

QUITOPIA

Giulia Testori _ joint PhD thesis in Urbanism

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Università IUAV di Venezia
Scuola di Dottorato IUAV
Curriculum in urbanistica _ cicle XXX
Promoter: prof. Paola Viganò

KATHOLIEKE UNIVERSITEIT
LEUVEN

KULeuven University
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Arenberg Doctoral School
Co-promoter: prof. Viviana d'Auria

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Collective city-making, participation and autonomy in Quito's urban future

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Thesis abstract

The aim of this doctoral thesis is to challenge the way in which cities are planned towards a more inclusive approach. Taking Ecuador as a case-study, it initially looks at a set of concepts and articles of the 2008 Ecuadorian Constitution and National Plan, focusing on topics such as the city, participation and autonomy. In this way, the research attempts to detect the potential of this institutional framework in order to satisfy the right to the city in Ecuador.

Focusing on topics such as the city, participation and autonomy, the research attempts to reveal the potentialities of such institutional framework vis à vis the planning of more inclusive cities. In a second moment, it points out that, despite the presence of participation and autonomy in this legal panorama, such principles have been very scarcely placed into practice. To attempt filling this gap between theory and practice, the thesis looks at the cultural history of participation and self-management of the Ecuadorian territory and brings to light an ancient, but yet still exercised, Andean practice called minga. After studying minga's evolution and co-optations along centuries, the focus goes to mingas' impacts in Quito's urban peripheries. This analysis is pursued through the study of the actors, events, decision-making processes and spatial impacts of mingas in shaping the territory of three self-managed neighborhoods of Quito. Quitopia, the last chapter, and title of the thesis, finally envisions a scenario where the Ecuadorian recent constitution and the cultural background of the minga, merge in a utopia where the metropolitan collective spaces of Quito are inclusively reshaped and co-managed. Although focusing on a specific case, Ecuador, the interpretation of the regulatory background, together with the study of local culture concerning the creation of collective spaces, are seen as a powerful combination that can be used wherever we want to experiment on alternatives for urban futures.

Abstract della tesi

Lo scopo di questa tesi di dottorato è immaginare un modo in cui le città possano essere pianificate tramite un approccio inclusivo. Scegliendo l'Ecuador come caso studio, vengono presi in esame una serie di concetti e articoli appartenenti alla Costituzione Ecuatoriana e al Piano Nazionale del 2008, focalizzandosi su argomenti come la città, la partecipazione e l'autonomia. In questo modo, la ricerca tenta di rilevare le potenzialità di tale quadro istituzionale al fine di soddisfare il diritto alla città in Ecuador. In un secondo momento, la ricerca evidenzia come, nonostante la presenza di partecipazione e autonomia in questo panorama giuridico, tali principi finora sono stati attuati se non in minima parte. Per tentare di colmare questa lacuna tra teoria e pratica, la tesi esamina la storia culturale di partecipazione e autogestione del territorio ecuadoriano e sceglie di portare alla luce un'antica pratica andina, tuttora esercitata, chiamata minga. Dopo averne studiato l'evoluzione e le cooptazioni attraverso i secoli, l'attenzione si concentra sugli impatti delle mingas in diversi momenti storici nelle periferie urbane di Quito. Questa analisi è perseguita attraverso lo studio degli attori, gli eventi, i processi decisionali e gli impatti spaziali delle mingas nel modellare il territorio di tre quartieri autogestiti di Quito. L'ultimo capitolo chiamato Quitopia, come il titolo della tesi, immagina infine uno scenario in cui la recente costituzione ecuadoriana ed il sostrato culturale legato alla minga, si fondono in un'utopia in cui gli spazi collettivi metropolitani di Quito sono interamente rimodellati e co-gestiti. Seppur concentrandosi su un caso specifico, l'Ecuador, l'interpretazione del background normativo e lo studio della cultura locale relativa alla creazione di spazi collettivi, vengono visti come un potente binomio utilizzabile ovunque si voglia sperimentare alternative future in contesti urbani.

Introduction

The broad objective of this research is to challenge the way in which cities are planned towards a more inclusive approach. Marginalization must be fought, urban projects made more participatory and in the primary interests of the public. I've chosen Ecuador as a case study due to a range of innovative concepts present in its recent constitution (2008) called *Constitución del Buen Vivir* (good living).

Testing this institutional framework through specific cultural interpretations and adaptations, I suggest contemporary alternatives to top-down city planning are not only desirable, but also possible. As a sweeping vision, the Buen Vivir concept offers ample space for citizen involvement in territorial decision-making and promotes, to some extent local autonomy. Yet while analyzing the Ecuadorian capital Quito, I couldn't find recent experiences where these institutionalized ideals are put into practice. In response to this gap between theory and practice, I pose the following question: considering the opportunities and challenges presented by the Buen Vivir on participation and autonomy, in what way can collective city-making reduce Quito's inequalities and what role can urbanism play in this setting?

To answer the research question, I structure the thesis in four main chapters. The first chapter explains the socio-political background of why this new constitution was formed and offers a reading of the possible interpretations of the Buen Vivir concept and its connection to Andean culture. I then focus on some specific values that weave throughout these contexts, such as: reciprocity, solidarity, cultural identity, etc. which highlight the

Constitution's originality and richness. In order to construct the setting for a more inclusive approach to urban projects, I examine how subjects of the city, participation and autonomy are treated in the Ecuadorian Constitution. Conclusively, assuming there is fertile ground for participation and autonomy to be included in a renewed panorama for the Ecuadorian territory, section three inserts these two concepts in a broader literature review.

The second chapter departs for a moment from the normative dimensions of urban analysis and passes to the scarcely researched Andean practice of collective city-making, called minga. Throughout time, mingas have generally consisted of community gatherings that collectively work on activities such as plowing a field, constructing a temple, paving a road, building a communal house, or cleaning up a square. Answering the need for deeper investigation on the topic, I trace the minga's evolution from the pre-Inca period to the contemporary moment. Proposed temporal analysis considers the actors involved in this management process and the mingas' spatial outcomes. Chapter Two also underlines the difficulty of representing these spaces, as they are being constantly changing and because the actors in each minga vary. To overcome such complications, the last part of the second chapter offers a reading of the different kinds of methodologies I used to collect data useful to understand mingas. I conclude by presenting a self-invented methodology useful to represent these dynamic spaces, called the *cronotopo* line.

To better understand the Ecuadorian application of the Buen Vivir principles and the minga practice, I start the third chapter by offering a brief analysis



Minga in road Humberto Albornoz, Comuna de Santa Clara de San Millán, Quito. On the 12th of November 2017. Source: <https://www.facebook.com/Comuna-de-Santa-Clara-de-San-Millán>

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of the Ecuadorian capital, Quito. Through data analysis, qualitative material gathered on site during the multiple field-works, I illustrate three neighborhoods of Quito that were almost entirely constructed through mingas. The cases are: Atucucho, Comuna de Santa Clara de San Millán and Comité del Pueblo. For each case I describe their origins and the processes of city-making they have undergone. I give particular relevance to the formation of collective space, including: streets, parks, collective sport fields, and rivers. This analysis substantiates that mingas are soaked in principles of participation and autonomy. I conclude this chapter by posing that cultural dynamics that should be recognized as a leading role in Quito's history and as a potential urban practice for Quito's more inclusive future.

The fourth and final chapter envisions Quitopia: a utopic scenario for Quito's future where collective spaces in the city are cyclically co-decided, co-produced and co-maintained by their inhabitants with the support of a net of experts. I begin to answer the primary research question and then I explain why the use of scenarios and utopias is an enriching methodology to speculate on alternative urban futures. To envision Quitopia I use the learnings gathered from the study of Atucucho, Comuna de Santa Clara de San Millán and Comité del Pueblo and incorporate the strongest elements of each neighborhood to project a future where the minga practice is at the center of the management of collective spaces. To visualize Quitopia, I detail two maps at the metropolitan scale that compensate each other; one underlines the places in the future where mingas could not be practiced, while the second map offers constellations of city space where a renewed process of neighborhood assemblies and mingas—economically and technically supported by the municipality—could take place. Finally, I visualize this projection at a more local scale; revisiting the crono-topo line shown in Chapter three about Atucucho, I project its continuation as if it was part of Quitopia. The potential design strategies, by being supported by existing Ecuadorian policies, render Quitopia the city of the Buen Vivir.

Finally, the reader won't find in this thesis a complete interpretation of Quito's spatial history,

neither a masterplan for its spatial future; rather what is proposed is an experiment to recalibrate the priorities of urbanism. Moreover, while the thesis is about an Ecuadorian condition, tools used to analyze it are replicable also for other contexts in need of alternatives that prioritize the making of more inclusive cities. In this sense, interpretation of the complex and often contradictory cultural anatomy of the city are crucial. When drawing upon an ample spectrum of research ranging from sociology, anthropology and political science—I do not pose an expert's contribution within any of these unique disciplines. Instead, I provide an interdisciplinary spatial perspective to the contemporary discussion of collective city-making.

Chapter 1

The *Buen Vivir* and the institutional framework

This first chapter looks at the Ecuadorian concept of *Buen Vivir* from different perspectives. The first section of three, shows the socio-political dynamics that enabled the 2008 Ecuadorian Constitution's formation and then sheds light on some of the cardinal principles that sustain its creation. Treated concepts include: the notions of plurinational state and of cosmo-vision, the wish to imagine a future beyond capitalism, the importance of exercising reciprocity and solidarity, the relevance of reflecting on local scale and cultural identity of a place and finally, a reflection on the utopian veil that embraces *Buen Vivir*. Section 1.2 focuses on the presence in the Constitutions of topics such as the city, participation and autonomy. The third part finally, proposes a reading of these three topics through a critical literature review.



Indigenous manifestation in Quito on the 22rd of March 2012. Source: Fabrizio Moreno

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Section 1.1

Buen Vivir origins

Origin of the Constitution

Through a census made in 2007 by the National Development Council of the Nationalities and Peoples of Ecuador, 830,418 persons self-identified as belonging to an indigenous group. In Ecuador, 14 nationalities and 18 indigenous peoples are recognized¹. In other words: 25 percent of Ecuador's population are of indigenous ancestry, while another 70 percent is of mixed indigenous and European descent. Despite strong indigenous presence in Ecuador, a recent UNICEF report concerning Ecuadorian history from its colonization up to these days, defines that without a doubt, the indigenous peoples and nationalities, together with the Afro-descendant population, are the ones whose rights have been the most violated (*Ministerio Coordinador de Patrimonio de Ecuador* and UNICEF 2007).

The fight for the recognition of indigenous populations' rights dates back to 1532. Yet only since the late 1980's, the CONAIE foundation (*Confederación de Nacionalidades Indígenas del Ecuador*) and through its political party *Pachakutik*, they were recognized as important actors in national politics. Through indigenous protests, and also decades of social and political activist revolts, citizens have demanded for the convening of a constituent assembly to establish significant constitutional reforms for the political and economic life of Ecuador. Other aspects

germane to the creation of a new Constitution were the recurrent economic and political crises Ecuador has undergone the last thirty years of the 20th century. Possibly the most devastating was the 1998-1999 financial and sovereign debt crisis that ushered in pauperization of the citizens' savings and consequent migrations abroad. The year 2000 is indeed remembered in Ecuadorian history as the year of the bank rescue via the dollarization process that consequently caused inflation, devaluation and the freezing of savings (Acosta et al. 2000; Bolay et al. 2004).

After the November 2006 electoral victory of the leftist President Rafael Correa, precisely on April 15, 2007, an overwhelming majority of voters—81.72%—approved the establishment of a constituent assembly with full powers. Five and a half months later, 130 members were selected through popular elections. The Constituent Assembly met for eight months to discuss and analyze the text of the new national constitution; which was approved nine months later on July 24, 2008 with 94 of the 126 votes cast. Work was divided into ten different areas and the sessions were open to individual and collective participation. During the Constituent Assembly, indigenous organizations presented specific proposals. First and foremost, they requested an institutional charter that recognized them as a social and political entity, and that legally identified and bound perspectives and systems of knowledge of their communities and organizations (Gonzales 2014).

The final text approved by the Assembly was put to the consideration of the people of Ecuador

¹ This data comes from the last National Census made in 2010, the responsible institute is the INEC (National Institute of Statistics and Census).

in a referendum held on September 28, 2008. The Constitution was finally approved by 64% of the population. The most significant objectives that the indigenous populations identified were eventually recognized in the Magna Carta. These objectives, which will be explained in the following pages, are related to the acknowledgment of Ecuador as an intercultural and plurinational state, '*Buen Vivir*' or '*Sumak Kawsay*' as a model of the development regime, water as a human right, food sovereignty, nature as a right, indigenous justice and collective rights (KIVLAK/GIZ 2011). The main objective as a nation, defined in the preamble of the Ecuadorian Constitution, stated:

"a new form of public coexistence, in diversity and in harmony with nature, to achieve the *Buen Vivir*, the *Sumak Kawsay*".

Buen Vivir and Sumak Kawsay

What do *Buen Vivir* and *Sumak Kawsay* mean? '*Buen*' and '*Vivir*' are two Spanish words that mean 'good life' or 'well living', while '*Sumak Kawsay*' is their *kichwa* translation². As Raúl Zibechi, Uruguayan writer and activist notes, the Ecuadorian Constitution devotes 75 articles to the *Buen Vivir* concept (Zibechi 2015). After the Constitution, in 2009 and then in 2013, the Ecuadorian government amended two national plans called '*Plan Nacional del Buen Vivir*' (PNBV). These plans enumerate ideas behind the Constitution and provide analysis for concrete policies. Yet the question remains, how to translate the holistic qualities of *Buen Vivir* and *Sumak Kawsay* through the wormholes of governmental policy?

To better understand the core values of *Buen Vivir*, a synthesis of thought is required to further illuminate the complexities of this topic:

Giraldo, Mexican doctor in Social Sciences and author of the book '*Utopías en la era de la*

² Kichwa is the second most spoken language of the Quechua language family. It is used in the Sierra and Amazonian Ecuador, in southwestern Colombia and the lower northern jungle of Peru. It is spoken by an estimated 2.5 million people (Hornberger & Coronel-Molina 2004).

Supervivencia. Una interpretación del Buen Vivir, writes that *Buen Vivir* could be defined as the art of living in equilibrium and harmony with what exists, through comprehension, and full experience that everything is interrelated with the rest (Giraldo 2014). For Gudynas, senior researcher at CLAES (Latin American Center for Social Ecology) for example, *Buen Vivir* is a pluralistic concept informed both by indigenous traditions and strong criticism to neoliberal theories of Western development:

"there are wide overlaps with the ideas of 'degrowth' movement...but *Buen Vivir* has strong attention to different ethical settings, incorporates spiritual positions, and is strongly intercultural" (Gudynas et al. 2011, 446).

François Houtart, Belgian Marxist sociologist and Catholic priest, focuses on the implications of *Buen Vivir* and its relation with capitalism. Following the discourses and traditions of the indigenous peoples, he proposes that it is a shift in the paradigm (Houtart 2014). Many authors have defined this new constitution as 'alternative', even though it preserves the principles of modern liberal democracies created during the European Enlightenment; it mixes modern values such as equality and freedom with the communitarian values of reciprocity, complementarity, harmony, and solidarity of *Buen Vivir* (Giraldo 2014). For Zibechi, these sets of concepts can be a source of inspiration for a civilization urged by alternatives from the pervasion of capitalism (Zibechi 2015).

Buen Vivir beyond Ecuador

The *Buen Vivir* ethos had a legal crystallization not just with the Ecuadorian constitution; it also began to influence neighboring countries. In 2009 this concept became the motto of the Bolivian government in the indigenous language *aymara* under the name *Suma Qamaña*. Both Catherine Walsh³ and Eduardo Gudynas noticed that this has been the first time in Latin America, where two

³ Catherine Wash is a senior professor and director of Latin American Cultural Studies Doctoral Program at the Universidad Andina Simon Bolivar de Quito.

nations established their political project through historically excluded, oppressed, subordinated and discriminated philosophies (Walsh 2010, Gudynas et al. 2011). Despite their differences—the Bolivian *Buen Vivir* is interpreted as an ethical principle, while the Ecuadorian case is portrayed as a set of rights—they both can be considered as strong decolonial acts (Walsh 2009, Gudynas et al. 2011).

Even though not covering such institutional relevance, it is worth mentioning that, among the Latin American peoples there are many visions similar to the *Buen Vivir*, like the *Shiir waras* of the *Shuar* of Ecuador, or the *Küme Mongen* of the *Mapuches* culture in Chile, *Teko Kavi* and *Nandereko* of the Guaraní (Gudynas et al.2011). Moreover, Houtart identifies analogous intellectual efforts also in African and Asiatic societies (2014). An outline of the Ecuadorian Constitution and National Plan of the *Buen Vivir* principles are illustrated below, with synthesis from many other theorists:

Plurinational state and Cosmo-vision

Unlike the vast majority of national constitutions, article 6 of the Constitution defines that Ecuador is a Plurinational state; a challenge specifically to the idea that in each modern State there is only one nation. On the contrary, plurinationality accepts that in the same State various cultural nations coexist (Giraldo 2014). Due to the above-mentioned plurality of nationalities present in Ecuador, their recognition signified a big step for the indigenous movements. Ecuador, by declaring its plurinationality, accepts cosmo-visions and philosophies from heterogeneous cultures, with the idea to build a political discourse that respects and recognizes multiculturalism that does not repeat the homogenization of the modern project⁴. For Zibechi, these 'other paths' involve making intercultural learning an art of understanding and translation, fostering cross pollination of different proposals, born from other worldviews and situations that do

⁴ A *cosmovisión* is the set of opinions and beliefs that make up the image or general concept of the world. Its best-known translation is the German word *Weltanschauung*.

not pretend to be all-embracing answers, but rather local experiences (2007).

Buen Vivir: The Right to Nature

The Ecuadorian Constitution, between the many recognized rights, introduces an original one called 'the right to nature'. It is a legal innovation typical only of Ecuador, and the seventh chapter of the Constitution is integrally dedicated to this claim. Nature or *Pachamama*—a goddess venerated by the indigenous peoples of the Andes who, in a broad sense, plays the role of the 'Mother Earth'—has the right to an integral restoration, that is, to the integral recovery of the ecosystems that have been degraded or destroyed by pollution and deforestation. Recognizing nature as a subject of rights is for the Latin American cultures a millennia-old belief. Yet this legal acknowledgement of nature is at the forefront of the times, catalyzed by the imminent need to protect nature during accelerated climate change.

Capitalism

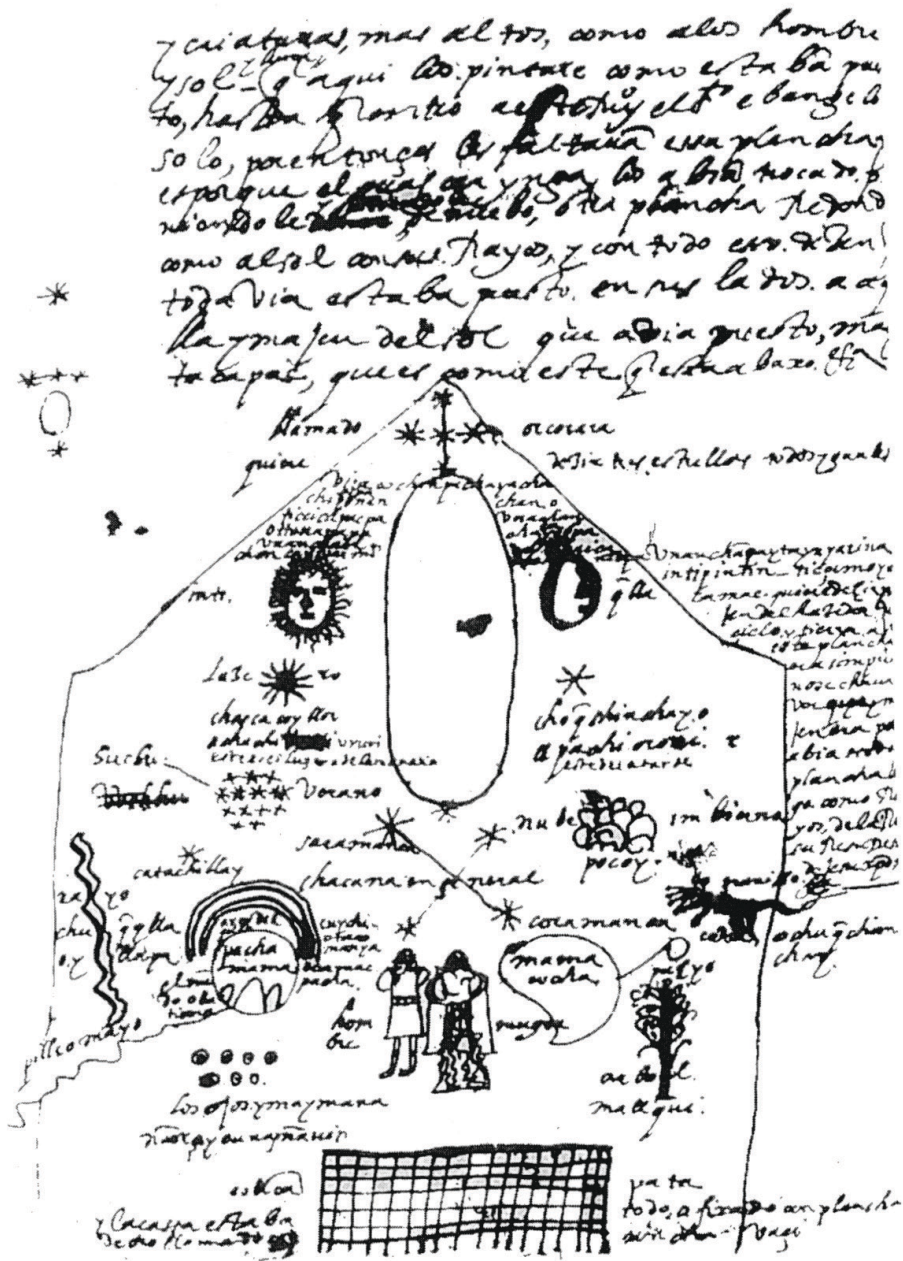
Another central and quite alternative goal present in the Ecuadorian Constitution and National Plan is to move beyond capitalism and modern Western culture. Precisely, in the section of the BVNP (*Buen Vivir National Plan*) called the Socialism of the *Buen Vivir*, one of the main objectives of the Plan is described as follows:

"...to build a plurinational and popular state that protects the interests of majorities, with the ability to govern and modify capitalist domination, and build a popular organization that prevents the domination of particular interests".

It then continues by specifying:

"the Socialism of the *Buen Vivir* questions the pattern of hegemonic accumulation, that is, the neoliberal way of producing, growing and distributing" (PNBV 2013, 24).

To better understand this point, it is worthwhile to include considerations of other theorists. For Giraldo, intrinsic to the *Buen Vivir* is the aim for a simple life that reduces our 'addiction' to consumption and maintains a balanced production without ruining the environment: a way to cooperate and



Crónica de Santacruz Pachacuti, representing the Andean cosmology. Source: Pierre Duviols, "Relación de Antigüedades deste Reyno del Piru". Estudio etnohistórico y lingüístico, Cusco, 1993, 209.

collaborate without competing (Giraldo 2014). He argues that life under the *Buen Vivir* concept should always be privileged over capital. On this matter, Ivonne Farah, professor of Sociology of the Universidad Mayor de San Andrés of La Paz, states that by attempting to remove the foundations of the pattern of accumulation typical to capitalism, implies changing the institutionality that legalizes inequality and exclusion. Always for her, by following the *Buen Vivir* principles, it could be possible for communities to restructure and regain their decision-making capacity over their own destiny (Farah 2011). Moreover, for Boris Maraño⁵, solidarity and reciprocity are the core principles that could help overpass consumerism and help reestablish a reciprocal relationship between people and nature (Maraño 2014).

Reciprocity and solidarity

Concepts of reciprocity and solidarity are woven throughout many articles of the constitution (see art. 27,32, 34,...). These concepts have different but interrelated meanings. Reciprocity can be described as the 'something that is exchanged', and in the broad Latin American panorama, means collective work. As will be further illustrated in the second chapter, such collective acts of work can be either called *mingas*, *covites*, *tequios* or *faenas* depending on the context. These are activities consist of the convocation of the whole community for the maintenance of roads, aqueducts, schools or the construction of communal huts, sports centers, dams and infrastructure for the common benefit. In such organizations, each member offers his or her physical labor, so that public work reaches each one of the members of the group. The quality of reciprocity is also present during the celebration of patron saints, bazaars, rituals and different events generally organized by the entire community (Giraldo 2014).

Solidarity is another community value at the center of the *Buen Vivir*. Reasoning on its meaning in

⁵ Boris Maraño Pimentel is a Mexican economist author of the book '*Buen Vivir y Descolonialidad. Crítica al desarrollo y la racionalidad instrumentales*' (2014).

this specific context, Farah states solidarity is the development of a social conscience based on the conviction that social problems can be solved by the strength of unity and by the struggle around a common cause (Farah 2011). For her, it is a historical concept that comes from the left, and for this reason, is never part of the public policies of capitalist governments (Farah 2011). Similarly, Belgian professor of spatial planning Frank Moulaert argues solidarity offers an antithesis to privatization and inspires a counter-ideology where social innovation could play a key role (Moulaert 2013). But for Rodotà, this force in itself does not impose an alternative principle, with respect to commercial relations, and does not state values reducible to mere economic convenience. Solidarity, for the Italian lawyer, is rather a principle that can eliminate hatred between rich and poor states, focusing on social rights that can regenerate a cooperative attitude that seems to have altogether disappeared. He also conceives that solidarity is a movement that keeps the horizon open beyond the miseries of the present times (Rodotà 2014).

Local-locality and cultural identity

Solidarity and reciprocity are not the only principles that *Buen Vivir* identifies to overpass capitalism; there are also other fundamental paradigms, such as the reinforcement of local cultural identity and communality over individuality. The Italian architect and urbanist Alberto Magnaghi, even if not relating to *Buen Vivir*, saw this same relation between identity of place and capitalism in his book '*Il progetto locale*'. For him indeed, territory and its various biophysical and socio-cultural components, especially those of old origins, are important values and a way to re-territorialize a place under post-capitalist terms (Magnaghi 2000). Moreover, considering and valuing ontology of places, although not free of conflicts, is a strategy common to most decolonial design thinkers. (See: Kamalipour et al. 2014; Tlostanova 2017; Escobar 2017).

From a different perspective, *Buen Vivir* places also community at its center. Maraño on this aspect specifies that the philosophy of the *Buen Vivir* recognizes that a person cannot lead a pleasant and full life without good relations with their social context, with their neighbors, community,

and natural environment (Marañón 2014). Farah for these same reasons expresses that where individualism is strong, social cohesion tends to be weak⁶ (Farah 2011). Gustavo Esteva, Mexican activist founder of the Universidad de la Tierra in Oaxaca and strong advocate for post-development, reminds us that the nature of being communal, for him called *comunalidad*, “constitutes the nucleus of the horizon of intelligibility of Mesoamerican cultures”. He specifies that it is precisely capitalism that worldwide has done the impossible to break community interrelations and that the concept of *comunalidad* should be held and cultivated (Escobar 2016). In line with this, the Greek architect and activist Stavros Stavrides actually sees communing in our era as a transgression, exactly because it is a dynamic that, for him, could help society evolve beyond capitalism (Stavrides 2015).

No return

One might wonder if the *Buen Vivir* principle shouldn't be considered a return to an idealistic notion of a pre-colonial Andean past. Rather than a static principle, Gudynas argues *Buen Vivir* is a notion that is continually being created (Gudynas 2011). Likewise, as the sociologist Philip Altmann⁷ specifies, the whole concept of *Buen Vivir* is a proposal for the entire society (mestizos, afro-Ecuadorian, white, etc.) and not just for indigenous peoples (Altmann 2017). On the same page, François Houtart explains that recognizing principles such as reciprocity, solidarity, frugality, etc. doesn't idealize pre-Columbian societies. Houtart, however, specifies that this dynamic does not ignore existing contradictions of the autochthonous peoples (Houtart 2014). For example, in order not to romanticize indigenous legacies, it is worth considering the authoritarian power relations, the status of women, the respect of

⁶ Farah refers specifically to Putnam's book 'Bowling alone' (2010), where he observes that social cohesion in the United States had declined in the last three decades of the 20th century.

⁷ Philip Altmann is a professor of sociology at the Universidad Central del Ecuador.



Yasuni Park. Source: <https://infoamazonia.org>

human life, haven't always been exemplary in these social groups, such as the 'imperialist' character of the Inca and Aztecs, as we would call it now. Moreover nowadays, as Houtart writes, indigenous organizations not only in Ecuador, have their own political and economical conflicts, and their political spectrum covers socialist to neoliberal ideologies. This to say, that they are social groups just as any others, with their complicated histories, dreams and trajectories (Houtart 2014). Considering the complexity of these legacies that have carried into the *Buen Vivir* principles, it is important to acknowledge they are neither retrograde nor a silver bullet. *Buen Vivir* carries multiple revolutionary and forefront ideologies, yet lamentably it doesn't guarantee effective and long-term social, economic and urban restructuring (Delgado Ramos 2015). For Houtart, this Constitution inserts itself well in the long tradition of Latin American legal "perfection", precisely because like other precedents, it does not focus on the application of such principles (Houtart 2014).

Contradictions and the transformative possibilities of *Buen Vivir* is one of the reasons why this thesis has been written. For example, nature is still exploited in the Ecuadorian Amazon and the Yasuni is an exemplary case⁸. Where did the right to nature go when national permission was given to Petroamazonas company to drill oil in such precious ecologically protected area? Or what happened with the right to the city of the Estero Salado inhabitants

⁸ The Yasuni is a protected park located in the east of the Ecuadorian Amazon. In 2007, a national campaign promoted by the Ecuadorian president Rafael Correa, called Yasuni-ITT Initiative, asked worldwide to finance its protection from oil extraction. The government hoped to generate funds of at least 50 percent of the profits that it would receive were it to utilize the oil reserves, because not drilling in the park would prevent 400 million metric tons of carbon dioxide from entering the air (Temper et al. 2013). Because they haven't collected enough funds, President Correa announced in August 2014 that the drilling would go forward.

when the *Guayaquil Ecológico*⁹ project was approved by the former president Correa? For now, instead of digging into where BV hasn't been adhered to, I instead attempt to project how these principles could shape the Ecuadorian territory if they were placed into practice. It is crucial to underline that defining these particularities of the Ecuadorian case does not mean that the search for 'alternatives' serves only this location. Analyzing both the institutional and cultural history of a place, offers a path to imagine contextualized alternatives.

How to put utopian thinking into practice?

Decolonial theorists, such as Mignolo, Quijano, Escobar, Zibechi, etc. have been fascinated by the *Buen Vivir* constitutional principles, declaring the Ecuadorian Constitution a decolonial act itself. However, in their many contributions they discuss and consider topics like reciprocity, post-capitalism, communality, etc. always and only on theoretical levels; not projecting hence their possible applicability in a tangible future. Altmann finds then in their theories another weak point:

"most decolonial thinkers lack of integration of what economists call problem of scale: instead of looking for a channel of communication between the local and the global—or at least, defining what those concepts mean—local logics are simply put in relationship with global ones as if they were placed on the same level" (Altmann 2014, 751).

Issues of applicability and the problem of scale can

⁹ The *Guayaquil Ecológico* is a 2010 project promoted by the Ecuadorian Government for the renovation of the river banks of the Estero Salado; a river crosses the poorest and highly contaminated sectors of the city of Guayaquil. There have been multiple cases of forced evictions in which there has been no previous warning leaving entire families helpless. A summer school to which I have assisted, organized by the University of KULeuven and the University of Guayaquil and financed by VLIR-UOS, deeply touched the topic, helping evicted inhabitants to negotiate their right to housing. All information are present at the following link: <https://designinginclusion.wordpress.com/>



Night in Quito. Source: Cristobal Ocaña.

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indeed be considerable limits for a tangible project that sees the Ecuadorian *Buen Vivir* transformed into practice; however, the fourth chapter of the thesis will precisely attempt, like Marcelo de Souza¹⁰ would say, to make these concepts more operational (Souza 2010). Transforming theory, such as the BV constitution into praxis, might mean to offer a scaffolding of actors, such as citizens, experts in urban planning, governmental agencies, etc.

Tlostanova, reasoning on what a decolonial design might mean, sees it as a:

"Creative and dynamic reflection and realization of the people's forgotten and discarded needs, wishes and longings, which would be inevitably linked to the local cosmologies, ethics and systems of knowledge seen not as the dead and museumized past, or as a conservative fundamentalist dystopia, but as a living and breathing present and a promise for the future" (Tlostanova 2017, 5).

Tlostanova indeed confirms how designing with decolonial principles implies taking a radical position vis à vis the current times. To project an unabridged alternative, free of Western capitalist constriction, would indeed signify an incredible effort: an endeavor that most likely looks like a utopia. Omar Felipe Giraldo in a section of his book titled "*Utopías en la era de la supervivencia: una interpretación del Buen Vivir*", offers a reading of the *Buen Vivir* precisely as a utopia. He says that, its realization demands sharp cultural transformations and a revision of the very foundations of modern Western civilization (2014). The *Buen Vivir* project as a utopia might have the immeasurable task of rewriting life, of helping us to question and rethink societal structures. Though Sisyphean, this effort is valuable, as utopias eschew treating reality as something natural, unbreakable, unmodifiable and without alternative.

The topic of utopia and its role in scenarios construction will be reconsidered in the last chapter

of the thesis. By treating the *Buen Vivir* as a utopia, with the aim of challenging and materializing decolonial principles by projecting them into a possible future, the second section of the first chapter looks at some specific institutional aspects that could help re-shape the Ecuadorian territory. The next section examines the presence of the city, participation and autonomy inside the *Buen Vivir* philosophical and institutional discourse.

¹⁰ Marcelo Lopes de Souza is a Brazilian professor of socio-spatial planning development and political ecology.



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Section 1.1

Buen Vivir laws on city, participation and autonomy

The city in the Constitution¹¹

In the Buen Vivir Constitution and National Plan there are not many articles that define the rights and desired perspectives for Ecuadorian **cities**, however, the few that are present are revolutionary, as for example *the right to the city*. Before understanding in this specific legal panorama, what right to the city means and its foundation in Ecuador, it is relevant to consider language surrounding on the origins of the right in greater Latin America.

The first and only state before Ecuador that decided to introduce the right to the city in its Magna Carta was Brazil with the City Statute Law of 2001 (Bayón 2014). Soon after, this principle was broadly discussed at the Latin American level and jointly examined in 2002 during the World Social Forum in Porto Alegre; producing a charter called the World Charter for the Right to the City, published in 2004. This document gave light to the need of a theoretical and political reference, in the form of an international human rights treaty, to legitimize the social experiences and struggles in cities against

inequalities and discrimination (World Charter for the Right to the City 2004). Social justice guided this charter, defining that all inhabitants of the cities have access to conditions of a worthy life. Another stepping stone that cemented international recognition of the right to the city, was the United Nations Habitat III conference that took place in Quito in 2016. This conference produced the New Urban Agenda, where the concept of right to the city was widely interpreted as 'cities for all' (100RC 2017).

Nevertheless, as it is well known, the right to the city was conceptualized decades earlier, through the work of the French Marxist philosopher and sociologist Henri Lefebvre. It was in 1968, amidst the cyclone of the revolution, that he published his book *Le Droit à la ville*. True to his Marxist foundation, Lefebvre's definition of the right to the city is difficult to synthesize in a few lines. Simply put, Lefebvre represents the right to the city in opposition to the negative consequences that cities suffered under the pervasive capitalist economy (Lefebvre 1974; Purcell 2003). David Harvey's 2000 re-reading of Lefebvre's treatise, illuminates the roots of his claims:

¹¹ The constitutional articles in English version are coming from the page:
<http://pdba.georgetown.edu/Constitutions/Ecuador/english08.htm>

"The right to the city is far more than the individual liberty to access urban resources: it is a right to change ourselves by changing the city. It is, moreover, a common rather than an individual right since this transformation

inevitably depends upon the exercise of a collective power to reshape the processes of urbanization. The freedom to make and remake our cities and ourselves is, I want to argue, one of the most precious yet most neglected of our human rights" (Harvey 2008; 23).

Regarding the legalization of a concept such as the right to the city and more specifically on the risks of its co-option, much has been already written, including a sharp reading by Mark Purcell in 'Possible worlds: Henri Lefebvre and the Right to the City' in 2013; or the one of Margit Mayer "The 'Right to the City' in the context of shifting mottos of urban social movements' in 2010.

