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# Mobilization, University and knowledge. What about communication?.

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**Mobilization, University and knowledge. What about communication?**  
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**Abstract**

This paper problematizes the "organization" of communication at the National University of San Luis, Argentina, examines the deployment of information and scientific data and the uniqueness of university communication media. Every organization communicates with its actions and messages to society. The Argentine public university is a paradigmatic and anarchic organization concerned with the training of professionals, the research and production of knowledge and the extension to its communities.

The Secretary of Institutional Communication advises on institutional communication policies, the production of audiovisual and graphic content, an organization whose functions are to communicate the activities carried out at the university, manage, the production of audiovisual content and design of communication policies. On the other hand, the Secretary of Science and Technology of the UNSL promotes scientific research, disseminates and communicates the knowledge that is born in the university to society.

The university media that possibly few read, watch or listen to and some focused-on university community issues, others similar to traditional media such as university radio, may arouse little interest in other more general audiences. There is information dispersion and fragmentation motivated by the diversity of university media without a management unit.

Keywords: university, communication, science, knowledge, anarchy

*Dedicated to the Secretary of Science and Technology of the UNSL*

**Introduction**

Communication in educational organizations constitutes a vital element for its development because it connects it with other actors, with citizens and with the community. For the university as a paradigmatic organization and relevant actor in society, which has diverse audiences, it is necessary to "think communication" from complexity and later, provide it with a plan and a communication strategy that links this organization with the various public.

This reflection arises from reflective questions proposed about the university as an organization that communicates, the creation of the Undersecretary of Institutional Communication (and later the Secretary) and the analysis of its initial diagnostic process.

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In a time in which there is a growing awareness of the constructive role of disorder, non-linearity, self-organization, and in which time and the subject are questioned, historicity has an active participation in the understanding of organizations and planning. Organizations go through the daily life of men and Mayntz (1972) defines them as complex social formations

conscious of their ends and rationally constituted, and they have begun to be treated as living organisms that are born and die (Weick, p. 1979). Schvarstein (1998) has defined organizations as a set of solutions in search of solutions and points out that these social formations have been born from organized actions solutions to meet the demands of problems present in a certain social context.

Universities have been characterized by Baldrige, Curstis, Ecker and Riley (1983) in *Alternative Models of Governance in Higher Education*, as organizations that have vague and ambiguous purposes and must build decision-making processes with the purpose of resolving conflicts and uncertainty.

The term "anarchy" is considered as the absence of public power, although it also means bewilderment, confusion, chaos due to the lack of weakness of an authority. Anarchy can also be considered as a form of social organization.

These organizations have been characterized by their own structure and dynamics that is partially determined by external pressures and by their own internal characteristics. The authors point out that they tend to unequal audiences who demand a voice in the decision-making process and have complex needs and technologies. The authors point out in their work the concept of the public to characterize the social groups that interact with the university and that is opposed to the notion of citizenship.

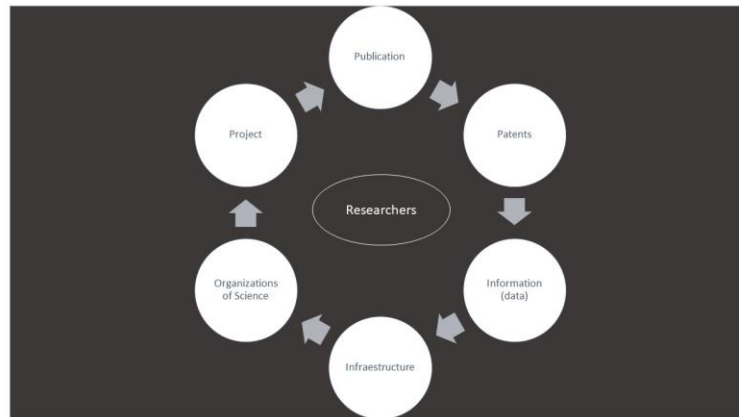
On the other hand, there is an idea of mobilization of knowledge that proclaims that knowledge must be useful for different users and that this knowledge must be prepared within the university so that it is ready for action. The concept of knowledge mobilization does not have a single definition, but rather different perspectives and definitions (Najdorf and Alonso, 2014), as a use of the results of research for decision-making in public policies (Nutley, 2007); method that facilitates the translation of research results to action (Bennet, 2007), efforts to share research results with potential users (Levin, 2011); actions that make it possible to leave knowledge ready for action and its intervention through interlocutors (Levesque, 2009), in Najdorf and Alonso (2014).

Information for different actors

Diagram N°1. Information from Community



Diagram N° 2 Information from Researchers



### Strategy and Plan

The strategy followed by those who administer the idea of institutional communication in the university seek to adopt as strategic objectives the consolidation of communication as a primary function of the University in the search for homogenization of the structure and design of the University's websites through the definition of the institutional image.

