LOCAL DEVELOPMENT AGENTS TRAINING TO SUSTAINABLE AND ENDOGENOUS DEVELOPMENT, AMONG MAYA COMMUNITIES.

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ABSTRACT

This paper focuses on the capacity building of local partnership members or leaders as development agents or social animators at their owns maya communities. It will relate an education/training process that take place since 1995 at four different regions at the Yucatan Peninsula at Mexico, carried by non governmental organizations and academic institutions.

It discusses the different matters and methods used along eight training workshops for local group leaders from fifteen maya communities. After each workshop the leaders applied the new abilities, like some participatory rural appraisal tools, in their own community and brought the results to the next one. But especially we are interest on the empowerment and conscientisation of the local agents in order to be actors that could built and animated endogenous development process. At this point the pedagogic relation used to encourage local an ethnic identities, traditional knowledge and self-confidence were quit relevant. At last the paper also refers the capacities achieved by the local maya leaders and what are they doing now at their local partnerships and communities.

I INTRODUCTION

This paper focuses in a theoretical and practical problem essential for the impoverished and marginated rural and indigenous regions in Mexico and Latin America. It aboard the capacity building of indigenous partnership and community members or leaders as endogenous and sustainable development agents, to construct a good life in their own Maya communities and regions according to their own models of well-being. This problematic enters in a more broad discussion about the pertinent education¹ for development.

The educational processes - in the broad sense of the word - represent the opportunity for constructing alternatives and proper projects of well-being; but above all education allows to restore and strengthen the confidence as persons and people, to negotiate the proposals of well-being and happiness in terms of more equity and capacity. It is about technical -to know to do-, and political -to know and to be able to make decisions or to influence in them in sake of the own benefit and the community's (Zarco 2003).

The analysis of the fundamental role of education in the process of rural development still shows that the basic problem continues to be the neglect ion of the cultural aspect in the educational offer. The alternative is in the application of pertinent

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curricula which should produce a process of reinterpretation of the components of the universal culture on behalf of the pupils, through their systems of knowledge, and also a reaffirmation of their own cultural forms, contributing likewise in the strengthening of their ethnic identity. In this sense, we need to understand the "development" as a process of adaptation or recreation of endogen character, perceptive by that a sort of auto development and auto creation by the proper groups or sectors of reference. It's a model that confronts itself with exogenic models, arisen form external authors, governmental dependencies, financial sources and international development programmes to the communities.

It's in this frame where the educational experience is registered, as well as the investigation that it's going to be expose in the following presentation, which was undertaken in the yucatec peninsula, formed by the states of Campeche, Yucatan and Quintana Roo, where a big part of the population in the rural communities is Maya speaking². In some regions, the Maya population predominates (*cfr.* Quintal et al. 2003), like the ones where three development civil associations³ have been working since more than 10 years ago. One of their central goals have been the education/training of bilingual Maya change agents who could work directly in their communities with the base groups.

Starting from the realization of the Popular Work Groups Peninsular Meeting in 1994 at Valladolid city, the three civil organizations (OSCs in spanish) together with researcher workers from two academic institutions⁴ began to exchange experiences and to join efforts to empower their work. This coordinated action gave place to the Participatory Development Peninsular Project (PPDP in spanish), performed in 5 micro-regions of the Peninsula between June 1995 and November 1998.

This paper refers the first Maya promoters formation conjoint experience realized by this OSCs in the PPDP⁵, an ambitious and novel project advocated to join in the same process:

- a) Education/training of 40 development agents from organized groups of 20 Maya communities from the three states of the Peninsula.
- b) Performance of communities resources and opportunities diagnostic and analysis with grassroots groups participation and
- c) Performance of community and micro-regional development plans and projects with the respecting agency (Moya *et al.* 2002).

An efficient coordination between technical advisors, teachers, academics, translators, community groups and agents was required to accomplish this objectives.

Participant Communities and Change Agents

Participating communities' population is Mayan, with different grades of Mayan traditional culture and bilingualism permanence. From the 14 communities that completed the training, 10 have 70% or more of Maya speaking population, and in 5 the percentage of Maya speakers is about 40%. The population goes form 1000 to 3000 habitants in 4

communities and from 300 to 700 in the rest. In four of the micro regions the traditional cropping systems and forest exploitation as the "Milpa"⁶, apiculture and the garden plots are still in use, and in spite of the tropical forest damage there is still a rich biodiversity. Nevertheless, in five communities at least half of the young and adults have to migrate temporally to work in Caribean Coast tourist centers or Mérida city industries.

