

LESSONS FROM PARTICIPATORY COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT IN INFORMAL SETTLEMENTS IN HONDURAS

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Informal settlements are common in most of the Global South and are unquestionably part of the development patterns that exist in Latin America. While the positive attributes of informal settlements are being recognized, residents of informal settlements do not choose to live in the difficult conditions of such settlements; they are forced to make homes out of the available land and available resources that they find.

A variety of interrelated factors have led to the creation of informal settlements in peri-urban and urban centres around the world. Among those factors, population growth, mechanization of agricultural production, lack of affordable housing, underpaid work, displacement due to conflict, natural disasters or climate change, and eviction from customarily inhabited land in rural areas have driven rural populations to cities. In most cities around the world, neither governments nor private housing markets have been able to provide affordable housing, or the necessary accompanying services, to those migrating to the cities, resulting in informal settlements. It is estimated that one in eight people live in informal settlements (UN-Habitat, 2016), therefore it is no exaggeration that this is a substantial problem in today's society.

The phenomenon of the informal settlement can be found around the globe. Informal settlements are typically characterized as being a grouping of households that have one or more of the following characteristics: lack of security of tenure of land or dwelling, lack of basic services and city infrastructure, housing that is not in compliance with planning and/or building regulations, or housing in geographically and/or environmentally hazardous areas (UN-Habitat, 2016). The list of characteristics illustrates some of the obvious challenges that the residents of informal settlements face. Poverty (UN-Habitat, 2016), low quality of health (Shortt & Hammett,

2013), high incidence of crime (Brown-Luthango, et al., 2017), and low levels of educational attainment (Marais & Ntema, 2013) are also common in informal settlements.

The improvement of such settlements has been undertaken by governments, nongovernment organizations (NGOs) and the residents themselves. NGOs play an important role in filling in gaps in the provision of goods and services left undelivered by public and private entities. The most common approach used by NGOs for upgrading informal settlements has been a participatory approach. Generally speaking, a participatory approach seeks to include beneficiaries in the development and implementation of projects and programs that impact them.

TECHO presents a unique case of current facilitated community development practice. It is a youth run organization, operating in 19 countries in Latin America, which seeks to facilitate community development in informal settlements. TECHO engages youth between the ages of 16 to 30 years old in the coordination and support of the development projects selected by the communities with which they work. This research studies the case of two rural communities working with TECHO in Honduras, El Ciprés and El Porvenir. The focus of this research is the participatory planning and development model that the organization has developed, called *mesa de trabajo*. TECHO's *mesas de trabajo* are working groups that consist of community members of informal settlements and youth volunteers who collaborate on identifying, prioritizing and resolving problems that act as barriers to overcoming poverty and low quality of life. TECHO's *mesa de trabajo* model is the cornerstone of the work that TECHO does and reflects a facilitative and participatory approach to community development.

The objective of the research is to examine two of the *mesas de trabajo* that TECHO Honduras has developed in two different communities in rural and peri-urban areas. The results

of the case study highlight how both TECHO and the community members manage to execute community development best practices as described in the literature as well as reveal important lessons learned while overcoming and circumventing barriers that they face. In addition, the study contributes to further improving their methodology for facilitating community development as well as identify lessons learned from their current practices.

The following section presents a literature review that provides a brief introduction to informal settlement upgrading, followed by deeper dive into the literature on participation in community development. It highlights the key elements that can be distilled out of the academic debate that has been evolving since the idea of participation in development was mainstreamed during the 1970s. The next section after the literature review provides an explanation of the methodology used in the study, which is followed by a brief layout of the context of the case study. Finally, the paper demonstrates how TECHO Honduras implements participatory informal settlement upgrading programs that puts into practice the key elements of participatory development practice.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

INFORMAL SETTLEMENT UPGRADING

Poverty in informal settlements is multi-dimensional. Many countries still use the uni-dimensional measure of personal income to gauge the rate of poverty; however, it is now widely accepted among international development organizations and within the social research community that well-being depends on a variety of factors and that income can not necessarily generate high quality of life if certain basic services are not available (OECD, 2017; Smale & O'Rourke, 2018). Other factors such as nutrition, health, housing, security, employment, education, clean environment and social networks all contribute to a healthy quality of life

(UNDP, n.d.). More often than not, living conditions in informal settlements includes few, if any, of these aspects. As such, cycles of poverty are repeated through generations who find themselves stuck spending all energy and resources on surviving day-to-day (UN, 2015; TECHO-Honduras, 2014).

A variety of approaches have been used to improve the living conditions in informal settlements. An approach dominant in the 1950s and 1960s was the government-imposed and delivered 'demolition and replacement' method, which consisted of destroying informal settlements and delivering housing units to the displaced families, as had been implemented in the Global North post-World War II (Abbott, 2002). However, this approach did not keep up with informal settlement growth and overcrowding being experienced in the Global South. The interventions that followed sought to correct the faults of the previous approach by shifting away from public housing to a self-help model, where informal settlement dwellers controlled the production of their housing. In this wave, two approaches emerged: sites-and-services and *in situ* slum upgrading (Amado, 2016). The sites-and-services model consists of public investment in the provision of greenfield lots and social and basic infrastructure services for families to use and build their own homes. *In situ* informal settlement upgrading generally consists of informal settlements being left in their original location, and upgrading the immediate housing and environment. The original aim of the *in situ* informal settlement upgrading model was for the relevant government body to bring services to vulnerable populations where they are and to arrange for legal title to land while they improve their housing, while the inhabitants of the settlement upgraded their homes (Amado, et al., 2016). Subsequently, the concept of informal settlement upgrading has evolved to an integrated approach that involves cooperation among the various stakeholders that are affected, from civil society, and the public and private sectors. This current approach also looks beyond the physical

infrastructure and seeks to improve the social, economic, and environmental conditions found in the settlement.

Even though informal settlement upgrading has been implemented all over the world, there is no specific methodology in which to refer. As previously mentioned, the concept is essentially “any sector-based intervention in the settlement that results in a quantifiable improvement in the quality of life of the residents affected” (Abbott, 2002, p. 307). As such, the goals and methodologies used in informal settlement upgrading programs vary widely, and many of the programs are undertaken by NGOs and multinational development organizations where there is no real or perceived support for informal settlement residents from the relevant government bodies. Rather than having a specific methodology, these programs are guided by the main principle of facilitating self-help of people who live in informal settlements. Thus, they are able to improve their circumstances when they are presented with better options for taking care of themselves and for increasing their income.

PARTICIPATION IN DEVELOPMENT

The notion of participation is almost universally promoted in planning and development theory and practice. It has been encouraged in a variety of fields such as environmental management (Reed, 2008), health planning (Hipgrave, et al., 2013), and infrastructure and natural resource development (Havel, 1996). However, participation is not easily defined. The concept, in development and planning contexts, is generally accepted to be the involvement of people in projects and development that impact their lives (IAP2, n.d.). Diversity in its definition begins in specifying who participates in what activities, and how they participate (Cohen & Uphoff, 2011). As a result, authors such as Arnstein (1969), Fung (2006) and Cohen and Uphoff (2011) have created frameworks through which clearly definable elements of participation can be identified and assembled. Those elements include, the type of participants, their level of

involvement, and the way in which the participants are participating. Arnstein's seminal Ladder of Citizen Participation (1969) is a linear range of participation as a function of power sharing, consisting of eight rungs: manipulation, therapy, informing, consultation, placation, partnership, delegated power and citizen control. Fung (2006) expands upon Arnstein's ladder by adding two other dimensions to form a framework called a "Democracy Cube". The Democracy Cube is a three-dimensional framework with three scales: participant selection, communication and decision, and authority and power. The rubric presented by Cohen and Uphoff (2011) includes even more elements. Their framework entitled "rural development participation" is focused specifically on participation used in development projects. It includes similar elements of participation as the Democracy Cube: who, how and what kind of participation. These elements are called the 'dimensions' of rural development participation. In addition to these, a fourth and fifth dimension are included that account for the context in which the participation is occurring. The fourth dimension disaggregates the characteristics of the development intervention as a whole. The fifth dimension categorizes the external environment into historical factors, physical/natural factors, and societal factors. In using this multi-dimensional framework, Cohen and Uphoff argue that participation cannot be clearly defined; it is not a 'thing'. Participation can only be defined by the specification of the elements of which it is comprised.

THEORETICAL JUSTIFICATION

Since being mainstreamed, some researchers have argued that the term participation has been used as a buzzword to give external interventions legitimacy and to mask the top-down "business as usual" practice of development (Cornwall & Brock, 2005). Despite this, a scan of the literature regarding the use of participation in development reveals two theoretical bases for the need of participation in development. One theory is based on the argument that those 'in need of development' are owed the right to self-determination of their developmental ends

as well as process. Chambers (1983) offers a normative argument for the participation of beneficiaries in their own development as their right. His argument is based on the belief that all individuals are owed the right to self-determination, including the vulnerable and marginalized. Participation is a mechanism that should be used by those on the receiving end of development assistance and accepted by those offering the development assistance in developing countries, such as development donors and governments. Kapoor (2005) and Abbas (2012) further the idea of participation as a right by arguing that values and conditions within societies change over time and space. They state that any legitimate construct and sense of well-being of an individual or group can only be determined by that individual or group. Within the context of North-South cooperation, Cooke (2004) suggests that the participatory approach has the potential to contribute to productive and positive development if it is used to improve the originally paternal ideologies of international development. Therefore, it is imperative for development to be led by the people undergoing the development. They both argue that any intervention devised by external parties is by default colonialist, perpetuating the control of power of the Global North over the Global South.

The other dominant theoretical basis found in the literature, participation is believed to increase effectiveness of development interventions by increasing the 'uptake' by the beneficiaries. Through participation, beneficiaries may develop some sense of ownership of a development intervention by investing time, gaining knowledge and invoking some level of control over decision-making; programs in which an individual participates, may consider them to be a part of their 'extended self'. Pierce et al. (2001) theorize that there are positive and causal relationships between the amounts of control a person has over an object (material or immaterial), the extent to which a person intimately knows an object, the extent to which an individual invests themselves into the object, and the degree of ownership that a person feels.

Thus, when individuals who are targeted for receiving development programs participate in the design and implementation of those programs, their commitment to the program and their follow through on the objectives of the program are expected to increase.