Returning to the Ecuadorian institutional framework, the right to the city is precisely recognized in Article 31 of the 2008 Constitution. It states as follows:

Persons have the right to fully enjoy the city and its public spaces, on the basis of principles of sustainability, social justice, respect for different urban cultures and a balance between the urban and rural sectors. Exercising the right to the city is based on the democratic management of the city, with respect to the social and environmental function of property and the city and with the full exercise of citizenship (Ecuadorian Constitution 2008, Art. 31).

As can be seen, this article assembles many concepts; it is composed of the right to public space, the exercise of economic, social and cultural rights in the city, the right to difference, and fundamentally participation in the democratic management of the city. Reasoning on this specific article, Manuel Bayón, master in Urban Studies at FLACSO Ecuador, sees the possibility to recognize the right to collectively construct the city as a way to modify territory. As will be seen in the next chapter, collective city making is indeed a fundamental cultural feature of the Ecuadorian territory (Bayón 2014). The right to 'respect for different urban cultures' could open up the recognition of multiple Ecuadorian territorial cultures, including the ancestral collective land property, the culture of co-producing collective spaces thought the reciprocal practice called *minga*,

or the self-care of the Amazonian forest practiced by autochthonous communities.

Further articles of the Constitution recognize clearly 'other' urban cultures. Article 60 for example, without further specifications, states that the ancestral, indigenous, Afro-Ecuadorian and *montubio* (from the Ecuadorian coast) peoples may constitute territorial circumscriptions for the preservation of their culture. Moreover, the law recognizes communes and their collective land property as an ancestral form of organization¹² (Ecuadorian Constitution 2008, art. 60; Bayón 2014).

The relationship between city and countryside mentioned in Article 31st, is further elaborated upon in Article 284, which outlines that economic policies shall have many objectives, including number five which states:

To achieve a balanced development of the national territory, integration among regions, in the rural sector, and between the countryside and the city, in economic, social and cultural terms (Ecuadorian Constitution 2008, Art. 284).

This statement affirms that an effort shall be embraced in reducing the inequalities characterizing different territorial features, would that be the coast, countryside, mountains (*sierra*) or the Amazon.

Augusto Barrera, the mayor of Quito from 2009 to 2014, has declared strong support for the principle of right to the city, but also affirms that though from a declarative standpoint this right is very strong, both implementation and assessment have been weak throughout Quito (interview Barrera 2017). Delgado, author of the article '*Ciudad y Buen Vivir: ecología política urbana y alternativas para el bien común*', has also identified this contradiction, echoing Barrera's position that the recognition of a social right and an obligation of the State, unfortunately neither guarantees a practical process of urban restructuring and nor a long-term perspective for

¹² The specific topic of the communes will be further explored in Chapter Three, as one of the three analyzed case studies is a commune.

a socio-environmentally harmonious urban future (Delgado 2015).

So far, we've seen that the city itself is not very present in the *Buen Vivir* institutional framework, however, it provides set of very interesting concepts that may be useful for a renewed urban planning interpretation. These elements include: the right to the city concept, the wish to achieve balanced development between various territorial scales, the preservation of multiple territorial cultures, the need for environmental and social justice, and between others, the social function of property. These institutional frameworks, along with the concepts of participation and autonomy, –provide concrete support to start imagining the spatial applicability of some *Buen Vivir*'s concepts.

Participation

Participation is another crucial topic necessary to be illustrated as beneficial to the concrete applicability of the Ecuadorian Constitution. The institutional bodies of the *Buen Vivir*, touch many ways in which an individual may express his/her own beliefs. Participation can indeed be asserted by voting, protesting, public consultation, etc. (Esser & Pfetsch 2013). The focus, here, however, is an analysis of the content and recurrence of laws where participation potentially functions in the urban planning sector. While the focus here is on Ecuador and participation's presence in its institutional framework, the final section of this chapter offers a reading of the positivity and traps of institutionalized participation.

First of all, in Ecuador, the Council for Public Participation and Social Control (*Consejo de Participación y Control Social* -CPCCS) is responsible for promoting and involving participation at all governmental levels (Ecuadorian Constitution 2008, art. 207). In Article 95 of the Ecuadorian Constitution, we can see a list of characteristics of how participation should operate:

Participation shall be governed by the principles of equality, autonomy, public deliberation, respect for differences, monitoring by the public, solidarity and interculturalism. The participation of citizens in all matters of public

interest is a right, which shall be exercised by means of mechanisms of representative, direct and community democracy (Ecuadorian Constitution 2008, Art. 95).

This article recognizes participation as a right and points out how it can be applied. Within this article, direct and community democracy also appear, and this is a valuable sign that legally recognizes the organ of the assembly: a historical representative body of the Ecuadorian panorama. The role of neighborhood assemblies will be further developed in the third chapter of this thesis while analyzing three neighborhoods of Quito.

Art. 302 of the Organic Code of Territorial Organization Autonomy & Decentralization (COOTAD) instead, focuses more on topics of planning, management and power:

Citizenship, individually and collectively, may participate in a leading role in decision-making, planning and management of public affairs and in the social control of the institutions of decentralized autonomous governments and their representatives, in an ongoing process of building citizen power. Decentralized autonomous governments shall recognize all forms of citizen participation, of an individual and collective nature, including those generated in the basic territorial units, neighborhoods, communities, communes, enclosures and those organizations of the peoples and nationalities, within the framework of the Constitution and the law (COOTAD 2009, Art. 302).

These articles hence state that participation can be implemented at different scales and that various forms of citizens' involvement shall be recognized.

In Ecuador, citizen participation is therefore considered a right, a guarantee, and the constitution consecrates the participation of citizens as a fundamental principle (Álvarez 2014). Examining the details more closely, the Organic Law of Citizen Participation (*Ley Organica de Participación Ciudadana*), whose purpose is to promote real participation of citizens throughout public policy cycles, has inserted a range of options of participation



Atacucho's meeting 1999. Source: Alvarado 2011, 9.



View of Comité del Pueblo neighborhood. Source: Ciudad de Quito Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/milindaciudadQuito/>

mechanisms that ensure a legitimate involvement of citizens. Amongst these options, some proposed include: Public hearings, Popular *Cabildos*, the Empty Chair mechanism, *Veedurías*, Observatories, Consultative Councils, Preliminary and Environmental Consultation, Preparation of participatory budgets, Accountability, Planning Councils (Álvarez 2014; Colpari 2011; SENPLADES 2011). Without going into the details of each mechanism, for Carmita Álvarez, Dean of the Faculty of Social work of the Manabi University in Ecuador, even though the new legal framework seeks to recognize and promote participation instances, participation has not been sufficiently elevated; there is still a long way to go, because there is no coordination between the same levels of government to ensure real participation that promotes the empowerment of citizen (Álvarez 2014).

Autonomy

With the same objective of envisioning an alternative urban future, adapted to the *Buen Vivir* principle, I here shed light on one more concept: autonomy. The struggle for autonomy has been one of the mainstays of the indigenous peoples of Latin America; this fight was energized after the 1994 Mexican Zapatista uprising. Disputes concerning autonomy in Latin America have existed since the Spanish conquest—and still continue—mainly over the control of indigenous territories (Escobar 2016; Giraldo 2014).

Back to more recent times, autonomy is a recurrent term in the 2008 Ecuadorian Constitution. To understand the complex relation between autonomy and territory, Title V Chapter 2 of the Constitution states that the Ecuadorian territory is organized into regions, provinces, cantons, and rural parishes. Metropolitan districts, the province of Galápagos, and the indigenous and pluricultural territorial districts, are defined as *Gobiernos Autonomos Decentralizados* (GAD), meaning Decentralized Autonomous Governments. Moreover, communes (*comunas*), precincts (*recintos*), urban neighborhoods and rural parishes (*parroquias rurales*) are recognized as basic units of participation in the GADs. Under the Constitution, the GADs shall have political, administrative and financial autonomy. Article 238 modifies these freedoms,

stating, “under no circumstances shall the exercise of autonomy allow for secession from the national territory” (Ecuadorian Constitution 2008). Here we can notice a mismatch between the basic units of participation, such as a neighborhood, and the actual role of CPCCS, who proposes to be the body that registers the different forms of organization, as well as the articulator between citizenship and different organisms of the State. From the other side, COOTAD article 306 states that the smallest scale of the territorial organization, the neighborhood, is allowed community representation. For this reason, new and existing neighborhood organizations are being recognized and promoted; creating more confusion on the issue, as it is not clear to which extent a neighborhood can decide on its territory.

From assessing these governmental policies, what can be deduced is that decentralization in decision-making is a top objective in the recent Ecuadorian planning. This aspect is worthy of attention as it could potentially be a tangible base for a decolonial project. As the American political scientist Philip Mauceri states,

“The growing efforts at decentralization create new political spaces within which social groups can organize” (Mauceri 2003, 21).

For this reason, participation and autonomy are two concepts that—not just in the Ecuadorian case—must walk hand in hand to lead to integrated and inclusive urban planning.



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Section 1.3

Contextualizing Participation and Autonomy in the Global South

This last section of the first chapter will look mostly at some of the critical literature on participation and autonomy in relation to city development in the Global South. Since in the previous section these same topics have been discussed uniquely at the Ecuadorian scale, the objective of this following contribution is to contextualize these reflections in years of critical discussions.

Participation was identified by the United Nations in 1955 as synonymous with community development (Moser 1986). After the recognition of the growing failures of the modernist low-cost housing programs and services in the Global South, the participatory urban planning approach took a relevant shift (Moser 1986; Ward 2012; Lombard 2013). It was by the mid 1960's that the Accelerated Growth Models of economic development were negatively received and scholars from various disciplines, including anthropology and urbanism,

"had begun to write perceptively about the highly functional and supportive social structures of slums and the destructive effects of urban renewal" (Ward 2012, 289).

By the early '70s there was then sufficient evidence, overall from the U.S. and British scholars, that precarious settlements and slums were outcomes of poverty. In William Mangin's 1967 article titled 'The Latin American Squatter Settlements: A Problem and a Solution', he describes many stereotypes about the self-help settlements and identified the

highly functional and supportive structures of the bottom-up community participation initiatives (Mangin 1967; Ward 2012). As a result of these reflections and discoveries, between the late '60s and '70s, the World Bank implemented throughout many countries of the South the so-called 'Site and services' housing schemes. It consisted in upgrading policies that saw formal planned settlements with basic services built on the site, where a secure roof and four corner-posts acted as fixed structure for self-builders to continue their own settlement (Ward 2012; Lombard 2013).

Significant to this shift was Christopher Alexander's approach to community participation; broadly recognized as one of the most enlightening of these years¹³ (Da Cruz 2012). He studied and attempted to unveil the needs of the self-help builder through his or her housing construction. In his book, 'The Oregon Experiment' he defines that:

"participation is inherently good; it brings people together, involves them in their world; it creates feelings between people and the world around them, because it is a world they have helped to make" (Alexander 1975, 40).

Shining bright light on the positivity and potentials

¹³ Christopher Alexander is a renowned architect and theorist. He is the inventor of the Pattern Language movement.



Corporación Nacional de la Vivienda brochure. "The employment of your family's free time is worth money. Take advantage of it! You can build your house!. Lima, Peru, 1961. Source: <http://www.grahamfoundation.org>



Turner's Aided self-help housing project. Formation of housing and planning problems of Arequipa, Peru. 1959-1960. Source: <http://www.grahamfoundation.org>



Turner's Aided self-help housing project. Formation of housing and planning problems of Arequipa, Peru. 1959-1960. Source: <http://www.grahamfoundation.org>

of the self-built, Alexander doesn't see it only as a way to create houses, but also as a rich process of fraternal feelings. Another significant step in the recognition of participation in city planning comes again from the United Nation, specifically in the 1976 Habitat Conference held in Vancouver. In this occasion the World Bank legitimized self-help as a positive element of development (Ward 2012). The urban sociologist and anthropologist Caroline Moser reported how the UNCHS defined participation as promoter of ownership, care, autonomy and stimulator of cooperative spirit in communities (Moser 1986).

In many contexts from the North to the Global South, community participation in different phases has also been institutionalized. It is understood that through community participation, governments, "despite limited outlays in per capita support, can assist a far greater number of the needy than can be reached by current conventional programmes" (UNCHS 1986 in Moser 1986; Lombard 2013).

Between many authors discussing this topic, Lisa Peattie in 1990 reflected on the double outcomes of institutionalized participation. From one side, through decentralization, participation reduces the state's regulatory role, and from the other, invites residents to take responsibility beyond the role of consumers, but as deciding actors (Peattie 1990). However, as it will be further seen, for other authors, participation, institutionalized or not, is not all positive. On the other side of the coin, I noticed there is much criticism concerning citizens' involvement in public decision making. Participation in fact has been interpreted negatively by many authors, for example, as a 'new tyranny' (Cooke & Kothari 2001), as a 'nightmare' which facilitates processes of legitimization and coercion (Miessen 2010) or as Belgian geographer Erik Swyngedouw's sees actively involved citizens as institutionalized hostages (Palmås and von Busch 2015).

Amidst this panorama of contradictions, it is not easy to take a neutral position. It can be said, however, that the 'negative' faction points out two main ideas. One branch of thought sees institutionalized participation as a way to control and depoliticize; as a system that legitimizes the unfulfillment of

the state's responsibilities. The other branch sees participation as a forced-need of letting everyone express themselves on issues which shouldn't be under their judgment. On this last position, the German architect and writer Markus Miessen is quite caustic, confessing his growing irritation on the romanticization that everyone should always be asked to be included in decision-making processes (Miessen 2010).

At this point it is crucial to touch on another aspect, that might determine when participation can be a positive or a negative tool: its cultural and local integration. When discussing culture, this term is drawn from urban designers and planners Kamalipour & Zaroudi's definition:

"...a complex accumulation of activities, crafts, habits, beliefs, art, ethics, and thoughts... a system of collective knowledge, meaning, value, and vision...distinctive indicator of a group in comparison to the other groups in terms of social norms, family patterns, institutions, and governance systems" (Kamalipour & Zaroudi 2014, 222).

Participation in the Global North and Global South can't be placed at the same level of comparison, due to their extensive and multifaceted cultures of engagement, but also when looking at smaller scales, it must be remembered that each practice of participation is constantly characterized by different traditions (Peattie 1990; Lombard 2013). For these reasons, it is vital to acknowledge that civil society is empowered and limited greatly from the context in which it interacts (Watson 2009). Concerning the role of the urban planner, Steve Connelly, professor of Town and Regional planning at the University of Sheffield, writes:

"Planners should not be seen as dupes, uncritically accepting Northern ideas and ideals, inculcated perhaps during education in Northern universities. Rather, they are thinking individuals, and in any setting there is a need for a nuanced understanding of how state planners engage with, adopt and adapt ideas of participatory planning, recognizing that this will be a culturally inflected amalgam of the strategic, the principled and the pragmatic" (Connelly 2010, 348).

For these reasons, when talking of urban planning, an ample and multidisciplinary team is crucial. Authors like the visionary architects Edmund M. Burke and Nabeel Hamdi, for example, proposed that the architect, when working with community participation, should acquire many sorts of knowledge, from social science skills, to anthropological understanding (Burke 1979; Hamdi 1997). A more recent viewpoint instead pushes for a co-design between different experts (Palmås and von Busch 2015). What is particularly certain is that:

“community participation implies that the community ‘takes part in’ the execution of a project together with project staff; it does not mean that the community should ‘take over’ the project” (Moser 1986, 119).

Moser offers the discussion that to participate doesn't just mean to take part in meetings, or to simply consult the end users to approve a project, but rather resides in an active engagement to find the most appropriate solution for the majority. It is then important to dispel the myth that civil society, overall in low-income contexts, is always keen to participate (Moser 1986). Communities generally get involved when there is a clear interest and expectation of benefits, communal or individual. People will not just participate because of a dispassionate desire to be part of a community. Moreover, it is worth specifying that there can be many kinds of institutionalized participation, for example, G. Narayana Reddy in his book 'Empowering Communities through Participatory Methods', proposes the 'Partnership Model', where through specific steps, community and government can work vis à vis long lasting results (Reddy 2002). Another example can be Reg Lang's 'Interactive Planning', which differently from the Conventional Planning, sees that the planner tries to balance competing interests in order to find a consensus, he or she does it by directly engaging with stakeholders to find adequate solutions (Lang 1986).

In considering Latin American scholarship on community participation, it is equally important to address conversations surrounding autonomy. As we saw in the previous section, the presence of autonomy is multiplicitous throughout the

Ecuadorian institutional framework, due to indigenous struggles for self-determination. However, it should be considered that the great majority of the Ecuadorian people are not eager to self-manage separately from the state, as the indigenous nationalities would like to. Despite this, Souza defines that for the 'new indigenous movement' autonomy refers above all to fight for what he calls 'extreme autonomy (*autonomía no plano extremo*)'. Beyond self-management, 'extreme autonomy' to him it is about a self-determination from foreign powers (Souza 2016).

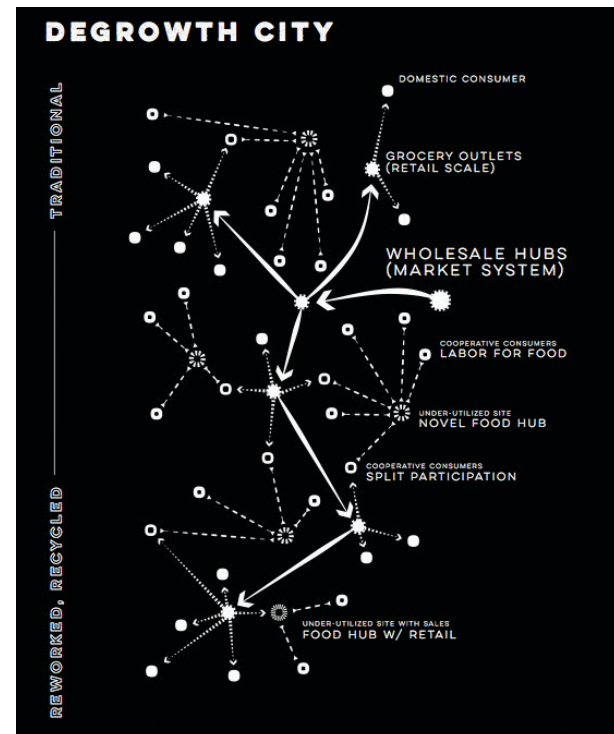
Before trying to understand which kind of autonomy might induce a potentially comprehensive territorial rearrangement for Ecuador, I offer a glimpse on how autonomy has been interpreted in different international occasions. One of the keenest authors who dedicated his life investigating and writing on autonomy is Cornelius Castoriadis. Beyond discussing territorial autonomy, he actually addresses the epistemology of the word and its role in collective or individual autonomy (Castoriadis 1997). *Auto-nomos* literally means to give oneself one's own laws, which sound like an oxymoron when written inside a law. Yet for the Greek philosopher, collective autonomy must be based on politico-institutional guarantees, as well as on the effective material possibility of equal chances of participation in decision-making processes. He says that autonomy is put into practice in a society when it is based on freedom and democracy, and overall when its citizens are aware of creating their own society (Souza 2012). Focusing instead on urban issues, Souza affirms:

“Deprived of the dimension of autonomy, urban development can only be, in the best of all cases, mitigated social oppression and inequality: a kind of modernisation-cum-reduction of poverty and environmental damage, conducted by enlightened ruling elites” (Souza 2000, 190).

Autonomy comes often into discussion when talking of social movements. A Latin American interpretation of autonomy—for example with the Mexican Zapatistas, the Argentinian *piqueteros*, the Bolivian uprising in the water war, Brazilian *sem-teto* etc., treat *autonomía* as a *condicio sine*



Zapatista women in Chiapas, Mexico. 2016. Source: <https://www.jacobinmag.com>



Degrowth city. Lydia Kallipoliti. 2015. *Autonomy and Autodigestion*. UABB Radical Urbanism. Source: <http://www.siteations.com>

qua non a social fight can be held (Souza 2016; Petropoulou 2018). This concept can also be valid for much smaller cases of territorial struggle, like the ones treated in the third chapter of the thesis. As Zibechi and Souza remind, *autonomía* in these similar set of cases means overall, people's power (*poder popular*) which normally translates into a search for independence and self-management (*autogestión*) for those who have been left outside and of who opposes or denies the state's apparatus (Zibechi 2007; Souza 2016). Moreover Souza, who specifically talks of the 'Project of Autonomy', underlines that it has to be spatialized:

"Spatial dimension has been largely neglected or underestimated by the social scientists devoted to the study of social movements" (Souza 2012, 186).

Next chapter will directly address this topic of representation, and more specifically of spatialization of apparently intangible social dynamics.

On a similar page, the Colombian anthropologist Arturo Escobar deeply reflects on the meaning

of *autonomía* vis à vis decolonial thinking. In his recent book *'Autonomía y diseño: la realización de lo communal'* he considers whether notions such as autonomy and communality and their associated practices could be the basis for a new design thinking (Escobar 2016). To him, *autonomía* is not only anti-capitalist, but also a concept, which implies the absence of the state. For Escobar, autonomy is indeed not achieved through the 'capture of the State', but by recovering from the State the key areas of the social life it has colonized. In this sense, autonomy means living beyond the logic of the State and capital by creating non-liberal, non-state and non-capitalist ways of being, doing and knowing. Hypothetically, an autonomous system should promote alternative power through autonomous forms of organization, such as community assemblies and rotation of obligations. To him also, the relation between autonomy and place is essential, as *autonomía* for him has a decidedly territorial dimension based on place (Escobar 2016). Following this viewpoint, the Irish lawyer, sociologist and philosopher, John Holloway, wrote in the Humboldt Journal of Social Relations in 2005 a quite innovative contribution titled *'Zapatismo Urbano'*. What makes this contribution so peculiar, is a rare reflection on what autonomy can mean—in this case seen as the one defended and carried out by the Mexican Zapatist movement—in an urban concept; while in reality it has been treated solely on rural and prevalently indigenous milieu.

When reasoning on what autonomy could mean in an urban context, Holloway gives strong value to local associations in order to reconstruct social bonds. To him, moving in this direction means to revive councilism (meaning the councils or the assemblies that are structurally horizontal), where free participation is encouraged (Holloway 2005). For Holloway, if someone critiques these discourses as romanticism, it is because of a power issue, stating:

"...realism of power politics failed to achieve radical social change and that hope lies in breaking reality, in establishing our own reality, our own logic, our own language, our own colours, our own music, our own time, our own space" (Holloway 2005, 177).

Another very interesting thinker on autonomy is Lydia Kallipoliti, a Greek architect who, when invited to participate to the Biennale of Architecture & Urbanism of Shenzhen in 2015 she decided to focus her work on autonomy. Kallipoliti created a timeline called *'Autonomy & Autodigestion'*, beginning with the uses of autonomy

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in the architectural investigations of Rudolf Wittkower, Colin Rowe and Peter Eisenman. She then illustrated the '70s ecological and libertarian ways of living and acting, like Clifford Harper's environmental autonomy, where getting rid of superficial material is a tool for political liberation. Continuing to newer interpretations, she then proposed future cities like the 'commune city' or the 'do-it-yourself city', where a collection of experiments based on autonomy are either established on new local economies, or self-constructed settlements, where parts of the city are self-sufficient islands separated from the centralized authorities. In the description of the project she says that:

"...a radical form of urbanism might be one that enables civic federation, or one that enables residents to become community stakeholders by providing them with tools to act coherently as a group and to develop infrastructural mechanisms" (Kallipoliti 2015, 132).

Kallipoliti hence imagines a future city composed of cells connected by networks, where tactical changes, done in small pieces, effect the whole.

On scenarios based on some level on autonomy, there could be much more to discuss, such as the idea of Libertarian Municipalism of Murray Bookchin, or the contents pursued by the anonymous writers under the name of Invisible Committee. However, at this point, it is useful to interrupt the discussion on the topic, which will be re-taken later, without forgetting a critical issue underlined by American feminist political scientist Jane Mansbridge. She points out that under the will of some urban reformers to implement decentralization to increase popular power, there might be the hidden risk of creating incompetent or corrupt islands that fragment the city (Mansbridge 2003). Similarly, the Italian professor of urbanism at the Politecnico di Torino Cristina Bianchetti would say, we must be aware of the risk of Balkanization when dealing with urban collective practices (Bianchetti 2014).

These last two references indeed raise a crucial point: a possible risk synonymous with autonomy is fragmentation. This is risky, because if we see the city as a machine or as metabolic object, autonomy in the form of small separated units, such as neighborhoods, their disconnected management, rather than smooth out injustices, might reinforce them or even create new ones.

In order to avoid such a dynamic—as will be seen in the final chapter— I offer a design proposal where communities self-manage their collective spaces (such as: squares,

roads, playgrounds,...), but in a way where each intervention is part of a much broader regulatory system common to the entire metropolis.

In conclusion, this chapter illustrates three main issues: the *Buen Vivir* in the Ecuadorian Constitution, the presence of city, participation and autonomy in the BV framework and finally their assessment in a critical literature review in the Global South. I've localized and synthesized these concepts in order to prepare the reader to the next chapter dedicated to both the collective Andean practice called *minga* and its representation on space. What links the *Buen Vivir* and the *minga* are precisely the issues of participation and autonomy, which characterize both scopes. In the 2008 Constitution these two concepts are illustrated within a set of norms, while for the Andean practice they are key aspects of its organizational form. Finally, as said in the introduction, embracing the concepts of participation and autonomy, identifying their potentials and critical features, is seen as a starting point to envision a more inclusive Ecuadorian urban future.

Chapter 2

The *Minga* and the Crono-topo line

The following contribution elaborates on an issue touched upon in the previous chapter: participation processes for urban improvements must be culturally and context specific (Peattie 1990; Lombard 2013; Watson 2009; Connelly 2010). This issue indeed is crucial to attempt answering the doctoral thesis main research question: considering the opportunities and challenges presented by the Buen Vivir on participation and autonomy, in what way can collective city-making reduce Quito's inequalities and what role can urbanism/design play in this setting? Of the many cultural aspects that might effect creation of Ecuadorian space, the first section of this chapter investigates a practice called minga; an Andean collective form of self-management and self-construction at the base of the most rural and urban Ecuadorian developments. The second section defines research methods used to study the minga: including interviews, archival research, on-site drawings, and the production of a method of representation called *Crono-topo line*.



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Section 2.1

The minga

This investigation on the minga is probably the most comprehensive research existing on the topic. This practice until now has been investigated mostly by social scientists and anthropologists, such as the rare book wrote by Dario Guevara in 1957 titled '*Las Mingas del Ecuador. Origenes, transito y supervivencia*' or later contributions, like the ones of Faas¹⁴ (2015), Klaufus & Mitzman¹⁵ (2012), Mayer¹⁶ (2002) and Ramirez¹⁷ (1980). However, in these last cases the discussions on the minga cover mostly

only a short section and the research has been solely dedicated to rural applications. However, as this chapter will demonstrate, mingas are practiced, overall recently, also in urban contexts. As far as I have observed, there is a lack of a combined research that looks also at the mingas' evolution throughout time and their spatial impacts. In order to fill these gaps, this section begins with a definition of what the word minga means, shows related patterns in a global context and then looks at its origins to the present day evolutions. Reading this practice in a contemporary context is necessary not only because there is a lack of literature about it, but because in the essence of minga, despite being so ancient, it is also revolutionary.

¹⁴ Aj Faas is an expert on exchange practices, social organization in Latin America and the United States, he is professor in anthropology at the San Jose State University.

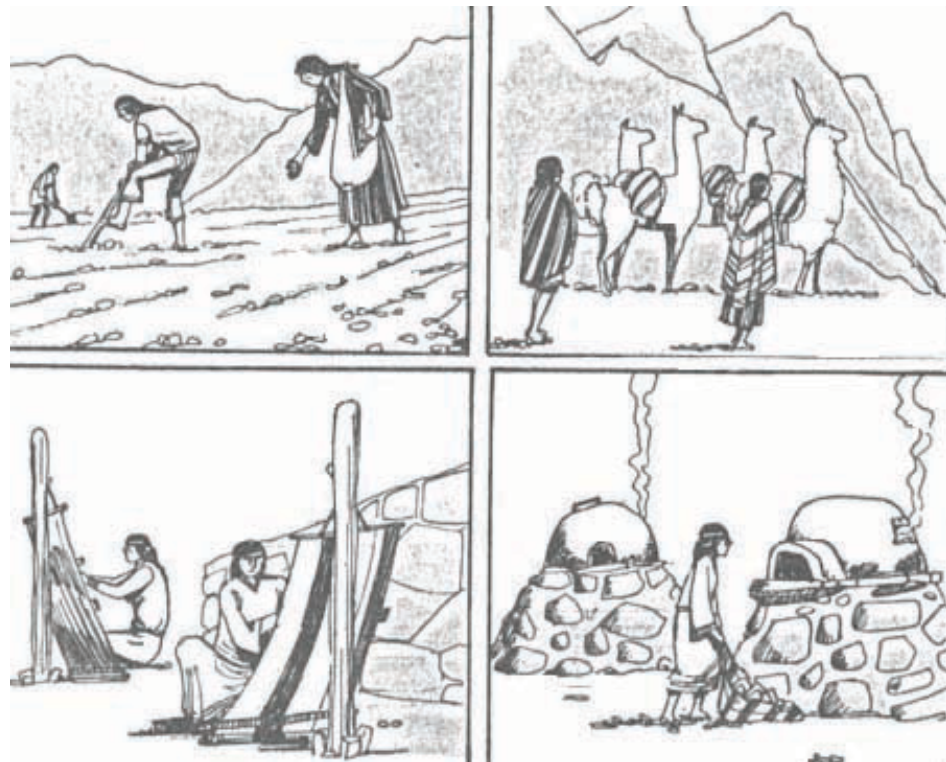
¹⁵ Christien Klaufus is member of the Centre for Latin American Research and Documentation in Amsterdam, she is the author of the book 'Urban Residence: Housing and Social Transformations in Globalizing Ecuador' (2012).

¹⁶ Enrique Mayer is a Peruvian professor of Sociocultural Anthropology at Yale University. He is the author of 'The Articulated Peasant' (2002), a book on the Andean peasant economies from pre-colonial times to the present.

¹⁷ Ramirez María is the author of '*Formas colectivas de la producción agrícola ecuatoriana. Caso específico: las mingas*' published by the Instituto Otavaleño de Antropología in 1980.

Definition of minga

Minga is a communal work practice from the Andean Region. It specifically originates from the Quechua word *minccacuni* and literally means requesting help by promising something in return (Masmiquel 2015; Garavaglia 1997). The *Real Academia de la Lengua* dictionary posits instead that the term comes from the Quechua *minka*, which also refers to a voluntary agricultural collective work serving a social utility. For Charlotte Glenghorn, lecturer at the University of Edinburgh in Latin American Film Studies, a minga describes the collective effort of community residents to help one another during a time of need or crisis (Glenghorn 2013). These various definitions promote an understanding of the minga as a multi-dimensional practice (Ramirez 1980). In general terms, however, a minga is usually 'called' to involve a group of people that works collectively on a particular task (Lozano 2013). Geographically speaking, the word minga has an equivalent meaning in Bolivia, Colombia,



Daily practices in the Ayllu period. Source: <https://es.educaplay.com>

Ecuador, Peru and Chile. In the last two countries it is known as *minka* and *mingaco* respectively, whereas in Brazil it is comparable to *adjunto* and *mutirão* (Lozano 2013; Masmiquel 2015). In other contexts such as Colombia, the term *minga* is also employed by the Indigenous Movement to organize mass protests and marches for social justice, or adopted to describe a collective way of empowering knowledge (Schmitt 2010; Levalle 2011; Gleghorn 2013; Quince 2016).

The *minga* is one of many systems of community work and reciprocity where people do not expect anything in return, apart from collective benefit. In the sub-Saharan African context for example, the Rwandan Government relied on the customary *umuganda*. This was used to enrich and adapt development programs as part of post-war reconstruction efforts and to cultivate a shared national identity. Today, around 80% of Rwandans participate in the monthly *umuganda* community work. The last Saturdays of each month, from eight to eleven in the morning, the population engages in cleaning up public spaces. The law stipulates that those escaping their duties are liable to be sanctioned. The projects include the construction of schools, medical centers and hydroelectric plants, as well as wetland rehabilitation and the creation of highly productive agricultural plots (Villaverde 2014). A similar custom coming from Haiti is called *kombit*, recently used for post-earthquake reconstruction. In Uzbekistan a voluntary public mutual aid known as *khashar* has been practiced for centuries. It is described as a hard work consisting in watering vineyards, mowing, harvesting, digging irrigation canals, but it is also used for the collective construction of public and private buildings (Villaverde 2014). One example are the *kashers* practiced on a yearly basis by students and staff of the Russian Economic University in the Uzbek city of Tashkent, where on a specific day of the year, everyone makes the university streets, courtyards, district, parks and city as clean and neat as possible.

Communal work and mutual aid are not limited to the global South. In Spain for example, collective practices of self-help such as the *auzolan* can be found in the Basque Country, the *andecha* in the Asturian region, the *tornajeira* in Galician territories,

and the *tornallom* in Valencia (Villaverde 2014). In Finland the *talkoot* is an example of a unique form of social participation. Hyyppä, author of the book *Healthy Ties: Social Capital, Population Health and Survival*, specifies that it works as an alternative form of collective work, which does not consider any kind of reimbursement besides the possibility of a shared meal once work is over (Hyyppä 2010). Like the *minga*, throughout the years *talkoot* has also followed migration waves from rural to urban areas.

“The purpose of the *talkoot* may be something of a common concern, that is, for the good of the group. It may involve building or repair work or assisting someone with a task that exceeds his or her own capacity” (Hyyppä 2010, 33).

Marianne Nylund, expert of community development in Finland, adds that in villages *talkoot* can also consist of building community houses, schools and churches together (Nylund 2013). Finally, in Ireland the *meitheal* is still practiced. In this case too, it consists of a communal gathering to help one another. Michael Kelly, founder of GIY (Grow It Yourself association), offers an example from Waterford City, where though multiple *meitheals* – mostly consisting of cleaning and planting, a group of volunteers created a native woodland based on an old Irish list of trees.

As we see from these other examples, this notion of cooperative work is not unique to Ecuador, however, it's important to consider the particularities of how it plays out in a pre-and postcolonial Latin American context. As follows, *mingas'* characteristics and habits have changed much throughout history, but the unifying point that connects its transformations from pre-colonial times can be found in its many re-interpretations and co-options.

The Ayllu and the prehistory

As Guevara says, despite all obstacles and all abuses, the *minga*, with its traditional roots in productivity and solidarity, is a virtuous heritage of prehistory (Guevara 1957). According to his sources, it was practiced since the conformation of the *Ayllu*: the basis of Andean society, which first was nomadic and



THE EXECUTION OF THE INCA.

Engraving depicting the execution of Atahualpa (the last sovereign emperor of the Inca Empire) 1497-1533. Source: <https://www.alamy.com>

soon after turned agrarian¹⁸ (ibid., Cabrera 2004; Palmeyro 2008; Calvo & Morales 2014). At the time, peoples cooperated to protect themselves from the weather or predators. Over time cooperative efforts extended to include work for common subsistence activities, such as the search for sustenance, the construction of canoes or to germinate crops. In the communal heart of the *Ayllu*, cooperation was forged and then became communal action. It is also important to specify that this tradition of mutual help exercised by the Andean indigenous communities, when practiced at the familial scale, was called *Ayni* rather than *minga*. Ramirez then refers to another communal expression practiced in the 'extended family'; involving individuals linked by kinship, *compadrazgo* and particular friendship (Ramirez 1980). This attitude extended to bigger tribes, which with time, gave way to the creation of the confederations. This participation in social relations at the community level generates a closer degree of kinship, and in turn, a greater desire to maintain these bonds (Ramirez 1980). Nowadays the term *minga* is used interchangeably to describe both familial and communal bonds.

Inca time

Originating as a practice strongly related to nature and agriculture, where the respect for *Pachamama*—Mother Earth—was all encompassing, during the Inca conquest of Ecuador in the XV century, the notion of *minga* was employed for the realization of sacrifices to the King Sun¹⁹ (Macas 2004; Palmeyro 2008; Masmiquel 2015). This term was adapted as *Mit'a*, a mandatory service for all married men between 15 and 50 years old (Quince 2016). The imposed discipline required all members to participate in

¹⁸ The *Ayllu* is the pre-Inca and Inca entity of territorial organization. It constituted a self-sufficient political, social, economic and religious unit that brought together several family groups related to one another. He shared ownership and managed resources collectively.

