LET US RETHINK
COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES

METHODOLOGICAL
PROPOSALS
TO DESIGN
AND IMPLEMENT
COMMUNITY
COMMUNICATION
PROJECTS

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INTRODUCTION

WHY THIS GUIDE?

The methodological guide you have in your hands is the result of a Participatory Action Research (PAR) process that has allowed us as REDES A.C., together with indigenous and rural communities, to reflect on the way in which a project concerning communication, connectivity and the use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) is conceived.

When we distance ourselves from the fascination that prevails in our society in terms of assuming technologies as tools capable of solving different social problems by themselves, we choose to understand the implications these technologies have when they are inserted in a certain territory and context. We believe it is necessary to take a step back to analyze how these technologies modify the way we relate and look at the world, as well as the consequences they have in social, economic and environmental terms.

We recognize ICTs as non-neutral tools and that have been created —mainly for consumption— by particular interests and for specific purposes which are contrary to the life plans of the communities. Along the road, we have come across countless communication and telecommunications projects that tend not to be sustainable over time as they are not fully linked to the needs and dreams of the communities in which they are developed.

Thanks to our experience with organizations, groups and people committed to communication processes in communities we have worked with —in this very long journey—, we have also discovered technologies can also be allied tools for the preservation of community life as long as they are inserted in the values and communication processes of the community. These technologies should be approached critically and be appropriated on the basis of a participatory and constantly reflective process.

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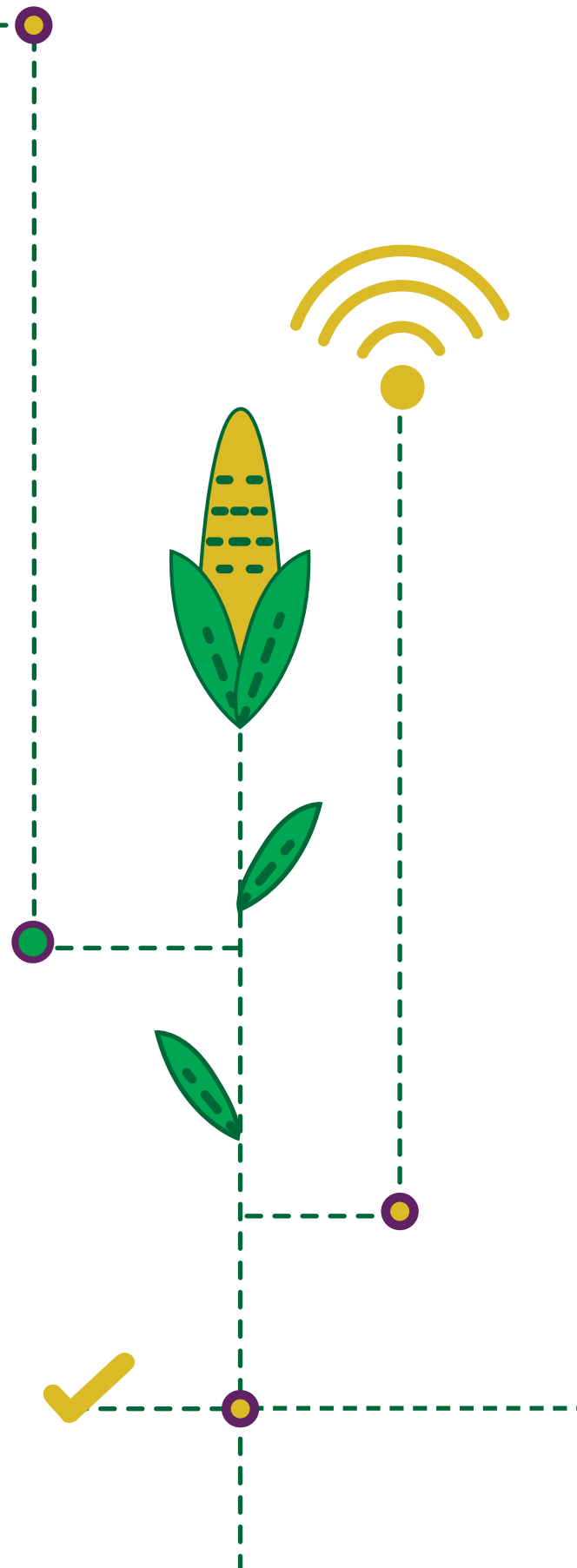
In collaboration with many organizations and communities, we have undertaken the search for mechanisms to transform technologies, appropriate them and use them based on community principles. We have also learned how to escape from these technologies, how to get away from them when it is necessary and how be able to mitigate the risks they entail in our lives. We feel that in this way we can collectively weave a path towards technological autonomy.

For the communities we have been involved with, connectivity is not an end in itself. It is about implementing a communication project to strengthen identity, autonomy, defense of territory and life, among other objectives. This implies identifying a technological model able to contribute to the realization of the community's goals and dreams.

Taking this into account, we introduce two methodological proposals that allow communities to identify useful technologies and develop participatory and sustainable communication projects, according to their organizational forms and based on their principles, needs, dreams and priorities. These technologies are interwoven with other communication tools and are as diverse as creativity allows.

Let us begin with the **participatory methodology for the creation of communication projects** —a proposal to think about the way forward in the design and implementation of communication projects in communities. This scheme is in constant construction and in no way do we intend to establish a rigid and unique model for these processes; if this was the case, we would be committing the very same mistake we want to avoid. Rather, this is an invitation to take a step back and avoid thinking about communication projects mediated by technology as an end in itself. This will allow us to approach communication strategies that can accompany the communities in the process of solving their perceived needs and in realizing their dreams.

We didn't reinvent the wheel. This methodology is the way in which we have systematized what we have learned from communities and indigenous communication and telecommunications experiences. All this has laid the foundations for a very rich panorama in terms of the diversity of voices, technologies, organizational forms and objectives to be achieved through the use of communication tools.

