




METHODOLOGICAL GUIDE FOR THE DESIGN OF STRUCTURES FOR TOURIST AND COMMUNITY INTERACTION IN THE LAGUNA DE COLTA

*Guía metodológica para el diseño de estructuras de interacción
turística y comunitaria en la Laguna de Colta*

*Guia metodológico para o desenho de estruturas para interação
turística e comunitária na Laguna de Colta*

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ABSTRACT

This research is based on the social approach of design, through the satisfaction of individual and collective human needs, understanding this approach as the main actor in the mediation of the economic, social, and sustainable development of the community. It is intended to analyze the different theoretical positions that supports the construction of an applied methodological guide, for the generation of sustainable tourism models, from the social dimension of the design and practice of community ethnographic research methods. This methodology is a resource for reflection on the social imaginaries, present in the relationship between the surroundings of Laguna de Colta, an ancestral iconic lagoon in the Ecuadorian Highlands with great tourism potential, and the community that inhabits it. The result was a methodological guide that seeks the viability of the practice of design, in little explored contexts, contemplating historical, community and political criteria, for the construction of interaction structures as a catalyst for sustainable tourism.

Keywords: Community development, social design, methodology, Laguna de Colta, sustainable tourism.



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RESUMEN

La presente investigación se fundamenta en el enfoque social del diseño, mediante la satisfacción de las necesidades humanas individuales y colectivas, además como principal actor en la mediación del desarrollo económico, social y sostenible de la comunidad. Se pretende analizar las diferentes posturas teóricas que sustentan la construcción de una guía metodológica aplicada, para la generación de modelos de turismo sostenible desde la dimensión social del diseño y la práctica de métodos de investigación etnográfica comunitaria. Esta metodología es un recurso de reflexión sobre los imaginarios sociales presentes en la relación entre el entorno de la Laguna de Colta, ícono ancestral de la Sierra ecuatoriana con gran potencial turístico, y la comunidad que lo habita. El resultado es una guía metodológica que busca la viabilidad de la práctica del diseño en contextos poco explorados, contemplando criterios históricos, comunitarios y políticos, para la construcción de estructuras de interacción como catalizador del turismo sostenible.

Palabras clave: desarrollo comunitario, diseño social, metodología, Laguna de Colta, turismo sostenible

RESUMO

Esta investigação baseia-se na abordagem social do design, através da satisfação das necessidades humanas individuais e coletivas, compreendendo esta abordagem como o principal ator na mediação do desenvolvimento económico, social e sustentável da comunidade. Pretende-se analisar as diferentes posições teóricas que suportam a construção de um guia metodológico aplicado, para a geração de modelos turísticos sustentáveis, a partir da dimensão social do desenho e prática de métodos de investigação etnográfica comunitária. Esta metodologia é um recurso de reflexão sobre os imaginários sociais, presentes na relação entre os arredores de Laguna de Colta, uma lagoa ancestral icónica nas Terras Altas do Equador com grande potencial turístico, e a comunidade que a habita. O resultado foi um guia metodológico que procura a viabilidade da prática do design, em contextos pouco explorados, contemplando critérios históricos, comunitários e políticos, para a construção de estruturas de interação como catalisador para o turismo sustentável.

Palavras-chave: desenvolvimento comunitário, design social, metodologia, Lagoa de Colta, turismo sustentável

INTRODUCTION

Tourism is a term, historically related to a social phenomenon, which takes place in a physical, cultural, economic context, but also political and ideological, and of course ethical, that is, the entire society, which involves the dynamics and the displacement of the actors outside their usual environment¹.

The vision on the sustainable tourism, is based on a development model, which avoids generating environmental impacts, and emphasizes the conservation of historical



and cultural heritage, as well as natural capital, based on the increase in economic income of the local community².

Within the frame of the development of the Latin American region, the so-called "community tourism" model is gaining strength and power, an alternative to traditional tourism that, in addition to environmental protection, allows the active participation of the local community in activities, as well as in the territory management. This initiative based on the principles of equity, interculturality and fair distribution of wealth, aims to preserve ethnic identity through the dissemination of cultural heritage, as well as natural.

Community tourism in Ecuador began approximately three decades ago as a fundamental strategy to reduce poverty in rural areas and directly benefit the inhabitants of the area, improving their socioeconomic situation and therefore their standard of living. However, at present, despite its great potential, it is in decline³.

Among the factors that must be considered, when talking about tourism nowadays, is the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. This health crisis caused significant changes in the dynamics of the global economy, and even more, in sectors such as tourism, for which physical presence and mobility is essential. In addition, at the same time it generates new opportunities and perspectives in the local tourism industry⁴, due to that one of the results of the confinement and limited mobility, the increase in interest in nearby or local natural attractions can be evidenced.

