

Chapter 2

Knowledge Creation, Management, and Dissemination in Impact Communities

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ABSTRACT

This chapter's mission is to reflect on the steps taken by knowledge (creation, management, and dissemination) in an impact community (IC). Also, it aims to analyze how this knowledge can be capitalized by the IC itself, as well as other ICs, through the replication of good practices. To this end, importance is attached to several stages of the existence of knowledge in an IC: 1) individual knowledge, which each single person carries and integrates into an IC when he/she becomes a member; 2) the combination of all the individual knowledge, which forces one to think in a knowledge management; 3) the moments of knowledge sharing; and 4) the internal and external dissemination of this knowledge. These last two dynamics—sharing and dissemination—result in a replication and multiplication of existing knowledge in an IC.

INTRODUCTION

Communities of Practice (CoPs) are aggregations of people who mobilize their energy to solve common problems through social learning processes. Among other goals, one of the most privileged of belonging to a CoP is the knowledge sharing, which takes place after its creation and is maximized with its internal and external dissemination.

One of the areas that is currently being explored is the creation of CoP by social entrepreneurs, the so-called Impact Communities (IC), that is, groups of people whose goal is to change the territory through

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social problems' resolution. They are IC because the creation of value for society is their ultimate purpose, as well as the promotion of change, and this takes into account the direct, indirect beneficiaries and other stakeholders, as well as the use of local resources and / or sustainability, innovation and growth.

Nowadays, Social Innovation is an area where more and more academics and practitioners dedicate their studies and interest. The development of the area has been such that it has moved on to a new phase of creation of IC, spaces where local people gather together to contribute to the socio-economic and cultural territory development.

IC are fed by the definition of CoP with respect to its scope and form, but in material terms they present specific contents, also considering the specificities of its members: social entrepreneurs. The IC arise from the spontaneous desire of social entrepreneurs to come together as a group, to jointly discuss and try to solve problems they face in the development of their initiatives and / or present good examples of managing initiatives. What unites these people in an IC is the desire to find solutions to social problems and transform the territory where they operate. This is the particularity of IC in relation to CoP, the interest is not only self-centered (sometimes this doesn't exist at all), but often it is to solve a problem that affects the environment, someone known, a particular group, or other.

What are the strategies for creating, managing and disseminating knowledge in/of IC? What are the strategies of knowledge internal transfer? How do territories benefit from this knowledge, by becoming Smart Territories as a result? What role for Media and Information and Communication Technologies?

These questions are always an issue in an Impact Community, whether in a conscious way, with procedure manuals being prepared and distributed; or in an unconscious way, bringing some chaos to the IC (in)formality.

Considering the specificities of people belonging to an IC, some concerns have emerged that underline the importance of this chapter:

1. The small number of social entrepreneurs in Portugal (2015 numbers of the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor¹, refer to about 2.9% of the total population) may mean that integration into an IC will make social entrepreneurs' scale of action grow larger because together they are more and because the range of action becomes more embracing;
2. The large number of organizations in the third sector, according to the Cooperativa António Sérgio para a Economia Social (António Sérgio Cooperative for Social Economy)² are about 55,000, which implies that, in Portugal, organizations of a more caring nature are replicating more problems and needs than solutions;
3. The lack of funding for innovative social initiatives (mostly justified by the non-compliance of Social Security parameters) often means the difficulty in Social Entrepreneurship initiatives to guarantee their continuity;
4. Given the dispersion of Social Entrepreneurship initiatives, it implies that they do not communicate and are not known, so they do not share problems, solutions or good practices;
5. The lack of knowledge of sharing and communication collaborative tools results in working in niches that does not allow to leverage more and better solutions.

Considering the aforementioned concerns, the paper has four main objectives:

1. To reflect on the creation of IC in the Portuguese context, but with a proposal of replication in countries with similar characteristics;

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