The mainstreaming of participatory practices in planning and development has generated a wide but polarized body of cases and opinions regarding its use (Cooke & Kothari, 2001). There have been many development NGOs that have used participation in projects and programs that have been deemed unsuccessful. However, the conclusion that can be drawn from this on-going debate is that the 'participatory approach' has the potential to contribute to productive successful development. From an analysis of this literature, three key elements have been found to be fundamental to participatory development: (1) flexible interventions and facilitative attitudes, (2) use of social capital, and (3) strategic politicization of the NGO.

FLEXIBLE INTERVENTIONS AND FACILITATIVE ATTITUDES

The first fundamental element that successful participatory interventions require is flexible and facilitative planning and implementation. There is evidence that the use of flexible and facilitative approaches improve the outcomes, both in terms of acceptance of the activity as well as the quality of the outcomes. Such flexibility and facilitativeness can be reflected in a variety of ways, but has been mainly documented in the literature as it relates to participant selection, and facilitative intervention selection and implementation.

Flexible Participant Selection

The selection of participants or beneficiaries for any project or program is often a very difficult task. A common assumption that is made in the design and implementation of participatory development projects is that 'community' involvement will result in outcomes that are favourable to the 'community' (Mohan & Stokke, 2000). However, the people who make up a community, often have varying viewpoints, values and aspirations, which can be the source of

divisions and conflicts. Within what often appears to be a small and homogeneous group may exist important social and economic conflicts, which influence the behaviour of the people within them. This phenomenon is illustrated in a case study of a Mexican community's struggle to work together on a rural tourism program aimed at fostering sustainable rural development (Clausen & Gyimóthy, 2016). In a government-funded program that aimed to provide support rural development projects by increasing tourism and improving local infrastructure, a condition was placed that required the creation of a committee made up of community members. Within the town of 13,000 people, of whom all were invited to participate in the committee, existing divisions in the community translated to the committee; local Mexican elites, North American tourism entrepreneurs, local Mexican workers and local government officials all present on the committee advocated for funding projects reflective of their competing interests. Therefore, allowing participation to flourish can require extra time and human and financial resources. Decision-making that allows for the surfacing of local ideas is often more complex and drawn-out than command and control style program management style allows for.

Furthermore, residents of informal settlements often rely on and trust informal networks rather than formally established institutions to meet their needs (Swapan, 2016). The presence of such informal networks, if not known prior to designing a participatory project, may lead to the need to incorporate additional players into the project due to the interconnectivity of the lives of the members of the community. Targeting what is considered to be one 'group' within society, the solicitation of participation from that group is near impossible without excluding some people who believe they are a part of it (Turnout et al., 2010). For example, in Bolivia, the targeting of indigenous peoples for resource extraction consultation process exposed the difficulty in practically separating people into distinct ethnicities for the purpose of consultation (Fontana & Grugel, 2016). In that context, there are fluid and constantly changing

boundaries between *indígenas* (indigenous from the lowlands), *originarios* (native from the highlands), and *campesinos* (peasants). During the implementation of the consultation process, it was found that mainly political differences mark the separation between groups rather than biological differences, as the *indígenas* and *originarios* live very similar lives to the *campesinos* and the *campesinos* are predominantly of indigenous origin. The important difference that lies between indigenous and peasant identity is their position towards rejecting decolonization and returning to the traditional community structures and lifestyles of the Andes. The result of pre-selecting and restricting the participation from one group turned out to be difficult to practically implement and created divisions between already marginalized but co-existing groups. Therefore, anticipating changes in participants/beneficiaries in participatory interventions is important to ensure interventions target beneficiaries as correctly and as inclusively as possible.

Facilitative Intervention Selection and Implementation

Flexibility in intervention selection and implementation is also essential to a participatory delivery. Projects that allow for community deliberation and decision-making throughout the intervention process require long time horizons with the ability to allow a project and process to materialize out of the unique context for which it is intended. In development, where problems are often ‘wicked’ and complex, innovation, that is the process of inventing solutions, requires trial and error (Lindblom, 1959). This process of ‘muddling through’ is not compatible with the dominant results-based management approach to development (Gamble, 2008). This requires a shift in culture for many development donors, including the World Bank. Recognizing and accepting the uncertainty of the direction of a project as well as its ultimate impact is difficult to sell in this era of neoliberal or market-oriented management present in all sectors. However, flexibility in funding is a common request from NGOs (Government of Canada, 2017). NGOs who want to allow for such flexibility

are often faced by the demand by donors to create rigid and linear plans that quantify the intended impact of interventions. In the case of MISEREOR, a German international cooperation organization, an internal management shift took place in which it changed its organizational philosophy and administration to be more facilitative and less prescriptive. This resulted in funding for programs that over longer periods of time and that did not require detailed plans prior to funding (MISEREOR, 2017).

Allowing participation throughout the project delivery process also requires NGOs to provide an enabling environment. Throughout a participatory process of problem assessment and project implementation, unforeseen causes and solutions to issues afflicting a given group or community can emerge that may alter the focus of an intervention. Yalagama et al. (2016) identify key success factors for participation from the perspective of the communities working with the highly successful Gemidiriya microfinance project in Sri Lanka. One of three key success factors for participation in development from the perspective of the community was the enabling environment for community-led development from the project donor and implementer. Their characterization of an enabling environment includes on-going and consistent technical assistance while leaving decision-making power regarding project affairs with the village organizations created as part of the project. Close support and monitoring from the NGO was found to provide emotional encouragement as well as operational momentum to the project without discouraging the village organizations during difficult times. The other two key success factors from the Gemidiriya project were the measuring of project outcomes by the committed community members and consistent community engagement throughout the duration of the project. The two other success factors point to the next key element discussed in the current literature review: the use of social capital of the community.

In summary, participatory processes substantially increase the number of unknowns and the possibility for change during the planning and implementation of development. However, contrary to technocratic project management discourse, this is not negative. It only requires a different mindset to be able to adapt to inevitably changing contexts and to manage relatively long project cycles without losing sight of the ultimate goal of improving quality of life of the participants.

USE OF SOCIAL CAPITAL

In addition to the way spaces for participation are *supplied*, the *demand* for such spaces has been found to be an essential condition for executing effective participatory engagement. The combination of the existence of strong social capital and the demand for support from external entities has demonstrated potential for avoiding poorly received participatory policies and programming.

Although it is a concept that is widely used and highly regarded, social capital has been called an umbrella concept that is not easily defined (Claridge, 2004). It generally refers to “networks together with shared norms, values and understandings that facilitate cooperation within or among groups” (OECD, 2001, p 41.). One conceptualization of social capital concentrates on civic engagement, “which comprises the activities and networks through which people contribute to civic and community life, such as volunteering, political participation, group membership and different forms of community action” (OECD, 2001, p 41.). The important aspects that strengthen social capital are shared knowledge of these networks, as well as the obligations and expectations created by those networks (Rydin & Pennington, 2000), which set roles that divide work and responsibilities between community members. The existence of social capital also means that networks and media of communication exist within the

community to share and receive information that is necessary to garner motivation and organize action.

Several studies have investigated the effect of social capital in participatory developmental interventions around the world (Portes and Landolt, 2000). These studies identify a variety of ways that the existence of social capital had a positive impact on the intervention. For example, Das (2014) identifies the impact that existing social networks have on creating solidarity between women in a community in India seeking the provision of water. Within this community, there was a relatively high level of existing social capital among the female population before the intervention was introduced, where they organized meetings and protests against the lack of water supply and drainage infrastructure in their community. The study found that the women's primary motivation to participate in the water supply scheme project was their group solidarity. They felt that they could influence decisions in their local government by acting as a collective. The mutual support and dependence also helped convince their husbands to let them participate in the project by explaining how the other women were participating as well. Their solidarity helped them individually resist, sometimes violent, refusal of their partners' permission to let them participate. Knowing that their group members needed more members to effect change helped them endure the difficult battle of gaining support from their partners.

Similarly, the study of an NGO that promotes women's rights in Kolkata, India highlights how the lack of existing social capital impeded participation in services (Bháird, 2013). The NGO, Shikha, working with women in the slums of Kolkata, found that because women were married at a young age and would move to the house of their spouse, they were often isolated and had no support to resist sexual, emotional and physical violence. Due to the fact that the women

generally accepted their role in the household and were expected to take responsibility for the abuse they received, they were not interested in participating in workshops and training that they felt was not related to their reality. Over time and by being flexible in their approach, the NGO workers created trust between them and the women from the slums, the women felt less anxious to interact with the NGO and each other. As a result, the women who began to participate in the activities arranged by the NGO, formed relationships among them. Subsequently, from those relationships, the NGO could create programs that were practical for improving the gender inequalities within the slums.

The consideration of social capital is also an important factor for determining the scalability of projects. Projects that are found to be successful in one area may not be transferrable to seemingly similar contexts, such as slums in the same city if the level of social capital is not the same or adequate (Hasan, 2006). For this reason, it is important of external entities, such as NGOs, to attempt to assess the level and nature of the social capital present in a community of interest (Tanwir & Safday, 2013). Hippert (2011) demonstrates how this knowledge is important prior to introducing interventions into any population. The researchers studied how a Bolivian government policy established in 1994 aimed at increasing the participation of women in political arenas by legally mandated citizens to voice their opinions in municipal organizations. It was found this obligation overburdened women because their regular duties were not delegated to others while their husbands had to travel long distances to find work. In many cases, the women, who were encouraged to apply for political positions, stated that they would rather see their husbands take the position in order to keep them closer to home, which would help reduce the women's work. The induced participation of women in this situation did not account for the overarching social norms, which led to the added burden that the women faced due to the lack of nearby employment opportunities. Other participatory

policies and programs that have been studied have been found to not sufficiently assess the willingness and ability of women to participate. In many of these cases, the lack of women or the perceived inequality between men and women is seen as a 'technical problem' and thus the addition of women into formal or informal positions of power or influence can abruptly upset social structures, causing damage to those it is meant to help (O'Reilly, 2010). Thus, the importance of cognizance of the impediments women face in accessing decision-making spaces cannot be over-stated. Other marginalized peoples due to internal and external conditions such as race, language and religion must also be considered in the assessment of the social dynamics of any given community or population of interest.

