Citizen Science Association Conference 2019
13 to 17 March 2019, Raleigh, NC

Workshop Report:
Towards an Iberoamerican Citizen Science Association
Friday, 15 March, 14h

Main goal and introduction

The symposium's goal was to collect lessons learned and good practices from other citizen science associations like Citizen Science Association (CSA), European Citizen Science Association (ECSA) and Australian Citizen Science Association (ACSA), and the emerging efforts in Africa and Asia, in topics like governance, communications, sustainability, among others to incorporate them in the consolidation process of the Iberoamerican participatory science network RICAP (Red Iberoamericana de Ciencia Participativa in Spanish). As well as, to convene interested citizen science practitioners, researchers, and educators active within the Iberoamerican region, and also from other regions, to harvest lessons and recommendations, and explore concrete steps needed to establish a regional citizen science network.

The proposed network RICAP, intends to provide a venue for building connections, transfering capacity, and supporting knowledge exchange around citizen science at different levels, including countries, institutions, local organizations and other stakeholders, as well as creating bonds with parallel networks like Citizen Science Association (CSA), European Citizen Science Association (ECSA) and Australian Citizen Science Association (ACSA), and the emerging efforts in Africa and Asia.

Summary of participants

30 people from different countries and organizations participated in this workshop. See participants list and contact information at the end of this document.

- **9 participants from RICAP:** António José Monteiro (MUHNAC, Portugal), Carolina Soto (Instituto Humboldt, Colombia), Cristina Luís (Faculdade de Ciências da Universidade de Lisboa, Portugal), Felipe Castilla (GBIF España), Gina Leite (WCS), Karen Soacha (Fundación Karisma, Colombia), Mariana Varese (WCS), Martín Pérez Comisso (Fundación Ciencia Ciudadana, Chile; Arizona State University), Martin Thiel (Universidad Catolica del Norte, Chile).
- **10 participants from the Iberoamerican region:** Petra Benyei, Carmen M. Velez Vega, Astrid Maldonado de Jesús, Natalia Ghilardi-Lopes, Thais Rech, Paloma Farias, Paloma Nuñez, Sandra Arango Caro and Sandro Von Matter.
- **4 participants from the American Citizen Science Association:** Jennifer Shirk (CSA, Cornell Lab); Shannon Dosemagen (Public Lab & CSA board), Tina Phillips (CSA, Cornell Lab)
- **2 participantes from the Australian Citizen Science Association:** Jessie Oliver (Queensland University of Technology, ACSA), Michelle Neil (ACSA)
- **3 participants from the European Citizen Science Association**: Dorte Riemenschneider; Muki Haklay (ECSA, UCL, CSA); Susanne Hecker (ECSA, CSA, iDiv)
- **1 participant from the Asian Citizen Science Association:** Caroline K. Williams
- **1 participant from Africa:** Suvarna Parbhoo Mohan, SANBI, South Africa

Highlights

Governance:

Q1. How to organize the network for an effective decision-making process?
    a) Have governance by laws
    b) Transparency in decision making
    c) Have an advisory committee not only from people within the region

Q2. How to create/maintain working groups (WP)?

a) Open mini seminar series
b) WG members will be dreaming to come to an online meeting if more than just one meeting is offered

Q3. How to keep the commitment alive with volunteers, advisors, board members, etc?
a) Make commitments more rotatory so that the work is more distributed
b) Sense of belonging/rotation of members

Q4. What are the opportunities and risks of the membership model?
a) Membership benefits: network, combined resources, access to toolbox and lessons learned, cost vs added-value
b) Membership risks: excluding lower-income members

Engagement, communications, capacity building

Q1. What are the best strategies for community engagement?
a) Participatory action research
b) Promote co-created projects
c) Traditions (Paulo Freire)
d) Think what is your community likely to be: scientists, community organisations, etc.
e) Local workshops and gradually grow into conferences with government support

Q2. What are the most successful capacity building activities?
a) Webinars, MOOCS, workshops

Q3. In your opinion, which are the best outreach materials?
a) A page (a newsletter) that you can access easily