We also want to share a series of steps for the **participatory design of community Intranets**. This guide has been conceived by systematizing projects which involve the use of ICTs by communities that have decided to create a content bank accessible to everyone in their territories —using electronic devices without necessarily requiring Internet access. In short, it is a strategy for selecting relevant content and sharing it, in which each community decides what they want to share or what information to access through a local network.

As in other types of communication projects, working with Intranets requires the constant participation of the community, from designing the platform to installing the infrastructure and its subsequent operation. Our proposal is based on these principles. It should be noted that these steps are not only applicable to this type of project, but may be useful in situations in which other communication technologies are used.

In general, both methodological proposals share the idea that technology should not be the center of the community project to be developed, but rather the occasion to create community. This is why our approach is based on the notion that the main characteristic of community communication experiences is the importance given to the **organizational and reflective process** that accompanies the creation and consolidation of the project, and not only the development of products and informative material.

Who has participated in the development ot these methodogical proposals?

This guide has been possible thanks to the contribution made by numerous colleagues with whom we have put this methodological proposal into practice since 2012. In addition to that, there is a historical and wide field of experiences in indigenous and community communication and telecommunications that have become important lessons to be learned and shared.

One of our great inspirations is women communicators who have handled cables and tools, but who also took in their hands the direction of their communication projects. They make us realize that technology is not only for specialists or men, and that each connectivity project must be conceived with and for women.

We want to thank those who have been part of this journey: the Ik´ta K´op Collective from Abasolo, Chiapas; the community of Guadalupe Ocotán, Nayarit; the participants of Diplomado en Telecomunicaciones y Radiodifusión Comunitaria para Promotoras y Promotores Técnicos Indígenas *Techio Comunitario*[1]; the University Center of the Xhidza People (CEU-Xhidza) in Santa María Yaviche, Oaxaca; Multimedios Jënmë'ëny in Santa María Tlahuitoltepec Mixe, Oaxaca; Ojo de Agua Comunicación; Boca de Polen Communicators Network; Xamoneta Collective in Cherán K'eri, Michoacán; Unión de Cooperativas Tosepan in Cuetzalan, Puebla; Consejo Regional Indígena del Cauca (CRIC) as well as the Pueblo Nuevo and Buenos Aires communities in Cauca, Colombia; we would also like to thank individuals and organizations that were part of the Abya Yala Community Networks Seedbed, both in Mexico and Argentina, especially Telecomunicaciones Indígenas Comunitarias AC, AlterMundi, Colnodo, CooLab, Instituto Bem Estar and the Association for Progressive Communications (APC).

There are many people, communities and organizations with whom we have had the fortune to share our ideas, reflect, give feedback, weave and enrich the work we present here. It goes without saying that this guide is unfinished; it is always reinventing and enriching itself. Feel free to review it, put it into practice, question it and share your questions and contributions with us. You will find our contact information at the end of this guide.

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[1] Training program for technical promoters in indigenous communities in telecommunications and broadcasting Techio Comunitario. Visit https://techiocomunitario.org/ to learn more about this project. Watch videos featuring participants from the first two generations of this diploma course: http://bit.ly/2tM1B5b and http://bit.ly/35S98gP

PARTICIPATORY METHODOLOGY

FOR THE CREATION OF COMMUNICATION PROJECTS

What is the objetive of this methodology?

This methodology develops a process of collective reflection for designing and implementing communication strategies, mediated or not by technologies. This process concerns life territory, as well as the identity, needs and dreams of each community or group.

The outline we present here is the result of the knowledge shared in Diplomado en Telecomunicaciones y Radiodifusión Comunitaria para Promotores y Promotoras Técnicas Indígenas *Techio Comunitario*. This training process is based on a participatory research that we started in 2012 in collaboration with organizations and individuals whose work is dedicated to issues concerning indigenous communication in Mexico. We have worked together to define the need to create and implement a training program focused on capacity building, which would allow communities to weave their own paths towards technological autonomy.

Although we were aware that it is an essential requirement to start with a selection of relevant technologies for the development of communication projects, we still had a significant bias that was preventing us from acknowledging the need to modify our approach in order to escape technological determinism.

It was during the first module of the first generation, developed in 2016, that we understood in more detail each of the steps and strategies we present here. Until that moment, our reference in terms of selecting relevant technologies was the percolator method, developed by Kim I. Mallalieu and Sean Rocke (2007)[2]. This method establishes that to carry out this process it is necessary to consider three elements: modes of life, types of users and physical environment.

At that time, it was Jaime Martínez Luna[3] who made us understand that this methodology might not have a clear and adequate inflection point. He told us: "This approach is based on

Abya Yala Community Networks Seedbed. Cherán K'eri, Michoacán, Mexico.

the Western vision —I think, therefore, I exist. And above all, we *are*. And not only do we *are*: we are one with the land we step on, with the sky, the trees, with our territory. And we also work; we *do with others,* with our hands, in our *tequio*[4]; and we celebrate, we sing"[5]. Jaime's words made us realize that we needed to

change the perspective from which we thought about technologies and their implementation so we could be able to generate processes truly linked to the objectives and dreams of each community.

Little by little, and thanks to the many experiences shared with people linked to the *Techio Communitario* program as well as with other people working in the field of communication, this methodology has been transformed bit by bit until it reached its present form. As Erick Huerta points out, the new proposal in terms of the technologies selected —which takes into consideration communal thinking, part of the territory, the idea of work and the importance of celebration— has proved effective, opening up an "infinity of possibilities to attend to the aspirations and desires of the community through communication projects". This methodology does not approach things from the perspective of development; rather it brings forward the idea of an ancestral existence linked with a territory and emphasizes the need to continue enjoying life inside it[6].

Below, you will find an infographic that outlines this methodology. We also provide explanations of each step and of the elements that comprise it.

