Community Outreach Roadmap: an emerging area of democracy and legitimacy for the Ecuadorian higher education and the third sector

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1 This paper was written with all the passion and vitality of our chief and Community Outreach Director, Ma. del Rocio Bermeo who unexpectedly passed away the 1st. October, 2018. We want to acknowledge her significant contribution to the field. This paper is a memory of her achievements in search of a better, more inclusive and just world.
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Abstract:

Participation in community engagement programs is mandatory for Ecuadorian higher education, building on a three-fold strategy of: learning, research and community outreach. However, this strategy is frequently lopsided, giving less significance to the latter. This paper intends to unfold two paradigmatic cases that link applied research and service learning, through a qualitative design of case-study methodology. Its aim is to answer how a roadmap for community outreach that embraces a transformative more inclusive and culturally appropriate development can be. The outcomes suggest that community engagement projects need to work with the communities and not for them, founded on the commitment of all stakeholders: faculty, students, staff, CSO and local governments.

Key-words:

Community outreach, service-learning, Ignatian Pedagogical Paradigm, university social responsibility

1. Introduction

Today in Ecuador it is mandatory for undergraduate students to engage in community outreach programs, as stated in Articles 87 and 88 of the Organic Law for Higher Education (LOES, by its
The academic regulation establishes that community outreach programs should involve a combination of the three fundamental functions of the university: education, research and community outreach. According to the norm (CES, 2016, Art. 94), undergraduates must do 400 hours of mandatory pre-professional internships, 160 of which ought to be carried out in community outreach programs that could preferably involve vulnerable communities in margin-urban or rural areas.

It is possible to find internships, also known as apprenticeships, from the very dawn of creation, as knowledge passed from one generation to the other. However, as Sides and Mrvica (2017, p. 1) highlight “the immediate past century or so may have been an aberration – a time in which learning was inculcated more and more frequently through lecture and book than through experience”. Currently, acquiring knowledge through experience is reinvigorated in undergraduate curricula not only in the Latin-American region (see Tapia, 2016) but also across different disciplines and world regions.

Internships can be regarded as learning through experience, a less formal type of learning, also known as “workplace learning” (Mathews, 2017). Internships have been linked to employability, as they become an opportunity for students to put their acquired theoretical knowledge into practice and engage into “real life” situations, in which their readiness for the workplace is put on trial. Mathews (2017, pp. 84-85) focuses on the “connected curricula framework” proposing three areas of attention: (1) developing capabilities and personal attributes for life and work in a changing world, (2) raising student’s awareness that they are developing a rich range of understandings, skills, values and attributes to take with them in their professional lives, and (3)
engaging in critical and constructive dialogue with others about the ethical application of evidence-based knowledge to society.

Within this framework, undergraduate students take part in internships in organizations and companies—whether they are for profit or non-for-profit—as well as in government departments, schools and universities to bring their knowledge into practice. Students balance their internships with regular class schedules, fulfilling most of the time both activities satisfactorily; moreover; it is possible to trace a link between employability and internships.

As Mathews (2017) analyzes, there are many forms of work-related learning activities, one of them refers to service learning:

**Service learning.** Students participate in a community-based project of activity, typically in collaboration with other students, for example by contributing to the work of a local charity. Direct engagement with the community for mutual benefit, as part of the overall aims and ethos of a programme study, can provide excellent learning experiences as well as activities, which are meaningful in their own right. Reflective analysis of the project and the student’s role in it can form part of their summative assessment. Room needs to be given in the assessment criteria for learning from mistakes and difficulties, as well as from obvious successes. (p. 91).

Tapia (2016) defines the field of service learning as a combination of community service with academic learning. Another recognized author in the field is Jacoby (2015), who defines service-learning as “a form of experiential education in which students engage in activities that address human and community needs, together with structured opportunities for reflection designed to achieve desired learning outcomes” (p.1). It has been highlighted that a major concern in service-
learning deals with students’ assessments. Through reflecting on the context and analyzing critically their involvement, students are able to appraise the activities that have been undertaken, the context approached and the stakeholders that are involved.