¹⁹ The Inca existed in the Andean plateau between the 13th and 16th centuries.

heliocentric rituals. Those who refused to follow these rules incited corporal or fatal punishment (Guevara 1957). The Incan Empire employed *Mit'a* as a labor tax that became a mechanism of social subordination to extract surpluses and free labor from the conquered groups²⁰ (Alberti & Mayer 1974; Faas 2015). As David Evan Glasser states in his book 'The Growing Housing Crisis in Ecuador', this practice

"involved broad participation by Indian worker squadrons in the construction of roads, canals, monuments, and other community projects" (Glasser 1988, 148).

In exchange for this, the state gave the communities land (El Comercio 2012). The collective ownership of the land was farmed by the *Ayllu* and was divided into non-transferable individual plots. Crops, waterways, grasslands and forests were collectively managed (Guevara 1957). Guevara defines that Incan domination maintained the tradition of the conquered *Ayllu* and contributed to reinforce agrarian collectivism. *Mingal* labors were elevated on a large scale, increasing the agrarian religion and giving a festive impulse to the agricultural calendar (Guevara 1957).

The Spanish Colony

The Ecuadorian jurist Marcia Quince explains that during the Spanish colonial period, the organization of the aboriginal communities was destroyed: colonists broke the unity of the people, removed them from the best lands and forced the natives to work for the colonial authorities (Quince 2016). Similarly to the Inca Empire, which used indigenous labor forces for the enrichment of the domain, *mit'a* in this case acted as a subsidy to private mining interests and with the tax revenues from silver production, the Spanish colonies largely financed European wars (Padilla 2013). Under the systems of *encomiendas*, indigenous people were also used to satisfy the Spaniards' lust for increased personal

²⁰ The original population before the Incas' invasion were the *Quitu*, population that inhabited Quito's area from 500 AD to the end of the 15th century.



Cacao harvesting in Hacienda Victoria, Ecuador. 1905 ca. Source: <http://cacao.culturaypatrimonio.gob.ec/>



Quito, August 1972. Source: Luis Mejia.

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capital²¹. As Guevara reports:

"they exploited the cooperative work of the indigenous tradition to satisfy their personal greeds...putting into play the imposition and conquest of docile *cacique's* free arms"²² (Guevara 1957, 8).

Much of this 'free' labor force was also exploited by the Church, the *mingas* of Indians were forced to participate in Catholic worship, but also for charity or to assist those affected by natural disasters: earthquakes, floods, plague, etc. (Guevara 1957). To understand the degree of this impact, Glasser writes:

"by the eighteenth century the major portion of (the Ecuadorian) land was in the hands of the Church, principally the *Compania de Jesus*" (Glasser 1988, 148).

During this colonial era (1534-1830), many indigenous people died for their freedom and their way of life. There were uprisings and struggles; they tried to resist with their language, their feasts, and safeguarding their customs, including the *minga* (Quince 2016). Some scholars underline that due to these various dominations, indigenous communities conversely praised their cohesion and tended to form a fence against external threats, so that in some cases, like in the still existing *comunidades*, it is still possible to find forests, rivers and pastures that are managed and held in common (Lozano 2013). Communal lands still exist in Ecuador and are protected by both the 1937 '*Ley de Comunidades*' and the more recent 2008 Ecuadorian Constitution²³.

²¹ The Inca existed in the Andean plateau between the 13th and 16th centuries.

²² The original population before the Incas' invasion were the *Quitu*, population that inhabited Quito's area from 500 AD to the end of the 15th century.

²³ One case study presented in Chapter three will precisely be a *comuna*.

Concluding this historical overview, Guevara again offers an interesting interpretation:

"the *minga* is a great legacy of indianity that we preserve to silence those who believe that the conquering of the strong peoples - like the Inca and Spanish - brought us the resources of modern progress and the bulwark of modern civilization" (Guevara 1957, 7).

Despite the various kinds of co-options, either to serve temperors or the Crown, *minga* existed as a collective way to bring forward productive resistance.

The haciendas

Moving forward in time, Ecuador fought for independence between 1809 and 1822, and even though in 1830 it was declared an independent state, other dynamics of indigenous exploitation were imposed by the so-called '*hacendados*' or *patrón*: owners of the *haciendas* consisting in large private estates. The peasants were forced to work on these ranches at least once a week - a day that was called *yanapa* - in order to get access to firewood, water, pasture, or even for the use of hacienda roads. In addition, they had to participate in the *mingas* organized once or twice a month by the landowner (Meier 1984; Ramirez 1980). These exchanges inside the haciendas, as defined by Ramirez, were entirely unequal (Ramirez 1980). Concerning the exploitation of the *minga* in his book '*Las luchas indígenas en el Ecuador*' Oswaldo Albornoz says:

"... a beautiful custom of human solidarity is used for a vile and shabby exploitation" (Albornoz 1971, 18).

The profiteering of the Andean peasants persisted unchanged until the end of the 1950's; it wasn't until the early 60's, when the banana started to be exported from the Ecuadorian coast that many *campesinos* (farmers) moved from the mountain to the plantations, provoking a notable wave of migration (Glasser 1988). Nonetheless, rural families who remained under the control of the haciendas, had no time to increase independent craft production or establish a business (Meier 1984). Through the Agrarian Reforms of 1964, 1970, and 1973, the *yanapa* was finally forbidden and the *hacendados* transformed their lands into



1_Avenida 12 de Octubre, Quito, 1970. Source: El Comercio
 2_October 2015. <https://www.elcomercio.com>
 2_Comité del Pueblo, Quito, 1976. Herdoiza 1996, 118.

capitalist enterprises. However, despite peasants finally having the right to freely dispose of their own labor time, at that moment they were deprived of the access to these lands and their products, finding themselves in need of money in order to buy goods from the markets. From an organizational perspective, consequently, as will be illustrated in the next section, the decline of the hacienda-order increased the autonomy of local authorities, such as neighborhood leaders and elected *cabildos*. Local assemblies, organized between the various householders, let the individuals exercise

“decision-making power not only with regard to mingas and infrastructure, but also in the areas of intracommunal relations and the relations between communities and external actors” (Korovkin 1992, 14).

Mingas in the 70's in Guayaquil and Quito

The 70's represented for Ecuador a real social and economic turning point; it could be described as a momentum in which many aspects of power and politics coincided. As previously stated, it was a period of agricultural reforms, but also the end of Victor Ibarra's dictatorship, the oil nationalization and the consequent investment in infrastructure and industry (Testori 2016b). However, the boost in economy didn't reach all social sectors: small and middle-sized farmers had almost no choice other than moving from rural to urban areas where new industries were located. Quito and Guayaquil, the two main Ecuadorian cities, became in those years the nexus of migration (Kingman 2006). Finding a job in the spreading industries wasn't the real dilemma for this newly resettled population. The greatest concern for newcomers was the scarce housing market, due to the lack of social housing and urban facilities. These caused the rise of spontaneous uncontrolled human settlements predominantly in the peripheral areas of the capital. In the case of Quito, migrants were generally forced to settle in mountainous and often-inhospitable infrastructure-free lands. Similarly, in the case of Guayaquil, these housing sites were grouped mostly in wetlands (Moser 1982). Illegal '*lotizadores*' (persons that divided lands into plots) were key figures for the trade of the lands. Yet migrants were expected to provide for all basic services and infrastructure

(Testori 2016b).

As Edward Dew points out in his book '*Politics of the Altipiano*', despite migration from rural to urban settings, cultural and emotional attachment within communities

“provided invaluable material and moral support to the peasants as they attempted to enter the urban mestizo world” (Dew 1969, 73).

When these communities constructed their newly urban homes, they also integrated customs and traditions from their original villages, adapting to the acting of building a festive and ceremonial connotation (Klaufus & Mitzman 2012). Regarding building materials used in most Ecuadorian '*informal settlements*' from the '70s to the present, Bravo makes an interesting observation on the homogeneity of material despite the cultural mix. When the '*invaders*' first settled, their initial shelter was called '*media-aguita*' and was made of poor recycled materials. As soon as the family had more capital to build their home, careful material decisions had to be considered: bricks were too expensive, wood was rejected for its association with rural areas and poverty, the adobe making process was too long, so finally concrete blocks were chosen as the most modern and easier material; an aspect which favored, conversely, low quality and low habitability (Bravo 1980; Testori & d'Auria 2018).

In this combination of rural customs and urban practices, the role of the *minga*—as will be seen in the next section—was crucial because of a deafening absence of the institutions (ibid.; Kingman 2006; Barrera 2013; Testori 2016). In his book '*La ciudad y los otros*' (2006) Kingman reported a revealing position of Quito's municipality on this concern:

“It is well known that the urbanization that has been done in this capital by private individuals, far from promoting health and beauty, has only created problems for the municipality that, impoverished as it is, has to attend to the primary works of pipelines, provision of drinking water, extension of the service of light and other works, in sites sold without access of any scientific plan for its urbanization; and therefore it has to make huge expenses, for having left this business



Assemblies in Quito. Source: Pirejecvec et al., (2013). Blog Quito Informal, <http://informal-quito.tumblr.com/> and <http://quitoinforma.com>

that has enriched many and has dismembered the heritage of the Municipality" (Municipal Gazette 1941-1942, p.95 in Kingman 2006).

Until the '90s, the involvement of the Ecuadorian State and municipalities with mingas, and more generally with informal settlements, were indeed rare. The official obstacle in receiving any kind of institutional support was based on the fact that most neighborhoods weren't legal. As Peter Ward, director of the Latin American Housing Network writes, it is only since the 1990's that the various Andean states started recognizing and subsidizing the gradual improvement of some informal settlements (Ward, 2012). However, in most cases, the silent indifference of the institutions was a disguise for a strategy based on not 'wasting' resources in areas that were not economically fruitful in the short term (Barrera 2013). In short: no tourism, no main commerce, and no real-estate interest. Nonetheless, this silence was sometimes broken, when more hidden agreements were taken with political parties or a single politician in change of political support (Herrera 2015; Testori 2016).

Regarding Quito, the ex-mayor Augusto Barrera writes that 30-20 years ago, the logic of governability of the municipality totally excluded the peripheral parishes from economic resources and services, such as education and public health. Yet the principles of solidarity between neighbors allowed the collaboration among themselves to solve the many incumbent problems. For these inhabitants, the common good prevailed over private interests and still today, the concept of 'the public' is intimately related to the one of 'community' (Barrera 2013).

Mingas in informal settlements and grassroots organizations

Due to this sense of solidarity shared between the newcomers, when settling in the city, as previously said mostly in rugged and barren lands, families didn't indeed just care about building their own house, but as soon as they arrived on-site they regularly founded a set of grassroots organization to attempt solving together the new problems. Mingas, for example, couldn't be realized without the existence of a public consultation and election

of leading members. To better understand how self-built neighborhoods were organized in Ecuador from the 70's onwards, it is essential to describe the organ of the **assembly**. Even before attending a minga, the main form of citizens' participation was acknowledged in the neighborhood meetings. When a new settlement was founded, initially, through a process of hand-rise voting, the representatives of the area were chosen. The assemblies served as spaces of dialogue between the representatives and the inhabitants; in this manner the population was involved and linked to the social, economic and political issues of their own neighborhood (Barrera 2013). In some neighborhoods or communities that still practice mingas, assemblies are usually organized once a month and all inhabitants are invited to join. A president and a vice-president, who are occasionally accompanied by a treasurer and a secretary, always head neighborhood organizations.

From Faas' perspective, the leadership and power of the representative members are largely based on their ability to organize mingas and secure outside resources for the community. By capturing external incentives, either from institutions or external groups, these community leaders often perpetuate the patronage culture, which is still rooted in the Ecuadorian local politics (Borja 2011; Faas 2015). Neighborhood leaders are indeed the figures that decide when to convene an assembly, but also the ones that deal with institutions for obtaining funds and deal with issues concerning other neighborhoods. These aspects make them respected inside the community and this gained power may not always be used only in the sole interest of the community, but also for personal gain; this indeed reinforces the patronage culture or in Spanish also called '*caudalismo*' (Gilbert and Ward 1984; Amin 2014; Korovkin 2001). In the leaders' hands, amongst the various responsibilities, there is the recording of mingas' lists of participants and the capacity to levy fines (Colloredo 2007). This dynamic will be later explored through specific case studies.

In order to better understand the minga practice, there are a set of dynamics that are common either to rural or urban ones. An **exemplary day** of a public minga is announced either by the sound

of a bell – more recently in various sectors of a community over loudspeakers – and in rural areas often by the sound of a horn called *'el churo'* (Corr 2010). As Ramirez describes it, if more mingas are organized in various sectors of a neighborhood, it is impressive to see the inhabitants coming out of their homes all at the same time, each one with their own tools (Ramirez 1980).

If we look at mingas for the construction of new settlements, a practice that was much more common in the '70s and '80s than now—as will be later seen in the case of the neighborhood of Quito called Atucucho—the forest covering the land had to be cleared for the building site. Subsequently, the roads were created and the plots traced. Generally all Saturday or Sundays, *'las mujeres'*, frequently pregnant, were the ones who were climbing slopes and canyons to collect stones for the construction of collective facilities, motivated to give their children a better future than the one they could have had in the rural areas (MDMQ 2002; Testori 2016b).

The scale of intervention and the kind of actors involved in each minga vary for each case. There are indeed also mingas organized in more exclusive ways, for example restricted to family members or friends to help a relative, build parts or their entire house. A 'public' minga by contrast, generally involves all the inhabitants of one or more neighborhoods. In this second case, mingas are generally planned to satisfy collective well-being; for instance, by cleaning a water channel that crosses different urban areas. In order to build something collectively, people either gather the required materials, or they pool the required monetary resources.

Regardless of the kind of minga, the work generally assumes a festive atmosphere and spontaneous games and jokes are common to entertain the workers during the hard work; this celebrative character found its apex when the minga is over. Usually called *'mingado'*, it consists in a conclusive party between the various participants and it is celebrated with drinks (such as *chicha* or *colada morada*) traditional meals (such as a *fritada*),



1_Screenshot from the documentary "Atucucho (El Rincon del Lobo)". Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qgne0c0E2Dk&t=3s>

2_Minga in Comuna de Santa Clara, Quito. 30th October 2016. Source: by the author.

dancing and music²⁴ (Otero 2011). Meals and drinks are still generally prepared by those who do not participate in the minga, either because of age, or because of physical impairment and cannot undertake hard work (Guevara, 1957; Klaufus and Mitzman, 2012). This aspect, as Ramirez refers to in the '70s, had such an importance that when the collective work was called by a family, a long time prior to the realization of the minga, the family saved money for the purchase of food and drink for the *'mingueros'* (Ramirez 1980). Equally essential for the mingado is the consumption of alcohol. As Klaufus says, overall among Quechua communities:

"ritual inebriation is regarded as a type of ontological journey across time and space, in search of the origin of being... it confirms the relationship between the new building, the community, their ancestors, and Mother Earth" (Klaufus & Mitzman 2012, 134-135).

Barrera specifies that festivities either connected to mingas or to local celebrations, continue to be very relevant in most neighborhoods of Quito. The party is the space of the public par excellence; it is where the community moves in terms of something common, which can be a religious feeling or a shared identity. This is especially true in rural areas, where traditional festivals represent an essential component of community life and where it is still very common for people to organize their lives to fulfill the roles they have within the party (Barrera 2013).

Having seen some of the main characteristics of different kinds of mingas, the organizational structure at their base and the festive setting around them, we can state that in these contexts of self-management, participation is an essential element of local development. It consists in a relationship of power where subordinate sectors gain access to

decisions and resources in institutional processes through forms of direct democracy. By participating and acting in the space, citizens thus have the potential to empower themselves and affirm their identity and autonomy (Ortiz 1999).

Another way in which civil society is generally involved in the self-management of their territory, are the **neighborhood organizations**, which are very common in most Ecuadorian *barrios*. Indeed, as García points out, little by little, as long as a neighborhood develops, many organizations are usually created, such as pro-improvement committees, cultural groups, sports clubs, associations, women's centers, sports leagues, youth groups, cooperatives, Christian communities, and federations among others (García 1985). What this variety of networks and citizens' active involvements demonstrates, as Eduardo Kingman Garcés²⁵, writes urbanization must be understood in terms of grouping and socialization, and even sometimes with a particular kind of relationship with the sacred; not only just as a practice of settlement and development of an infrastructure (Kingman 2006). Without participation of the people, commitment and identity with the group, no project could have been carried out planned by the leaders of any community organization. Because, as Cabrera says, for the Andean culture participating in the day of a community work is not a common work, this goes further, because it involves sharing many things, mutual support, solidarity, living with all participants, respecting their customs and traditions (Cabrera 2014; Testori 2016c).

Metropolitan mingas

Throughout the Andes, before the large migration waves to the cities, mingas were practiced in rural areas, mainly in contexts of shared agricultural tasks such as planting, harvesting, and distributing

24 The *chicha* is an Andean fermented beverage made of grains, maize, or fruit. The *colada morada* instead is a traditional Ecuadorian beverage prepared with black corn flour and red fruits. The *fritada* is a typical dish, also from Ecuador, made of fried pork together with cooked corn, onions and tomatoes, and fried ripe plantains.

25 Eduardo Kingman Garcés is a professor of Anthropology at FLACSO. He is one of the most well-known Ecuadorian anthropologists. He is the author of the famous book *'La ciudad y los otros'* (2006) on the history of Quito from 1860 to 1940.

FUNDAMENTAL mingas



AUXILIARY mingas



1_Source: <https://www.alainet.org/>
 2_Minga in Atacucho 1992. Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qgne0c0E2Dk&t=3s>
 3_Minga in Atacucho 1996. Source: MDMQ 2002, 33.
 4_Source: <https://lahora.com.ec> 2016
 5_Minga en La Mariscal 2016. Source: <http://commoning.city>
 6_Minga in Atacucho 2015. Source: <https://www.facebook.com/AtacuchoQuito/>
 7_Minga en Turubamba de Monjar 2016. Source: <https://lahora.com.ec>

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the yield. Yet it is important to emphasize that mingas can indeed be articulated through myriad manifestations, and distinctions between the various forms of social reciprocity are "complex and subtle" (Klaufus and Mitzman 2012, 132; Ramirez 1980). During the economic boom, from 1970 to 1990, mingas haven't solely taken place in peripheral areas of the metropolis, nor in neighborhoods with a high percentage of indigenous people. Sill now mingas are also found in more consolidated urban areas. One of the main differences with mingas in rural areas, is that they are less connected to activities of building or undertaking radical processes of city space making. In zones like the city center, a minga could be dedicated to clean a common space, such as roads or a square, or could consist in the invigoration of an inaccessible park. As the Ecuadorian engineer Pedro Encalada reminds us, the current sense of the urban minga is no longer to open roads, but rather can be to conserve water resources, reduce the adverse effects of climate change, reduce malnutrition, create culture, promote sports, and enhance values and symbols that give meaning and solidarity to the people (Encalada y Vásconez 2013).

With these considerations, I noticed that two primary varieties of mingas emerge: what I call the '**fundamental mingas**' and the '**auxiliary mingas**'. The former deals with the objective of satisfying essential needs for the existence and survival of the community as a whole, such as shelter and access to basic urban services, or education. Auxiliary mingas do not generally impact the more fundamental human needs in the urban environment, rather they improve the quality of shared spaces, such as collective maintenance of neighborhood parks or playgrounds.

As previously seen in these many examples, the reader might think that collective work in cases of necessity is common to many other mutual aid and self-building practices carried out in the global South and which have led, for instance, to the creation of Brazilian favelas, or Mexican *colonial populares*. The minga, however, has a robust cultural background deeply rooted in thousands of years of mixed sociopolitical histories (Korovkin 1992; Macas 2004). Its longevity and strength are supported by a

combination of spirituality, solidarity and reciprocity that even in mixed spatial and political geographies, has maintained resilience through centuries. Ethical and moral principles of interdependence typical of the Andean Region are bound to a ceremonial commitment for community building. The minga can indeed be considered as an indigenous custom, and although it has undergone a process of transformation, its fundamental characteristics remain, giving continuity to an organizational expression born within its idiosyncrasy (Ramirez 1980; Macas 2004; Quince 2016).

Mingas and exclusivity

It is important to emphasize that as Guevara warns, mingas cannot be considered a panacea:

"We shouldn't think that, in the small area of its field of action, the minga is the exemplary parable" (Guevara, 1957, p. 8).

One of the undesirable aspects of the minga, both in rural and urban applications, is that attendance is compulsory and therefore not exercised out of autonomous choice (Erazo 2010). Attendance is indeed considered a requirement for accessing certain services or for obtaining infrastructural improvements (Barrera and Mancheno 2013; Kowii 2009). Those who do not participate most likely have to pay a fine to the organizers (Dew 1969; Klaufus and Mitzman 2012). Besides a monetary penalty, punishment often becomes moral too, since those who fail to participate regularly are gradually excluded and ostracized by the community and risk becoming the object of criticism, relegation, and even threat (Ramirez 1980; Faas 2015; Quince 2016). This aspect still occurs today despite the fact that people are forced into a working system that does not easily allow them to find time for minga participation during weekends (Faas 2015).

Moreover, a minga nowadays hardly involves young people, often because they do not share the same concerns as the older generation. This is particularly relevant for second and third generation migrants who were not directly exposed to reciprocity because of their movement abroad (Schmitt 2010; Barrera and Mancheno 2013). It is also not uncommon to find deep distrust between different ethnic groups composing a neighborhood, often resulting in



1_Mega-minga with the cooperation of EPMOP, in San Patricio de Puengasí. 14th July 2017. Source: <http://www.epmmop.gob.ec>

2_Former mayor of Quito Mauricio Rodas and his wife sweeping the ground during a mega-minga for cleaning Quito before the pope's Francisco arrival. 27th May 2015. Source: <http://www.prensa.quito.gob.ec>

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prejudice in less educated and poor areas (Schmitt 2010). This trend is worsened by the dominance of old neighborhood leaders, who remain 'in power' without any intention of divesting their responsibility, perpetuating a clientelistic mechanism (Barrera and Mancheno 2013). In light of these remarks, it can be concluded that the *minga* practice, apart from the altruistic sense of sharing, companionship, and attachment to the native culture it represents, is also characterized by unequal power relations and sometimes, instead of being a reciprocal exchange, may become an unpleasant constriction.

Current times: less participation and less *mingas*

Even though the *minga* has been generally shifting the focus of its objectives to less demanding issues, a broad examination of the actual participation of Quito's citizens in urban issues shows that its numbers have drastically decreased (Dew 1969; Barrera 2013; Kowii 2015). One of the reasons, as Schmitt writes, is that

"if a community is characterized by an extensive provision of public utilities, the necessity to be engaged in public affairs is lower... and social participation becomes an unattractive option" (Schmitt 2009, 1447).

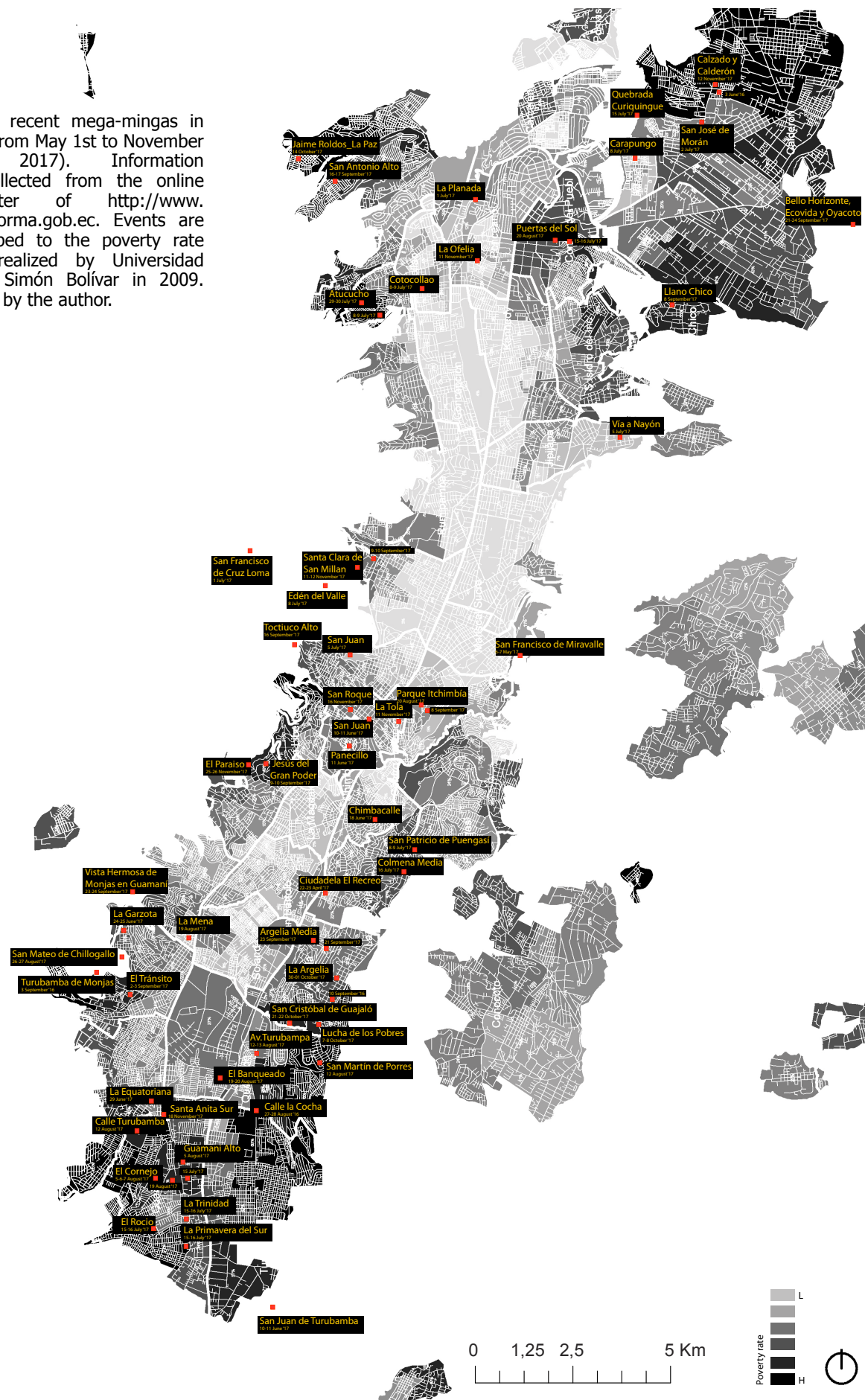
This, as will be seen in the next chapter, is not the only reason why civic participation has decreased, however, concerning *mingas* specifically, recent times have seen them losing their ceremonial power to summon people to convene. Uncharacteristic of older days, the work also seems to be embracing more functional characteristics. From Klaufus' perspective, this happens overall in cities, where collective arrangements are becoming more practical and ephemeral (Klaufus & Mitzman 2012). Another reason for low *minga* involvement of second generations of residents is they came to the neighborhoods as tenants when the settlements were already largely consolidated (Barrera 2013). For Ramirez, this tendency has much to do with a broader societal trend, which brings people to adopt a more individualistic and self-centered behavior (Ramirez 1980; Masmiquel 2015).

Institutionalized *mingas*

There was a time in which Quito's municipality began reflecting on the potentialities of institutionalized *mingas*. In the newspaper called *La Hora* I found an interesting article entitled 'Students change books by brooms' (La Hora 2015). The article offers information about the history of what it calls 'civilian *mingas*'. It says that in 1963 the newspaper *Ultimas Noticias* invited the population to participate in 'The week of cleaning' (*La semana de la limpieza*), in order for all of Quito's citizens to cooperate in cleaning and adorning the city and prepare it for the anniversary of its foundation. The armed forces, police, firemen, the Association of Neighborhoods of the South (*Asociación de Barrios del Sur*), neighborhood committees, schools, markets and factories all took part in that *minga*. The article then continues by reporting that what was later *Minga de la Quiteñidad*—a *minga* organized by different municipal secretaries with the purpose to involve the greatest amount of citizens possible to work one day (generally on Sundays) on collective issues—became official in 1975. The article then says that in January 2005, 17,000 students participated in a *Minga de la Quiteñidad* and in the case of the 2014 for example, it was organized by the Secretary for Environment in order to collect solid recyclable materials in some neighborhoods' houses.

It was a former mayor of Quito, Paco Moncayo that between the years 2000 and 2009 established what was called '**50-50 *mingas***' (*mingas cincuenta-cincuenta*). Solely practiced in peripheral and developing neighborhoods, these co-managed *mingas* were physically implemented by the residents and economically supported by the municipality. The metropolitan companies that have more recently supported the *mingas* are the EPMOP (Company of Mobility and Public Works) and the EMASEO (Municipal Cleaning Company) or the EPMAPS (Metropolitan Drinking Water Company). They supply citizens with machinery, equipment and technical knowledge, for removing debris, cleaning public sinks or repairing roads. (Agencia Publica de Noticias de Quito 2014; Diario El Quiteño 2016). In most of these cases, Quito's municipality also offers free health checks—monitoring weight, height, waist circumference, and glucose levels—as well as a nutritional education plan, indicating

Map of recent mega-mingas in Quito (from May 1st to November 30th, 2017). Information was collected from the online newsletter of <http://www.QUITOINFORMA.GOB.EC>. Events are overlapped to the poverty rate index realized by Universidad Andina Simón Bolívar in 2009. Source: by the author.



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portions of food and physical activity according to the findings (QuitoPress 2016). Moreover, another case that I found is the *Minga Quito Unete*. It was held in 2012 in 32 sectors of the eight metropolitan 'zonal administrations' in Quito; the task concerned reviewing street and public spaces lighting, painting the façades of several facilities, trees maintenance, vegetation planting, cleaning of the communal houses, amongst other activities (El Telegrafo 2012).

As we saw, Quito's municipality specifically, has implemented many kinds of 'institutionalized mingas' and the objective has been mainly suitable for maintenance and city's cleaning. More recently instead we can find another type of minga of this kind named '**mega-minga**'. It was introduced in Quito in July 2016 and promoted by the current mayor Mauricio Rodas. Several mega-mingas have been organized in Quito during the last years. Since they were introduced in 2016 until the end of 2018, the newspaper *Quito Informa* communicates that 111 mega-mingas were organized, in their first year of implementation July 2017-2018, 112,000 inhabitants benefited from them and the annual investment was US\$800.000 (Quitoinforma 2017). The mega-minga follows the same structure of the '50-50 mingas', where the municipality finances half of the work, while the inhabitants provide the other resources. According to the municipality, the mega-minga improves neighborhood common spaces by means of public works such as road asphaltting or garbage collection. The Secretary of Territorial Coordination and Citizen Participation (*Secretaría de Coordinación Territorial y Participación Ciudadana*) started organizing mega-mingas all along the metropolitan area, involving municipal companies that provide public services such as potable water and waste treatment. In the course of these actions, companies offer the necessary machinery for implementing the public works in question (cement mixers, garbage trucks, or small cranes) at no cost, while inhabitants contribute with their labor force.

Each neighborhood's Zonal Administration²⁶ defines the scope of the works. When the administration gathers, all neighborhood leaders are invited to take part in the ensuing discussions, and depending on their necessities—but mostly according to the availability of municipal companies—they may be entitled to benefit from a mega-minga²⁷.

The mega minga may offer many opportunities for citizens and institutions to concretely cooperate in building the city (Fraser et al., 2006). The mega-minga is substantially an act of responsibility undertaken by the municipality to provide services in marginal/neglected areas. Subsequently, it can be argued that municipal mingas rest on a participatory method that taps into inhabitants' know-how—in this case by harnessing the minga as a customary practice. According to the municipality, the objective of mega-mingas is to encourage neighborhood organization for positive purposes that can benefit the community (*Agencia Pública de Noticias de Quito* 2017). On this note, the ex-mayor of Quito, Augusto Barrera, specified that if all neighborhood rehabilitations were to be entirely implemented by municipal companies, this would take five times longer than through the mega-minga, ultimately making this shared-responsibility method a more efficient strategy (A. Barrera, personal communication, November 15th, 2017).

From the perspective of urban spatial production, however the mega-minga also appears questionable in its enactment. According to Barrera and Mancheno, these Ecuadorian co-management principles perpetuate an inequitable way of providing basic

26 In Ecuador, these units are called *Administraciones Zonales*. To date there are 8 in Quito: La Delicia, Calderón, Norte Eugenio Espejo, Especial Turística La Mariscal, Centro Manuela Sáenz, Eloy Alfaro, Quitumbe, Tumbaco, Los Chillos. See Chapter 3.1 for more details.

27 This process of funds distribution is well explained by Maria Luisa Changoluisa in the annex of the thesis.

services in the city. They also identify people who feel uncomfortable with this disparate way of acting in Quito, not only because citizens often do not have time to dedicate to collective work, but also because other urban neighborhoods services don't arise from self-execution, but are provided and carried out entirely by the municipality (Barrera and Manchedo, 2013). Such critique of a government-supported self-help case like the mega-minga is not new. In the 1970's and 1980's, authors like Ward and Burgess harshly criticized Peruvian self-help projects rooted in the concept of 'sweat equity'. These projects were seen as acts of co-optation of the low-income groups (Peek 2015; Ward 2012; Burgess 1982).

hold potential for the transformation of current processes towards a more socially just urban design practice. To do so, as Terry Irwin—head of the School of Design of the Carnegie Mellon University—points out:

“design must be informed by a deep understanding of local ecosystems and culture” (Irwin et al. 2015, 11).

In conclusion, this chapter until now has touched many different crucial issues. It has shown that many authors have mentioned and discussed the *minga*, though many more have overlooked it. I attempted to fill this gap by creating a comprehensive reading of the many different kinds of *mingas* and their evolutions through time. In the next step—Chapter three—after describing the city of Quito, I analyze three specific neighborhoods that have been entirely shaped by *mingas*; these analyses will allow also the discovery—through drawings and archival pictures—of the physical impact of *mingas* in collective spaces. This effort was to combine the rare, sectorial and fragmented body of written knowledge, together with a personal experience of what this practice is. Having described similar practices in other world contexts, stresses how it is not just about Ecuador, but that forms of communal organization and self-management are common— if different—to many cultures. One of my wishes has been to investigate, photograph, and draw these practices, not just to create an archive, but to examine the potentials of cultural practices for inclusive city-development across the world.

Relatedly, Barrera and Mancheno add that some neighborhood organizations or community groups in Quito hold *mingas* freely. For these authors, *mingas* should continue to be practiced autonomously and not as a forced requirement to obtain public services from the municipality (Barrera and Mancheno 2013). On this, Raúl Zibechi (2015) reports the statement of a Mexican Zapatista: “collective work is the motor of autonomy” and adds that it means dignity and self-esteem.

When reading about the mega-minga in the Ecuadorian newspapers on the other hand, inhabitants recurrently report about the “grain of sand” provided “to take care of our city”, while other celebratory accounts express how “the community is very grateful to the Municipality for these actions” (Epmop 2014; Quitoinforma 2017). However, such views underline how the institutionalization of cultural practices does not necessarily entail a shift in the participants' social status. They also illustrate how, even under the slogans of participation and citizen involvement, marginality can be sustained and (re)produced. The case of Quito's mega-mingas therefore, holds potential for understanding the position of autonomous processes of design and the dangers of their co-optation.

Do mega-mingas embody the possibility to help support and scale up processes of autonomous design? As illustrated thus far and will be further explored in Chapter four, mega-mingas are laden with contradictions. However, I argue that mega-mingas



Self-interpretation of a *minga* to clean a park. Source: by the author, 2018.

Section 2.2.1

Investigation methods

How the minga and the case studies have been studied

As underlined in the introduction, two of the main objectives of this chapter include describe the minga practice (section 2.1) while the second objective illustrates potential methods to investigate the mingas' effects on the transformation of space (section 2.2).

How the minga and the case studies have been studied

As previously noted, there is a dearth of study surrounding the minga-practice and its effects on the transformation of space, which prompted this thesis investigation. Apart from fragmented contributions found in many kinds of books dedicated mostly to rural areas and some pictures in recent online newspapers, a comprehensive reading of the practice evolution, its criticisms and potentials were missing. I have employed many methodologies of investigation to reconstruct the transformation of some spaces shaped by mingas. The three case studies that will be presented in Chapter three (Atucucho, Comitè del Pueblo and Santa Clara de San Millan) have been kindly supported by a group of people identified below.

