Towards the implementation of the social innovation in an international cooperation program: the case of the ecotourism development using Living-labs.

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Abstract

The importance that innovation has in global development is out of discussion today. But innovation is not only an economic or technological tool, it is also a social phenomenon, as already noted by the European Commission in 1995, indicating that it is through the how innovation individuals and societies can express their creativity, needs and desires and that are the characteristics of the environment that largely determine the capacity of society to generate and accept novelty.

The tool to be used for the generation of information from all involved areas of society will be the LIVING LAB and will be studied for the specific case of innovation in the sector of ecotourism in the Dominican Republic.

From the social point of view, this work is relevant to reconsider an important reflection on innovation models, requiring review and proposal of new models of involvement of the local environment in which they are located and public administrations which should give them support, as well as the design of sustainable growth models, which provides for socio-cultural aspects, their values of use and relationship between the actors involved.

Keywords: Social Innovation, Ecotourism, Living Lab, Dominican Republic.

Introduction

Several Latin American countries have been pioneers in the ecotourism development because of the abundance and diversity of its flora and fauna. However its development has a lot of room for improvement, since the abundance of natural parks and protected areas contrasts with the lack of ecotourism projects so innovation inclusive, taking into account local and sustainability aspects.

Theory development has advanced more than the empirical application and that there is a clearly non-covered hollow, as it is the identification of processes, indicators, variables, models and methods that characterize and measure social innovation, main objective on which articulates this research project. The tool to be used for the generation of information from all the involved areas will be the LIVING LAB and the specific case of innovation in the ecotourism sector will be the case studied. The empirical application be held in a basic sector for the economy of the Dominican Republic, whose barriers are permeable and non-intensive in knowledge, so the results generated will have important economic implications, as well as visibility. The integration of all the elements and the importance of the innovation developed the field (local) will provide a multidisciplinary vision from a social and sustainable focus.

Thus, the specific objectives identified in the project are the following:

1 To model the process of identifying needs, idea generation and evaluation of innovation through the Living labs that integrates the social, business and sustainable objectives demanded by society.

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2 To analyze the behavior of firms in relation to their social support in which they operate and establish patterns of business behavior are given regarding the social supports: what are most common, are more effective.

3 To develop and contrast a social innovation generation methodology, since the living labs. Application to the eco-tourism sector.

4. To make recommendations for fostering social innovation through business and political public performances.

Methodology

The first objective is presented as a pilot study. In a recent study, Garcia - Guzman et al. (2013) specified the steps to be followed to achieve the participation of users in a living lab: (a) the development of a community of local users as a key agent for the innovation process, (b) identify areas of interest and initiatives of innovation in collaboration with researchers and users, (c) detect the needs of users in interviews, reflection sessions, discussions and observations, (d) encouraging the participation of users in the development of products and service, and (e) that the users, researchers and designers evaluate the lessons learnt and prepare new initiatives in collaboration. This scheme will be followed.

To achieve the second objective we will analyze the information that companies publish on their websites and in their CSR or sustainability reports. The methodology used will be the analysis of the content of such information, in order to avoid subjectivity in coding.

The information generated will be discussed for the fourth goal and working sessions will be held in group. For the analysis of the actions carried out in other areas apply benchmarking techniques in order to identify the best practices developed by other institutions (Moore et al., 2012). This research will contribute to design actions to make innovation in the field of eco-tourism in the Dominican Republic, promoting the generation of ideas, receiving encouraging responses from different areas and involving both users and public authorities. It is necessary to know how has to promote and improve the social innovation occurs and where to have direct public actions.

Expected benefits

This project aims to raise awareness about social innovation can be improved through research, and its implications for citizens, companies and public administrations. The resolution of issues that affect us as pollution by mass tourism, could be addressed with the methodology we propose, although the empirical application that we have raised is concrete, the generalization of the model of social innovation through co-creation in Living labs is very powerful.

From the scientific point of view, understand merging new ideas generation systems including all the officers involved versus the classical system of generating ideas, inventions and innovations internal to the company provides vital information to search for new analytical tools enabling adaptation of traditional innovation methodologies and procedures, so that to achieve the social and sustainable management of the generation of high value-added knowledge-based economic growth.

From the social point of view, this work is relevant to reconsider an important reflection on the new models of innovation. Tourism and primary resources, which are the specific areas on which it will act, require review and proposal of new models of involvement of the local environment in which they are located and public administrations which should give them support, as well as the design of sustainable
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growth models, which provides for socio-cultural aspects, their values for relationship between the actors involved and use, due to the support of the environment with the project we are presenting high.

Also, this project aims to serve as a training platform for young researchers in the host country who work in these lines, creating a dynamic of knowledge production. This project will provide the motivation and the knowledge necessary to drive the formation of third cycle at the University's support in the Dominican Republic (FLACSO).

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References


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