High mountain lakes and lagoons are natural tourist attractions, as well as fundamental ecosystems for ecological balance with specific characteristics, which allow detecting environmental changes. In particular, the access to information on high Andean lakes and environmental benefits is limited⁵.

The Laguna de Colta, in the Puruhá culture also known as Kulta Kucha, is located at a height of 3312 meters above sea level in the province of Chimborazo in Ecuador and is considered one of the most visited areas of the province⁶.

This large mirror of water, with an elongated morphology, is surrounded by a lot of vegetation, being the totora (*Schoenoplectus Californicus*), which predominates in this landscape. The totora is a natural and native material, used as a basic input for the cultural industry (handicrafts), given its identity significance and expressive and symbolic value. In addition, in its context of heritage reevaluation, it has potential as a tourist-cultural attraction⁷.

To make possible the economic, social and productive growth of the community, participatory cultural activities are carried out, such as, for example, the reed horse competition. Likewise, the inhabitants have built a series of representations and imaginaries around the place, its origin, and mythological events. Therefore, think of tourist spaces such as La Laguna de Colta, a space historically wasted in the dissemination of tourism, for which it is of interest, since it is an easily accessible destination, which has natural resources, as well as cultural ones. , which contribute to the construction of innovative design strategies to generate sustainable tourism models;



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such is the case of water and reeds that exist in abundance, in addition to imaginary, cultural and symbolic manifestations that prevail over time.

In this sense, design deals with giving meaning to things to create significant morphological structures, that is, its practice collaborates actively and passively in the social construction of meaning. In such a way that conceiving design as a problem solver implies placing it in the human and material order, as well as in the social order where it produces meaning⁸. For this reason, the research seeks to consider the project dimension of design from a social and interdisciplinary approach. Martin Juez states that "projecting is how to think; even more: it is the why and what for to think about a problem and a solution"(p. 140)⁹. In this way, the project is always seen as a strategy.

State of art

There are some documents that mention the use of totora as a noble material in the construction of buildings, in this sense, by way of background, Hidalgo Cordero in his publication "Totora (Schoenoplectus californicus (C.A. Mey.) Soják) and its potential as a construction material" emphasizes the importance of the use of reeds as a construction material for floating islands by the Uros in Lake Titicaca. Totora is a biomass-based material with great potential for con-temporary construction and architecture, considering the trend of replacing the use of conventional materials such as concrete or steel with more environmentally friendly materials¹⁰.

Likewise, Hidalgo-Cordero in his research presents traditional techniques, as well as experimenting with new possibilities of using reeds, as a material that promotes biodiversity in contemporary design and architecture and directly benefits the community from a socioeconomic perspective¹¹.

It is currently promoting the use of the totora, as it is known, through the project called "Resignificación de la Totora, a través del diseño y la innovación de técnicas, usos y formas" whose purpose is focused on reinserting the use of the Totora in its own context, exploring with new forms and innovating in the technical field and use of the material. The research approach is based on the application of participatory strategies of the social actors involved, thinking about the possibility of reformulating the design paradigms to new uses, forms and production techniques⁷.

On the other hand, from a historical perspective, the construction of floating structures in Ecuador has a tradition since pre-Columbian civilizations. These vernacular mobile homes were used on the coasts of the country and in the rivers as a means of river transport and even in certain cases to obtain food. Even in the province of Los Ríos, the construction of this typology is preserved until today¹².

Finally, Torres Guadalupe in his research evaluates the environmental impact of the Laguna de Colta in relation to the construction, operation, and maintenance of the "Malecón Escénico Laguna de Colta", considering that the lagoon is an environmental, landscape and cultural resource. invaluable that transmits great benefits to society¹³. In principle, as a resting place for migratory species, conservation, and generation of



biodiversity and as a resource for recreation and tourism. In addition, it recommends applying the prevention measures designed in the Environmental Management Plan, in parallel with the development of the project, to control and mitigate the manifestations and negative impacts.

The present investigation analyzes the foundation and process of construction of the methodology that allows the transfer of knowledge of the customs and cultural expressions of the community and becomes a tool that links the analysis of the needs of the inhabitants from the anthropological perspective with the design discipline that allows us to interpret these social representations of the daily life of the actors and give a response to the community reality.

For the approach and construction of the Methodological Guide, the interpretation of the needs of the community surrounding the Laguna de Colta is taken as a goal to understand the relationship between the social actors and the place, for which an information survey has been carried out. through observation and dialogue with the community and mapping of local problems.

