

Leaders of Change: Social entrepreneurship and the creation of ecologies of solutions

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Abstract

The line of inquiry on evolutionary learning communities (ELCs) to promote evolutionary development (ED) seeks to identify the conditions by which people can self-organize to learn, design and implement actions that will improve their quality of life and their socio-ecological milieu. In the Fall of 2007, the Universal Forum of Cultures took place in the city of Monterrey, Mexico. This UNESCO sponsored world event offered an opportunity to implement an evolutionary learning community with local citizens to bridge the knowledge of the Forum with the sustainable development needs of the local community. Over two hundred citizens responded to the call to join the “Leaders of Change” initiative. The ELC was conceived as a group of potential social entrepreneurs who came together to learn, identify possibilities, and support each other in the development of projects to translate their vision into action. This article reports on the design, process, and outcomes of the 8 month action-research project as well as the outcomes, reflections from the experience and implications for future research.

Keywords: evolutionary learning community, social entrepreneurship, systems design, knowledge based development, evolutionary development, sustainability, citizen participation.

From Knowledge Based Development to Evolutionary Development

Monterrey, the capital of the northeastern Mexican state of Nuevo León, has historically been considered an industrial city. In the last few years, a major shift has begun to propel the region beyond the confines of physical industrialization and transform it into a knowledge city. Industrialization in Monterrey was launched in the mid-19th century by the steel company *Fundidora de Fierro y Acero Monterrey*, which accelerated the emergence of today’s Mexican leading multinational companies such as Cemex, Vitro, FEMSA and ALFA. Today, a new economic revolution is underway: in 2004 the State of Nuevo León decided to give a new strategic business orientation to the region by making Monterrey into an International Knowledge City. One of its core objectives is to position the State of Nuevo León, and in particular Monterrey, as the main Latin American IT supplier for the United States of America and Canada (Sada, 2006). It is a vision that will transform Monterrey from an industrial center to a knowledge and cultural hub. Monterrey’s reputation across Mexico is of an entrepreneurial and international

city, so the transformation toward a knowledge hub is congruent with the values and aspirations of its people.

The intention is to increase the gross economic output of the state of Nuevo León through industries and economic activities based on knowledge, research and technological development. The government of the state of Nuevo León defines a knowledge city as a geographic territory where government, business, and society devise a strategic plan for the common purpose of building a knowledge based economy (*Monterrey Ciudad Internacional de Conocimiento*, 2007).

Within the field of knowledge management, the application of knowledge strategies to promote economic development of cities and regions has been denominated “knowledge-based development.” There seem to be two recognized purposes: On the one hand, it is clear from the literature that knowledge-based development (KBD) is a powerful strategy for economic growth and the post-industrial development of cities and nations to participate in the knowledge economy. For example, technical and scientific knowledge for the innovation of products and services, market knowledge for understanding changes in consumer choices and tastes, financial knowledge to measure the inputs and outputs of production processes, and more recently human knowledge in the form of skills and creativity, are all codified within an economic model that seeks financial returns (Lever, 2002, p. 861). On the other hand, there are approaches to knowledge-based development that indicate the intention to increase the skills and knowledge of people as a means for individual and social development, eventually making prescribed formal education less needed (Gonzalez, *et. al.*, 2005, p. 109-110). Of course, this is not to say that human development precludes formal education any more than the advent of telecommuting precludes air travel; it merely makes it less of a necessity.

These two objectives are implicit in some of the communications (e.g., websites and public presentations) that describe the project Monterrey International Knowledge City. As part of the overall strategy and to use it as a launching path, the state of Nuevo León requested to be the host for the second Universal Forum of Cultures in the Fall of 2007. The first iteration of this UNESCO sponsored global event took place in Barcelona in 2004. The Universal Forum of Cultures “summons people instead of countries or governments; it is the civil society that reflects on the problems and challenges of humanity with the purpose of improving the well being of the present” (Forum Monterrey 2007).

In the transition from an industrial to a knowledge city, the Forum offered a clear opportunity to capitalize on the throughput of information, knowledge, technology, energy, values and people to accelerate this important transition and to leave a legacy of progress in service of both local and global sustainable development. However, even with the international infusion of expertise on topics related to a global agenda, the two interrelated main purposes of KBD (i.e., an increase in intellectual and human capital to bring about more creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship that will positively impact economic possibilities) can very well continue to operate within a framework of

"business as usual" that focuses on economic growth at the expense of the social and environmental impacts that a single focus on economic growth can create.

The research on evolutionary development (Laszlo & Laszlo, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2007) has been focused on expanding the boundary of KBD to incorporate a systems and complexity perspective to development strategies. Carrillo (quoted in Gonzalez, *et. al.*, 2005) considers that the first success factor for KBD initiatives is "a leadership committed, above all, with the sustainable wellbeing of *its* community" [emphasis added] (p. 108). From an evolutionary development perspective, this community cannot be anything less than the whole *planetary* community of humans and all other living and life support systems. The interconnectedness of cultural and political systems around the world, and the common challenges of climate change and resource depletion demand that local and regional strategies of development are in sync with these global realities.

As a result, a third purpose of KBD has been proposed to foster evolutionary development (Laszlo & Laszlo, 2007): the purpose of contributing to a socially, culturally and environmentally sustainable learning society – one that address the most pressing global issues of our time while enabling our collective creative capacity to produce life affirming, future creating and opportunity increasing realities. KBD, as a meta-field that seeks to manage the best utilization of the diverse array of human knowledge (from all scientific disciplines and cultural traditions) for the stewarding of human activity systems, has a strong say in the kind of outcomes promoted by development initiatives.