Sustainability

Q1. How to finance an association/network? What are the key aspects for keeping the network alive in the long term?
a) Create and keep trust between participants
b) Develop a multi-year strategic plan to share with potential funders. See ACSA website, and ECSA website
c) Money from: donors, sponsors, member dues, foundations, project grants.
d) Start small but be prepared for fast growth

More information about RICAP

- ***Inputs: Posters available in the workshop***
- ***Workshop's photos***

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Abstract

The number and size of regional citizen science associations has grown in the last decade and there are signs that it will continue growing. Independently of associations being in the Americas, Australia, Africa, Europe or Asia, all share the objectives of further improving citizen science practices and increasing the geographical and political impact of citizen science. To achieve this, organizations have adopted and adapted different structures to manage members, to design and apply strategies and to collaborate among them in key global topics, such as data sharing, privacy, standards, quality, best practices in citizen science, contribution of citizen science to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, and many others.

While the number of citizen science projects and practitioners keeps increasing and new associations keep emerging, we are not aware of a collection of recommendations specific for citizen science associations that provides support and advice to seek sustainability and asure impact in a local, regional and global context. We want to use our current process of creating the tentatively called Iberoamerican Citizen Science Network (Red Iberoamericana de Ciencia Participativa - RICAP) as an opportunity to exchange the existing knowledge and experiences from the perspective of other citizens science associations and their members.

Iberoamerica is a large and highly diverse region in which many institutions and people contribute to numerous scientific domains using different approaches, and citizen science is not new to the region, but the movement lacks a consolidated network to encourage its growth in Iberoamerica.

The symposium's goal was to collect lessons learned and good practices from other citizen science associations like Citizen Science Association (CSA), European Citizen Science Association (ECSA) and Australian Citizen Science Association (ACSA), and the emerging efforts in Africa and Asia, in topics like governance, communications, sustainability, among others to incorporate them in the consolidation process of the Iberoamerican participatory science network RICAP (Red Iberoamericana de Ciencia Participativa in Spanish). As well as, to convene interested citizen science practitioners, researchers, and educators active within the Iberoamerican region, and also from other regions, to harvest lessons and recommendations, and explore concrete steps needed to establish a regional citizen science network.

Specific objectives included to:
- Present the current status of the RICAP network, its proposed strategy and general objectives, along with an initial assessment of the citizen science experiences in Iberoamerica;
- Determine regional needs and opportunities in areas like capacity enhancement, education, data collection, data quality, tools and technology, fundraising and policy;
- Establish mechanisms to integrate the different local languages, other than Spanish and Portuguese, into RICAP;

- Review possible organizational and governance models for implementing the proposed network, particularly building on the examples of CSA, ECSA and ACSA;
- Convene participants and stakeholders interested in fostering the further growth and development of citizen science in Iberoamerica.

As outcome we expect to produce and share within and beyond the CSA Conference a set of considerations for regional citizen science associations to enhance their sustainability and impact. Participation in this networks can bring collective experience and shared human and technical infrastructures which may provide ready and open access to relevant information, guidelines and practices.

Agenda

(5') Short introduction (workshop expected results & instructions)
(5') Symposium objectives
(5') Introduction about RICAP
(5') Panorama of participatory science initiatives in Iberoamerica
(50') Group discussions
(15') Reporting back to plenary: presentations by each of 4 groups on highlight conclusions/recommendations
(5') Wrap up, thank you, and goodbye

Methodology

Participants were asked to form 4 groups, introduce themselves and answer the proposed questions with a set of recommendations. Then, they were asked to summarize their discussion with three highlight ideas. Next, we provided a transcription of each group's flipchart and participants list.

Question: Based on your knowledge and experience, What are key aspects to consider (develop or avoid) in each of the following topics? Do you have specific lessons to learn? What worked? What didn't work?

a) Group 1 : Governance
- How to organize the network for an effective decision-making process?
- How to create/maintain working groups?
- How to keep the commitment alive with volunteers, advisors, board members, etc?
- What are the opportunities and risks of the membership model?
b) Group 2: Communications, engagement and capacity building
- What are the best strategies for community engagement?
- What are the most successful capacity building activities?
- In your opinion, which are the best outreach materials?
c) Group 3: Sustainability
- How to finance an association/network? What are the key aspects for keeping the network alive in the long term?
d) Group 4: Lessons learned and opportunities of collaboration