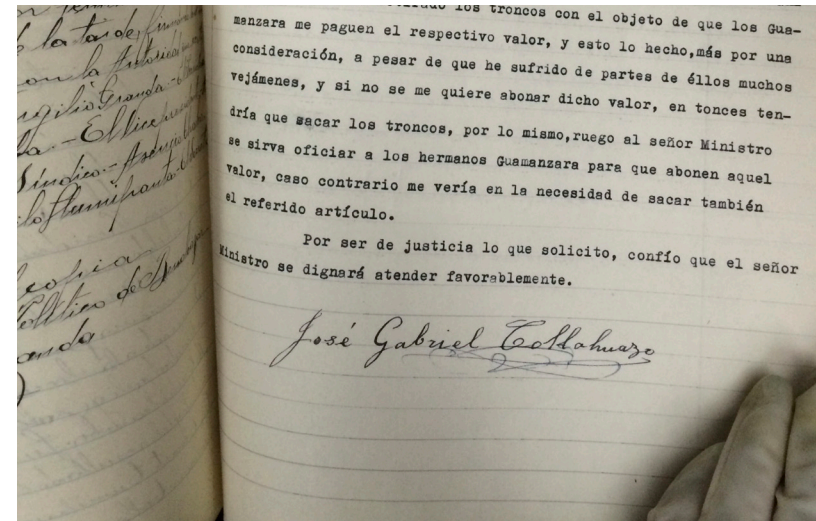
Fieldwork

During my doctoral thesis research, I conducted three fieldwork visits in Quito, for a total amount of 6 months. The on-site expeditions helped me most in understanding the historic precedents that affected these case studies. I documented my fieldwork through photographs, audio recordings and sketches. Pictures were taken mostly of public spaces, but also some were set inside neighbors' houses. The most precious moments were when

the inhabitants told me their stories about how their neighborhood was created, and even more revealing was when they showed me their private photo-albums. Having the possibility to be welcomed in many often-dangerous contexts was largely in thanks to the help of the neighborhood's leaders. In every case, it was always a *'bola de nieve'* situation. The *'bola de nieve'* is a Spanish expression: a 'snowball effect' where project momentum grows with each new influence. In the case of my fieldwork, it was through 'word of mouth', allowing me to meet more and more people open to being interviewed.

Taylor Herrera, former leader of the Atucucho neighborhood, was for example, vital in his testimony about the first land developments and creations of local citizens' association. For Santa Clara research, thanks to the commune's former president Victor Cochambay, I was hosted at his communal assembly. Francisco Zapata and Edwin Muñoz were spectacular in welcoming me to work in the offices of the former Ecuadorian Workers' Syndicate (CEDOCUT) located in the city center of Quito. They offered me many testimonies of the 1970's fights for housing; we also worked together in mapping collective associations in Quito. Thanks to Francisco and Edwin, I met Carlos Arias, a former neighborhood leader of Comitè del Pueblo. Most of the rare pictures of Comitè's mingas shown in the thesis are thanks to his private archive. I also once (8th of November 2016) attended a minga in the Commune of Santa Clara de San Millán, and together with Ramiro, one of its current neighbors, we went up to the Pichincha mountain to help the *comuneros* maintain a part of the eucalyptus forest.

Source: by the author, 2018.



1_Assembly report of Santa Clara. From MAGAP archive. Source: by the author
 2_Detail of aerial view of Atucucho, Quito, Ecuador. 1997. Source: Proyecto EMAPP.Q. Personal archive of prof. Maria Belen Granja Bastidas.
 3_Facebook page of Comuna de Santa Clara de San Millán. Source: <https://www.facebook.com/Comuna-de-Santa-Clara-de-San-Millán>

At the end of the *minga* we were welcomed at the *casa communal* to enjoy a *colada morada*.

Library archival research

Most of the books I consulted during the research were found in Quito's libraries, like the FLACSO, the Universidad Central del Ecuador, and the Library of the Universidad Andina de Quito. I also found important books in the Archivo Nacional de la Ciudad de Quito. Through a long process of permissions, I accessed the Ecuadorian Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock archive, where all documentation of Quito's communal assemblies are stored.

Cartographies in .dwg and shape files

Professor Henri Godard from the Universidad Andina, professor Monica Mabel Dazzini of the Universidad Católica de Ecuador and professor Yadira Hernandez from Universidad San Francisco de Quito, were of great help in sharing with me most of the dwg and shape files I used to realize Quito's maps.

Academic interviews

Between fieldwork, I interviewed many Ecuadorian professors who explained to me from very different perspectives of the Ecuadorian situation. The topics of discussion varied from the political climate, to the implementation of participatory processes and the indigenous protests, to the urban regulatory framework. Some of these conversations included prof. Mario Unda, prof. Wilson Herdoiza, Prof. Antonella Fustillos, prof. Patricia Palacio, prof. Monica Mabel Dazzini, prof. Maria Belen Granja Bastidas, prof. Jaime Erazo Espinosa, prof. Henri Godard, prof. Henri Allan. Conversations with foreign researchers interested and greatly involved in Ecuadorian research related to civil rights and social movements were also enlightening, including the Greek professor Nicholas Anastasopoulos, the American anthropologist Jeremy Rayner and the Spanish architect José Luis Oliver Ramirez.

Interviews with politicians

In order to better understand the Buen Vivir framework and its implementations, I had inspiring meetings with Ecuadorian politicians such as Jacobo Herdoiza, Secretary of Territory Habitat and Housing of Quito; Augusto Barrera, former mayor of Quito (period 2009-2014); Roberto Pozo, from

the Secretary of Environment and Maria Luisa Changoluiza, head of the Secretary of Citizens Participation in Quito.

Local conference attendance

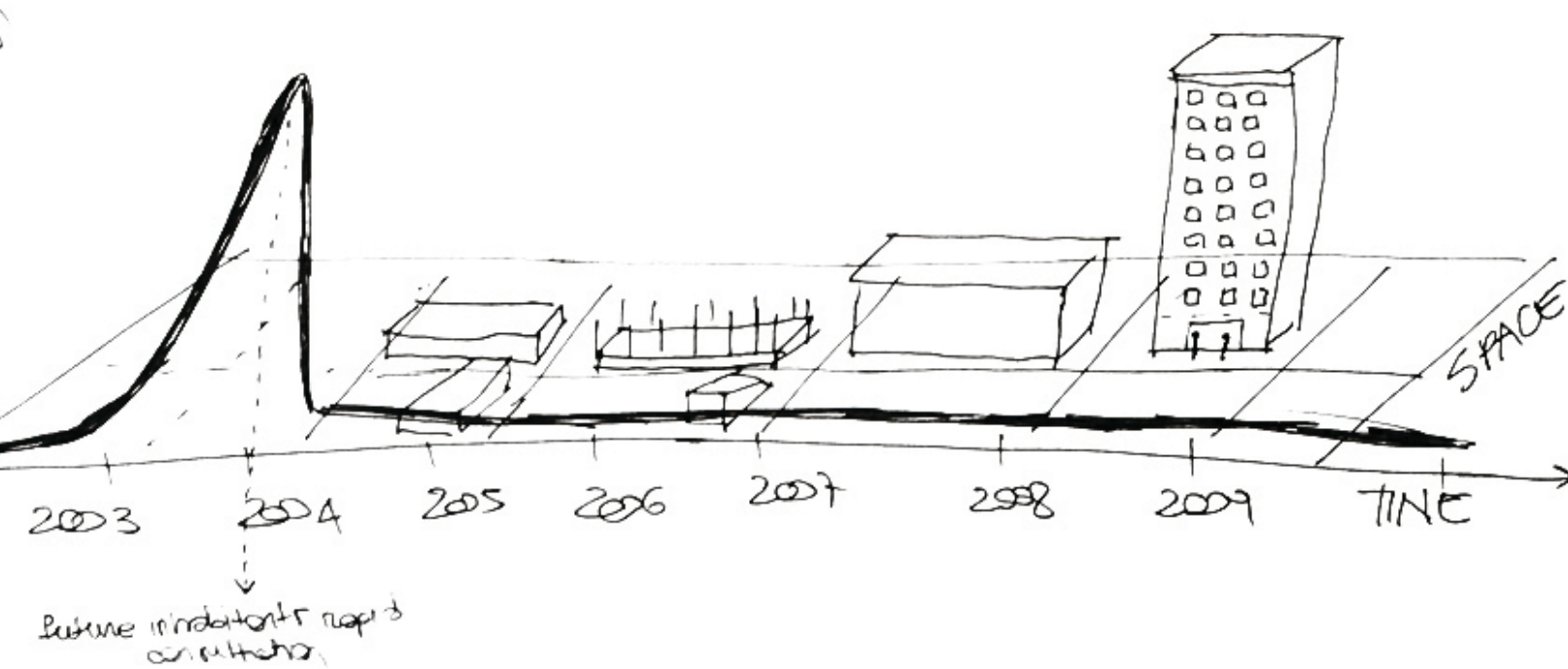
When I was in Quito, I attended multiple conferences, including the 2015 annual conference organized by the *Centro Nacional de Estrategia para el Derecho al Territorio* (CENEDET), directed by David Harvey and Miguel Robles Duran; and many others organized by the FLACSO University in Quito. In both cases the topics of interest were mostly related to the right to the city in its different interpretations.

Aerial photos

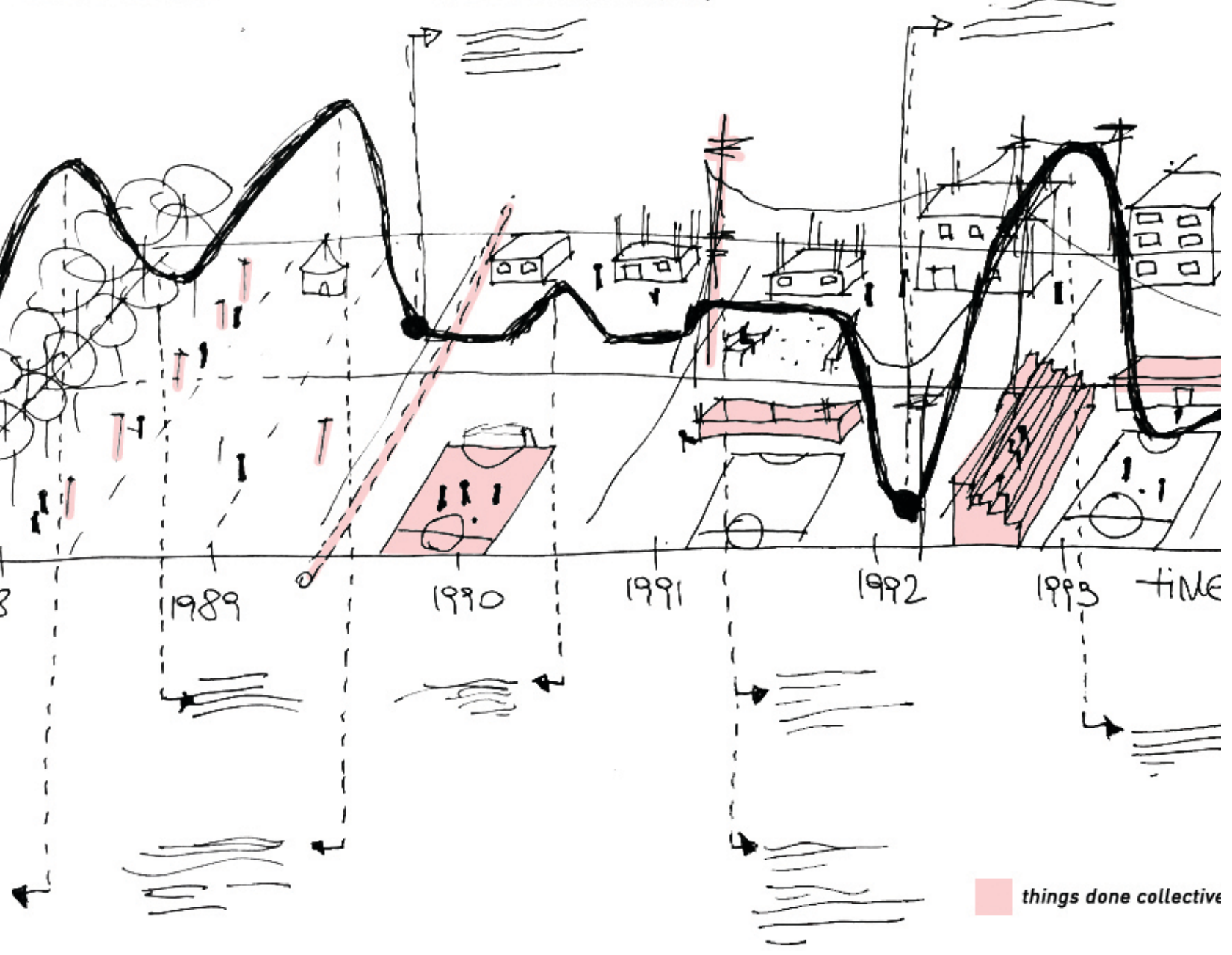
Two vital sources helped me in collecting Quito's historical aerial view. One source was the *Secretaria de Territorio de Quito*, who allowed me access to archival photographs by military plane expeditions from the '70s to the '80s. Maria Belen Granja Bastidas, professor of architecture of the Universidad Central del Ecuador in Quito also granted me access to her private archive. In 2017, Bastidas headed a course in architecture on the neighborhood of Atucucho. Together with her students, she collected an ample amount of newspaper articles on Quito's informal settlements and aerial views from 1983 to 1997 that she kindly shared with me.

Online research

While abroad from Ecuador, my main sources of information mostly came from online research, including hundreds of academic papers and books, as well as websites of Ecuadorian national and local newspapers, such as *El Universo*, *El Comercio*, *Quitoinforma*, and *El Ecuatoriano*. Very useful for the research were also Facebook pages, like the one of the Comuna de Santa Clara de San Millán, where pictures and calls for *mingas* are posted (<https://www.facebook.com/Comuna-de-Santa-Clara-de-San-Millán>).



INFORMAL SETTLEMENT with MINGAS



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Section 2.2.2

The Crono-topo line

A new representation method

The invention of the crono-topo line

As seen so far, this research has aggregated a broad array of materials to comprehend the complex minga practice; this systematization to make their work more coherent hasn't been a transparent process. When built spaces are the manifest product of collective events, such as the mingas, the material outcomes, do not always reflect the richness and potentiality of such shared processes. By reading collaboratively-made spaces with current urban planning/architectural tools, such as a map for example, much of the socially innovative aspects may be overlooked. A 2D map indeed might not include the actors involved in the building of a site, the space transformation along time, the intensity in which collective work has produced collective spaces, etc. and if it does, all these features are not represented in the same drawing. For example the neighborhoods that I'm analyzing in the thesis have undergone many mingas, and their collective spaces have changed drastically from one year to the other.

My investigation identifies the demand for new methods of representation that properly acknowledge the complex processes at play within shared space formation, in order to highlight its innovative features beyond the pure material outcomes of the built environment. The questions at this point have been: in which way could it be possible to exemplify the collective shaping of space through time? How to expand the perceptive limits of spatial representation commonly used in the urban disciplines? Is there a way to visualize

past, present, and future characteristics at the same time?

Initially my research aimed to represent spaces that were constructed collectively along time; but while interviewing inhabitants and politicians, the answer to what was built by mingas, was always: "Everything was built through mingas! And I doubt that the neighborhoods associations have ever recorded what and when things were built!". Indeed, even when personally asking the neighborhood leader Victor Conchambay, former president of the Comuna of Santa Clare de San Millán, if there was an archive, he said that only just recently the efforts of mingas started to be registered (interview 14th of August 2015). Indeed, a collection recording the efforts of these communities is non-existent even within local and state archives.

In this complex task of combining multiple information, the ambition is to not just represent the morphological evolution of space, but also the simultaneous combination of explicit and indirect influences of its current formation. In other words, my aspiration was to merge time, actors, events, policies, and space. A confirmation of this difficult task came then while reading Henri Lefebvre's 'The Production of Space' where he discusses 'spatial histories' stating:

"To reveal the production of space we should have to look at history itself in a new light. We should have to study not only the history of space, but also the history of representations along with that of their relationships –with

First ideas for a crono-topo line. Source: by the author, 2017.

Pacha: un concepto andino de espacio y tiempo

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de möbius (una figura sin derecho ni revés), donde los lados menores se unen de forma intercambiada después de una torsión de media vuelta.

PACHA Y LOS ESPACIOS TIEMPOS ANDINOS

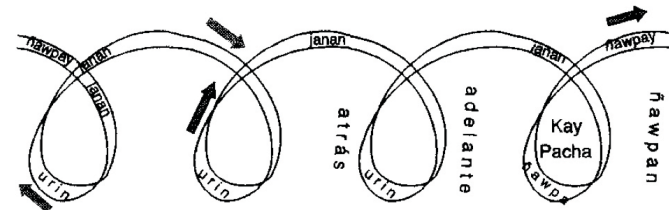


FIGURA 3.

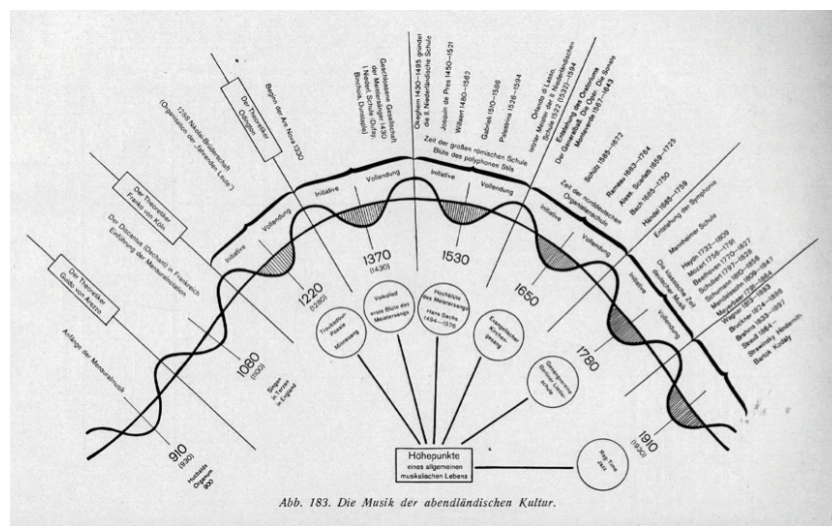
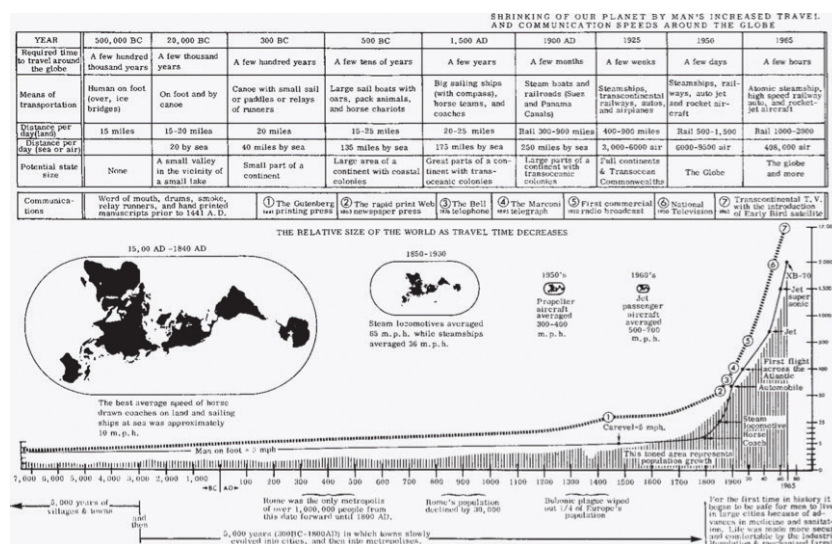


Abb. 183. Die Musik der abendländischen Kultur.



1. *Pacha*, space and time Andean interpretation. Source: Manga 1994.
2. Paul Ligeti's 1931 'Waveform chart of the history of art'. Source: Rosenberg and Grafton 2010.
3. Buckminster Fuller's 1963 'Shrinking of our Planet by Man's Increased Travel and Communication Speeds Around the Globe'. Source: Rosenberg and Grafton 2010.

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each other, with practice, and with ideology. History would have to take in not only the genesis of these spaces but also, and especially, their interconnections, distortions, displacements, mutual interconnections, and their links with the spatial practice of the particular society..." (Lefebvre 1991, 42).

In concert with Lefebvre, before trying to introduce new relationships or processes, I felt the need to dig into to some histories of representation. In this search, a quite inspiring book has been 'Cartographies of Time' (2010) by Daniel Rosenberg and Anthony Grafton. This contribution compiles many visualizations like: Sebastian Adams' 1871 'Synchronological Chart or Map of History' or Paul Ligeti's 1931 'Waveform chart of the history of art and Buckminster Fuller's 1963 'Shrinking of our Planet by Man's Increased Travel and Communication Speeds Around the Globe'. Moreover, Charles Joseph Minard's 1812-1813 map of Napoleon's March in Russia, not only succeeds in illustrating time and space, but also visualizes the size of the army, temperature and the distance (White 2010; Corner 1999). These renderings serve as encouragements to continue investigating the infinite potentials of representing multiple streams of information in one drawing.

My experiment in creating a new sort of timeline brought the creation of what I call a '**Crono-topo line**'. This visualization brings together the results of observing, describing and imagining relationships between local environment and local inhabitants; a way of combining the richness of the space's inherent contents. The crono-topo line evolves a common timeline, by including both CRONO and TOPO = SPACE and TIME. An inevitable difficulty was the risk of superimposing multiple sets of data, and possibly drowning some of the more subtle details, for this reason, the clarity of the Cartesian plane was chosen. Time is represented on the X-axis, while space takes shape through an axonometric drawing along the Z-axis. The Y-axis expresses what here is called 'participation intensity'.

The x-axis, representing time, is not divided in equal intervals between one year and the other. To help legibility if many events happened in the same

period, that interval is generally more stretched. This sort of elasticity allows more ground on paper to represent further information on collective details. Below the X-axis are ordered by **time, the neighborhood events** that may have influenced the formation of collective space, such as the date of the first invasion, when the first school was built, when the first electricity was installed, when the neighborhood's leader received external funding for the realization of a kindergarten, etc. Above the X-axis are listed instead a selection of events at the national scale that may also have affected the collective space formation also at the local scale, for example, the date of a specific policy affecting land legalization, an earthquake, an agricultural reform, etc.

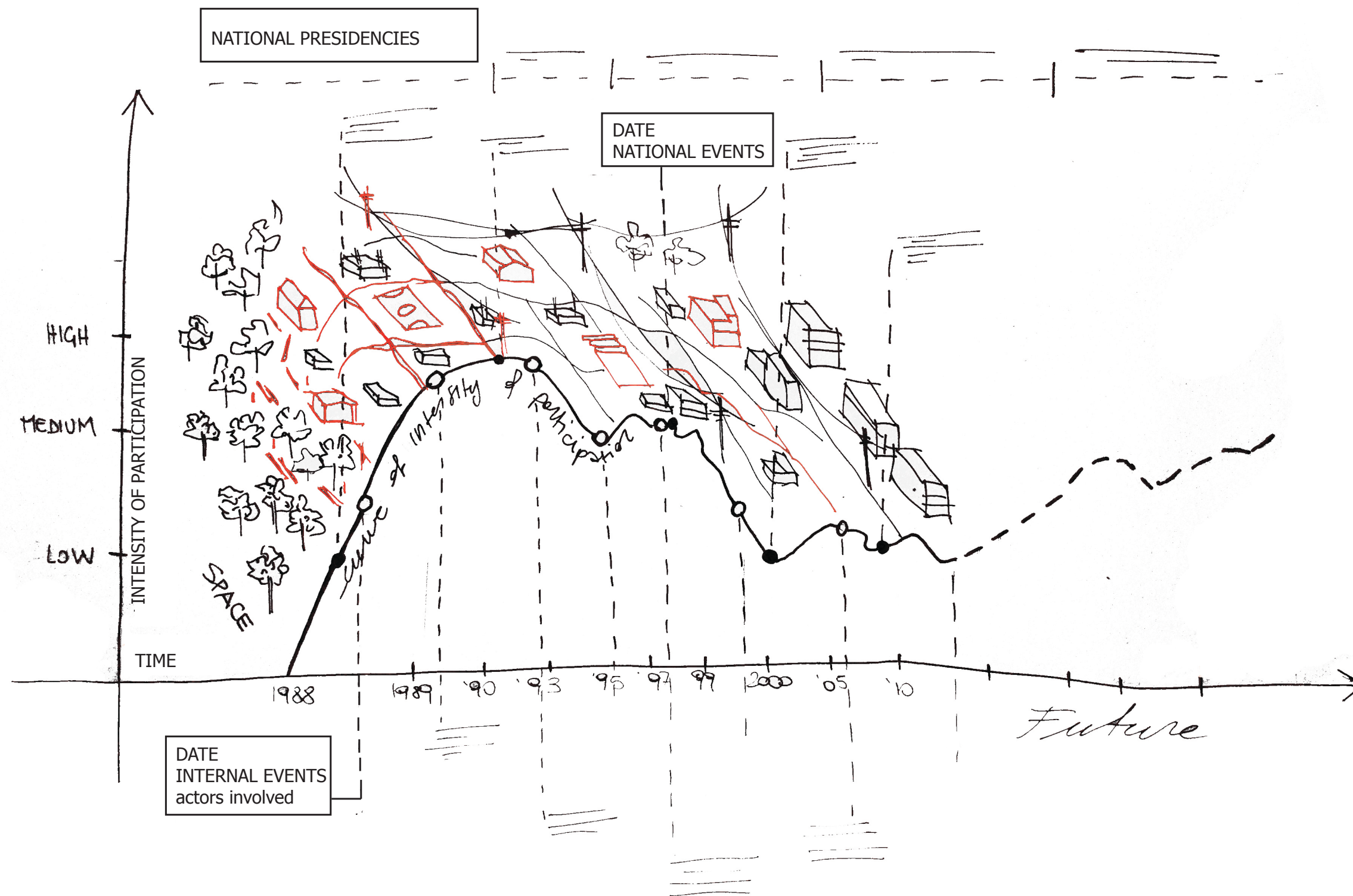
The physical **space** of the analyzed site then, is represented through an axonometric drawing. In the three case studies that I will present in the next chapter I made a crono-topo line for each neighborhood. The represented space does not represent the site in its entirety over time, but the axonometry consists of a summarization of that specific site's characteristic evolution. This simplification was chosen because most material that I gathered to understand the site in the past are just blurry aerial view and detailed pictures. The colored details of the drawing identify products of collective efforts, in this case, the product of mingas.

Finally, on the Y-axis I visualize what I call the '**intensity of participation**'. Divided into low, medium and high, this axis, together with the events on top and bottom of the time-line, allows the formation of a sine curve with low and high peaks that correspond to how much space has been collectively developed by its inhabitants across time. Developing the crono-topo line method and graphical style is still an ongoing process, yet I think this approach contributes to what Richard White, past director of Stanford University Spatial History Project said:

"Visualization and spatial history... is a means of doing research; it generates questions that might otherwise go unasked, it reveals historical relations that might otherwise go unnoticed, and it undermines, or substantiates, stories upon which we build

our own versions of the past" (White 2010, 36).

The crono-topo line hence reveals details that, if only described by words, or separated in many drawings, wouldn't probably be so rich, clear and context-based. Finally, in the case of this research, the crono-topo line, apart from combining past events, also serves as a palimpsest to reason on possible strategies for the future. Chapter Four illustrates and investigates these design proposals for Quito's future.



Main elements of a crono-topo line. Source: by the author, 2019.

Chapter 3

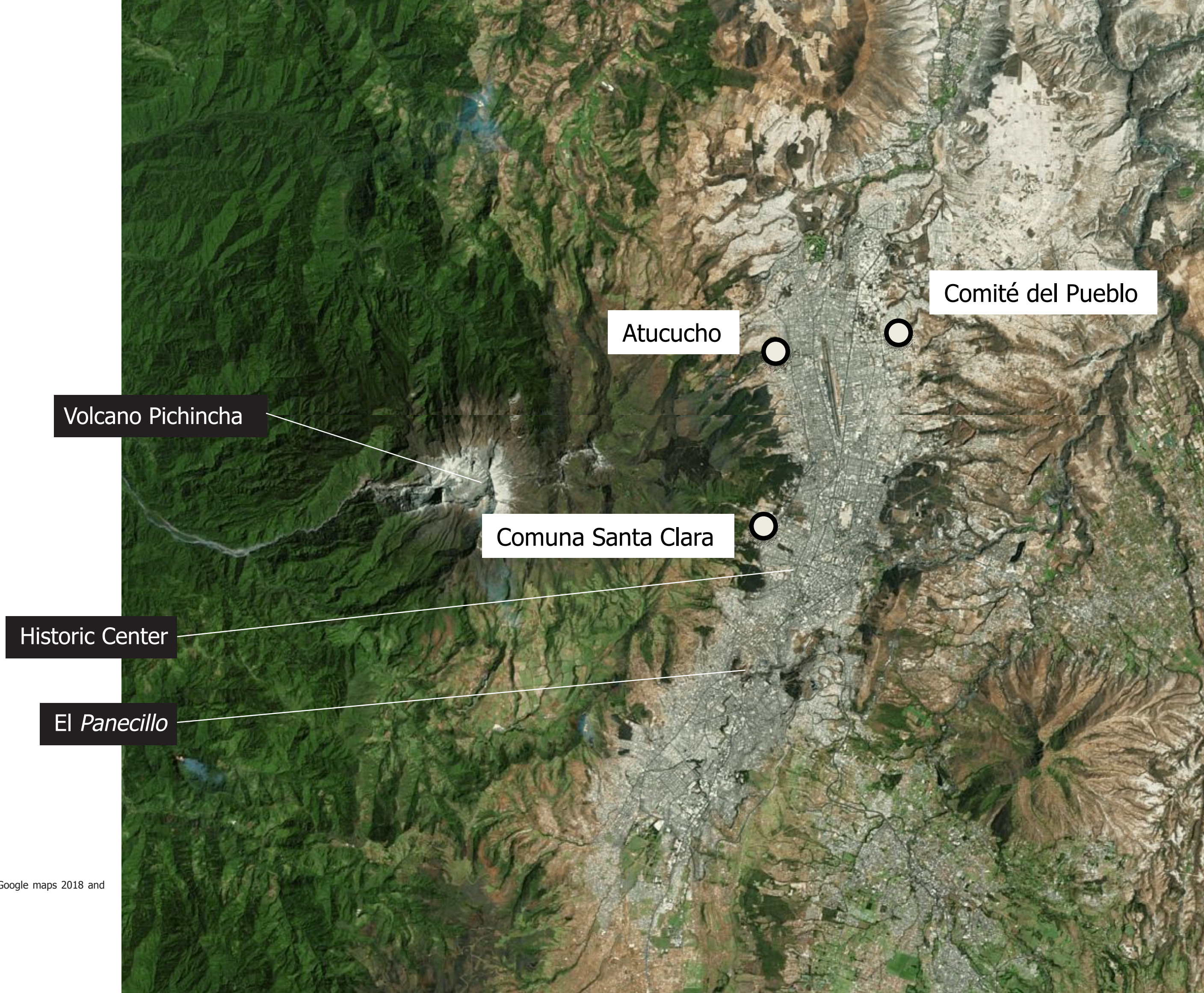
Quito and the three case studies

Initially, one of the first objectives I wanted to reach with my investigation was to map Quito's mingas. I desired to identify, as precisely as possible, the spaces along the entire metropolitan area that have been shaped by this self-construction practice over time. However, the more I investigated, the more I found the challenge unreachable. As I wrote in the previous chapter, there is a lack of historic material that illustrates when and where mingas were held. Finally, by synthesizing different sources, I created a map that approximates the location of the neighborhoods that most likely have been self-constructed through mingas— shown in section 3.1.

By looking at the identified spaces, I identified three kinds: neighborhoods built on invaded lands, communes (comunias) and settlements promoted by a political party. Each of these three categories instigated a different case study. The neighborhood of Atucucho, located in the northwest of the capital, is a product of a land invasion at the end of the '80s (section 3.2). The Comuna de Santa Clara de San Millán is a historical communal land neighboring the city center (section 3.3) and finally, Comité del Pueblo, located on the northeast of the metropolis, is a neighborhood built in 1971, a cooperative outcome between the Marxist Leninist party of Ecuador, low income workers and the Faculty of Architecture of the Universidad Central del Ecuador (section 3.4).

Looking at these three cases serves also to enrich discourse on participation and autonomy—introduced in the first chapter. Atucucho, Santa Clara de San Millán and Comité del Pueblo are indeed examples where, deliberately or not, participation and autonomy were pushed to the extreme. Each of the three cases will be analyzed following a consistent structure. I begin with the settlement origins; identify the complex net of actors that allowed its spatial/social development, detail historical events that influence the formation of collective space, and offer a highlight of the contemporary situation.

Generations old mingas and their effects on common spaces are illustrated through the crono-topo line. Analyzing these examples chronologically is crucial to identify both hidden and evident future potentials of urban self-management projects. As will be illustrated, the minga practice and neighborhood management are not always praised, but I believe that by identifying their contradictions, mistakes and good practices will help envision a more inclusive and culturally-integrated urban future for Quito.



