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Interaction and Network analysis in heritage organizations in Valledupar – Colombia

*Interacción y análisis de redes en organizaciones patrimoniales
en Valledupar - Colombia*

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: Between 2017 and 2022, it was carried out research on the management of cultural heritage organizations in the Colombian Caribbean. Caught our attention the quantity and quality of cultural organizations built in Valledupar, Colombia, in comparison to larger cities, and with greater economic resources. **Objective:** In this study we attempt to identify the economic support ecosystem in the cultural heritage organizations of the city of Valledupar (Cesar, Colombia) and, based on in-depth interviews, formulate postulates about the forces that have facilitated the development of a rich and complex cultural ecosystem, despite the scarcity of resources. **Methodology:** Social network analysis ARS was used, based on the methodology of Organizational life stories. **Results:** the relationship dynamics of seven cultural heritage organizations are shown. The network of support that organizations use to survive were represented, which allow them to improve management and strengthen their relationship systems for financing, learning and access to new services and resources. The SNA methodology allowed us to identify the greatest supports, the type of networks, and the development possibilities of the organizations analyzed.

KEY WORDS

Social Network Analysis SNA, cultural heritage, organizations, management. Qualitative methods.

RESUMEN

Introducción: Entre 2017 y 2022 se realizó una investigación sobre la gestión de las organizaciones del patrimonio cultural en el Caribe colombiano. Nos llamó la atención la cantidad y calidad de las organizaciones culturales construidas en Valledupar, Colombia, en comparación con ciudades más grandes y con mayores recursos económicos. **Objetivo:** En este estudio intentamos identificar el ecosistema de soporte económico de las organizaciones patrimoniales culturales de la ciudad de Valledupar (Cesar, Colombia) y, a partir de entrevistas en profundidad, formular postulados sobre las fuerzas que han facilitado el desarrollo de un rica y complejo ecosistema cultural, a pesar de la escasez de recursos. **Metodología:** Se utilizó el análisis de redes sociales ARS, con base en la metodología de Historias de vida organizacionales. **Resultados:** Se muestra la dinámica de relación de siete organizaciones de patrimonio cultural. Se representaron las redes de apoyo que utilizan las organizaciones para sobrevivir, que les permiten mejorar la gestión y fortalecer sus sistemas de relacionamiento para el financiamiento, el aprendizaje y el acceso a nuevos servicios y recursos. La metodología ARS permitió identificar los mayores apoyos, el tipo de redes, los conflictos y las posibilidades de desarrollo de las organizaciones analizadas.

PALABRAS CLAVE

Análisis de redes sociales ARS, patrimonio cultural, organizaciones, gestión, métodos cualitativos.

1. INTRODUCTION

Between years 2017 and 2022, it was conducted research on the management of cultural heritage organizations in the Colombian Caribbean and called attention to the quantity and quality of the organizations that had been formed in this city, compared to larger cities with greater economic resources. With the help of social network analysis, the dynamics, and relationships of 7 heritage organizations will be shown. From the large *Fundación Festival de la leyenda Vallenata*, which preserves the peculiar character of its music, to the very small *El Cuartico*, which rescues the traditional ways of life of the region, we attempt to identify the economic support ecosystem in the cultural heritage organizations of the city of Valledupar and, formulate hypotheses about the forces that have

facilitated the development of a rich and complex cultural ecosystem from scarce resources.

The city of Valledupar is located in the department of Cesar, in northern Colombia. For centuries this region, separated by two great mountain ranges, the Serranía del Perijá and the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta, has been inventing life. One of its greatest cultural promoters, the musician Beto Murgas says: “Since nothing came here, we had to invent everything” and so it seems, in Valledupar music was invented: Vallenato (intangible heritage of humanity), the instrument was invented: the accordion (which is a modified bandoneon) and, as in García Márquez’s Macondo, solutions for life were invented: housing, pans, totumo spoons and, more, all with their own vallenato forms.

It is a medium-size city (with 385,000 inhabitants) with a rich cultural heritage, that rocks between development and tradition. Founded in 1550, Valledupar is located at the east coast border in Colombia (Fig. 1). It has a historic center that preserves buildings from the colonial era and, was declared a National Asset of Cultural Interest in 2000, giving priority to its conservation (MINCULTURA 2019). Its territory is inhabited by four indigenous groups: Aruacos, Kankuamos, Kogui and Wiwas, which maintain distinct cultures, habits and customs that give the region a great ethnic and cultural diversity (Alcaldía de Valledupar 2022).

The centralized economic model in Colombia has generated a disconnection in this region of the country that has translated into poverty and little technological and economic development, when compared to the cities in the center of the country.

Each year, during the famous Vallenato Festival, in a week the population can increase by 50% and, a hotel room growth its price up to 10 times. After this festival the city return to their slow pace of boiling afternoons. This calm environment has fostered the development of numerous cultural organizations that are striking for their diversity, their permanence, and their ability to achieve global goals, such as the Unesco nomination or the consolidation of vallenato as a national rhythm. In fact, if this cultural wealth did not exist, Valledupar would not exist on the national scene.

At the beginning of the study, we started with two premises: that the organizations would be very small, with low permanence, and that the largest source of resources would be the State through the local and state governments; but we found a rich ecosystem with many people interested in cultural heritage. This is, perhaps, the starting question of this study: Around what elements has this rich cultural ecosystem developed in a border city?

In order to establish that in this study we attempt to identify the socioeconomic support ecosystem in the cultural heritage organizations of the city of Valledupar (Cesar, Colombia) and, based on in-depth interviews, formulate postulates about the forces that have facilitated the development of a rich and complex cultural ecosystem, despite the scarcity of resources. In the study carried out by Holden (2015), when asked what the cultural ecosystem referred to, people responded in two ways depending on what they understood as culture:

a. Like all the activities that individuals do to create collective meanings and, b. As a synonym of arts and artistic practices. In this paper we understand cultural ecosystem as that which integrates both, the organizations that work around the creation of meaning, arts, and cultural identity: artistic, cultural, traditional, archaeological, or historical heritage.

Fig. 1. Map of Cesar - Colombia. Valledupar to the north. Source: Governor's office of Cesar, 2024.



These 7 organizations (Fig. 2), which have received national recognition, are a sample of what organizations from all over the country are doing to recover, preserve and promote local culture (Citro et. al. 2017). This work is not a census, so not all the organizations in the city are shown. We choose those that voluntarily provided information for the construction of their organizational networks, that show diversity in the types of heritage they preserve and work with constancy throughout the years. They appeared in the in-depth interviews carried out in 2017 and were followed up in the following years through their networks, media, and new interviews (Fig. 2).