As Mathews (2017) posits, these activities with mutual benefits for students, communities and third sector civil society organizations (CSOs), seem straightforward and are encouraged at higher education programs. Students’ close engagement with CSOs provide them with a sense of agency by actively working and sharing their knowledge before finishing their undergraduate education. From the CSOs side, communities and local organizations host university students who volunteer on their proposed ventures and share local assets in a wide range of forms. Nevertheless, its accomplishment entangles by a number of complications:

**First**, in order to do the fieldwork, students and faculty must travel to margin-urban or rural communities; in many cases, this involves leaving the campus which results into long travelling hours and the provision of food and accommodations in sometimes, difficult conditions. While most students are keen to engage in this new and exciting experiences, faculty members are less enthusiastic in such ventures. Yet, faculty play the key role of students’ mentors and are responsible for students’ performance towards the rest of stakeholders. O’Meara et al. (2011: 93) analize that “engaged scholars –whether in service-learning, action research, or intentional civic practice– are involved in important work”.

**Secondly**, to make this process possible, local communities and their organizations must agree to welcome higher education students and faculty. As many community outreach programs involve CSOs working in the area as well as local governments, agreements must involve a formal acceptance at community assemblies. Coordination among all stakeholders need to be fixed in
advance to fieldtrips, which can result in an incredibly high amount of time and effort spent. Moreover, fieldwork involves modifying in many ways local daily activities. Communities and CSOs need to allot time for the newcomers, answer never-ending questions, visit recurrently places, and repeat, once again, rather trivial everyday activities.

**Third** and most important is that both students and faculty members engaging in fieldwork need to be aware of the ethos, aims and purposes of the community outreach program, including a deep understanding of the particular context of the targeted community, in order to approach it with a respectful and humble mind. Communities and CSOs also need to be clear about the scope of the project, the expectations and requirements as counterparts.

Through a qualitative design of case-study methodology (Yin, 2014) this paper explores the different ways in which community outreach programs engage faculty, students, local communities and CSOs. Our purpose is to evidence the manifold affordances of leaving the learning cloisters and developing fieldwork can have, as well as to answer the question of how a roadmap for community outreach that embraces a transformative more inclusive and culturally appropriate development can be.

2. Education, Research and Community Outreach

Starting in 2010, the Ecuadorian LOES establishes as mandatory for higher education students to engage in community outreach programs. In this way, all three substantive functions of higher education: teaching, research and community outreach acquire the same status. Nonetheless, this three-fold standpoint is not yet acknowledged by most of the academic community, still suggesting teaching to be the main (and thereafter merely) task of higher education (e.g. Jarrín, 2018, p. 12).
In the case of the members of the Association of Jesuit Universities in Latin America (AUSJAL), programs that merge teaching, research and community outreach have been a regular practice long before the decree. One of these universities is Pontificia Universidad Católica del Ecuador (PUCE). Its educational model is built on the integral training of students focusing on intellectual, cultural, moral and spiritual capacities for social transformation (PUCE, 2017). It lies upon Saint Ignatius’ Pedagogical Paradigm, IPP (Ortiz, Fernández, & Yánez, 2015) aiming to accomplish learning outcomes both in class and in normal life by training students for service, as stated in its motto “ser más para servir mejor” (*be more to better serve)*.

IPP sustains that learning achievements come from both experience and theory, which is funded in a mentoring process, especially important for community outreach processes. IPP aims to establish a faithful society with a sense of social justice, achieved through five phases of the teaching-learning process:

1. Takes into account the **context** and personal situation of each student and community.

2. Promotes cognitive, psychomotor, emotional and creative learning **experiences** through didactic methodologies and theoretical knowledge.

3. It is **reflective**, in the way that students are able to consider the importance and deep human meaning of their own field.

4. Boosts deep changes in students so that the performed tasks **act** both on the subjective and individual understanding; in that way, students become more competent persons towards new situations.

5. Performs integral **assessments** of all issues related to the teaching-learning process.
This learning model relies on a harmonic and balanced articulation of the three substantive functions of higher education, namely: teaching, research and community outreach. Teaching involves the development of professional competences through different pedagogical and adult education methodologies. Research deals with experimentation, reflection, production and application of knowledge, innovation, techniques and technologies for development. Community outreach is the rationale of higher education, as the deep purpose of both teaching and research combined; it is the prevalence to transform everyday reality through good practices: to approach communities and transfer knowledge. In other words, without appropriate curricular development and without good research practices, there would be no community outreach.

