



Arts-Based Service Learning: A Vehicle for Development and Sustainability of Communities

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ABSTRACT

Through this qualitative study we intend to show how an Arts-Based Service-Learning Program was implemented with Fine Arts Students, in a Higher School of Education of a Portuguese Polytechnic Institution, Portugal, in collaboration with some local communities and how this Program helped to understand such pedagogical tool as a way of integrating arts-based service in the community with learning that enriches the participants' experience, strengthening community relationships, bringing about change in their environments and presenting the students and community views on the approval and involvement of a sustainable program. We also try to point out the importance of the involvement and collaboration of an art gallery in this process, presenting a brief description of one student's project as an example of a pedagogical resource of our service-learning practices.

Keywords: Arts-Based Service-Learning; Higher Education; Community, Sustainability; Art Gallery involvement

INTRODUCTION

It is often difficult to assess the impact of the Arts-Based Service-Learning on communities. Days, months and even years, can take place before the benefits from the community-university partnerships can be recognized. The growth of programmes that implement *Service-Learning Programmes* across all areas has seen a sharp increase across Europe, as this methodology favors the social commitment of the students. Our area of expertise in this project was Art and Humanities. We believed that such methodology would help our students to set a framework for an integrated local/regional approach of academic teaching and learning that would contribute to the development of cultural contexts, meeting their needs and boosting innovation in these areas through this innovative methodology that created a community-university partnership. Although since 2019 our Institution has been coordinating an International Project related to Service-Learning [1], this was the first time that Fine Art students, with no background in Education, would be involved in such an innovative approach. The Rural 3.0 International Project intended to bring higher education institutions (HEIs) and rural partners together to work on a common issue – development of the necessary knowledge and skills.

From 2020 Polytechnic Fine-Arts students were actively encouraged to use their knowledge and skills to contribute to the development of their communities. Higher Education (HE) should respond to these challenges, but HE institutions are traditionally slow to adapt to new challenges. Academic students were engaged in ABSL, with appropriate educational contents and tools that promoted education that improves lives of people in their communities.

Considering the involvement of HE students in this process over the last two years, some art teachers from our Higher School of Education (HSE) have been discussing the meaning of Arts-Based Service-Learning (S-L) approach with their art students, in order to respond to the needs identified by the local community. In fact, according to Power, Bennett, Sunderland and Bartleet [2] there are differences between Higher Education and community Service-Learning expectations, as this approach involves 'establishing relationships, sustaining those relationships, sustaining workers outside the university and sustaining transformation and radical hope within students and community members'(p.253).

The Arts-Based Service-Learning (ABSL) approach arose in this educational context with the intention of developing students' sense of sustainability in relation to the influence of their critical engagement upon the life of their communities. This gave them the opportunity to think about their active social role, using art to address different issues related to art, to bring, at least, some sustainable development. Cardoso [3] states that we are dealing with a vision of territorial or local development, based on the local actors present in the territories (associations, state and para-state institutions, cooperatives, Private Institutions of Social Solidarity, local action groups, in general) (p.42). According to the same researcher the local development model, also called territorialist, assumes that the development and satisfaction of the population's needs involve the mobilization of the endogenous potential of the regions and, in particular, the involvement of associations and people, within the framework of local, community development. But the question is why national/international institutions, governments, and international organizations (European Union - EU, Food and Agriculture Organisation -FAO, World Trade Organization – WTO and others...) come in the 21st century to promote and finance these programs. He also states that sustainability has several aspects (social, economic, cultural, environmental, etc.). But it is a diffuse term, which seems like we are all trying to say the same thing. It depends on the actor. It is a polysemic term.

In this program of ABSL, sustainability was understood by integrating the voice of the students and the community participants within planning and management. Moreover, sustainability was also interpreted through the belief that this collaboration between the Higher Education Institution (HEI) would involve long-term commitment and empowerment of all those involved. This article aims:

- To show how an Arts-Based Service-Learning Program was implemented with Fine Arts Students, in a Higher School of Education of a Portuguese Polytechnic Institution, Portugal, in collaboration with local community, drawing attention to one Art project developed in this Program, which involved an Art Gallery.