To include this third purpose, there is a need to recast those who live in a knowledge economy as more than knowledge workers. In reality, only a fraction of a city's population would have the educational level and capacities to be employed in knowledge industries such as information technology and biotechnology. The real impact of a knowledge city is in the empowerment of knowledge citizens. Carrillo (2004) defines knowledge citizens as a better educated (formally or informally), critical and informed population that is ready to participate in civic life, is politically active, is interested in a better quality of life for itself and the next generations, including concern for healthy lifestyles and less dependence on consumption, is appreciative of artistic expression and cultural activities, and is more competent in human relations (p. 40). Knowledge citizens do not have to be Ph.Ds in computer sciences, but have access to information and knowledge through communication technologies that enable them to be active participants in the shaping of their life and their interdependent future. Knowledge citizens make possible a learning society. A learning society describes the human and social capital that make possible a knowledge city. Learning is the process of acquisition and creation of knowledge; while knowledge is the outcome of such a process. The knowledge city may be thought of as the hardware: the infrastructure for learning and knowledge creation. The learning society is the software: the culture of learning, creativity and innovation that distributes the benefits of access to knowledge across society by offering a higher quality of life and greater opportunities for meaningful living. A knowledge city, without knowledge citizens, would create a polarization of those with access to the ivory towers of the complex and expensive info-

tech industries, universities and research institutions and those who continue to live at the low-tech margins of society.

The purpose of evolutionary development is to foster a global sustainable learning society: one that has a high level of exchange and interconnections among the population and institutions around the world in order to inform local development strategies with lessons learned in different contexts. No community, city or country is isolated. Information and communication technology is enabling the exchange necessary to develop strategies with local and global relevance. Our ability to respond to sustainability challenges requires collaboration among governments, businesses and civil society across regional, national and international boundaries for the creation of a viable shared future.

Evolutionary Development: Expanding the horizon

Knowledge citizens are individuals capable not only of following prescribed instructions but also of improving and creating solutions. They do not expect government to solve societal problems, but understand that their ideas and participation are an essential component of finding solutions and creating alternatives. Similar to the change in education from an emphasis on knowledge reception to interactive learning (Laszlo & Laszlo, 2002), the notion of knowledge citizens shifts the locus of control to the people: their interests, ideas, and aspirations are key in defining the what, how and why of change. Knowledge citizens are active participants in the improvement of their quality of life and in the shaping of their society.

Evolutionary development is a systemic and strategic view of development that prioritizes economic, human, social, cultural and ecological needs as equally important in the dynamic search for improved quality of life and ongoing viability of living systems. Since it seeks to create a metastable dynamic interaction between human and natural systems, evolutionary development is a proposal that includes and goes beyond sustainable development. Sustainable development is the next evolutionary challenge for humanity. It involves mastery of the flows of resources and energy on this planet to stop the destruction of ecosystems and find a stable path of co-existence. Evolutionary development moves beyond the search for a balanced equation between supply and demand of resources, to explore the evolutionary creative potential of human beings in partnership with Earth. This involves not only the redesign of the economic system but also the evolution of institutions and cultures.

Figure 1 shows the transition from unsustainable development to evolutionary development, using as a framework the funnel of the Natural Step (Nattrass & Altomare, 1999). The funnel is a conceptual framework that represents the closing of options and the narrowing of possibilities if we continue to use more resources at a more rapid rate than the earth's ability to regenerate them. Continuing on the unsustainable path of development, with a single focus on economic growth and considering social and environmental impacts as externalities, leads to the intersection of the two walls of this

funnel which represent civilizational collapse. Sustainable development, using this framework, means stabilizing these two trends: curbing our resource consumption, reusing and recycling, generating energy from renewable sources, and finding ways to do more with less. However, much of the emphasis of sustainable development is on the scarcity of resources. There is a very hopeful response from the business sector in terms of showing their corporate citizenship by adopting eco-efficient strategies and innovating products and services that are environmentally friendly. Yes, this kind of innovation may result on green buildings and clean energy, but unless parallel to these infrastructural changes there is a commensurable transformation on the consciousness of people, redefining the purpose of our existence and the quality of our relationships to each other and the planet, we may find ourselves living “green” but meaningless, disconnected, stressful and conflicting lives.

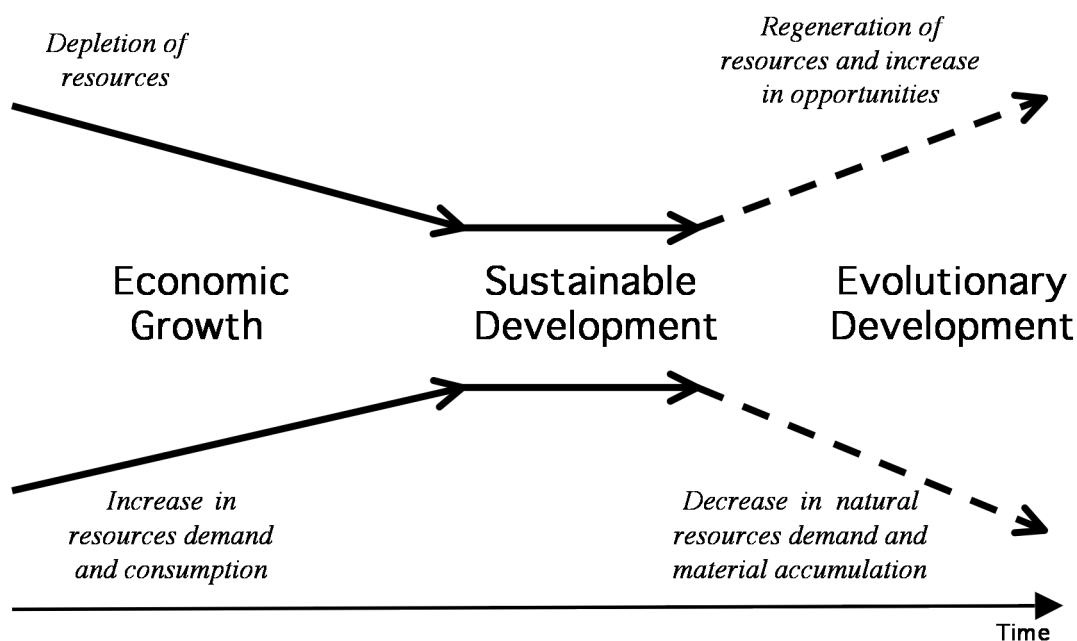


Figure 1. Beyond Sustainable Development

Evolutionary development includes sustainable development, that is, our ability to live within the Earth’s carrying capacity to satisfy our material needs without robbing future generations of their right to also do so. However, it presents a broader vision that redefines the meaning of being human and the possibilities of mastering living in syntony (or dynamic harmony) with our socio-cultural and natural environments.