PUCE’s community outreach model aims for a significant learning experience (Figure 1). For community outreach projects to take place, teaching must focus on developing students’ professional competencies with critical problem-solving analysis. Innovative research methods are required to close the gap between techno-science and social-knowledge, which would make the leap to avoid fragmentation of reality, encouraging research on techniques and technologies for the democratization of knowledge. Curricular learning has to connect students’ experiences with the reality of communities. This is the place where teaching and learning meets and it is in this sense that service-learning is understood within community outreach programs.
Fig. 1: PUCE’s community outreach model for a significant learning experience

In a historical perspective, the understanding of service-learning at PUCE is built on a number of methodologies from different disciplines, just to name a few:

a) “Learning to think-by-doing” methodology developed by the School of Andean Agriculture from PUCE Ibarra (ECAA). This proposal established a dual school building based on the educational model of the Zamorano in Honduras\textsuperscript{2}, and incorporating a holistic training to students since 1997;

b) University Social Responsibility (RSU, by its Spanish acronym) put forward by AUSJAL (2014). RSU frames the Saint Ignatius University Leadership Program (LULI) that

\textsuperscript{2} “Aprender Haciendo” (learning by doing) is described as the educational model of Zamorano., Honduras
https://issuu.com/zamonoticias/docs/ee-modelos-zamorano-2 Retrieved 05.27.2018
provides students with a meaningful professional and human experience based on learning team co-working and spirituality “connecting students ‘displacement’ with the people and their everydayness” (Marvel, Andrade, Egas, & Salao, 2018);

c) The IDIS area methodology –integration of teaching and research in service– from the Medicine School. that supports the acquisition of knowledge, attitudes and skills in biomedical, sanitary management and psychosocial aspects that frame students learning outcomes;

d) Action-research methodology (Ander-Egg, 2003; Grodos & Mercenier, 2000; Lewin, 1946) put in practice by the Healthy Living Landscapes Lab of the College of Architecture (see Section 5.1). This methodology is also in practice by the graduate school of the Public Health Institute, from the latter, as stated by Grodos and Mercenier (2002, p. 38) “action research enhances HSR [health systems research] by placing the researcher in the real world of complex social and human systems”.

e) Ignatian university volunteering (VUI, by its Spanish acronym) since its launching in 2014 has involved hundreds of students “that get involved just for gratitude, as their motivation and participation is not rewarded with academic credits nor requirements for graduation” (PUCE, 2016).

Service-learning encourages critical reflection and students’ responsible commitment to social transformation. In this way, service-learning owes its theoretical grounding to Paulo Freire’s critical pedagogy school (Freire, 2005). Beyond a learning model, Freire’s pedagogy is a critical and political endeavour for change. Freire considers that dialogue is the essence of education, and
education is an instrument for the practice of freedom because dialogue is only possible if it is full of words intended to transform the reality and change the world.

In the same vein, Thomson, Smith-Tolken, Naidoo, and Bringle (2011) analyze the role of service-learning. The authors enlighten different models of service-learning in different contexts that strengthen the relationships between higher education and civil society. It is precisely the degree of this relationship that makes possible good practices of service-learning. However, service learning is just one phase of the community outreach model shown on Figure 1, and all other phases need to be oriented and accomplished in order to attain a significant learning experience. As the model shows, at the margins of the entrenched core functions of the university is located the legal framework, which acts in three levels: local, national and international. In Section 4, we will unfold issues related to the legal framework in view of the principles of democracy and legitimacy.

3. A roadmap to community outreach

In the model of community outreach, the interrelations between all elements are fundamental. For example, through community outreach it is possible to strengthen research and provide adjustments to academic curricula. Service learning is one part of the bigger systemic landscape of learning with social consciousness for professional agency.

Building on the “general parameters for a good service-learning practice in sustainable community-based projects” (Campo, 2015), the proposal for a community outreach roadmap takes into account seven major features (Figure 2):
1. A project should start with a **diagnosis** of the actual, concrete and dimensioned needs for intervention. Once identified, these needs determine the project’s aims and goals, the characteristics of the proposed solutions, the purposes for transformation, and the sustainability criteria of participatory social development processes in the mid- and long terms.

2. The project should promote learning, allowing students to meet academic requirements, but also willing to ensure that knowledge acquired through research, leads effectively to **critical reflection**. Through critical reflection, students could develop generic competences such as teamwork, assertive communication, technology management, autonomy, creativity and sensitivity, research, learning of specific skills from their professional field, social and environmental responsibility, ethics and humanistic
values. Critical reflection could encourage also students’ assertiveness and compassion, undertaking the reality of the community as their own. In this way, students are able to propose more contextualized solutions (Ríos, González, Armijos, Borja, & Montaño, 2016). Additionally, the project’s outcomes need to overcome curricular fragmentation, in search of transdisciplinary and holistic solutions which should connect different fields of knowledge aimed to achieve the macro goals of a sustainable development.

