

# INTER-COLLEGE COOPERATION AS A TOOL FOR CAMPUS ENVIRONMENTALIZATION

## Strengthening the cooperation project between Universidade de São Paulo, Brazil, and Universidad Autónoma de Madrid, Spain

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### Abstract

For several decades, environmental variables have been introduced to universities, either in curriculum activities or campus management. Following such trend, Universidade de São Paulo (USP), in Brazil, and Universidad Autónoma de Madrid (UAM), in Spain, created, throughout the 1990s, organizational structures able to coordinate environmental actions: the USP Recicla Program (at USP) and Ecocampus Office (at UAM). Since 2008, both universities have been developing a collaboration line through an international cooperation project by Agencia Española de Cooperación Internacional y Desarrollo de España (AECID), which intends to strengthen the environmental action of USP and UAM, leading them to sustainability. This article presents the means used and the main opportunities and difficulties found in both universities concerning their participation, management and environmental educational processes. For so, different investigation techniques are used in the diagnosis, such as statistical surveys and interviews with institutional officers and members of each participation and environmental management organization. Diagnosis created for each university indicated differences and similarities regarding the internal issues and motivations for the administrative, political and technical characters of the environmental subject in both institutions. Therefore, this article aims at explaining the relevance of inter-

college cooperation as a feasible tool to strengthen institutional social environmental cases, which, on their turn, may be examples to other educational institutions.

## **Keywords**

*University, environmental education, environmental management, participation, sustainability.*

## **1. Introduction**

For several decades, universities have been invited to adopt more sustainable guidelines in terms of teaching, research, extension and management within university campuses. The responsibility of universities concerning a sustainable future has been highlighted as of the appearance of the first official documents in the environmental education area, like the publication of the First Intergovernmental Conference on Environmental Education (TIBILISI, 1977).

A preliminary analysis on how universities have been implementing sustainability and the environmental education enables the identification of two complementary poles: the management of impacts caused by the activities of the university and the education of the university community (STERLING & SCOTT, 2008; WALSH, 2007; ALBA, 2006). In the first group, there are management actions, understood as a set of activities to prevent, reduce and correct negative impacts caused by human activities in universities. In the second group there are actions that try to incorporate the dimension of sustainability in all its senses (ecological, social, political and economical) to the education of the university community.

For the last two decades, several university associations and networks were created in order to stimulate actions concerning university sustainability. In the case of Brazil, Rede Universitária de Programas de Educação Ambiental (RUPEA) [University Network for Environmental Education Programs] was created in 2001 and was established as from agreements entered among three Brazilian higher education institutes (PAVESI, 2007). In Spain, the Conferencia de Rectores de Universidades Españolas (CRUE) [Conference of Deans of Spanish Universities] was created in 1994, a non-profit and state association formed by Spanish universities. In 2002, this institution formed a Commission for the Environmental Quality and Sustainable Development with the purpose of stimulating the curricular environmentalization and sustainability of university studies, promoting best practices in the environmental management of universities and sensitizing the university community on the principles of sustainability.

However, despite its relevance, sustainability in higher education is relatively recent and requires scientific systematization on how the processes to incorporate sustainability in the university life have been playing out (SHRIBERG, 2007).

Universidade de São Paulo (USP), in Brazil, and Universidad Autónoma de Madrid (UAM), in Spain, institutionalized their actions for the university sustainability in the 1990s, promoting two environmental programs in their campuses, according to the explanations in the following paragraph.

Despite of the different organizational, infrastructural, geographical, cultural and financial contexts, both universities tried the dialogue to improve their environmental engagement, moving towards the socio-environmental sustainability in their campuses. The alternative chosen has been the shared systematization of their experiences, which facilitate the joint deliberation on the improvement of their action strategy. As of 2007, there have been different meetings and discussions among educators, researchers and technicians from the environmental management of both universities, which built up cooperation links among the team of communication research, education and environmental participation of Department of Ecology, and Ecocampus, both from UAM, and also USP Recicla and the collaborative research teams in their programs. Such cooperation was formalized in December 2008 with the approval, by the Agencia Española de Cooperación Internacional para el Desarrollo (AECID) of a project named "Strengthening and Consolidation of Cooperation between Ecocampus Office (UAM) and USP Recicla Office (USP)" (D/020589/08) and later renewed until 2010 (D/026504/09). The main purpose of this project is to strengthen the environmental structures of both universities in the environmental management, participation & education areas and to guide them towards the incorporation of sustainable measures in their processes.