Therefore, one cannot simply 'add marginalized people and stir' (Cornwall, 2003). A thorough understanding of the social networks, or lack thereof, is critical to creating effective and inclusive participatory spaces for making decisions and taking action. The reality is that the poor have a high opportunity-cost for participating in activities outside of their usual lives. Those who must make large sacrifices to attend meetings tend to only participate when they perceive that there will be a direct benefit (Asian Development Bank, 2012; Beard, 2005; Das and Takahashi, 2014; Mansuri & Rao, 2012).

STRATEGIC POLITICIZATION OF THE NGO

A politicized conceptualization of participation can be used to empower the disenfranchised, as they are the ones who know their reality better than anyone else. Participation becomes empowering when one recognizes that each individual has unique and inherent knowledge and understanding of oneself and one's environment. If individuals are willing and able to organize themselves to collect data, share knowledge and problem-solve, they can collectively demand, negotiate and attract investment from governments, private

companies and/or NGOs to improve their living conditions and access to opportunities. In other words, it is powerful (Jacobs et al., 2015).

One of the most common critiques of the participatory approach is the way it has been technocratically applied. That is to say, the application of participatory techniques without any consideration of how that participation will affect the political landscape, removes the association of participation with the redistribution of power. However, the participation of marginalized people inevitably increases their level of empowerment, which may come with benefit for them but risk (real or perceived) for those with power to lose. Therefore, it is important for NGOs facilitating this participation and resulting empowerment to understand the impact this redistribution of power may have in the political landscape and the possible repercussions.

First, NGOs that use participatory practices should first keep in mind how participation of disenfranchised people can be co-opted (Schönwälder, 1997). Cooke (2003) suggests three forms of co-option of participation to wary of in development. First, participatory practices that are technocratically applied typically can be used solely to increase the psychological commitment and sense of ownership of the participants in a non-negotiable objective. This coerces the participating group into believing in a predetermined mission, borrowing from managerialist tactics. In this way, opportunities for resistance to control decreases because the 'empowerment' they have gained 'removes' the control imposed. A second form of co-option identified by Cooke (2004) is that of the proletarianization of the poor. This process may be, in some cases, a short-term solution to a community with low quality of life. However, the long-term sustainability of an improvement is dubious as the rapid introduction of wage-based economics into a community runs the risk of introducing new and unforeseen problems. For

example, when individually-oriented economic opportunity is abruptly introduced into communities where traditions of familial lineage are the norm, diverging interests and heterogeneity can be by-products to the increase in financial income that do not necessarily translate into an overall improved quality of life in those communities (Platteau & Abraham, 2002). Lastly, a third form of co-option is found where *organic* participation growing from strengthening and spreading of social capital in the grassroots, reflecting a deep and radical shift in power is appropriated by a special interest group in order to maintain the status quo or to advance a hidden agenda which only benefits a select few, undermining the focus of a social movement. In Latin America, there is a tradition of co-optation of leaders of popular movements and organizations into 'state machinery' in exchange for the ability to monitor their development and demands (Rahier, 2012).

Without the genuine commitment of the dominant segment of a population to increase equality within their society, both induced and organic forms of participation run the risk of being co-opted. The potential of co-option poses a serious challenge that some critics see as insurmountable through induced intervention. Because local authorities from within the development context stand to lose in the devolution of power to the marginalized, those authorities must be willing to act against their own self-interest (Cobbinah, 2015; Patel, 2016). In light of this, external entities working with communities through participatory development programs can impart on individuals and groups within those communities sustained empowerment, by reshaping of political networks beyond the duration and location of a project or program or determining the lack or weakness of the political capabilities of the poor. Political capabilities, defined as "the institutional and organizational resources as well as collective ideas available for effective political action" (Williams, 2004, p. 567), build the capacity necessary to further upgrade marginalized communities beyond the scope of a project. It also can lead to

high percentage rates of participation and retention of participants if they are cognizant of the way a project is part of a larger political disruption within the greater context (Bonnar-White et al., 2013). Examples of such efforts to facilitate projects that attempt to increase the political capacity of communities is the creation of maps and surveys of physical capital as well as population and economic data of marginalized communities. It has been found that when communities can quantify their need as well as resources, it has the potential to augment the sense of financial and social capital that they have. Socio-economic data owned by communities can be used to justify the need for infrastructure upgrades, as has been documented in examples from Brazil, Namibia, and Zimbabwe (Banana et al., 2015; Colombo & Pacifici, 2016; Muller & Mbanga, 2012). Part of the power that comes with the data is the collective ownership of it. In contexts where political leaders publicly support projects in hopes of votes in elections, geo-referenced population data can add weight to community-based organizations that wish to get support for their projects (Jacobs et al., 2015).

CONCLUSION

Informal settlement upgrading has been the response from governments and the third sector in combating the inadequate living conditions present in informal settlements around the world. This is mainly due to the lack of capacity and resources of the public sector to provide decent housing and basic services. Therefore, informal settlement upgrade programs that facilitate self-help and multi-sector collaboration are the most common technique for confront this global problem. As such, participation of residents of informal settlements play a crucial part of these programs.

Participation in development interventions has been common practice for several decades (Bháird, 2013). Therefore, there are numerous published studies that have drawn important lessons from the experiences of organizations that have attempted to facilitate

participatory practices in development contexts (Participedia, 2013). The breadth information available on the topic of participatory practices is a testament of the continued trial and error that forms the global and on-going collective learning process that is underway. The present review of the literature found that firstly, the concept of participation is extremely broad, which can result in ambiguity in the academic as well as practical discussion of the topic. However, three key elements have been distilled from that discussion: (1) flexible interventions and facilitative attitudes, (2) use of social capital, and (3) strategic politicization of the NGO. The case study presented in the following sections will present findings from an NGO in Honduras, whose model of participatory informal settlement upgrades incorporates these three elements and how these elements are carried out in the field.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

CASE STUDY

This research project is intended to study the application of a participatory intervention model that seemed, from prior knowledge and grey literature, to explicitly incorporate three key elements necessary for effective execution (presented in Chapter 2: Literature Review). In focusing the study on the application a particular model in a particular context, the case study approach was deemed appropriate. Case studies are appropriate for exploring, in detail, a bounded system (Mayan, 2009). The bounded system can be an organization, an event, an activity, a program or a person (Creswell, 1998).

For the purpose of this project, the implementation of the particular model of intervention used by TECHO was chosen to be studied. The specific context of the application of their model of intervention was selected to be its country program office in Tegucigalpa M.D.C., Honduras (Figure 1).

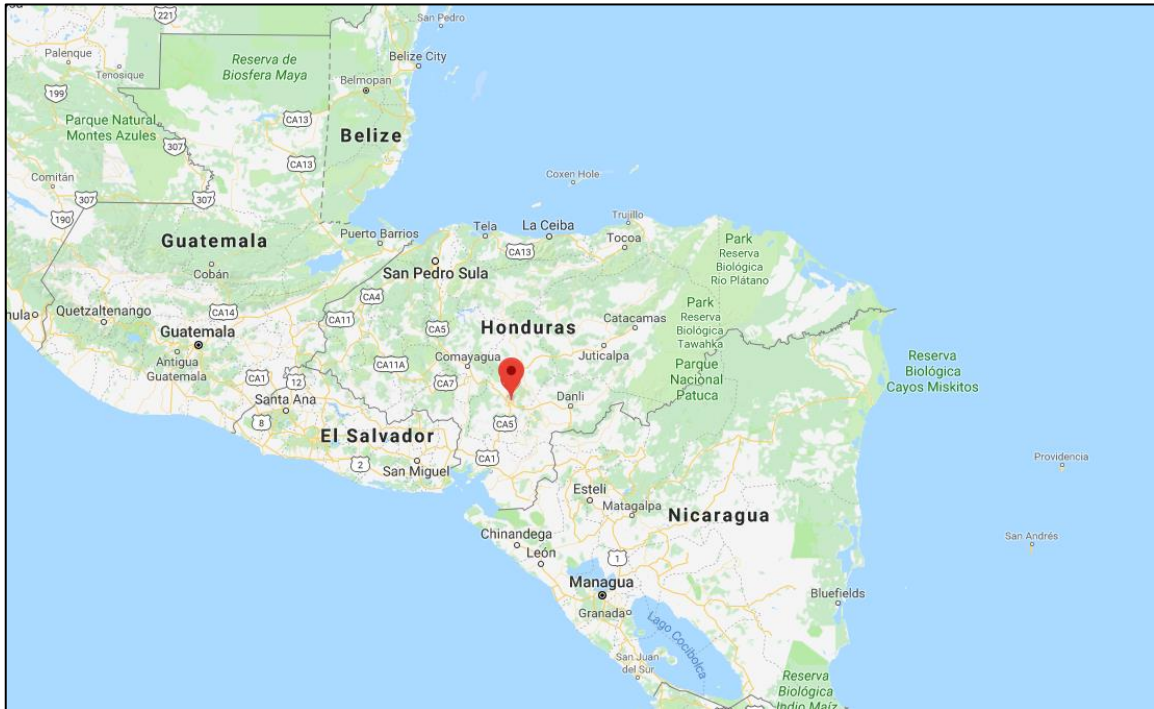


Figure 1: Map of Tegucigalpa M.D.C., Honduras

This location was chosen primarily due to the researcher's previous professional experience in the region as well as the personal connection with TECHO Honduras, established through the Canadian NGO (non-governmental organization) Cuso International. Through Cuso International, it was possible to establish an agreement for conducting the research with TECHO Honduras over the course of six months (March to August of 2018), including working from their office and visiting their partner communities (informal settlements). Given that their head office is located in the capital of Honduras, Tegucigalpa, and most of the communities with which they work are also within a few hours' drive from Tegucigalpa, it was determined that access to both the head office as well as those communities would be feasible and secure.

Due to time and resource constraints, two of the five communities where *mesas de trabajo* are actively functioning with TECHO were selected to be studied. The two communities are El Ciprés, part of the municipality of Lepaterique, Francisco Morazán (Figure 2) and El Porvenir, part of the municipality of San José, La Paz (Figure 3).



Figure 2: Map of El Ciprés, an informal settlement in Lepaterique, Francisco Morazán



Figure 3: Map of El Porvenir, an informal settlement in San José, La Paz

These two communities were chosen because they represent two extreme cases of community organization. El Porvenir is a recently formed community where participation in communal projects has been strong and existent since before TECHO began working with them, whereas, the community of El Ciprés was a community with very little social cohesion prior to TECHO's arrival. Investigating the implementation of the same model of intervention in these two cases provides important insight into the potential adaptability of the model. Further description of the cases and their contexts is presented in Chapter 5: Empirical Results.