Fig. 2. Organizations analyzed in Valledupar, Snowball Methodology. 2024.**Source: Authors.**

2. ORGANIZATIONAL PERFORMANCE AND NETWORKS

From the perspective of complexity there are different ways to study, formulate and measure complex systems, all of them trying to reduce complexity for understanding, prediction or intervention (Mesjasz 2010, Grösser 2017). Social networks and their images have shown to be very effective in explaining the quality and characteristics of the relationships that individuals establish with their environment and have even functioned as predictors of labor and school success, among others (Reynoso 2019).

Cultural heritage is a network of relationships that is formed around cultural meanings. Communities are the means by which intangible cultural heritage is disseminated (something similar happens in tangible heritage, although it has the advantage that the object and the symbol are condensed into one). Intangible cultural heritage is normally disseminated through orality, habits, practices, and facts, and to a much lesser extent through the written word, recordings, virtual interactions, or impersonal dynamics.

The biological metaphor of the ecosystem can be very useful in heritage studies because it shows the diversity and complexity of the relationships of the cultural system of a region. In this sense, the elements analyzed here are only a few of the many that can appear in an ecosystem: external influences, influential people, public policy, technologies, entry of new resources, among others.

This need to stay connected makes it necessary to understand the type of relationships that are assembled around heritage and the characteristics of such relationships. Research in cultural heritage has been concentrated around communities of experts who have historically defined the value of cultural practices, goods or expressions and have defined policies around what should or should not be conserved. However, there is less research on the livelihoods of heritage organizations and tools and studies that try to link the knowledge and services of

all stakeholders in cultural heritage are still scarce (Oh 2019; Tengö et. al 2017; Whyte et al. 2015).

In cultural heritage organizations, economic and financial sustainability relationships may be indistinguishable from learning, dissemination, or support service relationships, however the development of economic sustainability relationships is central to making heritage organizations viable in time and do not depend only on communities that can disappear as their members disappear due to the natural life cycle, but that can remain for future generations (Kilonzi & Ota 2019).

In the case of this study, the proposal of Barabási (2003; Crossley 2019) was applied, which uses networks as a representation of relationships in social complexity. It could be said that networks are a map, as could be hierarchies, pyramids, organization charts, decision trees, etc. However, these networks are expected to be effective in showing the organizations studied as a structure of interpersonal links, in this case a kind of down to top modeling that allows moving from individual levels to groupings less conflicting than other formalisms (Reynoso 2008).

The cultural heritage organization can be seen as the executing entity and the axis of realization of collective cultural objectives, the way in which heritage is materialized and extended to society for its use and appreciation (Gómez-Zapata & Barrio-Tellado 2023; Lebeau 2020; Cabrera & Vidal 2017). In this case, the networks make it possible to assess the attributes of the relationships established by these organizations and the quality of the support that has been built (in the past), but also to make a diagnosis and build objectives to improve the management of these organizations and thus the conservation of heritage and the construction of cultural identity (Baxter 2014; Melo 2015).

In terms of support and funding, heritage organizations have relied mainly on state resources but the conditions on heritage collections (policies, collections, exhibition, etc.) can be very demanding for the organizations, reducing their freedom of action on their projects (Hernández & Ruiz 2017). Thus, this article aims to present the organizations studied as a structure of interorganizational links and to show the methodological possibilities provided by network analysis to show the sustainability potential of cultural heritage organizations for the conservation and safeguarding of the heritage of communities.

3. HOW DOES NETWORK ANALYSIS WORK?

The analysis of social networks allows us to characterize and understand social reality based on the schematization of the relationships established between actors (Borgatti 2013; Foster et al. 2011). In the case of human social organization networks are a map of the negotiations that take place, the deals that are developed and the ways in which they relate and solve problems in their environment (Granovetter & Swedberg 2018). As a methodology ARS network analysis can be complemented by obtaining other types of internal organizatio-

nal variables such as strategic, quality or public variables. In this case network analysis is based on the gestalt and synthetic capacity of the image, capable of showing organizations more directly than analysis, language or interpretation (Reynoso 2008: 22).

Social network analysis (SNA) has emerged as a powerful tool to elucidate relationships and interactions that are difficult to see in an unstructured analysis, such as: information flows, power structures, the dissemination of news and stories, the distribution of resources and services, among others (Borgatti & Halgin 2011). The ARS has been applied in various ways in the field of cultural heritage, including the identification of communities of practice in heritage management, the mapping of visitors to cultural sites, tourism carrying capacity optimization studies and the evaluation of the impact of interventions in the stakeholder network. ARS social network analysis has been very useful because it represents these relationships in the form of graphic structures, however the graphs must find support in the meanings of groups and communities to acquire meaning (Holden 2015).

With social network analysis it is possible to identify actors, centers of gravity or communication gaps in a cultural ecosystem, it is also possible to map processes, opportunities, and paths of action to improve (Serrat 2009). Although the application of network analysis is not new, it has been enhanced with computing tools, for example Hewison et al. (2010) studied the formal and informal networks of the Royal Shakespeare Company. Bernardini (2007) tracked the relationships between Hopi Artisans, and Mills et al. (2012) mapped the flows of information and techniques in ceramics in North America (Mangialardi et al. 2015).

For Sözen et. al. (2009) the strength of an interpersonal bond is a combination of four attributes: the amount of time invested in the relationship, the emotional intensity, the intimacy (mutual trust) and the reciprocity services that describe the bond, all of them subjective and each one independent of the others, the set is intracorrelated. At the time when the author defines the qualities of the bond (70's of the 20th century) he postpones for future empirical studies the operational measures, however, he proposes on an intuitive basis to define the bonds as strong, weak or absent (Reynoso 2019) which is still used with satisfactory results until today.

From the analysis of ARS networks, it is possible to make inferences about characteristics such as the centrality and power of these actors. In this study, centrality and power have been defined through the number of times an organization or network was mentioned by one of the actors interviewed (Granovetter & Swedberg 2018). Here this indicator, too, is related to the intermediation power while the organizations mentioned can serve as intermediaries between actors. Thus, the more times an organization or network has been mentioned the more centrality or power it has (Sözen et. al. 2009), this characteristic is represented in the graphs through the size of the nodes, which we will see in the figures below. However, this method, mainly in social studies, requires qualitative support that allows giving dimension and depth to the schemes and measurements of the net-

works. In our case we used in-depth interviews to review some of the findings of the ARS technique.