This article will describe the chosen paths, the main difficulties found and the opportunities of environmental management, participation and education activities of both universities that have occurred up to this moment through this cooperation process associated to the project that was financed by the abovementioned AECID. This way we can see the importance and relevance of inter-university cooperation as a strengthening tool for institutional actions with socio-environmental characteristics and its spread in other universities, as well as future projects among universities aiming at working together for the improvement of the university sustainability.

## **2. Institutional environmental departments at USP and UAM**

Universidade de São Paulo (USP, 2009), founded in 1934, currently has 11 university campuses, located in 7 cities of the State. Its academic community has over 100 thousand people among undergraduate and graduate students (88,000), teachers (5,700) and technical administrative servers (15,000).

Universidad Autónoma de Madrid (UAM, 2009) was founded in 1968 and has two campuses. Nowadays, the total number of people at the university is over 36,000: teachers and research personnel (2,454), administration and service personnel (1,050) besides first, second and third cycle students (32,326).

At USP, USP Recicla Program is one of the main departments that institutionally work the environmental issue. It was created in 1993 and aims at "contributing to the development of sustainable societies through actions towards the reduction of waste generation, environmental preservation and improvement of quality of life". It is based on the concept of work seeking for coordinated autonomy and for the setting of a network, as well as the horizontal construction of planning and decision-making. Its focus is solid waste, using the 3 Rs principle: reduce consumption and waste, reuse materials and recycle by promoting selective waste collection. The waste topic is only a motivation to pursue socio-environmental sustainability within the university. In order to encourage the active participation of several actors of the university community (undergraduate and graduate students, administration and services personnel and teachers) the Program is governed by rules that organize its structure and organizational operation comprising the different properties of the university community.

During its 17 years, USP Recicla has contributed to the development of different environment-related aspects, such as the proper management and reduction of waste generation and training of people who are committed to sustainability. Similarly, we give special mention to the training of administration and services personnel, such as environmental educators, and the training of students and scholarship students of several degrees. The program works as an important articulator of other environmental programs of USP, like PURE (Program for the Efficient Use of Energy), PURA (Program for the Efficient Use of Water), environmental groups, administration agencies and the environmental management of USP.

In 1997, Universidad Autónoma de Madrid consolidated its environmental engagement upon the creation of the Ecocampus Program and an office in charge of its coordination. Thanks to the implementation of this program, the commitment with Agenda 21 has been formalized, improving the environmental situation of its different campuses and teams and sensitizing the university community in order to encourage the participation and intervention in the debate and the quest for solutions to the global and local environmental conflicts. (BENAYAS *et al*, 2009)

Aiming at combining the environmental management technical activities with the education, awareness and participation processes of the university community, four strategic lines were developed (PROYECTO ECOCAMPUS, 2009):

- a) environmental management integrating water consumption, transport & mobility, construction, interior design & quality, biodiversity & gardening, waste management, energy efficiency, and atmospheric & acoustic contamination areas;
- b) awareness and involvement of the university community in practices focused on the support to environmental education, participation and curricular environmentalization;
- c) research for sustainability with the development of final essay projects by students, upgrading the relationship with research teams whose projects are related to sustainability;
- d) involvement with society setting relationships with other university level institutions and collaborating with autonomic and national associations and UAM student associations.

As of the beginning of the Ecocampus Program, some of the most important effects achieved were: engagement of the university community to decision-making processes concerning environmental management (especially within the pale of *Comisión de Usuarios y Calidad Ambiental*, [Commission of Users and Environmental Quality]); awareness of the university community regarding environmental topics, reference space to request for information or make suggestions, environmental management of waste, energy, mobility and other issues such as the incorporation of environmental premises to hire services.

By considering different contexts and trying to value different experiences, USP and UAM decided to promote a collaboration that could strengthen the departments that already institutionally work the environmental issue. The proposed challenge arise from the teams involved and spreads towards the general context of both universities, involving researchers, students, technicians and other members of their university communities.

### **3. Exchange and cooperation activities regarding sustainability between USP and UAM**

With the purpose to strengthen good practices and researches focused on sustainability in university campuses, different activities were analyzed, observing the following specific goals:

- a) Strengthen USP and UAM's environmental management, education and participation units;
- b) Improve the environmental and educational efficiency of environmental education and management processes concerning urban solid waste at USP and UAM;
- c) Enforce the consolidation of networks upon the joint development of research, management and education activities focusing on the sustainability of these universities.

