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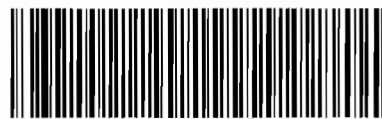
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FINAL REPORT OF THE UNESCO/PCI - CEPAL/CLADES JOINT SEMINAR ON
METHODOLOGIES FOR EVALUATING INFORMATION INFRASTRUCTURES
AND RELATED EXPERIENCES IN LATIN AMERICA

(Santiago, Chile, 30 September - 2 October 1981)



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SEMINAR ON METHODOLOGIES FOR EVALUATING INFORMATION INFRASTRUCTURES AND RELATED EXPERIENCES IN LATIN AMERICA

1. ORIGIN AND OBJECTIVES OF THE MEETING

At the First UNISIST Meeting on Regional Co-operation in Information Policies and Planning in Latin America and the Caribbean (Lima, Peru, 1-5 October 1979), UNESCO/PGI and CEPAL/CLADES officials held preliminary talks on the organization of a meeting of experts to study experiences with regard to the evaluation of information infrastructures. The importance of the meeting lay in the fundamental role played by evaluation in the design and implementation of national and regional information plans and policies and the many activities carried out in the region by the national and international bodies.

Subsequently, at the Inter-Agency Consultative Meeting on Scientific and Technological Information Activities in Latin America and the Caribbean convened by UNESCO/PGI, the two institutions agreed on the agenda and date of the meeting and reached general agreement on its objectives, which were stated as follows:

- (i) To evaluate the methodologies used for surveying and diagnosing information infrastructures in Latin America.
- (ii) To identify basic indicators that should be used in future studies in order to allow for a comparative analysis of and follow-up on the development of information infrastructures.
- (iii) To suggest guidelines and recommendations to the relevant international, regional and national bodies with regard to the content of and methods for carrying out surveys and diagnoses of information infrastructures, mechanisms for exchanging information on this issue and guidelines for carrying out inter-institutional co-operation programmes.

2. PARTICIPANTS

Participants were chosen in their capacity as experts in the evaluation of information infrastructures. An effort was made to bring together a group representing officials of national, regional and international bodies having information programmes in Latin America that would also provide a balanced sample of the various conceptual approaches to this issue. The list of participants appears in appendix 1.

3. ORGANIZATION OF WORK

After opening the meeting, the participants elected the Bureau, as follows: José Arias (Chairman), Milton Nocetti (Rapporteur) and Julio Cubillo (General Secretary of the Seminar).

The agenda for the meeting was divided into four parts, as follows:

1. Opening of the meeting
2. Presentation of substantive papers
3. Group meetings
4. Reading, discussion and approval of recommendations.

The study, analysis and discussion of specific items was mainly carried out by working groups. Working groups were set up in each of the following areas and entrusted with the following specific duties:

Group 1: Referral information systems on information infrastructures 1/

Specific objectives

- (i) To examine critically Latin American experiences in this area, distinguishing between methodological aspects (questionnaires, definitions of objectives of surveys), products (directories, reports) and the impact of referral systems in terms of an increased use of information infrastructures.
- (ii) To propose areas where research is warranted, either to improve existing methodologies, change approaches, expand coverage of surveys or maximize the impact of referral information systems.
- (iii) To identify appropriate mechanisms for facilitating the exchange of information between technical teams responsible for designing and carrying out surveys of units and information networks in the region at the national, subregional and regional levels, and between these units and networks and UNESCO/PGI.

1/ Referral information systems are those which are designed for the treatment and delivery of descriptive information about information units for the purpose of promoting the use of their services. Information is normally made accessible to users through replies taken from data bases, either computerized or manual, and through printed directories.

Group 2: Information systems for the planning of information infrastructures.^{2/}

Specific objectives

- (i) To examine the impact of diagnoses of information infrastructures as they concern decisions taken by agents who establish policies and development activities.
- (ii) To discuss factors that may have had a positive or negative influence on this impact in light of experiences in Latin America.
- (iii) To propose priority topics for research concerning methodological or conceptual aspects pertaining to the degree of utilization of research findings by decision makers.
- (iv) To identify appropriate mechanisms for facilitating the exchange of information among technical teams of national, regional or subregional bodies responsible for preparing the diagnosis of information infrastructures in the region, and between them and persons carrying out similar work in UNESCO/PGI.

