

A University for the Communes? Or The Communes Are the University

"For the people to become a real force, they must first have consciousness; and for the people to have consciousness, they must have knowledge and culture."

—Hugo Chávez

On May 24, at an event held at an impressive University Campus in Tocuyito, Libertador municipality, Carabobo state, *La Victoria Commune, December 9th* Communal Council, President Nicolás Maduro announced and signed the decree establishing the **National University of the Communes (Unacom)**. While the Campus stands out for its capabilities and dimensions, fundamentally, the true university of the people must be present throughout the national territory, in the 5,338 Communes and Communal Circuits of the country; there where the most pressing needs dialectically and radically converge with popular knowledge, original understanding, and the boldest solutions that only communities can generate, systematize, multiply, and socialize. Our people as builders, our people as engineers, scientists, peasants, our "Maestro Pueblo" (Master People) will have a rigorous, unique, original, and virtuous method to accredit and complete their wisdom and knowledge.

As Professor Andrés Eloy Ruiz stated at the first Meeting of Trainers of Unacom, education **must emerge from the environment: where we live, where we work, where we constitute ourselves as social beings**. As Simón Rodríguez would say, there in our *topos* (places), we have the places within multiple processes for the generation and concrete application of knowledge. A significant portion of our community members, from these environments, possess useful and relevant knowledge for their territory, which, in most cases, has not been recognized. Playing with words, Professor

Andrés Eloy refers to the need to accredit this knowledge and experience: *"You don't know everything you know, but I know that you know it (you've shown it to me, as a community), and I want you to know what you know,"* so that together we can solve problems and make dreams come true in our territory. This is one of the priorities for our new-born alternative university.

The creative powers of the people, which Aquiles Nazoa turned into vital poetry, are present everywhere, growing in the most diverse environments—perhaps disconnected or disordered—but they build, solve, and transform to the extent of circumstances and conditions allows them. The Venezuelan People's Power takes on the challenge of locating, recognizing, and empowering these liberation forms of knowledge that only the people can develop, free from the constraints of conventional education (when we incurred in technicalities, academic fetichism, and bureaucracy). For this, Unacom must become the tool that unleashes the creative, scientific, healing, and transformative forces of the people in their community. As Professor Eneida Azuaje from Amazonas told us, the processes unleashed the University of the Communes will unleash a **"creation of transformative conditions"** process.

To create these transformative conditions, the founding philosophy of Unacom is based on the practical ideas of one of the doctrinal architects of the Bolivarian Revolution, alongside Commander Hugo Chávez: **Master Kléber Ramírez Rojas**. Without incomprehensible formulas or convoluted language, the university will accompany the people in their processes of:

- **Producing Food** (material conditions for life).
- **Producing Science** (sovereign and liberating knowledge).
- **Producing Dignity** (an organized, dignified people who assume their power and capacities to transform their reality in order to be happy).

Therefore, we dare to present an equation, an approximation, a very simple first formula to try to explain the relationship between these variables. Commander Hugo Chávez often repeated, quoting the philosopher: *"God speaks through mathematics."*

$$FS = \frac{DD}{BCM \times BCC}$$

FS: Social Happiness (common aimed-horizon).

DD: Dignity and Direct Democracy (critical determining factor).

BCM: Gap in access to adequate Material Conditions for life (the lower, the better).

BCC: Gap in access to Science and Knowledge for life (the lower, the better).

For the people to make themselves happy (FS), they must of course produce what allows them to improve their material living conditions (BCM), based on the generation and systematization of knowledge, science, and technology (BCC) within their own ranks. However, improvements, both material and intellectual-scientific, will not have relevant impacts without achieving higher degrees of dignity (DD), that is, a more dignified life sustained by the democratic and direct exercise of the people's political power to transform their reality, using those methods of community organization that allow them to dispose of the necessary material resources and scientific knowledge to advance towards a better society.

In this analysis, we are not referring to sanctuary-like living conditions. Nor do we start from knowledge and technology whose unlimited development generates inequality and subordination to their patterns and designs. Both the material conditions to be guaranteed and the knowledge to be developed to advance towards a comprehensively happy society must be useful, relevant, and liberating; only then can a dignified life be ensured and the sovereignty of the people reaffirmed, based on their wisdom and culture.