Volcano Pichincha

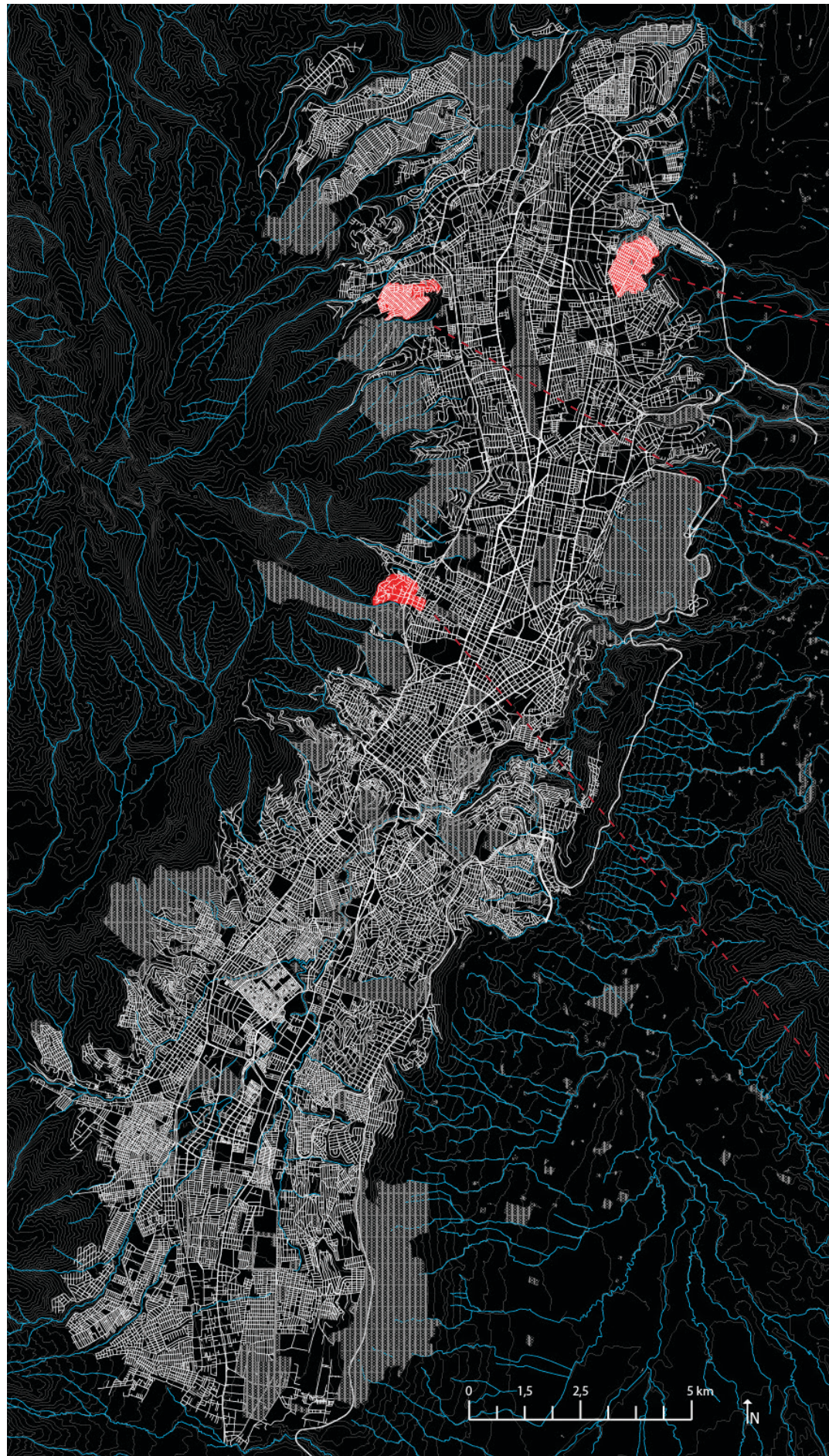
Atucucho

Comité del Pueblo

Historic Center

Comuna Santa Clara

El Panecillo



Comité del Pueblo



Atucucho

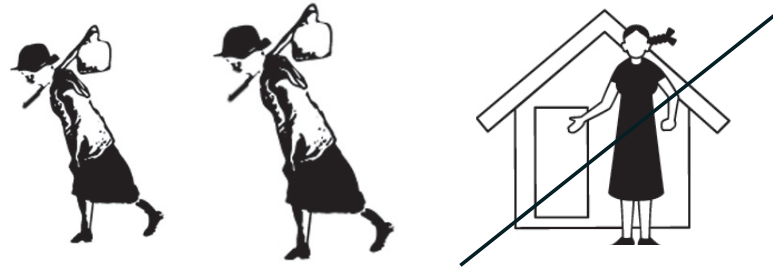


Comuna de Santa Clara de San Millán



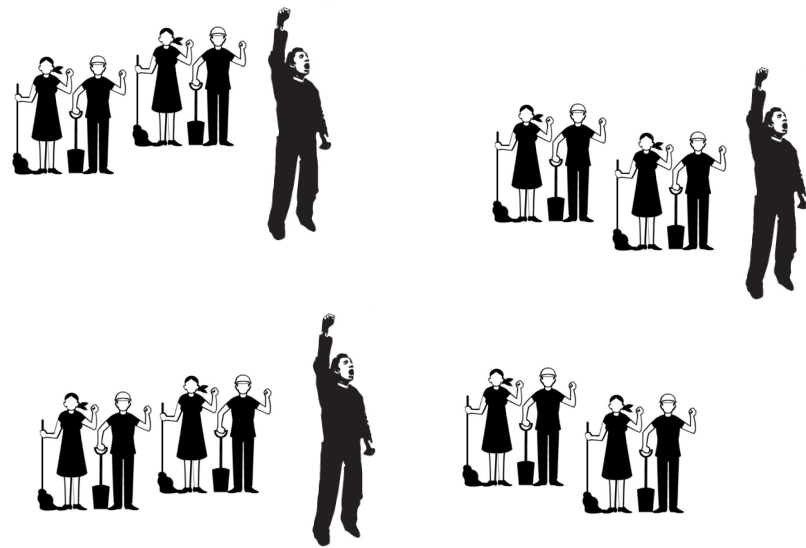
ATUCUCHO

Poor farmers/illegal workers

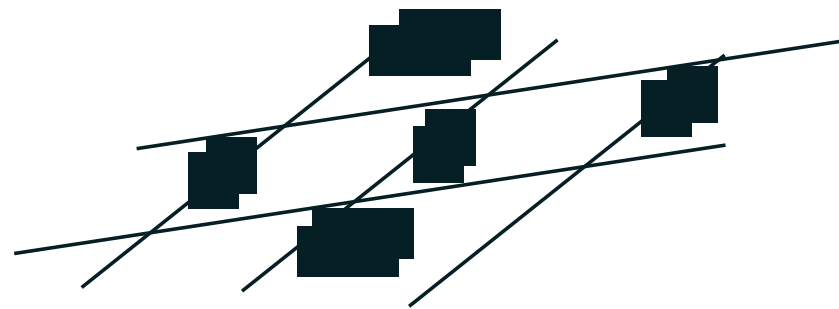


Didn't have access to social housing

Only chance they had : invade land



Every family builds their own house

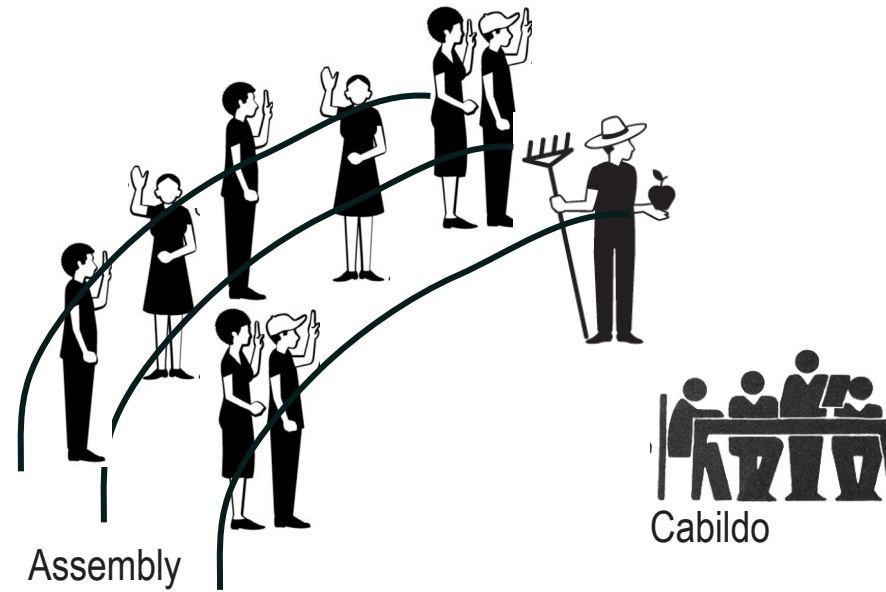


COMUNADE SANTA CLARA

Ancestral community that live together collectively



Land and properties managed through Assemblies

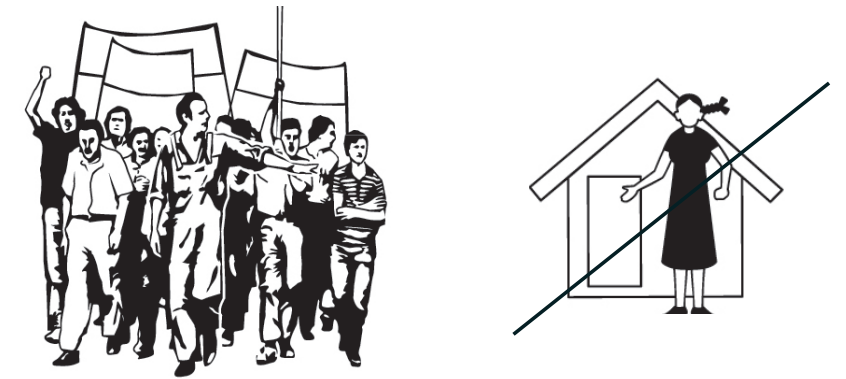


Through MINGAS they prodbuild streets, houses, services all collectively

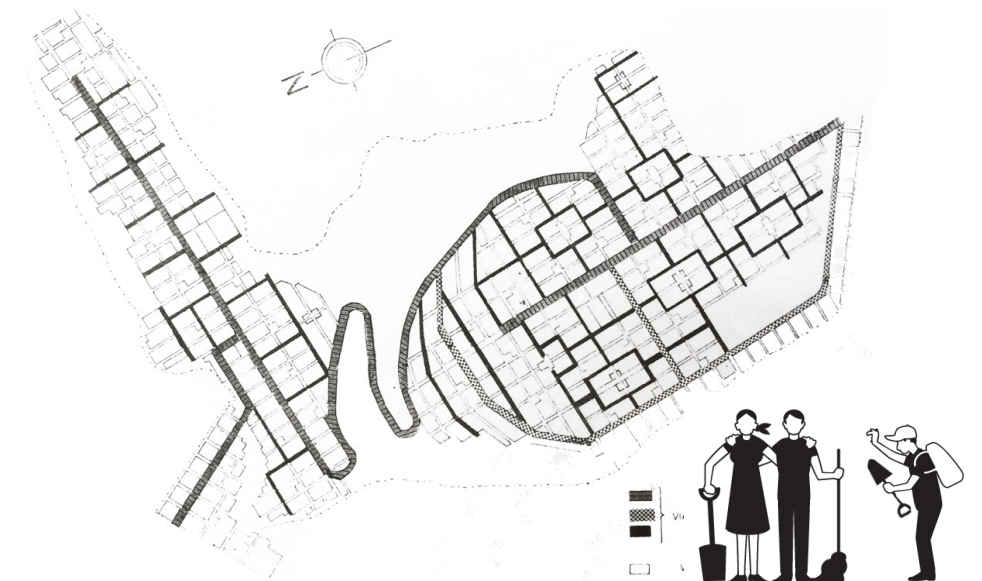
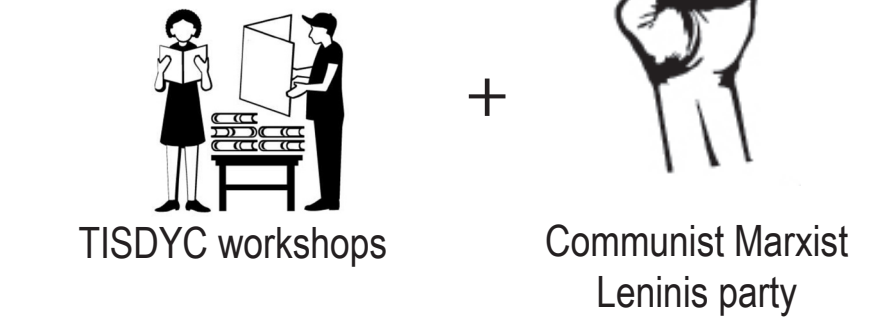


COMITE' DEL PUEBLO

Poor workers striking for an affordable house



professors and students from the Universidad Central of Arch



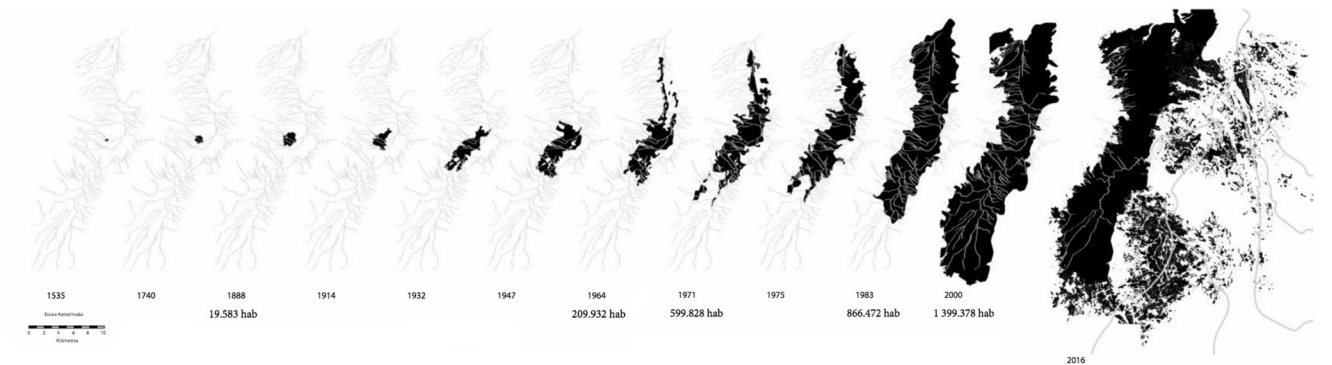
Built together an entire 'barrio' of 20.000 people



Quitopia. Collective city-making, participation and autonomy for Quito's urban future.

Section 3.1

Quito



The Ecuadorian capital—Quito—until now has been just mentioned through the text; therefore, before introducing the three case studies, it is important to offer a reading of the city's main geographical, urban, administrative and economic characteristics.

The city of Quito is located in the middle of the Andes Mountain range at an average altitude of 2,820 MASL, and a few kilometers south of the equinoctial line. To the west of the metropolis is the active volcano Pichincha, part of a mountainous chain more than 40 km in length. This location gives it a unique topography that has strongly conditioned the morphology and structure of the city. The filling processes of ravines (*quebradas*) have been constant over the centuries and to better understand its amplitude I share a personally drawn map—see next page.

The city of Quito was founded in 1534. The Spanish conquerors chose this location because of its strategic position, since the complex topography provided favorable conditions for an adequate defense (Ortiz 2007). Adapting to the ground layout, roads were planned as a checkerboard (*damero*), at the center there is the main square,

Plaza San Francisco. From this nucleus, the city grows towards the north, where the parks Alameda and Ejido are located. The development of the city first expanded south, with a satellite city of working-class neighborhoods, due to the arrival of the railroad and the installation of first industries. The south was separated from the historic center by the natural physical barrier of a small mountain called *El Panecillo* and the Machángara creek. Over time, the south grew in a disorderly manner, with weak connection to the northern part of the city that increasing infrastructure and access to basic services (UNHabitat 2017).

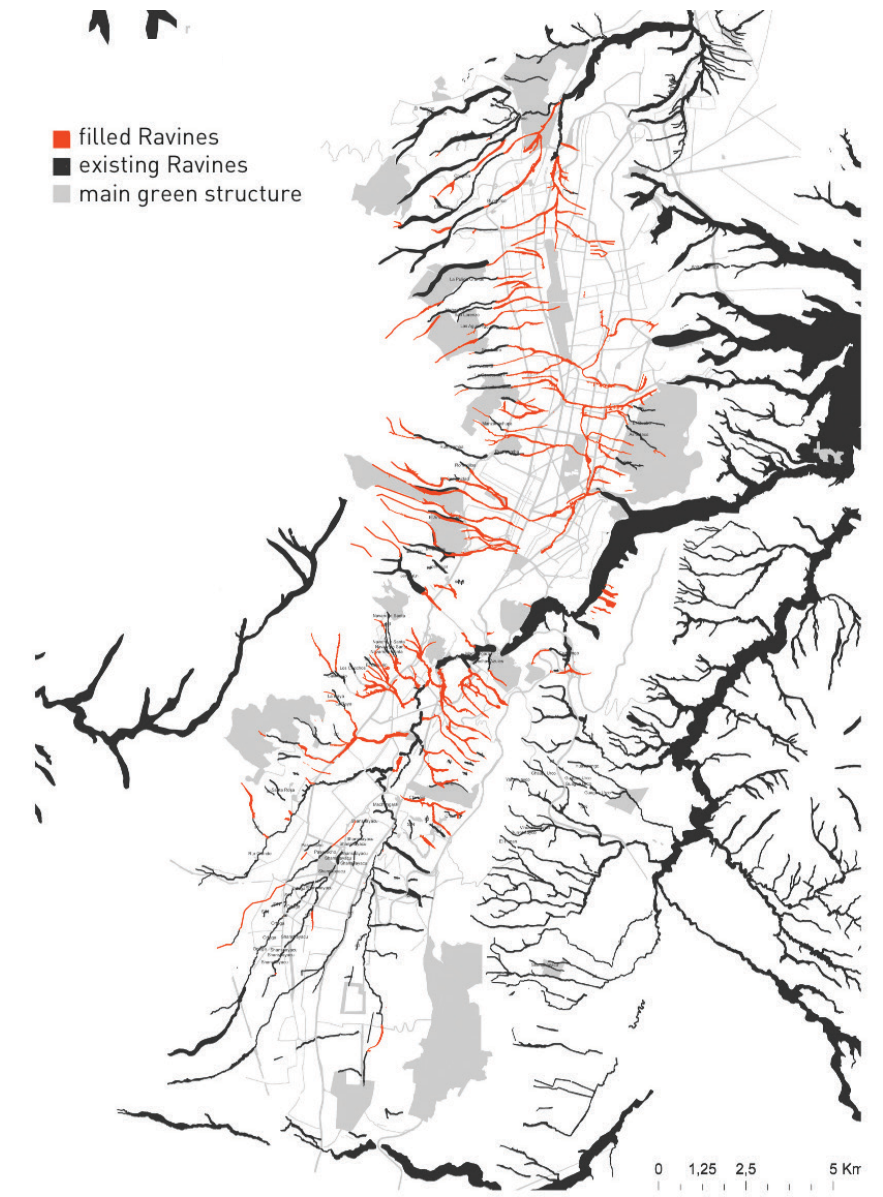
Until the end of the '50s, what is now known as the historic center, concentrated the main activities of the city, such as the political and administrative center of the country, commerce and residence. On September 8, 1978 UNESCO declared Quito's city center a World Heritage Site; it is indeed considered one of the most important and better conserved historic sites in Latin America. Quito has around 130 monumental buildings and five thousand properties registered in the municipal inventory of heritage assets (Carrión, F., & Dammert, M. 2013). At the end of the '80s the center began a process of deterioration and abandonment and wealthier



Quito's map from Dionisio de Alcedo y Herrera in 1734. Source: private archive of Yadira Hernandez.



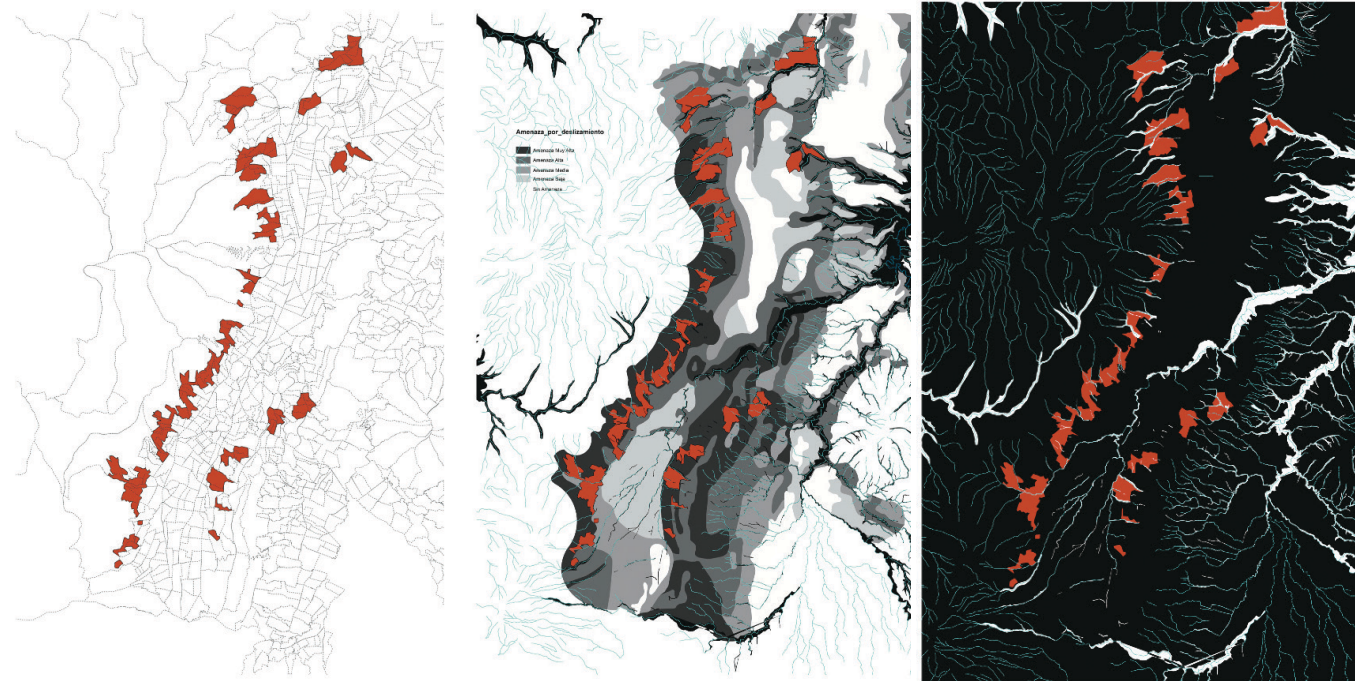
Detail of the ravines crossing the city of Gualberto Pérez map of Quito in 1888. Source: Ortiz et al. 2007.



Map of existing and filled ravines. Source: by the author, 2017.



Picture of a Quito's ravine taken from the plane on 15th of September 2015. Source: by the author.

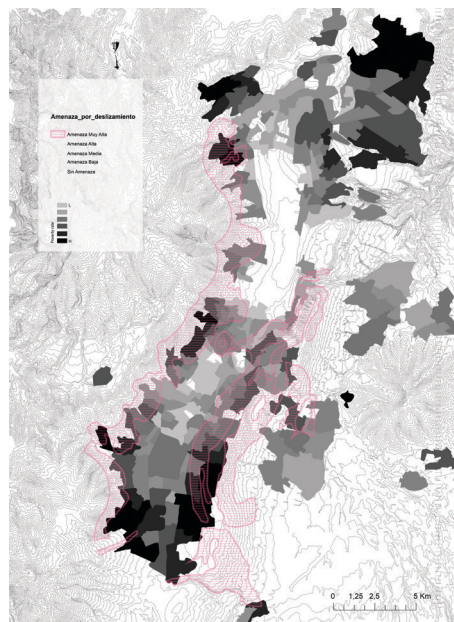


Autoconstructed neighborhoods
source: own elaboration from Felipe Correa (2014) + GIS from OpenStreet map

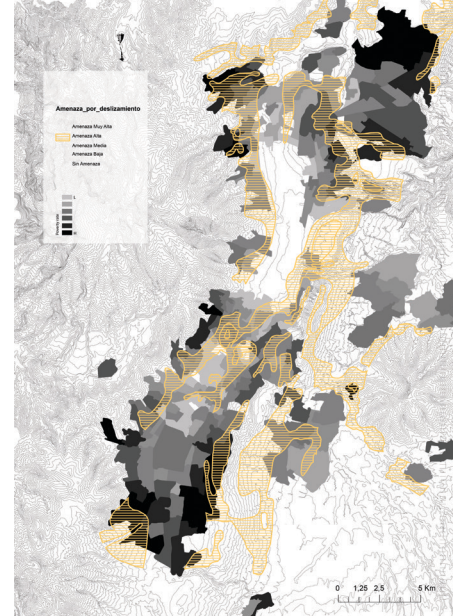
Autoconstructed neighborhoods + Risk areas (land slides)
(ibid)

Autoconstructed neighborhoods + Ravines and Rivers
(ibid)

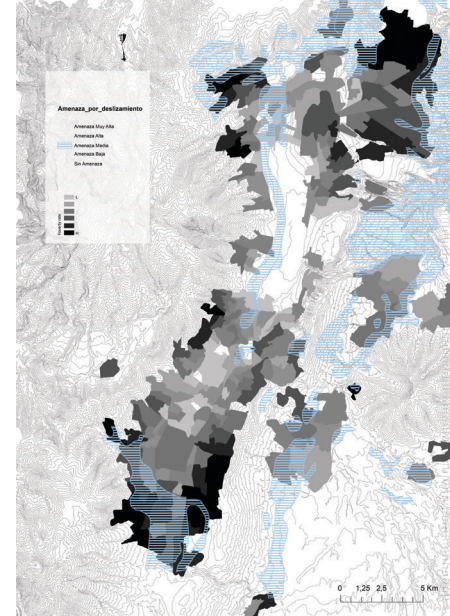
POVERTY RATE AND VERY HIGH RISK OF LAND-SLIDE



POVERTY RATE AND HIGH RISK OF LAND-SLIDE



POVERTY RATE AND MEDIUM RISK OF LAND-SLIDE



Combination of: Poverty Rate (*Incidencia De La Pobreza Según Zonas Censales En Quito 2001 - 2006*). Universidad Andina Simón Bolívar, 2009. + Dwg Zonas de Deslizamiento. DMQ 2009. Source: by the author, 2017.

Quitopia. Collective city-making, participation and autonomy for Quito's urban future.

classes moved towards the north of the city, towards La Mariscal (now called 'pink zone'—*zona rosa*) and the Park de La Carolina sector.

From the '70s, as will be revealed in the below case studies, the urbanization process of the city was accompanied by the oil boom. This oil boom created a dispersed growth of irregular occupation towards the slopes of the volcano Pichincha and the Itchimbia hill. In the maps on the side I illustrate **Quito's auto-constructed neighborhoods**, overlapping them with other maps, such as risk areas for landslides; income by neighborhood, and ravines together with water streams. These maps reveal that the auto-constructed neighborhoods are invariably located in the most dangerous areas, mostly surrounded by ravines and rivers, and they almost entirely constitute the poorest areas of the city.

By the '90s Quito had undergone an important transformation: from a compact and dense city, to a dispersed and underemployed one. The needs for expansion due to population pressure, and the lack of immediate available space, lead growth toward the eastern valleys. The emergence of isolated settlements went hand in hand with a progressive real estate speculation and illegal land offerings. Occupation of the valleys, mainly of Tumbaco and Cumbayá, responded to a model of garden-city and single-family houses, often with ample green areas, composed to a large extent of enclosed urbanizations.

In 1993, the Municipality of Quito obtained the legal and administrative title of Metropolitan District, and acquired new competencies in transport and environmental care. The municipality also initiated a new form of local management, through the creation of the **Zonal Administrations** (*Administraciones Zonales*). This allowed a decentralization of responsibilities on administrative management and services, as well as ensured more effective ways of inhabitant. Currently, as can be seen in the next page, the MDMQ has 8 Zonal Administrations and a Special Tourist Administration named *La Mariscal*.

Further concerning administrative subdivisions, the metropolitan area of Quito is divided into units

called **parishes** (*parroquias*). There are 32 urban ones and 33 suburban or rural ones. The rural parroquias are recognized as *Gobiernos Autonomos Decentralizados*: the GADs that were mentioned in Chapter 1 of the thesis. The whole administration of the metropolitan area is in charge of the Municipality of the Metropolitan District of Quito (MDMQ), while the parishes have more local responsibilities, for example the sharing to its neighborhoods of the municipal funds for participation (*Presupuesto participativo*). According to the last Population and Housing Census (2010), the metropolitan area of Quito has a **population** of 2,239,191 inhabitants, of which 71.80% lives in urban areas and 28.20% in rural ones. It is important to note that in the Metropolitan area of Quito the population is predominantly young; according to statistics from the *Instituto de la Ciudad* indeed, 70% of the population is under 39.

Quito is the city of Ecuador that contributes the most to the national economy, generating 22.11% of the National GDP for the year 2010. At the same time, however, despite being a city that concentrates wealth, as will be seen also in the below case studies, it is cradle of a inequality and informality. Quito's economy is vulnerable to factors such as the national dependence on the price of oil or other international markets for raw materials, such as the flower industry (UNHabitat 2017). After the institution of the 2008 Buen Vivir Constitution, an important step for the Ecuadorian economy was the nationalization of **oil**, which was previously 97% owned by private and foreign companies. In April 2010, through the Executive Decree 315, former Ecuadorian president Raphael Correa made this fundamental resource for the 99% of public domain; allowing financing during the subsequent years and causing great investment in Ecuadorian services and infrastructure. This second economic boom in the Ecuadorian history—after the '70s—found a strong relapse when the price for a barrel of crude oil diminished from almost \$144US in December 2008, to approximately \$42US in March 2017. This created a strong debt to the Development Bank of China, which was chosen as official borrower (Acosta 2013; Fontaine 2014).

Diagrams to understand Quito's administration

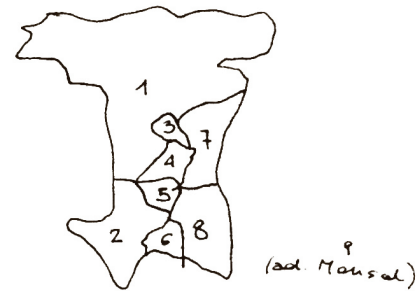
ECUADOR IS DIVIDED INTO 24 PROVINCES



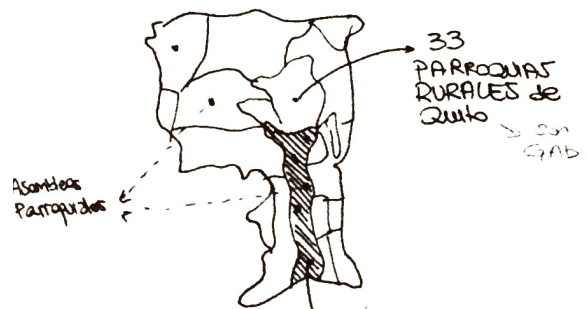
PICHINCHA PROVINCE IS DIVIDED INTO 9 CANTONS



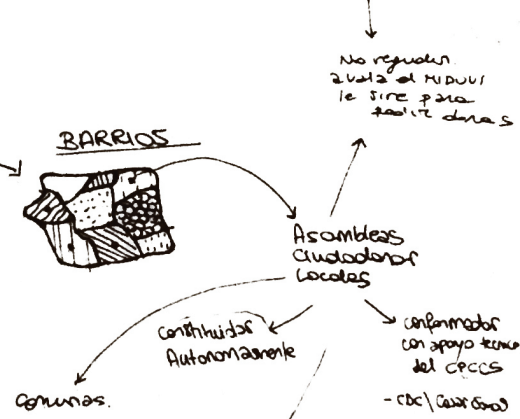
QUITO'S MUNICIPALITY IS ALSO DIVIDED INTO 9 ZONAL ADMINISTRATIONS



INSIDE QUITO'S MUNICIPALITY THERE ARE 32 URBAN PARISHES AND 33 RURAL PARISHES



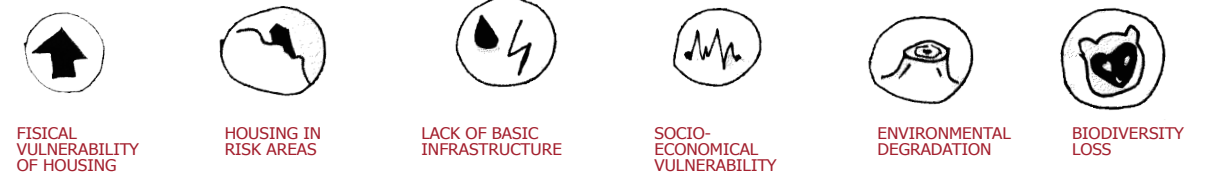
PARISHES ARE DIVIDED INTO NEIGHBORHOODS



Quitopia. Collective city-making, participation and autonomy for Quito's urban future.

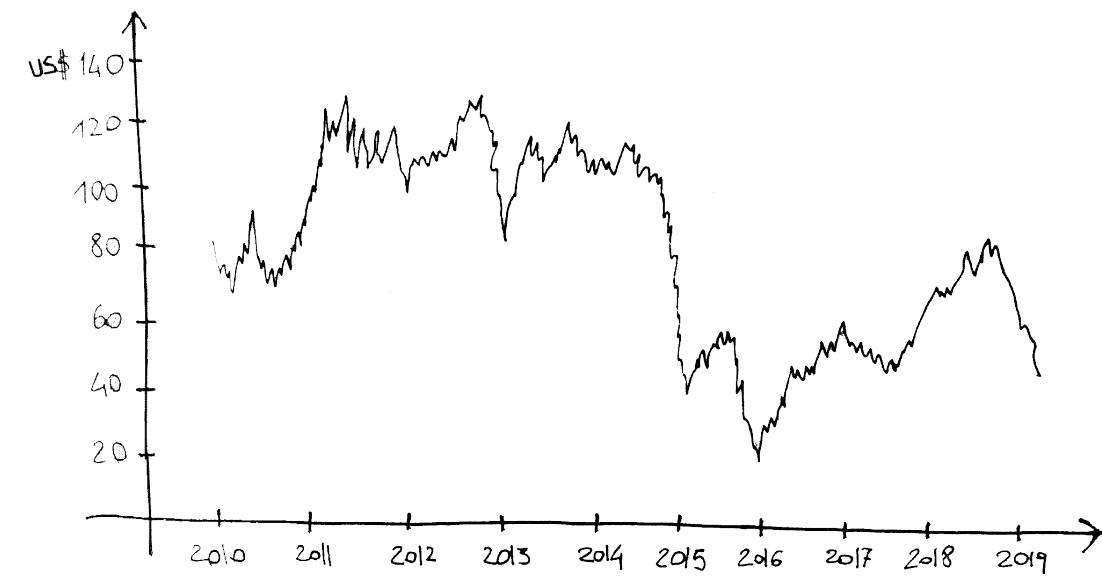


CHRONIC TENSIONS



Source: INEC 2017.

PRICES OF CRUDE OIL PER BARREL 2010-2019



Source: Bloomberg 2019.



Participation in Quito

After introductions to the minga practice and Quito, we have yet to see how the Buen Vivir principles of participation and autonomy have been practiced throughout the Ecuadorian capital. When starting this doctoral thesis, I focused more on the Ecuadorian institutional framework. Soon I felt the urge to go on-site and see how participation and autonomy were placed into practice. During the first fieldwork I made in Quito in 2015, I became interested in a specific case where I thought Buen Vivir's participation programs were implemented in urban spaces. This was the case of *La Floresta* neighborhood. Aside from being known as the 'hipster' sector of the capital, La Floresta held the UN Habitat 2016 conference.

While I was in Quito, as part of the programme of the Secretary of Territorial Coordination and Citizen Participation, Quito's Municipality hired a group of architects called *Mecanica Urbana* to think about collective strategies to make the neighborhood more inclusive and pedestrian-oriented. I have attended several of their open meetings and I came to discover that more than involving La Floresta's citizens, their call was to modify the neighborhood through the free contribution of young artists and university students. I observed the group in action, proposing mingas with the objective of painting with bright colors, pallets and zebra lines (Testori 2015b). The result turned out to be aesthetically pleasant, but it wasn't more than a simple process of beautification; not the Buen Vivir placed into



1_Meeting in La Floresta neighborhood 2015. Source: <https://www.facebook.com/mecanicaurbanauio/>
 2_Results of the project, October 2015. Source: <https://www.facebook.com/mecanicaurbanauio/>

practice, as everyone told me²⁸. Observing mingas being practiced between young inhabitants was definitely a surprise, yet the extent of their community organizing was still limited.

These mingas in La Floresta excluded most of the pressing socio-spatial issues addressed by some citizens on-site, such as lack of facilities for the elderly population, marginalization of the black minority, privatization of public space previously used by street vendors, or lost building heritage. As Bianchetti and Sampieri wrote, this kind of use of 'worldwide' participation tends to flatten the urban complexity into ready-made strategies and endorses quick gentrification processes (Bianchetti & Sampieri 2014). Or as Neil Brenner wrote in his essay titled "Is 'Tactical Urbanism' an Alternative to Neoliberal Urbanism?", these kinds of temporary projects just alleviate the grow-first urban development and are just a palliative (Brenner 2015).

In the following year, in 2016, I finally had the chance to talk with two enlightening people: the professor of sociology of the Universidad Central del Ecuador, Mario Unda, and Maria Luisa Changoluisa, from the Secretary of Territorial Coordination and Citizen Participation (*Secretaría de Coordinación Territorial y Participación*) of Quito's Municipality. Both interviews have been fully transcribed and are present in the thesis' annex section. What I've

28 When I was in Quito, to every person I interviewed, either inhabitants from the case studies or academic, I asked where I could find in Quito a process of institutionalized participation dealing with urban space. Most of them told me to look at La Floresta neighborhood case, which is what I did; then some suggested me to look at the mega-mingas, which were described in the previous chapter; and one more example often mentioned was the Ortega ravine in the south of the capital. Concerning this last case, self-organization of families created a cooperative called *Solidaridad Quitumbe*. They recovered a ravine from being a trash dump and transformed it into a park, but in the Ortega ravine the municipality was involved just at the very end of the project, so I couldn't consider it as a 'Buen Vivir institutional framework into practice' example.

learned from their different perspectives is that participation, an all-encompassing principle, has been placed at the center of the recent Constitution, and that many structural modifications and new decrees were created to find a way to involve citizens at different scales and on different topics. Changoluisa explained to me that a law called *Ley Orgánica de Participación Ciudadana*, renewed in October 2016, was considered the supporting column for building a participatory structure. However, as Unda specifies—but also as Changoluisa admits—it is a very bureaucratic and over-regulating policy. This norm at the neighborhood level places on top of the existing *cabildos* and neighborhood committees a new representative structure called *Consejo Barrial*, which in most cases, is an imposition of members external to the historic representative team and most of the time has been rejected by the local community.

On the 19th of April 2017, I also had the luck to have a long and enriching conversation with the former mayor of Quito Augusto Barrera (2009-2014). When discussing participation, Barrera said that for him, this law is just a way to control people; a mechanism that flattens popular organization in order to avoid dissent and possible revolt. He stated that, "in this way people lose the will to participate, they get tired, no one goes to the reunions and something that was part of culture slowly disappears". From Maria Luisa Changoluisa's perspective, instead these roles of participation are vital to breakdown the clientelism that is so invasive in each neighborhood's representative committee and it is relevant also to make these public spaces more inclusive to women and young people.

I must admit that these reflections and discoveries during my fieldwork, made my enthusiasm and optimism for the Buen Vivir diminish. Yet conversations with these actors also gave me hopes that studying and reconsidering the minga practice and potentials of the Ecuadorian constitution is very timely and needed. These exchanges also confirmed how the crono-topo line is an important tool to track these waves of change.

Section 3.2

Atucucho

"La ciudad de los palitos"

Before describing the neighborhood of Atucucho, I will briefly introduce on the political situation at the time of its creation.