Most of the population in this regions has a low quality life and a deficient family economy, associated to an unfavorable insertion in the regional market. Government development projects, when they exist, and formal education follow an exogenous model, incompatible with the requirements of endogenous and sustainable development. There is an increasing devaluation of Mayan culture and wisdom among young people.

The heterogeneity of the students in the workshops enriched the whole experience (*cfr.* Campero 2002). Initially it was required a man and a woman from each town, bilinguals, that could write and read and whom were able to be change agents in their communities. The number of men and women was similar and 80% were bilingual, nevertheless there were from analphabet and mayan monolingual persons (14%) to young's with high school and college studies (25%,) and most of agents had coursed primary studies but presented difficulty to write. The ages ranged between 17 to 59 with the majority between 30-40. There were women in first time group participation and people with leadership and representation charges in their towns.

The 30 base organizations involved in the process were small productive groups improved by the OSCs: "milperos" experimenting in horticulture and agroforestery; beekeepers and women who cropped hortalizas in their garden plots, raised pork or were candy makers.

II THE EDUCATIVE PROPOSAL

The educational program was inserted in a wider dynamic proposal of integral and sustainable development for the participant Mayan communities, that includes organized groups from the towns in the whole process. So the modality constructed was a **bilingual and intercultural semi-presence proposal of education in the alternation**, with analysis, experimentation and application spaces.

This proposal integrated three Peninsular Meetings⁷ with the participation of local partnership members and 8 Agents Workshops that formed the axis of the whole project. The students were trained for the performance of the participatory appraisal in their communities at the workshops, that took place every 3 months (may 1996-may 1998). Between workshops, the students socialized their new learning's in the town participating groups and together they applied the participatory appraisal tools, analyzed the problems or even propose some solution actions or projects. The results of this intercessions work were presented in bristol board and drawings in the next workshop, they were commented with other agents micro-regions and were discussed with some technical advisers. So the appraisal went out from the workshops and went back to them.

Every micro-region had a tutor from an OSCs to support the teachers in the workshops and to support the students in the comprehension and application of methodologies in their communities. This were accompanied by members of some base association, that tanks to its intercultural work experience and Maya and Spanish languages domain, collaborated as translators in the workshops and towns and accompanied groups and agents in the rural appraisal. The whole process was also a space of training for tutors and translators.

III EDUCATION/TRAINING PROCESS OF LOCAL DEVELOPMENT AGENTS

Capacity building is a dialectical process in which the subject develops knowledge's, abilities and attitudes received from exterior accompanied by a subjective process of reflection that allows him to resignify his knowledge's and his practice (Campero *et al.* 2003), and redefine his being and his identity.

Due to the last, in the case of education of adults and particularly of Maya associations leaders or members, this training is a process of resocialization, because it supposes the internalization of habits, norms values, meanings and attitudes that take to a break with the meanings learned and internalized before in their communities during the primary or secondary socialization (Berger and Luckmnn 1972; Krotz 1988; Rosales 1997, 1998). This resocialization includes for example, the women participation in associations or activities out of their homes, to speak in public or with civil servants, to take initiatives, to revalue Mayan culture and reconstruct ethnic identity.

In attention to this process of resocialization this experience is analyzed, with especial attention to the pedagogic relation and the impact in change agents life, based at the workshops reports, at the interview to 18 promoters and 3 translators two years after the end of the Workshops⁸ and in the participating observation realized during the whole process and proceeded in some regions.

The educational objective was the necessary capacity building for the improve of endogenous development in local agents people. The training commission from PPDP designed the curricula for the 8 workshops and the egress profile of the agents according to 4 big thematic areas included progressively in all the workshops:

- A) Reality appraisal: agents capable of the evaluation of natural and human resources to potent its improvement, and who understood the importance of the diagnostic tools.
- B) Participatory analysis and planning: agents who analyze and priorize problems, make and negotiate work plans, projects and community plans.
- C) Popular communication: agents able of knowledge interchange and enhance participation in their towns, direct meetings and joints.
- D) Human development and identity: agents with knowledge and valorization of traditional wisdom, empowered in their self-esteem and individual and collective identity as Maya development agents.