A review of literature focusing on issues such as local development and its sustainability (Touraine [4]; Silva and Cardoso [5]; Leão [6]; and many others) alongside arts-based service-learning (Moura et al [7]) confirms the importance of the role of community partnerships in local development. It points out reasons for collaborative actions, confirms the need for

cooperation between educational and art institutions and community, and presenting variations in behaviors and attitudes in different countries, as well as the conditions necessary to generate ABSL projects that could encourage social intervention as well as draw attention to different needs within the community. Art proved to be a fruitful stimulus for our community partners as it offered complex, multi-layered interpretations of local and sustainable development and interrogated them in diverse ways.

Local development, that means the development from the viewpoint of the local community and its needs, reached its peak in Portugal after 1974, the date of the Portuguese Revolution. Since then, various local development associations have been formed to respond to the social, political, economic, and cultural needs of the communities. Leão [6] mentioned some objectives of one of these associations (IN LOCO), which emphasized the following aspects (<http://www.in-loco.pt/inloco/filo.htm>) when addressing development: it should (i) be the product of the creative synergy between local populations and outside professionals, between grassroots organizations and public services, between old traditions and modernity; (ii) take place from an ecological standpoint capable of defending and enhancing the natural, social, and cultural heritage and (iii) translate a permanent educational process capable of giving rise to a development culture and, simultaneously, generating a social and cultural project (p.17).

Regarding local development Silva and Cardoso [5] state that other key concepts need to be addressed (p.57). They are territorial and social equity, responsibility and environmental justice that are defensible, in which local agents must be the protagonists of development. In this assumption and considering objectives of concrete improvement for the well-being of the population, this perspective has potential. However, the same researchers also reveal some limitations which derive from the exogenous constraints and impacts of the current capitalist economic globalization. Notwithstanding these constraints, local strategic development, according to Moura [8] can mobilize synergies in the defence of the local natural, cultural, and landscape heritage and the application of resources, seeking to attract external resources and counter global strategies that harm endogenous development.

ART – VEHICLE EXPRESSING CONCERNS AND COMMUNITY REACTION

In the last decades, artists have been using art as a vehicle to express their concerns related to several pressing issues. Thierry de Duve states that *“to understand contemporary art it is necessary to have a sophisticated, specialized, and strongly intellectual education. Therefore, it seems to me that it is vital that the art community also becomes more aware and politically conscious of the social role of the arts and its arguments”* (In Fernandes [9], p. 52). Since the 1960s and 1970s, artists have been exploring a range of unconventional processes and materials found in everyday experience, as suggested by *Art Povera* artists, or seeking to return to nature, through ephemeral interventions using natural elements. Some end up being destroyed by nature itself, and artists can only have access to them through documentation search. Even if they are not necessarily a form of ecological activism, Land Art proposals highlight the environmental fragility from sculptures made directly in the landscape to installations that take the discussion about nature and the future inside the museum.

In the same period, artists' concerns with the world were also the engine for an "art of refuse" (Brooks [10]) through which conceptual artists expressed themselves against the Vietnam War, denouncing its support and its relations with cultural and artistic institutions, revealing the

financing strategies of those structures and their politics of inclusion or exclusion of the art produced from the minorities and the so-called "peripheries". Artists also started calling attention to their discourse, to their role in society, and their rights as workers, organizing themselves collectively and creating artist-run spaces that currently continue to emerge in different geographies. In New York, Seth Siegelaub and Lucy Lippard (exhibitions organizers) were looking for more democratic ways of promoting artists internationally, namely through publications (catalogues as exhibitions and/or as artworks) that circulated between both sides of the ocean, such as *Xerox Book*, 1968; *January 5-31*, 1969, *One Month* [March 1969] or *July/August 1970*. (Moreira [11] pp.93-94).

