

# Academics as Promoters of Social Engagement

## Laboratorio Social COEDPA: A case study

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La Caleta beach in Cádiz city, Spain.  
Photographer: Giuliana Andréia Sfredo.

Science communication plays an important role in citizen participation, allowing the population to acquire scientific knowledge easily and start noticing its presence in their daily lives. As scientists working under an eco-social approach, we felt the urge to propagate academic expertise, with as many people as possible, through Communication-Education-Participation tools. That is how, in January 2019, the Laboratorio Social COEDPA was created.

Laboratorio COEDPA is an experimental, open, and participatory space within the University Research Institute for Social and Sustainable Development (INDESS) of the University of Cádiz (UCA), Spain. Our main features are multidisciplinary, circular knowledge transference, and our external researchers. With an international group of collaborators from Spain, Brazil, Russia, Costa Rica, and

Ireland, we work with the new model of Blue and Safe Tourism approach.

The circular knowledge transference, which is a term that we created, is the way to create joint and shared knowledge between academia, public administrations, media, social agents, and civil society through participatory processes. In other words, our main mission is to transform the knowledge from the classroom and the academy, to serve society. We can achieve this goal thanks to our researchers, external collaborators, and associated entities' collaboration. Together, we aim to promote citizen science, ocean literacy, and the culture of risk prevention and management, building more resilient societies through non-formal education, research, innovation, scientific dissemination, and connections. "Connecting people to science and science to people" is our motto.

The challenge that we face now and for the future is to achieve a greater impact with our activities. Therefore, we work on several lines of action: a) production of pedagogical and informative material on social media for the general public; b) continuous improvement of the Laboratorio COEDPA team through training and participation in specialized forums/events; c) coordination with other social and economic stakeholders; and d) activities focused in public management, education, and media diffusion. Our group is constantly looking for partners (local, national, and international), new researchers and external collaborators, people committed to our society and with the desire to change the world. Through our initiatives, we intend to disseminate scientific knowledge about ocean and conservation, questioning the system, showing the importance of protecting ecosystems, and encouraging participation, at the individual and collective levels for the fulfillment of the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

At the beginning of our journey, in 2019, we organized the 'Disaster Coverage Seminar' and the '1 Conference on Risk Reduction on Our Coasts: Blue and Safe Tourism'. In 2020, Laboratorio COEDPA joined two academic initiatives during the year of the COVID-19 outbreak: The Virtual Blue and Safe Tourism Week 2020 (our participation in the European Maritime Day - EMD) and the Ocean Week. Both events aimed to promote coastal tourism resources, as well as maritime businesses, emphasizing environmental commitment and risk prevention. Later on, our team joined the European Researcher's Night 2020 edition with three online activities: 'Yincana Virtual Turismo Azul y Seguro', 'Mar de Mujeres Webinar' (special edition), and the 'Webinar Natural evolution and artificial transformation of Cádiz Bay'.

Also in 2020, we launched the activity Ciencia y Café (Science and Coffee) as a place for the scientific community to meet curious people from different places and languages (Spanish, Portuguese, English, and Russian) within the



*Fragata Portuguesa*; Photographer: José Sánchez Olmedo, participant of Océano de Recuerdos contest in 2020.



framework of the program UCA committed to the SDGs. The online interview (approximately 30 minutes) allows the researcher to share their expertise through an informal chat advertised on social media. Four editions of Ciencia y Café were produced, presented live, recorded, and shared on YouTube. As a result of this initiative, and seeking great proximity to our audience, another event was designed based on the concept of collective intelligence: 'Dando Caña a la Ciencia', a podcast with people from different backgrounds discussing environmental issues. This event aims to be fun and casual like sitting at a bar talking with friends, making conversations about science easy and pleasant. And last but not least, we present our main event: Mar de Mujeres. The 'Webinar Mar de Mujeres' (Sea of women) is a recurring event on our calendar, which aims to highlight the roles of women in workplaces dominated by men, especially in marine science. It helps to spread the work of researchers and women involved in ocean-related activities from all over the world. In 2020, Laboratorio

COEDPA organized three 'Webinar Mar de Mujeres' allowing connections between different stakeholders.