3. A community-based project could rely on participatory involvement where different stakeholders meet: students, faculty members, communities and CSOs. Thereon, Ríos et al. (2016) are particularly aware of the importance to work with all stakeholders, to respect and accept the capacities of “the other” with a deep encouragement of two-ways horizontal dialogue, that should involve constant feedback and processes’ assessments. Stakeholders’ participation should take place during all phases of the project. Likewise, the punctual delivery of the agreed products and results must happen on time, to keep a good working climate with the satisfaction of well done work (Rodríguez, 2014).

4. A community-based project should have direct relation with the institution’s internal management, as to ensure resources and enable capacities for the project’s successful completion. The function of internal management is to fulfill the legal framework for community outreach projects. It is also in charge of establishing management procedures, fixing teachers and students’ schedules and coordinating all networking activities with stakeholders (e.g. signing of agreements, commitments, bills, etc.).

5. The purpose of the project is definitely a two-way transfer of knowledge. Projects should be aware of all the possibilities to impart and receive different type of knowledge
at different moments and levels. This aspect has a straight relation with the sense of putting things in common: giving and receiving. The dual sense of communicating and learning from the feedback received. This is the moment to celebrate the outcomes of the joint venture among stakeholders.

6. A sixth element refers to **sustainability**, which results from the achievement of the five previous features. The project’s permanence over time could allow constant renewal of working teams and the opening of new professional fields tackling other spotted needs at the community level that could spring greater social involvement ensuring “stakeholders’ empowerment” (Ríos et al., 2016) as well as greater impact and participation.

7. Finally, the seventh feature deals with the outcomes of the project, aimed to transform the reality, in pursue of social change. At this time, the **systematization** of the experience and its **dissemination** could allow sharing outcomes, promotion and replication elsewhere. Furthermore, systematization is useful for dissemination, and public recognition through academic and cultural publications, inter-institutional cooperation, grants and awards.

Community outreach is a fundamental curricular activity for all students from different fields. For this reason, it is not an option just for those who are willing to work with communities and have sympathy for rural or urban-marginal groups. The strength of the outreach model is in interdisciplinary teams for social development and multidisciplinary teams for planning, monitoring and assessment processes. In this way, students from all fields would understand major
humanitarian problems such as inequalities, discrimination, human mobility, etc. and see humanity as a whole, a systemic reality in which all elements influence each other.

Community outreach does not end with the delivery of initially agreed products, but continues through monitoring of the processes’ transfer, community empowerment and autonomy. In this way, assistance practices with an only an aid perspective belong to the past. Current projects are essentially transformative and participatory.

4. Democracy and legitimacy of community outreach

Ecuador includes in its legal system, mandatory principles based on respect, protection and promotion of human rights, especially those recognized in all international instruments, since the Human Rights Declaration from 1948. These principles address in a specific way persons, indigenous people, communities and collectives entitled to reach dignity in their own ways of living. In addition, the Ecuadorian legal system puts under the spotlight of the government, individuals in some kind of risk, vulnerability or violence situations, to whom public policies must guarantee special attention and protection.

The cross-cultural elements and the diversity that characterizes Ecuador should reinforce dialogue, participation, inclusive processes and compensation-related actions (Reascos, 2011). In the human rights exercise, it is very important to recognize certain elements as fundamental to any design or planning. These elements are gender, disabilities, human mobility, ethnic and racial background, and age (Constitution of Ecuador, 2008, art. 156). When these elements are unattended, the results are discrimination, disparities, poverty and other social problems.
At higher education, actions in community outreach planning follow a human rights’ pattern. They assure that people and communities have the opportunity to define their own priorities. To do so, participation in these ventures must support a non-discriminatory implementation of actions. As a result, people and communities must acknowledge that it is possible to fulfill equality and equity in their lives. To this regard, participants work towards a comprehension of affirmative actions, as the main path to achieve social inclusion with autonomy and life independency. As suggested by Salgado (2013):

The notion of human rights cannot be discussed apart from the struggles of various human groups oriented to defeat inequality power relationships. Relationships with others are marked with exclusion, invisibilization, undermining of human beings, forced assimilation, and other kinds of exploitation. (p. 14)

