Social Citizenship in the development of the Knowledge Society

[Research-in-Progress]

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Extended Abstract

The undergoing Action-Research Project, here presented, is designed under the scope of Political Philosophy, considering the emergence of the Knowledge Society and the possibility of adopting suitable public policies oriented to promote social cohesion and social capital through active citizenship in order to improve individual and collective well-being, with a direct impact on the overall development of society.

Social citizenship, inclusive bottom up participation in knowledge society, is boosted by educational and training strategies because education is central to civic and societal empowerment. This Action-Research Project aims to test such a methodology based on territorial dissemination of the net citizenship, through the implementation of a network with institutional support of the municipalities. At the core of this project are trained knowledge mediators to ensure the public participation of all citizens, whatever their knowledge or abilities.

The Action-Research Project begun with a pilot-experience supported on Montijo Municipality ([1], [2]). Its main Action goal was to promote citizenship activities, beyond the ones carried out by municipality, encouraging their participation in the co-design of solutions. The Research goals were twofold: firstly, to observe and test an Action-Research Methodology enabling the societal empowerment and, secondly to define and test a Knowledge Mediator Profile ([3]), able to promote the application of such methodology.

The second stage of the project involves the replication of the pilot experience in a network of municipalities with regional impact. This replication process will provide an important outcome: a network of social capital available to the articulation of public policies for training and certification of Knowledge Mediators ([3]), which is a valuable framework of other sectorial politics of sustainable development on the region.

The proposed reflection is within the scope of public policy from which two levels of implication emerge: the philosophical validity of referential utopia of human rights as civilizational heritage and the architecture of the possibility of social transformation through an interdisciplinary approach for problem solving, integrating several scientific disciplines, technological knowledge and social common sense.

This exploratory project falls within the research line of interaction Action/Research and it aims to explore how citizens think and reflect upon how they see themselves, the place they live in and how they produce knowledge. The promotion of effective citizen’s participation, from their view point, requires a dynamic processus of collective construction with the support of knowledge mediators and local communities. This implies a learning and citizen-driven innovation approach rooted in the territorial collectives. It is underpinned by the idea of a participation process enabling people's choices, preferences and voices to be expressed and considered, both in virtual and geographical territories, putting their representations in the globalization map of the problems to be addressed by public policies. We will link previous experience (in Montijo) to develop the
goal of knowledge production and management in different regions of partners’s countries, supported by knowledge mediators. There is an increasingly believe that mediation is required to achieve, in our global society, better quality in democracy. That can’t be done without training new skills. And we have to assess the adequacy of the training programmes to achieve these goals. The relevance of mediation as certifiable expertise is based on quality evaluation of the thematic dossiers produced by the Local working groups of the respective Citizenship Observatories (at GEOC) in each municipality, simultaneously with the validation of the impact of such thematic registered though the Citizenship Observatories (OC). Exploring the co-production of knowledge and solutions in the learning communities working together with Local Learning Centers, is another important outcome of project.

Key words: Knowledge Mediators, Public Policies, Social Capital, Social Citizenship, Municipalities, Training, Learning Communities.

References