Evolutionary development is grounded in a mental model of abundance. This abundance is systemic. As it was well articulated by Donella Medows more than 30 years ago (1973), there are real limits to growth based on the carrying capacity of the Earth’s ecosystems. The limits to growth become apparent when the main industrial processes that extract natural resources, transform them into products and services, and commercialize them are linear in nature: the take-make-waste production line. But

nature's design is systemic and cyclical. Nature doesn't produce waste, only food for other systems: the exhausted CO₂ from animals is food for plants; and decomposed leaves are food for the soil. It is in these cycles of renewal that systemic abundance is created: an abundance not in terms of unlimited resources, but rather unlimited cycles of regeneration to sustain life.

Collaborative Social Entrepreneurship

We are living unsustainable lives and most of the social systems in today's world (business, schools, healthcare system) were not designed with sustainability in mind. Nevertheless, public, private and social institutions are starting to acknowledge that our global civilization is going on the direction of collapse, and there are clear indicators of the decline of political, economic, and ecological systems (Diamond, 2005).

The solution of the complex global problems (including poverty, armed conflicts, environmental degradation, global warming) cannot be left to business and government leaders alone: most solutions and alternatives require cultural and behavioral changes both at institutional and individual levels. For example, strategies to address global warming involve reducing CO₂ emissions. In addition to the regulations and programs for carbon reduction or CO₂ sequestration by industries and other institutional players, there are many actions that citizens can take to do their part: their consumption options, transportation choices and lifestyles can either contribute or ameliorate global warming. Because of the power that people have to achieve change, there are initiatives that seek to harvest the collective power of individuals to support social change. For example, CarbonRally.com is an organization that creates healthy and fun competition among teams (of students, neighbors, coworkers, or whoever wants to accept the challenge) to reduce their carbon footprint through small but significant changes in their daily lives.

CarbonRally is an example of a social enterprise. Its founder, Jason Karas, combined his business expertise and his concern for the environment to create a company that makes money through corporate sponsorships while engaging communities around the world in a friendly and fun competition to respond to global warming:

"I'm concerned that our CO₂ emissions could have rough consequences for the next generation, and that time is running out to address the problem. That said, I'm optimistic that we can do something about it. The past year has seen a remarkable increase in awareness, corporate initiatives, technical innovation, and policy. To win, we'll need to couple all of these advances with personal action on a massive scale.

A few friends and I created Carbonrally in late 2007. I have a dozen years of experience in corporate strategy and new product development in the telecoms industry, and advanced degrees in business and environmental economics from Duke University. My favorite job these days is being the dad of two little kids. My time outdoors with them is motivating me to do something about climate change.

I've realized it's time to RALLY UP. I hope you will join me" (Karas, 2008).

Social entrepreneurs have the vision, creativity and determination usually associated with business entrepreneurs. However, they are committed to produce lasting social change. The profit motive is not their priority. Social entrepreneurs create innovative organizations that apply management and business expertise for efficient operation, although they can be either for profit or nonprofit, with the purpose of creating social value (Guía de Emprendimiento Social para Lideres de Cambio, 2007, p.1).

Entrepreneurial activity is encouraged by governments and universities. It is a means to promote economic development and to create new jobs. New business incubators provide vital services to entrepreneurs to support the development and implementation of their business idea through access to information, work space, legal and financial services, among other features. The development of entrepreneurs has parallels with the development of leaders: traditionally it has been seen as a process of development of *individual* capacities and each entrepreneur receives the support necessary to increment the possibilities of success.

Social entrepreneurs face similar challenges to launch their ventures. They need advice and support to translate their idea into action and initial resources to scale their idea before it can be self-sustaining. However, since they are focused on social problems, it would make sense to see the development of social entrepreneurs as an intrinsically collaborative process that connects entrepreneurs addressing interrelated issues. This is the notion of the ecosystem of solutions: a network of social entrepreneurs, collaborating in the implementation of their solutions, and learning from each other in order to create synergies for the common good. In other words, creating evolutionary learning communities (ELCs) (Laszlo & Laszlo, 2000, 2004; Laszlo, K.C. 2001) to empower social entrepreneurs to act collectively, may be a useful strategy.

The notion of an ecosystem of solutions or collaborative social entrepreneurship shifts the emphasis from the individual contributions and sees the real impact in the new connections and relationships that will enable a deeper cultural transformation. If social entrepreneurship continues to focus on individual entrepreneurs and their enterprises, we will be cultivating individual trees instead of a forest. The 'business as usual' business mindset values competition over cooperation. This mindset is frequently adopted by social entrepreneurs, resulting in the creation of new (green) products and services that generate a profit but may not make a significance difference in shifting direction away from unsustainable trends. But if a more systemic and evolutionary mindset informs the actions of social entrepreneurs, then in addition to innovative solutions we would have a fertile ground for the emergence of a new culture, an hybrid between business and nonprofit practices, that is aligned with the larger shift required for sustainable and evolutionary development.

Dialogues at the Forum Monterrey 2007

A culture of learning is both a path and a destination for evolutionary development. The vision of a sustainable learning society implies a society whose members have developed the policies, strategies and programs to balance the economic, human, social, cultural and ecological needs through processes of learning, participation, collaboration and inquiry. The creation of a sustainable learning society requires bringing people together through dialogue to define the paths that make sense to them; the ways forward that are meaningful and feasible given their values, situation, talents and aspirations. The creation of a sustainable learning society begins by enabling and empowering individuals in community to develop their competencies and sensibilities to meet their personal, economic, social, and environmental needs.