Trying to outline the model that facilitates our advance towards social happiness based on the proposed formula, we start from the following premises:

- **The model is systemic:** Strengthening one pillar improves the others (e.g., more DD allows for more relevant distribution of material conditions (BCM) and democratizes knowledge and science (BCC); while improving these two variables implies reducing the gaps (the smaller they are, the better for society).
- **Dignity and the exercise of Democracy constitute the driving, transforming numerator**, guaranteeing the real transition towards a comprehensively happier life.
- **BCC and BCM are structural barriers**, hard to break, even if democracy levels are significant. However, the higher the level of dignity, the less effect these barriers have on social happiness. Of course, a virtuous interaction and flow between the three variables leads to greater happiness.
- **Stated differently, low CM and CC gaps are necessary bases, but not sufficient.** The formula collapses, society collapses (ethical, human collapse), when democratic practice is minimal or non-existent. No material or scientific force can compensate for the loss of the ethical force of dignity.
- **If BCC is high**, inefficient CM production or acquisition outside the territory must be very high and widespread to compensate, but resources are finite and depletable.
- **If the knowledge gap is high**, even with low BCM and high DD, society would lack the structural tools to progress sovereignly.
- **Participation and the direct exercise of power through the organized people (DD) means and determines:** it is the critical factor of the formula—without it, $CM \times CC$ can never compensate; however low their gaps, they tend to leak unequally, exclusively.
- **Dignity arises and elevates through participation in decisions affecting one's own and collective life.** DD is the crucial, transformative element ensuring that

material resources and knowledge result in happiness, turning people into agents responsible for their own and collective prosperity.

- **Participation must be guaranteed in the collective construction of knowledge.**

Here are some examples:

1. Neoliberalism vs. Participatory Socialism

Variable	Description	Value (0-10)
DD	Privatized rights, elites decide, symbolic participation.	1.8
BCM	10% owns 85% of wealth, inaccessible services, incomes diluted by privatizations.	8.0
BCC	Marketized education, popular knowledge marginalized (only seeks cheap labor).	7.0

FS =

$$1.8 \times 8.0 \times 7.0 = 1.8 \times 56.0 = 0.0328.0 \times 7.0 \times 1.8 = 56.0 \times 1.8 = 0.032$$

Neoliberal FS = 0.032 → Extreme social unhappiness.

2. Participatory Socialist Society

PEOPLE'S ORGANIZATION: ANOTHER POLITICS IS POSSIBLE

Variable	Description	Value (0-10)
DD	Universal public services, direct democracy (assemblies, participatory budgets), institutions subordinate to people's power.	8.0

Variable	Description	Value (0-10)
BCM	Communal economy covers basic needs, guaranteed access to essential goods/services (despite external blockades/disinvestment).	3.5
BCC	Popular education, science for social service, dialogue of knowledges (technical/ancestral), multimodal educational access.	2.0

$$FS = 8.0 \cdot 3.5 \times 2.0 = 8.0 \cdot 7.0 = 1.14 \quad 3.5 \times 2.0 \cdot 8.0 = 7.0 \cdot 8.0 = 1.14$$

Socialist FS = 1.14 → Viable and growing Social Happiness.

Irrefutable Conclusions:

1. Real democracy (DD) is the core enhancer of social happiness:

⇒ In participatory socialism, DD=8.0 multiplies impact by reducing gaps.

⇒ In neoliberalism, DD=1.8 is deadweight sinking any glimpse of wellbeing.

2. Gaps reinforce each other in neoliberalism:

⇒ **BCM × BCC = 56.0**: A wall denying basic rights. The formula proves inequality is not a "side effect"—it is the model functioning, its nature.

3. Participatory socialism optimizes scarce resources:

⇒ Despite BCM=3.5 (material limitations), synergy **DD↑ + BCC↓** generates viable FS (1.14).

⇒ **Sovereign knowledge (BCC=2.0) is the accelerator**: Democratizing knowledge reduces gaps more than merely distributing material resources.

4. The formula debunks economic myths:

⇒ Neoliberal myth: "*Privatization makes services more efficient*" → The model shows they may be efficient for those who can pay, but for majorities, they are non-existent. **FS=0.032 expresses its ethical failure.**

In this sense, and taking a phrase from the Hungarian philosopher István Mészáros, which Commander Chávez always cited:

"The measure of success of a socialist society cannot be reduced to abstract economic parameters, but must lie in a substantially democratic mode of general self-management, where the conscious participation of associated producers determines the priorities of social reproduction."

With the proposed formula, we aim to use the abstract to transform the concrete—life itself.