4. MATERIALS AND METHODS

In 2017, a first trip was made to identify organizations that were working on cultural heritage in the city of Valledupar. Then, in 2022, this information was confirmed and enhanced. The central idea of this study is to show the cultural ecosystem in Valledupar, the system of socioeconomic support that has been generated around cultural heritage. As it has been said in other studies the category Heritage Organizations is scarce in the literature (Cabrera & Vidal 2017) and part of the effort of this work is precisely to show its relationships, processes, and complexity (De la Rúa 2005).

Materials

In-depth interviews were conducted based on the validated instrument: Organizational Life History (Historia de vida y Análisis de Redes sociales en Organizaciones de Patrimonio cultural, adapted of Martínez & Palacio, 2016), which evaluates the history, resources, and networks that each organization has developed. This instrument asks which organizations they had a relationship within the last year, what type of resources they obtained and, how frequently they interact. Since 94% of the interactions were one-time, the intensity of the relationships was not analyzed.

Methods

The sampling was done using the snowball method (where one organization conducts to the next one), to identify the organizations that work on cultural heritage in the city. The only exclusion criterion was not being constituted and recognized as an organization. Thus, people who work alone as musicians, informal groups or social movements were not included in this analysis. The scheme of this job is detailed in Fig. 2.

Two face to face interviews with managers were conducted, for each organization, and the information was verified through social networks and news in 2022. Gephi 0.9.7 free software was used for data analysis. This analysis is based on three indicators:

- a. Number and type of relationships with the organizational agents with which projects have been developed in the last two years.
- b. Number and type of institutional support relationships
- c. Membership and degree of cohesion in formally constituted work networks.

In this case, neither the direction nor the degree of relationship between the organizations was evaluated, but a qualitative analysis based on in-depth interviews was made of the relative importance of the projects carried out by the organization of interest, in terms of promotion, financing or support in work.

5. RESULTS

For the degree of centrality indicator, the largest number of relationships, as expected, is shown by the *Festival de la leyenda vallenata* (38 Vs. El Cuartico con 14), which shows its influence in the network and its capacity to generate support and mobilize resources. It is one of the main cultural events in the country and attracts more tourists and visitors to the region.

The overall network (Fig. 3 and 4) shows a relatively small size that has developed recurrently around the same organizations analyzed. This shows that, despite being a small city with limited resources, it has managed to consolidate a group of supporters around culture and heritage. Although most of the responsibility is assumed by the cultural entrepreneurs (as they make clear in all the interviews), they have also been developing support networks around their projects. For this reason, public entities such as the mayor's office and the governor's office frequently appear, which have a great influence by generating the greatest financial and logistical support.

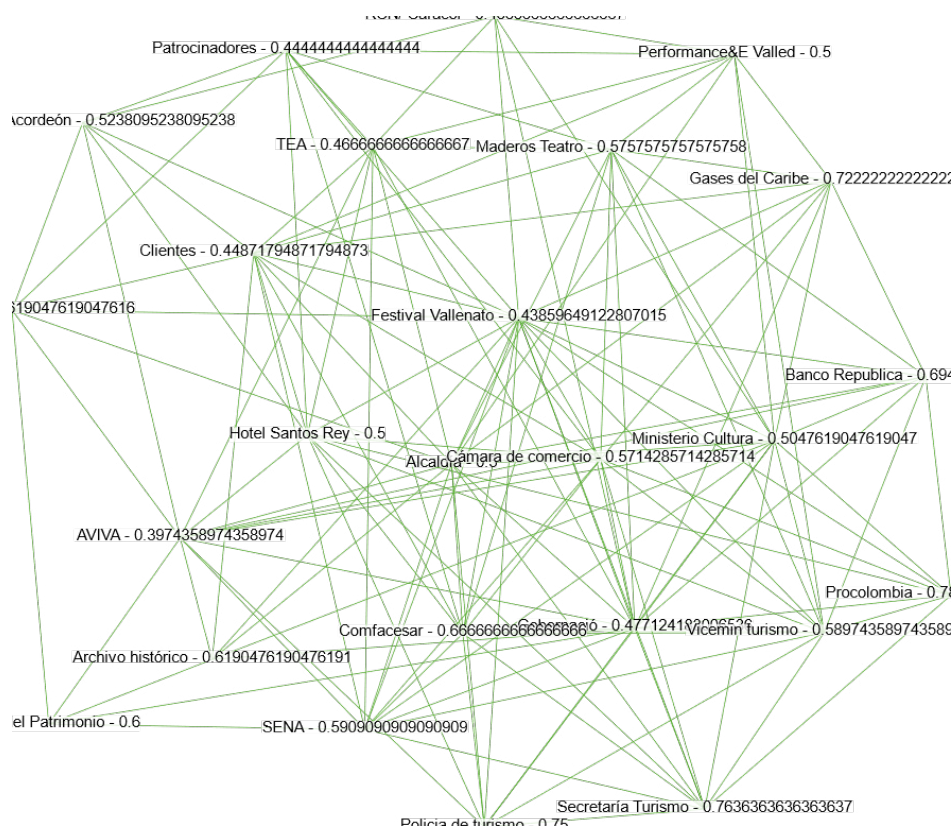
In general, this type of networks can be called LE scale-free because they do not fall apart, even if some nodes disappear (Crossley 2019). This may be because in a small city, frequent and personal relationships ensure that the network is sustained even if the organization itself disappears. For example, hubs or highly connected entities, what the festival could be like, are more effective in moving information and serving as sources of communication than the idea of reaching every single organization.

For the indicator Centrality of intermediation (Betweenness) that measures leadership, occupying an intermediate position, the highest was the Festival too (26,9). Public entities again show a key role (Federal Government 22,2 and local government 14,4) however, in this category also appears the AVIVA Foundation (12,5) as an important actor that was mentioned by other organizations for its leadership in the defense of architectural heritage and has collaborated with other projects in the city. This shows the work of the Foundation AVIVA that has managed to sustain itself and has also promoted the development of other organizations such as the Historical Archive, the *Vigías del patrimonio* (Heritage Watchers) and the Cuartico. These hub organizations (Festival and AVIVA) are called upon to teach capabilities to the less connected ones to improve network connectivity. Also, that the network had one or two actors (centrality) connecting the whole network (state entities) in self-organizing systems, following a pattern, in this case seeking as a partner the major stakeholder in social benefits: the State.

For instance, during the interviews with the other 6 organizations, the Festival was the main reference, however, three organizational leaders: Aviva, The Historical Archive and the Hotel de los Santos Reyes said that it is a shame that it is so predominant because Valledupar is not just vallenato. Their rich architectural, historical and indigenous heritage, and their traditional culture, are aspects to which no resources are dedicated because almost everything goes to the festival, so they must barely survive with private initiatives.