It is important to highlight that in each of the moments of development of the methodological design, the interdisciplinary approach of ethnography is considered, which promotes a continuous dialogue between the various theoretical and practical positions for the analysis of facts and social situations.

METHODS

Participants

The construction of the methodological guide for the design of tourist and community interaction structures in the Laguna de Colta is based on a qualitative paradigm since it is oriented towards the meaning of the phenomena, investigating them from the point of view of the actors in a natural habitat and in relation to the context¹⁴. In this sense, the work was developed considering the participation of an interdisciplinary team in order to understand, analyze and interpret the social representations of the interaction between social actors and the place from the diversity of Design, Architecture and Anthropology¹⁵.

Methods

The purpose that urges the development of the guide is to structure and point out the steps to follow to carry out an ethnographic investigation based on the promotion of harmonic tourism, as a catalyst for development, and its link with society and nature. This, considering that for the practice of harmonic tourism a collective impulse is needed as well as a proactive community participation throughout the entire project process¹⁶. From this premise, the application of a methodological guide allows the investigation and interpretation of the needs of the community surrounding the lagoon to understand the various relationships between the social actors and the place from the application of



techniques such as observation, in-depth interviews, research with images, to then enter the interpretive process and the search for relationships through the approach of insights and finally to hermeneutics for the process of construction of anthropological data.



Figure 1. Methodological Scheme

The methodological scheme (**Figure 1.**) shows the various relationships that are created in the four axes proposed for carrying out the methodological design. In the first instance, the social dimension of design is considered as a study perspective, considering that this discipline emerges as an activity through which the human being responds to problems and needs of his daily environment. From this premise, the human component of its practice entails an inevitable implication with the reality of man, and, therefore, an ethical and social responsibility¹⁷. Manzini⁸ considers that design deals with giving meaning to things to create significant morphological structures, that is, its practice actively and passively collaborates in the social construction of meaning. In such a way that conceiving design as a problem solver implies locating it in the human and material order, as well as in the social order where it produces meaning.

As a second point, the notion of community is considered from the perspective of territory, understanding that the area of intervention is the context of the Laguna de Colta, which is located in the province of Chimborazo in Ecuador. For the study of the community, aspects of interaction, perceptions and imaginaries around the construction of social space have been taken into consideration. From this perspective, it is conceived as "something that goes beyond a geographical location, it is a human conglomerate with a certain sense of belonging. It is, then, common history, shared interests, spiritual and physical reality, customs, habits, norms, symbols, codes"¹⁸.

The inhabitants of the lagoon's surroundings have built a series of representations and imaginaries around its origin and mythological events. In this sense, considering the community as an active part of the research process allows documenting their needs for sustainable community development. The same that are linked to

territorial, historical, political and social aspects and it is expected that they can be satisfied through design in its social dimension, which seeks to provide the community with a model of sustainable tourism that promotes its social, economic and productive development.

Needs are a way of expressing beliefs, that is, they are a cultural perception⁹. They are the most important motivational factors in the configuration of the environment, they are determined by culture and civilization.

Materials

Regarding the materials used for the development of the methodological guide, work has been done in several work sessions of the research team, carried out through virtual platforms and face-to-face workshops, as well as field visits. In this sense, the proposal is based on bibliographic and cartographic resources, and, in turn, information obtained from in-situ research. For that, audio and video equipment have been used, as well as stationery and drawing tools for the development of cartographies, narratives, and records for the delimitation of the field of study. Finally, all the information has been synthesized in the development of a methodological structure, which serves as a guide for the development of the investigative process and later its link with the project actions.

Process of design of a methodologic guide

The methodological guide is structured according to three causes that allow the framework of the two proposed research moments to be identified. In the first place, it was necessary to know the context and delimit the field of study, to later define the scope through the approach of objectives, to guide, point out and illustrate the various steps to follow. Finally, a schedule of activities has been designed with the intention of achieving understanding and interpretation of the relationship between the place and the inhabitant.

The importance of reviewing the existing information, bibliographic survey, as well as, construction of the referential framework, arises from the need to establish the approaches and scope of the research and has been raised from the following perspective: What has been studied? Who and how many have been studied? Where have the studies been carried out? What methodology has been used in the studies? Are they recent? What have been the contributions?¹⁵.

The objectives were designed based on the study of the variables and allow elucidating the relationships between the community and the space. Once the objectives were set, the following research questions were proposed, essential to clarify and structure the process. What do social actors understand by community space? What is the relationship between inhabitant and space? What discourses are present in the interaction between inhabitants and space? From which discourses are the imaginaries of ideal spaces constructed? What is the relationship between social needs and community space? What are the social imaginaries about the ideal interaction between



inhabitant and community space? In addition, at the same time it generates new opportunities and perspectives in the local tourism industry.

