“Memoria”
Social Innovation Challenge

Introduction

In México, 92% of violent crimes are not reported. People are afraid of denouncing violence and unfairness due to the imminent threat of retaliation. Memoria is a responsive website that seeks to report and identify all victims of organized crime in México in order to give them a voice to tell the world their stories. Our website will utilize the latest security to ensure denouncer’s anonymity and gives journalists and scholars the opportunity of also contributing to the Project. The goal of this data gathering is to provide policy-makers an alternative solution to Access reliable information, giving a solution for gaps in current government reports on México’s crime situation. Memoria is a highly innovative and versatile way of centralizing data to potentially construct maps, graphs, and all kinds of educational tools. Currently, there is no Project like this either in México or the U.S. and we are looking to create a tool that is significant for both governments in order to remove the smokescreen that leaves the world uncertain about México’s real situation.

Business Description

As mentioned, Memoria will be a responsive website that collects all data from different news reports and denounces to compile all the information into a unique database that can be used for an infinite number of purposes. The Project will count with a control group of three staff members to verify the veracity and reliability of the information given. It will protect the identity of people who share data with us through a SSL application and a proxy which will not let even the highest-ranked hacker to track down any Project contributor in order to make sure that everyone remains anonymous and allow data access to be more transparent for the general public.
**Sustainability of Project**

Memoria is a Project that is already been worked on but needs the necessary financial support to be taken to the next level. It is planned to be developed and set up during this summer to later on sell it to Justice in México Project here at USD who would need to do all the fundraising to pay for it, hoping to get some capital from wither Justice in México or the Woodrow Wilson Center which is one of its biggest sponsors. Due to our competitive business strategy that is both data and economically driven, it ensures the sustainability and success of our Project for years to come. In order to get the initial capital for our web application and its associated costs, we will first acquire money from direct donations from interested supporters and alumni through tele-funding activities as well as applying for grants and scholarships that support research in security issues, specifically in México. Through this strategy, we will be able to secure some funding for Memoria for years at a time and be able to acquire larger sums of money so as to ensure the success of the Project. Another financial strategy will be making our most recent data available only to Premium users who will be asked to pay a fee to Access the data for a specific period of time. All of our data on homicides occurring in México will be available to the public with the exception of the most recent facts and figures. This will allow us to market the most cutting edge research in the field to both the public and institutions. The team will also work to publish reports that will be available to the public to purchase in order to better assist them in understanding what is really happening in México today.

Other financial initiatives we would like to take on to ensure the success and sustainability of the project includes providing consulting services for institutions and organizations on homicides in Mexico and the data that we have gathered. This will allow us to increase awareness of our
web application and the situation in Mexico, but also to increase the amount of users who are utilizing our data and allow them to apply it to their own work and understanding of the world.

Returns

The homicides in Mexico web application will also allow for a wide range of returns for both investors in our project and in the ways it creates social impact in the world. The returns for investors who choose to invest in our project will really come from how their financial contribution positions them to the global world. By contributing to our application, it shows that their company cares about what is happening in Mexico and wants to be a part of efforts that demand more transparency and democracy in Mexico today. Investors will also know that they are contributing to something new and exciting, especially as to this day there is no web application like the one we are proposing that centralizes all of the homicides in Mexico in one place. Investors of the homicides in Mexico web application will also become part of an elite Presidents’ Club that allows them access to special events held by the project throughout the year. This will allow investors to see how their money is being spent and to further understand the research that they are funding.

The social impact of the web application will be great and is only made possible by the financial contributions of investors. The data collected through the web application will create more transparency in the country by showing the public every homicide that is reported and its exact location, as well as the perpetrator(s), if confirmed. This tool alone will allow Mexican communities to see what is happening in their neighborhoods, but also allow academics and institutions the ability to further pinpoint states and cities that are most affected by homicides. This is a tool that does not currently exist for researchers and that through the creation of an application that allows the user to see when and where homicides happen in Mexico will call for
greater sharing of information which will lead to impacts on policy both in the United States and Mexico. The impacts on policy will also lead to greater acts of accountability on both sides of the border, as the application will call attention to what is happening in Mexico, calling for action. Finally, the project will also push for a stronger democracy in Mexico, as it calls on civil society in Mexico to participate in order to give voice to the victims and to have trust in the application to report homicides.

**Competition (Added Value)**

The homicides in Mexico web application is a never before attempted resource that if successful will be ground breaking in its abilities to provide quick and user friendly data. While there are various Mexican sources working to compile information on homicides in Mexico such as blogs and several newspapers, these are in their early stages, are often lacking up to date information, and are poorly maintained. Other efforts are not data driven and do not provide a basis for statistical analysis. Unlike these resources, our web application will be organized by state and city, allowing users to view our data on a map, making it visually appealing and easy to use. The information will also be in real time, meaning that it will be up to date and maintained by research staff who will ensure that all data is displayed correctly and that it is current. The main reason why our project stands out from other resources who have tried to compile similar data is that it will not be solely focusing on a couple states, but rather will bring together all data on homicides in Mexico to display them in one forum that users can use to search for their desired research interests. While we will have the option to search by state, users will also have the option to see a more comprehensive list of homicides occurring in the country, giving them more data to work with and understand. The application will also ensure anonymity for those who submit information on homicides to the research team, as this is vital, especially with
regards to homicides committed by members of organized crime groups. Lastly, our application will provide a means for institutions, civil society, and academics to come together to access data in a way that is mobile friendly, user friendly, interactive, and fun.