In this context, academia must give a response to communities’ needs with a social justice perspective. Processes would guarantee active participation of stakeholders’ opinions, with full recognition of a sense of service learning and knowledge sharing. Moreover, it is very important to put in the core of this reflection, the understanding of human dignity within the model:

Human dignity articulates three dimensions attached to a person: individual autonomy – the possibility to choose a life project, and with it define him/herself; life conditions, referred to the material resources each individual needs to accomplish his/her life project, and finally, integrity of body and spirit, meaning by this, physical and spiritual integrity to fulfill the life project. These dimensions must be considered not as abstract, unrealistic
For community outreach projects, it is imperative that both students and faculty know, and deeply understand, human rights, and the characteristics of interdependence, indivisibility and same hierarchy that must be embraced when addressing members of different collectives, communities and human groups. Moreover, each individual, community member or collective has the right to auto define him/herself, to take part and have a say in those spaces where decisions are taken, and to create and be part of monitoring systems to assess actions and projects’ outcomes. Participants shall learn how to explain and put into practice these matters within all type of addressees, this is inside and outside their institution.

Another fundamental concept is precisely that of “community”. This is, to understand the context and the scope of each project. This perception guarantees that each student has a full comprehension of the different realities in which he or she will professionally perform, putting in action his/her social compromise and ethics.

On the other hand, democracy and legitimacy of community outreach can be viewed on a two-fold strategy: (a) from one side, priority is given to vulnerable groups –especially those facing unprotected situations and located under the minimum floor of human rights– through positive and preferential actions that could operate as restorative mechanisms or procedures having initial prevention effects or active social control, and (b) efforts are placed in the fulfillment and accomplishment of public politics which are directly related to the United Nations Sustainable

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3 Available at [www.corteconstitucional.gov.co](http://www.corteconstitucional.gov.co)
Development Goals (SDG) leading the 2030 Agenda, with an integrated three dimensions approach of social, economic and environmental development.

Figure 3. Democracy and Legitimacy in Community Outreach

Figure 3 illustrates vulnerability that situates population under a minimum floor, which is precisely at the core of SDGs that lead to overcome this situation, in order “to leave no one behind” and to provide a life of dignity for all (Gordillo, 2017). Community outreach’s planning nowadays heads with strong reference to the SDGS, especially SDG 4: Education, SDG 5: Gender equality, SDG 8: Decent work and economic growth and SDG 16: Peace, justice and strong institutions.

About integrated decision-making and participation, an interesting approach of community outreach in Ecuador is the so-called UnOS initiative4 supported by the European Union. Through this initiative, a linkage between universities and third sector organizations develops across three interrelated components: (a) research and dialogue, (b) strengthening of capacities, and (c)

4 UnOS initiative, linking universities and civil society organizations: http://www.unos.ec
community outreach platform. In this project, PUCE leads national universities whereas two NGOs, Grupo Faro and Esquel, stand for the CSOs. The project aims to build a participatory research agenda on CSOs based on dialogue and proposal building; it promotes training through a citizen school for members of CSOs, and the construction of a platform to share capacities and experiences between CSOs and universities. For the last component, UnOS project established agreements with two local networks: REUVIC, the network of higher education community outreach and CEOSC, the national network of civil society organizations.

A benchmark of the UnOS project has been the exhibition of Best Practices (BP) in Community Outreach (April 2018) that had the participation of twelve universities and CSOs from different regions of the country. Attending projects were contestants of the BP award. Elements of the roadmap of community outreach assessed the participants, which guaranteed actual social change, knowledge transfer, service learning, training research and the acquisition of a significant learning experience both for university members and for CSOs and communities. Moreover, through this exhibition it was possible both to disseminate project outcomes among academic circles and to allow CSOs and universities to learn from other projects and approaches, see gaps where to get involved and establish alliances for joint ventures in the near future. It is important to mention that this exhibition allowed the team from PUCE to re-evaluate the community outreach roadmap referred to in this paper (Figure 2).

5. Paradigmatic cases of successful community outreach service-learning

In qualitative research, choice of cases is theoretically guided (Silverman, 2013); in this study, selected cases respond to the community outreach model mentioned above. Flyvbjerg (2006) analyzes various ways of sampling, as well as different strategies for the selection of cases: one of
them is choice of the “paradigmatic cases”. This refers to those cases that “highlight more general characteristics of the societies in question” (p. 427). As Flyvbjerg asserts, there is no standard in paradigmatic cases, because they set the norm and can be distinguished since they shine with their own light.