Data Collection Techniques

The theoretical framework approach allows us to base the findings from the methodological process through the analysis of concepts. In this sense, the application of an ethnographic methodology with a qualitative approach was reflected and subsequently determined, establishing two moments of investigation.

The first moment, called the location in the field, includes two main activities: entering the field and selecting informants. In the place of the informants, key people from the community were selected, as well as professionals from the municipality, who know the reality of the place and allow us to understand the dynamics of the relationships between the context of the Laguna de Colta and the community that inhabits it.

The second moment of the investigation is the application of information gathering techniques. For that, several interactive research techniques have been selected, based on continuous dialogue and active participation of the community in the research process. Subsequently, the structure and format of the data collection instruments were designed.

Research Ethical Standards

Among the last points of the methodological guide are the ethical considerations, in which the need for a prior signature of informed consent is established, specifying that the identity of the informants will not be used, nor will any of their names or names of the informants be published. the people mentioned in the interviews.

The research team, which will carry out the data collection in the field, has been trained explaining the research techniques, application of each of the instruments, use of tools and resources for recording the information obtained and the methods of analysis. and interpretation of it. The field visits are carried out according to the proposed planning and schedule. All the information collected is planned to be recorded in a field diary through notes, sketches or visual narratives for later organization and categorization. In turn, the guide recommends analyzing the data obtained continuously, to obtain preliminary results and conclusions, used to contrast them with the proposed scope and objectives.

Finally, within the methodological guide, the format of the final report of the investigation is specified, consisting of the following chapters: summary of the observation, description of the observation area, techniques and instruments applied, duration of the observation, limitations and finally the results of the observation, as well as the interpretation of the information.



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RESULTS

The result of the research is a methodological proposal for the design of tourist and community interaction structures, which appropriate the cultural and natural resources present in the context. As explained in the design process of the guide, the methodology is structured in the following chapters:

1. Introduction
 - a. Project description.
 - b. Project Justification.
2. Guide purpose.
3. Reach/scope
4. Objectives of the methodological guide
5. Research Planning.
 - a. Review of existing information.
 - b. Research objectives
 - c. Definition of research questions
 - d. Theoretical framework
 - e. Investigation methodology
 - I.1 Sample selection
 - I.2 Techniques
 - I.3 Instruments
6. Research team selection
7. Chronogram
 - a. To be defined according to the project schedule
8. Implementation of the investigation - Collection of information.
9. Organization and analysis of information
10. Preparation of the report

To carry out the information gathering in situ, the data collection instruments represented in **Table 1** were proposed.

Table 1. Data collection techniques

Technique	Tool	Resources
Participant observation	Observation guide	Field Diary Camera
In-depth interviews	Interview Guide	Recorder Field Diary
Interviews with images	Interview Guide	Images, sheets, markers. Recorder. Field Diary



Focus groups	Focus group script	Recorder Field Diary
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Participatory observation is an information collection technique based on active observation and experimentation of daily life and community activities of local social actors. This method allows the researcher to interact with the inhabitants of the place and understand the dynamics of use between the space and the user, both those that occur, as well as those that are wanted and could occur in the future.

The next technique to apply in the field is the in-depth interview. For use in this project, guided and open interviews were designed (Annex 1), which allow the interviewer to leave the formality of a classic interview, react appropriately to the present moment and context, and establish a more spontaneous dialogue with the interviewee. The in-depth interview will be applied to 10 participants from the community surrounding the Laguna de Colta, this number could be extended depending on the situation in the field and information saturation. It is sought that the profile of the interviewees is diverse, that is, that they belong to different age, family, gender and age groups to guarantee that the stories, interpretations, relationships with the space are diverse and have a wider universe of answers than analyze.

Likewise, a collection of information will be carried out working with two focus groups of 7 people each, this from a designed data script (Annex 2). The focus group participants should be other informants than those who have been interviewed to deepen the dialogue with the community actors and understanding of the social imaginaries of the place.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The present investigation presents as a result the structure of a methodological guide, in addition to the research techniques, and how these are going to be applied in the field for the collection of information. All the techniques are raised from the anthropological perspective, as a flexible interaction tool, which allows the research team to react appropriately to the situation and record a true image of the dynamics between the social actor and the place, and in turn an active participation of the informant throughout the investigative process. In this sense, the importance of a methodological design is based on the expected product, which in this case is the construction of ethnography with a community sense, as a foundation for the project process.