DATA COLLECTION

The data collection for this research project has taken place in three forms. As previously mentioned, the researcher was invited to work directly from the head office of TECHO Honduras in Tegucigalpa over the course of six months, from February to August 2018. This arrangement had a positive impact on the ability to collect data. First, positive rapport between the researcher and the staff and volunteers of TECHO was established through the existing inter-institutional relationship between Cuso International and TECHO Honduras. In addition, by being in the office everyday, the researcher was able to quickly build trust and understanding with the staff and volunteers. As a result, access documents and information was generously made available on an as need basis, which facilitated the planning of the study from the beginning.

The data collected for this project were all of a qualitative nature. As is recommended for conducting contextually rich data necessary for case studies, three methods of data collection were used: observation, document review and key informant interviews.

OBSERVATION

Observation began immediately once the researcher started working in the TECHO office. The TECHO staff invited the researcher to staff meetings, volunteer training sessions, and

institutional social events. The opportunities where the richest information was captured were the field activities in which the researcher was able to participate. These activities included housing construction weekends, census survey collection¹ and the TECHO-community working group meetings, called the *mesa de trabajo*. In total, the researcher was able to participate in two construction weekends (February 23-25 and May 26-27), two census survey collection weekends (May 5-6 and 19-20) and attended four *mesas de trabajo* (April 22, May 12, June 3 and July 1). Observations were documented in dated, handwritten field notes, which were collected in two notebooks.

DOCUMENT REVIEW

A review of internal documents, not available in the public domain, also began at the beginning of the research period in Tegucigalpa, and continued to occur intermittently throughout the research project, as awareness of useful documents became known to the researcher. Such documents include community project planning documents, community survey documents, annual evaluations, published research reports, and institutional reports and manuals. These documents were formally provided to the researcher upon request by the staff of TECHO Honduras. External news articles were also reviewed as part of the research project, however, these played a lesser role in the overall analysis. Many of the external news articles were not found to be directly relevant to the case study and often were dubious in credibility.

KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS

Finally, six semi-structured interviews were conducted with key informants. These participants were selected using purposeful sampling. Purposeful sampling is a method of selecting interviewees based on their unique experience and knowledge in a particular event or

¹ The census survey was a survey done of all the informal settlements in the metropolitan region of Tegucigalpa, M.D.C. in May 2018. The survey collected data related to population, land tenancy, accessibility to basic infrastructure and social services and security.

subject (Mayan, 2009). In accordance of good research practice when involving human participants in academic research, ethics approval was sought and received prior to engaging with the interviewees (Booth, et al., 2003). The Research Ethics Board of the University of Guelph granted the researcher approval in May 20, 2018. No other research ethics board was consulted because Honduras does not have a national framework for ethical conduct of social research involving human participants. Therefore, the research project was conducted with the principles of research ethics of Canada. As part of the application process, it was required to create an interview guide outlining the list of questions that the participants would be asked. This guide is provided in both English and Spanish in Appendix I.

Two staff, two volunteers and two community leaders were selected to be interviewed, all of who agreed to participate. Of those six interviewees, three women and three men were interviewed. The two staff members who were interviewed were the Director of Social Action (June 20th), and the Director of Community Engagement (June 20th). The volunteers who were interviewed were the Community Coordinators of two communities (El Ciprés and El Porvenir), both of whom have held their role for over a year. The interviews for the Community Coordinators for El Ciprés and El Porvenir occurred on July 13 and July 16, respectively. Finally, the two community leaders were two notably active community members from the communities of El Ciprés (July 1st) and El Porvenir (June 3rd). Due to data saturation, no further interviews were conducted. The interviewed ranged from half an hour to an hour in length. The researcher conducted the interviews in Spanish, in which she is professionally proficient. The interviews with the community members were done after community meetings, in an isolated area outside of their respective gathering spots. The interviews with staff and volunteers of TECHO were conducted in the TECHO office, during regular working hours.

DATA ANALYSIS

The analysis of the data collected during the study was on-going throughout the research period. A content analysis was conducted on all relevant documents and interview transcripts. This content analysis was conducted in order to compare the theory and practice of participatory community development programs in informal settlements. Therefore, both a conventional and non-conventional approach of content analysis was used (Yalegama, et al., 2016). Conventional content analysis seeks to identify categories of themes or responses from data provided in documents or interviewee opinions. In this case, the key themes found in the academic literature (refer to Chapter 2: Literature Review) were the focus of the content analysis. A table was created that separated the three themes and all the collected data were categorized within that table, including interviewee comments, field notes and information collected from the document review. In addition, other themes that were emphasized during the data collection were also noted and included in the data analysis. The results of the data collection and analysis are presented in the following chapters.

CHAPTER 4: NATIONAL AND LOCAL CONTEXTS

This section provides descriptions of the national and local contexts of the case study as well as TECHO itself. First, a brief introduction of national poverty reduction programs is described, followed by an overview of the nationally legally recognized community organizational structure that is present in many communities across Honduras. Then, descriptions of TECHO, its model of intervention as well as its operation in Honduras is presented. Lastly, descriptions of the communities of El Ciprés and El Porvenir are presented.

POVERTY REDUCTION IN HONDURAS

Honduras is the largest country in Central America by landmass and second most populated, after Guatemala. It has a population of 9.11 million people, of which 61% live in poverty (or live on less than \$4USD per day) (World Bank, 2016). The national government has in place several programs aimed at reducing poverty from a variety of angles. In all 18 *departamentos* of Honduras, the national government has implemented its VIDA MEJOR program that is a series of projects that aim to improve quality of life and reduce poverty in a multi-faceted way. These projects include the free delivery of eco-stoves, family gardens, bio-sand filters and concrete floors. For single mothers and families living in extreme poverty (or living on less than \$1.90USD per day), the national government has also implemented conditional money transfers and food bags, which have reached 270,000 families (El Libertador, 2018). The national government has also put in place a school snack program aimed at keeping children in schools, which has reached 1.4 million children. Other poverty reduction strategies taken by the national government has been the creation of employment. The CON CHAMBA VIVÍS MEJOR program is focused on strengthening the agro-food sector, ensuring full employment in industrial parks and providing financial and technical support to micro, small and medium enterprises. The national government has also launched an employment programs aimed at NINIs (unemployed youth who are not studying). The program, called ¡CHAMBA AHORITA!, has set a goal of creating 100,000 jobs over four years for NINIs by subsidizing their first three months of employment in private enterprises (UN, n.d.).

Unfortunately, these programs only begin to reach the estimated 5,557,100 people living in poverty in the country. Therefore, a large number of NGOs are present in Honduras. While no official count of the organizations of the third sector is published, it is estimated that there are more than 16,000 NGOs operating in Honduras, according to *Unidad de Registro y Seguimiento Asociaciones Civiles*, or Unit for Registering and Monitoring Civil Associations

(URSAC) (El Heraldo, 2014). These NGOs work in all fields of development including education, health, environment, economic development and water and sanitation.

COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS

An important part of the organizational landscape in both urban and rural communities in Honduras is the presence of community boards or *patronatos*. *Patronatos* are legally formed associations that are comprised of the residents of a community that occupied a physical space who seek to maintain the common good, self-management of their needs and the defense of their interests (La Gaceta, 2014). These *patronatos* are found in both formal and informal settlements. According to both the *Ley de Patronatos y Asociaciones Comunitarias* and the *Ley de Municipalidades*, municipal governments as well as national authorities must make arrangements with the communities at all stages of any project or program that affects them. In addition, all governmental entities of all levels are obligated to respect, protect and encourage *patronatos* as spaces of democratic organization and community self-management. As such, *patronatos* have the legal right to undertake community projects such as the construction and/or maintenance of community infrastructure (roads, water distribution systems, schools, etc.) subsequent to the delegation of the pertinent authority.

Another common type of community organizations in Honduras is the *junta de agua* or water board. Before 2003, the *Servicio Autónomo Nacional de Acueductos y Alcantarillados* (SANAA) or the Autonomous National Aqueduct and Sewerage Service was the main provider of water and sanitation services in the urban areas of Honduras. In the rural areas, local *juntas de agua* were the main providers water and sanitation services, receiving technical support from SANAA. Since the year 2003, Honduras has officially sought to decentralize the provision of water in urban areas and grant local water boards in rural areas legal status by passing of the *Ley Marco del Sector Agua Potable y Saneamiento* or the Potable Water and Sanitation Sector

Framework Law. The purpose of decentralization was to broaden the reach of services and to increase transparency in the sector. The framework established the *Consejo Nacional de Agua y Saneamiento* or the National Council of Water and Sanitation (CONASA) and the *Ente Regulador de los Servicios de Agua Potable y Saneamiento* or the Regulatory Entity of Potable Water and Sanitation Services (ERSAPS). CONASA is the national entity which sets policies and strategies for the provision of potable water and sanitation services; ERSAPS is meant to set regulations and standards of provision of those services. Under this framework, SANAA is meant to become the technical arm of CONASA and devolve its role as provider to independent public-private organizations who are supervised by the respective municipal government. However, this framework has not been completely realized and the previous arrangement for provision is still the common system in place. In other words, the provision of water and sanitation services, where present, are mainly administered by community-based *juntas de agua*.

In any educational centre, whether public or private, there usually exists an *Asociación de Padres y Madres de Familia* (APF) or Parents' Associations. These APFs are made up of students, teachers, parents and guardians of students of the educational centre. The purpose of the APF is to discuss and contribute to the school's operation in order to create the best possible learning environment and learning outcomes. They also are responsible for monitoring the operation as well as the educational indicators of the centre. APFs are legal organizations that must abide by the federal regulations set out in the *Reglamento de Participación de la Comunidad Educativa de la Ley Fundamental de Educación y Acuerdo Ministerial* N°. 1395-SE-2015.