A Strategic Social Communication Plan must begin with a communication diagnosis. It often happens that "members of the university are often not aware of the importance of communication so that society knows what the university does or what it does research. Due to its size, the university has a dispersion of academic, scientific, cultural information, etc. " (Quiroga, 2018, p. 5). On the other hand, it is essential and useful "in higher education organizations, ... a communicative planning that diagnoses and starts management activities in higher education institutions, since the administration of resources is synergistically related to communication" (Quiroga, 2018, p. 6.7)

An adequate and flexible communication plan fits the objective and consolidates the components of the project. The traditional elements of communicative planning are basically: justification, objectives, recipients, strategies, strategic activities, strategies with society (formal education), strategies with the media of social communication, strategies of institutional communication, strategies with decision makers, use of ICT, artistic and cultural strategy, guidelines for the production of a glossary, monitoring and evaluation.

At the National University of San Luis, the Institutional Communication Secretariat is empowered to advise on institutional communication policies, production of audiovisual and graphic content and its functions are to communicate the activities carried out through the different available means. carried out at the university, manage, produce audiovisual content and design communication policies.

Planning the institutional communication of an organism that coordinates other information media requires a vision that takes into account: social processes, constant mobility of opinions and emotions, institutional weaknesses or strengths, political and economic changes, market fluctuations, Scientific news, idiosyncrasies and socio-cultural characteristics, influence of the media, virtual networks, technological advance, individual and collective vulnerability, natural and anthropic disasters, as well as any event that influences the context.

The Plan allows all the communicative actions that have been detected in the organization to be articulated and organized within the same communicational strategy. This allows optimally directing all the messages that need to be communicated to all sectors of the population, adapting them to each segment of society and each socio-economic and cultural reality.

### Considerations to the preliminary document

Next, some comments and / or criticisms made with a constructive sense of the preliminary document of institutional diagnosis made on the communication in the UNSL called "Contributions to the Institutional Vision of the UNSL" are wielded.

The mere creation of a communicative body such as the Secretariat for Institutional Communication and the claim and desire to grant communication a space in the UNSL government structure, does not by itself succeed in displacing the communicational field from a reductionist perspective linked to the media in their different languages and devices and a diffusionist role.

Therefore, the complex communication network of the UNSL cannot be oblivious to these new convergent scenarios and any institutional communication policy must take into account these new languages and emerging platforms and the vision of institutional communication as a process that must link to the institution with its social context.

There is information dispersal and fragmentation motivated by the diversity of university media, it is not well known what the original objectives are, nor are topics and content hierarchical. In many cases, it is not clear what the traditional university media such as Radio Universidad that overlap each other were created for.

According to the university authorities and the analysis document, the university media, be it radio, web channel or institutional press, are inserted in a context that allows presenting "communication proposals of high social value" and:

*"Access to certain types of information sources, positions the communication area of the university at a clear advantage over other universities based in the province that do not generate content aimed at society in journalistic format and also with respect to other commercial media that do not they regularly address issues related to scientific issues, for example, or reflections on issues on the daily agenda".*

The wielded fortresses are vague. What are communication proposals of high social value? And access to information sources? All the press can access different information and documentary sources of the university, since the activities of the university are public.

On the other hand, the proximity of the university media to a large and relevant group of people who carry out research in the most varied disciplines should promote the presence of publications, programs and social communication content of science. For example, the Secretariat of Science and Technology should have on its website the accommodation of all the scientific journals of the different faculties of the National University of San Luis and the deployment of scientific journalism and social communication of science to publicize what knowledge researchers produce and how this science carried out at the university helps to improve the quality of life in the community.

The proximity of the own communication media with the university actors themselves should provide the university media with a clear distinctive identification with respect to other commercial or community media in the province of San Luis.

It is considered that, with the development of institutional communication, universities will tend to develop content with a multimedia journalistic format and that it is an ethical and democratic duty and challenge to tell society what the university does with the funds that come from taxes. of the taxpayers, who investigate the teachers, how much the authorities earn, what is the rector's curriculum, who has written about the university and society, what is his budget and what is it spent on, etc.

The coordination of the different areas that depend on the Secretariat of Institutional Communication and the promotion of agendas mentioned in the document are basic requirements. This requires going beyond the fulfillment of the statutory missions that tend to lag behind the dynamics of social and educational changes.

Undoubtedly, the university media that seem to have little general public and that are probably followed by the university community, generally focus on topics related to the university community.