Discussions by group

Communications, engagement and capacity building

Communications

- With ACSA we invested heaps of money on a formal comms strategy and have never had capacity to actually implement it.
- Develop a communication plan and stick to it
- Have at least 1-2 people dedicated to "regular" communications
- Share success stories
- Lessons learnt: Comms RULE: if people don't know you are there then they can't connect
- In ACSA social media is great to find and engage project leaders and share projects
- "Citizen science" is not well known in Australia either. It has taken time to get this for. Many projects think they are "conservation" not citizen science. we are working on it!
- Language barrier: use twitter to translate? It has "translate function"
- Science communicator per language
- Website with open login so people can be included and feel part
- When is the best time to communicate on your channels? Facebook has analytics which tell you the best time to post
- How are you going to communicate? newsletter? wiki? social media? Build it over time
- Be careful about privacy issues. Ei. photos
- Privacy issues: have original content. Create! Create! Create! Comms take time, Approximately 20 hours per week

Engagement
- Face to face connections. Use appropriate language, with local communities use more familiar words instead of science.
- Communicate through previously established groups (community-based monitoring, scientific NGOs)
- For community engagement take the time to get to know the community
- Do not assume you know them or what they need
- Find strong partners or community based organizations to reach potential remote communities
- Levels of awareness: long term process
- Membership fees to renew every two years

Capacity building
- Matchmaking (in the website) between research institutions and NGOs/Communities that want to do citizen science.
- E-learning
- Massive open online courses (but consider high investment in creating them, translate existing courses)
- Platforms (adobe connect, zoom, GoToMeeting)
- Toolkits: How to collect data? Blogs. Collate projects in regions with contact (Example: SciStarter)
- Internships/ scholarships to kickstart projects or to upskill young individuals.
- Hosting skills development workshops: focus on particular skills required.

Legal issues
- Get a pro bono lawyer!

Others
- We created a leadership team in CitSci asia, we recruited "ambassadors from each country. My idea: create meeting groups for cities/regions
- Who is your host organisation? Museum? University?
- Be careful with the replication of projects of other countries (context is very important)
- Citizen science association in each country and then do a South American CitSci consortium
- Spain and Portugal are already part of ECSA
- Why to include Spain and Portugal? Regional organization only makes sense if its reasonably big-small. (for communication it can be bigger but for engagement it should be smaller)

- Why Spain and Portugal and not Latin America?
- Why is Spain and Portugal included? Should they not be ECSA? or is it to source funding/guidance for South America? Ist it a historical decision? Language decision?

Governance
- The motivations for creating the association is fundamental for defining what to do: in the case of CSA were fundamental two motivations **share information and communicate** between the members and show the citizen science like a field, to say "we are here".
- Political context matter: within associations integration is a challenge, even in the case of CSA that is a one country but with many states. In the case of ECSA there are many countries and they are working on that.
- Traditions and cultural context matter: the traditions about citizen science in each region are very important. In the case of USA they want more data with more quality in the case of Europe they were coming more from the science and work with communities, and this define in some point the association's aims.
- Associations according to their aims must decide how to operate: in the case of CSA they don't operate projects directly instead of ECSA that take part in citizen science projects that are funded at the European level.
- Tools for sharing knowledge: the journal Citizen science: theory and practice is one of the tools that CSA decided to create for this purpose. MoU with other association, and potential to increase participation in it.
- Democratization of the association is necessary but implies a lot of effort: give voice to many people to decide where the association is heading require a lot of time and represents a lot of tensions.
- The principles are a flexible path: one way to work together is to have some agreements like the 10 principles of citizen science created by ECSA, but this must be dynamic and flexible, is not a settled definition.
- Important questions for a new network or association: Who needs to be convinced? About what?
- The geographical scope are dynamic: at the beginning the CSA were designed with a global idea but with time and the creation of other associations, nowadays is focusing more in the USA.
- Models to take decisions: in the case of ECSA there are many volunteers, a board nominated by the general assembly, there is staff, a steering committee and a chair. There are no specific rules about participation by countries but they embrace diversity.
- Suggestion:
  - Read the article about the CSA foundation (there are 2 papers about the associations, one in CSTP and another one in a book).
  - The languages on how to communicate are important.
  - Document best practices to share projects.

