

FUNDACITE MIRANDA



Roundtable: “Innovation, Development and Sustainability for the 21st Century: a perspective from Venezuela”



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CONCLUSIONS FROM THE FINAL REPORT

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Conclusions from the Roundtable Report:

Though each of the four working groups reflected on particular themes about challenges we face in Venezuela in achieving that scientific and technological development contributes effectively to a future of sustainable, equitable and resilient development, there are common elements of the analysis that are worth highlighting here in the form of a conclusion and final reflection.

In the first place, in general all the groups recognised that during the last decade there have been important changes in the science and technology policies of the country that attempt to achieve a change in the conventional model of doing science, orienting it toward greater participation and social equity. In this sense, the proposals of the new STEPS Manifesto have much resonance with the orientations that the Venezuelan state is trying to give to the S&T politics of the country. For this end, the state has created a new institutional platform, including:

- A new **Ministry of Science & Technology** created in 1999 with the objective of organising a National System of Science, Technology and Innovation, in agreement with the needs of the new political project of the country
- The **Science Mission (Mision Ciencia)** (2001) defined as a process of massive incorporation and articulation with social and institutional actors by means of economic and social, academic and political networks, for the extensive use of knowledge in the function of endogenous development and integration.
- The revised version of the **Ley Organica de la Ciencia, Tecnologia e Innovacion del 2006**, with the objective "To promote, stimulate and strengthen scientific research, the social appropriation of knowledge and transfer of technological innovation, with the aim of strengthening capacity for the generation, use and diffusion of knowledge and to impulse national development."
- The **National Science, Technology and Innovation Plan 2006-2030**, oriented to the achievement of greater sovereignty, endogenous development with social inclusion and participatory democracy.

Nonetheless, to date the effective contributions of this new institutionality in favour of achieving environmental sustainability and greater social equity in our development model are limited and very partial.

Common points mentioned in the working groups which act as obstacles for the success of these objectives are:

- **Tensions and distance between the notion of development at that at the level discourse we say we want as a country (sustainable endogenous development based on a social system) and which effectively we are bringing about.** This incoherence between discourse and political action contributes to the lack of concretization of a new effective agenda for sustainable development.
- **The manner in which the 'established agenda' of scientific-technological innovation is installed within our educational system and in general in our institutions at all levels**, by which despite multiple efforts, we find that the reality of organisations impedes the development of emerging initiatives

- **The difficulties of our institutions' lack of knowledge for adapting to new circumstances, in particular to new forms of production and use of knowledge.** The public sector is very vertically-organised, and maintains a traditional view of these processes. The traditional academic and professional training which is strongly compartmentalised [discipline, sector] has contributed in an important way to the resistance that some sectors have manifested regarding the new agenda that has been put forward for the construction of multidisciplinary, interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary knowledge. Such resistance have arrived even to the arenas of current political polarization, in some cases conditioning the will of some sectors to participate in the change of the agenda and leading to an anti-science discourse among others.
- **The limited notion of the concept of participation in the process of scientific-technological innovation.** There are not sufficient channels of communication and dialogue between the scientific community, the State and local communities. Even though the policies of the State are strongly oriented to achieve greater popular participation in the definition of a scientific-technological innovation agenda, the academic sector does not feel sufficiently a part of this discussion, which means, ironically, that the new policies of scientific-technological innovation are generating a new modality of social exclusion. This generates an atmosphere of high conflictivity which limits the true potential that the new State politics could have in this area.
- **The high level of turnover at an institutional level and lack of continuity,** which makes implementation (operationalisation) of policies difficult.

It is suggested that the great challenges that we should confront in order to strengthen the agenda for innovation, development and sustainability in Venezuela are:

- There is a need to resolve the tension that exists between model of development that is proposed at a discursive level (sustainable socialist development) and the productive model that we effectively have, based on the intensive exploitation of natural resources (e.g. petroleum)
- It is necessary to address the issue of institutional weakness in order to effectively implement a new agenda of STI.
- It is necessary to focus also on changing the model of global domination that limits the implementation of an emerging agenda of STI.
- It is necessary to support further debate about 'what science, technology and innovation?' 'For whom?'
- There is a need to deepen the participation of different sectors of society in the definition of public agendas for STI.
- It is necessary to develop an effective 'dialogue of knowledges' in the practice of STI – to pass from rhetoric to practice.
- Deepen the efforts to promote inter- and trans-disciplinarity in scientific research.
- Achieve effective incorporation of social movements and social networks in the innovation process.
- To bring about sustainable efforts over the long-term. To assure institutional continuity in the initiatives of STI that address sustainable development.
- Transformation of educational processes and systems.
- Strengthening based on experiences of success [best practices] and effective learning from unsuccessful experiences.
- To create spaces for dialogue in order to continue deepening these debates.

See also Full Report in Spanish.