Remarkable international exhibitions appeared, such as *Documenta 5*, Kassel, in 1972, through the hands of the Swiss historian and curator Harald Szeemann, paving the way to others, such as *Les Magiciens de La Terre*, presented at the Georges Pompidou Centre, Paris (1989) or at the III Havana Biennale, Cuba, attempting to broaden the spectrum of participation to non-western art, anticipating future efforts to discuss post-colonial issues and to decentralize discourses on art.

Despite some utopian efforts and other relevant achievements, "art and artists in a capitalist society remain luxuries" (Lippard [12] p. xxi), something that only a few can truly access. The Brazilian artist Cildo Meireles usually says that "in countries like Brazil, maybe the best artists die before completing one year of life. Maybe we're working with the best that survived" (Meireles and Tejo [13] p. 190). In a "global" world inhabited by inequalities of all kinds, whether more or less silent, some authors try to make themselves visible through all kinds of resources, including strategies similar to advertising to attract public attention, such as the ones used by Guerrilla Girls in their attempts to fight sexism and racism within the art world.

As the American historian David Joselit [14] points out, globalization has led to two opposed conditions: cultural homogenization or Macdonalization (similarity), but also to greater diversity and awareness of cultural difference, through a greater and faster contact between geographically distant regions. For the American art educator Julia Marshall [15], art can be a powerful tool to reflect more deeply and differently on global issues. Artists have sought to rethink cultural identity, tradition, and history in multiple ways, and a wide spectrum of contemporary practices draw attention to social and political issues, to the fragility of social structures, precariousness, borders, migration, displacement, and other issues. Some authors explore narratives of resistance to historicism, such as the work of Portuguese and Mozambican artist Ângela Ferreira, analysing the intercultural and identity relations between the Western and the African world. She recently published pastels from the series *Pan African Unity Mural* revealing details of the murals at a community house in Cape Town, which she helped to paint in the 1980s with the CAP muralist group (EDP Foundation, Electra 15, winter 2021-2022). In the last decades, this artist has been developing a reflection on modernist aesthetic and cultural models and their theoretical and historical reading, through works such as *A Spontaneous Tour of Some Monuments of African Architecture* (2021), that set the basis for intercultural communication through architecture.

Other authors use almost invisible forms to emphasize the fragility of the body, denouncing the violence that arises over it until death, whose social causes and consequences have been researched by the Mexican artist Teresa Margolles, denouncing the injustices and social

inequalities of her country, marked by drug dealing, violence, and fear (Rugoff [16] p. 67). The installation *Aire / Air* (2003), using steam collected in public mortuary in Mexico City to wash bodies of murder victims before being autopsied, is an example of the involvement of the public in participating experiences, proposed by some forms of body art, performances, happenings or installations that require the physical presence of the spectator's body to complete the artwork. The centrality of the artistic object gives way to idea, life, action, or process, individually or collectively developed, in a (sometimes understood as) shared creative experience between artist and public, and the same strategy has been used by museums and other art spaces, inviting authors to run guided visits, talks, and other events, and inviting schools and other institutions to participate.

METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

Regarding the current practices and their limitations, previous research undertaken by us, and developed in different contexts, led us to understand that (i) there was no link between academic context and the communities around them, (ii) there was a narrow understanding of the potential of ABSL methodology for the communities; and lastly (iii) communities cultural partners have been neglected by Higher Education Institutions and students are not actively encouraged to use their knowledge and skills to contribute to the development of them.

This qualitative study investigated the perceptions of students in one BA Fine Arts Course, at the Higher School of Education of a Portuguese Polytechnic Institute, about Arts-Based Service Learning (ABSL), as a pedagogical strategy, and as a way of understanding the world, development, justice, education, learning, citizenship (Moura et al [7]).

Key Questions

Higher Education (HE) should respond to these challenges, but they are traditionally slow to adapt to new challenges. Personal reflection led us to the following research questions in this subject:

- Will ABSL help students to close the gap between HEI and community cultural and artistic contexts?
- Will students' projects meet the needs of the community partners?
- Will ABSL help the students enhance awareness of social needs in local and regional community contexts and lead to valuable research results that could influence local policies?