Monterrey's current vision and initiative as a knowledge city is primarily focused on the economic growth dimension. Yet, the Forum Monterrey 2007 had a broader agenda organized in four themes (1) cultural diversity, (2) sustainability, (3) knowledge and (4) peace. The local relevance of these themes for the region is equal to its global timeliness:

1. Cultural diversity: Although Mexico is rich in regional cultural diversity, with many indigenous groups and distinct cultural traditions in each state, there is a strong dominant homogeneity that characterize Mexican culture. The border states with the United States of America blend into their local cultures the influence from the powerful northern neighbor. Nuevo León is one of these border states and Monterrey is a city with an openness and appreciation for international cultures. Monterrey has several world class universities, attracting regularly international students and visiting professors from all continents and it is an international business center since it is the home for large multinational corporations. With the program of Monterrey as International Knowledge City, several IT companies from India have established operations in the city because of its geographical location and engineering talent (Laszlo, Laszlo & De Fougères, 2008). These conditions position Monterrey as a new multicultural center.
2. Environmental sustainability: Water shortage has been an issue for Monterrey for decades. With the growth of the city, air contamination is becoming a health problem. However, the public transportation system is inefficient and unsafe and there are not enough regulations to reduce industrial and household pollution. The city lacks of an effective recycling program. The whole country's infrastructure is dependent on oil and the efforts to reduce energy consumption and to develop alternative energy sources are insufficient. Environmental sustainability is not yet a priority. It is not part of the compass to set development policy.
3. Knowledge: Although this is cornerstone for the region's development strategy, there is a huge need to increase the educational level of the population to shift to knowledge-based development. Industrialized nations have a population with an average of 15 years of formal education. Mexico's average in 2003 was 7.8 years. There has been steady improvement since in the 1960s when the average was 2.6 years of education. Nuevo León is among the states with higher

educational levels: the state average is 9.1 years while poorer states in the South, such as Chiapas, have a state average of 5.9 (Salgado, 2009). The Forum's Dialogues and events provided a venue to inform and educate the general population on topics that formal education may not address yet. Educational institutions were able to involve their students and educators in the Forum to enrich their curriculum. The Forum provided valuable resources in the formation of knowledge citizens with a more global perspective.

4. Peace: Armed conflicts have been part of recent Mexican history in the south (e.g., Chiapas) where social injustice has forced indigenous groups to organize in guerrillas and defend their rights. In the last 5 years, a noticeable increase in violence lead by drug dealers has put Mexican society in a constant state of fear. Mexican culture shares strong connections with Catholicism (e.g., the influence of the Guadalupe Virgin in popular culture) and there is pride in the importance of family values across the country. However, these values are being shaken by the insecurity created by extreme inequality: the gap between rich and poor has lead to organized crime in the form of kidnapping and murders as means for economic recompense. These realities were external to Monterrey for many decades but not anymore. Social justice and peace are inextricably connected.

These themes were explored during 8 weeks with a series of educational and cultural events that comprise the Forum's agenda of "Dialogues" (see table 1).

Table 1. Dialogues Agenda

Week	Dialogues theme	Date
1	Peace and Spirituality	25-30 September 2007
2	Education, Science and Technology	2-7 October 2007
3	Cities, Population and Natural Resources	9-14 October 2007
4	Knowledge Based Development	16-21 October 2007
5	Health and Quality of Life	23-28 October 2007
6	Governance, Participation, Human Rights and Justice	30 October-4 November 2007
7	Identity, Diversity and Cultural Policy	6-11 November 2007
8	Communication	13-18 November 2007

Given the educational and cultural purpose of the Forum, the Dialogues component played an important role in engaging people in considering and integrating new perspectives. Jorge Angel Diaz, the Director of Dialogues for the Forum Monterrey 2007, explained that dialogue can be more than a communication exchanged between two or more people. The dialogue that each of us can have within ourselves when we engage with an author (through reading his or her writing) or through the appreciation of a work of art is an important form of dialogue (Diaz, 2006). It is through dialogue that we learn. In essence, dialogue means thinking together. Without the Dialogues component, the Forum Monterrey 2007 would have been an enjoyable and memorable event. However, through the Dialogues, the Forum sought to expand consciousness, introduce new questions, and spark interest in people to seek their own answers (Diaz, 2006).

The Forum Monterrey 2007 attracted 4 million visitors to the city of Monterrey during the 8 weeks of the event (Montemayor, 2009). The Dialogues agenda was carried out through conferences and panel discussions in which the general public was invited to participate. However, their participation was passive in most of the cases, since the emphasis was put on listening to national and international experts who were brought to present their views on the topics selected. The audience was there primarily to listen and the level of participation was generally limited to a few questions at the end of the event. In other words, there were not enough spaces for true, interactive and participatory dialogue among the citizens and visitors attending the events.

Anticipating that this was going to be the case given the scale of the event, a collaboration between three organizations was created: the Forum Monterrey 2007, the EGADE (Graduate School of Business Administration and Leadership) of the private university Tecnológico de Monterrey and the educational nonprofit organization Syntony Quest. Their collaboration focused on creating an Evolutionary Learning Community (ELC) as a space where a selected group of citizens could engage in dialogue to learn from each other, integrate the knowledge from the Forum, develop new capacities, and apply them in social entrepreneurship projects. The name of this initiative was *Líderes de Cambio* (Leaders of Change) and it was an initial effort to expand the boundaries from a knowledge city, with economic and technological objectives, to a sustainable learning society, with human, socio-cultural and ecosystemic dimensions as well. Leaders of Change was also conceived as part of the legacy of the Forum: a strategy to connect the world event with the long term transformation toward a knowledge city and sustainable learning society — from the bottom up.