The interdisciplinary perspective of this research, as well as the data collection techniques, are similar to those published in the research called "Methodological guide to map uses of public spaces in the city of Ambato from the social representation of design"¹⁴. For this reason, it is thought to obtain all the expected results, despite the differences between the urban context of the afore-mentioned study and the community and rural context of the Laguna de Colta. The hermetic nature of the local indigenous



community and its openness to dialogue with the investigative team could be one of the limitations of the investigative process.

The approach of the methodological guide is a response to the need for interdisciplinary research, which addresses the various visions of anthropology, sociology, architecture and design. This based on a comprehensive analysis that leads to the understanding of the dynamics that are built between the place and the community that inhabits it. Social representations and imaginaries, as well as their expressions, are studied in terms of spatiality, as well as temporality. In this sense, the proposed methodology is not only an academic tool, but also a way to highlight a social problem, between the community and its daily needs and the administration of the territory by the institutions in charge. In this way, links are built between the theoretical and the practical of design, since this tool allows access to the understanding of reality and, therefore, build a diagnosis and strategies for the project phase.

Through the methodological design, it is intended to endorse the cyclical relationship between the object - subject - context, which from the sustainable perspective allows a relationship of symbiotic dependence benefiting all the actors (Figure 2).



Figure 2. Cycle of relationships between the object, the subject and the context

This is because on the part of the community there is interest in the care and administration of the territory and its natural attractions in favor of natural re-sources, such as reeds, which it uses to make its handicrafts, the sale of which is the main economic income, in addition to being a cultural resource that contributes to the tourist and socioeconomic development of the area. On the other hand, the link that occurs between natural resources (totora) and cultural re-sources (handicrafts), represented in **Figure 3**, is of great interest, both for the re-search phase, as well as for the design phase, due to its value. symbolic and ex-pressive, in addition, of its socioeconomic potential from a sustainable perspective.



Figure 3. Relationship between resources with symbolic and expressive value

The expected result of the application of the designed methodology is the construction of an ethnography of community sense which accounts for the symbolic universes of the social actors with the intention of making a description or interpretation of their meanings and significances around the interactions. with space. Likewise, the insights, the visual narratives and historical cartographies as interpretative methodological resources, which are intended to be applied, allow to base the ethnographic report and therefore identify the true needs of sustainable community development.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

CONTRIBUTION OF THE ARTICLE TO THE LINE OF RESEARCH

This study aims to analyze the different theoretical positions that supports the construction of an applied methodological guide, for the generation of sustainable tourism models, from the social dimension of the design and practice of community ethnographic research methods.

CONTRIBUTION STATEMENT OF EACH AUTHOR

The researchers contributed equally.

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Annex 1: Script of the in-depth interview

INTERVIEW SCRIPT

Age:

Gender:

1. How long have you lived in this Community?
2. Do you like living here? Why?
3. Would you like to live elsewhere? Where?
4. What is the use that you give to the community space?
5. Is the use given to the community space ideal, or should it be used in another way?
6. Do you think the community space meets the needs of the community? How?
7. Is the way the community space is used the same as the way your parents or grandparents used it?
8. What place in the community do you like the most? Why?
9. What place in the community do you like the least? Why?
10. What are the best memories you have of the community space?
11. What is your relationship with the lagoon?
12. How is the community related to the lagoon?
13. Do you think that the lagoon has to do with the history of the life of the community? Why?
14. Is the way in which the new generations relate to the lagoon the same as the way in which the previous generations related?
15. Do you think that tourism is necessary for the life of the community?
16. Do you think that the community should live from tourism? Why?
17. What places do tourists like the most? Why?
18. Which places are the least liked by tourists? Why?
19. What should the community improve in space to improve tourism?
20. How should community spaces be used?
21. Does the community space lack something?
22. Should community spaces be used equally by children, youth and adults? Why?
23. Should community spaces be used equally by men and women? Why?
24. If you had to put an object that improves the community space, what would it be?
25. What does the community need to improve its living conditions?



Annex 2: Discussion guide with focus group

DEBATE SCRIPT WITH FOCUS GROUP

1. What does your community represent for you?
2. Does the community space have the treatment it deserves?
3. Are there spaces that need to be improved in the community? Why?
4. Are there spaces that affect tourism in the community?
5. Are the inhabitants of the community happy with the community space?
6. What spaces are part of the historical memory of the community?
7. How should the spaces be so that it becomes a meeting place for the inhabitants of the Parish?
8. How should the spaces be so that the place improves tourist conditions?
9. How should the community be so that its living conditions are the best?
10. What do you think is the most important activity for the community?
11. Does the community space allow this activity to take place in a good way?
12. How should the community space be so that tourism becomes the most important activity for the community?



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