Group 3: Inter-Agency co-operation on information systems regarding information infrastructures

Specific objectives

- (i) To identify and discuss co-operation mechanisms for carrying out joint efforts in connexion with the technical and operational tasks involved in surveys of information infrastructures, for either planning or referral purposes.
- (ii) To make recommendations to participating organizations and to competent national bodies on how to rationalize their efforts and maximize their impact in the region.

^{2/} Information systems for the planning of information infrastructures are those used to bring together, organize and disseminate information on information units -either individual units or groups of units- in order to provide support for decision-making that affects their operation and future development. Information is normally made accessible to decision makers in the form of statistical tables and reports regarding the objectives, services, organizational aspects and human, physical and financial resources of the units and information networks. In the planning of information infrastructures, emphasis will be placed on the diagnostic phase.

- (iii) To analyse the advisability and feasibility of having common tools for carrying out surveys of information infrastructures.
- (iv) To explore inter-agency mechanisms for the exchange of information and for consultation in this area, both on substantive issues and on the co-ordination of the pertinent institutional programmes of work.
- (v) To identify joint viable projects to which priority should be given, in order to initiate inter-agency co-operation on specific aspects of this issue.

The groups submitted their recommendations for consideration to the final plenary meeting, where they were approved. Because the recommendations of the working groups were quite similar, it was decided that an integrated proposal should be prepared on the basis of the recommendations of Group 3. A group consisting of the rapporteurs of the three Working Groups and members of UNESCO/PGI was appointed to review the texts and incorporate those recommendations of Groups 1 and 2 that had not been included in the text submitted by Group 3. The final text of the recommendations appears on the following pages.

SEMINAR ON METHODOLOGIES FOR EVALUATING INFORMATION INFRASTRUCTURES
AND RELATED EXPERIENCES IN LATIN AMERICA

UNESCO/PGI and CEPAL/CLADES

Santiago, Chile, 30 September-2 October 1981

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. General recommendations

Considering the necessity of having national capabilities for conducting evaluations and surveys of information infrastructures in order to encourage their coherent development consistent with the development information needs of Latin America;

Bearing in mind the limitations of the resources available to the various institutions, whether national, regional or international, for carrying out work programmes to evaluate, diagnose and survey information sources, and the inadequacy of these resources for covering all information requirements in the different development sectors;

Recognizing the great lack of co-ordination of such efforts at every level;

Considering the relatively weak impact of and lack of follow-up on surveys, diagnoses and evaluations of information units, sources and infrastructures,

It is recommended that:

- (a) The aforementioned institutions should make every effort to carry out joint action and harmonize their programmes in order to avoid duplications and maximize their impact at the national level.
- (b) Future diagnoses and surveys of information units and sources should be carried out within the context of expressed needs as stated by a national decision-making body that is in a position to promote change in the situation with regard to the supply and use of information in the country, thus ensuring the achievement of the results desired.

- (c) In the absence of an expressed need, national groups responsible for conducting surveys and planning of information systems should:
 - (i) Anticipate, when initiating diagnostic studies, the type of information required by the decision maker in order to produce change in the information situation;
 - (ii) Formulate communication strategies capable of effectively transferring to different decision-makers existing or new knowledge regarding the situation, using marketing techniques and a variety of formats for presenting the diagnostic information.
- (d) New surveys and evaluations on these issues that may be carried out in the region should be based on existing guidelines and methodologies developed by UNESCO/PGI, CEPAL/CLADES and other competent bodies having experience in Latin America.
- (e) Efforts should be made to conduct future research studies to:
 - (i) Identify the means by which a conceptual link might be established between findings of surveys and evaluations of infrastructures and the types of decisions taken by different users;
 - (ii) Conceive communication strategies oriented towards marketing of the findings of diagnostic studies;
 - (iii) Identify ways of interrelating the findings of studies of supply and demand for information within the global context of the process of transferring information.

2. Recommendations to UNESCO

Considering the recommendations of the UNISIST Meeting on Regional Co-operation in Information Policies and Planning (Lima, 1979) and the Inter-Agency Consultative Meeting on Scientific and Technological Information Activities in Latin America and the Caribbean (San José, 1980), concerning the creation of a Regional Committee of UNISIST,

It is recommended that:

- (a) A Working Group should be established, within the framework of the aforementioned Regional Committee, to deal specifically -as a priority activity- with the co-ordination of programmes pertaining to evaluation and surveys of information units, infrastructures and sources.