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[2] Mallalieu, K. and Rocke, S. (2007). *Seleccionando soluciones TIC sustentables para la intervención pro-pobre*. IRSI

[3] Jaime Martínez Luna is a philosopher, anthropologist, and composer from Guelatao de Juárez, Oaxaca. He has been one of the promoters of Communality as systematization of the way of life of the original peoples in the *sierra* of Oaxaca.
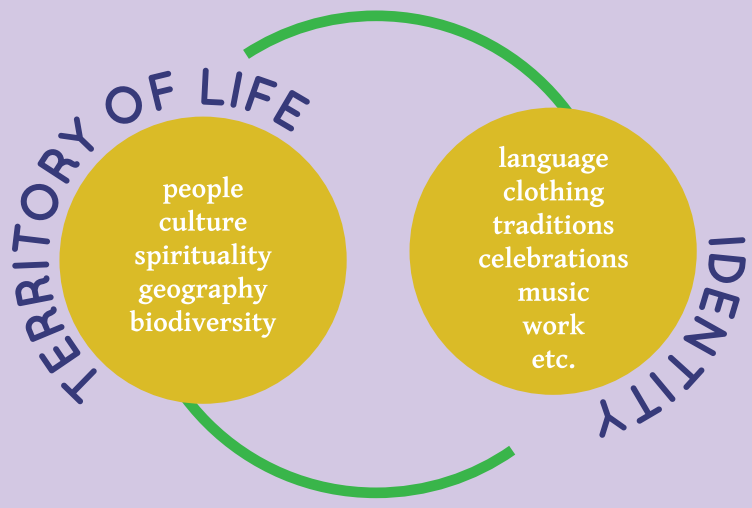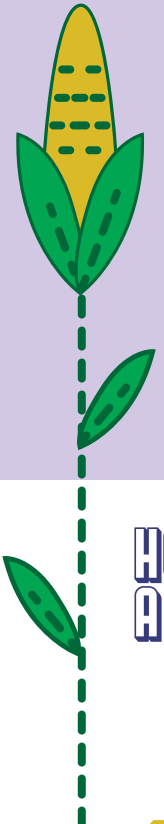
[4] *Tequio* is a form of community work for collective benefit.

[5] Martínez Luna in Huerta, E. (2016). Aprendizajes en la elección de tecnologías para Pueblos Indígenas. *Comunicares.org*. Retrieved from: http://bit.ly/2egBrPx

[6] Huerta, E. (2016). Aprendizajes en la elección de tecnologías para Pueblos Indígenas. *Comunicares.org*.

THE GROUND WE WALK ON

TERRITORY OF LIFE

people culture spirituality geography biodiversity

IDENTITY

language clothing traditions celebrations music work etc.

HOW DO WE ESTABLISH A COMMUNICATION STRATEGY?

WHAT ARE WE GOING THROUGH?
What are our needs, problems, and weaknesses as a community?

WHAT ARE OUR DREAMS FOR THE COMMUNITY?

COMMUNICATION STRATEGY
How will we achieve our collective dream? How are we going to organize ourselves to achieve it?

THE GROUND WE WALK ON
What are our strengths?

COMMUNICATION PROJECT(S)
What tools do we need? Which technologies can be useful?

if an ICT is chosen

REFLECTION/ EVALUATION

ACHIEVEMENT/ CELEBRATION

EXECUTION/ IMPLEMENTATION

ICTS AS TOOLS
FOR COMMUNICATION PROJECTS

1 ANALYZE TECHNOLOGY
according to what we plan on doing.

2 EXPLORE OUR OPTIONS
For example: private or free use; equipment maintenance, weather conditions, etc.

3 USE AND APPROPRIATION
User training and articulation.

4 APPLY/ IMPLEMENT

5 ACHIEVEMENT/ CELEBRATION

6 EVALUATION/ REFLECTION

7 TECHNOLOGICAL INNOVATION

STEP 1: THE GROUND WE WALK ON

Far from focusing on the installation of Internet networks, community radios or any other type of communication mediated by technology, the foundations of this methodology are in the exploration and analysis of the cultural, territorial, organizational, political, economic and social characteristics of each community.

Therefore, the first step is to analyze in detail the **territory of life** we inhabit. This has to do with geography and biodiversity, but also with the people who inhabit the territory, its culture, its history and spirituality. At the same time, we have to define the **identity** that makes up each town: its language, clothing, traditions, festivals, music, work and other elements that might seem relevant.

The idea is to establish a **collective narrative** that can account for all the richness of the ground that is trodden on and the fabric of relationships that comprises it. This can be told by way of stories, maps, drawings, plays, or any other way people find to express and shape their story. It's important to make this narrative as rich and detailed as possible.

Drawing the territory. Popayán, Cauca, Colombia.

STEP 2: HOW DO WE ESTABLISH A COMMUNICATION STRATEGY?

It is very important to emphasize that, although this strategy can lead us to projects implying the use and appropriation of ICTs, in many cases the communication strategies required can take us to other paths. For instance, if we think the strategy is to recover the use of public spaces, would it be the most convenient thing to develop a radio or a community network? Maybe this is not the best idea. Perhaps the most pertinent thing is to clean up the football field and use it again, or organize a cinema club in the community square. This is how we achieve the objectives proposed in the communication strategy.

Once all these elements have been analyzed, we go through a **cycle** in which key elements allow the creation of a communication project that may —or may not— lead to the use and appropriation of ICTs based on real and specific needs.

Now we have to go back a few steps to the initial moments of our trip; we resume the previous narration and analysis that was made concerning the territory and we recognize the **strengths** of each community.

Next we pose the **problems** or situations each community or group is going through. Some questions that can be helpful at this stage are:

✔ **What are we going through?**
✔ **What concerns do we have?**
✔ **What weaknesses have we identified?**
✔ **Where do we need to strengthen ourselves as a community?**
✔ **What are the needs of our community?**

Once these problems and needs are identified, it is essential to recognize and name the dreams we have for the community and its territory. If we recognize everything that makes us strong, as well as what weakens and worries us, then we can ask ourselves: **what are our dreams for our community?** These expectations can be projected for the short, medium and/or long term.