Aim of the Project

The aims of the project "Art, Education and Community" were explained within this subject and the students began to reflect on the meaning of Arts-Based Service-Learning as they analysed some projects developed previously at their institution in collaboration with cultural and educational institutions in the district of Viana do Castelo, Portugal.

Research Location

The curriculum development work and research was carried out in a Polytechnic in the north of Portugal.

Sample

A mixture of two art teachers and nine community partners, most of them in the district of Viana do Castelo, Portugal, participated in this research together with twenty third-year students in Fine Art from ESEVC, who worked in groups (Table 1), and developed projects with different partners of the community. Each project was developed individually or in a group. They were referred to by their initials to guarantee anonymity.

Table 1 Participant Groups

Group	Name of the Project	Partners and Jobs where the students' degree was useful	Service	Learning
A	<i>Art and Community: step by step, side by side</i>	Pilgrim Support Point at Esposende; Esposende City Council and Esposende Tourism Service Religious dimension	To support the project 'Arte do Caminho' of Tourism Office of the Town Hall at Esposende	ABSL Design of a stained-glass window for the Pilgrim House. Collaborative action in and with community, as part of an art initiative for the route of the Portuguese Coastal Way.
B	<i>The world is upside down</i>	Municipality of Paredes de Coura Social dimension	To support an Inclusion Project of the Municipality at Paredes de Coura	ABSL Design of a poster. Collaborative action in and with the community.
C	<i>Introverted</i>	Students of 1 st year Fine Arts BA degree at ESEVC- IPVC Artistic dimension Academic context	To explore a collaborative art project with colleagues from the same BA course	ABSL Drawing and painting to promote interaction between classes of the same course
D	<i>Art for the Youngest</i>	Cultural Center of Alto Minho at Viana do Castelo city- Barca d'Arte Gallery Artistic community partner- Museum/gallery Director	To collaborate with the Educational Services of the Cultural Center of Alto Minho	ABSL Design of a leaflet for children (1 st cycle of Basic Education- 6 to 9 years) that visit the art gallery of the Cultural Centre of Alto Minho
E	<i>IlustraTeca (Illustration + Library)</i>	2nd year class, class B (Agrupamento de Escolas de Monserrate,	Promotion of reading, drawing, and painting; illustration of	ABSL Drawing and painting with the aim of promoting reading and illustration.

		Escola Básica de Avenida), Viana do Castelo Municipal Library and 2nd year students of the Technical and Higher Professional Course in Illustration and Graphic Production at ESEVC Fine artist in formal educational dimension Academic context	bookmark reading in the library	
F	<i>Cultural Animation of the Hotel</i>	Hotel Régua Douro Community arts worker	Promotion of cultural activities in the Hotel through an <i>art workshop</i>	ABSL Cultural animation.
G	<i>The Week of Tolerance</i>	Healthy City Office at Viana do Castelo City Hall Graphic designer	To collaborate with Healthy City Office at Viana do Castelo City Hall	ABSL Design of a poster
H	<i>Artistic Animation</i>	House of the boys Art therapist - inclusion	Promotion of artistic animation at House of the boys	ABSL Workshop for young boys at an orphanage
I	<i>Mural</i>	Frei Bartolomeu dos Mártires School Group - 7th grade class Fine artist in non formal educational dimension Academic context	Promotion of an artistic project at school	ABSL Mural

Action

All the projects developed throughout this semester implied: (i) detecting a need in their community; (ii) planning the activity with the partners of a selected context (see Table 1); (iii) carrying out the activities; (iv) evaluation and reflection, and (v) assessment and celebration. Each project had specific learning outcomes related to their HEI curricula. Table 2 presents some of the common learning outcomes of the projects.

Table 2 Learning Outcomes

• Adequate knowledge and contents to the real world of work
• Develop innovative answers to community needs in the real context of work
• Show evidence of research competencies (e.g. using knowledge, attitudes, such as scientific curiosity, motivation, discipline and organisation, innovation, persistence, autonomy and progress), regarding the sectors of art and culture
• Use fieldwork and content analysis from first and second hand sources related to social and cultural realities
• Use research processes and design ideas
• Use forecasting tools, planning, scheduling and control in implementing a community project
• Disseminate information through oral expositions in public

Topics addressed by the different projects:

- Local cooperation, inter-institutional relations, development cooperation
- Civic engagement / responsible citizenship

These projects intended to help art students to understand ABSL as a pedagogical tool, and a way of developing sustainable empowering conversations and products with the community, combining their own professional development with social responsibility of taking their projects out of the campus and closer to community around them.