Leaders of Change: The Design of the Initiative

The main purpose of Leaders of Change was to plant the seeds for an ecosystem of solutions generated by a diverse group of citizens as a result of their participation in the Forum Monterrey 2007. With such a wonderful array of knowledge resources available as a result of the agenda of events of the Dialogues of the Forum, the Leaders of Change initiative was a small effort to intentionally facilitate dialogue among a small group of citizens to catalyze further learning and action. It was an opportunity to bridge the Forum as an event to the International Knowledge City initiative as a longer term socio-cultural transformative process.



Figure 2. Call for participation through the Forum Monterrey 2007's website: "Wanted 100 Leaders. Leave a legacy in your community and become a leader or change!"

The formal sponsored process of Leaders of Change was conceived as an 8 month action-research process that began before the launching of the Forum, from August 2007 (1 month before the inauguration of the Forum) to March 2008 (4 months after the conclusion of the Forum). Some seed funding as well as in-kind donations such as access to meeting facilities and food were obtained for the project.

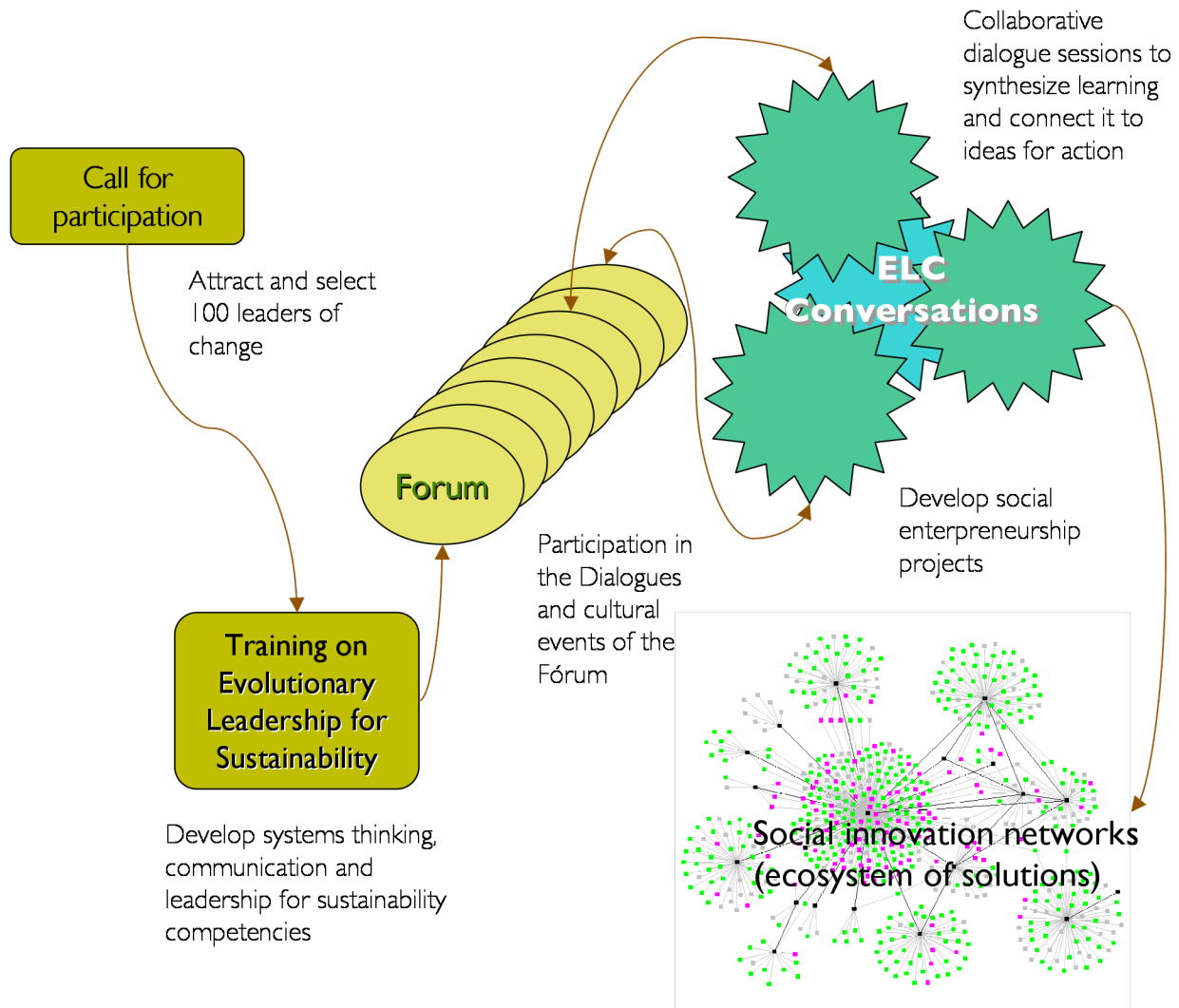


Figure 3. Design of Leaders of Change process

Characteristics of the initial group of Leaders of Change

A call for participation was launched in mid June through the official website of the Forum (www.ForumMonterrey2007.org) and the Tecnológico de Monterrey's university radio station¹. The message of the call sought to attract diverse participants with a common focus: a desire to learn and to be part of positive change in their community.

¹ Radio spot message: "The Universal Forum of Cultures, the Graduate School of Business Administration and Leadership of the Tecnológico de Monterrey, and the organization Syntony Quest invite the Monterey community to participate in the initiative "LEADERS OF CHANGE." If you are between 18 and 99 years old and wish to leave a legacy of wellbeing in your community... you have the qualities that we are seeking! For more information contact us at lideresdecambio@monterreyforum2007.org or call the number 8625-6170.

Interested citizens filled out an online questionnaire as part of the selection process. A total of 211 applications were received from which 112 citizens were accepted to participate based on an appraisal of their qualitative responses of why they wanted to be a Leader of Change and also based on their time availability to commit to the 8 month process.