Undoubtedly, the idea that “the UNSL media can participate in career promotion campaigns, monitor the admission of students, generate content to support the transfer of science and technology with the productive sector, etc., is plausible. Without a doubt, this is beneficial for the community and the university.

But, beyond noting the verification "that the different areas (of government and management) have a communicational dimension", perhaps it is more interesting to think that what is not communicated does not exist. The messages and events not communicated, the investigations that are not disseminated, that do not come to light, do not exist if they are not known.

It is possible to think about the dissemination of journalistic content created at the UNSL in other media in the interior, but for this the university must produce them.

There are undoubtedly gray areas between the relationships that are promoted between the university and society. One document highlights that the university does not communicate properly with the community.

The document on the UNSL website indicates that, from the cross-sectional analysis of the different internal documents, based on Book 2 The university in prospective (2010), it appears that “*communication with the environment, the educational community as a whole observes an important deficit, since it is expressed that the community ignores the strengths of the UNSL due to the fact that what is done in it is not properly communicated or disseminated*”.

In this sense, within the institutional purposes set out in Book 2 we find that in axis IX 1. Communication the “problems of internal institutional communication that are visualized both in the production, in the circulation and dissemination of information are pointed out. institutional in the different sectors (p. 105) and particularly they are “considered that the Institution's website is not a means that is well prepared to provide information...”.

### **Communication at UNSL**

It is possible that after almost five years of the creation of the SCI of the UNSL, the diagnosed problems are still present since the mere instrumental solutions did not bring greater growth, vigor and development to university communications.

According to the document, the objectives stated in Book 2 are "IX.1-a-Improve internal communication in the university through different means ...", IX.1-b-Define an external communication policy, which allows it to improve institutional image making the potential of the university known in the local and regional environment ... ", IX.1-c-Create new and better communication channels that open other circuits of exchange and allow a fluid interaction with the different actors of the community to promote dialogues and listen to other voices that allow progress in the construction of a more open institution ”,“... strengthen communication between the different Headquarters, Centers, Academic Units with the community... ”(IX.1-A-2-) Also the need to "obtain the necessary budget to finance the organization, articulation, equipment and operation of the Comprehensive Communication Area" is focused.

The Strategic Objectives that were drawn up in the draft diagnosis of the Secretary of Institutional Communication are:

- Consolidation of communication as a substantive function of the University.
- Own content development based on the activities that the institution itself generates and its link with the community.
- Integration and coordination of the information that is generated through networks between the different instances of the governance and management structures in a transversal manner.
- Establishment of the UNSL as a distinctive ‘brand’.
- Tend to strengthen fundamental values such as solidarity, respect and acceptance of the other and political, ideological, cultural and social coexistence.
- Regarding the specific objectives outlined in the document, the following are outlined:

- Preparation of a comprehensive organization chart of the Institutional Communication Secretariat that allows the identification of structure, objectives, functions and lines of action within the general organization chart of the University. This organization chart has not been disseminated through the institutional channels of the UNSL such as the web.
- Homogenization of the structure and design of the UNSL websites through the definition of the Institutional Image. The institutional image of the UNSL is not known.
- Development of a multimedia / convergent / comprehensive communication policy. It is not defined what is considered a multimedia / convergent / comprehensive communication policy.
- Definition of the identity of the radio and television channel from a cultural / communication perspective with a local / regional vision tending to a greater insertion in the community, which will guide the production of content.
- Disposition of information from a criterion of public accessibility as a way of raising awareness and sensitization of the university and general community.
- Generate content that allows reinforcing the academic, scientific and extension activities of the UNSL and with a strong local, cultural and social imprint.
- Use of the media as specific learning spaces for students of related careers. This idea is not perceived with identity in the university media.
- Internal and external visibility of the production of specific contents of the University.
- Integration from a communicational dimension all the secretariats, undersecretaries and other dependencies of the UNSL.
- The Lines of Action presented by the Secretary of Institutional Communication to the university community in the preliminary document are, among others, the following:
- Continuous evaluation and planning of the actions generated from the different areas of the Secretariat.
- Generation, for each internal service of the UNSL, an API that allows data to be retrieved from different websites.
- Generation of a mobile application that brings together all the services and information sources offered by the UNSL so that its members can access them in a clear and simple way, taking into account current technological requirements.
- Verification of the UNSL website meets the accessibility criteria established for the websites of public entities.
- Diagramming of schedules avoiding fragmented structures in mosaics.
- Establishment of a framework that regulates the incorporation of students under the figures of Internships, Scholarships or Pre-professional Internships in such a way that their formative sense is guaranteed.
- Optimization of the management of the social networks of the different media.
- Specification of investments in infrastructure and equipment.
- Support and expansion of collective productions and inter-institutional agreements.
- Generation of university content planning instances.
- Development of the brand, aesthetics and UNSL style.
- Preparation of a master plan for the web platform that accounts for the strategic lines, action plans and management projects in the short, medium and long term.
- Generate programming grids that link the institutional communication area, some University radio programs and UNSL TV in a comprehensive manner with a view to multimedia.
- Generate annual installation campaigns for programming (radio + tv + institutional).
- Hold and promote dialogue tables with sectors that will be involved in the tasks to be carried out in the medium and long term (radio + institutional).