It is important these dreams are thought of in the present tense. Capturing them as something that is already happening allows us to feel them close and plausible, no matter how big or difficult to reach. Some examples of dreams expressed in workshops we have developed are:

◉ *We instill stories and traditions, as well as a mother tongue to new generations.*

◉ *We leave selfishness and individualism behind for the benefit of the community.*

◉ *We continue to autonomously inhabit the territories of our ancestors.*

◉ *We promote our worldview and strengthen cooperation and identity.*

The answer to these questions will lead us to understand what is happening in our communities —taking into consideration their history and context— as well as the complexity of the present we want to transform and the horizon we want to draw so that it can be built.
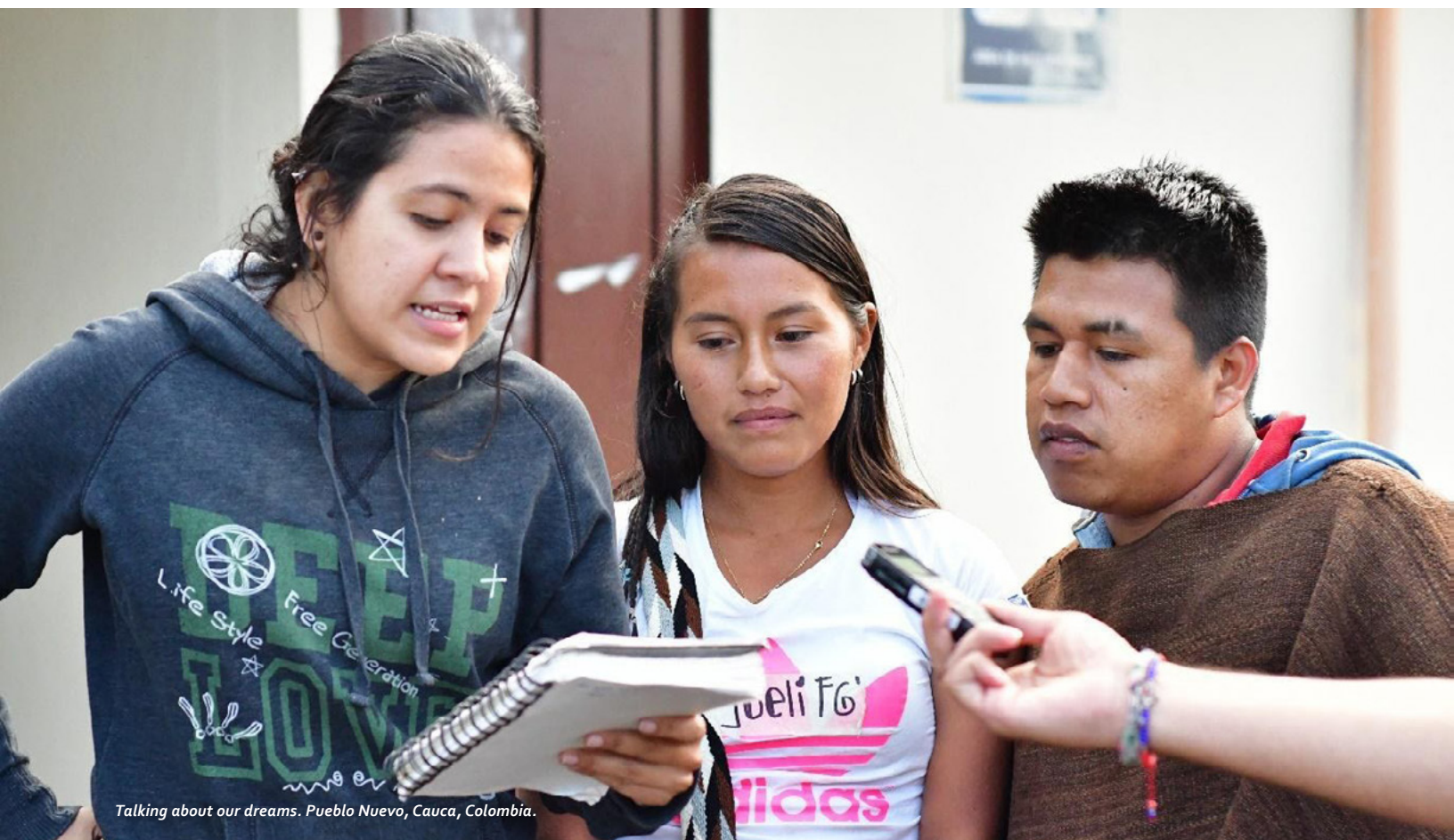
Talking about our dreams. Pueblo Nuevo, Cauca, Colombia.

Now we can move towards defining a **communication strategy**. A strategy is the path we choose to build the collective dream, so it should be conceived in a broad way. At this stage the tools with which it will be carried out are not yet defined.

A communication strategy seeks to enhance the strength and work with the weaknesses of each community. These are some examples:

- **Strengthen the culture for the survival of our peoples.**
- **Preserve our environment and protect nature to take back the territory.**
- **Assert our indigenous roots to strengthen collective memory.**
- **Practice social and solidarity economies in our life projects with freedom and autonomy.**
- **Recover public spaces inside the community and renew personal ties.**

When defining the strategy, we also discuss how we will **organize** to carry it out. At this moment, we define roles and responsibilities for each stakeholder, as well as certain steps, actions or tactics we need to define to set up our strategy.

ATTENTION!

A common mistake is to think a communication strategy simply means using a tool or applying a technology. For example, if our dream implies *revitalizing our mother tongue*, the communication strategy should not necessarily contemplate *installing a community radio*. We have to go beyond the idea of a tool. In this case, the strategy could be to *strengthen orality in the new generations*.