(b) This Working Group should begin forthwith to:

- (i) Formulate a plan of action and regional policy in this field;
- (ii) Establish terms of reference and identify financing in order that UNESCO/PGI and CEPAL/CLADES may jointly undertake an advisory mission to evaluate existing guidelines, tools and methodologies for evaluating and surveying information units and sources in order to make recommendations to the competent national bodies regarding the joint use of a single integrated methodology;
- (iii) Establish terms of reference for a feasibility study of a mechanism to make it possible to collect and disseminate information on data bases -for purposes of either referral or evaluation of existing information units, infrastructures and sources in Latin America- in order to provide orientation for information searches and avoid duplication of efforts;
- (iv) Promote the carrying out of a feasibility study on the establishment of a permanent data base on indicators of the status of information infrastructures and uses in Latin American countries;
- (v) State the substantive and financial requirements for carrying out training courses, orientation missions and other appropriate mechanisms for transferring knowledge and skills pertaining to the planning of information infrastructures to the competent national institutions.

Further considering the need to co-ordinate information programmes at the national level and channel efforts of the various intergovernmental and international bodies in this field through the national focal points of UNISIST;

Bearing in mind the uneven development of these focal points and the fact that in some cases they are the same as the focal points of institutions having information programmes in Latin America such as CEPAL/CLADES, IDB and others,

It is recommended that:

- (c) UNESCO should undertake programmes to strengthen and reactivate the national focal points of UNISIST.

- (d) UNESCO should keep institutions having information programmes in the region, particularly financing bodies, informed regarding the status of these focal points.
- (e) UNESCO should set up joint programmes with CEPAL/CLADES, IDB and other competent organizations in the region, to carry out activities through and/or jointly with specific national focal points in Latin America in order to share resources and maximize their impact at the national level, particularly in those cases where the same national institution serves as the official contact for several bodies.
- (f) UNESCO should encourage the national focal points to organize joint meetings with the intergovernmental and international bodies in order to establish a forum for strengthening national information programmes in connexion with the evaluation and surveying of information infrastructures.

3. Recommendations to IDB

Bearing in mind the efforts of the Bank to encourage and create national information units to collect and prepare the factual and documentary support required to carry out feasibility studies and evaluate on-going or completed projects in different sectors of development in Latin America;

Considering the vast experience the Bank has in the preparation of manuals and guidelines for evaluating the situation with regard to information,

It is recommended that:

- (a) The Bank should exchange information and experiences with UNESCO, CEPAL/CLADES and other competent bodies in the area of evaluation of information infrastructures in order to transfer its experiences and take into account other approaches.
- (b) The Bank, together with UNESCO, CEPAL/CLADES and other competent bodies, should formulate a joint programme of action for carrying out evaluations of information infrastructures in selected countries of the region and exploring the possibilities for conducting information survey projects in the context of external development financing.

- (c) The Bank should request advice from UNESCO, CEPAL/CLADES and other competent bodies concerned with the evaluation of information infrastructures in connexion with the analysis of requests for horizontal technical co-operation having to do with the subject of information that may be formulated by member countries of the Bank and generated within the context of the CT/INTRA Project.

4. Recommendations to CEPAL/CLADES

Considering the pioneering nature of the regional diagnostic study of information infrastructures carried out by CEPAL/CLADES;

Bearing in mind that not all the information gathered has been included in the final published report of the study;

Considering the importance of having detailed information for decision-making in the Latin American countries;

Bearing in mind that as yet there has been no in-depth discussion regarding the indicators proposed in the study,

It is recommended that:

- (a) CEPAL/CLADES should make every effort, within the framework of its existing resources, to disseminate the findings of the study at the national level and present the information again in such a way as to allow for it to be effectively communicated to decision makers.
- (b) CEPAL/CLADES should use the existing information and carry out new surveys in countries participating in the Planning Information System (INFOPLAN).
- (c) It should encourage and set out in a systematic fashion the comments of different specialists within or outside the region for the purpose of developing some basic suggestions for future work in this area.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