Returning always to Bolívar: *"Regarding solving the great problem of man in freedom, it seems the matter has been ignored, and the clearing of this mysterious unknown shall only be verified in the New World."* This new world emerges and consolidates in the epicenter of the Communes, their Communal Councils, in the development of territorial socialism, built in the immediate environment of our lives dignified with knowledge, in community. There lies the clearing of the mysterious unknown that will lead us to form *"the System of Government that produces the greatest sum of happiness possible, the greatest sum of social security, and the greatest sum of political (and spiritual) stability."*

Understanding this trilogy of interconnected principles and processes for life, the community—in Venezuela's case, the Communal Council and the Commune—constitutes the quintessential and natural environment for generating knowledge and solutions; this is the real environment of the National University of the Communes. The classroom and laboratory are the territory. Unacom will be organized in each Commune into **Communities of Knowledge for Communal Transformation (CCTC)**. There, students, knowledge-holders, academics, professionals, technicians, public servants, people-teachers, communal education spokespersons, and trainers—all citizens of that territory—will meet dialogically.

From each Community of Knowledge, the collective, assembly-based construction of the **Knowledge Map of each Commune** will be promoted. This will provide an instrument of immense value through which, based on their planning, communities will elevate their capacities, potential, characterize their environments and talent for training, with the supreme objective of training their members, responding to their prioritized needs, and fulfilling their plans and dreams. The **Knowledge Map for Communal Transformation** will allow us, among other things, to specify the knowledges, trades, and professions needed to generate solutions and satisfy the shared needs in each territory.

Today, Venezuela's Communal Councils and Communes are building their original model, their formula of local self-government—“**their toparchy**”—based on the System of People's Government that articulates and links traditional expressions of territorial governance and subordinates them, in the best sense, to communal government. In this unique construction, the Knowledge Map for Communal Transformation comes to order and complement essential elements of Communal Development Plans, Concrete Agendas for Action, and Maps of Dreams, generating a useful and virtuous synthesis to specify training needs and the capacities of each territory in the educational process. Participants in Unacom's programs will find in their Commune's Knowledge Map the guiding compass, navigation chart, and concrete expression of their inexorable life commitment to the present and future of their community.

The Commune is the true and only university. Unacom will be an instrument of people's power to ensure this. The training method will be based on awakening creative capacities and popular intelligence so necessary knowledge spreads through community-endorsed paths and actors, rewarding the formative process in their own territory and the happiness of their neighbors. While theoretical foundations will guide training processes, their essence will be found in transformative practice. It is there—in

the construction process, maintaining a project, planting, caring for others, in communal action and doing—where shared learning and teaching, recognizing knowledge and capacities in each person and life story, will generate a unique symbiosis expressible only through life, smiles, and prosperity in each community. Each Commune, in assembly, will endorse its participants in training programs and academic pathways based on alignment with needs and capacities expressed in communal planning and its Knowledge Map.

In Venezuela's emerging People's Government System, planning is formed and aggregated from all territorial levels, starting from its essential base and guarantor of reality: **communal planning**. From the community, planning is generated and integrally articulated, converging in the National Plan (Homeland Plan of the 7 Transformations). All levels and axes of planning feed back into each other and influence others. Unacom is committed to accompanying this plan coordination process, overcoming the inertial disconnection lingering from the institutional State now being transcended.

The method we want the people to build in their Unacom will center on **transformative planning-training-action**. Training is the bridge, the connector, the grounding wire between plans and the concrete action of transforming people in their territory. Training qualifies communal action technically, scientifically, and politically, enabling the realization of dreams expressed in each Commune and Communal Council's plans. From that transformation, that action, that training, and that articulated planning, we advance towards the higher, national transformation: a whole much greater than the sum of its parts.

We conclude these initial reflections with an excerpt from President Nicolás Maduro's speech inaugurating Unacom's University Campus. These are clear lines, strategically

binding directives—morally and politically—that will guide the development of the People-made-University to build the new society, the good Homeland.

"This cannot be an aerial university; it must be a university born with deep roots in the territorial communal organization, where today the conditions are created for a new society to emerge. Now we must systematize what we do in the territory and strengthen critical thinking for the development and defense of our values. Training professionals, leaders of this project does not mean instructing them with empty or closed manuals—it means unleashing their transformative power, sharpening their consciousness, strengthening their capacity for diagnosis, proposal, management, and cultural and political creation. A trained comunero must be a strategic actor of the new social and communal state, translating into practice the Homeland Plan of the 7 Transformations to make them concrete realities: transforming the economy from production, politics from participation, culture from symbolism, and life from dignity. We will not train office administrators; we will train builders of the new republic—builders of action, knowledge, and a new praxis."

This is the challenge President Nicolás Maduro has called upon all the people, all communities of the country: knowledge for life, from dignity. This is Unacom's strategic direction—born to change what must be changed, including and consolidating popular knowledge from its roots to its fruits.

"Knowledge is the first power a people must have."

—Hugo Chávez

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