



*CONA Case Study:*

## Where does knowledge reside in your team?

### Client:

A large Colombian Infrastructure Contractor

### Business Need:

The study sought to understand how operatives relate to each other within a project team, and how they acquire their tacit knowledge, which is believed to be influenced by other individuals who are able to transmit the knowledge required.

### How We Helped:

We used ONA to examine communication networks between site operatives in a Colombian construction project focussing on the nature and characteristics of knowledge exchange. The information was collected directly at the project site. During this process, 55 administrative and operative staff were asked to answer the questionnaire designed. Questions were formulated in a way that helped understand the nature of information, discussion and instruction flows within the team.

The study yielded some fascinating results. Among which is the identification of non-expected actors who play very central roles towards other actors in the networks. This is the case of equipment operators, technical assistants, operators and welders. This result showed that actors do not really need a high status in the

project structure in order to help other members. With enough expertise they are able to transmit their tacit knowledge and help other members to perform better. All the networks in figures 1-3 demonstrated that the key to nourish knowledge is to interact on an on-going basis through the expansion and cultivation of expertise among its members. Through these actions, and even without noticing, operatives are creating a Community of Practice (COP) which offers stability and provides an identity when connecting across skill boundaries, while focusing on expertise when facing and sharing similar situations.

**Figure 1: Information Flow Network**

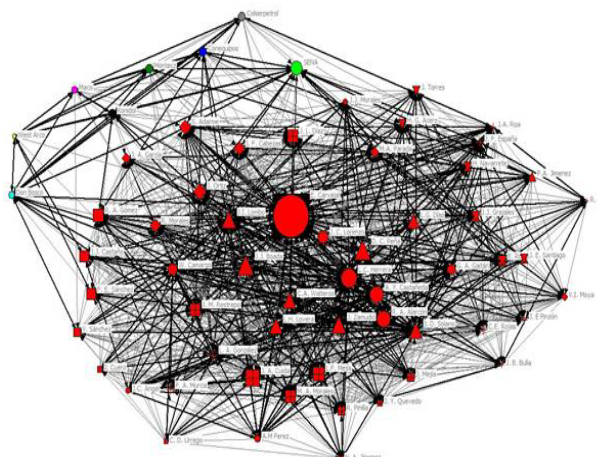
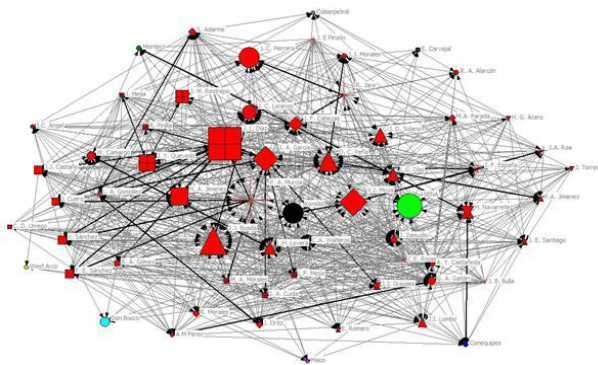


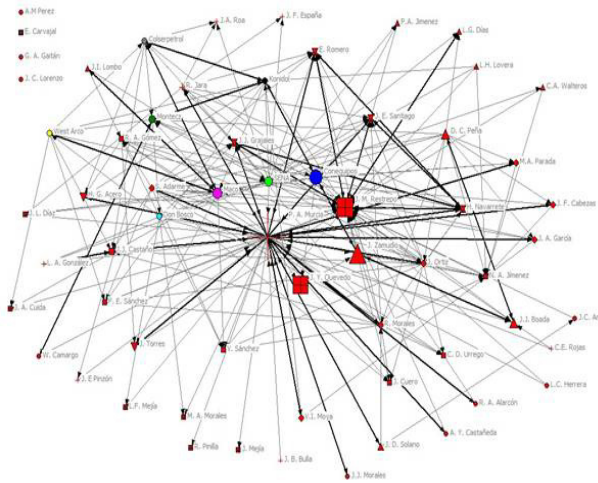
Figure 2: Instruction Flow Network



**Business Benefits:**

ONA maps allowed the identification of Communities of Practice (COP) leaders whose interactions and socialisation activities supported the development of other operatives skills.

Figure 3: Discussion Flow Network



\* Findings of this case study were originally published in Gomez-Soto, M. & Pryke, S. D. (2010) An examination of tacit knowledge networks in a Colombian construction project: communities of practice and project culture, Proceedings from Sunbelt XXX. Riva del Garda Fierecongressi, Trento, Italy.

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