One of the interesting findings when looking at the graph is the frequency with which state support is mentioned in the form of government, mayor's office, Procolombia, Banco de la República, SENA or ministries and vice ministries. Although government support in Colombia is not onerous, as the interviewees mentioned small projects (less than US\$13,500 per year), they do contribute to interesting events and allocate significant resources to the Festival (There is no official figure but the festival generates about COP\$38 billion in benefits). In the case of private entities, the family compensation funds (which in Colombia manage and distribute the resources of the family subsidy for employees) and the Chamber of Commerce, which is a private, non-profit organization created to defend and stimulate entrepreneurs in Colombia (COMFECÁMARAS 2021), were frequently mentioned.

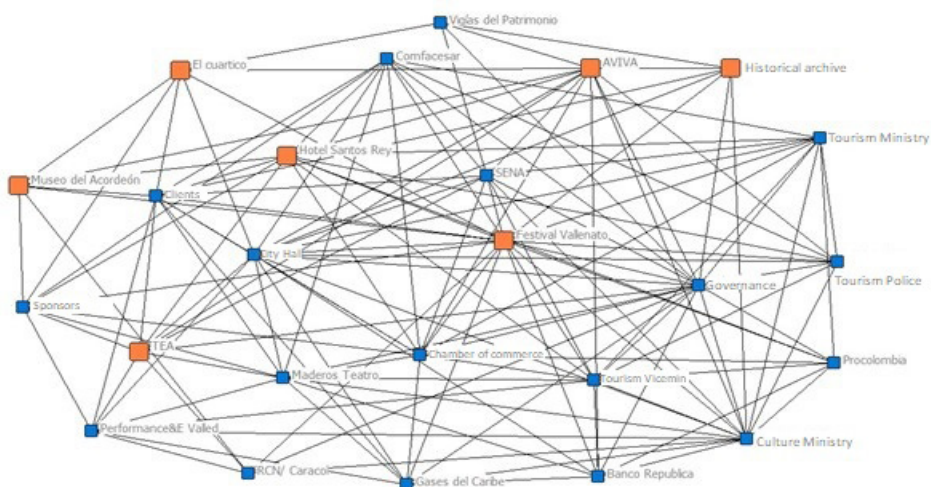
Fig. 3. Clustering coefficient. 2024. Source: Authors.



In terms of communities, these graphs show the existence of four large groups or “tribes” around cultural projects: a. Historic; b. Vallenato; c. Traditional life, and d. Arts. but rather the communication between the different cultural manifestations; however, the discourses do not identify a single cultural community. Rather, the organizations are grouped around well-known leaders and support entities that finance some activities, showing a competition for scarce public resources. Although most of the organizations survive with their own resources and time, they do require other means to develop important intervention and development activities. This could be done by developing resource management skills from private or mixed entities, other public entities, and international cooperation organizations.

It is a relatively homogeneous network with nest form (Fig. 4) in which the farthest point is the *Museo El Cuartico* (The Little Room Museum), which has survived mainly on family resources, although they have managed to integrate into various activities of the Festival, and the cultural life of the city. Relationships are built around two forces, the Vallenato Festival and the public entities that support the cultural activity. More than communities there is an interaction of all, in which there is a very marked tendency towards the Festival and vallenato, and another that seeks to promote historical heritage, and the idea that the city “is something more than vallenato” (Personal Interview AVIVA, Archive and Accordion Museum 2017) to show all the cultural richness of the region.

Fig. 4. General network of organizations in Valledupar. Source: Authors, 2024.



Thus, even the most distant point is immersed in the relationships and services of the network. In the interviews it became evident that the links are infrequent (about once a month or less), they are weak ties (not personal or friend-

ship) and most of the time they are of services, not reciprocal. In the in-depth interviews leaderships emerged marked as, for example, the Aviva Foundation was associated, in almost all the interviews, with the leadership of Alba Luz Luque, the leadership of the Vallenato Festival with Consuelo Araujo, Rafael Escalona and the former president Alfonso López Michelsen, and the leadership of the Museum with the musician Beto Murgas.

They have a high level of cohesion because the farthest point is only two nodes from the center. In the group of sponsors are local companies that support, for a single time a year and without continuity commitments, or those that buy advertising in different events, as well as private television networks that have carried out medium-term projects in the city. The company *Gases del Caribe* appears apart from the group of companies because it was mentioned by the interviewees on several occasions (4) as providing important resources (although with the same conditions, annually and without a commitment of continuity).

In this network scheme it was decided not to show isolated individuals in the category Clients and Suppliers for two reasons, because this category Clients and Suppliers only appeared in the interview of the Vallenato Festival and because they are the same organizations for the whole city. On the other hand, in the interviews it was evident that there have been some very strong personal leaderships such as those of Alba Luz Luque or Consuelo Araujo la Cacica, who appear frequently as cultural promoters in the interviews. The results for each of the organizations analyzed are shown below:

5.1. AVIVA Organization

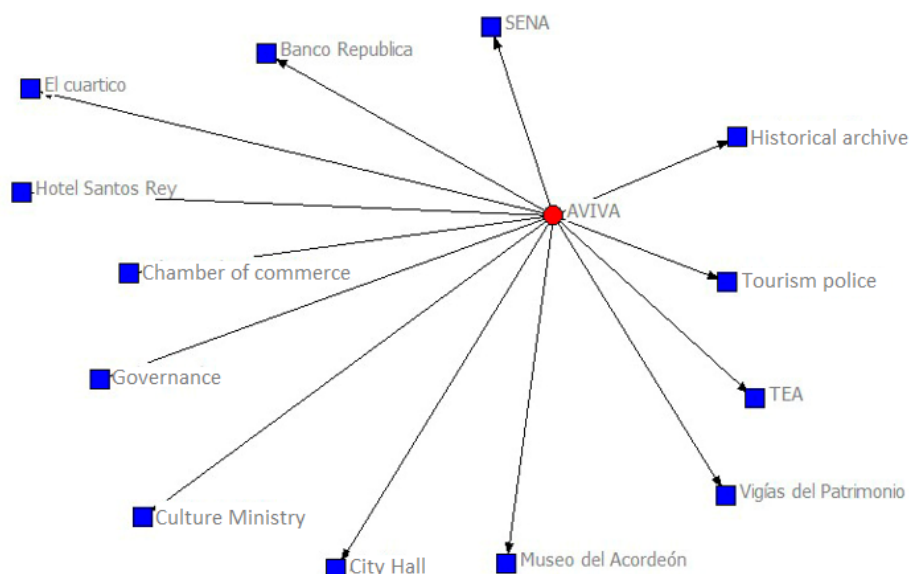
The AVIVA organization (*Amigos del Viejo Valle de Upar*) was founded in 2007, when 12 professionals (architects from the city and residents of the area) came together with a sense of loss due to the deterioration of the historic center of the city and decided to form a foundation. This project, led by Alba Luz Luque, has been working on the recovery of the historic center of the city, which has buildings from the 16th century and was declared historical heritage of Colombia: There are monuments like De Badillo Church, De Valencia de Jesús Church (S.XVI) and National Loperena School (1942) (El Pilón 2020). The administrative model of this organization is interesting because it has no headquarters, no fixed costs and operates with donations in time, labor and kind made by its members.