Yin (2014) provides a two-fold definition of case study methodology. From the one side it focuses on the scope of the case study, suggesting that it is an empirical inquiry investigating in depth a contemporary phenomenon within a real-world context. On the other hand, it refers to the features of a case study where the real-world context supposes no clear distinction of context and phenomenon, involving as a result, many variables of interest and multiple sources of evidence that provide converging data, which also benefits from prior theoretical propositions for data collection and analysis. Building on case study inquiry, this article refers to two cases that illustrate most components of the community outreach model proposed.

5.1 Case Study 1: Healthy Living Landscapes Lab

The Healthy Living Landscapes Lab from the College of Architecture, Design and Arts at PUCE is a project that links research, teaching and community outreach. Its strategy is “to raise” the landscape in order to improve the socio-cultural relations of the inhabitants with their environment and give meaning to sustainable human development. From the symbiosis between the western concept of landscape and the life principles of the Andean worldview –especially the principle of link and reciprocity (ayni⁵)—, it aims to encourage the understanding that the landscape is not just

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⁵ Ayni is a word in kichwa (vernacular Andean language) referring to both reciprocity and complementarity, specifically associate to difficult times in which support is needed.
a natural framework but a deep connection among community’s culture, customs, rituals, territory, space and natural resources (Borja, 2012).

The Lab explores and deepens the study and assessment of healthy living landscapes through a series of qualitative and quantitative indicators aiming to identify environmental units for the recovery and reinforcement of indigenous and endogenous cultural expressions of each territory. Research helps to define conceptual and action lines both for teaching and for community outreach.

Teaching is performed through class periods of the Architecture Workshop, where students develop seed-projects through “participatory action-research methodology” (Ander-Egg, 2003) focusing on the social problems and needs of the urban-marginal and rural communities addressed. The Architecture Workshop teaches students to assimilate non-linear and alternative work processes, both inside and outside the classroom with constant feedback and interaction with the communities. Meeting targeted communities give students the opportunity to be part of the proposed strategy and to be sensitive to social needs, while being co-responsible for design decisions. These decisions are taken together with the community and in line with the raising vision of the landscape, proposed by the Lab, also referred by AUSJAL (2014) as a type of “lived experience” (experiencia vivencial).

In the last years, the Lab has been working deeply in two communities: first in La Merced located within the Metropolitan District of Quito, and in the rural area of Cotogchoa, in Rumiñahui. In both places, the local government has been involved and the resulting infrastructure projects prioritize the local spatial planning and territorial development decisions. Two of the most

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6 Seed-projects are a type of first line projects responding to dialogue and community needs. Those are preliminary draft designs that boost communities’ imaginary and empower the development of more concrete and feasible proposals in charge of the Healthy Living Landscape Lab (Armijos, Borja, González, Montaño, & Ríos, 2016).
representative projects in Cotogchoa are "The recovery landscapes of the Suruhuayco gorge" and "El Pino neighborhood viewpoint" (Armijos et al., 2016).

Teaching strategies include lectures on theoretical concepts of healthy living landscapes, fieldtrips to communities, sense and perception of space, analysis, interpretation and situational diagnostics, panel discussions with the communities to define architecture designs and solution. It also involves prioritization, architectonic alternatives with technical definition of all components and the final delivery of seed-projects both to the university as an academic task and to the communities. The aim of seed-projects is that stakeholders will take them to the next step, which is the actual building of infrastructures and architectonic solutions performed by the Architecture Office.

For the Lab, community outreach focuses mostly on seed-projects resulting from the contents of the Architecture Workshop, even though it also works with other projects, which do not necessarily result from teaching. Within community outreach advanced design processes that require professional performance are included. It is here where the Architecture Office is fundamental to the Lab. At this point, the proposed activities acquire sense when the transfer of the architectonic vision is done in a direct and sincere way, and becomes an opportunity for breeding healthy living landscapes for the communities.