Nevertheless the original curricula transformed it self due to the adaptations in the way, not only to the students and appraisal progress of the, but to the suggestions of technical advisers and tutors, who participated in the workshops and observed the difference circumstances in towns and micro-regions. So the final curricula was a collective construction (fig 1).

Workshops Methodology

The training workshops were performed in different towns of the Yucatán Peninsula, with host facilities. Starting Friday afternoon an finishing Sunday noon. The coordinators, experts in popular education, initiated and ended the sessions with songs, dynamics or games that enhance the mutual recognizance and a trust environment.

The workshops integrated six blocs. The first and second ones were dedicate to the first thematic area, included expositions of the results of the participatory appraisal in towns: ejido maps, productive activity tendency lines, garden plot maps, town history etc., sometime working in small groups. Saturday morning second bloc included practical demonstrations of the new rapid rural appraisal (RRA) tools. The natural resources appraisal exceeded programmed time. The third bloc advocated to reality analysis and plan with techniques like the problems-solutions tree. Most of the workshops dedicated many of their time to this two areas, that resulted the most exhausting for promoters.

The popular education fourth bloc consisted of poster making, public speaking essays or meeting preparation demonstrations. This area also integrate the human development area, preparing songs, sociodrams or public representations of the community agent roll or towns history and culture. This plays were performed on Saturday night and constituted ludic moments of great importance, because of the reflections of what a agent was or was not, or about differences and similarities between towns and micro-regions. Many of the change agents resulted in great actors and their plays allowed them to make fun of them selves. The song reaffirmed the agents roll and their aims an hopes, a basic component in adult education. (Freyre 1993 and Schwartz 1995.)

THEMATIC AREAS PLACE AND DATE	INTRODUCTION	DIAGNOSTIC OF THE REALITY	ANALYSIS OF THE REALITY	POPULAR COMMUNICATION	OURSELVES AS DEVELOPMENT AGENTS
BACALAR, Q. ROO, march 7-9 th 1997	a.1 Concepts in Maya a.2 Presentation of the productive diagnostic b.1 exhibitions of posters with drawings and concepts of the workshop translated to Maya b.2 The promoters expose the tendency lines, the seasonal calendars and the lists of inputs and products. Under supervision of an instructor the facts are commented in small groups.	a. Diagnostic of the garden plots: natural and productive elements b. The techniques are shown: transects, plot maps, community maps A transect is practiced in two garden plots and a drawing is made in groups	a.1 Consideration of the problems a.2 Analysis of problems and alternatives a.3 design of projects b.1 A exercise about the principal problems is made by micro regional groups b.2 The functioning of tree of problems and solutions is shown for everyone. The groups practice the use of these tool under supervision of an instructor and make a project.	a. Theater workshop b. Exercises of movement and voice The elaboration of a sociodrama is shown, which is later prepared by microregional groups.	 a. The agents before the community. How does th community react on the diagnostic? b. Presentation of the sociodramas made about the problems that were found in the communities because of the diagnostic The lack of communitaria participation is commentari in the groups and proposa are made.
MANI, YUCATAN, June 8-10 th 1997	a. Presentation of the garden plot appraisal and the analysis of problems b. The promoters expose the transects, maps of the plots and problem and solution trees worked out the communities	a. Introduction to the sociocultural diagnostic b. presentation of the video about the life in the communities	a. Analysis of the productive systems b. With help of specialists, the diagnostics of the productive systems made by the promoters are analyzed by theme and per group, which concludes with a matrix of strength, debilities and proposals of solutions.	 a.1 Interpretation in Maya language of generating words of the subject matter of this workshop. a.2 Elaboration of means of limited diffusion. b.1 An interpretation in Maya language is made with allusive drawings in a collective effort b.2 Elaboration of posters and mural newspaper by groups, which are presented and analyzed by the groups together. 	a. Identity as developmen local agent b. The participants sugge examples of leaders and c communitarian promoters whose personal qualities and experiences are discussed in small groups Composition of songs about the local agents an the communities, which a presented by night during the Second Meeting.