To strengthen the cooperation of both universities and to achieve these goals, different activities are developed such as the exchange, spread and research of USP and UAM's experiences. The case study was used as a methodological strategy in which the universities involved are the object of analysis. In this kind of study, the results obtained cannot be generalized, even when valid for the studied reality and similar situations (TRIVIÑOS, 1987). The methodological path of the project research is oriented by a qualitative approach. According to Lüdke and André (1986), this type of approach tries to answer particular questions and the concern is in the subjectivity, in understanding and explaining the dynamics of social relationships, wisdom, experience, quotidian, as well as the understanding of structures and institutions as results of human activity (MINAYO, 1996). Given the different physical and institutional characteristics of each university, certain activities have been adapted to each reality. The illustration below presents the developed activities grouped in diagnostic, sharing and disclosure tools (Figure 1).

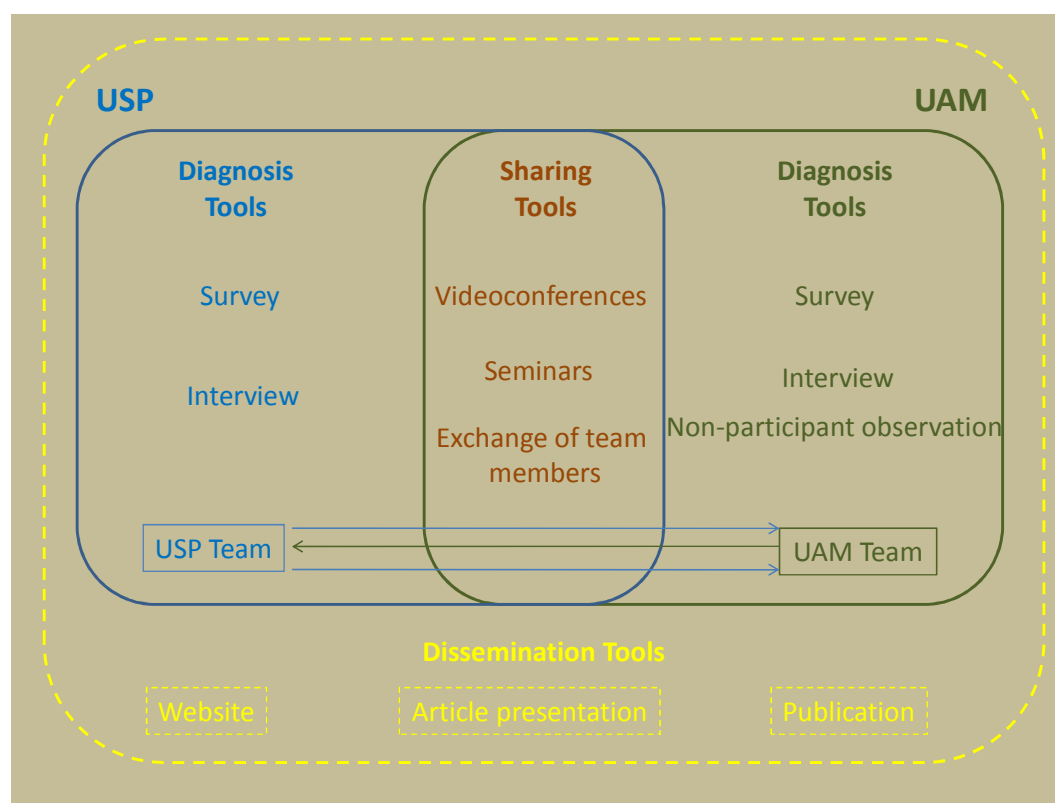


Figure 1. Scheme of the cooperation-project tools.

In order to strengthen the cooperation between universities, different work places have been developed and consolidated with videoconferences, seminars, technical meetings and the creation of departments. Due to these actions, integration among teams is encouraged, the

exchange of experiences is eased, and the adjustments and definition of the action methodology, as well as the adequacy of the schedule to execute the project, are more efficiently carried out. The departments of team members aim at deeply and more presently collaborating with the other university, supporting data collection, development of activities to share experiences, organize meetings and seminars. Similarly, these departments furnish a stimulating effect on visitors when they learn in the field about the experience of the other university.

On the other hand, in order to carry out research-related activities, there was the identification of the environmental structures present in universities: a diagnosis, adapted to different contexts, which enables to go deeper in the characterization of existing environmental structures and the relation among them.

### **3.1 Diagnosis tools**

In the first phase of the project, a diagnosis on the departments or environmental management, participation and education structures was carried out for both universities. During the second phase, its operation was better observed, identifying synergies between environmental structures and involved actors, within the universities.