The Architecture Office works with the “Interpreter Architect methodology” that builds on participatory architecture (García Ramírez, 2012), family architects method (Livingston, 2006) and action-research methodology. The interpreter-architect methodology focuses on architectonic design with community participation, in order to achieve appropriation of spaces and conscious empowerment of the processes for social development.
The interpreter architect does not perform community architecture, since she/he is not subordinate and limited to giving an answer to community demands. The interpreter architect does not do architecture for the community, since there is no will to impose criteria from a vertical vision of architecture. The interpreter architect does architecture with the community, which involves a relationship between the interpreter and the community as to understand each other, share experiences, learn together and come up with architectonic consensual solutions. Doing architecture with the community means to interpret technical and rightly the imaginary, the way of seeing and understanding the world from the communities viewpoint and to relate it with “raising the landscape”, proposed by the Lab (Ríos et al., 2016)

Raising the landscape develops through three phases: (1) inform about the process and commit community participation in the project, (2) assess the situation and propose solutions to identified problems, and (3) hand over the agreed projects and evaluate the participatory process. Each phase responds to the proposed methodology, summarized in seven characteristics:

- Architecture with the community.
- Respect for the other's knowledge, co-responsibility.
- Adopt the reality of the community as one’s own
- Give importance to the design process.
- Permanent feedback in a participatory process.
- Empowerment of the community, appropriation of processes.
- Symbolic delivery and celebration of the process.
The Healthy Living Landscapes Lab considers that in order to achieve social transformation, it is necessary to break traditional paradigms. Therefore, through concrete actions it aims to demonstrate that social impact can be achieved through critical reflection and participation in sustained processes for social coexistence, constantly reflecting on the need to adapt the regulatory framework to achieve sustainable human development.

5.2 Case Study 2: Chugchilan Project

The School of Medicine leads the community outreach project “Endogenous Development of Sigchos and Chugchilan”. In order to respond to the different needs and requests from the community, the project that started on 2016, nowadays is worked out by the colleges of Nursing, Exact and Natural Sciences, Human Sciences, Communication and Architecture, Design and Arts. The project involves three components: (1) Community and scholar health, (2) Development of the Community of Guayama, and (3) Living landscapes (performed by the Healthy Living Landscapes Lab mentioned in section 5.1).

San Miguel of Chugchilan is located in the Sigchos district, Cotopaxi province, at 3200 m. above sea level, on the Andean moors. Chugchilan is largely an artisanal agriculture and livestock area. Its population is mainly composed of kichwa indigenous groups. According to Espinosa (2015) the district presents high rates of unsatisfied basic needs, low schooling levels (39% of the population did not finish elementary school), high levels of illiteracy (24.6%), high rates of food insecurity and malnutrition (43% of the homes present severe food insecurity), sanitary problems including absence of drinking water and disposal of solid waste, and high rates of unemployment. It is been claimed that unemployment rates must be analyzed within the context studied, since once in Chugchilan, it can be observed that the great majority of the population, even small children,
work the land, herd cattle and support households. Hardship of rural life gives no chance to vagrancy, therefore unemployment rates could just refer to formal contractual forms of labor, and not to actual worklessness (Yepez-Reyes, 2018).

The Chugchilan project places special emphasis on service-learning as the meeting point between teaching and community-based learning. In this sense, the project deals with different types of activities with communities, the local health system, schools and CSOs. This section focuses on the first component of the project, namely school and community health. In 2017, the main objective of this component was two-fold: from the one side it aimed to put in practice the model of school health and on the other, it worked on a hygiene and hand-washing campaign.

The component started long time before the actual fieldtrips, with all the paperwork necessary for the university to approach the targeted schools and install mobile medical labs in their buildings. With all clearances in hand, the community outreach engine at PUCE started recruiting students from the colleges of Medicine, Nursing and Communication. They all attended a workshop on techniques for working with children, and about contents on good hygiene, as well as a service-learning conceptual session supported by LULI, aimed to reflect on the importance of the activity, the context and the proposed outcomes.

The first fieldtrip took place in February 2017 with a diagnostics purpose (step 1 of the community outreach roadmap). Its aim was to collect data for the hygiene campaign, which took place through various qualitative research techniques: observation, focus groups with students at the targeted three schools, and interviews with teachers, parents and authorities. This fieldtrip’s goal was also to meet the school staff and arrange the community-based activities for the school health assessment that would take place on the next visit.
The model used for school health, in line with the community outreach roadmap, has its own specific steps:

1. **Clearances.** The first step, mentioned above, is worked out with the schooling authorities and the community, in order to allow university students to visit the schools. This turns to be quite slow and time-consuming because of all the bureaucratic instances involved.

2. **Health cards.** The second step is to open a health card for each school student. Health cards contain basic information from routine check-ups performed by Medicine students; height, weight and nutrition information performed by Nutrition students, and the results of blood and parasite tests performed by Clinic Biochemistry students.