The Foundation has lobbied for the recovery of the Alfonso López square and the buildings surrounding the square, including some alleys and churches of historical interest. Their work plan includes 8 blocks around the Plaza for its conservation, the creation of the local Heritage Board, the development of the Heritage Watchers Program in schools and the celebration of Heritage Month, which is held every year. To this end, they have created networks with some public organizations or governmental entities such as the Bank of the Republic, the SENA, the Historical Archive, the Ministry of Culture, the Mayor's Office,

and the Governor's Office; however, they recognize that this relationship has been complicated due to the different interests involved in public management. The most interesting aspect of this initiative is that they have supported projects such as *El Cuartico* for the preservation of the traditional values and techniques of the Upar Valley.

The AVIVA Foundation has been establishing links and generating support that place it in a central place in the cultural life of the organization. It is linked, in different ways, with almost all the organizations mentioned above, which is why it is a central node in the entire network. It works as a constituted entity and has led processes and helped to strengthen the processes of other organizations in the city, which evidences a superior management development.

Fig. 5. AVIVA Foundation network. Source: Authors, 2024.



5.2. El Cuartico Memory Center

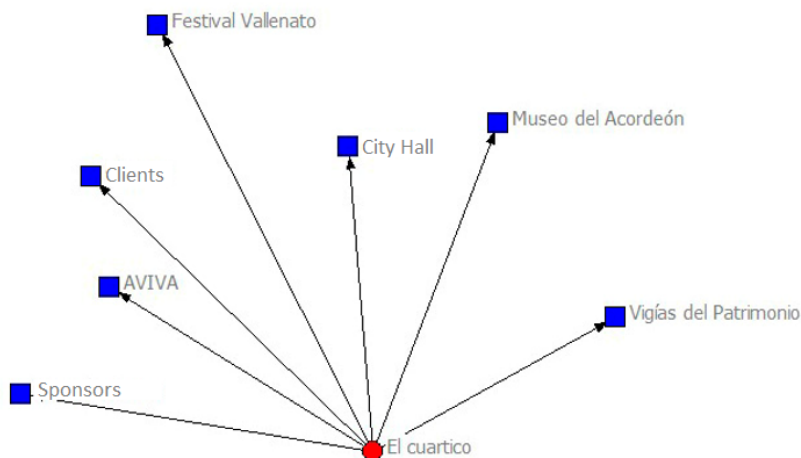
The memory center project *Casa de bahareque El Cuartico*, is established on the paternal house of the Jiménez family, made up of five people. It was finished on April 27th, 1966 and is located in the San Joaquín neighborhood of Valledupar. Built in cane, mud, wood, tile roof and mud floor, it has three rooms: living room, bedroom, and kitchen. It is spacious and cool in a city that easily reaches 40° in the shade. This “Cuartico” is a Memory Center for future generations, reflecting the essence of the traditional customs of the Valley. It represents the ordinary and familiar life, relaxed and pleasant, that was lived until not-so-distant

times in the region. It is called the *Cuartico* because the same room was used to eat, sleep, receive relatives and visitors.

The furniture and household objects include benches, wooden tables, leather seats, among other valuable objects. A grinding stone from 1850, owned by the maternal great-great-grandmother Virginia Torres, which was used to grind corn, coffee and salt, is preserved. Like any other house in the region, EL CUARTICO was inaugurated with a “parranda vallenata”, that is a kind of party enlivened by a vallenato group, with Colacho Mendoza, Adán Montero Jiménez, Rodolfo Castilla Polo and Jairo Negrete, famous musicians of the region.

The *Centro de Memoria El Cuartico* has a very simple network, with little support, which has been generated over the years. They do not have resources for advertising or sales, nor do they carry out events, all the financial effort is made by the Jiménez family at the head of Cecilia Jiménez, however, they have managed to position themselves as one of the most representative places in Valledupar (They have rating of 5 in Tripadvisor) and have won awards such as the *Casa festivalera* in 2016 and 2018 and *Gestores de cultural ciudadana* in 2016. *El Cuartico* is an initiative with many attractions that has managed to move the interest of other organizations. They have woven their network with organizations such as the Vallenato Festival, The AVIVA Foundation, the Accordion Museum, and the mayor’s office, however, they recognize that their funding is difficult, and their greatest support are tourists (they are few and reached zero in this quarantine season). Therefore, it is an organization that has been strengthened in the imaginary of the city but has not been able to consolidate a permanent network of reciprocity in services or financial support.

Fig. 6. *El Cuartico* memory center. Source: Authors, 2024.



5.3. Festival de la leyenda Vallenata

Festival de la leyenda Vallenata is the greatest celebration of the people from Valledupar and one of the most important in the country. Once a year, it celebrates Vallenato music and culture, unique in the world. This festival gathers the songs, traditions, legends and myths, customs and uses that make up the Vallenato folklore. Initially, it was held in the basement of the 'Francisco El hombre' stage of the Plaza Alfonso López (until 2005). Since then, it takes place in the the *Parque de la Leyenda Vallenata*, which was built specifically for this purpose. The number of people registered to participate in the different contests is increasing. The growth of the Foundation can also be seen in its organizational and administrative structure (it is made up of 37 people), since it went from being the dream of a handful of motivated people, to an example of organization, efficiency and folkloric, cultural and social results with priority safeguarding by the Colombian Ministry of Culture.

As it can be seen in the general network, the festival concentrates all possible relationships in the city. It is, perhaps, the most important focus of identity at the local level, with an international impact. The network of relations of the Vallenato Festival Foundation is the most complex of this group of organizations. Through the Ministry of Culture, the governmental contribution, not counting services can reach \$135 thousand dollars and, produce \$900 thousand dollars (Caracol.com 2021) and they have sponsors, who make contributions to the project, clients who buy different strategic advertising and sales spaces in the event that they can produce (Área Andina 2017) Likewise they work with the chamber of commerce, the SENA, the police, the different governmental instances and Colombian media channels (Panorama Cultural 2013).