Only when this is taken into consideration, can the communication project be the *installation of a community radio*. And it could also have to do with other tools such as *community murals, lectures and conversation clubs, translation of popular songs, participatory theater*, and so on. Also, a strategy could be based on more than one communication and technology project. We need to be constantly asking ourselves **in which ways a tool or ICT helps us** differentiate a project from a communication strategy.

Once our strategy is clear, we define the **communication projects** and, if pertinent, **the use and appropriation of ICTs**. At this stage we analyze the information and communication tools or technologies that we need and might be useful to us.

As we mentioned before, by using this methodology, we could generate processes without using technological communication tools. There have been cases in which the result of a chosen strategy, such as *strengthening community ties*, involves the decision of cleaning up a soccer field and hold a tournament in the community.

In case we think it is necessary to incorporate technological tools, it is important to constantly ask ourselves whether these technologies respond to the problems and needs referred above.

In either case —with or without using ICTs— in order to propose a communication project, it is necessary to **define a work plan**. Some useful questions at this point are:

Designing a communication strategy. Cherán K'eri, Michoacán, Mexico.

✔ **What objectives do we want to meet?**
✔ **What are the necessary steps to carry out our strategy?**
✔ **Who will be participating?**
✔ **Who are our allies in this process?**
✔ **What resources do we need?**
✔ **What will be our working hours?**

STEP 3: ICTS AS TOOLS FOR COMMUNICATION PROJECTS

As a result from carrying out the plan, we may find it necessary to use ICTs. If such is the case, the following steps are suggested in order to implement the designed strategy:

1 **Define whether you want to create a communication or an access to information project** and, according to this decision, critically analyze the different technologies that could be appropriate. For example, if the strategy for the community is to reinforce ties with people outside the territory, then we need a communication technology: a cell phone network could be a project that would help fulfill this strategy. On the other hand, if the strategy is to reinforce our own educational processes using pedagogical materials from other communities, what we need is a technology that facilitates access to information. In this case, a community Internet and/or Intranet could be useful.

2 **Evaluate each of the existing technological options:** are they free or private?; what are the costs of the equipment?; does it require special maintenance?; what are the geographic and climate conditions in the community? Find out if there are people with skills to handle the equipment and, if necessary, establish alliances with organizations or groups of people.

3 **Carry out a capacity building plan** for people operating and managing the selected networks or media, as well as for those using them.

At this stage we will have laid the foundations for our communication strategy and for our communication and/or ICT project and we will be able to put it into practice.

Celebrate and reflect: constantly restart the cycle

Once the designed projects have been implemented and are developing along with the community, it is essential to take a moment to celebrate the achievement of having been able to carry out the project. This is also an occasion to reflect and evaluate.

Abya Yala Community Networks Seedbed. Cherán K'eri, Michoacán, Mexico.

Celebrating allows us to share the joy of our work with the community, it encourage us and reminds us of the reasons why we are promoting our project while we offer our work to earth and to life.

At the same time, after celebrating and working, it becomes necessary to **reflect and evaluate** the scope of the project; to think about the problems we faced and about our progress, about expected and unexpected results, among other things. The guideline for our reflection and for evaluating our work will be whether the project was integrated successfully to the proposed strategy and to the collectively drawn dream. The evaluation will serve to continue, improve and innovate, or to rethink the strategy and renew the paths to be traveled.

How frequently the project should be evaluated will depend on the dreams, goals and deadlines previously established: it could be periods of 6 months, a year, two years, or five years. The important thing is to constantly reflect and evaluate the processes and projects that are being implemented.

This whole process works like a cycle. Once the implemented projects have been evaluated, we go back to the starting point; to the ground we step on, to our territory, to our identity, needs and dreams; we ask ourselves again what strategies are to be followed and what projects must be implemented. In this way, the cycle is restarted to improve an existing process or creatively trigger new ones.

PARTICIPATORY DESIGN OF A COMMUNITY INTRANET

WHAT IS THE OBJECTIVE OF THIS METHODOLOGY?

This methodological proposal seeks to develop the potential of a community Intranet by identifying the communication and information needs of that community and by exploring the ways in which such proposal can be articulated with an existing community communication strategy.

At the same time, it offers a meeting point between technology and people, allowing collectively designing an interface and categorizing content related to previously identified needs. Finally, it includes the design of a work plan for the sustainability of the Intranet by the community organization.

This methodology should be put into practice once it has been decided that the ICT project to be developed in terms of a communication strategy is a community Intranet. However, it is important to take into account that this methodology is not intended only for the case of Intranets: **it can also be applied to different communication projects in communities.**

The development of this proposal has been possible thanks to the contributions from different experiences that have helped us rethink connectivity through the deployment of community networks for Internet access and Intranets that are born from community principles and autonomous organizational forms[7].

One of the most important references is the Ya J'noptik Community Intranet[8] developed by the Ik 'ta K'op Collective and Intrabach, both from Abasolo, Chiapas. To this we must add the experiences shared during the development of the Intranets of Santa María Yaviche and Santa María Tlahuitoltepec, Oaxaca; Guadalupe Ocotán, Nayarit[9] and Cherán K'eri, Michoacán.

One of the most significant experiences that were crucial for writing this text was meeting at **Abya Yala Community Networks Seedbed** in Cherán K'eri in June 2019. Participants from both generations of Techio Comunitario, as well as other organizations and collectives, applied this methodology and we shared ourselves in a celebration that implied not only reflection, but that also laid the foundations for the formation of the Xamoneta Intranet in Cherán[10].

This methodology encourages the community to get involved in the project by establishing a dialogue while implementing it and by critically reflecting on what is happening in the community and on the way in which certain relationships could be woven or consolidated to address specific problems and realize dreams. And here we want to specially emphasize that, when it comes to community and indigenous communication experiences, **the process of creating and implementing these projects is usually more important than the final product**.

