved articulation in the executive branch. An articulation that traditionally does not occur”. In this way it also allows the group to organize who’s who and what is being done (3° Conversatorio RAGA, 2020).

Through these teams, work and communication networks are created that allow to generate knowledge within the leaders of each network, and all their specific public officials.

Each team is headed by the Director of an entity (see Table 2, column 3) and also has an internal leader belonging to the Public Function who administers it. This organization is similar to that of the transversal forums in Argentina, where INAP represented the Civil Service.

The ways of connecting to organize work changed due to the pandemic. Now they are conveyed through WhatsApp chats (with phones and profiles). These have become an indispensable resource for managing the knowledge produced.

“These teams provide follow-up of daily tasks... in the territorial order, which strengthens decentralization. These chat meetings can bring together up to 3,000 public officials in connection with the authorities, a situation impossible to consider in times of face-to-face normality”. The junction of chats promotes debate and analysis on certain issues, which allows to elaborate strategies based on concrete experiences (3° Conversatorio RAGA, 2020).

The Public Officials Network (similar to an internal Facebook), “...allows legal directors, auditors, human talent, etc., to publish articles, pass research on practical issues ... They are also exchanged opinions and experiences”. This Network serves to support innovation and collective intelligence (3° Conversatorio RAGA, 2020).

These teams take part in the courses of the Higher School of Public Administration (ESAP, in Spanish) for public managers and territorial officials.

Likewise, they have served to sustain important values, for example, the Integrity Code for the Republic of Colombia, Dr. Grillo adds:

In the context of the pandemic, these teams became a vital communication channel from home. The Public Function office shares new every day regulations by WhatsApp. This way, each team has is updated regarding the emerging regulations. This is how they share the administrative decisions or the guidelines and protocols from the Ministry of Health for state entities regarding COVID-19. (3° Conversatorio RAGA, 2020)

At the same time, they put together the questions asked by citizens. As a by-product easy-to-understand videos were developed to clarify issues regarding the pandemic or paperwork that had to be done.

Elected officials end up involved. Grillo adds: “over time we have developed a directory, constantly updated, of governors and mayors who connected with specific teams in the territory for strategic reasons” (3° Conversatorio RAGA, 2020). These are decentralizing policies. They also have 32 territorial leaders who have joined.

Fernando Augusto Segura Restrepo also participated in the 3th RAGA Colloquium 2020 (3° Conversatorio RAGA 2020). He was in charge of the Directorate of Participation, Transparency and Service to the Citizen of Public Function. Fernando linked these teams to Open State policies. He considers that to develop this approach it is essential to have inter-institutional cross-cutting processes collaborating in a network.

Fernando Segura Restrepo, mentions:

We realized, years ago, that it was important to have dialogues within the institutions with the leaders regarding planning, internal control, citizen services, public contracting issues. All these policies we lead from the Public Function and each has a manager within each institution. Before we developed guidelines that we sent into thin air, because we could not guarantee their effective arrival of the manager in charge of putting them into practice. Thus, we characterize these value groups and programed face-to-face and virtual scenarios in order to integrate leaders in the same issue in order to enhance compliance with the guidelines. The advantage of transversal teams is that they do not respond to a hierarchical structure. They are all on the same level no differences. These dialogues are very important because the opinion of the other is valued not as a boss but because of the relevance of their comments, in fact: a ‘peer’ that helps to move forward. (3° Conversatorio RAGA, 2020)

These modes guarantee access to information since transmissions occur in real time thanks to ICT, which ensures impact and audience segmentation. It is relevant to know what the public value offered means to them.

Furthermore, participation and collaboration principles are materialized, as well as the collective construction. Officials' requirements and their resolutions, are known in real time, including their experiences, policy implementation doubts or how to better serve citizens. Training needs to generate competencies in solving pressing problems are also highlighted. This helps build the planning process itself.

Meetings between teams ensure, in parallel, forms of accountability and feedback on errors and suggestions for improvements.

Another result from the Public Function was a kit to implement Open State policies in the framework of the pandemic. Segura Restrepo considers:

What happened is that the entities were canceling Open Government activities as a result of the pandemic. Finally, they decided to give it a boost because they considered that this is the moment where that approach cannot be abandoned. Today is when people need the most to know what governments are doing and to be able to demand accountability if they consider that things are not being done well. (3° Conversatorio RAGA, 2020)

As mentioned, each transversal team has a public policy leader, who is in charge. Those who manage the circulating knowledge in their line are the leaders who are at the forefront of each team. They ensure that requirements and requests are not lost, while identifying experiences and new approaches.

What is captured in these workstations results in academic training instances, thus guaranteeing the generation of competencies to face the pandemic in real time, through shared problems and responses.

FINAL THOUGHTS

Government institutions have historically failed to produce comprehensive responses to crisis situations, especially when they must respond by making their structures more flexible and generate new skills or competencies in their officials.

Traditional structures have limits or restrictions that are too patent by their proclivity to generate watertight compartments; and then it is difficult for them to incorporate new functions, competencies and actors to interact in contexts marked by complexity and urgency.

CoP's and networks can reduce the process of the government's increasing weakness, now ravaged by different crises, in addition to the pandemic (poverty increase, disbelief and their relationship with social inequality); and

its own internal problems of patronage and corruption. On this last point, both networks and CoP's in fact assume, control tasks, even without intending to do so. This allows the government in itself to consolidate its own strengthening tasks and eradicate improper actions, an unresolved issue. The 'technical rationality' that encourages these communities and networks, can put some limit to clientelism and dark political interests that increases mistrust and social outbursts in a framework of suffering –physical, economic, social and psycho-emotional– caused by COVID-19.

Of course, these mechanisms are not enough. They are only instruments that allow some improvements.

On the other hand, in the face of new contexts that mark the pandemic and the post-pandemic, it is necessary to enhance collective knowledge by connecting knowledge and experiences. These 'frontier' encounters may well provoke cognitive dissonances, that if successful, will allow to construct a common language to agree on innovative responses.

In those cases, innovation should not be enclosed in 'superficial' and disconnected laboratories. That is why it is important to incorporate it systematically, and place it on the 'shoulders of giants', as mentioned by OPSpedia. Since 'the best project is, eventually, a collective enterprise'. Its benefits should also be understood along these lines because, once the relevance of innovation has been proven, it can be shared with 'the entire organization'.

Finally, the transformation of professions and competencies in the face of new contexts must be highlighted. Beyond the increasing multidisciplinary that generates dialogues between knowledge, including one's own professional path; information and knowledge management requires identifying which are the most relevant professions to be charge, although many more end up getting involved. Unfortunately, the public sector in Latin American countries has not yet assumed, for the most part, the relevance of these competencies, a situation that the pandemic underscores, and in many cases, has generated disorderly and fleeting initiatives.

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