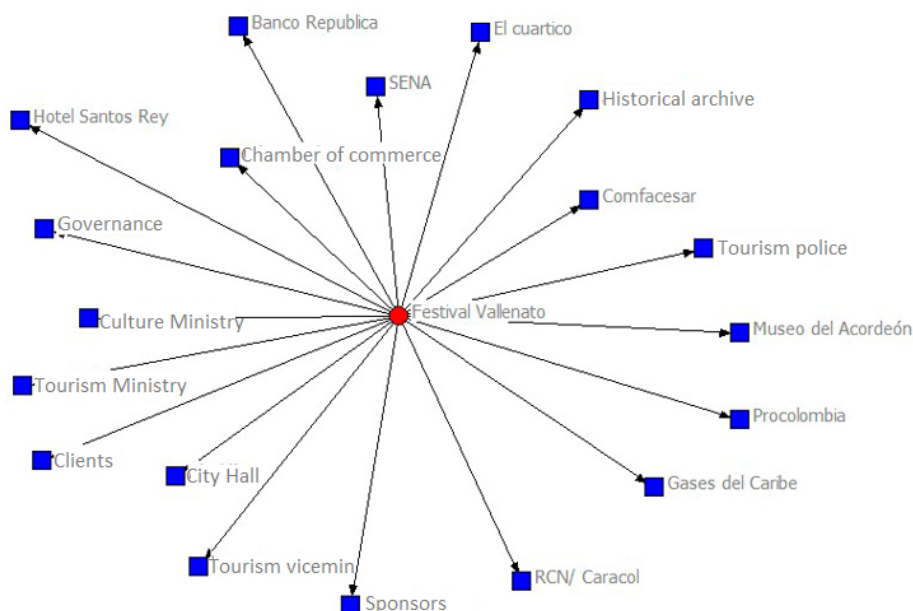
Festival de la leyenda vallenata is the most central node, as expected, since it moves a large amount of resources of the region and is the most important cultural event for locals and visitors. It is no exaggeration to say that people from Valledupar live and breathe vallenato, and this is evident in the network. The Festival supports other cultural projects or serves as a platform for the development of alternative projects around the theme: *El cuartico*, the Accordion Museum, families of artisans, musicians, merchants, tourism companies and all those who in some way are associated with this annual festival. They have a store, a restaurant and a space for shows that take place throughout the year.

The Festival can be seen as a central node around which the most important activities of the city's cultural life converge. The Vallenato Festival Foundation was reported by most of the interviewees and has a very strong influence (positive and negative) on cultural activities and the budgetary allocation of cultural spending in the Caribbean region, which can be a disadvantage from the point of view of other small organizations competing for scarce resources for culture in the region.

Among the sponsors of this event are the most important companies in the country such as the big media, the large beverage and communications industries, so it is not comparable with the others, therefore the caveat is made that,

although the categories Clients and Sponsors are represented with a single node, a single network of clients and sponsors of the Vallenato Festival would occupy an entire space. This festival moves almost 100% of the region's tourism in one week of the year (the city receives 74.000 tourists) and its budget is US\$1.1 million dollars (Área Andina 2017), however, the biggest supporters of the organization are the state entities represented in the network (MINCULTURA 2016).

Fig. 7. Festival de la leyenda vallenata. Source: The authors, 2024.



5.4. Hotel de los Santos Reyes

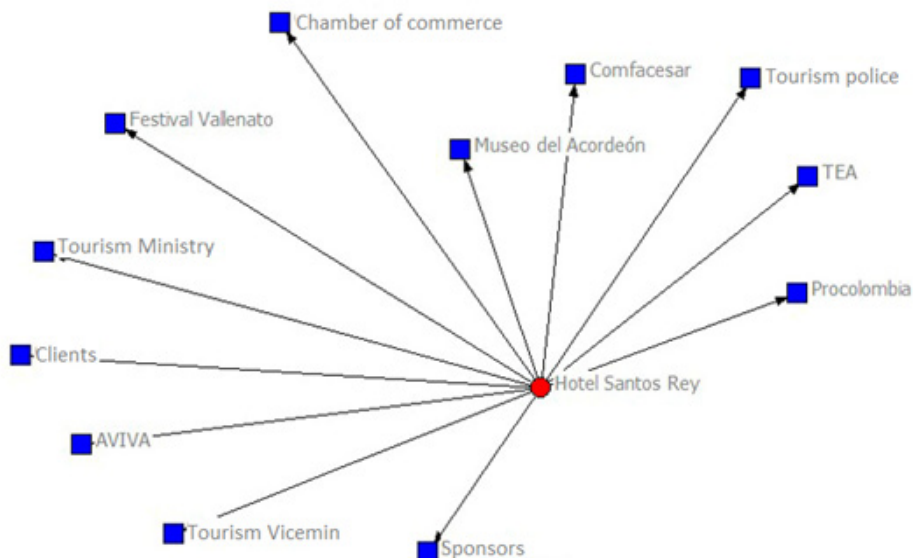
Hotel de los Santos Reyes is the materialization of the efforts of two environmental engineers who wanted to recover a 17th century architectural treasure in the historic center of Valledupar, for the enjoyment of the city and to develop a value proposition compatible with the environment, climate and diversity of the foothills of the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta. They had a hostel in another part of the city and saw the abandoned building, which was a dump: there was rickety furniture, debris, etc. It was falling apart. They had wanted to venture into the boutique hotel segment and decided to rent the house for that purpose.

The authors of the project, which has been going on for 18 years, recognize that the restoration process has been very difficult, because there are no plans, guidelines or financing from the State, unless the hotel is subject to conditions that do not favor them. Thus, the restoration of heritage by a private entity is an

activity that presents few benefits, despite which the authors of the project think that it is an effort that has been worthwhile, and the fruits can already be seen.

Because there are not many restoration architects or experts in the colonial period in Colombia, they tend to be very expensive undertakings. The architects in the area did not know about restoration, so they were asked why they were complicating their lives, they were recommended to knock down, to make the electrical or water installations by breaking the walls, which made the project really difficult. Despite this, the engineers insisted, and a natural restoration was done based on what they had seen in other places, respecting the original building and the structure of the house, searching the Internet, learning from the experience of others in different places, it is a story that has been pieced together. Due to Cristina Zapata's training as an environmental engineer, they have bet on green energies, environmental certifications, they have made a great effort to recover the gardens using native species. In addition to the leaders, they employ 5 more people on a permanent basis. The alley was also intervened, trees were planted, urban furniture was installed, negotiations were held with the neighbors who began to get involved and even with the mayor's office to prohibit the parking of motorcycles and cars, which was a recurrent practice.