In the ESEVC they were firstly engaged in a collaborative discussion about this new strategy. Secondly, students were introduced to the concepts of the project, ABSL, sustainability, local development and discussed some projects developed by artists and art teachers (Moura [8]). Thirdly, students selected different local associations, to identify their needs and prepare their projects.

Students met via zoom with an artist and specialist in artistic education, Maria do Céu Diel, who shared examples of projects with social intervention projects, which were developed at the University of Fine Arts in Belo Horizonte, Brazil. She spoke about the "Pedagogy of Autonomy: knowledge necessary for educational practice", by Freire [17], who highlighted in his work the importance of a scientific training committed to political clarity on the part of educational agents, along with enormous and necessary affection and joy.

In the initial sessions of this program, the concepts of socially engaged art, cooperation, leadership, empathy were discussed. Lecroy's seven-step model for teaching social skills provides helpful guidelines (In Johnson, McKay-Jackson and Grumbach [18]). Socially engaged art was the goal of this program, as it is also part of many independent artists' works assuming

that artists as citizens have the capacity and responsibility to effect social change or influence the world in some way.

The students consulted a list of existing protocols between their Higher Education Institutions and local institutions to be able to choose one of them, or eventually choose another that have not had a protocol with ESEVC yet. Later all the groups agreed on an action plan and began to talk about the needs of their community partners, in order to design their projects.

Choice of Case Study

Bearing in mind the need to collect information on the aspects that determine the needs of an artistic community partner on the one hand and the aspirations of a final year art student leaver on the other, we have considered this method – the case study – as the most suitable to carry out this research.

In this article we feature only one project mentioned in Table 1, as it was developed with an artistic community partner, and also by one of the students with the longest art practice experience, and the best prepared in the area of art and cultural heritage and, consequently, most likely to understand this undertaking.

TR [19] worked alone and developed the Project *Arte para os Mais Novos or Art for the Youngest* at the local Cultural Centre of Alto Minho, specifically at Gallery Barca d'Artes.

Step 1 - Building Relationships

TR selected a possible community partner, Alto Minho Cultural Centre, and tried to explore the needs of this context. She talked with the Director of the art gallery in this Cultural Centre, who was a former art student at the same Polytechnic, and he agreed to collaborate, and TR asked the following questions to the art gallery Director:

- (i) How do the gallery help children to learn about art exhibitions when they visit Barca d'Artes gallery? and
- (ii) What kind of educational materials use to be created, in order to help children to understand the exhibitions?

Both agreed that the gallery did not use any educational materials and she suggested to create a leaflet that would be a pedagogical educational resource for future primary education children that visit this art gallery.

Step 2 - Designing a Project

After TR has researched and identified the needs of the Gallery she said:

(...) Thus, I started from a situation observed in multiple occasions and contexts which was the lack of interest and understanding for art forms and synthesized a problem formulation. I developed, around this problem, a concept of intervention in which it is intended to bring the new (...) generations closer to the cultural agents (organization). Given this framework, I did the planning, collection of information (data) through research in various aspects and the respective analysis and treatment of this information. This treatment (of the data) involved the crossing of information between the cultural, technical-artistic, and didactic-pedagogical aspects. The result is the creation of a leaflet that will be made available to the Barca d'Artes art gallery.

Then she designed her project after discussing when her partner needed to be involved directly in the project and the types of collaboration, resources, and time needed. The Director said he would like that this educational resource could:

- Fulfil the communication and pedagogical need of an art gallery, and
- Help him to develop research skills in the fields of pedagogy, to better prepare him for future professional challenges in that context.

