

Lessons learned by the Andean ROAD

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Abstract. The Andean Regional Office of Astronomy for Development is now three years old. The structure of the Office replicates the target groups in the Central Office into three groups: Universities (Task Force 1), Schools (Task Force 2) and the General Public (Task Force 3). In 2013 we gathered with the potential stakeholders in the region to define a work plan 2015-2020 on these fronts. Here we summarize our successes and biggest challenges.

Keywords. Development, Post-Development

1. Introduction

The Andean Regional Office of Astronomy for Development (ROAD) started its activities in 2013 and was officially signed into existence in 2015. After three years of official operations we have deployed different activities first outlined in our original proposal †. Here we present our structure, successes, challenges and outlook for the next two years.

2. The Andean ROAD structure

The Andean ROAD coordination is a shared responsibility between Los Andes University (Colombia), Parque Explora (Colombia) and the Chilean Astronomical Society. The structure of the office defined its strategy with three different targets: Universities, Schools and the General Public.

3. Successes

The most important success has been keeping a conversation with the central OAD office and the IAU members interested on development activities. The networks created in such conversations have helped us to keep motivated and define new strategies.

Some other successful initiatives include:

- Organizing two regional schools aimed at advanced undergraduate and graduate students. The first one was held in Quito (2014) with a emphasis on astroparticle physics. The second one was held in Bogotá (2015) with a focus on cosmology.

† <https://github.com/AndeanROAD/ProposalROAD>

- Organizing two regional meetings aimed at defining the structure and projects to be developed by the Andean ROAD. The two meetings have been held in Bogotá (in 2013 and 2015).
- Developing didactic material for visually impaired people (project *Astronomía con todos los sentidos*). This material is currently being used across Colombia and Chile.
- Obtaining funding for two PhD positions for Colombian Students in Universidad Chile through the Radio Astronomy Working Group of the Andean ROAD.

4. Challenges

The main challenge has been running the activities through volunteers and without permanent funding. Another challenge across all our lines of work has been finding better ways to share across institutions the lessons learned and produced materials. We have experienced communication issues with OAD Task Forces, which hampers our ability to follow up on OAD-financed projects. This has a non-negligible effect on the replicability and sustainability of such projects.

We also lost the coordinator for the General Public activities, this has left us with only two active lines of work: Universities and Schools.

Another meta-challenge has been trying to define what development means for us in our region. The mainstream development concept used by the OAD is still very much influenced by ideologies from the global north. Postdevelopment concepts (based on a decolonial and more balanced conversation) although more interesting and relevant to our realities (Grosfoguel (2002)), are harder to bring into the conversation of hierarchical organizations (IAU, OAD, ROADs).

5. Outlook

In the next two years the Andean ROAD will continue working with two important goals in mind: organizing two more regional meetings (Perú and Bolivia) to discuss strategies to establish astronomy (at the research, teaching and outreach level) as a tool for development and consolidating the production of materials for the *Astronomía con todos los sentidos* program. We seek to expand the scope of activities for the Radio Astronomy and Astroparticles Working groups by setting working sessions along regional meetings that will take place in the next couple of years.

References

- Grosfoguel, R. (2002), Colonial Difference, Geopolitics of Knowledge and Global Coloniality in the Modern/Colonial Capitalist World System, *Review* 19, 2, pp. 131-154.