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[7] This definition of community networks was coined at the first Latin American Summit of Community Networks in 2018: http://bit.ly/2MpndKZ

[8] For more information, please visit http://intrabach.org/

[9] For more information about these processes go to https://www.redesac.org.mx/intranets

[10] Click here to watch a video of this meeting: http://bit.ly/36NbzBn

PARTICIPATORY DESIGN OF A
COMMUNITY INTRANET

THE INTRANET
IN THE CONTEXT OF OUR COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

- Objectives of the intranet
- Mapping and linking stakeholders
- Needs to attend
- Community processes to strengthen
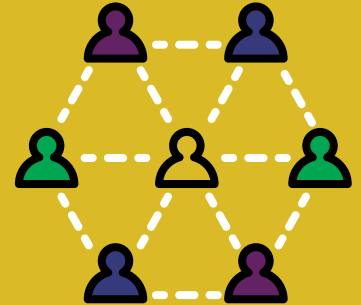
INTERFACE DESIGN

- Imagining and drawing the interface
- Content
  - Classification/cataloging
  - Production/creation
- Intranet access
- Information protection

PLAN DESIGN

- Community principles
- Terms of use and guidelines
- Internal organization and sustainability
  - Work areas
  - Designated people
- Dissemination strategy
- Work timeline
  - Steps, times, resources
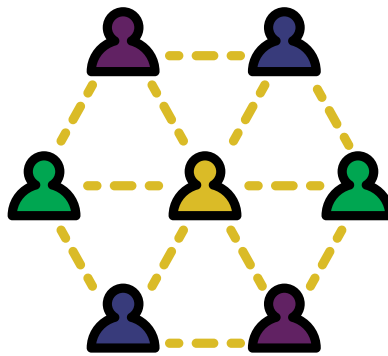
STEP 1
THE INTRANET IN THE CONTEXT OF OUR COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

The starting point for designing the Intranet is to be clear about the place this tool occupies within the communication strategy which should be previously designed based on the participatory methodology for communication projects.

In case the matrix has not been established, it is important to step back and analyze the characteristics of the community, its needs, problems and dreams, and to reflect on whether the Intranet project truly addresses the **real needs** of the community.

To illustrate the place the Intranet should have in terms of our strategy, we will discuss the elements of the previously designed communication strategy, mentioning our dreams, defining objectives, actions and people in charge, as well as allies and schedules. Taking all of this into account, we will then define the **objectives** of the Intranet. Some examples of objectives set out in other workshops are:

- **Strengthen the community culture by selecting content related to our own culture.**
- **Become a specific entertainment alternative for all community sectors.**
- **Strengthen learning and educational processes in the community.**
- **Preserve and spread the knowledge of the community.**

Once the objectives have been defined, we can discuss who will be involved directly or indirectly with the project and we can also define the details of this relationship. Among the **stakeholders** involved here, we can mention cooperatives, traditional doctors, community authorities, artisans, orchestras or community radios —people or groups that will allow the sustainability of the Intranet, either by using it, supporting it financially, or by collaborating with their own content.

Mapping stakeholders and relationships allows us to be able to look at the **needs** that the Intranet is meant to deal with, as well as to analyze the community **processes** it could contribute to strengthen. Remember that this is a communication tool designed for integrating itself to ongoing community processes.

Here are some guiding questions typically answered at this first stage:

✔ *What are the objectives of our Intranet?*
✔ *Who is it intended for?*
✔ *Which stakeholders will you engage with and in which ways?*
✔ *What needs will it satisfy?*
✔ *What processes will it strengthen?*

In order to answer these questions, you can use maps, diagrams, drawings, tables or lists. Each group will find the best way to capture and organize this information.

A member of "Nuestra Intranet" explaining the communication strategy. Santa María Yaviche, Oaxaca, Mexico
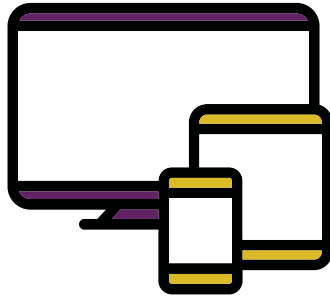
STEP 2
INTERFACE DESIGN

Once we have defined the function of the Intranet in terms of the communication strategy, we can give free rein to the imagination so that we can use drawings to arrive to an idea of how the interface of our Intranet could be conceived.

With these drawings, we usually represent a "home page" or captive portal but the main sections and the breakdown of subsections and contents are also defined. It is important to note that this ideal design can be visually modified depending on the technical possibilities that exist at the time of implementing the strategy.

This exercise seeks to name each **section** and define its **content** as well as its **format**. We want to offer a list of each section, subsection and contents, so that it may be easier to differentiate content already protected and classified, misplaced files, and material we have to produce from scratch.

When we first draw the diagram of our Intranet, it is important to think about the people in our community: how we imagine interacting with them, what colors are representative of our community, what words or phrases resonate in our territory and so on. The interface has to be related to the cultural codes and worldview of our community. This is why in some cases we named some sections using native languages in order to specifically represent a topic.

Here is an example of how to organize this information:

| SECTION	CONTENT	FORMAT	AVAILABILITY YES (Y) | NO (N) MISPLACED (?)
WHO ARE WE?	Description of the group History Community principles Rules of use Contact	.doc .png	Y
JORHENTPERAKUA *(Education in purépecha)*	Description	.odt .jpg	Y
	Books about the community	.pdf	Y
	Educational project	.pdf	?
	Educational experiences of the community *(to be defined with the school teachers)*		N

At this stage we have to think about content in terms of open or limited access: we have to be sure as to whether we want an Intranet only accessible inside the territory or an Internet access door. A crucial aspect is to discuss strategies for security and protection of data and information on the Intranet; self-care is important so that the technological foray does not imply harm to the social fabrics of the community.

*Here are some guiding questions to be answered at this second phase:*

✔ *How do we imagine and/or dream our Intranet to be?*
✔ *What content will it host?*
✔ *Where is that content?*
✔ *How are we going to recover the existing content?*
✔ *How are we going to produce new content?*
✔ *How are we going to classify it?*
✔ *How can the content be accessed?*
✔ *How are we going to protect the information on the Intranet?*

In order to inspire you, we would like to share a video of the Ya J'noptik Community Intranet, developed by the Ik 'ta K'op Collective of Abasolo, Chiapas, Mexico.

