

SPACE EDUCATION AND OUTREACH SYMPOSIUM (E1)  
Calling Planet Earth - Space Outreach to the General Public (6)

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MAKING SPACE PRODUCTS AVAILABLE TO THE GENERAL PUBLIC: RESULTS OF A  
PARTICIPATIVE, HANDS-ON APPROACH TO PROMOTE SPACE OUTREACH IN THE  
BOLIVARIAN REPUBLIC OF VENEZUELA.

**Abstract**

Since 1999 the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela started a new chapter of its history based on a new constitution that includes the opinions of popular organizations transcending the traditional sphere of political parties and corporations, promoting further engagement of the people in every aspect of the national life. Based on this fundamental principle, in 2009, a new law provided the legal framework for the conformation of geographically defined social organizations named Communal Councils (Consejos Comunales in Spanish) and by 2010 its further integration in Communes was legally established. These popular organizations determine a space for particulars to plan and execute development projects by themselves for the benefit of the community, with either direct or indirect support from state institutions, putting to practice the concept of participative democracy which lays at the core of 21st Century Socialism.

Following these ideas, the Bolivarian Agency for Space Activities (ABAE from its Spanish initials) has developed a series of projects to reduce the gap between its products and its final users; the Venezuelan people. One of these projects, the Public Service System (PSS), provides a platform for users to acquire satellite products generated by the first Venezuelan remote sensing satellite (VRSS-1) at different processing levels, where any citizen could be a user.

This research presents some case studies of remote sensing imaging applications proposed and implemented by citizens and popular organizations that had access to products provided by the PSS. On a preliminary study of 200 PSS requests, 66 (33%) of them belong to either individuals, students or the previously mentioned Communal Councils. Special emphasis will be made on Communal Councils and Communes applications to evaluate how this revolutionary legal and political structure has brought space technology and its products to the people, its impact on their living conditions and the effectiveness of such hands-on approach in promoting space outreach to the general public in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.