

BOOK REVIEW

Christian Ghymers, Patricio Leiva. 2016. *Construyendo el Espacio Común De Educación Superior, Ciencia, Tecnología e Innovación para la Asociación Estratégica Birregional (Building the Common Space for Higher Education, Technology and Innovation for the Strategic Biregional Association)*. **Belgium, 644 pages**

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Latin America and the Caribbean and Europe are two regions that have old interactions and a complex history behind. On the other side, in this evolution there is a new stage whose leading elements are the Community of Latin America and the Caribbean States and the European Union, “young” actors that have started a new type of relationship, a strategic biregional partnership based on shared democratic values and that aims to strengthen the links of political, economic and cultural ties of the two spaces.

The European Union - Latin America and the Caribbean Summits (EU-LAC Summits) have been developing since 1999, building paths of cooperation in different policy areas such as climate change, sustainable development etc. Yet, one field had been overseen and that is the one of education. The appearance of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) and the implicit shift from a multilateral perspective over the partnership to a biregional one favoured the view according to which cooperation in other policies would be further enhanced if the one in the field of education, science, technology and innovation would progress.

Therefore, academics, professors, researchers and other staff involved in these fields set the basis of the Latin America and Caribbean - European Union Permanent Academic Forum (FAP ALC-UE) and planned to fill this gap. Thus, in 2012 it organized two seminars in Paris and Lima in order to prepare the First Latin America and Caribbean - European Union Academic Summit (ALC-UE

Academic Summit) held in 2013 in Santiago de Chile, at the same time as the First European Union - Community of Latin American and Caribbean States Summit (EU-CELAC Summit), continuing the work started in 1999, but under another perspective. Then, the 2014 preparatory seminars in Bucharest and Guadalajara delivered the draft content for the Second ALC-UE Academic Summit held in 2015, in Brussels, along with the Second EU-CELAC Summit, where two representatives of the FAP ALC-UE, the rectors from the National School of Political Science and Public Administration, Remus Pricopie, and the University of Guadalajara, Itzcoatl Bravo Padilla, to deliver the conclusions of the ALC-UE Academic Summit to the Heads of State and Government of the two regions.

The book is an important reference for the 2016 literature regarding this relationship, given the fact that it analyses the process of building a common biregional space for Higher Education, Technology and Innovation and comprises the contributions of the participants.

The volume is structured in 10 chapters, some actually corresponding to components of this common space, such as the integration of Higher Education Systems, the integration of Research, Technology and Innovation, the collaboration between the Higher Education Institutions and the Society and the Productive Sector or the links between the Academic Community and the Public Policies. My review will focus on these, given the fact that the others deal with topics such as Innovation and Intellectual Property Rights: Towards a New Model of Partnership University-Industry Government in the Framework of the EU-CELAC Partnership, the EU-CELAC Intergenerational Forum or the Programmes and Projects of Academic Cooperation between the two regions.

Thus, the chapter regarding **Higher Education integration** issues comprises analyses the articulation between of the two spaces, on one side the European Space for Higher Education and on the other, the heterogenic and disparate sphere of higher education in Latin America, where we can nevertheless highlight the existence of the Latin American and Caribbean Higher Education Meeting Space (ENLACES).

The governments are seen as having the responsibility for recognizing and supporting the implementation of policies aimed at providing a flexible legal framework and an adequate financing system for international mobility, simplifying migration issues, such as student, academic or scientific mobility visas and the regulation of residence and / or work permits, while, on the other hand, the idea of creating a Bi-regional Agency for Accreditation and Evaluation

of Higher Education would allow the harmonization of quality assurance criteria, strengthening the common path and procedural convergence.

The role of the universities is also very important, given that they would have to develop internationalization strategies that are convergent with the processes set out above and to promote academic and research mobility, to create joint programs that favour the dynamics of recognition of studies, to update their information and communication systems and to adapt their administrative and financial management systems in order to facilitate international mobility.

Professors and researchers should carry out analyses, studies and research that are preferably attached to biregional networks in order to advance in the biregional convergence process, should develop subjects with a bi-regional comparative approach and participate in projects of academic and research mobility.

Last, but not least, students could use their academic and professional experiences in order to improve the qualifications' quality while they hold representative positions in the universities' structures.

The chapter regarding **Research, Technology and Innovation** contains elements such as bridging academic research and different economic areas, such as the example of the Scientific Tourism in Patagonia, that creates a liaison between research and tourism development, by studying new knowledge, technology transfer and local development, taking into account cultural heritage and ecosystems and achieving tourism development of isolated rural areas.

Other innovative aspects refer to the digital framework. An example could be that the virtual university appears as an option for cost reduction and for access to global communications, given that the "marketplace" for goods and services is now a "marketspace". Besides, information and communication technologies that have permeated daily activities, providing flexibility, availability and almost unlimited access to the citizen with respect to the services that are on the network, as well as the availability of information have had repercussions on the form of social organization, which has evolved towards the knowledge society, which in the government sector is known as electronic government (e-government).

The chapter regarding the collaboration between the **Higher Education Institutions and the Society and the Productive Sector** brings together aspects connected with the social economic development, given the new roles that universities are assuming in the society, like the challenges supposed by knowledge society, for example the role of knowledge in the economic sphere and the changes in the modes of production, circulation, appropriation and

social application of knowledge in productive processes, under the imperative to promote innovation as the basis of competitiveness.

The authors present the dynamic of the “Triple Helix”, namely the system that involves three main actors: companies, governments and universities, therefore the knowledge that the universities produce also becomes a potential for economic added value. Some of the areas where this relationship can best be harnessed are the environmental crisis, poverty, social exclusion and unemployment, given that in both more and less developed countries, the need for a significant social component stands out. This leads to the transformation of the relations between the universities and the productive sectors, since they are not based anymore on only a technological component, but also on a strong social innovation component.

The chapter regarding the links between the **Academic Community and the Public Policies** covers topics analysing how the higher education institutions of our countries contribute to the sustainability of our societies (from the point of view of gender equality, climate protection for example), given that the promotion of a sustainable human development model can be incorporated by the universities in the curriculum, in the content and practice of the universities.

Another aspect regards the identification of the challenges that we are facing at the moment, contributing to the proposals or projects that can be implemented in the future using biregional instruments. In this sense, the proposals refer to organizing forums and academic encounters that would help exchange good practices, to asking the governments to have an active commitment to the principles and policies that the United Nations is pushing at the global level, to demanding the governments to acknowledge the organisms and bodies that are dealing with these problems in order to offer them support from the point of view of financing and infrastructure.

I recommend this book for all those interested in the problematic of the two regions and in the work that has been done until the moment regarding the construction of the Strategic Biregional Association between Latin America and the Caribbean and the European Union, more accurately the integration of the Higher Education Systems, Research, Technology and Innovation, the collaboration between the Higher Education Institutions and the Society and the Productive Sector or the links between the Academic Community and the Public Policies.