Plan of Action

Activities	Dates
Project Definition and Planning	October and November
Contact with entities and formation of partnerships. Collection of images (photographs) and documentation.	November
Bearing in mind that, due to the unavailability of the first partnership attempted, the project "Mar em Viana" or "Sea in Viana" did not materialize, and with that, the whole project was abandoned in favour of this one aiming at art, all the redefinition and structuring of the project <i>Art for the Youngest</i> was done in November and December. The rest of the schedule remained unchanged.	November and December
Conversations with the art gallery manager (CO). Collection of information related to the educational practices of the art gallery. Graphic definition of a leaflet addressed for basic education children (6 to 12 years). Building the leaflet entitled <i>Art for the Youngest</i> ; Collection of perceptions from partner entities and potential audience.	December
Celebration/Presentation of the Project in the art gallery and Evaluation (Figures 1, 2 and 3)	January
<i>I negotiated the edition of the information leaflet and the dissemination on a website of the Gallery and the IPVC, using free online content through creative common licenses</i>	February

Step 3 - Implementing the Project

TR and the Director interacted and tried to solve the problem previously diagnosed during the interview. There was time for reflection to ensure that all steps of the project were ensured as planned. Every week TR also talked with her ESEVC art teacher to ensure if the learning goals were being achieved, and when necessary, some adjustments were made. She kept records of thoughts and ideas.

Step 4 - Presentation and Celebration

TR finalized and celebrated this project (Figures 1-5) and finally, she shared her findings at the Higher School of Education. She said: *'This project intended to contribute to develop knowing and understanding of the history of art. It was necessary to create a document that provides playfully some information about the evolution of art (...).'*

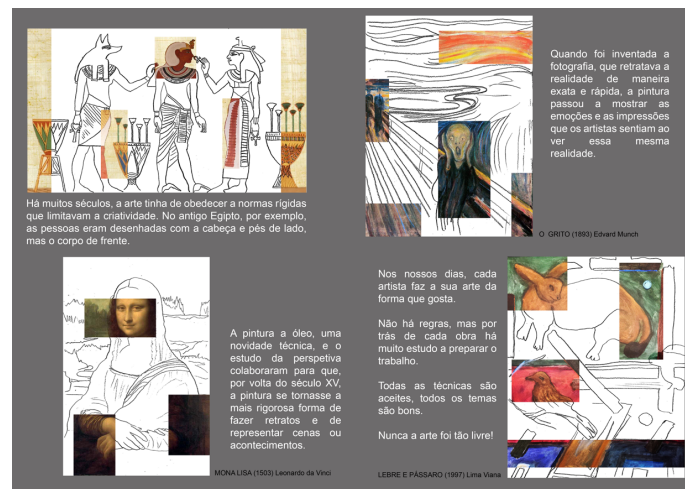


Figure 1: TR, Leaflet a, 2021 © Ricca.



Figure 2: TR, Leaflet b, 2021 © Ricca

Positive changes of this case study

TR was able to recognise the advantages of working with the community as it enabled her to share the knowledge she had acquired at the Higher Education Institution and, at the same time, learn with the partner's experiences when solving together common concerns. ABSL helped her to understand the role and support of the community partner, allowing her to see how all together support each other.

This student was able to engender a rich symbiosis with the life of a gallery and helped the partner understand that although he may not know how to explore the full potential of the artworks that are exhibited there, he can benefit from the rich source of feedback and inspiration from the artists and specialists in art education from the HEIs of its community.

This work investigated how ABSL helped to promote sustainable collaboration between HEI and the context of an art gallery. We only presented one case, but through it, it was clear that learning is a social process and discourse becomes central to making meaning (Boyd and Myers [20] p.10).



Figures 3, 4 and 5: TR, Art Leaflet © Ricca

Key Findings

ABSL helped students to reduce the gap between HEI and some community cultural and artistic contexts and to meet their needs using collaborative projects. The wide range of projects included discussion of concepts on community-based art, cultural organizing, and social practice.