Click here to find more about it: http://bit.ly/34D0bqi
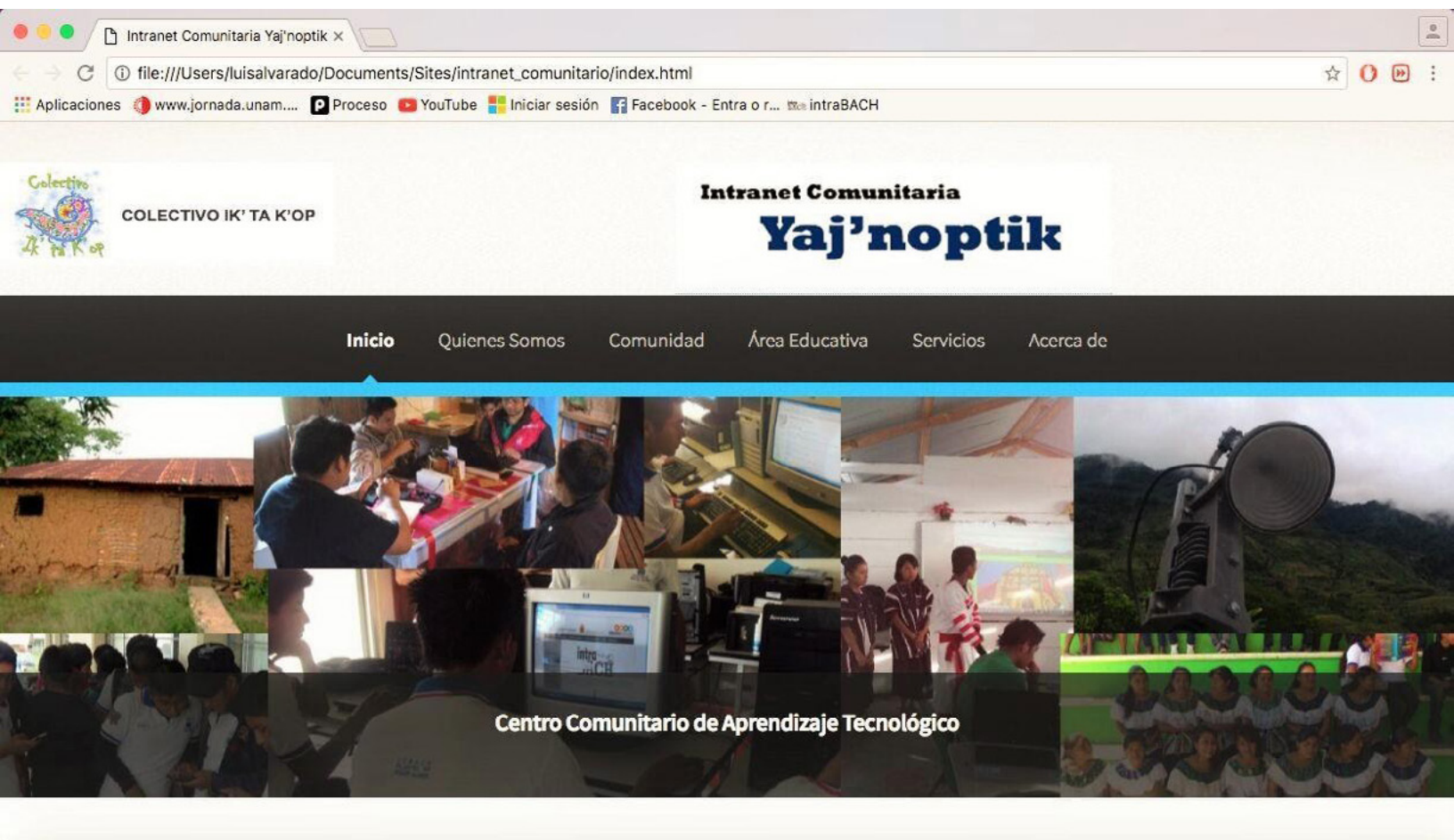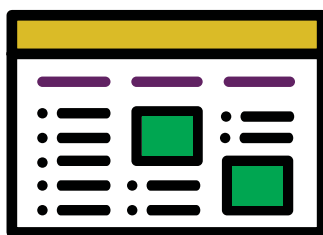
STEP 3
PLAN DESIGN

The third and final phase is the design of the plan to implement the Intranet. At this stage, we define the elements that will make the project work and that will ensure its sustainability.

This implies establishing the **community principles** that will guide its development: that is, defining the **terms of use**, the guidelines or code of ethics of the Intranet, the fields of expertise required for its operation; the **people in charge**, as well as the **steps, times and resources** necessary to implement it. Another important point is to define a **dissemination strategy** so that the community can get to know about the Intranet and get involved both in its use and in its development.

Some of the principles shared by various Intranet projects are reciprocity, respect, forms of collaborative work (such as *mano vuelta* or *tequio*), dialogue, plurality and Good Living. If these principles are well defined and comprehended when designing the project, the rules of use or guidelines are easy to establish, carry out and respect, as they are intrinsic part of the organizational logics that indeed shape life in the communities. It is important to remember the processes through which life in our communities has been historically sustained so that we can think about solutions that have been proved to be effective.