By environmental structures or departments we understand all sections, departments, commissions, groups of study and research, laboratories, projects, sectors and councils that institutionally handle the environmental topic, either with global (in all campuses) or local presence and belonging to the University's organizational chart. Initiatives, projects and non-institutional programs (student associations, external projects, among others) and actions of curricular environmentalization, although vital for the insertion of sustainability into the university, were excluded from this survey in regards to USP, and less considered in the case of UAM.

The methodological path of both universities was differently traced to achieve the proposed goals and keep the parallelism of the research at the universities. For UAM, the study was focused on the main campus and for USP, it was focused on the seven campuses forming the university. Concerning the environment, for the case of USP, it was intended to present a more complete view of the university sustainability in its different areas (water, waste, energy, among others). Likewise, a general perspective of education, participation and articulation among the different structures was intended. For the case of UAM, different areas of environmental management were generally presented, nevertheless, the research was focused on the aspects of solid waste generation and there were attempts to go deeper into the structures working for the environmental management, education and participation in order to learn more about its operation and relations.

At USP, after examining official documents of the university organization, including rules and other organizational standards, a survey was carried out with the following actors:

- a) Coordinators of university campuses who are responsible for territorial management;
- b) People responsible for and participant in institutional environmental programs, acting in the whole university;
- c) People responsible for teaching, research and extension units and administrative agencies.

Out of the 80 questionnaires sent, 50 returned, from which information was systematized and its analysis pointed out the need to go deeper into research in order to identify other environmental structures at the campuses of USP that were not taken into consideration during the first phase. Moreover, the study was increased by the following topics:

- a) General perspective over environmental management, education and participation at the campus;
- b) Structures that encourage these actions, considering: i) projects and programs; ii) services (laboratories, material classification sector, etc.); iii) decision-making departments (committees, councils, commissions, etc.); iv) groups of study and research;
- c) Weaknesses and strengths of the general sustainability panorama at USP.

At UAM, after reviewing existing reports and other secondary sources (access to spaces and web in the network) regarding the evolution and current situation of environmental management, education and participation, the interviews directed to the people in charge of the several known structures were designed. 13 semi-structured interviews were carried out, comprising topics of environmental management as well as environmental education and participation. The discourse analysis was carried upon an emergent categorization. In the second phase, as a data collection technique, it was applied the non-participant observation of different gatherings comprising structures and groups, aiming at registering information concerning behavior and dynamization of the participation processes in real meetings. With this purpose, a set of values was designed to enable the systematization of information collection. Subsequently, a different questionnaire was given to participants and members of some structures with the purpose to evaluate the satisfaction level with the activity and structure of participation studied. These questionnaires were designed and filled out by 82 people involved as participants and/or volunteers.

### **3.2 Sharing tools**

With the purpose of achieving the cooperation between teams (USP and UAM), a space were created for the exchange of experience and knowledge about the development of project activities at each university. The tools used for these purposes were:

*The 14th European Roundtable on Sustainable Production and Consumption (ERSCP)*

*The 6th Environmental Management for Sustainable Universities (EMSU)*



- a) videoconferences: with a more direct contact as compared to e-mails, the videoconferences enable a reciprocal information flow in real time. Seven videoconferences were carried out, integrating teams, methodological adjustments, adequacy of the schedule and financial resources, among others, in addition to the conceptual deepening of project matters;
- b) seminars, three in 2009: June (Spain), October (Brazil) and December (Spain) and three in 2010: in June and September (Spain) and the last one scheduled in Brazil to take place in December. In these seminars the institutional cooperation was effective by means of experience exchange, theoretical deepening of conceptual project foundations and joint production of teams, which strengthened relations in an intense teamwork.
- c) exchange of team members, by means of: meetings with the participation of institutional representatives and experts, and of researcher-assistant departments (one UAM assistant at USP and two USP assistants at UAM) and helping to perform the different activities of the project, such as information collection for diagnosis (surveys, interviews, non-participant observation), preparation of videoconferences, meetings and seminars, etc.

### **3.3 Dissemination tools**

The dissemination tools aim at making information accessible and available for the internal community of both universities, but also for other universities. At USP a seminar driven to the whole university community was carried out at the main campus in São Paulo, and other seminar was scheduled for December 2010. Furthermore, a temporal project section was created on the Ecocampus Office's webpage; an article was presented in the VI Iberoamerican Congress of EA (September 2009, San Clemente del Tuyú, Argentina), as well as the publication<sup>1</sup> in the form of a magazine named "En el camino a la sostenibilidad [On the track of sustainability]": challenges and learning shared at USP and UAM".