Sustainability

- Get the funding to employ people to build the network with some stability -3 years, even part time
  - Critical: having a person with the role to manage and grow it
- Have a bank account
- Have a good membership management system
  - CSA: membership can be individual or institutional (most flexible funding). doesn't have the same institutional benefit of increasing funding
  - Have a policy and/or a vetting process, especially for institutional memberships (to avoid hijacking)
  - No need a complex system, but it is critical to have someone to keep it updated
  - consider a differentiated member category (cheaper) for community-based organizations to be able to participate

- Consider starting small and grow iteratively
  - ACSA used facebook to survey and contact potential members. the term CS was not known, but there was a lot of participatory / cb work
- Discuss and clarify what is the motivation for the members to be part of the network: what are the benefits to them of being members
- Involve the different cultures existing in the region (ancestral, urban, modern, etc)
- Incorporate as much transparency as possible with members and manage their expectations
- Organization constitution / fiscal sponsor
  - Choose a good host institution (or just open your own bank account) to manage money. it should be easy to work with this institution. At the beginning, this 'fiscal sponsor' organization can help with a bank account, granting, email account, website, etc.
  - Individual champions are very important, especially very early on: few individuals that generate, motivate the movement
  - Early on think what kind of entity you want to create (association, non-profit, etc). it should align with your purpose, but also consider host country's laws and regulations
  - For ACSA, it worked well to have early on a strong strategic plan with clear deliverables (1, 3 yrs) and a governance structure. they handed off this documents to get funding / support. ACSA strategy and constitution are online -look them up!
    - From the beginning they organized into a 'management committee' and got a non-profit status; it worked best under Australia regulations
- WORKING GROUPS:
  - CSA: at the beginning they organized informally in working groups; then these working groups became a "working board" -i.e., board members were in charge of specific tasks and deliverables. now they are moving towards a "board of directors" model and hiring staff, so that board of directors can focus on fundraising.
    - A challenge with the WG was that they felt lonely; didn't touch base so much.
  - ECSA has quarterly meetings of heads of working groups.
- Funding model:
  - ECSA: others said of ECSA: it's worth studying its funding model -it's the most diverse.
    - ECSA itself does not apply to projects. Other organizations include ECSA in their project proposals. Some of the activities for ECSA included in the proposals include strengthening ECSA, ECSA meetings, and ECSA small granting programs
    - The first projects to include ECSA in their plans/proposals were taking big risks; then it transitioned to many organizations wanting to involve ECSA in their project proposals (it provides credibility)
  - CSA does not apply to projects, so it can
    - focus on services to members
    - not to compete for resources (projects) with members
  - CSA sources of income include membership fees; time, in-kind support; small grants (through partnerships) are for planning, harvest of best practices, etc.
  - Try to get seed funding for the network: look who has funding for science and would like to invest in the network
- Check the Germany CS strategy and the process (Susanne Hecker led it); both are great models to review and follow

Lessons Learned

- Look early on at who else is doing work similar to citizen science but do not call it citizen science (meaning that there are several projects that are not called citizen science, but actually are citizen science and need to be involved in the network)

- Good to figure out early on if RICAP wants to be an umbrella/network for citizen science, or do citizen science work.
- As an example, CSA helps to develop + support the field: conference, development of webinars, forum/list serve, host working groups. It is not a project repository
- Include human health as another priority subject to focus on, not only ecological (include the maximum of knowledge areas in the network)
- Have transparency in order to build trust
- Open the network to several society groups (politicians, communities, other interests, …)
- Create a network that is representative and generates confidence among its members
- Create joint activities among the countries to enable connection
- Have an advisor group
- Have and ambassador from each country
- The network should be involved in policy making
- Adapt the ECSA 10 principles to yourself to define what is your goal
- No ONE term for 'citizen science'
- People want to belong to an association that makes a difference in policy

Workshop proponents

Soledad Luna, Kyle Copas, Carolina Soto, Dairo Escobar, Joaquín Cochero, Felipe Castilla, Cristina Villaverde, Jaume Piera, Anabela Plos, Néstor Acosta, Patricia Koleff, Elizabeth Torres, Andrea Ferreira Portela Nunes, Karen Soacha, Mariana Varese

Workshop facilitators

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