This organization also develops cultural activities with the community such as meetings and lunches to promote local identity. They have also developed a support network that has helped them to win international awards such as the Charming Hotels award. Currently there are exhibitions of weavers, traditional cooking, jewelry, and painting, and the idea is to continue expanding the offerings to turn the house into a gallery, a place for exhibitions and cultural encounters, in alliance with local and visiting artists. They have also sought institutional support through entities such as the Vice Ministry of Tourism, Procolombia and the Chamber of Commerce.

Fig. 8. Network *Hotel de los Santos reyes*. Source: Authors, 2024.

They are very clear that without the search for support they would not be able to carry out activities other than their commercial activity. Given their knowledge of hotel and tourism management, they have overseen managing support and networks around their activity, stable and long-term relationships. They have developed activities to integrate the community, such as the urban recovery of the *Callejón del Mahoma* to make it participate in their project, despite this they conclude that this has been a very costly and lonely process.

5.5. Accordion Museum Casa Beto Murgas

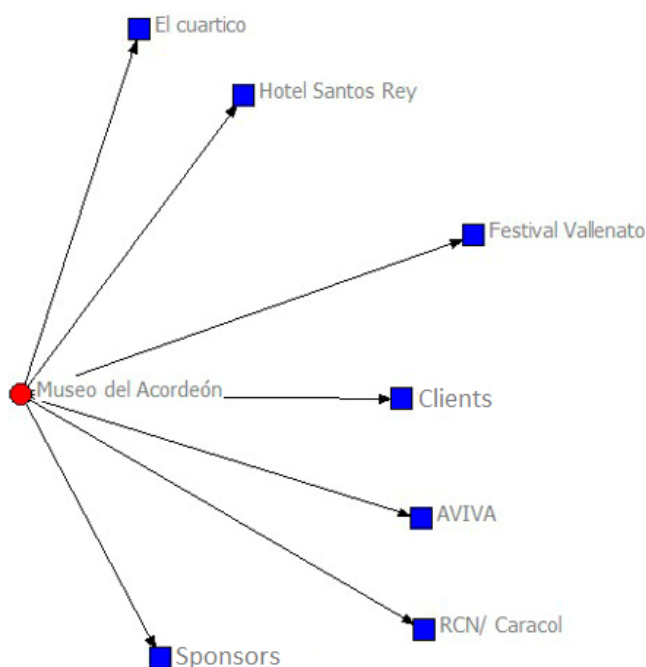
Casa Beto Murgas is a space dedicated to vallenato music and everything related to the accordion and minstrelsy, in which the 4 members of the family participate permanently. To tell the story of how the Accordion Museum began, the musician tells how in 1982 he bought an accordion for his young son. In the words of the cultural manager: “At that time Beto was a five-year-old boy and refused the gift because he wanted a bigger accordion” (Personal Interview with Accordion Museum 2017), but from that small accordion, which only has two rows, and from the questions asked by visitors about the contraption, the collection was born.

After this, Beto Murgas begins to investigate and finds beautiful things about the accordion. As a scholar of Vallenato folklore, collector and lecturer

on the accordion, he explains that this instrument nested like the condors in the highest peak of musical fusion: The Upar Valley. He says that it was the Perijá mountain range where he developed his vocation, listening to the minstrels who at that time walked from farm to farm with their accordions on their chests, singing the terrestrial songs that today are listened to by a great part of the world. Musicians such as Chico Bolaño, Emiliano Zuleta Baquero, Escolástico Romero and composers such as Rafael Escalona, Leandro Díaz and Armando Zabaleta, nurtured this joyful and picaresque style that today is reflected in his walks and merengues vallenatos.

This cultural space has old and precious designs that exhibit the technical evolution of this instrument in Vallenato music and revives the history of the protagonists of the Vallenato verse. It operates in the hall of the Murgas home and has no administration or similar costs. As in the case of *El Cuartico*, the network of the Accordion Museum is a small network of personal support, which is sustained mainly by family effort and the assistance of tourists, who arrive at the time of the Vallenato Festival.

Fig. 9. Accordion Museum Network. Source: Authors, 2024.

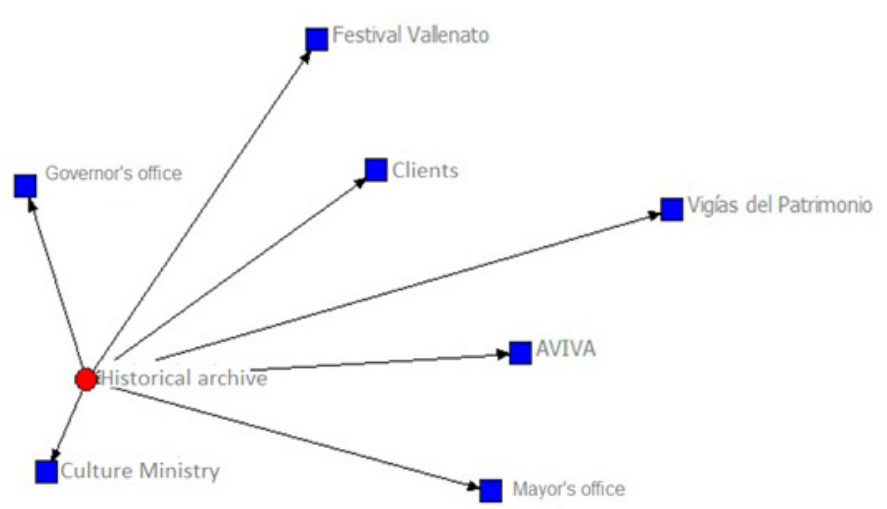


5.6. Historical Archive of Cesar

The historical archive of Valledupar is one of the oldest and most outstanding notarial records in the country. It keeps documents of more than 300 years: according to experts there are almost 1,000 records, with everything related to business since colonial times from 1727 to 1985: private agreements, property deeds, wills, and contains a photo library, an art gallery, a newspaper library and an anthropological museum. This archival treasure contains the notarial patrimony called Pedro Castro Trespalcacios Historical Archive (El Pilón, 2021). It is a non-profit organization that survives with two volunteer staff members and very meager public budgets.