Fig .1 COMPONENTS OF THE CURRICULA ELABORATED DURING THE 4TH AND 5TH WORKSHOP , PPDP

Source: Relatorías de los Talleres cuarto y quinto

Notes: a: subject. b: didactic proposal

The town or micro-regional identity was also enhanced in the nights, with traditional dances, historical events, legends, traditional handcrafts, etc, building and empowering individual and collective identities. This activities enhanced the aspects of human development, identity, self esteem and revaluation of Mayan Culture (*cfr*. Rosales 2003^9). Last day, the fifth bloc systematized this area with reflections in small groups that allowed everyone participation and opinion. Last bloc was to plan the homework at towns, from the application of techniques to informative meetings, ending with the emblem song of the project and renovating the compromise of keep on working.

Pedagogic Relation

One of the central principles that guided the pedagogic relation between teachers and students, was the search for intercultural dialogue and the predominant use of Mayan language in workshops and meetings. Certainly, not all the capacitors were Maya speakers and had to be translated, but this was in function of the central ideas or occidental concepts such as "development, project, etc", that were prepared before with the translators and showed in draws, or were explained by exercises of group interpretation ¹⁰.

The intercultural issue was beyond this level because the appraisal and problem analysis set off from the Mayan or local conditions and knowledge's, comparing them with the ones from occidental science together with specialists in search of a synthesis. Caring of the forest, deforestation, performance of traditional rituals and nutrition topics were boarded in this way.

Nevertheless, as the PPDP interaction with towns didn't set off from local organization and institutions, but from grassroots groups working with OSCs. The whole community was not represented and involved (Moya *et. al* 2002) in a wider process, which in turn difficult project internalization in that level.

Gender, Mayan ethnic identity issues and sustainable development were not worked explicitly as thematic lines, but they were presents implicitly marking direction and sense in activities.

The aim in all the workshops was of emotions, hopes, enthusiasm, respect and , compromise. This facts enhanced the collaboration and the progress of the workshops. The affective and emotional components proper of primarily socialization are present too in the resocialization processes (Berger and Luckman 1972).

Work in Towns

Training, appraising and planning were three process that obey to diverse dynamics and factors, therefore the application of the participatory rural appraisal tools were done in a different way in each community and grassroots organization.

The agents in training worked hard to inform and involve other groups and local authorities, but in general the participatory appraisal-plan process, induced from out side in most cases, resulted strange to the local culture and to the ordinary life rhythm and organization, so it supposed in words of the students "to march against the flow"(*cfr.* S.A. 1994). As pointed by Bernard Schwartz (1995) education in alternation obeys not only to pedagogic factors, but to social and political facts, out of the control of the educators.

So it was required a great flexibility, mobility and linking from technical advisers, tutors and teachers that should be with the students at workshops and towns. They also had to participate in coordination and planning instances to adapt the program to the different conditions and rhythms in every micro-region and community. One of this instances were the meetings of educators, tutors and interprets to analyze the appraisal progress and the circumstances at each community, in order to make the pertinent adaptations to the educative process, like micro-regional workshops when required.

IV RESULTS OF THE EDUCATION/TRAINING PROCESS

Initially 20 towns and 40 grassroots members were invited, finishing the process 14 towns (70%), 22 change agents (55%) and 4 interprets, being more the women who finished their formation (72%) than men (50%). Form the beginning of the workshops there were towns and agents who were not able to proceed, due to the lack of necessary conditions to participate in the PPDP project, like consolidated groups interested and an OSCs for accompany the whole process. Most of finishers were elected or send by their group, but their weren't always supported by them so the effort and participation was personal. In the other hand in five groups the participation was collective (*cfr.* Rosales, 1998) and constant.

All the animators are Maya speakers, most (90%) speaks spanish too with different grades of difficulty and 3 were monolingual but thanks to the experience they can now speak spanish.

Knowledge, abilities and attitudes

Observation of agents fulfillment in their communities and interview results show that the better results were obtained in identity, human development and communication areas, precisely those with less formal time assigned but also those continuously reinforced while working at the workshop, due to their central task in the education process as being and doing resignification. We found that the 95% students revalued Mayan language and traditions, improved their self esteem, security and personal development. Actually 85% is able to direct meetings, public speaking and/or with functionaries, They have improved writing, and Mayan and Spanish oral expression. 80% is able to performance negotiations at least in their towns, 71% directs theirs group meetings and 23% have directed community or ejidal assemblies.