Ecuador in the 1970's and 1980's

As mentioned in the previous chapter—while describing the minga practice—Ecuador between the 1970's and 1980's has seen a long and intense wave of immigration of low-income people from rural to urban areas (Martínez 2011; Gatton 2005). The reasons of this exodus were various: the end of the dictatorship of Velasco Ibarra in 1972, oil nationalization, and consequent copious investments in industries and infrastructures. This resulted in Ecuadorian main cities becoming desirable places for many rural inhabitants affected by the 1964 and 1973 Agrarian Reform (Borja 2011; Bravo 1980). In 1964, "0.4% of all proprietors occupied 45% of total farmland, while 90% of farms, owned by half of the country's population, were too small to support a single family" (Wasserstrom & Southgate 2013, 33).

The reform had forbidden the exploitative dependence of the agrarian workers to a patron. It then acted as a pressure mechanism for large and medium size landowners, who felt compelled to modernize in the capitalist sense, becoming agricultural entrepreneurs (Brassel et al. 2008). Nonetheless, for the small landowners, this reform pushed them to sell their lands and move to urban areas (Borja 2011). The second Agrarian Reform, promulgated in 1973 by the military nationalist government of Rodríguez Lara, similarly pushed for a business perspective, which established that if lands weren't productive enough, they were to be nationalized and redistributed (ibid). However, as the American social anthropologist Robert

Wasserstrom and Douglas Southgate specify, there were at the time, "1.8 million highland peasants who had received nothing at all under land reforms" (Wasserstrom & Southgate 2013, 16); confirming hence the need to migrate.

Concerning exportation and Ecuadorian wealth, the Ecuadorian economist Luis Ángel Velasteguí Martínez reports that exports changed from 190 million dollars in 1970 to more than 1300 million dollars in 1977. The budget of the central government went from the order of 5000 million sucres²⁹ in the 1970 to 27 billion in 1977, the GDP increased from 1062 millions of dollars to 139.4 billion dollars in the same period (Velasteguí 2004).

At the time, thanks to this new model of accumulation based on oil extraction (see section 2.1), Ecuador acquired relative autonomy from the traditional dominant sectors almost entirely related to agriculture. Quito positioned itself as the center of public administration, which before was mainly concentrated in the port city of Guayaquil. However, despite a period characterized by prosperity and redistributive politics, the state gain from the oil boom didn't reach all social sectors and remained concentrated in the dominant classes. Big landowners of the Andean region, agro-exporters, the modern industrial bourgeois connected to transnational exportation, and the middle class all benefited from the oil boom. This capitalist development caused deterioration of the lifestyle of the rest of the social

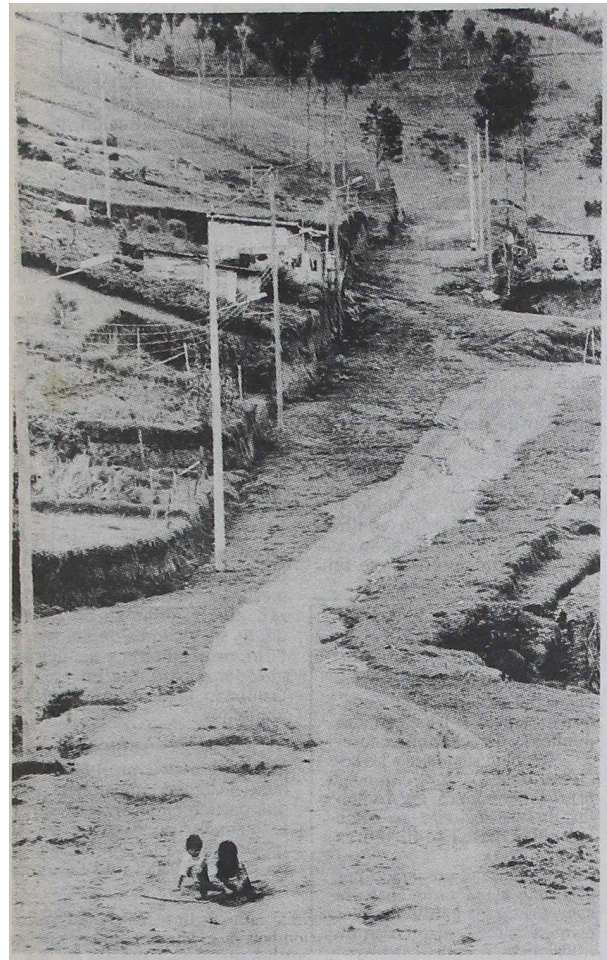
²⁹ The *sucre* was the Ecuadorian currency until the dollarization of the year 2000. In the 70's 1 sucre was equal to 0.04 US\$. (Borja 2011).



Atucucho

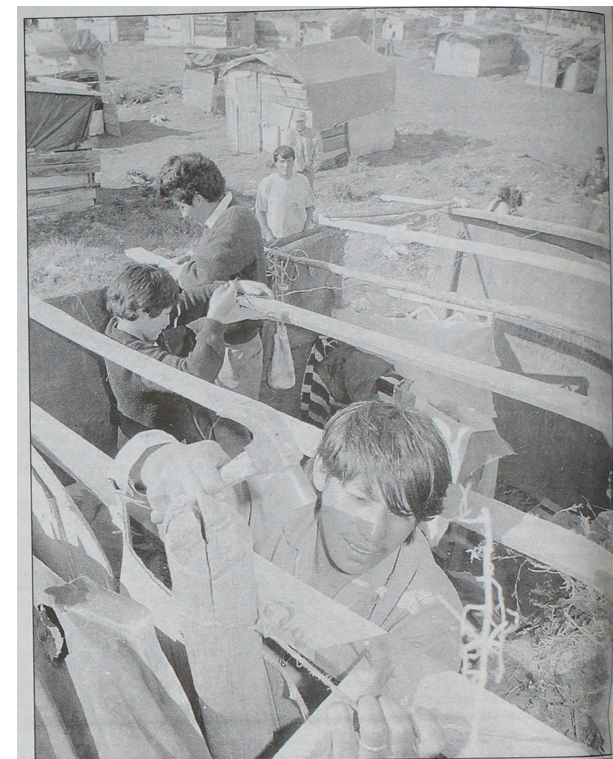


View of Lucha de los Pobres neighborhood, 1988. Source: El Comercio. Saturday 22 October 1988. From: prof. Maria Belen Bastidas archive.



No importa no contar con obras de urbanización ni vías, el afán es conseguir un pedazo de terreno donde levantar, aunque sea en forma precaria, una vivienda.

Atucucho in 1991. "It does not matter not to have works of urbanization or roads, the aim is to get a piece of land where to build, even if precariously, a house". Source: El Comercio. 10th August 1991. Personal archive of prof. Maria Belen Granja Bastidas.



UN MIEDO DIARIO - En Chillogallo las viviendas son aún de cartón. El temor al desalojo es una constante.

Auto-contruction in Chirongallo, Quito. Source: El Comercio, 26 de January 1997. Personal archive of prof. Maria Belen Granja Bastidas.

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The process of deforestation. Self-interpretation. Source: by the author 2018.

"We don't have where to go". View of the interior of a shelter in Atucucho 1988. Source: El Comercio 23rd June 1988. Personal archive of prof. Maria Belen Granja Bastidas.

'No tenemos a donde ir'

Otra de las mujeres que se encuentran posesionadas del bosque protegido del Pichincha dijo que levantó su casucha desde hace tres meses y que se ve en la necesidad de trasladarse al otro lado debido a que no tenía dónde ir.

La señora Rosa Suárez, al igual que muchas de las personas que están en esta zona, argumenta que se han trasladado al bosque para construir su casa cumpliendo la promesa del actual presidente de la República, León Febres Cordero quien ofreció pan, techo y empleo.

Logranamente y con una ligera sorpresa la señora dijo que por lo menos nosotros nos vamos a beneficiar con el techo ya que mi marido no tiene trabajo y vivimos dentro de las limitaciones que tienen todos los pobres.

Advertió la mujer que no existen mayores problemas. Dijo que el agua se repalan del barrio cercano, denominado El Triunfo. "Mis hijos madrugan a tomar el agua que nos sirve para la cocina", expresó la humilde mujer.

Rosa Suárez es una señora de alrededor de 38 años de edad. Es madre de cinco hijos, el último de los cuales nació hace unas tres semanas. Su marido es carpintero y no tiene trabajo estable. En la casucha existe una sola cama hecha de tronco de árboles en la que descansan las siete personas que conforman la familia.

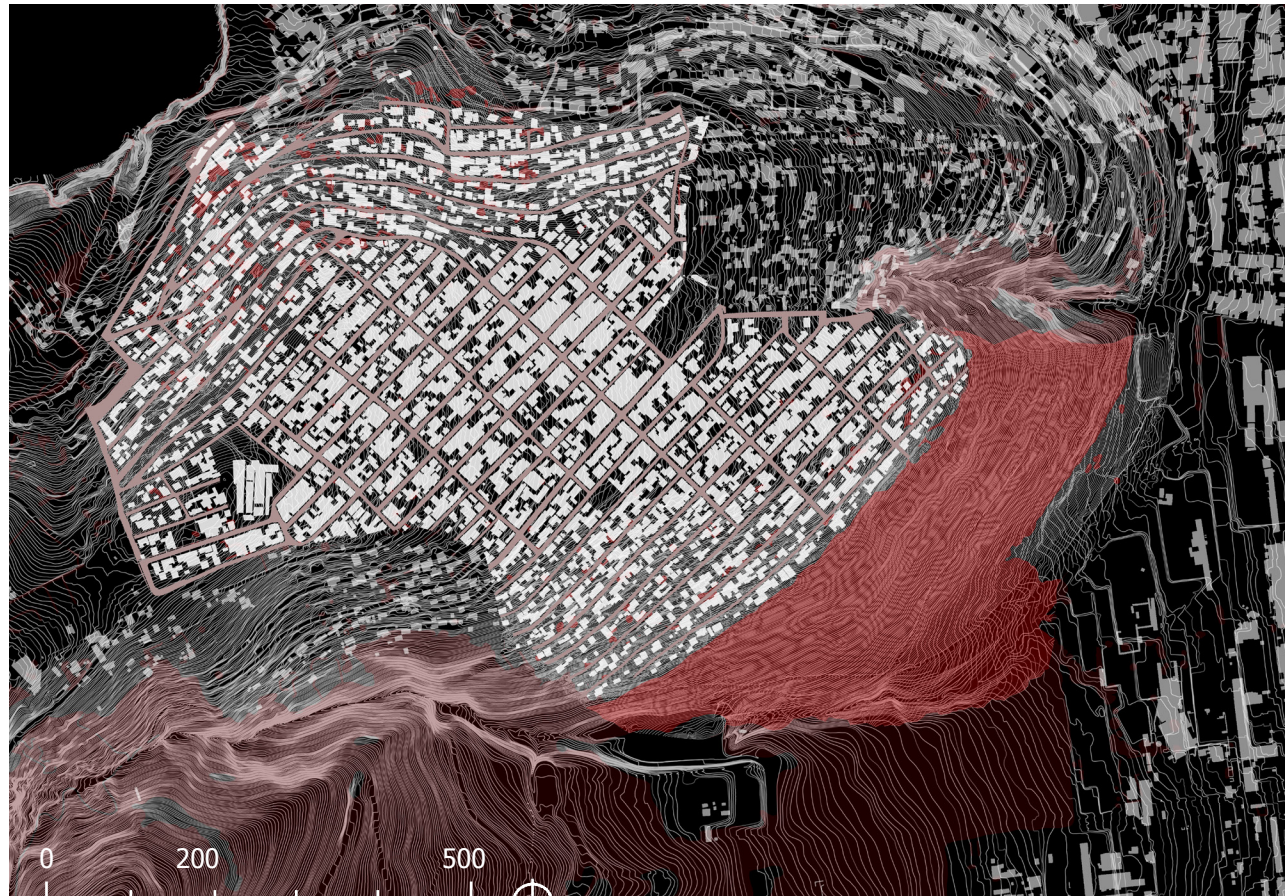
"Mira señor nosotros somos pobres y no tenemos nada. Si nos botan de aquí nos sabremos donde ir", dice la señora con lágrimas en los ojos. "Nosotros vamos a morir. Mis hijitos no tendrán dónde dormir. Mi esposo no tiene trabajo y por lo tanto carecemos de una buena vida", agrega la señora.

propias de las incomodidades "ya se han enseñado". Indica que no se han presentado mayores problemas. Se han aprendido a enfrentarlos.

todos los socios a realizar las mingas de limpieza. Indica que el frío es el principal enemigo que tienen pero que han aprendido a enfrentarlo.

▲ Esta mujer prepara sus alimentos en precarias condiciones. Ella llegó a la zona desde hace tres meses. Dice que es pobre y que no tiene dónde ir. Vive con sus cinco hijos y esposo en la rústica vivienda.

(Foto Diego Sandoval)



Atacucho's map. Source: by the author, 2016.



View of Atacucho. Source: screenshot from video 'Historias de participacion: Atacucho' <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QMn0uPFWxRs>

sectors, leaving craftsmen, farmers and small landholders isolated (Bravo 1980).

As a result, this process consolidated in Quito a heterogeneous and unorganized group of people that had limited access to the housing market, social housing and urban facilities. As Oña Lenin reports, in order to better understand the situation of the lower income classes of Quito, it must be underlined that in the period between 1962 and 1975, land prices inflated to 427,5%, just like rents and materials of construction (Oña 1980). Concurrently, in the absence of planning and/or low-income housing and urban growth management by state institutions, popular sectors channeled their search for solving the housing problem through renting/subletting and forming new neighborhoods (Huerta et al. 2012; Borja 2011; Carrion 1992). In the last case, land prices prevented the poorest sectors of society from accessing urban dwellings. Instead, people sought lower-priced land in suburbs or outside the city limits, situated on agricultural land or vacant plots in forests or hillsides. In most cases, lands were occupied illegally and the newcomers were constantly under threat of eviction.

Newcomers to Quito faced many difficulties including payment for their plots to illegal land sellers (*lotizadores*), building of their own house, provision and access to basic services and infrastructure, and exposure to severe environmental risks (Carrion 1992). Characteristic of most self-built Ecuadorian cases, these inhabitants faced these challenges through cooperatives, assemblies and mingas. Due to its ongoing successful collective self-management since two decades, I analyze the neighborhood of Atacucho.

Atacucho and the fight for land

Located in the northwest of Quito, Atacucho lays on the slopes of the Pichincha Mountain between 3,100 and 3,300 meters above the sea level. Currently it has around 17,000 inhabitants and it is divided into six sectors: *La Campiña*, *El Cisne*, *Laderas del Cisne*, *Corazón de Jesús*, *La Unión*, *La Paz* and *La Escuela*. The history of the neighborhood originates in 1988, when on the 1st of April, a group of 200 families occupied a land that was property of the Ecuadorian

Ministry of Health.

Two strong and controversial leaders, Segundo Aguilar and Carlo Yacelga, organized the massive occupation with the aim of transforming it into a housing settlement. From a private interview to Taylor Herrera, president of Atacucho's committee *Pro-mejoras* (2nd of September 2016), the occupation was illegally supported by the right-wing president of Ecuador Leon Febres Cordero, who secretly allowed the leaders to take possession of the area. According to Carrion (1992), this strategy probably bolstered the strong need of political support for the imminent president's elections and a recognition of the inability of the State to help the poor in the housing needs.

As can be seen in the crono-topo line and the zooms at the end of the section, the land initially consisted of dense eucalyptus forest, which between the 1st and 5th of April 1988 was considerably reduced due to the tireless work of the first occupiers (Alvarado et al. 2011). On the outset, the situation was precarious. As soon as some available space was created, inhabitants started building their shelters with what they could, from the deforestation of the eucalyptus, gaining the initial name *Ciudad de los palitos* (City of sticks). With time, zinc started appearing and within some years, concrete blocks were found as a common building material throughout the neighborhood.

Leaders of Atacucho commissioned an engineer to structure the plots, who imposed a grid of roads upon the steep topography (Herrera 2016). Due to the geologic composition of the soil and the strong water flows during rainy seasons, Atacucho is highly vulnerable to erosion and landslides (Pirejevec 2013). Leaders delivered plots to the migrants with enrollment monthly subscription payments plan. A plot at the time had a price of 12 thousand sucres and the newcomers were mainly *mestizos* originally from outside of the Pichincha province: Esmeraldas, Carchi, Imbabura, Cotopaxi, Chimborazo and Loja (DMQ 2002).

Before shedding light on the social organization and self-management of the neighborhood, it must be underlined that since the first occupation of this

NOVEMBER 1987

Secretaría de Territorio, Hábitat y Vivienda - Municipio de Quito



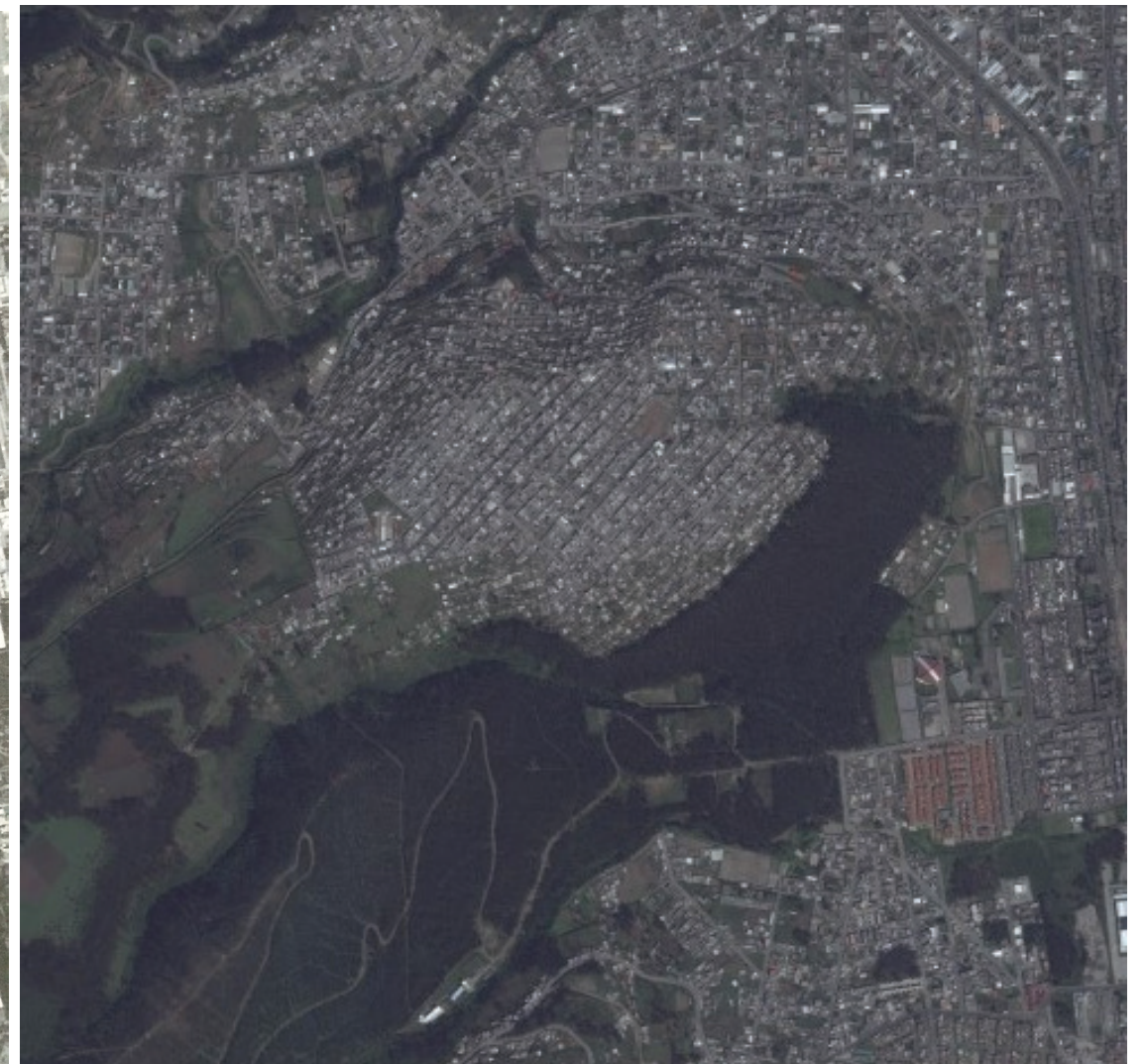
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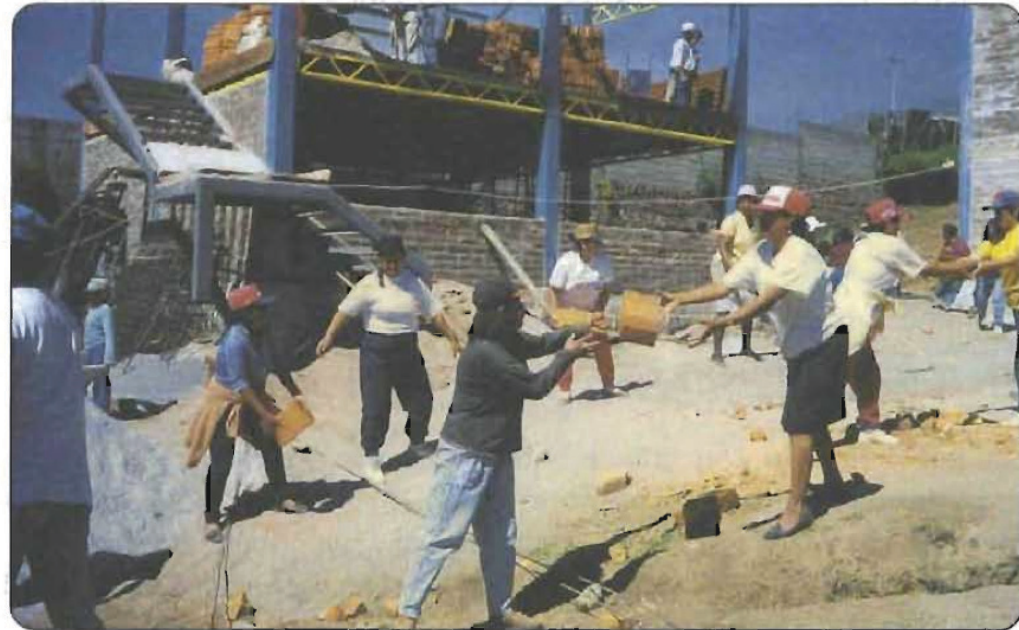
Secretaría de Territorio, Hábitat y Vivienda - Municipio de Quito



JULY 2015

Google maps





1_Minga in Atucucho for the construction of the Development Center in 1996. Source: DMQ 2002, 27.
2_Strike for land-titles. Source: DMQ 2002, 11.

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land which was owned by the Ministry of Health, there were many cases in which the police were commissioned to evict the newcomers with tear gas shelling. The publication *Quito Adentro* (2002) however, describes that evictions weren't always successful, as policemen were easily corruptible with alcohol offered by the inhabitants (DMQ 2002).

Addressing almost all developing needs independently, inhabitants were essentially left alone by governmental and local institutions. If some attention was given to Atucucho by the municipality, such as providing scant funds for the construction of a self-built kindergarten, or acquisition of water tanks; direct relations with the leaders of Atucucho's committees were mostly avoided and rather filtered by NGOs or international aid organizations (Alvarado et al. 2011). However, hidden agreements sometimes were made directly with political parties or single politicians in exchange for political support. For example, in an interview, former neighborhood leader Taylor Herrera described to me the case in the early 1990's in which an Ecuadorian deputy made a donation of building materials to Atucucho's residents for the construction of new classrooms (Herrera 2016).

Finding themselves in a condition of deep poverty and isolation, despite years of calls for support, inhabitants of Atucucho faced an apathetic and passive municipality. This was not only the case in Atucucho, but common to many neighborhoods informally growing all along the northern perimeter of Quito. The only way to have a right to demand for municipal services and infrastructure, as will be seen later, was the legalization of each family's plot. This has been for over two decades the highest desire of Atucucho's inhabitants (Hoey 2014; Montufar 2013).

Self-management: assemblies and water service

Going back to the beginning of Atucucho's first settlements, in the absence of State support, the community autonomously faced many needs of basic existence. As mentioned before, from the very first cut of the eucalypt forest, countless practices were developed collectively through mingas, such

as tracing plots, creating roads and sewer systems, etc. "With pick and shovel, we were creating the main road, it was very difficult for heavy machinery to pass through there, selfless work and sacrifice were required from all", the inhabitants recall (MDMQ 2002, 17).

In the same way, collective buildings took shape, and women, often pregnant, were the real constructors and fulcrum of the communal life development (Carrion 1992). Through networks of solidarity, Atucucho's territory was shaped by collective actions. It was a long process to satisfy human needs that not only manifested physically. Social innovation also channeled social empowerment (Van Dyck and Van den Broeck 2013). The school, churches, and an artisanal house of Atucucho were outcomes of collective work, and mingas, apart from being practices of sharing and teamwork, were outcomes of great physical efforts that were mostly mandatory (Ariruma 2011). In an interview Isabel Muñoz, a consultant who in the '90s worked with UN-Habitat in Atucucho proposing women's emancipation trainings, told me that even if mingas weren't mandatory, the sanction for those who were not participating was social instead of monetary (Muñoz 2015); reinforcing what I discovered about obligatory minga attendance, as described in Chapter 2.

In Atucucho, and throughout many Ecuadorian indigenous communities or communes, the neighborhood organization is a complex machine of dialogue and interconnection between different sector leaders, block representatives and citizens. The place in which the decision-making process allows the self-management of the community is the assembly. As described above, even though committees and associations rise and perish depending on civic needs, the superstructure of the neighborhood assembly still exists in most Ecuadorian neighborhoods. Generally, assemblies are open to all citizens, and the decisions are either taken by hand raising or by secret vote. Due to this capillary structure, this system of direct democracy has the potential to deeply involve the entire population on different issues, like the security of the neighborhood, management of its collective spaces, and organization of socio-cultural activities.



Visit to Atucucho's bank, August 2015. Source: by the author and N. Anastasopoulos.

However, as observed by Taylor Herrera during my fieldwork, scarce involvement of black minorities and young generations is still an obstacle to successfully overcome (Herrera 2016).

Worth to mention is that I chose Atucucho as a case study because of the social innovation its inhabitants carried out over time. Neighborhood water management methods underscore this innovation. Initially, at the end of the '80s, water was fetched from a mountainous river and its diversion was complicated due to the protests of a nearby landowner. Often polluted for its multiple uses including construction, irrigation and domestic usage, water management created conflicts also between the different sectors in the neighborhood (Carrion 1992; Herrera 2016). To address this need, the committee of citizens *Comité Pro-mejoras* (1991) was created. This was a parallel citizens' organization to the already existing Cooperative of Inticucho. While the Inticucho one was mostly in charge to sell plots, the *Comité* had a central role in the neighborhood's self-development and empowerment. Elected by the entire population, the very first step its representatives took was to collectively constitute the *Junta de Agua* (Water Board) (Carrion 1992; Alvarado et al. 2011). Involving the entire population, they built a water storage tank and its service was distributed to each family through water hoses and collective faucets³⁰.

At the beginning of the '90s, this system decreased conflicts between neighbors. Together with the absence of external providers and the necessity

³⁰ The *Comité Pro-mejoras*, which now is legally inscribed in the MIES (Ministry of Economic and Social Inclusion), manages the assemblies. A president, a vice-president, a secretary, a treasurer, a pro-secretary, 5 principal spokesman and 5 supplementary ones coming from all the different sectors form the committee. These representatives are elected by the General Assembly, which meets 3-4 times a year. There are currently 3 kinds of assemblies *Asamblea General*, *Asamblea semanal de coordinadores y promotores barriales*, *Asambleas sectoriales and Reuniones de Comités Vecinales* (Alvarado 2011).

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of finding immediate solutions the neighborhood's self-management spirit rose. The need for water became a stimulus for multiple collective actions inside the community organization (DMQ 2002). The committee, for example, also worked with children under 5 years old, which were many and with no place to stay while their parents were at work. For this reason, they founded the CEMSI (*Centro de Madres a Servicio de la Infancia*), a non-profit association organized mainly by women that is still very active nowadays. They provide care for people with special needs and elderly, helping, autonomously, around 2000 people in the entire *barrio* (neighborhood).

Culture, leisure, identity and participation fostering

Looking at the different cooperative dynamics, analysis shows that initially social movements and organizations inside Atucucho mainly asked for public services and infrastructure. Through time, community groups concentrated more and more on culture, leisure, identity and participation. These evolutions revealed how this extended community had many ambitions, beyond the individualistic dynamics in the rest of the city (Moulaert 2013; Van Dyck and Van den Broeck 2013).

The self-organization of different groups and activities has made their management quite interdisciplinary. Sports leagues, for example, still involve men and women of all ages, and *grupos juveniles*, normally composed of youths in search for affirming their own identity, also focus on music and culture (Alvarado 2011). There are also women's associations, elderly associations like *Amigos para siempre* (Friends forever), and for a few years, supported by the United Nations HABITAT program,

a radio and a local newspaper were present³¹. As such, Atucucho's social innovation was represented by the "focus on the different skills by which collective actors and groups play their roles in society" (Moulaert 2013, 16).

Another association, amongst the long list of Atucucho's collective initiatives, is the *Banco Comunitario de Atucucho*. Standing with honor, it is a novelty for a neighborhood that didn't have any tradition of formalized economy and production (MDMQ 2002). Conceived during the beginning of Atucucho's legalization process, it was designed to give loans under favorable conditions to people that had to buy land titles (Hoey 2014). At the beginning, there were 28 founding members and their deposit was of 100 US\$ each. At the end of 2015 there were 460 members, and the collected fund corresponded to 200.000 US\$ (Tendorio 2015). Still in use, neighbors can access rapid credit of up to 3.000 US\$ and in order to open a bank account it's only necessary to be an Atucucho resident. The collective bank produces its own currency, which has the value of 1 US\$, which is used inside the neighborhood during specific events³². During Christmas time, for example, the banknote has been given to the children, who could choose their own present inside the market set up by their parents. The revenues obtained by the loans were reinvested in programs for children and adolescents. The dream of the bank organizers would be to start working with the shops of Atucucho to make it a permanent currency (ibid.).

³¹ *Amigos para siempre* (Friends forever) was founded by one inhabitant, Señora Rosario Kinga in 2001 and hosts around 100 members. They meet twice a week to offer medical support, motivational training, gymnastics and art crafts. They also developed a micro enterprise: a little bakery whose funds go back into the association to finance their activities (Pirejavec et al. 2013).

³² Atucucho is the only neighborhood in Quito that produces its own currency.



Atacucho in the '80s. Source: Alvarado 2011, 6.



View of Atacucho, 4th July 2015. Source: by the author.

Conclusively, until now we saw many inventions and collective involvement, Atucucho's inhabitants created their own media, currency, after-school organizations, football team, etc. However, due to reasons like the lack of public investments and limited work places, it can be said that inhabitants are still trying to find

"acceptable progressive solutions for a whole range of problems of exclusion, deprivation, alienation, lack of well-being, and also to those actions that contribute positively to significant human progress and development" (Moulaert 2013, 16).

Atucucho indeed certainly needs support from many sides, like the technical one of engineers to avoid environmental risks for example, and economic one, to foster internal jobs creation. From their side Atucucho's inhabitants they have a history of self-management, capacity of problem-solving and innovation that should be highly considered, not just to find acceptable solutions, but to see it as an example of autonomy and self-empowerment.

The legalization process

The first steps for the neighborhood's legalization were taken in July 1996, when Atucucho was finally recognized as urban instead of rural, and inhabitants were seen as "owners without land title" rather than "invaders" (DMQ 2002; ElTelegrafo 2014). In the same year the municipal cadaster office valued Atucucho's land at 370 million sucres and citizens composed a collective fund to buy it. In two years, they collected 250 million sucres. However, in the year 2000, with the dollarization of the economy, the amount reduced drastically to only 12 thousand dollars and another evaluation had to be done (ElTelegrafo 2014). From this moment, the internal collaborative cohesion started crashing and fights between neighbors boomed, while speculation and violence invaded the 6 sectors. As Phelim Hoey calls them, 'unorganized years', these were 10 years in which in Atucucho the delinquency was extremely high and was the time in which thieves were burned, for this reason the sign in the neighborhood '*Barrio organizado. Ladrón cogido será quemado!*' (Organized neighborhood. Thief caught will be burned!) (Hoey 2014).

This history sees a turning point in 2010 when the

mayor of Quito Augusto Barrera brought to the National Assembly a request for changing the law n°90 of May 2003, in order to allow the selling of the 66 hectares from the Ministry of Health directly to the possessors without the need of an auction. Thanks to this legal procedure, the majority of Atucucho's houses now have legal status. The land titles (*escrituras*) reenergized the neighborhood morale, new leaders were elected, no more lynching have occurred, and the collective spirit, which had been lost, has revived (Hoey 2014).

Manuel Tituaña, Atucucho's former president in 2014 declared to the *El Telegrafo* newspaper that, "Living conditions got better. We have investment in public and roadwork and coexistence issues (fights between families) were solved. We also signed an agreement with the Provincial Council for paving some streets and a new bus routes have been implemented" (El Telegrafo 2014). However, as we'll see in the next paragraphs the support from local institutions continued to be extremely rare and often ineffective.

Projects with municipal institutions

It can be noticed indeed that, after the legalization, small projects were implemented also by the municipality. The program '*Yo, Mi Barrio, Mi Ciudad*' (2015) supported the consolidation of Quito's houses in the poorest conditions, though was unfortunately only financed for a few months. Moreover, highly praised by the Ecuadorian State was the relationship established between the Council of Public Participation and Social Control (CPCCS) and Atucucho. The State proposed to Atucucho's neighborhood leaders some training days on citizens' involvement in the decision on local issues. These trainings however, as an active inhabitant, Juan Tendorio explained in an interview, brought not much more than a joyful and fallacious HD video decanting the renewed interaction between the two parties³³. Tendorio as well explained that this was an attempt to introduce, on top of the

³³ Link to the video '*Historia de participacion: Atucucho*' <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QMnOuPFWxRs>

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already existing citizen's organizational structure, the *Consejo Barrial*, a participation unit conceived by the government, that diverged dramatically from the existing and authentic local participatory dynamics (Tendorio 2015). Through this we can notice how Buen Vivir's participation enforcement, has sometimes been carried on as a propaganda process.

Another example were the mingas 50-50 implemented by Fernando Lara, administrator of the municipality of the *Zona Norte* of Quito. For this project, the municipality proposed to finance 50% of the costs of materials and machinery needed for the paving some neighborhood's roads. However, the community, aside from paying the other 50%, had to organize itself in *mingas* for its physical realization (Hernandez 2010). It is a mechanism that the *Fundacion Rurbana* defined as a clear expression of the existing inequality between the different neighborhoods of Quito, being "something that would never be asked to the inhabitants of the city center" (Barrera & Mancheno 2013, 54). On the same level, a mega-minga of two days—29 and 30 of July 2017— was organized by the Metropolitan Public Mobility and Public Works Company (EPMMOP), that 'offered' their machinery and personnel to work together with 200 residents of the neighborhood, to improve the quality of the streets in different access points of Atucucho (Quito Informa 2017).

Atucucho and its *Gobierno Barrial* vis à vis the constitutional principles

What has been discussed up to now, is a clear example of what Jörg Plöger, from the Research Institute for Regional and Urban Development of Dortmund, defines as circles of "community mobilization to achieve common objectives of basic infrastructure and legal recognition" (Plöger 2012, 212).

Atucucho is indeed a case, where residents developed a range of approaches to cope with the inability of the state to adequately provide affordable housing and services. Distinctive to Atucucho is that, differently from many other informal or post-informal settlements involving land occupation, its residents didn't stop their active cooperative involvement even if there were strong internal

disagreements or continued insecurity regarding the obtaining of land titles.

As can be seen by the sine-line showing the intensity of participation in the crono-topo line—in the next page—depending on internal or external contingencies, different organizations sought the satisfaction of the residents either autonomously or thanks to interactions with external initiatives, and a sense of solidarity connected those who were sharing similar challenging conditions.