The composition of the initial group was half males and half females. The age ranges covered from 18 to 65 years of age. The educational and occupational backgrounds, as well as the socioeconomic status of the group was diverse, representing different sectors of the local population. (See figures 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8.)

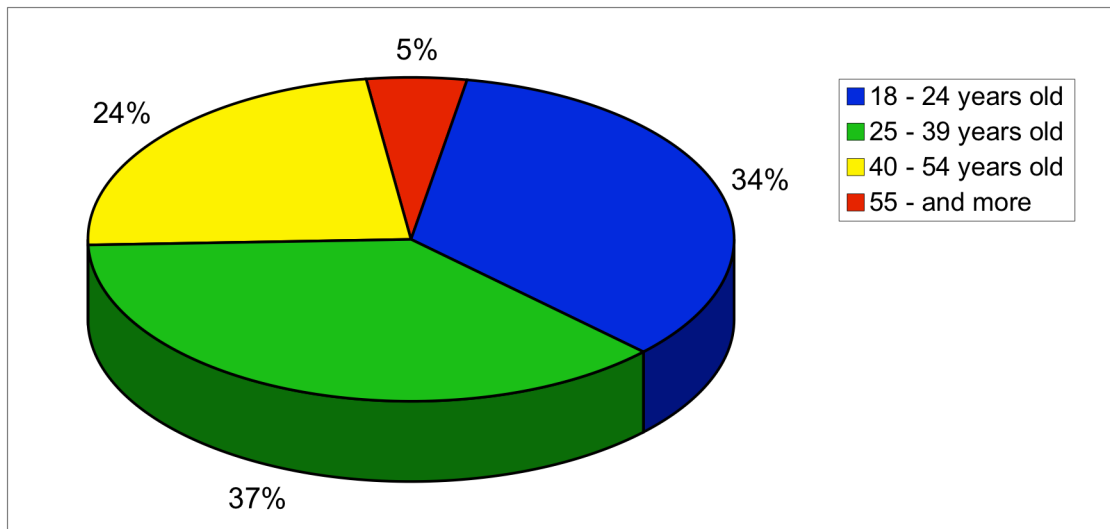


Figure 4. Age distribution of Leaders of Change

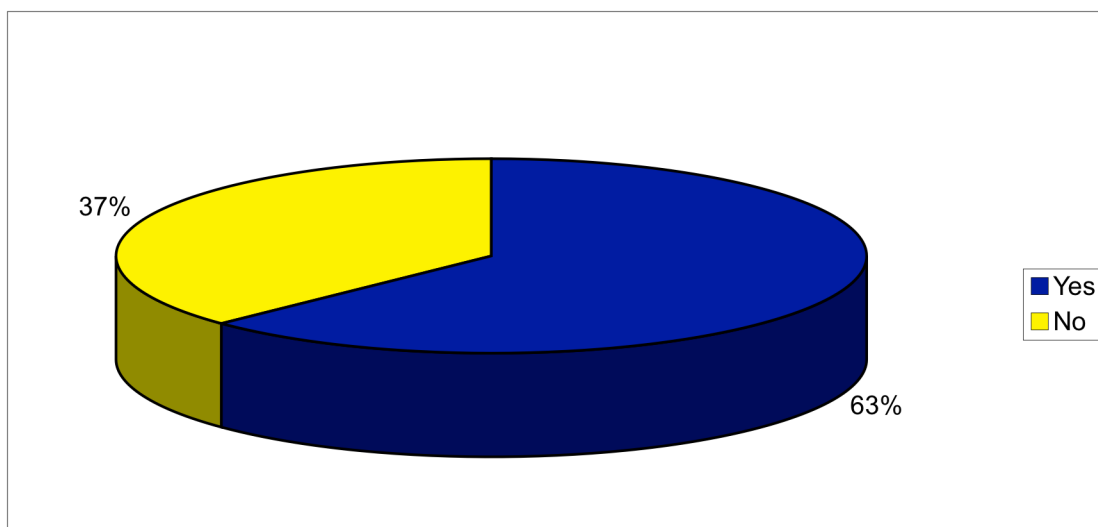


Figure 5. Economically active (i.e., employed) Leaders of Change

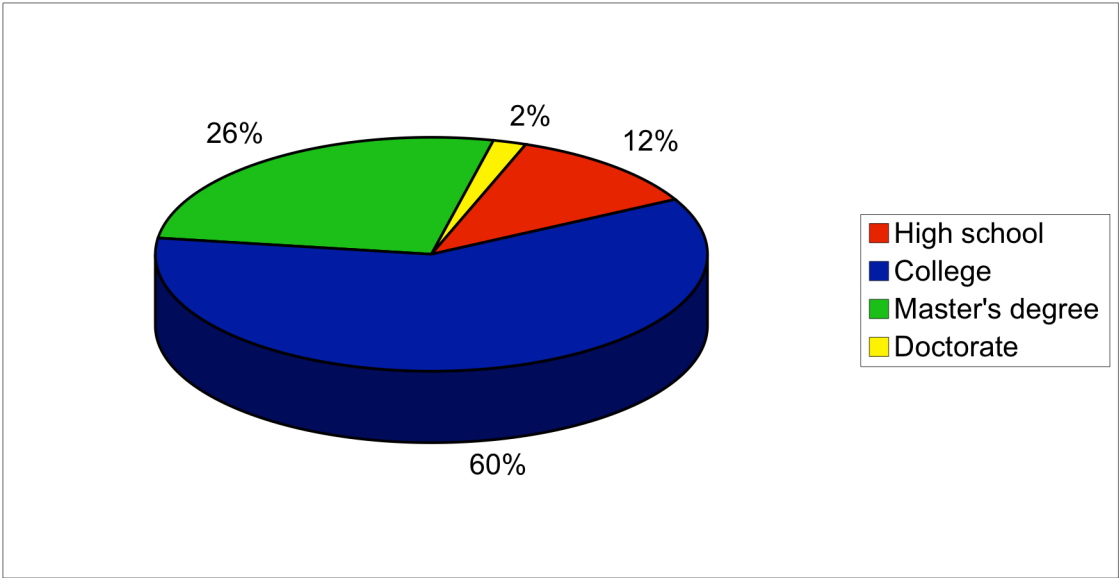


Figure 6. Educational level of Leaders of Change

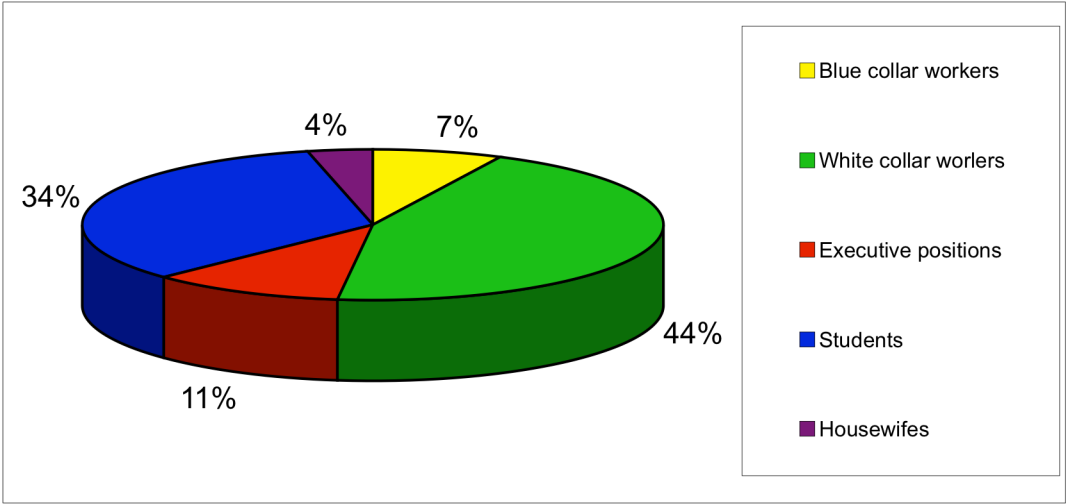


Figure 7. Occupations of Leaders of Change

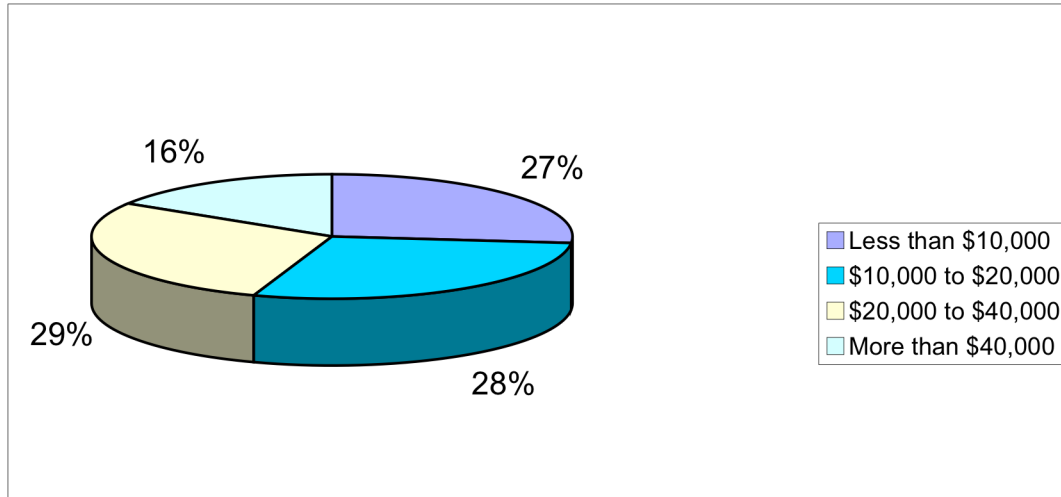


Figure 8. Income levels of Leaders of Change (in Mexican pesos)

The process of Leaders of Change

The 112 individuals received a 3 day training on Evolutionary Leadership for Sustainability a month before the Forum was inaugurated. The training focused on developing systems thinking, communication and collaboration skills and provided the evolutionary development framework for understanding social and environmental sustainability challenges and opportunities. Because of the size of the group and the characteristics meeting facilities available for this training, we offered the course twice for a group of 50 plus participants each time. This made the learning process more interactive. During the 3 days of the training, the participants got to know each other and connected with their peers in a deeper way. An unexpected outcome was that these 2 subgroups maintained stronger internal bonds than with the 112 group as a whole throughout the rest of the experience.