3. **Analysis.** The third step takes place back at the university. It consists on checking the collected information, analyze the results and focus on problems and issues that need particular attention.

4. **Outcomes.** The fourth step is to bring back the results to the communities involved. This includes presenting and delivering the databases and analysis to schools and parent committees, so that they can take the appropriate actions on the identified situations. The School District, which is in charge of coordinating activities with regional health services received the outcomes, as well. In this way, the university copes with the national health and schooling system. Schools must keep the health cards, in the students’ portfolios, for future assessments.

The hygiene campaign design covered a one-class-term (ca. 40 minutes) activity developed simultaneously by three different teams of five students each (both from Medicine and
Communication), as to approach the whole school on one day. Beforehand the campaign was put on trial on a local (urban) school, to evaluate its effectiveness before departing to the countryside and for the university students to gain confidence.

On March 2017, the school Tupac Yupanqui at Chinalo Alto received, during one day, the visit of 31 students and faculty of PUCE. As planned, the hygiene campaign happened in tandem with the school health model. Medicine students were quite interested in taking part in both activities.

Children at Chinalo Alto had a very busy day. All the disorder resulting of the presence of university students at the school, turned to be favorable for the Clinic Biochemistry team that was able to conduct blood tests to children too busy and relaxed to react adversely to the needle prick, which was an unexpected outcome and definitely an asset. During the next days the hygiene campaign took place at other schools, while the model for school health continued at Chinalo Alto.

Health cards from the schools approached signal a number of health problems such as parasitic infections, violence, teenage pregnancy, malnutrition, skin diseases, epilepsies, vision, hearing loss, and other handicaps (Moreano & Yepez-Reyes, 2018). As a result, the Medicine College developed, together with the Regional Health District, a training program to be performed in 2018 addressing mostly community health technicians, with the support of local doctors and nurses and CSO from Sigchos and Chugchilan. This training program will involve faculty and university students from different colleges, since many structural, cultural and social issues need to be tackled from diverse fields with an interdisciplinary and joint work approach.

6. Discussion
Linking research, teaching and community outreach, from a structural point of view, turns to be a complex process due to multiple reasons, but mostly because it is sluggish and time-consuming. The actual integration of the three substantial functions of higher education depends both on internal management and on the rupture of conventional paradigms of faculty, students, staff and communities involved.

One of the pitfalls encountered deals with a weak response from the university’s internal management to arrange the schedules of participants, and to make available economic and material resources needed to support innovative learning and teaching forms outside the classrooms. It is important to highlight that PUCE’s community outreach model builds on AUSJAL’s RSU, which speaks about four substantial functions of higher education, and not just the three core ones: teaching, research and community outreach. AUSJAL’s fourth function involves internal management, which is considered as important as the other three, in order to work in tandem. In this way, to look at internal management as a fourth substantial function, entrenched with the other three, could be the key to solve this matter.

A change of paradigm in participatory involvement suggests that students are able to assimilate concepts and have critical reflections about the processes, but the concreteness in the field of these reflections is still weak, needs to be worked out and deserves more attention from faculty members. On the other hand, it persists a patronizing vision of the communities themselves, preventing their active participation, actual involvement, commitment, empowerment and appropriation of the processes. Moreover, universities and communities have different agendas that are hard to combine, which results into sporadic actions that use to be diluted along the way. Finally, regulatory bodies from Sectional Governments and Higher Education need to endorse community outreach processes to bear out their implementation.
As mentioned above, community outreach is sluggish, which is an outcome not necessarily regarded as something undesirable, but it still needs to be taken in account. Paperwork, both at the institution and with government departments, CSO and communities is time-consuming and sometimes surpasses academic timing and requirements. Extended time in community outreach projects makes students be part of the activities and boosts comradeship among the stakeholders: peer students, faculty and community, and among members of the community themselves (CSO, public officials, individual members).

The community outreach roadmap intends to link higher education institutions with local communities and work with them and not for them. In that way, together in a joint venture, proposals address a transformative more inclusive and culturally appropriate development. Moreover, as it was realized during the best practices exhibition, the possibility to share the outcomes of projects allows identifying gaps and concerns that need improvement. However, the roadmap is just designed and needs constant, steady and persistent involvement, as well as continuous assessment from all stakeholders, in order to witness interesting results in the mid and long-terms.

7. References


Jarrín, F. (2018). Competencias y responsabilidad social de los estudiantes universitarios en el Ecuador. Quito: Centro de Publicaciones PUCE.