This is how Francisco Valle Cuello, expert historian of the Academy of History of Cesar, defines it: “Here is everything we were as a city, who did business in this territory, which were the most recognized families. It is our history” (Personal Interview with Historical Archive 2017). However, the old facilities are not the most suitable for this type of archive, the weather and environmental conditions, the high heat and humidity make preserving the material heritage very complicated, so it was moved to different places, although in 2019 the necessary interventions were carried out (for a value of US\$52,000 dollars) to take the documents to an appropriate place for its collection (Valledupar Mayor’s Office, 2019).

Fig. 10. Cesar Historical Archive Network. Source: Authors, 2024.



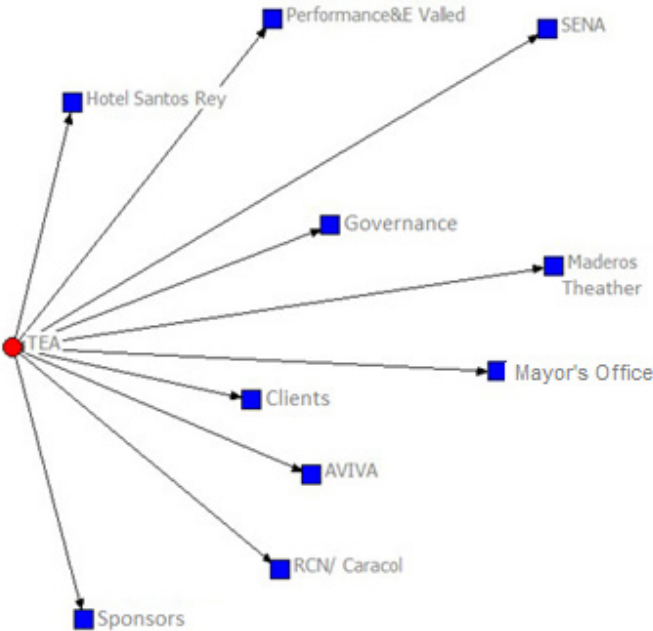
This is a small network of very strong institutional support, probably due to the very nature of the heritage it preserves. Despite this, they have established close alliances with the SENA, the heritage watchdogs and the AVIVA founda-

tion. It is a very old organization that is currently renewing itself to improve its services and strengthen its role in the region.

5.7. TEA Theater

Fundación Teatro Estudio de Actores (Actors’ Studio Theater Foundation) TEA is an organization, composed of 14 members and with 19 years of work, which is dedicated to the conservation of the visual arts and the cultural heritage of Cesar. Its manager, actor and theater director Boris Serrano, says that TEA was born from the need to train the community of the department of Cesar in the visual arts and to create a school. They have participated in projects with the Mayor’s Office and Governor’s Office and have developed projects with young offenders, children, special population, prison population, artists, musician children, not only in the performing arts but also in other arts. As a school they have developed training projects in health, government, peace, civic culture and even “We have participated in soap operas very typical of the Colombian tradition and very remembered by the public such as Rafael Orozco, Diomedes, *La Cacica*”, says the director (2017). He also says that, in these productions made for large networks, they managed to get and train a staff of natural actors with high quality and excellent reception.

Fig.11. TEA Theater Network. Source: Authors, 2024.



In terms of networks, the TEA organization has had important projects with the most important TV networks in the country, RCN and Caracol, but its main source of resources is the public sector, through the mayor's office and the governor's office, thanks to specific projects in visual arts training and citizen culture. It also has the support of the Maderos theater and the Performance organization, which have collaborated in joint projects such as the production of soap operas and the training of actors. It is a small network that has allowed them to survive for two decades but recognizes that most of the work has been due to the determination of the group of managers of the organization.

6. ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSIONS

First, it can be said that this rich cultural ecosystem has developed around three different types of heritage: the historical heritage represented in buildings, squares and archives, the cultural heritage represented in the diversity of solutions and ways of life of the region, the anthropological and archaeological wealth, techniques and arts, and musical heritage through vallenato and accordion music. In each of them, organizations were found that were working with public and private resources, including personal ones, to protect and promote the heritage of the region.

However, as it is evidenced by the main indicators of the network, this cultural wealth is marked by the prominence of the Vallenato Festival. The festival is the center of gravity around which the projects are executed. It is the node with the highest degree (38), greatest closeness (0.82), Authority (0.3) and intermediation (26.9). Which is evident in the in-depth interviews when one of the interviewees says: "We are not just vallenato, there is much more."

In this work it was found that the organizations most mentioned as funders of TPOs were local governments and the Ministry of Culture (92%). As the corresponding network shows the State continues to be an important support for heritage organizations, mainly in the area of obtaining resources and knowledge. State organizations such as SENA, Banco de la República and the armed forces were also mentioned. Given that this heritage cluster is being formed around mayors' and governors' offices, with the mediation of the Ministry of Culture, these entities are the ones called upon to convene, offer services for the formation of strengthened networks and mediate in training and the management of knowledge and capacities.

One of the complaints that appeared most frequently is that, regarding public resources, some expressions had priority and took the largest number of resources, in this case the Festival in Valledupar. It would be necessary to look for alternative mechanisms that would make it possible to dispose of financial resources in an equitable manner and that would speed up the matching of capacities and needs.

A Cultural Heritage Ecosystem network should consider the necessary talents, the costs of conservation, the research agency, the existence of heritage

banks that process and integrate resources for restoration and the search for cooperation resources. There is a need to generate resource management capabilities to search for new sources and the development of products or incentives that facilitate access to new members to these organizations. It was a good surprise to find that organizations such as Aviva and the Festival de la Leyenda Vallenata have been carrying out actions to support other organizations.

It was evident that there have been some very strong personal leaderships such as those of Alba Luz Luque or Consuelo Araujo la Cacica, who appear frequently as cultural promoters in the interviews, but it is necessary to develop leadership, management and commitment skills in these organizations so that when these initial leaders are missing, the organizations can continue to strengthen.

Chambers of commerce and compensation funds appear in the network, which despite being private entities provide a very important public service, as well as some public and private universities. An interesting surprise in the findings is the participation of private companies in the supply of events and the financing of venues. Although private enterprise does not appear as a continuous subsidiary of the activities, it does participate actively.

The organizations studied have achieved remarkable network management, which has allowed them to build up a bank of funders and establish stronger commercial relationships. Despite this, this research shows that the organizations still have a very local vision, with little capacity to manage international resources, even though they have had the support of international organizations at times. Most of them talked about public organizations, confirming the premise that the State is the great funder of heritage in Colombia, however, as recommended by Professor Macarena Hernández (2017): “it is necessary to make a modeling of heritage according to the case, because sometimes the State is more restrictive than the market”.

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