Despite Atucucho's social innovation; by looking at its physical design, not everything can be praised. If we look carefully at the collectively constructed spaces, we can notice that as more time has passed, more common areas have become occupied by private buildings; reinforcing the lack of green areas. One might wonder how this has possibly happened, above all if decisions on collective spaces were taken through assemblies. The reasons are



Screenshot from the video Atucucho (Rincon del Lobo). Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qgne0c0E2Dk&t=3s>



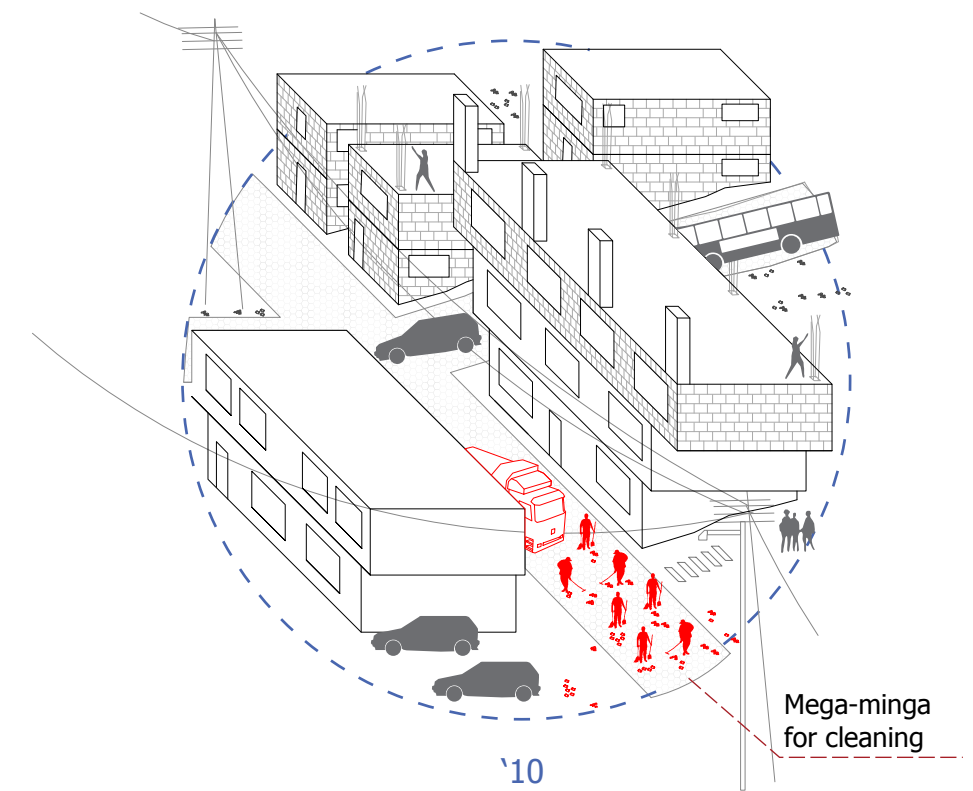
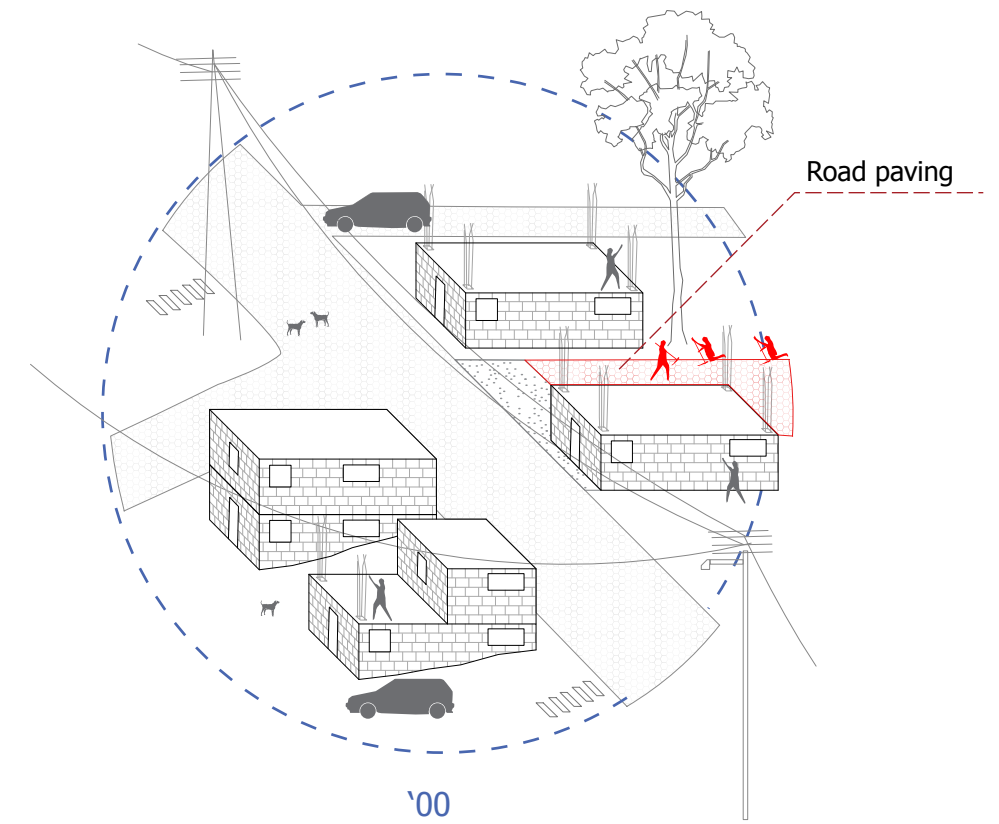
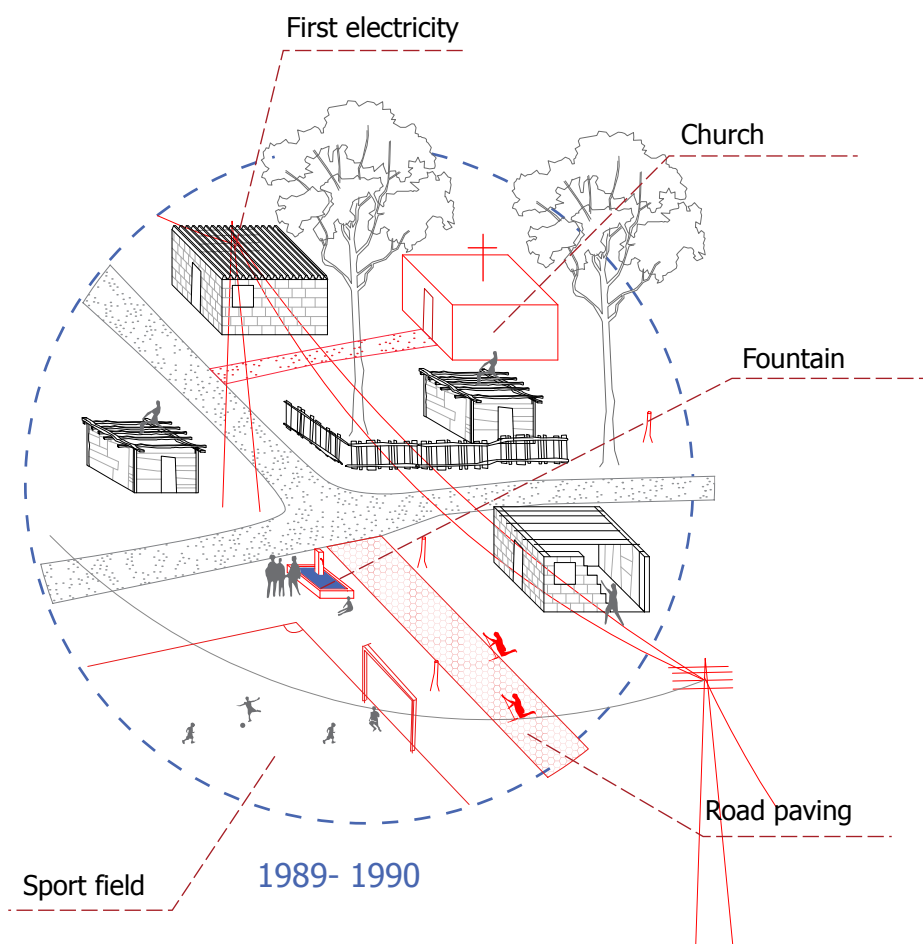
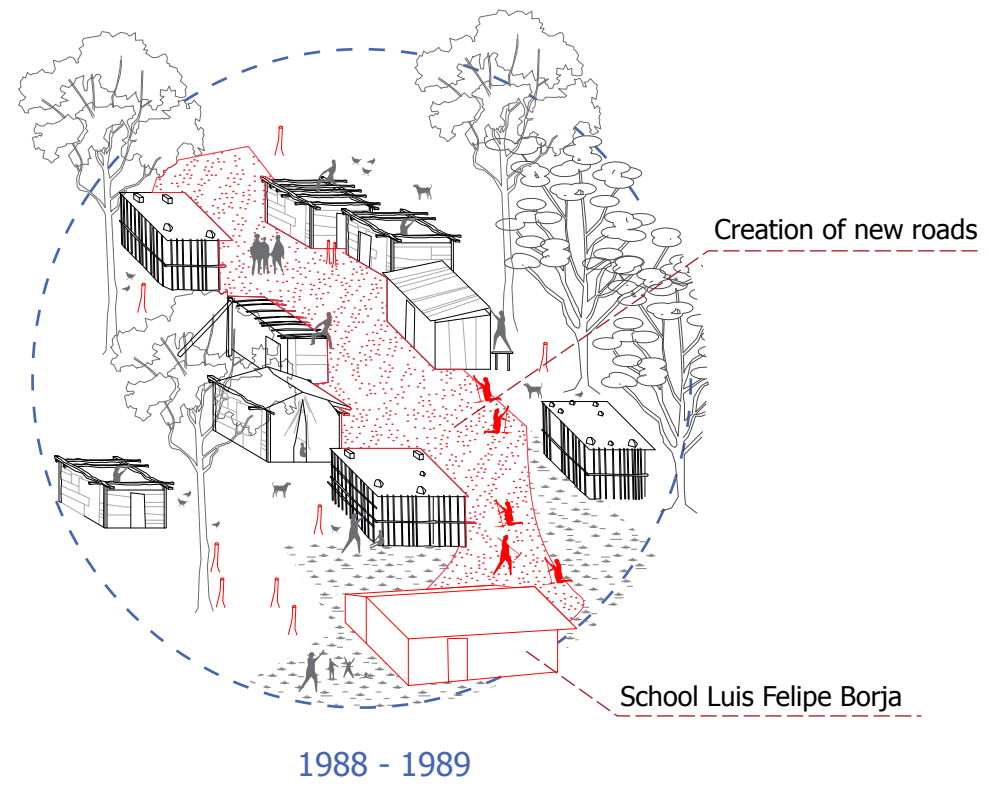
1_View of Atacucho. Source: Bennett 2014.
2_Former Atacucho's leaders. Source: Hoey 2014.

probably many: the latent risks of neighborhood leaders' corruption, the appropriation of these spaces by people in need of a shelter, and the little desire of some citizens to get into trouble, as by calling this lack they could go against some other occupiers. Are mingas then not useful and is self-management a constant risk?

To attempt a response to this question, by not being 'controlled' from external entities—like the State or the municipality, autonomy and self-management—may embrace a path that is not redistributive, democratic and inclusive. It must also be remembered that inside these peripheral and low-income neighborhoods, the figure of an expert, such as an architect, urbanist, or engineer is almost always absent, so many of the decisions are made according to common sense rather than following a long-term plan. Self-organized neighborhoods are not necessarily able to address every need of their community. Similarly, autonomy and self-management are not always the solution to all problems. However, in cases in which government institutions are absent, a self-managed system like Atacucho's can be exemplary. Atacucho in this sense, contrasts the urban socio-spatial relationships of nonexistent solidarity so common to other 'more standard' areas of the Ecuadorian capital.

Furthermore, it must be mentioned that, since 2015 Atacucho has declared itself an Autonomous Government. Though still embryonic, this declaration envisions the possibility to incorporate the *Comité pro-mejoras* in a bigger structure akin to the *Gobiernos Autonomos Decentralizados (GAD)* described in the first chapter. In this way, it seems that what some of Atacucho's inhabitants envisage is major autonomy in decision-making from the municipality and the possibility of having their own executive, legislative and judiciary power (Tendorio 2015; Muñoz 2015). In an article of *El Comercio* of 2014 titled, 'Three neighborhoods where the works are born and run by the community' it says that the neighborhood government is based on the general assembly, the board of directors and sector representatives and that each block has a promoter and they meet every week. However, it is still not clear which level of governance they could legally reach (El Comercio 2014).

Conclusively, despite what Atacucho has been able to achieve 'out of the system', governmental regulations on neighborhood management shouldn't be discarded, but rather integrated, analyzed and interpreted especially vis à vis the recent Ecuadorian Constitution of the Buen Vivir. Article 248 of the Constitution—as mentioned in the first chapter of the thesis—indeed regulates the possibility for the neighborhoods to be listed as 'basic units of participation' and indeed COOTAD's article 306, establishes the existence of these units and gives the right to the neighborhood's council to be seen as a community representative body. Finally, reconsidering article 31 of the Constitution, which talks about the 'right to the city' and the 'respect for different urban cultures', I believe that it could be interpreted to the extent that self-management and co-production of space are recognized as a right and hence supported as an alternative method of city making. Moreover, the *gobierno barrial*, if seen more as a basic unit of participation than as a GAD, could become legally the promoter of direct democracy and neighborhood empowerment. Through this approach, the *gobierno barrial* could claim from the municipality technical and economic support based on the discussions held in the local assemblies.



Source: by the author, 2019.

Comuna de
Santa Clara de
San Millán

Section 3.3

Comuna de Santa Clara de San Millán

One of the last remaining urban comunas

The Ecuadorian sociologist Arbolada Maria, author of the book *Memoria social y cultural del Distrito Metropolitano de Quito: ruralidad y comunas* (2014), states that studies on comunas are still very rare, as well as investigations that characterize their presence in the city and projection in the future. By analyzing the case of an urban commune, this thesis contributes to this research gap.

What are the comunas?

A *comuna* in Ecuador is a legal and administrative entity, which has specific communal land tenure; likewise, a *comuna* is the name of the community who lives in it. Communes in Ecuador have their organic law, legal, social and economic structure. Constituting a communal government, comunas have sovereignty and autonomy, which allows their inhabitants (*comuneros*) to manage their own regulations and statutes (Romero 1996). According to the actual Ecuadorian Constitution, communal land shall be inalienable, immune from seizure and indivisible (Ecuadorian Constitution art.57-4). The comuna has a form of property based on the right to usufruct. According to the civil code, usufruct is the right to enjoy a thing that is owned by somebody else, that should be treated as its proprietor would enjoy it, adding to this obligation of conserving its substance, both in matter as form.

A comuna is administered by self-governance and managed by the democratically elected members of

the *cabildo*. The cabildo can be seen as a City Council, an administrative body composed by the President, Vice President, Treasurer, Trustee and Secretary. Apart from administering the comuna, the council is responsible for mediating relations between various public and private institutions. Moreover, similarly to the case of Atacucho, decisions concerning comuna's territory and inhabitants are made through assemblies. All assemblies are open to all citizens and the decisions are either taken by hand or secret vote. General assemblies are normally held every 45 days and they address common issues such as collective work, security, common space, but also socio-cultural activities (Romero 1996; Rayner et al. 2015; Hopfgartner 2015).

Rayner, Morales and Simbaña, authors of an article titled '*El Proyecto Comunal: Propiedad, Democracia y Urbanización en el Ecuador*' (2015), recall that some aspects of comunas can be interpreted as a contemporary Community Land Trust, while Bustamante et al., much earlier, compared them

Source: by the author, 2018.



1_Map of Comuna de Santa Clara de San Millán. Source: by the author 2017.
2_View of Santa Clara in November 2014. Source: Pablo Ortega.

to Chinese *Tachai*, but without the State control³⁴ (Rayner et al. 2015; Bustamante et al. 1992). Communes can be rural or urban and generally are composed by common spaces, such as roads, squares, communal houses, cemeteries, forests, watersheds...the rest of the land is generally divided into plots, which are assigned to each family that composes the commune. These usufruct properties shouldn't be sold to external members, unless the cabildo and the MAGAP (Ecuadorian Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock, Aquaculture and Fisheries) approve it. The assignation of the land indeed is transferred, or better, inherited from generation to generation. If all cabildo rules are respected, possession of the land is counterfeit, because all land is deemed communal. It is more common, however, as will be seen in more detail afterwards, that due to various kinds of pressures, communal land is sold and integrated to the municipality. As Katrin Hopfgartner, one of the few experts of Ecuadorian communes recalls, during the past 50 years, the number of comunas within the Metropolitan District of Quito have been reduced by one fifth. Currently in Quito there are 78 communes, of which 48 are active, 45 are located in rural areas and just 3 are urban (Hopfgartner 2016).

Originally, as will be further illustrated in the following section, comunas were places where indigenous inhabitants took refuge during the Spanish invasion in the XVI century and are still 'strongholds' of the

³⁴ Community Land Trust (CLT) constitute a social mechanism that purposes the resolution of the fundamental questions of allocation, continuity and exchange of affordable housing. The CLT is a legal entity, a quasi-public body, chartered to hold land in stewardship for all mankind present and future while protecting the legitimate use-right of its residents (Davis 2010). The Tachai instead, in English translated to People's Commune, was part of the Mao Tse-tung socialist utopia for the Chinese rural areas, they were active by from 1958 until 1983. The system consisted in autonomous agricultural communities that provided by themselves all their needs; they were working as diffuse states with the objective of reinforcing autarchy against the threats of international capitalism.

Ecuadorian indigenous movement. At the base of this land-sharing and organization through assemblies, communal solidarity is part of an ancient legacy for which sharing is the base of everyday life. As we saw in the first chapter, while talking of Esteva's definition of *comunalidad*, he also adds that for the original people that live in the comunas, the relation with the place and its territory is existential; it represents the roots of their culture. Always for Esteva, there is no clear distinction between the physical place and the community who lives in it; together they form a definition of culture with a strong symbolic charge. The land where they live is indeed considered a strong link with their ancestors and is seen as part of Mother Hearth (Esteva 2015). The minga, as will better see later, for all the Ecuadorian 'active' comunas is still a very common practice.

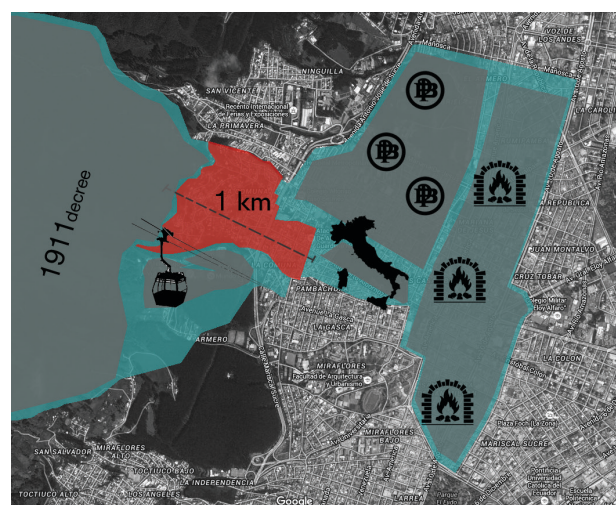
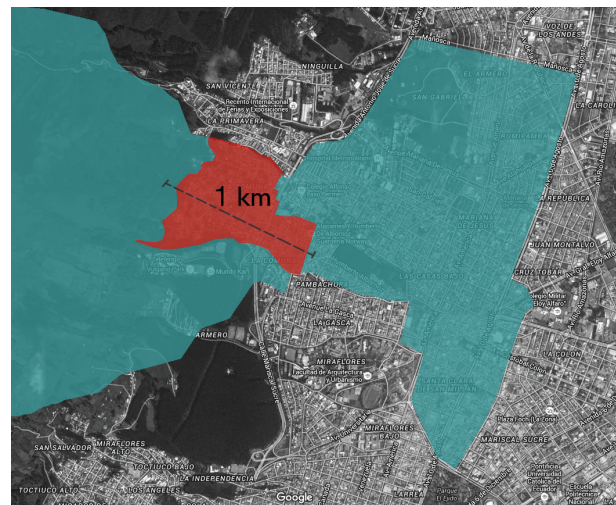
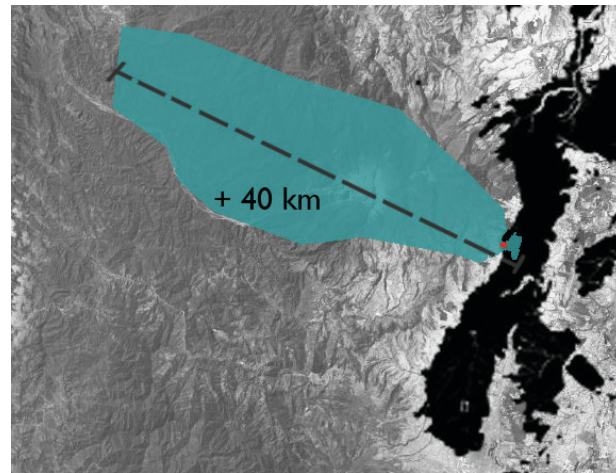
Historical aspects

In order to find the origins of the comunas we have to look back to the Inca Empire, where *indios* were identified as 'savages' in opposition to the supposedly civilized population adapted to the Tawantinsuyo³⁵. With the Spanish conquest (1534), even if this dichotomy fails, natives were still seen as inferiors and their lands used to be expropriated and sold to big landowners or the Church. As Romero et al. describe in their book '*Identidades urbanas*' (1996), even if the lives of indigenous peoples were fragmented, they found the resilience to formulate a new identity.

With the beginning of colonization "coming from the relation between the national space and their own environment, the Indian society decides to communalize itself" (Romero 1996, 101).

It is in this moment that the term "*comun*" or "*comuna*" was introduced to denote a group of persons that self-organized in land they were deeply rooted to. Native communities, in this sense, incorporated to their logic a new property conception expressed in defense of a territory organized commonly and based on the structure

³⁵ Tawantinsuyo were the territories under the Inca Empire from the XIII century to the Spanish colonization.



Evolution of the borders of Santa Clara. Source: by the author 2016.

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of the *ayllus*. In the case of Quito, indigenous lands were somehow respected by the colonies. Yet in the case of the Kitu Kara peoples, in order to remain autonomous, they had to provide the Spanish their free labor to effectively build Quito's city center (Kingman 2006). Subsequently, since the XIX century, the communal organization became symbol of the *indios libres*; a pre-Incan strategy for the survival of traditional powers and through repudiation of westernized society³⁶ (Romero 1996).

Comuna de Santa Clara de San Millán

Continuing this exploration into the complexity and diversity of comunas in Quito, we turn to one of the three remaining urban comunas: the Comuna de Santa Clara de San Millán. Lying on the slopes of the Pichincha Mountain, in western central Quito, this commune was born as an indigenous settlement during the Inca Empire and now hosts 10,000 inhabitants. According to oral testimonies, the territory once extended from the Miraflores canyon to park El Ejido, the Avenida 9 de Octubre and north up to la Mañosca. In an interview with Comuna resident Arch. Silva, the boundaries extended to Mindo and Lloa, meaning that all the Pichincha Mountain was part of Comuna de Santa Clara (Silva, 28th August 2015). Currently, the Comuna is surrounded South by the one of the main infrastructural spines called *periferico*, a touristic cableway called Teleferico that extends to the Pichincha summit; North by the neighborhood of Las Casas and to the East it confines with the La Gasca neighborhood, in direct connection to the capital city center.

The location of Santa Clara is indeed very centric in the Ecuadorian Capital. Between Avenida Antonio José de Sucre, the access road of the comuna, and the central Mariscal Sucre neighborhood, the distance is just three kilometers, while the Universidad Central of Ecuador is just one kilometer away. The Avenida Antonio José de Sucre divides the comuna almost

vertically, while there is a perpendicular commercial spine on the road Humberto Albornoz. Located on this last road, are little shops and restaurants and an access road to the sport fields. Apart from a kindergarten and a small little medical center, these are the only social services for the whole commune.

According to neighbors' testimonies, the commune of Santa Clara de San Millán has been legally recognized since the XVI century. The certificate, known as the *'cédula madre'* (mother ID), was delivered to the comuneros directly by the queen of Spain. This document supposedly established the existence of the comuna and the limits of its territory. In the XIX century though, this document got lost, so until nowadays there are no original records that define its authentic status and limits. For this reason, since that time and for centuries, Santa Clara has been in constant controversy with the surrounding owners and the municipality, as there was no way of proving that water and land belonged to it. The official recognition of Comuna of Santa Clara de San Millán finally dates the year 1911, when the General Eloy Alfaro approved its legal status.

Throughout time, **the borders of this neighborhood** have dramatically and inexorably reduced. For Kingman and Hopfgartner, this happened because of different reasons: the prohibition of brick-ovens in the old part of the comuna; the imposition of municipal taxes; the construction of the Italian Embassy who obtained a big part of communal land in exchange for some merino sheep; and the transfer of another vast site to the Pichincha Bank who theoretically took it to consolidate a debt with the comuneros (Kingman 2006; Hopfgartner 2016). Santa Clara in the XIX century, indeed produced bricks for the entire city center of Quito and the comuneros were employed as laborers to build the Sucre Theatre, the Alameda promenade and the observatory (Bustamante 1992). Bustamante and Rayner underline strong pressures on Santa Clara's territories by the Church and private investors. Due to these tensions, comuna inhabitants had to move higher up the mountain slopes.

In recent years, the municipality provided

³⁶ The *Indios Libres* instead of being the *peones* or the dominated people, were the ones who under the Colony were free to have their own land.



The collective garden *TUKUYKUNAPAC- Manos en la Tierra*. Source: <https://www.facebook.com/Comuna-de-Santa-Clara-de-San-Millán>



Mingas for the forest *La Clarita*. Source: <https://www.facebook.com/Comuna-de-Santa-Clara-de-San-Millán>

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connections to potable water and sewerage. Now inhabitants have to pay for these services, whereas before water sourced from the mountain was managed and stored autonomously. For some of the comuneros, as Hopfgartner points out, this was an unjust act, as they stewarded the water for centuries (Hopfgartner 2014). As can be seen in the telecast, 'El Vecino en la Comuna' of 2011, many are still the works constructed by the comuneros through mingas, like road-paving, water canalization, green structure care, etc.³⁷.

As in other comunas, the cabildo in Santa Clara, has a central role in the entire administration of comuna management. Often accused of corruption, unlawful possession of money and doubtful relations with political parties, the cabildo has been criticized by the community. As of December 2014, however, Santa Clara has a very young and organized representative group. Led by the president, Victor Cochambay, after a year of assessment and endless bureaucratic work to fix many administrative snarls, he told me in a personal interview (28th August 2015), they were proposing many activities to strengthen cohesion and solidarity between comuneros. For example, at the time they created a Facebook page, which is still very active today³⁸. For a period, they also created an online TV channel and a local magazine called *El Comunero*³⁹. Through this platform, they announce assemblies, activities for young and elderly, minga convocations, football matches, etc. These activities spark a change for the history of the comuna, which

historically was not open to improvements and modernizations.

During the last four years, the comuna, with various interruptions, brought forward some desired projects, like the ecological park *La Clarita* and a common vegetable garden. *La Clarita* is located on the highest part of the comuna and is a project in which all members participated through mingas⁴⁰. The common garden, called *TUKUYKUNAPAC- Manos en la Tierra*, is composed of a hydroponic garden, a terraced greenhouse, and a selection of native herbs of the Pichincha forest. The project is very recent, it was inaugurated at the end of 2018. It is supported by NAAU-New Urban Agriculture Approach Project and has the objective of being a space of production and learning for the comuneros and the neighboring schools.

Land pressures and commodifications on comunas

Following Arboleda's discourse, comunas historically have felt pressures and attempts to privatize their communal land. State, municipalities, big landowners and sometimes even their own inhabitants have been responsible of comuna destruction. This has happened usually in the name of productivity, agrarian development or following the idea that their disappearance served to overcome an atavistic model better replaceable with institutionalized cooperatives (Arboleda 2014). Looking at history once again, reveals that land in the comunas didn't represent richness, but its products, like crops, water, and trees, legitimized the use of a space and gave it meaning. Despite monetary value being historically external communal ideals, the proximity of comunas to urban contexts and culture, triggered their disappearance (Romero 1996). It must be underlined that Santa Clara doesn't depend economically anymore upon agriculture and its population is not completely indigenous, rather

37 'El Vecino' is an Ecuadorian TV-documentary on neighborhoods and communes of Ecuador. The episode on Santa Clara de San Millán can be found at the following link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zUgSKeytkuo>.

38 Here there is the link to the page: <https://www.facebook.com/Comuna-de-Santa-Clara-de-San-Mill%C3%A1n-702395189897793/>.

39 Page url: <http://elcomunero2016.blogspot.com/>

40 Of the approximate 10.000 inhabitants, the comuneros inscribed are 2000. Mingas are mandatory just for them, and like in most other cases, if they do not attend mingas, they have to pay a fine.

primary *mestizos*.

In this case, where the land is of high economic value because of its vicinity to the city center, for some comuneros, the temptations to abandon the comuna and move to other parts of the city is high. Many comuneros, not have land titles, end up accepting ridiculously low prices from buyers who take advantage of them. It must be underlined that the comunas urbanization process isn't solely negative, but it must incorporate services, facilities, development, etc. Romero notes that many neighborhoods of Quito have become homogenized, as their unique hence diversities and peculiarities were obliterated during urbanization (Romero 1996).

During the last century two main policies put a strain the communal structure. First, the Agrarian Reform in 1964, also mentioned in Atucucho's case, which strengthens the land commercialization and enhanced massive agricultural production, marginalizing small-scale producers. Second, the *Reglamento de Disolucion y Liquidacion de las Comunidades Campesinas*, which was enacted by the president of Ecuador Leon Febres Cordero during his mandate in 1985. This last decree was designed to 'close out' all the comunas that were located inside the urban areas, transforming them into simple neighborhoods. However, as Rayner remembers, thanks to the support of 3 lawyers offered by the Democratic Left (*Izquierda Democrática*), Santa Clara won the cause and remained a commune (Rayner et al. 2015).

Looking with more detail at these different pressures on communal territories before the promotion of the Buen Vivir Constitution, there were numerous cases in which the municipality, illegally agreeing with the cabildo, led the sale of communal land through corrupted MAGAP officers who worked as land traffickers (Rayner et al. 2015, Romero 1996). More recently, the municipality of Quito expropriated communal land for public works, such as the case of the new airport in the east of the capital, well-illustrated by Manuel Bayon (Bayon 2014). In some other cases, land is appropriated through the 'excuse' of safeguarding environmentally protected areas. In the case of Santa Clara, the 'Spatial Plan for

Territorial Management' of 2013, identified canyons neighboring Santa Clara as protected areas. Similarly, the comunas around the Ilalò volcano, became managed by the Environmental Secretary of Quito's municipality almost automatically under a law called AIER⁴¹. After all, for how much the municipality wants to carry improvement interventions, the 'municipalization' of communal lands means more tax revenues and more land for investments. From the market perspective, commodification forces act as strong destabilizing factors for the communal equilibrium. Due to global privatization tendencies, which see land as capital accumulation imperative, comunas are fertile ground for speculation and base for possible mortgages and indebtedness; they are therefore yearned spaces for developers who are seeking profit (Harvey 2012; Rayner 2015).

41 As the engineer Ortega, of The municipal Secretary of Territory Habitat and Housing (STHV) told me in an interview, together with the comuneros, they created a Spatial Plan for Territorial Management (26 July 2011) which classifies the land use, occupation and buildable sites and risk areas of the Comuna (according to the art. 57-8). The article 2 of the Plan lists that this plan was done to "convert the Comuna into a democratic and sustainable space". Despite this plan, the Santa Clara de San Millán's cabildo decided not to accept it (Ortega 2015).



Agrarian Reform in Ecuador 1964.
Source: <https://especiales.elcomercio.com/planeta-ideas/ideas/7-diciembre-2014/50-anos-gran-cambio-campo>

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Ultimately, these various aspects have had repercussions also inside the comunas and increased internal disagreement. Issues frequently rise between who sides with the idea of privatizing their plot—in order to have the legal status to access to mortgage loans and municipal services—and who wants to keep the community and the land as intact as possible. With Romero's words, this happens because of an issue of logic. From one side, the comuneros want to protect the organization refer to their history with pride—y as a way to safeguard cultural features that is no longer the same. From the other side, there is a tendency to fragment communal property and envision its privatization. Therefore, as Bustamante et al. recall: "the buying and selling of land, weakens community ties and detracts from the sense of community institutions" (Bustamante et al. 1992; 38).

In this sense, from one side the organizational logic of the community is participatory, involving practices of solidarity, and historical vision; but from the other, involves conflicting processes, especially with respect to land ownership (Bustamante et al. 1992).

Analyzed from a more philosophical perspective, the Comuna's borders may be seen as Stavrides' thresholds or Estava's meeting point between the '*hombre comunalitario*' and the '*hombre occidental*' (Stavrides 2015; Esteva 2014). A space where the autonomous individual who is free to choose his own culture with the final purpose of marrying universal values and the 'communalitarian' man who lives as a person, as a hub of a network of concrete relations. The commingling of cultures that this proximity represents is manifested in two very different ways: one is built by the State and the Market and the other is the outcome of tireless mingas.

Potentialities and limits for the future

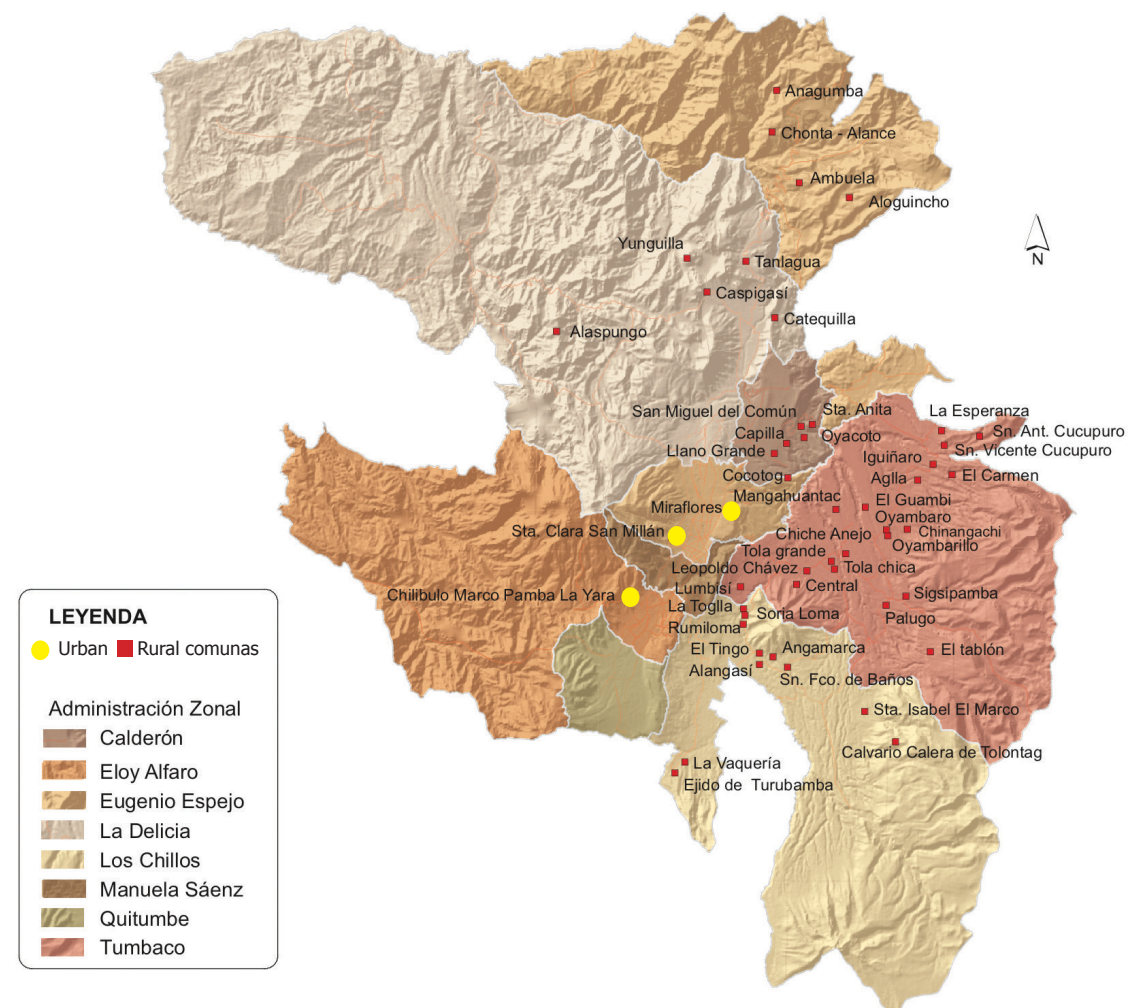
In Santa Clara there is little industrial equipment, not all roads are paved, there is a lack of employment opportunity and there are few available pastimes. Investigating this comuna is a way to envision how it can become a source of inspiration for a civilization which urges alternatives (Zibechi 2015). In a context where exchange values prevail and where the developing economic model is based

on quantitative and perpetual growth, a case like the Ecuadorian comunas could be seen as an alternative to the individualistic and patriarchal society of the Western accumulation mode (Zibechi 2015; Harvey 2012; Santillan 2016). The Buen Vivir constitution—described in Chapter one—which argues for 'going beyond capitalism' comunas for authors like the Ecuadorian economist Pablo Dalvos, could bring a light in the darkness of capitalism interpreted as producer of an epistemic colonization that neutralizes the capacity of thinking about alternatives (Zibechi 2015). For Santillan, indigenous communities which for decades are playing the role of insurgent struggles built from below, represent a counterpart to this systematic destruction of the collective perpetuated by this neoliberal thinking (Santillan 2016).