### **4. Actuation of USP and UAM towards sustainability**

This section points out the most relevant results of the inter-university cooperation activities carried out. With different techniques, a characterization was carried out on the structures and actors involved in the processes of environmental management, education and participation, as well as a diagnosis of its strengths and weaknesses.

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<sup>1</sup> Access at [www.inovacao.usp.br/sustentabilidade](http://www.inovacao.usp.br/sustentabilidade)

#### 4.1 USP and its institutionalization process of environmental topics

The information provided by the 50 questionnaires replied, a sample of 62.5%, and complemented by the development of 21 interviews with the relevant actors of environmental management and education at the university, revealed different performances in the university scope, classified as general actuations (in all campuses of USP) and local actuations (created in accordance with the specificities of each campus).

Figure 2 presents the first-type structures, located in different levels of the Dean's Office organizational chart, marked with the orange color:

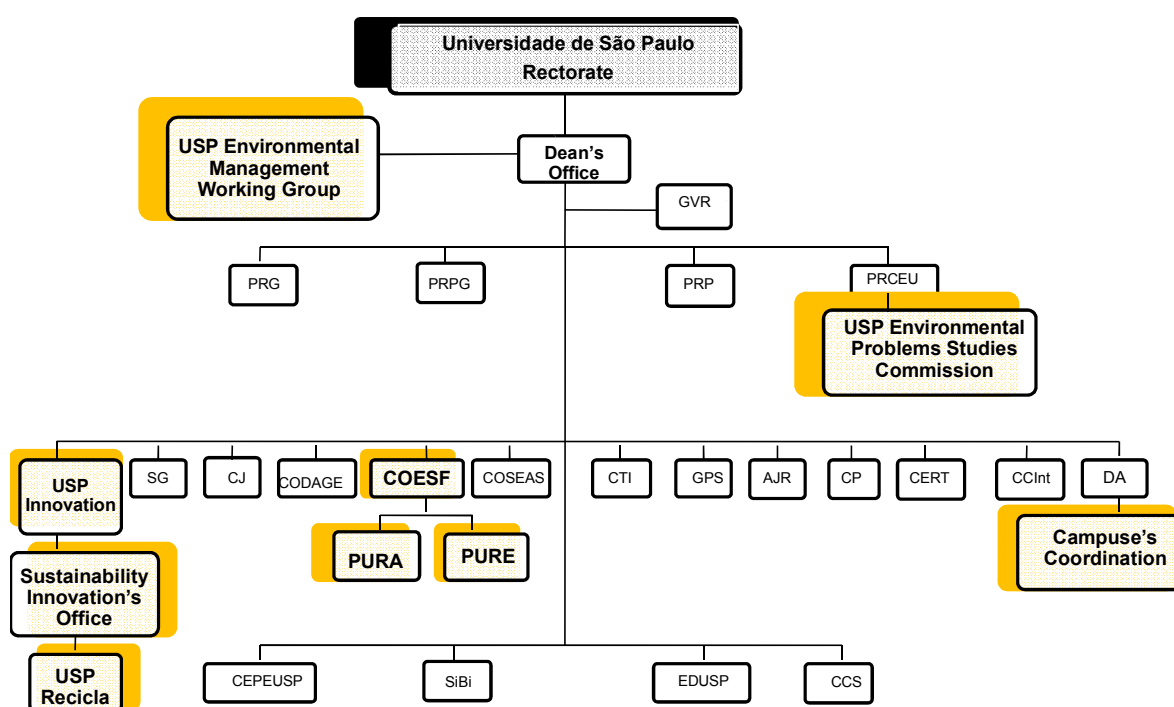


Figure 2. Chart of environmental structures at USP identified by research.

From the illustration we can observe that:

- There is no single structure (commission, section, program, Vice-Dean's office, etc) centralizing the management of environmental issues at the university, and;
- The several structures concerning environmental issues at USP do not exclusively handle them.

In addition, these departments are in different hierarchical levels of the USP administration, which, on the one hand, expresses the decentralization of the university administration concerning environmental issues, but on the other hand, might hinder their communication,

causing a lack of interaction and common work, according to what was stated by the interviewed departments.

Regarding the local presence in each campus, over 70 environmental structures were mentioned such as administrative departments and sections, programs, projects, laboratories, decision-making agencies, study/research groups, teaching programs, etc.

This diversity of environmental structures is not evenly distributed among USP's campuses, in some of them only the action of institutional structures of the entire university such as USP Recicla, PURA and PURE could be identified. Nevertheless, other campuses presented an integration movement of the several environmental issues and structures, comprising environmental management, participation and education. Among them, we can mention the "Sustainable Campus" <sup>2</sup> Work Plan of the coordination office in the State Capital of São Paulo (COCESP), and the Participative Socio-Environmental Master Plan<sup>3</sup> (PDSP) of the Campus Luiz de Queiroz, in Piracicaba.