We brought together the whole group of Leaders of Change (or 2 subgroups according to their date of training) for 8 collaborative learning sessions to create an evolutionary learning community through which we sought to facilitate three kinds of dialogue:

1. Generative dialogue for community building: Create a sense of belonging to the community through the development of interpersonal connections that are meaningful and lasting
2. Evolutionary dialogue for learning and knowledge creation: Facilitate the acquisition of knowledge and the development of skills through mutual support, sharing ideas and experiences, and access to learning resources.
3. Strategic dialogue for envisioning possibilities and catalyze actions: Generate solutions and action proposals that will be the source of self-empowerment for the participants as social change agents or social entrepreneurs in their communities.

Table 2. Schedule of sessions of the ELC

Session No.	Date	Relation to Forum	Type of dialogue
1	8 September 2007	Before Forum	Generative dialogue
2	8 October 2007	During Forum	Generative and evolutionary dialogue
3	22 October 2007	During Forum	Evolutionary dialogue
4	5 November 2007	During Forum	Evolutionary dialogue
5	26 November 2007	During Forum	Evolutionary and strategic dialogue
6	5 January 2008	After Forum	Strategic dialogue
7	2 February 2008	After Forum	Strategic dialogue
8	1 March 2008	After Forum	Strategic dialogue

The explicit approach to learning fostered by ELCs seeks to generate personal, social and environmental transformation for sustainability. One assumption of the process is that there is collective wisdom available that needs to be activated and accessed so that people can step forward to provide solutions to their own problems, as well as to create new possibilities for their future (A. Laszlo, 2001, 2003).