In analysing the findings, we understood that while community benefits are often the focus in collaborative research, the collaborative research in this academic context, using such approach also enabled students to consolidate and contextualise principles, such as:

- Be culturally, educationally, and contextually receptive;
- Work with community entities to develop appropriate responses to challenges and community needs that respect the integrity and capacities of all participants;
- Search ways in which polytechnic students and lecturers can contribute to social, educational development;
- Investigate and trial methodologies of arts engagement that harnesses community cultural resources;
- Collaborate with and learn from cultural partners; and
- Enhance awareness of social needs in local and regional community contexts and lead to valuable research results that can influence local policies in a near future.

The students' comments on the ABSL were derived from what can be called a *mixed diary*, centred around tasks of each team. The students interpreted the notes recorded in their diaries, about what took place, what they had observed, what they learned. This collaborative approach helped to improve the abilities of student learning by exposing them to educational and social issues. Moreover, ABSL increased opportunities for students to grow as it considered skills, knowledge, and dispositions to engage ethically in community contexts.

Art students understood ABSL as a combination of practical skills mixed with theory, and that specific skills differed according to the community partner and needs, although some of these skills are common to all of them:

- Imagination, creativity and resourcefulness;
- Interpersonal and social skills;
- Creative problem-solving and decision-making;
- Teamworking;
- Ability to work independently;
- Oral and written communication;
- Self-motivation and self-management;
- Organization and planning; and
- Using creative software.

All students also reported that this approach helped them to improve their ability to deal with change and innovation, both personally and professionally. Most importantly, it gave them the opportunity to interact with several organisations which they did not even know they existed and by doing so, they learned a lot with them and that has made them understand that there is still a long way to go.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The students' projects involved a broad range of activities, such as:

- testing and/or implementation of innovative practices in the field of arts;
- activities that facilitate the recognition and validation of knowledge, skills and competences acquired through formal, non-formal and informal learning;
- activities of cooperation between local authorities to promote the development of education, and students' integration in actions of local and regional development;
- activities to better prepare the education of professionals for equity and inclusion challenges;
- initiatives that encourage active citizenship and social entrepreneurship.

The bridge between art and its sustainability in the community was built on the kind of response given by the art student to the art gallery. TR created an educational resource which was a starting point for an educational work that needs to be developed in that context, to attract the interest of the different public that visits that context. The social component of such intervention consisted in the development of the gallery partner's awareness of the importance of the educational materials related to art and it was clear that ABSL must be permanently adjusted in curricular terms and given greater importance to the construction of a critical knowledge that respects some principles, such as:

- confrontation with risk, acceptance of the other, rejection of any form of prejudice;

- sharing of experiences between participants of Higher Education institutions and those of Socio-Cultural Institutions;
- knowledge transfer between HEI and the community, to create artistic solutions through the promotion of sustainable work.

It is essential to emphasize the involvement of artists and cultural institutions in the educational process of these art students, in formal and non-formal contexts. It is important to share cultural spaces between artists and students so that the latter can show the product of creativity achieved in their projects. But despite all the attempts to bring the public closer to art, we observe that the general public reveals a significant degree of incomprehension or indifference towards visual arts. On a local scale, social inequality and detachment from art and culture are also present, as we can observe through our teaching experience, and the constraints to artistic creation and enjoyment are noticeable from an early age, building a distance between a significant part of the population and the artistic experience.

One of the possible ways to counter this distance is through socially engaged practice, or socially engaged art, an artistic or creative practice that aims to help a “community work towards a common goal”, to “raise awareness and encourage conversation around issues”, or to collaborate with residents to improve conditions in a particular community. In short, it “involves people and communities in debate, collaboration, or social interaction” (Tate [21]). It uses “forms” and “materials” beyond those used in studio art, involving people as the medium or material of the work, and using participation as a fundamental element – artists working in collaboration with community members, with other sectors or other artists (Frasz and Sidford [22] p. 11).

The dissemination of such initiatives is another parameter of relevant importance, as they promote not only the artists, the art students, but also the educational and artistic institutions that participate in them. In this way, the importance of ABSL can also be highlighted proving that the involvement of schools, art institutions, artists and students constitutes added value for the community in which they are inserted.

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