Regarding the **weaknesses** or **barriers** that hinder the correct operation of structures identified at USP, we can mention:

- a) Reduced participation of the university community in environmental issues. The greatest difficulty is to have the participation by the university community due to, among other things, the lack of a formal commitment of the university towards environmental issues of an environmental policy establishing socio-environmental guidelines for teaching, researching and managing activities in the whole institution.
- b) Lack of availability of specific financial resources and infrastructure that are only allocated based on the decision making of the institution/agency, which, most of the time, has other priorities for the budgetary allocation hindering the performance of continuous activities.
- c) Lack of an environmental department or structure in the organizational chart of university administration, what interferes the introduction of the theme to the schedule of decision making of managers and in life of the university community;
- d) Lack of an institutional environmental policy to provide environmental guidelines for the development of programs and projects in the environmental management, participation and education areas.

With regard to the **facilitators** for the preparation and implementation of environmental initiatives at the university campus, we can remark:

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<sup>2</sup> Access at [www.usp.br/cocesp](http://www.usp.br/cocesp).

<sup>3</sup> Access at [www.esalq.usp.br/instituicao/docs/plano\\_diretor\\_socioambiental.pdf](http://www.esalq.usp.br/instituicao/docs/plano_diretor_socioambiental.pdf).

- b) The role of the university as a promoter to train people in the environmental area.
- b) The need of the university to adapt to the environmental standards and Laws in force.
- c) The existence and consequent familiarity of different knowledge areas and their encouragement in environmental researches and their proper application in the campuses.

## 4.2 UAM and its institutionalization process of environmental topics

For the case of UAM, different structures and actors are involved in the management and/or stimulate the environmental education and participation of the university community. It was possible to carry out an identification of the structures and actors mentioned, presented in the following illustration (Figure 3):

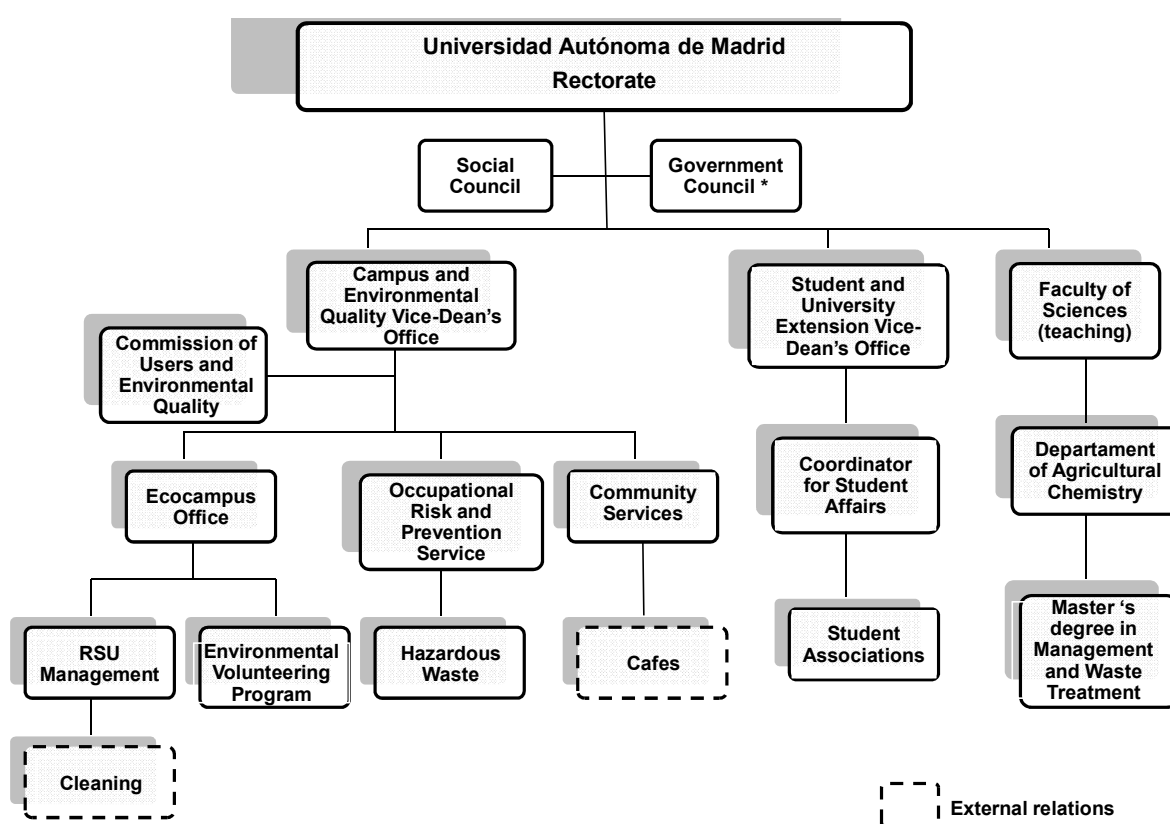


Figure 3. Chart of environmental structures at UAM identified by research.