- Generate internal working hours with press references from each of the different departments of the University.
- Center the production of content in a unified, regularized and homogeneous framework that allows an aesthetic communicational coherence.
- Generate audience studies and reception analysis of the content produced.
- Develop the different Style Manuals for all areas of the Secretariat (Institutional press, web channel, university radio and institutional image and web development area).
- Continue and deepen the articulation with the different dependencies of the Rectorate of the UNSL and advance in a greater integration with the academic units.
- Implement an articulation plan with the student body aimed at strengthening the link between the communication areas of the Secretariat and the careers so that students can develop their pre-professional practices.

It is understood that a news item is the communication of a relevant, current fact that is communicated. Scientific activity can be news for:

- The institutional activity of the secretary of Science and Technology of a university.
- The realization of an unexpected discovery within the university.
- The publication of partial or final results of a research project.
- The approval and / or implementation of a research project.
- Obtaining prizes and recognitions from scientists, researchers or research groups

### **From the Social Communication of Science to the Mobilization of Knowledge**

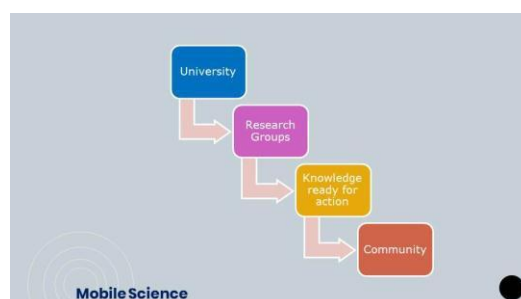
An Institutional Communication strategy in the university should recognize the university nature of anarchy as a form of organization in the first place, it should look for real or imaginary borders in the different faculties that make up the university, recognize that the dialogue between university students and society is relevant, and that university or scientific information is not only of interest to university actors, but also to governments, industry, and those who finance research. This means rethinking the relations of university extension and transfer through dialogue options that deepen the social conversation.

If we understand scientific communication as the management and transmission of scientific knowledge to the rest of society and that in this process it is necessary and beneficial for an exchange of opportunities and ideas to take place between researchers, scientific communicators and citizens, we must advance in the search for the expansion of that of a mobilized knowledge (Quiroga, 2020 a, b).

The Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) defines knowledge mobilization as:

*“The reciprocal and complementary flow and consumption of scientific knowledge between researchers, mediators and interlocutors and users of said knowledge — within and beyond the academy — that seeks to achieve the maximization of benefits for users as well as the achievement of knowledge created in and for Canada and / or internationally that cause positive consequences and that finally allow –in addition to improve the profile- in terms of wealth and impact- of the research in social sciences and humanities”.*

Diagram N° 3 Mobile Science (Quiroga, 2020b, p. 7)





While the social communication processes of science focus on providing knowledge to the public about the endogenous research activities of a certain institution, the idea of mobile science is based on the deployment and sharing of research results with citizens as long as users. Regarding the integration of these in the process of knowledge production, in peripheral contexts in developing countries, it is not usual to notice the structural dimensions that operate on the practices of scientists who usually open or close the possible courses of action of the investigations.

In this sense, Naidorf and Alonso (2018) argue that the mobilization of knowledge should be understood as the use of evidence and the results of research for decision-making in public policies, efforts to share research results with users and the actions that allow to leave the knowledge ready for the action and its intervention through interlocutors. With these expressions, the use of scientific knowledge should converge towards the need for recognition of non-academic interlocutors as part of the knowledge production process (Naidorf and Alonso, 2018).

At the end of the communication intervention, it is proposed to carry out a communication management audit, an effective tool to view the opportunities and strengths, weaknesses and threats of operations, tactics and strategies at the communicational level and evaluate the management of communication from various dimensions (Abadía Sánchez, Vaca López, 2014). It is also about exposing the results of the UNSL research to the public, increasing public understanding of the issues being investigated within the university and generating actions and efforts to share the fruits of the research with users and community.

To do this, we propose to overcome the bureaucratic barriers that prevent more fluid ties with the community and abandon the idea of university transfer and extension, actions where the university addresses the community to provide a share of what it does, for an idea where the university and the community are and almost on the same level of equality, without asymmetric relations and the university and the community commune and communicate deeply.

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