TECHO

TECHO is one of many NGOs operating in Honduras. TECHO, meaning roof in Spanish, began as a youth-run NGO in Chile in 1997. Its aim was to combat poverty in informal settlements by constructing emergency dwellings. In the 20 years since its establishment, it has

opened offices in 21 countries in Latin America and continues to be a youth-run organization focused on reducing poverty in informal settlements. While TECHO's operations in each country are adapted to the context, the model of intervention is same across the region. TECHO seeks to overcome poverty through the collective action of youth volunteers and the residents of informal settlements in the implementation of projects and programs. As such, its impact is two-fold, executing projects and programs to improve the quality of life in informal settlements while building capacity within youth (ages 16-30) as well as residents of informal settlements. TECHO also strongly promotes volunteerism and relies heavily on youth volunteers who execute a large percentage of the operations of the organization.

TECHO'S MODEL OF INTERVENTION

TECHO's model of intervention is highly participatory and is based on collaboration with community organizations. TECHO works on a community-level basis where it establishes a participatory planning and development mechanism called a *mesa de trabajo*. TECHO's *mesas de trabajo* are working groups that consist of community members of informal settlements and youth volunteers who collaborate on identifying, prioritizing and resolving problems that act as barriers to overcoming poverty and low quality of life. TECHO's *mesa de trabajo* model is the cornerstone of the work that TECHO does and reflects TECHO's facilitative and participatory approach to community development.

TECHO's model of intervention follows a loosely defined process that is guided by principles and its ultimate objective of community development through the strengthening community capacity and to developing housing and habitat initiatives (TECHO, 2018). The process begins with the initial contact between TECHO and the members of an informal settlement. The initial contact may be initiated either by TECHO or by the members of the informal settlement. During this initial contact, TECHO and leaders of the community and/or

community organizations meet to fill out a community characterization questionnaire and to present and discuss TECHO's principles and goals. The community characterization questionnaire is used as an exercise to reflect on the living conditions in the informal settlements and the results are used by TECHO to assess how it can support the members of the informal settlement. The characterization focuses on the size, history, land tenancy, housing conditions, community infrastructure, surroundings, and community dynamics (presence and activity of community organizations) of the informal settlement. Once the initial meeting is held, the community leaders or group is responsible for disseminating the information to the other residents of the informal settlement in order to gain support. If enough support is gained, a community assembly is held where all community members are invited to hear directly from TECHO staff and/or volunteers about their work and objectives, and to communicate their ideas, concerns and support. In this initial meeting, the first tangible project is proposed, which is the construction of houses for the most vulnerable families of the community. This first project is used not only to improve the living conditions of the families who receive housing, but also to build trust and a sense of collaboration between TECHO and the community. This stage of the process usually takes between three to eight months.

Following the successful completion of the first project, TECHO and the community members of the informal settlement create a *mesa de trabajo*. The *mesa de trabajo* is a working group made up of community members and TECHO volunteers. The goal of the *mesa de trabajo* is to lead the work that is done between the community and TECHO. The *mesa de trabajo* meets regularly, between once and twice a month. The first action taken by the *mesa de trabajo* is to do a household survey of the community that collects more detailed data related to topics covered in the community characterization questionnaire. In addition to the household survey, the members of the *mesa de trabajo* completes a community assessment that not only

identifies but analyzes problems present in the community. The result of the community assessment is to determine the priority issues present in the community, as well as their causes and consequences. Using the results of the survey and the community assessment, the *mesa de trabajo* develops a plan of action that outlines the concrete actions that will be taken including schedule, resources and responsibilities.

The plan of action is the key document used throughout the rest of the period (usually one year). The *mesa de trabajo* then works to complete the actions outlined in the plan of action. This part of the process is the least prescriptive due to the wide range of activities or projects that result from the community assessments. During this stage, the community coordinators attend the *mesa de trabajo* meetings and push along progress by following up on actions to be taken and facilitate the delegation of tasks in order to complete the projects that are undertaken. The community coordinators also meet with the TECHO staff to update them on the status of projects, the general momentum of the *mesa de trabajo* and notify staff of any issues that need to be resolved at an institutional level.

At predetermined times during this process, a monitoring questionnaire is completed to assess the progress of the *mesa de trabajo* and to determine roadblocks or bottlenecks in its progress. The *mesa de trabajo* will also redo the household survey after a substantial amount of time in order to determine changes in the community since the initiation of the partnership. From this evaluation, the *mesa de trabajo* determines whether the on-going presence of TECHO is still beneficial to the community or if the community has built enough capacity to continue to undertake projects on its own by either raising or appealing for funding on its own or the *mesa de trabajo* has completed all the projects that TECHO has the capacity to support. However, the

mesa de trabajo is still being productive but requires support and facilitation from TECHO, the assessment process is restarted and the process is repeated.

TECHO HONDURAS

TECHO has been operating in Honduras since 2010. Over the course of the last seven years, TECHO Honduras has been active in 21 communities in six *departamentos* and has mobilized over 18,000 volunteers in its various activities. In terms of tangible infrastructure projects, TECHO Honduras has facilitated the construction and installation of over 1,000 housing units, 440 household solar panels, 80 latrines, 3 kindergardens and is in the process of completing a school.

TECHO Honduras currently has eight staff members and counts on 28 volunteers who are part of their core team of volunteers. Each member of the core team of volunteers holds a specific operational role within the organization. The staff and core team of volunteers are split into two teams: the commercial team and the social action team. The commercial team is responsible for fundraising and corporate partnerships, external communications and financial affairs. The social action team is responsible for the volunteer management, logistics and infrastructure and community engagement. TECHO Honduras has one staff member assigned to community engagement. That staff member manages a team of volunteers who are assigned to each community that TECHO Honduras is actively working in. For each community, 2-3 volunteers are assigned to be Community Coordinators. In addition to these volunteers, TECHO Honduras also assigns a Regional Community Coordinator role to one volunteer per region, whose responsibility is to oversee the overall progress of the communities in that region and to be aware of other communities who may be suitable for working with TECHO Honduras.

COMMUNITY CASE STUDIES

EL CIPRÉS, LEPATERIQUE, FRANCISCO MORAZÁN

El Ciprés is a community of approximately 100 families that was established over 60 years ago. It sits on the outskirts of the city of Lepaterique, within an hour's drive from the capital, Tegucigalpa. However, though the road to the community from the main highway is a dirt road, often flooded by rain, making it only accessible by all-terrain vehicles and on horseback. The community members live primarily from small-scale vegetable farms in order to sell their crops in Tegucigalpa. The families of El Ciprés do not own the land that they live and work on. They only have the legal right to use the land but cannot sell it, as it is part of the nature reserve, Yerba Buena. The government controls the land and thus puts the families at risk of being evicted due to changes in forest management policies. Many of the families of El Ciprés live below the poverty line. Their houses are made of adobe and dirt floors. Most do not have connection to electricity or latrines but do have a water tap that provides untreated water from the mountains nearby.

Prior to TECHO's arrival in El Ciprés, the community's only external support had been from the Spanish International Cooperation for a school building project. The municipality has committed to various infrastructure improvement projects, such as the road to the community but these commitments have yet to be carried out. The community also had and continues to have a *patronato*, a *junta de agua* and an APF. TECHO arrived in El Ciprés in 2015 where it initiated its presence in the community with the construction of several houses for families who in most need of adequate shelter at the time. Through that experience, the staff and volunteers of TECHO Honduras learned that the community members was quite divided and did not work well together, thus not many community members participated in the construction project. TECHO Honduras also learned that the *patronato* was not supported by many of the community members.

Following the first housing construction project, the staff and volunteers of TECHO Honduras continued to meet with community members and the *patronato* to plan another construction project and explained how TECHO aims to work with a cohesive community where as many people as possible pitch in to all the projects, in terms of logistics and labour. A second housing construction project was undertaken six months later where more housing units were built for other families in need. This time, the community leaders including those from the *patronato* were much more involved and contributed throughout the entire process. Shortly after, TECHO Honduras launched the *mesa de trabajo* en El Ciprés and began to investigate further into the community through *mesa de trabajo* meetings and through a household survey. From the community assessment and household survey data, two projects were chosen upon which to embark. First project was the construction of a fence to enclose the school property. The second project was to arrange a carpentry course for several of the community members. Both of these projects have been completed. Now, the *mesa de trabajo* is focused on two new projects the construction of latrines for the community hall and for many of the families.

EL PORVENIR, SAN JOSÉ, LA PAZ

El Porvenir is a relatively new informal settlement in the outskirts of San José, La Paz. The families that live there have lived there for 44 years as part of the community of Guayabal, which had approximately 130 families. However, in 2016 approximately 40 families living in one section of Guayabal decided to form their own community, El Porvenir, due to a feeling of negligence and a strong desire to improve their situation.

La Paz is one of Honduras' predominant coffee growing regions. The main occupation of families in this area, including those of El Porvenir, is growing coffee. La Paz is part of a larger ecological region called the *corredor seco*, or the dry corridor. This area has in the last 8 years faced a worsening of already difficult climate, plagued mainly by droughts (FAO, n.d.), worsening

the conditions and situation in an already poor region of Honduras. Most families living in El Porvenir own the property that their house is on, but they typically work other property owners' coffee fields. Like the families in El Ciprés, most families live below the poverty line and live in houses made of dirt or adobe. Many now have electricity due to a community-based project that the community members organized since separating from Guayabal. Access to the community is difficult due to its location high up in the mountains, connected to the main road by a series of narrow dirt roads. Most families also have access to untreated water through a piping system, however, many do not have latrines or any sanitation infrastructure.

TECHO started working in Guayabal in 2013, before El Porvenir began an independent community, separate from Guayabal. Between 2013 and 2016, TECHO Honduras contributed to the families who now make up the community of El Porvenir by constructing houses and some shared latrines. Since 2016, it has established a *patronato*, a coffee producers' association, a *junta de agua*, and a women's committee. Seeing the evidently high level of initiative and internal organization between the community members, the staff of TECHO Honduras decided to immediately create a *mesa de trabajo* with the community members of El Porvenir. The *mesa de trabajo* has been ambitious and productive in its work. They have prioritized education, recognizing that access to education in the community is difficult and lack of education in its population has contributed to the community's marginalization. In 2016, a kindergarden was built, primarily due to the efforts and organization of the community members. The community laid out a vision for its infrastructure projects. The kindergarden was the first communal building to be built and serves as a community centre/meeting hall as well as the kindergarden. After finishing that project, the *mesa de trabajo* began working on the building of a school. This task required buying property and meeting with the education secretariat to register the school and arrange for teachers to be sent to the school. This project is on going and has taken substantial

effort on the part of the community members as well as TECHO Honduras. Future projects projected for the community include a small primary health centre and the construction of latrine and the installation of solar panels for every household.