As it can be observed, there are different topologies of structures and actors. On the one hand, at a more institutional level, we have several government agencies (councils, vice-rectorates and commissions) located in rectorates and on which other services, programs and actors rely. At a more academic and teaching level, there is a graduate program that is focused on research-training with respect to waste.

The identification of environmental structures have been a more simple process at UAM as compared to USP, because UAM is provided with a based structure (Vice-Dean's Office and

Environmental Quality) that coordinates everything related to the environment at the university, except for student associations and training programs. However, despite the existence of such structure at an institutional level facilitating the environmental management, education and participation process and other initiatives (associations, etc.) consolidated over time, there must be efforts to boost the relations among the studied structures.

At UAM, the items below were also identified as **weaknesses** that hinder the good efficiency of environmental management and participation processes:

- a) Management – waste collection: UAM is not provided with full flexibility, autonomy and knowledge of all data concerning waste collection, because its final phase and its further treatment is carried out by the local government. Internally, there are infrastructure difficulties regarding the involvement of actors in waste collection and deficiencies sorting it;
- b) Lack of communication among some of the several internal actors involved in environmental management, which hinders the implementation of joint projects;
- c) Lack of public policies for a consolidated and powerful waste management (and within the articles and conditions guidelines of the agreements);
- d) Lack of environmental awareness at the university: several actors interviewed pointed out the lack of waste-sorting interiorization since the university community considers it an extra effort;
- e) Lack of innovative techniques in awareness campaigns. The current propagation techniques can saturate due to the great amount of information flowing everyday on other themes through brochures, posters and more common means of communication. Likewise, these campaigns are more likely driven to a certain type of audience, the students; although it should actually reach everyone involved in the university community. This barrier is a consequence of the existing difficulty in translating the message in campaigns to all audiences, and on top of, getting people to collaborate without complaining;
- f) Problem of consolidation of environmental participation: insufficient knowledge of structures and lack of information reflected by its action to the rest of the university community so as people know what is being done. Additionally, there is a lack of relationship among structures for them to work together more collaboration is required among them;
- g) Instability of some structures due to the rotation of people involved with them (students in associations, technicians in management services).

In contrast, **strengths** and **facilitators** were also identified:

- a) Existence of an institutional structure that comprises and coordinates all themes related to the environment at the university;

- b) Waste management: the local government collects waste with no charges. Agreements were created, like conventions, for the good operation of management. The structural part of university has two factors that contribute to the management: i) the existence of environmental guidelines and criteria within the articles and conditions of the restaurants and cleaning agreements; ii) recommendations to develop more sustainable habits;
- c) Awareness: importance of training activities carried out by Ecocampus that contribute to the collaboration improvement of people involved in the management process. Campaigns are also positively valued because they stimulate waste sorting;
- d) Participative processes: decisions made within the structures tend to be consensual, not by voting. But in some cases, voting is chosen. The participative decision-making requires efforts and time, but it is positively valued by the ones involved because all opinions are taken into consideration;
- e) Economic and material resources: the lack of budget is not perceived as a great problem.

## **5. Lessons learned**

### *a) An institutional environmental structures strengthens environmental management, participation and education*

The lessons and conclusions showed below are results not only from research diagnoses carried out at both universities, but also from the familiarity and exchange of knowledge experienced during the project.

The experiences studied are dated as of the beginning of the 90s as a consequence of the environmental discussion and concern among members of the university community. Ecocampus and USP Recicla were not created for being exclusively management-focused projects. They would also comprise education and participation of the university community. And over time, we can see that the continuous development and trajectory of initiatives, projects and activities concerning university sustainability shows the consolidation of these two experiments. At the same time, the creation of new action initiatives (structures, groups, specific commissions, associations, etc.) for the university sustainability is a symptom of the importance given to these themes at each of the universities and of their necessary evolution. It is important to know where we came from to know where we can go to. Differences between both universities are not obstacles but actually stimulate mutual cooperation for finding the opportunity to proceed together through the path of sustainability.