In their own words "...I feel free to speak in meetings and assemblies, the workshops helped me to communicate with people...". "I learned to speak in front of people, with security and trust, because at the workshops they let you participate and talk...". "I feel no more ashamed to speak in spanish and in maya ". The trust environment in the workshops allowed "I have learned a lot at workshops, you win peoples respect...you know you can communicate something and make people understand".

"It is important to preserve Mayan language and traditions... who knows his history knows his town". Most of them has a clear concept of what a community change agent is (90%). Some have clarity about an integral and sustainable development for their towns. "The promoter teaches how to improve the production ..." "He most inform and support the community with his knowledge ...he organizes groups, helps people to find jobs...he most like his job...he most be honest, look for friendship with people, he is responsible, works for his town not for personal interest...".

In a second grade of agents apprehension we have reality interpretation and improvement in analysis capacity in most promoters (76%) and specially in 33% of them. They are able to perform natural resources appraisals (57%), but only 28% can do it alone. They can't remember the name of a tool but they know that "the appraisal awake us... now we can think in a development for the future... we learned to valorize what we have, the natural resources and all the things else... history allows us to analyze the causes of problems...". "The map shows the parts of communities, the kind of lands..., the diagram teach us how outer institutions come to give or propose, but never asking our opinion, so we have to see if it is advantageous for us...".

Respect to plans 10% is able to perform projects and work plans alone and 57% is able to do it with assessment. The concept of community appraisal was clear for 57% "it is to see the community problems, analyze them and to look for solutions, it is to know all what we have, the forests, people, sick children, etc..".

Training facilitation facts.

The change agents trained mentioned in first place the teachers, their attitudes and patience to explain. It was also pointed out the use of Mayan language, the team work, the work tables, the dynamics " everyone's opinion and participation, the posters and drawings, the sharing of experiences, the opportunity of make questions and talk, and not just look and listen...", and in general the interactive and dialectical dynamic that included the whole group in the process.

In second place were mentioned the RRA tools and the way to make projects and work plans (23%). The ludic environment in the workshops was also well received. The games, plays and Saturday festivals "were funny and easy to understood". To "met lots of people, the similar problems of other towns, others ways of work, to exchange different experiences" were the thinks they liked more

Impact in community, family and self life

The bigger impact of the PPDP was in the agents personal development, which have had positive consequences in family life (80%). Partner relations have been improved, resulting in agents work comprehension, "mutual trust, and help in domestic labors...", "more communication with sons and wife, share of learning's".

In the case of women their self esteem has been enhanced, as well as their security and their chances to get out of the community and assist to meetings, workshops, improve their garden plots, earn some money, etc. This is due also to a change in their husbands attitudes respect to women's activities.

Except for 3 trained change agents, the rest is still active in their groups, and 52% are very important in theirs associations, which counts with a project, advances or are growing. Moreover, 3 agents that weren't able to finish the workshops, are now incorporated as promoters and participate actively with their local partnership. 61% agents fulfills some charge in their group or town (two are ejidal commissioners) or have interaction with other local partnerships.

Promoters interviewed (90%) continues training, at different workshops, while working, at their towns or out of them, assessed or accompanied by an OSC. Learned knowledge's and attitudes retro-alimentation is basic for resocialization continuity. Those who remember clearly the different techniques, emit analytic opinions, have elaborated or delineated projects, are very active, have auto-gestive groups or community impact, are the same with whom the OSCs have continued working because they have had financial and conjuncture conditions for that. And this conditions have varied from region to region.

At the south of Yucatan, 2 animators joined the OSC accompanying productive groups, and lately integrated a Mayan agents cooperative named "K'et Xiimbal" "the one who accompanies" together with other 10 local agents. They continue their training in a local Diplomat that reinforces intercultural approach as well as Mayan history, cosmovison and identity revaluation.

At the west of Bacalar, Quintana Roo, five agents played an important roll at the socialization and discussion process of the Microregional Indicative Development Plan, finished in coordination with the OSC and lately discussed with the communities, and presented to the State and Municipal authorities. The training impact was bigger at community and microregional levels there, and smaller at the productive groups level, some of them even disappeared.

At "los Chenes", Campeche's region, the agents were trained in organic agriculture, gender promotion and communication. At Camino Real, the agents have a long history of participation and community work, training and workshops with the OSC and they have extended their action to other communities.

V FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The narrated aspects of pedagogy relation, didactic, agents training environment and trainers work at their groups and towns have allowed Mayan local agents to consolidate new capacities and redefine their practice and values. It is clear for us that capacity building is more an art than a science (*cfr*. Paré and Lazos Chavero 2003).

In what extent can we speak of a process of resocialization of these promoters? The resocialization in this context did not mean a rupture with the past¹¹ but rather a long term process of slow incorporation of new habits or values, as well as a resignification or "mayanization" of these new practices. This process has also included the revaluation of the

Maya identity and the coexistence of the new and ancient values or even the persistence of old habits in the clothing of new ones

Resocialization started in many cases long before the workshops, in agents life history, while participating in different activities like drama teams, community charges, etc. Their leading capacities even came from their ancestors, grand fathers leading patrilineal systems, etc, so the past roots have been reinforced. In the same way, women who had to brake with some habits they had learned from their mothers, also had revalued their culture roots and their grandmother's wisdom but looking for the future.

It is evident that the resocialization is a long term and complex process that requires practical continuity and retro-alimentation of knowledge and attitudes learned. One of the most important results of these training process is the integration of Mayan local agents microregional organizations, that work for development aided by the OSCs. The trajectory, achievements and conflicts of these organizations, and the cultural brokers agents roll are beyond this work, but its study is central for our topic.

The results and advances were different in every micro-region, and even without the human and financial resources to reach all the objectives, some groups growth, consolidated or were able to negotiate and implement productive projects. The participatory appraisals were completed in 14 communities, work plans were profiled in 9 communities and four micro-regions integrated the Diagnostic and lately an Indicative Development Plan. There was a great information and experiences exchange between all the participants, and in general, the development promotion processes in the micro-regions get dynamical and continue in use (*cfr.* Moya *et al.* 2002, Rosales and Moya 1999, Llanez Ortiz 2001, EduceA.C. 1999).

There stills a log way to walk but it's true that we just can refer to an endogenous development and the achieve of socioeconomic, cultural and political rights for indian people when they are the subjets of this process, leading or facilitating it with their own organizations and communities.

¹ The pertinent education is the one linked with the necessities and fundamental interests of the people worked with. It connects the educational process with the process of effective action in the transaction of the oppressive reality of the adults, which limits their personal and social development (Schmelkes 1991)

² There are 547, 098 five years older Maya speakers in Yucatán state, 37% of the total population (INEGI, 2001)

³ Educación Cultura y Ecología A-C. (EDUCE A.C.) at Chenes, Campeche and at Bacalar West side, Quintana Roo; Investigación y Educación Popular Autogestiva (IEPA A.C.) at The Camino Real between Yucatán and Campeche and Misioneros A.C. (MAC) at the South of Yucatán

⁴ INAH Yucatán Centre and the Research, Systems and Extension Department of the Veterinary School of Yucatan Autonomy University.

⁵ Later, members of these organizations conformed the peninsular team of The Peasant and Indigenous University that performance the Peninsular diplomate for sustainable development improvement, from may 2002 to may 2003 (Zarco, 2003) and they still work together in different educational experiences.

⁶ Milpa: ancient multi-cropping system including Maize, bean, chile, pumpkin, sweet potato, etc. that rotates forest plots to slash and burn them, sow for two or tree years and then rotate to other forest plot abandoning the old plot to recuperate its forest and its soil nutrients, avoiding erosion.

⁷ The first was the foundational meeting of the PPDP january 1996, where it was drown the common future dreamed and the workshops objective was presented. The second one, at the middle of de appraisal, included advances and songs and hopes and the last one included community development proposes.

⁸ Interviews performed by M. Rosales with the aid of antropologist Carlos Arceo as part of a research project of Centro INAH Yucatán.

⁹ This article refers how the workshops were also places of meeting and knowledge of the different peninsular Mayans and of recreation of locals and micro-regional identities.

¹⁰ A byproduct of the workshops was a notebook with all this concepts and words drowned and explained in Maya language, performed by a specific team.

¹¹ In a previous work (Rosales 1997) we referred this intermediate forms between the total resocialization and the secondary socialization, that produce subjective reality partial transformations, or sectors of it, and that they don't take to a total discontinuity, searching some coherence with past

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