CHAPTER 5: EMPIRICAL RESULTS

TECHO HONDURAS' COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Though the purpose of this research project was not to confirm a hypothesis, the results of the study do confirm the researcher's initial understanding of TECHO's model of intervention as a model that incorporates the key elements for participatory development practices, as stated in the academic literature (Chapter 2: Literature Review). However, other important elements emerged from the interviews with the staff, volunteers and community leaders and will be discussed at the end of this section.

FLEXIBLE PROJECT DESIGN AND FACILITATIVE ATTITUDES

TECHO Honduras, as well as TECHO in general, has a flexible model of intervention. The steps of their approach and engagement with communities reflects how very little of their process is prescribed. From the description of the model provided in Chapter 4, it is clear that the most prescriptive part of the process are the tools used to collect data from the community and the plan of action document created in the *mesa de trabajo*. In all other aspects of the process, the community approach and execution is done according to the volunteers and community members' desires. Some examples of this include the selection of time, date and location of meetings. In all the communities working with TECHO Honduras, *mesa de trabajo* meetings are held on Sunday mornings, as that is when the majority of community members have leisure time. The community members choose the location of the meetings. In El Porvenir, the meetings are now held in the kindergarden, whereas in El Ciprés, the meetings are usually

held in the community centre. When the community centre is being used for another purpose, the schoolroom is used instead. Special consideration is also given to the time of year. The communities located in La Paz often stop meeting during the coffee harvest season as most community members are extremely busy with harvesting activities. One interviewee from TECHO stated how the organization learned and adapted to this circumstance:

“... we are conscious of the periods where, for example in the rural community in terms of coffee, when the families are all, everyday from Monday to Sunday working and this resulted in an impediment for the *mesas*, so we are very aware of those periods in the community... there, yes, it's a bit difficult to organize ourselves at that time of the year, or to execute anything with the *mesa de trabajo* at that time. Now we have that more clear.”² (June 20, 2018, Personal Interview.)

Participant selection is also completely open and voluntary. Every *mesa de trabajo* meeting is open to any community member who wishes to participate. This openness has helped encourage people who were not active in any community organization prior to the *mesa de trabajo* become involved. One Community Coordinator explained that when the *mesa de trabajo* first started, the core members were a group of three to five people who tended to attend all community organization meetings. But after meeting other community members who appeared to have the will and capacity to contribute, they were encouraged to join and did so.

“... now the President [of the *mesa de trabajo*] is very young and active. This is good because it's not the same people that there were when I entered

² “... estamos consciente de cuales son periodos por ejemplo en las comunidades rurales a nivel de café, cuando las familias están todos los días de lunes a domingo trabajando y eso resultó en un impedimento a las mesas, entonces tenemos muy en cuenta cuales son esos periodos de la comunidad ... allí sí, nos cuesta un poquito organizarnos en esas épocas del año, o ejecutar algo sobre todo en la mesa de trabajo en esas épocas. Ahora eso se tiene más claro.”

[my role]. When I entered, it was always the same five people.”³ (July 13, 2018, Personal Interview.)

The nature and scope of projects are decided in the *mesa de trabajo* meetings. Other than the housing construction projects, TECHO Honduras does not impose any particular kind of project on a community. Instead it allows the projects to arise from the community. “The assessment is completely from the community, like the assessment is born, done by and fed into by community participation and it is what they perceive of their own community and what they tell us at the end of the day.”⁴ (June 20, 2018, Personal Interview.) All the projects undertaken in the community other than the housing construction projects were born out of *mesa de trabajo* meetings. That being said, the housing construction projects have been noted to be helped in the growth of the community overall.

“... it has impacted. I would say a large percentage because I always stress that when one has to be thinking about building a house, one stops doing other things, one stops going to *patronato* meetings, stops doing the things and activities that they have to.”⁵ (June 3, 2018, Personal Interview.)

TECHO attempts to carve out projects desired by its partner communities that can be proposed to the government, aid agencies and private foundations for funding. An example of this is the school that is, at the time of writing, being completed in El Porvenir. A private foundation was approached by TECHO to fund the construction of the school, which the foundation ultimately accepted. TECHO’s wide spectrum of alliances with external partners allows them to strategically ‘sell’ projects to

³ “...ahora la presidenta es muy joven y activa. Eso es algo bueno porque no son las mismas personas que habían cuando yo entré. Cuando yo entré, eran las mismas cinco personas de siempre.”

⁴ “El diagnóstico es meramente comunitario, ósea el diagnóstico nace, se realiza y se nutre de la participación comunitaria y de que ellos perciben de su comunidad y nos aportan al final. Entonces creo que eso, esa mesa de trabajo, ese diagnóstico que da vida a ese plan de acción.”

⁵ “...ha impactado, yo digo que en un gran porcentaje porque yo siempre resalto algo que uno ese por estar pensando a construir una casa, uno deja de hacer otras cosas, deja de ir a reuniones del patronato, deja de ir a todas las cosas y actividades que uno tiene que hacer.”

organizations or companies who are looking to contribute socially to society or show corporate social responsibility.

The facilitative nature of TECHO's approach to informal settlement upgrading is quite evident. From observation, the *mesa de trabajo* meetings only followed very loose agendas. In El Porvenir, the meetings were co-chaired by community members and TECHO's Community Coordinators. In El Ciprés, the meetings were chaired by the Community Coordinator but the goal of the meeting was to facilitate discussion regarding topics at hand and to come to a consensus between community members. One Community Coordinator expressed:

"That is what we try to do. I think we are mediating entity. Not just me but also the other volunteers. Because they speak with us. They express themselves to us. And what we try to do is to have them express themselves to each other so there isn't a 'he said, she said'." ⁶ (July 13, 2018, Personal Interview.)

The function that TECHO seeks to perform in the community is to assist in systemizing the ideas and efforts that the community members put forward so that improvements that the community members envision actually come to fruition. TECHO from its staff to its volunteers imparts a culture of catalyzing change and creating enabling environments for positive change within informal settlements.

Some interviewees reflected that sometimes being flexible is not a choice, but a result of adapting to the circumstances within which TECHO Honduras finds itself. It can be difficult during certain times of the year to physically reach the informal settlements due to the poor conditions of the roads in combination with heavy rains. Even in large all-wheel drive vehicles, it is difficult to climb the hills on muddy roads without getting stuck. Therefore, *mesa de trabajo*

⁶ Eso es lo que tratamos de hacer. Creo que somos un ente mediador. No solo yo, pero también demás voluntarios. Porque hablan con nosotros. Entonces se expresan con nosotros. Y lo que intentamos hacer es que ellos se expresan frente a los demás para que no haya, él dijo, ella dijo."

meetings get postponed and communication between the community members and TECHO Honduras is reduced temporarily to telephone calls or text messages between the community coordinators and the main contact people from the *mesas de trabajo*. Another factor that creates some instability for the TECHO Honduras to be able to reach the informal settlements where they work is its financial status. Like many NGOs, TECHO relies on a combination of funding sources to maintain its operations and to execute its projects. Most of the funding for TECHO Honduras is on a project-to-project basis. For example, a private company or an international cooperation entity will sponsor a bounded project, such as the construction of 20 houses in a particular informal settlement. Very little funding is available for sustaining the on-going work with the community members between projects. This is a particularly difficult situation for TECHO Honduras as the volunteer community coordinators who are the representatives of TECHO who always attend the *mesas de trabajo* only travel in privately contracted transportation, due to security risks. Honduras' inter-city public transportation is quite insecure so TECHO Honduras must hire cars or transportation services each time they visit a community. Unlike in other countries where TECHO is present, their community coordinators can travel independently in public transportation for a fraction of the cost.

However, TECHO staff and volunteers mentioned that adding some structure to the process has helped guide both the community members and volunteers in maintaining order in the meetings as well as execution of projects mentioned it. TECHO Honduras has recently implemented a requirement to assign roles in for the members of the *mesas de trabajo*. It was mentioned that the addition of roles has helped the delegation of tasks as well as communication between *mesa de trabajo* members. "Key elements, I think, well defined roles; that has helped us a lot recently ... because they define the responsibilities that each person has

for what we are trying to accomplish.”⁷ (June 20, 2018, Personal Interview.) While keeping the *mesa de trabajo* as an open meeting to all community members, the addition of fixed roles for certain members has added clarity as to how the actions taken by the *mesa de trabajo* will be carried out and by who.

USE OF SOCIAL CAPITAL

All interviewed staff and volunteers identified internal organization among the community members with whom TECHO Honduras works, as paramount to a functional *mesa de trabajo*, and intervention in general. In fact, TECHO Honduras has made it a criterion for working with a community. This decision was justified this way:

“Other countries probably [do], but in TECHO Honduras those are decisions that we have been taking, it has been difficult to work in communities where was no community organization. It was highly complicated and required a lot of resources focused only on organization. ... It is due to our institutional capacity and because we see that there are other communities that already are organized where we can save those steps and time in these other communities. We know that there are communities who live in very precarious situations and that already have that internal organization so that’s where we are going to go, before investing elsewhere, knowing that we could skip a step.”⁸ (June 20, 2018, Personal Interview.)

That being said, TECHO Honduras does not have a precise benchmark for measuring the level of internal organization of the communities with whom they work. However, in the household survey, the interviewees are asked if they are aware of the existence of internal organizations

⁷ “Elementos claves, creo que roles muy definidos; eso nos ha ayudado muchísimo últimamente, ... porque allí definen las responsabilidades que tiene cada persona para que lo que queremos trabajar.”

⁸ “Algunos países probablemente sí, pero en TECHO Honduras son decisiones que hemos ido tomando, y se nos dificultó en algunos momentos trabajar con estos asentamientos donde no existía organización comunitaria. Fue sumamente complejo, y requirió muchos recursos en únicamente ese eje de organización. ... Es por capacidad institucional y sí vemos que hay una comunidad que ya tiene esa organización donde podemos ahorrar esta cantidad de pasos y tiempo en esta comunidad, porque sabemos que hay comunidades que viven en situaciones muy precarias y que tienen esa organización interna entonces allí vamos a llegar, antes de invertir en acá, sabiendo que podemos saltar un paso.”

such as a *patronato*, a *junta de agua* or any other community groups. They are also asked if those groups are supported by the community, if any of the groups have undertaken an community-level projects and how involved the community was in the execution of those projects. In this way, TECHO Honduras can get a sense of the existence and reach of any community groups as well as the perception of those community groups by all the community members.