The exchange of experiences proposed by this project taught teams, offices and universities regarding several aspects related to the environmental management, education and participation. The most important aspects perceived are presented below, many of them being interrelated.

The existence of an environmental structure connected to the senior management and policy of university facilitates the insertion of the theme to decisions and actions. At UAM there is an institutional structure and a centralized environmental policy consolidated at a rectorate level. In this sense, USP has learned which steps to follow in order to create an environmental structure that depends directly on a vice-rectorate, such as the ECOCAMPUS Office. However, the efforts of the Agency for Innovation as a driver of environmental activities inside USP must be considered.

*b) Participative processes in decision making, guarantee of sustainability*

The participation in discussions and decision-making processes on how to act regarding sustainability in both universities is a determining factor for the development of their programs. In the case of UAM, the Commission of Users and Environmental Quality have the participation of different university sectors and the different perceptions of users and centers are represented. Debates consolidate decisions so as they can hardly be reversed by superior departments. The fundamental value of USP's experience is the motivation of agents supposed by the participation organization in USP Recicla Program. Its structure in commissions, from units up to the university itself, passing by the different campuses, allows the involvement of an important number of people who, with a pro-active attitude, become agents that propagate awareness and actions for sustainability.

*c) The centered work on an unique environmental theme facilitates the awareness of the university community, however, it loses interrelation with other themes.*

The centralization of the work with all environmental themes at Ecocampus Office (water, energy, waste, mobility, etc.), integrating environmental education and participation, is a good design of actions considering the environmental theme and its different dimensions as a whole. On the other hand, USP Recicla is focused on waste (education for its reduction), and by working with a more specific theme, it can go deeper with different actors of the university community, gathering more people and increasing the awareness.

*d) Educational campaigns (short-time) are to motivate the community and projects (long-time) stimulate education of more critical people.*

Ecocampus Office works with specific campaigns in its actions at the university. They are short-time campaigns that use different activities such as posters, stickers, gymkhanas and simulation games, Attractive activities that calls the attention of the university community. On the other hand, USP Recicla Program works by means of long-term projects, in which scholarship students and volunteers participate during a long period and that, due to this particularity, achieve a greater engagement towards the theme from the part of the

community. In addition, actions are progressively developed aiming at achieving a gradual change in each one.

*e) The activities developed go from the wideness of the environmental theme and sustainability and its link to social aspects.*

For the development of projects, USP Recicla Program values the integration of theory and practice, the joint perspective of “society and environment” and assumes theoretical references of education and sociology. These principles are reflected in the communication and awareness campaigns of the Program. UAM handles different themes, most of them environmentally based, putting up social matters in its projects.

*f) The lack of people makes the work difficult and furnishes extra roles to people who are involved*

The USP Recicla Program as well as the Ecocampus Office relies on their own team of technicians in addition to scholarship students and volunteers. On one hand, the temporal rotation of students involved in environmental programs allows several people to become propagation agents and, on the other hand, there is a lack of employees, which furnishes extra roles to the steady personnel.

## **6. Conclusion**

The work developed through cooperation was an important opportunity for mutual learning in order to strengthen socio-environmental actions. Actions for sustainability by the participant universities, Universidade de São Paulo (USP) and Universidad Autónoma de Madrid (UAM) were reinforced by the consecution of different works, which were the project developed in 2009 and the ones implemented up to now, in 2010. The experiences of each university were deeply studied, comprising not only the main units of activity dynamization for university sustainability (Ecocampus at UAM, USP Recicla at USP) but also other units, spaces and people involved driven to achieve the university contribution towards sustainability.

During the last financed period, the efforts were not focused to knowing experiences but to reflecting on its strengths and weaknesses so they can be shared by the participant universities and by other interested institutions. For that, the design of an evaluation tool has been developed to enable the systematic collection of information concerning the current status of the university activity with respect to sustainability in order to improve its planning and quality. An awareness tool was also developed in order to involve more members of the university community in sustainability issues. The main purpose will be keeping the



reinforcement actions for the sustainability of participant universities as models for other Latin American higher education institutions.

With the development of a digital information, awareness, and evaluation platform for environmental management, education and participation at universities; the focus will be the synergies among university environmentalization experiences. The university community will have the opportunity to evaluate the socio-environmental status of its campus and to acquire knowledge and trainings as sustainable agents at their own university. The presentation of the results regarding this phase will become a seminar as the end of the project and as the creation of a space for common meetings with other universities in order to continue strengthening relations beyond the cooperation established between USP and UAM.

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