I. Experts from national institutions

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Appendix 2

AGENDA

Wednesday, 30 September

- 10:00 - 10:30 Opening of the Meeting
- Address by Mr. Robert T. Brown, Deputy Executive Secretary for Co-operation and Support Services
- Address by Mr. Claudionor Evangelista, Chief, CLADES
- 10:45 - 13:00 Review of studies on information and society with emphasis on measurement of infrastructures and information activities. Presentation by Mr. Michel Menou, Expert/Advisor, UNESCO/PGI
- 15:00 - 16:15 UNESCO experience in elaborating methodologies for the diagnosis of information activities and services for development. Presentation by Mr. Vitor Montviloff, UNESCO/PGI
- 16:15 - 17:30 The CLADES Regional Diagnosis. Presentation by Mr. Julio Cubillo, CEPAL/CLADES
- 17:30 - 18:00 The UNESCO IUP Project (Information Utilization Potential Trade). Presentation by Mr. Michel Menou, Expert/Advisor UNESCO/PGI
- 18:00 - 18:30 Studies and designs of information infrastructures in Colombia. Presentation by Mr. José Arias (ICFES, Colombia)
- 18:30 - 19:00 Indicators of supply, demand and transfer of scientific and technological information in Brazil. Presentation by Mrs. Maria Beatriz P. de Carvalho (IBGE, Brazil).

Thursday, 1 October

- 9:15 - 13:00 Working Groups
- 14:30 - 18:30 Working Groups

Friday, 2 October

- 9:15 - 13:00 Working Groups
- 14:30 - 16:00 Working Groups
- 16:30 - 17:00 The IDB Inter-Agency Technical Co-operation Programme. Presentation by Mr. Gustavo Cañas, IDB
- 17:00 - 18:30 Reading, discussion and approval of recommendations

Appendix 3

LIST OF DOCUMENTS SUBMITTED

- UNESCO/PGI Experiencia de la UNESCO en la elaboración de metodologías para el diagnóstico de las actividades y los servicios de información para el desarrollo. Contribución del Programa General de Información al Seminario sobre Metodologías para la Evaluación de las Infraestructuras de Información y Experiencias Afines en América Latina. Santiago, Chile, 30 de septiembre al 2 de octubre de 1981. PGI-81/WS/13, Paris, 17 de julio de 1981.
- UNESCO/PGI UNESCO experience in elaborating methodologies for the diagnosis of information activities and services for development. Contribution of the General Information Programme to the Seminar on Methodologies for Evaluating Information Infrastructures and Related Experiences in Latin America. Santiago, Chile, 30 September/2 October 1981. PGI-81/WS/13, Paris, June 1981.
- UNESCO/PGI A summary of studies of the Information Society with emphasis on the measurement of information infrastructures and activities (presented by Michel Menou, UNESCO Consultant). Contribution of the General Information Programme to the Seminar on Methodologies for Evaluating Information Infrastructures and Related Experiences in Latin America. Santiago, Chile, 30 September/2 October 1981. PGI-81/WS/13, Paris, September 1981.
- UNESCO/PGI IUP: A system of indicators of the information utilization potential for the monitoring, analysis and planning of national and international information activities (presented by Michel Menou, UNESCO Consultant). Contribution of the General Information Programme to the Seminar on Methodologies for Evaluating Information Infrastructures and Related Experiences in Latin America. Santiago, Chile, 30 September/2 October 1981. PGI-81/WS/13, Paris, June 1981.
- CEPAL/CLADES Informe de diagnóstico regional. La infraestructura de información para el desarrollo. América Latina y el Caribe. Santiago de Chile, marzo de 1981. (E/CEPAL/CLADES/L.7).
- CEPAL/CLADES The development information. The Latin American and Caribbean situation. This document is an excerpt of the study: CLADES: "La infraestructura de información para el desarrollo. Informe de diagnóstico regional." E/CEPAL/CLADES/L.7, marzo, 1981. It has been prepared for presentation in the Seminar on Methodologies for Evaluating Information Infrastructures and Related Experiences in Latin America. Santiago de Chile, 29 de septiembre de 1981. (E/CEPAL/CLADES/R.15).

- CEPAL/CLADES Lineamientos para una acción concertada de agencias con programas de información para el desarrollo en América Latina y el Caribe. (E/CEPAL/CLADES/R.3), Santiago de Chile, 1980. Documento presentado en la Consulta Inter-agencial sobre Actividades de Información en América Latina y el Caribe auspiciada por UNESCO/PGI y organizada por IICA/CIDIA, San José, Costa Rica, 21-25 de abril de 1980).
- CEPAL/CLADES Guidelines for concerted action between agencies operating information programmes for development in Latin America and the Caribbean. (E/CEPAL/CLADES/R.3), Santiago de Chile, 11 June, 1981.
- CEPAL/CLADES CLADES: Su rol y funciones. CLADES/INF. 5, Santiago, septiembre de 1977.
- CEPAL/CLADES CLADES: Its role and functions. CLADES/INF. 5, Santiago, September 1977.