TECHO Honduras also evaluates its intervention in informal settlements on the basis of the demand for support by the community members. Similar to measuring social capital within the community, it is proven to be very difficult to determine with a high level of certainty the willingness of the community members to execute projects together, for the overall improvement of the wellbeing of community. It is primarily by talking to community members that volunteers and staff gauge their interest and commitment to contributing to the execution of projects, which includes the process of starting and sustaining the *mesa de trabajo*. “That is also very subjective and it very much based on our perception of the spaces that we can create in the community.”⁹ (June 20, 2018, Personal Interview.) One measure that TECHO Honduras has implemented in order to substantiate the desire of the community members to work with TECHO Honduras is the requirement of a letter stating so. The letter must say that the community is interested in collaborating with TECHO Honduras and the letter must be signed by the majority of community members (June 20, 2018, Personal Interview.).

TECHO Honduras also undergoes an initial, pre-*mesa de trabajo* project, which almost exclusively consists of constructing houses for the most vulnerable families within the community, in order to gauge the level of internal coordination and trust between the

⁹ “Eso también es muy subjetivo y es muy a percepción a los espacios que podemos tener en la comunidad.”

community members. The experience in El Ciprés, for example, has been that many community members participate in the activities families are only interested in projects that directly benefit their family and their family only, such as houses, latrines and household solar panels. “When they [TECHO] says that there will be more projects, many people arrive, 30, 40. But when they see that there aren’t any projects yet, they all pull out.”¹⁰ (July 1, 2018, Personal Interview.) It was also put this way:

“Not everyone collaborates. Because like I say, there are some who only pull for themselves. For example, we did the housing construction. And some families that received houses have not returned.”¹¹ (July 13, 2018, Personal Interview.)

The lack of sense of common good and collectiveness has impeded the progress of the *mesa de trabajo* and has impacted the projects that the community has chosen to embark on. The members of the community have struggled to get sustained support for project development. Members of the community have tended to only show up to participate in events when they are occurring but not during the planning phases. The level of cooperation and commitment to community development projects in El Ciprés has increased since TECHO began working in the community, but still requires improvement in order to independently organize and execute projects.

This, however, has not made the *mesa de trabajo* ineffective. Instead of giving up on the community due to apparent internal differences between residents of El Ciprés, TECHO has suggested projects that do not require as much communal investment and that are designated for several individual families: latrines for the community centre and latrines for the most vulnerable families in the community. By continuing to work together on common goals, albeit

¹⁰ “Cuando dicen van a venir más proyectos, ya juntan bastante, 30, 40. Pero cuando ya miren que ya no hay proyectos, ya se retiran.”

¹¹ “No todos colaboran. Porque como te digo, hay unos que solo halan para donde ellos. ... Por ejemplo, hicimos la construcción de casas. Y ciertas familias que recibieron casas ya no vuelven.”

with many discussions and tension, the expectation is to improve the discord between community members in order to be able to collectively embark on bigger projects in the future. Therefore, TECHO Honduras' long-term investment in a community is one that does not necessarily demonstrate its progress visibility or immediately.

TECHO's commitment to the community is felt within the community. Skepticism and distrust felt by community members as a result of broken promises made by other entities has impacted the way TECHO works. It is also for this reason that TECHO has incorporated a pre-*mesa de trabajo* construction project in every community in which it works.

"We open the *mesa de trabajo* after the constructions mainly because then the community will know us, will get to know us, will know very clearly how we works, how much we work and that we complete our work. We don't promise something and then not finish it. We complete our projects entirely.¹² (June 20, 2018, Personal Interview.)

The community members who were interviewed corroborated the trust between TECHO Honduras and the two communities.

"...other organizations have left us some fear to be able to work with organizations of this kind because the community doesn't believe that the organization will complete the project, when at the end it's not guaranteed. So TECHO has differentiated itself from those other organizations."¹³ (June 3, 2018, Personal Interview.)

TECHO Honduras, staff as well as volunteers, are quite conscious of the level of social capital is present in the communities where they work, and how the level and nature of that social capital impacts the work that they try to accomplish with the community members. This

¹² "Nosotros abrimos la mesa de trabajo luego de las construcciones, sobre todo por eso porque la comunidad sabe de nosotros, ya conoce ya de nosotros, muy clara de cómo trabajamos, en cuanto a cómo trabajamos, de que si es un trabajo cumplido, no es prometimos algo y no se hizo sino que trabajamos a cabalidad."

¹³ "...otro organismos nos ha dejado algún temor de poder trabajar con algunas organizaciones de ese tipo porque a la gente no se le crea ese tipo de que va a levantar un proyecto cuando al final no es cierto. Entonces el TECHO ha diferenciado ese tipo de organizaciones"

insight has proven to be critical for the model of intervention to be able to be applied in communities where inter-personal relationships between community members are existent but not always positive and constructive.

STRATEGIC POLITICIZATION

TECHO's approach towards working in informal settlements is deeply rooted in its belief of self-determination. TECHO avoids representing the community members with whom it works. Instead, as an institution, TECHO seeks to amplify the voices of those living in informal settlements. "We do not want to be the voice of the [informal] settlements either. The people and the families that live in the settlements have their words, their voice. We can only bring them closer to the spaces where they can be heard, but we never want to be the voice. The complete opposite."¹⁴ (June 20, 2018, Personal Interview.). The same perception was heard from the community members.

"With respect to the flexibility that exists between us and TECHO, it has been very good, very excellent, because they do not come to impose, they don't come saying you guys have to do this, that this has to be there. Instead everything comes out of the *mesa de trabajo* and the *patronato*."¹⁵ (June 3, 2018, Personal Interview.)

The actions it takes within the community is firmly based in the belief that those living in the conditions of vulnerability and poverty are best suited to identify the problems in their lives and environment as well as the solutions to resolve those problems. A TECHO staff member stated:

¹⁴ "No queremos ser voz de asentamientos tampoco. La gente y las familias que vive en asentamientos tienen sus palabras, su voz, únicamente, podemos acercarnos a los espacios donde pueden ser escuchados, pero nunca pensamos ser la voz del asentamientos, todo lo contrario."

¹⁵ "De grado de flexibilidad que existe entre nosotros con TECHO, ha sido muy buena, muy excelente, porque no vienen a imponer, no vienen a eso tienen que hacer ustedes, que aquí que allá, sino que todo sale de la mesa de trabajo, incluso el patronato."

“... the problems are known and recognized by the inhabitants of the [informal] settlements, and the solutions to those problems are within the inhabitants of the [informal] settlement. So we believe that this participatory model allows us to make better decisions between the inhabitants as well as the institution, with respect to the problems that exist there.”¹⁶ (June 20, 2018, Personal Interview.)

Even once the community members who make up the *mesa de trabajo* complete the community assessment and create a plan of action, this plan of action and in particular the actions to be taken in the short-term must be approved by the majority of the community members.

“...the decisions made within the *mesa de trabajo*, the case of El Porvenir, are communicated within the community. They [the decisions] are presented to everyone and if the community accepts then we do it. If not, well then we don’t do it.”¹⁷ (July 16, 2018, Personal Interview.)

Consent from the majority of the community is of utmost importance to TECHO.

However, TECHO Honduras is aware of that in some cases, community dynamics are not inherently egalitarian. Due to the nature of the *patronato* system that is in place in Honduras, there automatically exists a group of individuals who hold positions of power that impact the community. For that reason TECHO Honduras does not directly work with the *patronatos*.

“We create a separate space because we know that sometimes decision-making can be quite centralized in a community, which can be detrimental to that community. It’s because sometimes opinions can be limited and input can be diminished that would otherwise be useful for the projects. So the idea of the *mesa de trabajo* is to always include the [existing] community groups as a base but to leave the space open to other people who didn’t have the opportunity to join those organizations. If they have the will, if they have the drive to work, they can join those spaces and

¹⁶ “...las problemáticas se conocen y reconocen por los pobladores de los asentamientos, y también las soluciones de esas problemáticas están en los pobladores y pobladoras del asentamiento. Entonces consideramos que este modelo participativo nos permite tomar mejores decisiones en conjunto tanto pobladores como la institución a respeto a las problemáticas que existen allí.”

¹⁷ “...esas decisiones que se toman dentro de la mesa de trabajo, en el caso de El Porvenir se socializan con la comunidad. Las presentan a todos y si las acepta toda la comunidad pues, se desarrolle el proyecto. Si no, pues, no lo hacemos.”

contribute to the growth of their community.”¹⁸ (June 20, 2018, Personal Interview.)

In order to get a relatively credible level of consent from the community, the model of intervention is adapted to the level and nature of internal organization that is present. The perception of the existing community groups by the community members is an especially important consideration for TECHO Honduras with respect to how it facilitates the *mesa de trabajo*. The validation that any community group has or does not have within that community impacts how TECHO Honduras seeks approval from the community. In El Porvenir, where the *patronato* is very much validated by the community, the *mesa de trabajo* will make plans and proposals that are pertinent to the projects that the community members and TECHO Honduras can execute together. Then, as previously mentioned, those plans and proposals are presented at the *patronato* meetings. The members of the *patronato*, in this case, voted in by the community members and thus represent the community. In the *patronato* meetings, the decisions are made there whether or not to support the plans and proposals. Whereas in communities where the *patronato* is not validated by the community, the decisions are made in the *mesa de trabajo* and are communicated to the *patronato* via community members. Any disagreement that arises from the decisions taken are then evaluated and discussed in the subsequent *mesa de trabajo* meetings. For large projects such as a new school or health centre, the Community Coordinator will convene a community assembly to discuss the project and get majority community approval.

¹⁸ “Nosotros creamos un espacio aparte porque sabemos que a veces puede ser centralizar tanto la toma de decisiones en una comunidad que puede ser un poco perjudicial para la misma comunidad. Es que a veces puede limite mucho la opinion, tambien se reduzca mucho los aportes que pueden recibir para algun proyecto entonces la idea de la mesa de trabajo es siempre incluir a esa organizacion comunitaria como base pero dejar el espacio abierto tambien para que otras personas que no tuvieron la oportunidad de sumarse a esa organizacion puede participar, si tienen la voluntad, si tiene las ganas de trabajar, que se pueden sumar a esos espacios pero tambien aportar al crecimiento de su comunidad.”