Diaz (2006) considered that, as a result of these dialogues, “it will be possible to take certain clear actions in the future. That will be possible because opportunities will be generated. We will see horizons from which we may construct; the platforms on which we’d stand will allow us to know where we are and what our possibilities are. In the end, we will propose solutions for some of the dilemmas of humanity.”

Lessons Learned from the Experience

The number of applications and the fact that we had 112 individuals who accepted being part of Leaders of Change was an indication that there is concern and interest to participate in social change initiatives from diverse citizens.

From a diffusion of innovations perspective (Rogers, 1983), we expected to see the number of active participants diminish as the process advanced. There was a number of participants that were primarily attracted to Leaders of Change because of the (free) 3 day training or as a way to stand out and have privileged access to the dialogues and cultural events during the Forum. However, they were disappointed when they found out that there was not real advantage or differentiated treatment but rather responsibility to carry forward the legacy of the Forum. These individuals stopped going to the sessions early in the process. Then there was natural attrition as the Forum was coming to an end and the emphasis was shifted from learning and reflecting on the themes of the Forum to their own ideas and initiatives for social entrepreneurial activity (see Table 3). Having a project idea or the commitment to start a social enterprise was not part of the

selection process. We were interested in seeing if the community building and learning within the ELC would foster social entrepreneurial spirit to a group of citizens that would not have been on a social entrepreneurial path without this initiative.

Table 3. Participation in ELC sessions

Session No.	Date	Number of Participants
1	8 September 2007	87
2	8 October 2007	50
3	22 October 2007	40
4	5 November 2007	36
5	26 November 2007	40
6	5 January 2008	30
7	2 February 2008	21
8	1 March 2008	21

20 participants attended 75% or more of the sessions (between 6 and 8 of the 8 sessions) of the ELC. The other 92 participants attended 5 or less sessions. This means that 18% of the initial 112 participants completed the process, including the sessions that were focused on social entrepreneurship.

During the first session after the Forum (on January 2008), with the 30 participants that attended we brainstormed and generated ideas for social enterprises based on their interests and learning in the previous months. In that session 26 project ideas were identified. By March 2008 there were 8 projects (see table 4) with a defined team to further it. However, they were only sketchy ideas and none of the projects had a proper business plan with clear next steps for implementation.

Table 4. Leaders of Change social entrepreneurship ideas

Project	Description
Tlaltoca	Educational sustainability center and experiential programs for children and youth on ecological and social justice issues
Motivational Circle	Speaking series and educational sessions for middle and high school students to encourage them and coach them to continue their formal education
Etni-K	Commercialization of authentic indigenous products from (apparel, jewelry) with fashionable designs
Human development group	Training and coaching services for elementary teachers on human development (e.g., emotional intelligence, conflict resolution, etc.)
Forum Legacy	Cultural and social events to bring together the community of volunteers that participated in the Forum Monterrey 2007. Organize a delegation from Monterrey to participate in the Forum Valparaiso 2010 (in Chile).
Wiki Museum	A museum created by the people and for the people of Monterrey with a collection of objects and artifacts to tell their story as

	“regiomontanos”
Ethical Enterprises Consulting	Consulting services to help Mexican corporations become socially responsible while taking care of their bottom line.
Sustainable fishing	Education and recreational opportunities to learn the “catch and release” fishing technique.

After the last session in March, MBA students from EGADE (Graduate School of Business Administration and Leadership) offered advise to those Leaders of Change who were interested and available to work on developing a business plan for their project idea. Four of the projects (Tlaltoca, Motivational Circle, Etni-K, and Forum Legacy) have a business plan and all of them have started operations to some degree. Nevertheless, there is a huge need for more support and these initiatives need seed funding to effectively scale and become self-sufficient.

The formal 8 month initiative was under funded. It was possible because of the volunteer work of researchers, trainers and students. As a result, there were some deficiencies that limited the potential impact of Leaders of Change. The first deficiency was in communication. The Forum organizers promised to enable a web-based virtual collaboration space for Leaders of Change but this never happen. This resulted in limited unidirectional email communications from the facilitators/researchers to the group of 112 Leaders of Change and no real possibility for having online dialogue and plan projects during the time period in between face-to-face sessions.

The success of Leaders of Change resided in the gathering and identification of citizens with the potential to become social entrepreneurs and creating the initial conditions for the learning that leads to the path of creating and implementing social enterprises. To the time of the writing of this research report, a core group of Leaders of Change continue to communicate and gather informally. A seed has been planted and we hope to create the conditions to continue to nurture it for it to flourish in the future.

Conclusion and Implications for Future Research

Leaders of Change represents a pilot case study of an exciting possibility in the field of evolutionary development. The Forum Monterrey 2007 provided an ideal opportunity to test some of the theoretical and methodological concepts to create Evolutionary Learning Communities.

The process was documented through notes from each session of the ELC, reflections on the experience, and interviews with some Leaders of Change. In addition the application questionnaire has both quantitative and qualitative information that needs to be analyzed to get a clearer picture of who answer to the call of Leaders of Change and to explore further implications for catalyzing socio-ecological change efforts through citizen participation.

In terms of action-research, a next phase for Leaders of Change would be the creation of a synergistic social incubator to collaboratively nurture the seeds that each of the

projects represent and intentionally link them in the creation of cultural shift toward a sustainable learning society. This is a new possibility through a nescient partnership between Syntony Quest and the Institute for Sustainable Social Development (www.idess.org.mx) of the Tecnologico de Monterrey.

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