**Background**

We are a team composed of one USD Undergraduate Alumni candidate for a Master’s Degree from Columbia University; one USD graduate student in International Relations with undergraduate studies on business and economics as well as full-knowledge of computational sciences (tech guy); and one undergraduate USD senior student in International Relations with focus on security issues. All of us are passionate about México’s security issues and potential solutions to the complex problems now present in that country.

We are highly supported by Dr. David Shirk, an Associate Professor in the Political Science Department and the Principal Investigator for the Justice in México Project at the University of San Diego. Dr. Shirk conducts research and publishes on topics related to Mexican politics, U.S.-Mexican relations, and law enforcement and security issues along the U.S.-Mexican border. We are also supported by Octavio Rodriguez, the Coordinator of Justice in México Project and other staff members who are deeply interested in not only supporting the Project but potentially buying the independent research tool directly from the team. Justice in México Project is a free standing program at the university that continues to promote analysis, dialogue, and policy solutions to address a variety of urgent problems related to security and violence, transparency and accountability, and justice and human rights issues in México and the U.S.-Mexican border region. When it comes to experience, the three of us are very committed with the Project as current Justice in México interns in charge of conducting educated research, data gathering and analysis and one of us is actually developing more efficient tools for the
website and data management strategies. We also have had continued immersion in the Mexican country and are very familiar with not only the politics but the style of living of the Mexican community.

Validation

As mentioned, Memoria is an ongoing Project that has had remarked significance for informational purposes by scholars in the field. We can actually find citations of the data in “The Mexican Undead: Toward a New History of the “Drug War” Killing Fields by Molly Molloy in Small Wars Journal, “Mexico’s Drug Trafficking Organizations: Source and Scope of the Violence” by June S. Beittel in Congressional Research Services, “The Criminal Subversion of Mexican Democracy by Andreas Schedler in Journal of Democracy, and “Defining Market Violence: The Dynamics of Violence in the Mexican Drug Market” by Talia Hagerty for Center for Global Affairs, among many others. There is a persistent need for accurate data about organized crime rates and statistics that are accurately provided by our Memoria. Through Justice in México, this has been done in the past couple of years manually with the assistance of interns, volunteers and students spending hours of tedious research that can be simply facilitated by our web application.

Niche Market

We are addressing mainly U.S. and México’s governmental institutions as a reliable source of information regarding violence in México related to drug-trafficking. Our information is also directed to specific non-governmental institutions in the are concerned with security issues and human rights, journalists that can Access our databases and even generate cases of their own, students and scholars from the field, and especially those particular families that could
have their beloved ones memorialized by our website. Our application will also serve as a secure way for crime victims and their families to provide testimonies and denounce violent crimes.

We plan to do outreach activities such as getting published in newspapers, local magazines, news, radio programs, and seminars to publicize the program and actually reach out for the toughest “clients” involved with public security and polici decisión-making but that will actually be under our buyer’s administration as we are particularly focused on setting it up to sell it as soon as possible.

**Barriers to competition**

As mentioned, the database is highly innovative and currently there’s no other Project efficiently doing what we can do with the information. Competitors do not have the economic or human resources needed to invest in such an ambitious Project, along with the technical qualifications required to develop the application. Our main competitor would be “CartelDB” which is a database that extracts cartels’ victims information from: elblogdelnarco y Menos Días Aquí. Although they have friendly interfaces, there are many gaps of information, it lacks institutional support and contributors and they do not have dynamic statistics. Our other competitor would be Grupo Reforma with its “Ejecutometro” Project which presents friendly statistics but again the information gaps are numerous and the information is severely outdated. The last competitor would be Grupo Milenio which has increased statistical analysis but it lacks continuity and aggregate statistics. The main reason why most competitors fail is because of their inability to develop secure platforms to manage the kind of information we are soliciting. Because it is strongly sensitive information and dangerous to be managed in México, we are strategically located outside of the country and are able to protect the identities of the people who want to share information with us and avoid them from being identified and tracked. Also, data
gathering and classification is highly time-consuming and meticulous, a work that not everybody is willing to do.

**Costs**

We estimate a total of $6,000.00 U.S. dollars per month to set forth the Project on its entirety. We need an approximate of $166.00 dlls/month to buy a new server, $34.00 dlls/month to buy the SSL (security device), $12.00 dlls/month to buy the proxy, and $5,388.00 dlls/month to pay our researchers and developers of the Project. We also estimate a total of at least three months to have the program up and going and two months to get the actual funding to get the Project moving. In total, to start the program this summer as we intend it we are in need of $30,000.00 U.S. dollars for the first five months which will be critical to launch the program and get it ready to function perfectly and be sold.