For this last phase the guiding questions are as follows:

- ✔ *What principles will guide the development of the Intranet?*
- ✔ *What will be the guidelines for using the Intranet?*
- ✔ *How do we ensure compliance with these principles and guidelines?*
- ✔ *What responsibilities will each of the stakeholders involved acquire?*
- ✔ *How are we going to organize ourselves to operate the platform?*
- ✔ *How are we going to spread the news of the platform in the community?*
- ✔ *What stages and schedules are we talking about?*
- ✔ *What resources do we need?*
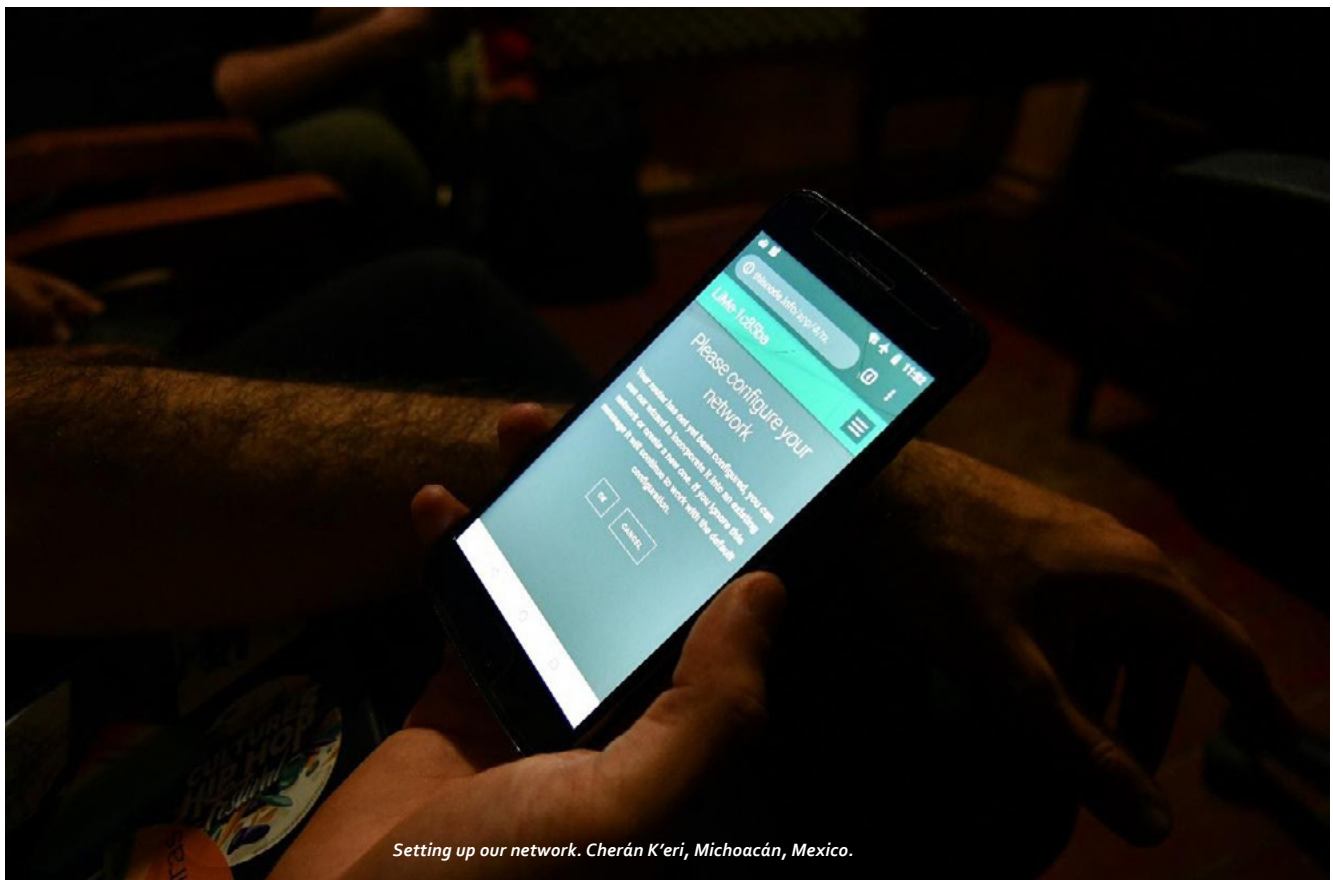
Setting up our network. Cherán K'eri, Michoacán, Mexico.

Sharing knowledge. Semillero de Redes Comunitarias del Abya Yala. Cherán K'eri, Michoacán, Mexico.

A SUGGESTED PATH TO FOLLOW

In one of the workshops for the implementation of this methodology, some representatives of communication projects were asked **how they could implement this methodology in their communities**. We think it is important to share their answers as they were helpful in taking some important steps. As it can be noted, these recommendations bring together elements of both the methodology for creating communication projects and the participatory design of the Intranet:

1. It is advisable to assemble a team of committed people to prepare a first draft of the implementation plan for applying the methodology.

2. Socialize the proposal and summon key stakeholders in the community.

3. Hold a meeting with the community and follow the steps of the participatory methodology designed for communication projects. Make sure you explain what an Intranet is. Define the dreams and needs of the community, as well as the communication strategy.

4. Allow the community to decide the communication or ICT project they want to promote and proceed to organize the team that will develop the project together with the key stakeholders that they will accompany this process.

5. Design a plan with the elements described above.

6. Execute the plan, including a training process for those in charge of the operation of the Intranet and also for platform users.

7. Celebrate with a project launch party.

8. Establish a medium-term for the evaluation of the project and the restructuring of the plan to follow.

The methodological proposals that we have shared in this document are not to be considered conclusive. In fact, as we have shown in this last section, the processes generated and the mechanisms to trigger them will always be in constant construction and resignification. Our journey has been a constant search to create the appropriate conditions for allowing communities to generate and consolidate their own communication projects; and in that journey we have also rebuilt ourselves and the way in which we think about our work.

In this context, we refuse to consider communication an accumulation of materials to promote our work or as a way of accessing the information currently available in our world. We understand communication as a process of constant reflection concerning our realities. We think that it is working together that we can face our felt needs. This is why this is an open invitation. As we said above, our intention was not to present a model or a rigid methodology, but to share with you some reflections and techniques that we have learned thanks to the experience of many people, groups and communities. Your comments and contributions to this guide will make this reflection increasingly richer and will contribute to the process of moving towards technological autonomy.

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