Through example and dissemination, we hope to contribute to an inspiring and participatory ocean community, focusing on gender equality (Ocean Decade outcome 7). Our online activities bring us closer to obtaining an accessible ocean (Ocean Decade outcome 6) due to the possibility of dissemination through virtual platforms and international reaching potential.

In our portfolio, we also have face-to-face activities such as 'Un Mar de Cosas' ('A Sea of Things'), an initiative that aims to promote leisure, well-being, and quality of life through occupational performance, discussing issues related to the marine/coastal environment, leaving positive messages. The themes proposed for the workshops are related to sustainability and safety in a maritime context, but also with values such as gender equality, peace, justice, and inclusivity for people with functional diversity. In 2020, the first edition of these workshops was called 'Bolsa

ConCiencia'. Different social groups and high school students from various educational centers in the city participated. Reusable bags have been provided from Laboratorio COEDPA to write messages related to the SDGs. The result was beautiful and informative artwork.

For 2021 and 2022, we have two contests on our calendar for ocean lovers: the 'Océano de Recuerdos' photography contest and the 'Océano de ideas' short film contest. These contests aim to increase people's connection to ocean issues and more, making them feel like a relevant part of this ecosystem. The human-ocean bond is shown through the photographs and short films produced, enabling us to, once again, link scientific dissemination with different artistic techniques, creativity, and humanity.

The challenge of transmitting information in appropriate bite sizes to different audiences can be satisfactorily overcome through the use of social media and different tools such as animations. On our social media, we promote sustainability campaigns



Atardecer en Porto Covo; Photographer: Antonio Rodríguez Ortega, participant of Océano de Recuerdos contest in 2020.



and posts explaining concepts, bringing environmental issues to clarity, fomenting safe tourism, and stimulating small/big individual commitments. For instance, our activity Marea Cultural (Cultural Tide) intends to bring culture and science closer to citizens in an eye-catching way, with cultural tips of many sorts presenting movies, books, or virtual visiting of museums, being the content always related to the ocean.

On our media, and especially on our YouTube channel, we promote audiovisual language, which has many advantages when it comes to understanding complex themes. So far Laboratorio COEDPA has three animations related to environmental issues such as marine litter and recycling, mangroves' importance, and the international day of girls and women in science.

Among the innovation and knowledge transference activities, it is worth highlighting the ZeroRisk2030 Mobile Application, presented as a challenge to the Ocean Hackathon® 2020 to promote a new Blue Tourism Model, safer, smarter, inclusive, and

sustainable, as well as the proposal for gamification in educational centers, with the Virtual Gymkhana of Blue and Safe Tourism and the beach cleaning game 'ConservAcción'. In both activities, we approach the participant with innovative digital educational tools used as an instrument for knowledge dissemination, PC games, and dynamic connections make learning fun and awaken the interest of students while promoting moments of leisure, fun, integration, and excitement.

In summary, the Laboratorio Social COEDPA is an experimental space of co-creation, scientific dissemination, citizen science for a more sustainable society and shows that we are all important actors in the Ocean Decade. We want to highlight the motivation of Laboratorio COEDPA: to bring science closer to the general public in a pleasant and friendly way, transforming scientific communication. This participatory approach allows every one of us to be part of the change we want to see in the world, asking new questions and creating, together with other social agents, a

new scientific culture in which the Blue and Safe Tourism model materializes.

To know more about what Laboratorio Social COEDPA is doing, follow our work and join us for our next activities: <https://turismoazul-seguro.uca.es/>. And follow us on Instagram [www.instagram.com/labcoedpa/](http://www.instagram.com/labcoedpa/) and YouTube: [www.youtube.com/channel/UCI5Rj3A4Sskd-NVPlcg\\_g0RQ](http://www.youtube.com/channel/UCI5Rj3A4Sskd-NVPlcg_g0RQ)

#### Endnote

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Marea Baja; Photographer: José Ortega Medina, participant of Océano de Recuerdos contest in 2020.