As an NGO working in the third sector, focused specifically on informal settlements, TECHO, and by association TECHO Honduras, seeks to be and be seen as an organization that “works in the field, from the field, alongside the inhabitants, never above or below them, always alongside people ... not behind a desk.”¹⁹ (June 20, 2018, Personal Interview.) As an NGO that is present in 21 countries in Latin America, it also seeks to be known as a reference in issues related to informal settlements in the region. That being said, one of the institutional focuses as well as its approach to its work in the field is to work in partnerships. Generally speaking, TECHO is open to working with any entity that shares their values and who are willing to collaborate with the community to undertake any of the projects that are desired by the community members. In Honduras, these partnering entities have been diverse in nature, including municipal and national government departments, media companies, banks, multinational companies, other multinational NGOs, and individual professionals. TECHO sees partnerships as not only necessary but synergistic, producing greater impact together than working on the same issues within the country.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

Participatory development is practiced all over the world. The application of participatory practices in informal settlement upgrading is expected due to the multi-sectorial approach that the concept is based on. Several studies have documented the advantages and disadvantages of participatory approaches. These studies have highlighted the key elements necessary for enabling effective and appropriate participation in informal settlement interventions. These elements are (1) flexible interventions and facilitative attitudes, (2) use of social capital, and (3) strategic politicization of the NGO.

¹⁹ “trabaja en el terreno, desde el terreno, junto a los pobladores, nunca sobre ellos, ni tampoco de abajo, siempre trabajamos a la par, junto a gente ... estamos detrás de un escritorio.”

TECHO, the NGO born and based out of Chile, has been practicing participatory informal settlement upgrading programs and projects since 1997. It is now operational across Latin America, in 19 countries. The three key elements mentioned above were identified as being part of its institutional culture and operations. For that reason, TECHO was chosen to be studied in order to learn how these elements are operationalized in the contexts where they work. TECHO's Honduran program office, and specifically its work in one rural and one peri-urban communities, is the case that was chosen to be studied, due to the researcher's existing connection to the organization and experience in the country.

The investigation found that TECHO does indeed implement the key elements found in the academic literature. In practice, the application of these elements was admittedly difficult to execute and are done so in ways that are not completely reliable or that guarantee success. However, adapting a mindset that accepts uncertainty is one of the characteristics of facilitating effective and respectful participation. The following table outlines the best practices found in the academic literature and description of its application by TECHO in Honduras.

Table 1: Summary of key findings from the academic literature and the case study

<i>Best Practices</i>	<i>Application</i>
1. Flexible interventions and facilitative attitudes	
- Creating spaces for participation requires flexibility. When projects are designed with a rigid framework, they run the risk of leaving out people and ideas that would otherwise be relevant input to the project. The initial assessment of a community's needs, capacity and internal organization can be mistaken. Therefore, maintaining an open policy for accepting participants throughout the engagement can help include more people who may not have understood the value of the initiative at the beginning. The cost of participation, especially in vulnerable	-TECHO tries to create relationships with communities, and not only work in communities for a single project. The TECHO work model serves as a guide to the process of working with a community. That guide is not very prescriptive. It does not include fixed timelines or defined projects. It prescribes the way to collect data from the community to begin to understand the problems and establish the <i>mesa de trabajo</i> . The <i>mesa de trabajo</i> is the key mechanism that allows open participation and continuous discussion between community residents and TECHO

<p>populations, is high because most of their time is spent on making money or surviving. With time and exposure to a project, even the most vulnerable are can be willing to get involved and bring with them their valuable life experience and conceptualization of problems faced in the community.</p> <p>- To create spaces where the sharing of ideas and experiences is valued, an external entity must use a facilitative attitude. The representatives of that entity should serve as guides through a development process instead of experts on development issues. These representatives, instead of imposing solutions, help to systematize the opinions and ideas that arise from the participants. This kind of facilitation is ideal but requires a lot of time, and is not linear, so flexibility is necessary for facilitation, and vice versa.</p>	<p>representatives. The problematization and prioritization of projects have a fixed process, but the way of making decisions within the <i>mesa de trabajo</i> also adapts to the context. Communities that already have an established way of making decisions as a whole can continue to be managed and communities that do not have a way of making decisions among the villagers can decide within the platform of the <i>mesa de trabajo</i> how to best to make decisions on behalf of the community.</p> <p>- Regarding facilitation culture, community leaders continue to work with TECHO and invest in the <i>mesa de trabajo</i> because they do not feel pressured by TECHO. Rather, they feel supported in their own efforts to improve their communities. In addition, the community coordinators who facilitate the <i>mesa de trabajo</i> are very clear that the problems as well as the solutions that come from the residents are the ones that must be taken into account. Their attitudes and work in the field reflect the culture of respect for the self-determination of residents of informal settlements that is widespread within the social action team of TECHO Honduras.</p>
<p>2. Use of social capital</p>	
<p>- In addition to paying attention to the way spaces for participation are offered, consideration must also be paid to the demand for such spaces. In other words, the ability and willingness of people to participate is just as important as the way you facilitate their participation. An external entity that wants to intervene in a community in a participatory way must investigate the level of social capital that exists in the same community. Social capital refers to existing social networks which are recognized as norms and values that are understood and shared by people in the community that facilitate cooperation between them and with other groups.</p> <p>- The existence of social capital is important for the effectiveness of participatory development processes because it means that there is already trust among the members of</p>	<p>- The existence of social capital within the partner communities of TECHO Honduras is very important for the success of the work model. As a national strategy, TECHO Honduras tries to work exclusively with communities where validated community (internal) organizations already exist. Given that social capital is not tangible or visible, TECHO does not use a specific measure to quantify the level of cooperation and trust among the inhabitants of the communities where it works. However, they have adopted ways of estimating internal organization via surveys, informal conversations and the requirement of a letter of agreement signed by the majority of the community that confirms the willingness to work with TECHO.</p> <p>- Also, TECHO recognizes the importance of creating social capital between the community</p>

<p>the group, and organization respecting the distribution of work. In addition, it can motivate vulnerable people who face obstacles to participate, such as women, if they feel they have group support and / or that they have an important role in a process of positive change. Where the level of social capital is low, an external entity can try to create social capital among the individuals of a community, starting with the creation of trust between people from the community and the external entity, and then between people from the same community.</p>	<p>and the institution. According to the community leaders, TECHO has differentiated itself as an institution because of the follow-up and compliance with the work they have shown. Examples of how this has been achieved include: the <i>pre-mesa de trabajo</i> project where TECHO and the community build homes for the most vulnerable families, the allocation of 1-3 community coordinators per community, and the <i>mesa de trabajo</i> that meets 1-2 per month. That is why the villagers have confidence in what TECHO says and they feel that they can speak honestly to the community coordinators, who represent TECHO. In addition, the lines of communication between the community leaders and the volunteers and staff of TECHO are open and informal, so the community leaders do not feel abandoned, even during periods of low activity.</p>
<p>3. Strategic politicization of the NGO</p>	
<p>Participation can result in the empowerment of those who participate when the distribution of power is taken into account. If participation techniques are used without a distribution of power to the participants, it is unlikely that they will be empowered. Therefore, power must be considered in the dynamics of a space of participation, in terms of the distribution of decision-making about the intervention. In addition, any external entity that promotes the empowerment of a community through an improvement of living conditions, social capital and / or political capacities of the inhabitants of a community, can find resistance for those who have control in that context. That resistance can be openly expressed or it can manifest itself in the form of co-optation, where the marginalized population is invited to spaces of participation where their voice is heard but their opinions are not valued. So, a strategic position taking into account the dynamics of power within the context where participation is occurring can help achieve results that reach far beyond the duration of the intervention.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The control over the decision making during the interaction between TECHO and the community is shared. In addition, TECHO takes into account the distribution of power within the communities. In cases where the community has an internal organization (<i>patronato</i>) that is verified by most of the community, the <i>mesa de trabajo</i> functions as a committee subsidiary to the <i>patronato</i> where they can manage community projects. In communities where the internal organization is weak or is not validated by the community members, the <i>mesa de trabajo</i> functions as a parallel entity that collaborates in the same way and interacts with other internal organizations. Therefore, they try to find projects that are approved and validated by more people, and therefore can impact and reach more people. - TECHO does not try to be or represent the voice of the inhabitants of the partner communities. Instead, it tries to bring the residents from informal settlements to the spaces of influence where they can be heard. In addition, TECHO puts an emphasis on working in partnerships and networks. TECHO

	seeks to create alliances with entities who can support projects necessary for the community but for which TECHO does not have the capacity or resources to support. In addition, TECHO tries to be a reference in the sector of development in informal settlements and also a link between the same informale settlements and other development organizations.
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TECHO's international operation includes continuous reflexive and self-evaluative processes, so as it continues to work in this sector, collecting feedback from the field from more than 1,000,000 volunteers working in over 600 communities, it is likely that this NGO will get closer and closer to developing a rigorous, effective and legitimate way of facilitating the upgrading the growing number of informal settlements in Latin America.

This way of working requires more time and human and financial resources, as opposed to traditional development models where resources are allocated to highly structured and time limited projects and where the relationships between development entities and project beneficiaries are more formal and systematic. Many times the execution of projects with the residents of informal settlements is a process of trial and error, where the results of projects do not always go as originally expected, and are not necessarily visible or immediate.

The high level of participation in TECHO's model of intervention also implies that TECHO as an organization operates with a lot of uncertainty in terms of financing and planning of activities. The internal planning of TECHO Honduras is a continuous process that is not done only once a year, but on an as needed basis. This requires their staff, volunteers and donors to be highly flexible and adaptable.

TECHO manages to execute this working model with the recognition that the development process in any context, and perhaps even more in informal settlements, is not

linear. Within the long-term investment in the informal settlements that TECHO does, the volunteers and staff of TECHO together with the residents of the informal settlements define specific projects that fit within the traditional framework of project management used by international NGOs and companies that want support social projects. In doing so, TECHO have managed to implement a human orientation to community development that makes them an exemplary model for other organizations in this sector.

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