The Commune of Santa Clara brings to light the positives of being so close to the city center and at the same time partially immersed in nature. With its singular land property and rich history of collectivity and solidarity, it may represent one kind of alternative. From an administrative and political perspective, the comuna is indeed based on autonomy in decision-making (assemblies), enabling the voices of the comuneros be heard, and imparting direct responsibility of their territory. Even if these shifts look like essential components of recent post-capitalist postulations, it must be remembered that they are the products of centuries of cultural evolution.

Despite these social benefits, comunas like Santa Clara still need deep improvements from many perspectives, including a strengthened internal economy, land regulation, longer-term urban planning strategies, better involvement of the youth sector, and reinforcement of the cabildo's credibility. For this reason, comunas as entities, are here not praised for everything they are. They must not be kept in a crystal case that immobilizes comunas in their time. Instead, many improvements could be bought ahead by reconsidering them in relationship to the Buen Vivir 2008 institutional framework.

From an institutional perspective, we know that Santa Clara was declared a legal organization since the decree of 1911. Some years later, all Ecuadorian



Location of Comunas in Quito's municipality. Source: based on the Secretaria de Coordinación Territorial y Participación 2012.

comunas were finally recognized under a specific law, which is the 1937 *Ley de Organización y Régimen de las Comunas*. A revisited document was then published in 2004, but the comuneros are still waiting for a new law which gives them more autonomy. At the present moment, potential protections for this model can be identified in some articles of the Buen Vivir Constitution. Concerning specifically communes, in article 56, the Constitution states that the collective rights of the comuneros are recognized and that they can freely uphold, develop and strengthen their identity, feeling of belonging, ancestral traditions and forms of social organization. In article 57, between many points, it is written that its inhabitants cannot be displaced from their ancestral lands and that the State shall guarantee the enforcement of these collective rights without any discrimination, in conditions of equality and equity between men and women (Ecuadorian Constitution 2008). Article 60 then states that comunas that have collective land ownership are recognized as an ancestral form of territorial organization. Finally looking at the COOTAD, at articles 307 and 308, comunas are identified as 'basic participation units' and all citizens can enjoy popular initiatives.

Final postulations on Santa Clara

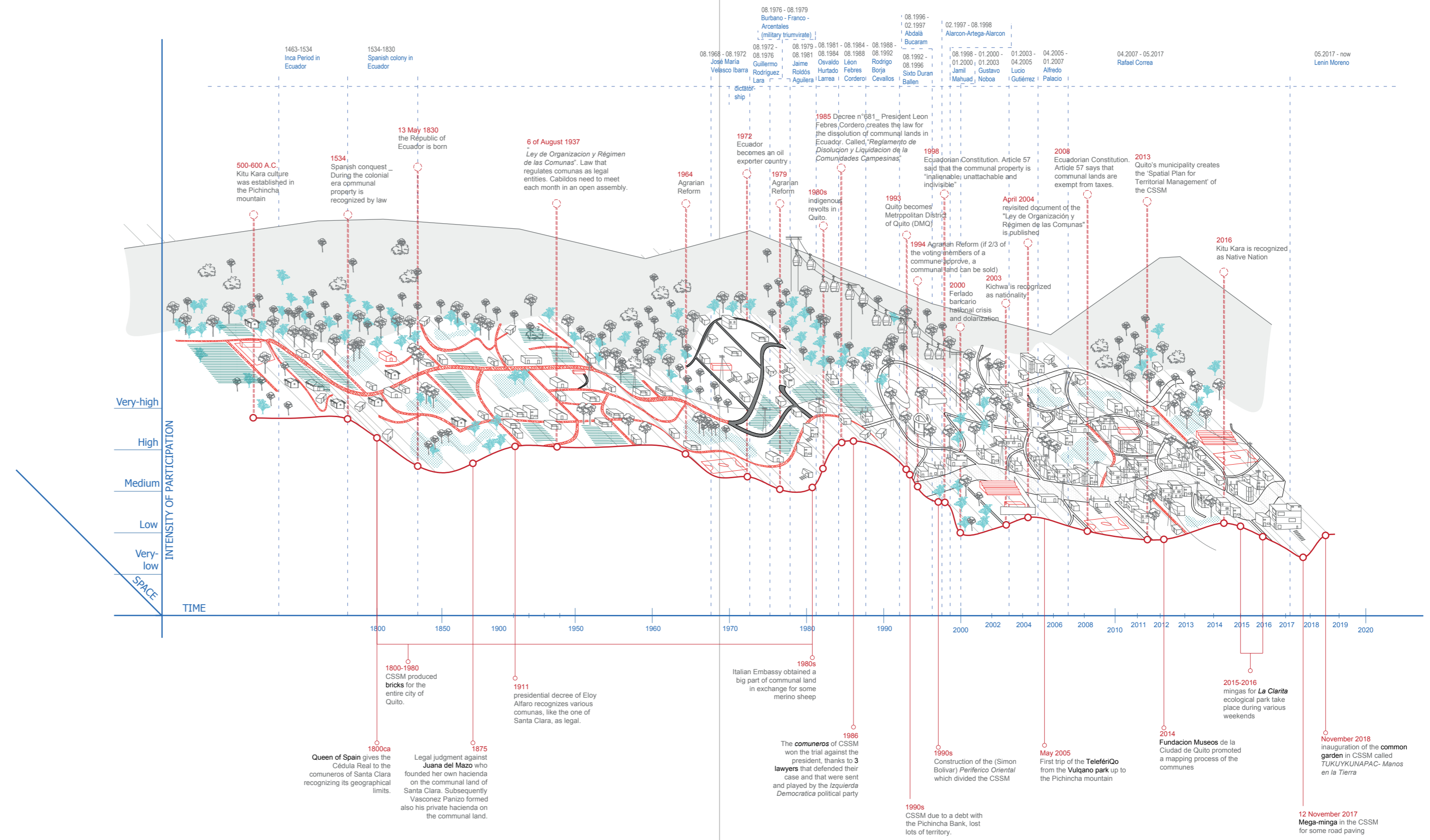
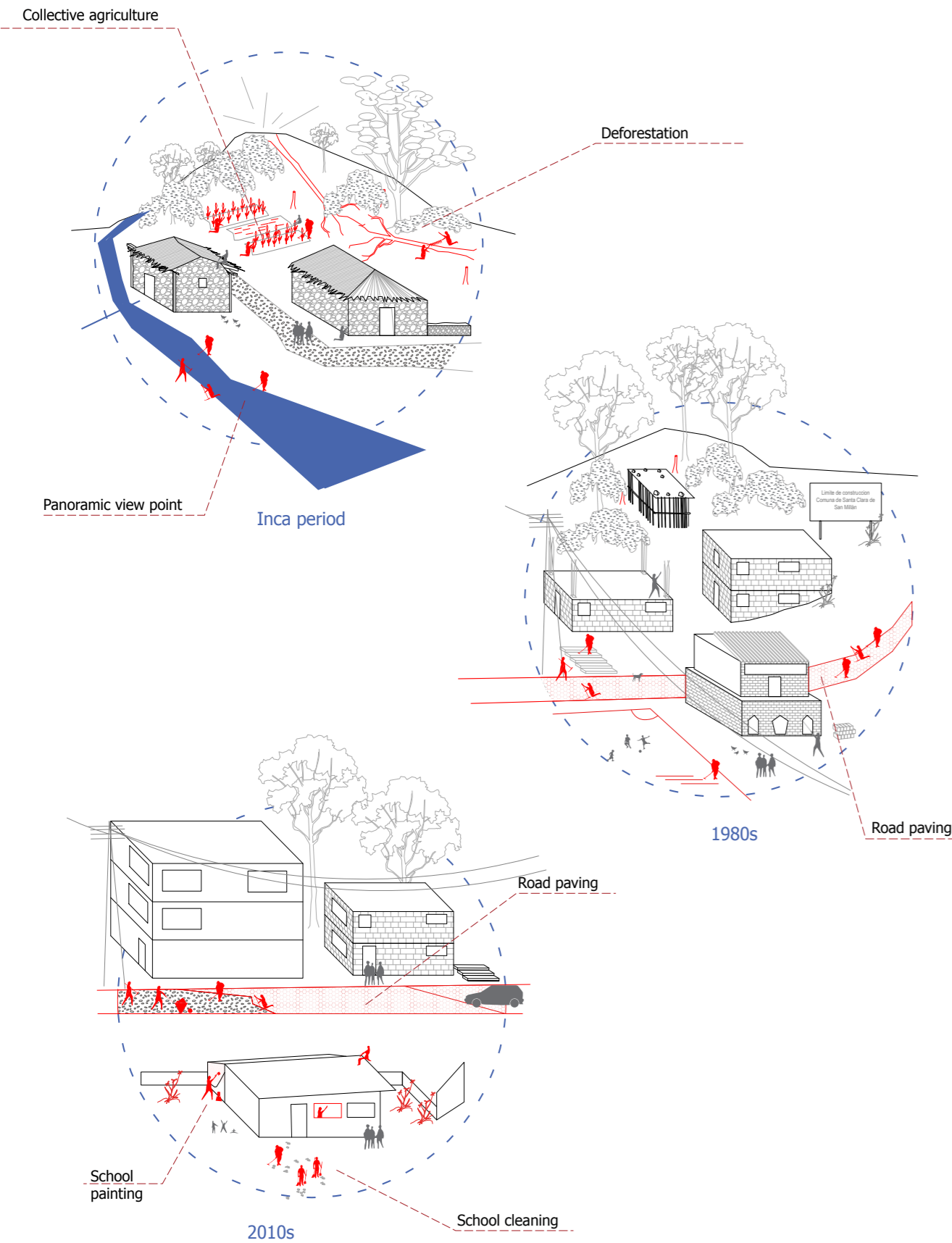
Concluding, if as Raquel Gutiérrez said at the *Congreso Internacional de Comunalidad* in 2015, "from the academic trenches you have to be in search of theoretical strategies to understand the ways of comprehending what is at stake and amplify it"; the challenge is really to understand how this could be seen, with all its possible improvements, as an urban referent (Santillan 2016).

Ecuadorian urban comunas are crucial also to foster interchanges, that won't forcibly contaminate the commune, but as Stavrides says, may create opportunities of negotiations and exchange between emerging collective identities in other parts of Quito, so that 'islands' will be avoided, while networks of solidarity enhanced. Harvey on this aspect said in an interview visiting El Tr3bol in Cali, Colombia:

If you start to have a network, there can be forms of communications that can go on, so that you don't have that kind of competition between neighborhoods for resources, and you can start imagining collective mechanisms that think about how can we reorganize the metropolitan region in moments of terrible social inequalities, different life chances in different parts of the city (Harvey 2015).

I believe that this idea of networks of collectivities inside a metropolitan region like the one of Quito, might assume a more realistic perspective, overall if studying carefully the potentials of cultural practices of self-management spread throughout its territory.

Santa Clara's Crono-topo line



The Crono-topo line of Santa Clara de San Millán
Source: by the author, 2019.

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Section 3.4

Comité del Pueblo

"The land is ours!"

The third case study I analyze is a very distinctive one; probably it is the biggest collective construction of Quito known to this day (Bravo 1980; Borja 2011). Its history makes it a profound Latin American example. The case of Comité del Pueblo was studied in 1980 by Gonzalo Bravo Araneda in his Master thesis in Social Science titled '*Movimientos Sociales en Quito Comité del Pueblo*', there are then other contributions like the one of the Ecuadorian sociologists Mario Unda (1986) and Francisco Herrera Aráuz (2011) dealing with the case. All of the three, with different intensities, focus mostly on Comité del Pueblo unveiling the political dynamics surrounding the construction of the settlements. There is then a chapter written by Didier Fassin in the book '*Mujeres de los Andes. Condiciones de vida y de salud*' (1992) specifically titled '*Más allá de los mitos. La participación política y social de las mujeres de sectores populares en Ecuador*' where the perspectives of women in the participation process of the neighborhood's construction are shown. More recently, I have found Ecuadorian theses, mostly in architecture, where the neighborhood is partially described as a case study mostly to define the context where they imagine a contemporary building. However, there is still very much to write on this very complex and exceptional case; the following contribution will attempt to fulfill this challenge.

When trying to find historic urban plans and architecture details of this huge (23.000 inhabitants), mostly self-constructed settlement, I found a total absence of public materials. It was thanks to a deep and revealing conversation with professor Antonella Fustillos, partner of Wilson Herdoiza—one of the main architects and organizer of the entire

process—that most of the materials I'm here sharing came to light. Fustillos and Herdoiza both gave me the copies of the TYSDIC journals, produced in the Faculty of Architecture of the Central University of Quito, and described most of the drawings and process details. Professors Fustillos and Herdoiza gave me also four books written by Herdoiza (1980; 1982; 1991; 1993) where the philosophy surrounding the creation Comité del Pueblo project is largely uncovered. These materials are all parts of their private archive, which from their words, were forcibly removed from all libraries due to the political left-wing message they carry forward. I here thank them again for the amazing opportunity they gave me to share this rich history with me.

With my contribution, more than what I have done with the other two previous cases, I offer a reading of the socio-political situation at the time of Comité del Pueblo's creation and the complex interrelations between its actors⁴². Most importantly, I unveil the creative urban project and the role of the minga in its development. The following section illustrates the political and economic situation of Ecuador at the beginning of the 70's. The second part concentrates on the involvement of the faculty of Architecture and Urbanism of the Universidad Central of Quito. The third looks at the project for the neighborhood itself, going through the historical different processes of investigation, design and realization. Finally, a fourth conclusive section critically looks at the

⁴² A crono-topo line also in this case is built and can be found at the end of the section.

Manifestation of Comité del Pueblo inhabitants. Quito City center. 1973. Source: TISDYC n°2 Arquitectura en la Reforma. Quito: FAU. 1973, p.68_ personal edits.



1_Comité del Pueblo map. Source: by the author, 2016.
2_Bird-eye view of CdP, 2017. Source: <https://www.bing.com/maps/aerial>

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actual situation of Comité del Pueblo vis à vis the challenging participatory expectations envisioned by the actual Ecuadorian institutional setting. The following contribution is conceived as a dialogue between different sources. Historical developments are illustrated through limited archival material and deep on-site research, while the lived context is drawn through fieldwork observation and spatial analysis. Both the phases are supported by a broad set of interviews and as in the previous cases these findings are represented in the crono-topo line at the end of this section.

A propitious momentum

The rise of the neighborhood called Comité del Pueblo dates back to the beginning of the 70's. As mentioned previously in the case of Atucucho, it was for Ecuador a historical period that combined radical events like the end of Victor Ibarra's dictatorship and the beginning of the national oil exploitation. It is in this precise moment—1971—when a 'vindictory' organization called *Comité Provienda Popular* (Committee Pro-Social Housing) rose. Its leaders were militants from the Communist Marxist Leninist Party of Ecuador (PCMLE) and its existence created a new alternative to the syndicalism organizations and the orthodox traditional left. The main political leader and founder of CdP was Carlos Rodríguez Paredes, a lawyer and professor at the *Universidad Central*. This movement manifested its discontent vis à vis the dictatorship, cared about the exacerbation of the urban problem in the city of Quito, the rise of consumerism and overall the housing issue (TISDYC 1972). During the first two years of its foundation, the extreme left wing organization realized wide campaigns in extended popular sectors of the city, and what boosted the affiliation to it was an appealing proposal of the existence of a housing cooperative that offered land for a *sucre* per square meter (Bravo 1980). What gave Comité Provienda Popular more credibility and hope was that, since the beginning, the housing demand for which the committee was fighting had a legal support. The group indeed referred to a decree issued in 1938 that claimed that anyone could apply

for the expropriation of rural and urban land⁴³.

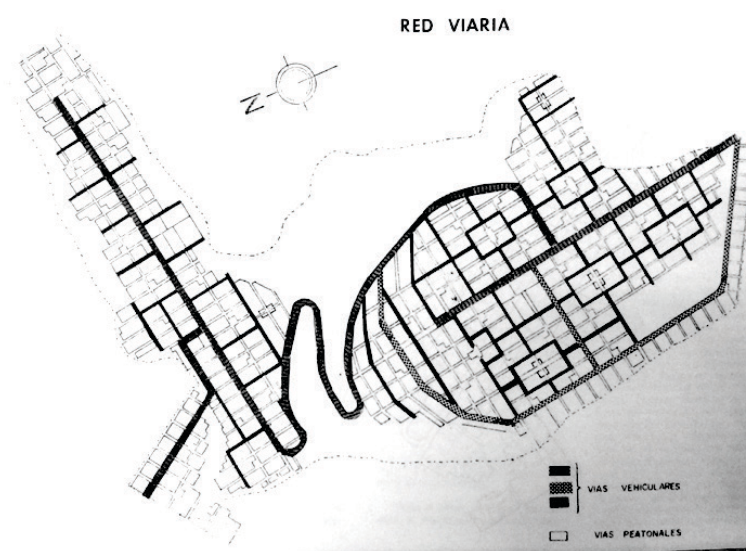
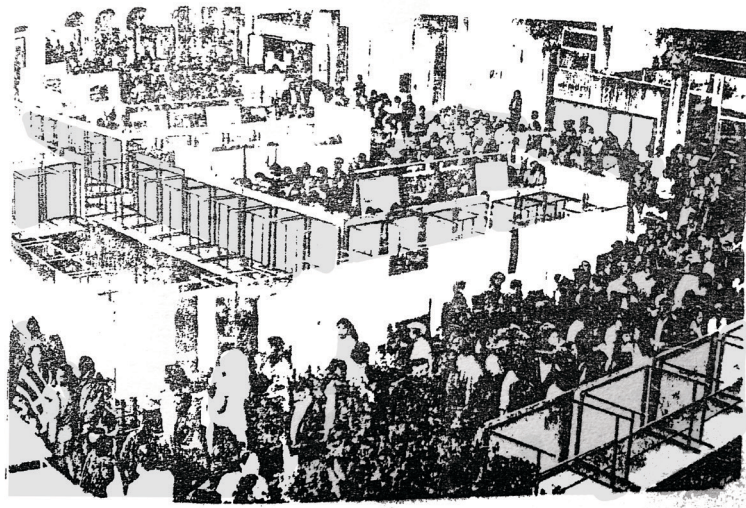
What also avoided their repression from the state and municipal institutions external to the political party, was the fact of never sponsoring land occupations and illegal procedures, giving hence right to private land. Their slogan was "The land is ours! If they won't giving it to us, we will get it!". After having fought against the State and the Church who were not allowing the movement to exercise the previous decrees, from Bravo's interpretation, that same slogan changed its meaning to:

"The land is ours! If they won't give it to us we will buy it!" (Bravo 1980, 85).

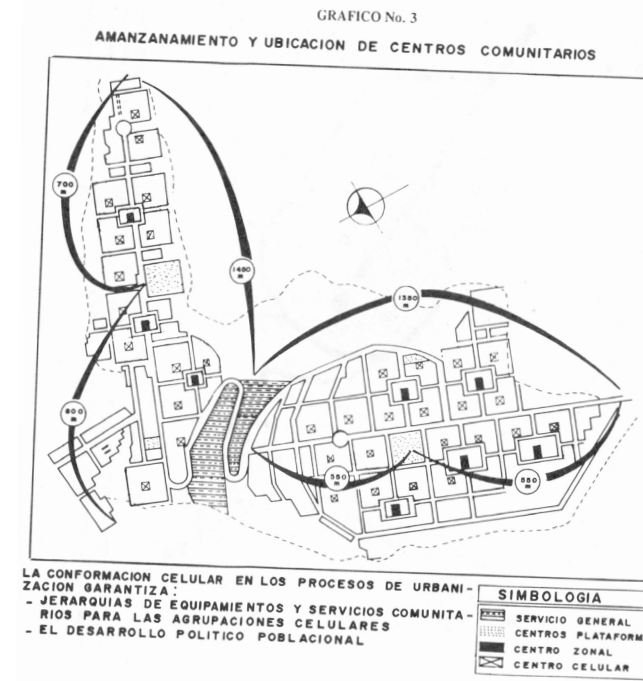
Bravo was referring to the fact that the movement decided to collect the money from all members and wanted to buy a land for all the people that needed a house as a private acquisition. Divided into brigades, the members were looking for a hacienda to be bought somewhere in the capital, and while finally negotiating the price for 'La Eloisa'—a land located in the northeast of Quito. The movement sought technical advice from the Faculty of Architecture and Urbanisms of the Universidad Central (FAU) where the faculty was asked to design a new neighborhood for all the members of the Comité and, as will be seen next, it was for that time, but still nowadays, quite an original match⁴⁴.

43 The specific decrees were the n.165, 168, 181, 194 of July and August 1938, were expedited by general Alberto Enriquez Gallo and allowed the expropriation of territories for housing construction if were asked by popular committees in vital need. (Vistazo 1980; Bravo 1980; Borja, 2011).

44 From the interviews to Francisco Zapata (October-November 2016), still active leader of the movement, the money was collected in a collective bank located in the headquarters of the collective in the city centre of Quito, between calle Junin and Alborada. Each member, during over 30 years has been depositing their savings to acquire their plot.

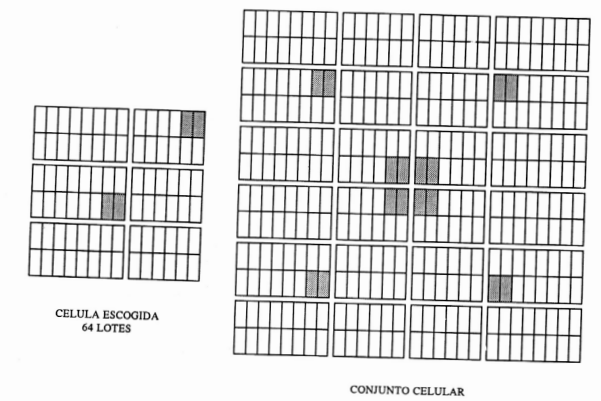


1_ TISDYC handbook n°5 cover, 1976. Source: Elaborated by the student of the FAU, UC, Quito.
 2_ Questionnaires hanged on tables in the Universidad Central of Quito. Source: TISDYC handbook n°3, 1974, 33.
 3_ Road infrastructure map. TISDYC handbook n°5, 1976, 28.

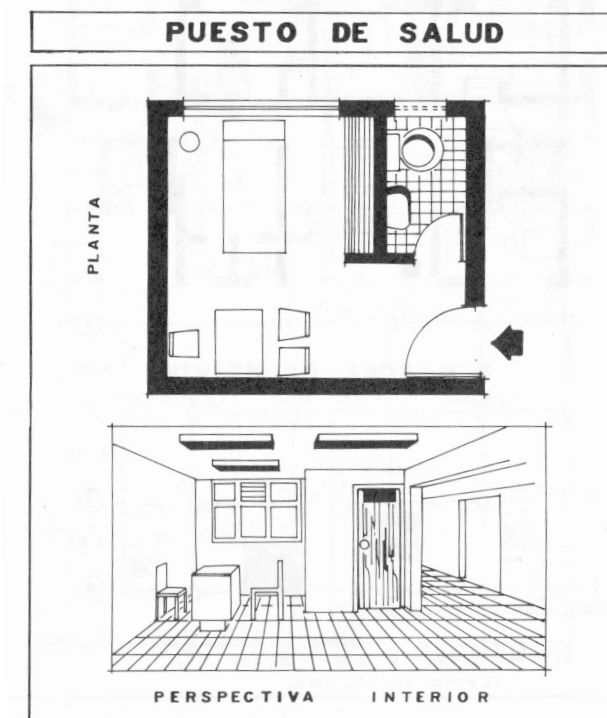


1_ Walking time to reach community centers in CdP. Herdoiza 1996, 111.
 2_ Plots, cells and platforms of CdP. Herdoiza 1996, 110.

ORGANIZACION ESPACIAL

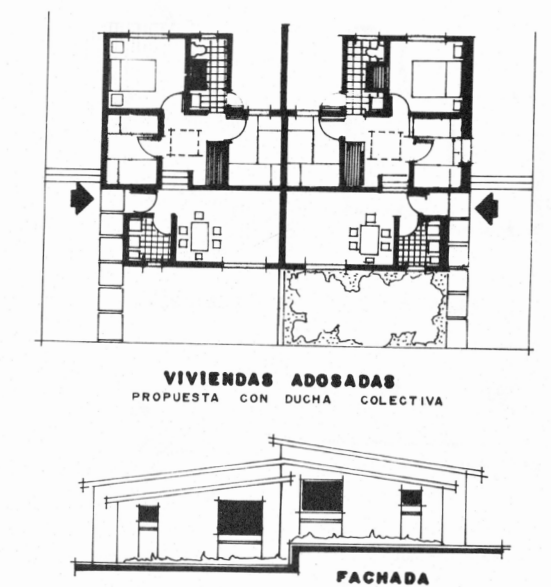


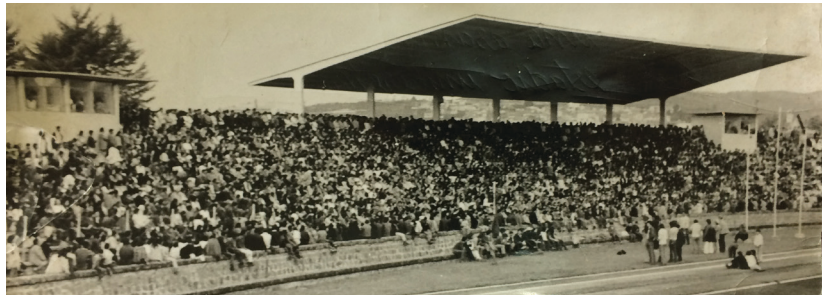
- UN AGRUPAMIENTO RECOMENDABLE ES DE 80 FAMILIAS, QUE REQUIEREN DE UNA CELULA BASE DE 84 LOTES, DE LOS CUALES 80 SON PARA VIVIENDA Y 4 PARA EQUIPAMIENTOS. (2 EN LA UNIDAD CELULAR Y 2 EN EL CONJUNTO CELULAR).
 - LA ADICION DE 4 CELULAS BASE CONFORMA EL CONJUNTO CELULAR, CON UN NUCLEO DE SERVICIOS COMUNITARIOS DE 8 LOTES



1_ Proposal for Health center. Herdoiza 1996, 116.
 2_ Proposal for Housing. Herdoiza 1996, 114.

PROPUESTAS ARQUITECTONICAS VIVIENDAS PROGRESIVAS PARA EL PROLETARIADO





1-2_Plots announcement in Universidad Central stadium, 1974. Source: Francisco Zapata.
3_During the construction of CdP. Source: Carlos Arias.

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FAU Involvement

As soon as the FAU accepted the challenge, on the 16th of November 1973, the TISDYC workshop opened its doors. Acronym of *Taller de Investigación Social, Diseño y Comunicación* (The 'Research, Design and Communication Workshop'), was conceived as a module to involve students in a University Extension (*Extensión Universitaria*) programme. It consisted in complementary classes and laboratory-work expressly incorporated into the teaching and learning system: a practical way to make students learn alternative lessons with a direct contact with social reality. Moreover, behind its specific application, a further ideological significance laid at its base: the will of diffusing a political consciousness and reform the academia, getting rid of its conservatism and technocracy (Herdoiza 1982; 1990).

The founder of TISDYC and main responsible for its first application in Comité del Pueblo, was the architect and Full Professor of the FAU, Wilson Herdoiza, who simultaneously to this was taking a PhD in Social Sciences in the Sorbonne of Paris⁴⁵. In France, Herdoiza was surrounded by personalities like Alain Touraine, Manuel Castells, and Henry Lefebvre and their European approach on the power of social movements, the class struggle and the 'interdisciplinary tactic', were great influences in the formulation of the workshop.

During the inauguration speech of the TISDYC workshop, Herdoiza said: "None of architects who have graduated from our universities are working in the poor urban or rural areas...where there is lack and need of housing, drinking water, health care, education, etc...where resides the people that make up the real essence of this country" (Herdoiza 1993; 84). For Herdoiza, this lack needed to be compensated with urgency. His call to defend the

⁴⁵ The TISDYC format has soon become an institution applied in many different contexts (ex. 28 neighborhoods in the Northwest of Quito, in Imbabura, Manabi, Amazon Area, etc.) and which lasted in the faculty of the School of Architecture for over 30 years.

autonomy of the university was in direct contrast to the common perception of the architect as designer of beauty and functionality, embedded in a bourgeois optic, limited to the levels of the form without understanding content (TISDYC n°5 1976).

The student's point of view were instead expressed in their 1971-1976 publication *Arquitectura en la Reforma*. Their essays illustrated the building process of Comité del Pueblo, but also critiqued dictatorship, mining policies, and the indifference of the State in the Ecuadorian housing problem. In one essay we can read:

"Our fight, our commitment is together with the people. Today, the university starts marching shoulder to shoulder with the popular sectors" (TISDYC n°2, 0).

The description of the Project and its implementation

Students and teachers weren't asked to draw just some architectural details, but instead, to participate in an enormous machine of design, citizens' involvement and physical construction of the neighborhood. The effective work started mid-November 1973 and the plots were delivered to the families on the 24th of January of the next year; a tour de force that lasted only two months. (TISDYC n°2 1973) From the tales of Mrs. Fustillos, that specific day of 1974 was a memorable one. The rector of the Universidad Central and the deans of the various faculties were invited to the stadium of Quito. The families waiting to know the number of their new plot were elegantly dressed and for every number communicated through the megaphone, a burst of applause filled the stadium.

The families in need of housing were a total of 4,500, the land was 140 hectares and 65% of this population was completely excluded from accessing institutional funds and in most cases didn't possess any kind of savings (Zapata 2016, Bravo 1980). Concerning the design group, as will be seen later, because an adequate academic knowledge to link the university with the popular sector didn't exist, the methodology developed for this pioneer case

was strict and very organized. Departments, blocks



The '*Media aguita*' in Comité del Pueblo. Source: Carlos Arias.



1_A day of minga in Comité del Pueblo. Source: Carlos Arias.
2_The first open-air market in CdP. Source: Carlos Arias.



1



2



3



5



4

1_Mingas in Comité del Pueblo. Source: TISDYC handbook nº5, 1976, 30.
2-3-4-5_Mingas in CdP. Source: Carlos Arias.

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and groups of students were divided in 'horizontal' and 'vertical' coordinating systems. The work was developed partially inside the university and for the rest was spent on site. On site were done the fieldworks and the mingas, while inside the design of the settlement and conferences.

The philosophy of TISDYC, rejected the building standards as conceived by the municipality. Dimensions of sidewalks, circulation ways, building unit form, etc., had to be reconsidered starting from a deep knowledge of the needs of the new inhabitants. One of the most striking aspects of this new model was indeed the inquiries prepared by the students. Engraved on sheets of iron and then printed on big papers and distributed in various classes of the FAU, questionnaires were ready for each family to be filled in (Fustillos 2015). Questions referred to the formulation of the family, number of members, age, sex, education, income, which kind of job the parents were doing and in which part of the city, etc. The new inhabitants were asked as well to describe their current house and if they were able to construct and work in team. In the summer of 2015, talking with an old dweller of Comité del Pueblo, which still lives there and took part at all the process of its foundation, he described that he remembered very well when the families were invited to the faculty of architecture to fulfill the questionnaires; from his perspective it was a great honor to be involved with such institution (Juan 2015).

Concerning the work on site, in the queries '*Arquitectura en la Reforma*', students illustrated their study of the topography: a hilly land surrounded by canyons. On the decision of the plots then, knowing the amount of inhabitants they had to host, the design team decided that the easiest and most effective way to divide the land was through multiples and submultiples of a base model. Established a base of 3 by 3 meters, the plots were of 189 square meters equals to 9 meters by 21, and

the built morphology was finally the grid⁴⁶.

Composed of plots, cells and platforms, the project provided different kinds of equipment for each scale and each of them had to be attainable at walking distance. Also for public facilities, municipal standards were rejected and there was a brigade of students responsible for visiting existing facilities in Quito, such as clinics and kindergartens, to measure beds, common areas, etc. to begin reflecting on the formulation of new parameters for Comité del Pueblo. For the simplest plot unit, the cell, they envisioned communal services as laundries and showers, hall for socio-cultural activities and sport⁴⁷. At the platform level, they centered schools, gardens, kindergartens and small health centers. While at the biggest neighborhood level, they identified the need of two high schools, a hospital, a politic/sport center for mass gatherings, a space for fairs and markets and the main green areas for recreation and sports. TISDYC students didn't design the facilities, but just defined were they could be. On this, at page 30 of the 5th TISDYC handbook, students write: "We could have planned big markets, hospitals, schools according to the best techniques and functionality, but these drawings would have never had the chance to be built...therefore facilities will

46 An aspect of the grid, which can be related to a vast urban literature as an inheritance of the colonial times (Lopez Moreno 2001; Mazza 2015), but yet contradictory respect the students' will of taking distance from urban standards. This morphological urban decision is also highly criticized by Antonella Fustillos during her interview. She saw this urban form, more than the result of a 'new architect' conception, rather like an own-goal respect the critic the university movement did about 'modern rigidity' like the Le Corbusier's one (TYSIDIC N°5 1976).

47 The calculations were painstaking, for example for the showers they defined an amount of 11 of them per cell, imagining 28 daily turns, satisfying the needs of 7 families a day and 80 families a week (making specific exceptions for Saturdays and Sundays) (TISDYCn°5 1976).



1-2_Views of CdP. 2016. Source: by the author.
3_View of CdP. Source: El Vecino en la Comuna video. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4sRvUM-cZV0>

take shape just depending on to the economic resource of the community" (TISDYC 1976, 30).

Concerning the design of the mobility network they planned a high number of pedestrian roads and few vehicular ones. The neighborhood, still now, is connected to the city with just one main boulevard, Avenida Jorge Garcés.

In relation to the commercial/industrial sector, as there were no investments to imagine development, the neighborhood was designed as entirely residential⁴⁸. Despite the many ideas of leaders to develop a solidarity economy out of the capitalist model, most of these concepts soon failed. One was the attempt to import rice—without intermediaries—from the Ecuadorian coast to Comité del Pueblo and another concerned developing urban agriculture behind dwellings to organize local markets (Zapata 2016). Unfortunately, the projects were either wrongly calculated or too limited to sustain so many inhabitants.

Referring finally to basic infrastructure of sewage, water, light and telephone connections, the designers knew the State would never finance them and that the only way to have these resources was to imagining their sites and later delegate the responsibility of their realization to the ingenuity of the inhabitants. On the implementation of the project, as soon as plots were assigned, even before all the studies based on inquiries concerning facilities, housing prototypes, public spaces, etc. were completed, there was a strong pressure from the members of the committee to start building their dream: their house. Due to economic limitations, it was not imaginable to build the cornerstones of the project by simply calling a construction company, but neither was it imaginable to wait any longer; therefore the neighborhood was entirely

⁴⁸ Comité del Pueblo neighborhood, for being promoted by a left-wing party, self-constructed and designed by architects, can be compared to the case of Villa el Salvador in Peru. In Villa el Salvador though, an entire sector was planned as industrial, which was a farsighted choice that still nowadays supports the local Peruvian economy (Sotelo 1994).

self-constructed by the committee.

The history of community work of the future inhabitants of Comité del Pueblo was crucial for this point in development.

As Plöger writes: "social deprivation and the desire for progress were significant drivers for community mobilization and collective action" in all Latin American countries (Plöger 2012, 214).

But in this specific Andean case, we must consider that most of Comité's members were farmers used to working collectively mainly for agricultural purposes, or if coming from more urban contexts, were as well used to practice minga for paving roads and building a communal house (Guevara 1957). At this point students, even if initially were called just to design the plan, didn't slow their personal and active involvement. Even if the university revolution during the late 60's mid 70's had a worldwide echo, in the case of the Universidad Central, student efforts weren't simply a protest or a proposal, but a tangible realization of a renewed role of the university student.

It is needed to underline that a cooperative project of such magnitude is not known at the Ecuadorian level and could be counted amongst the biggest at the global scale (Bravo 1980; Zapata 2016). The majority of the future inhabitants of Comité del Pueblo, who at the time were renting a house in Quito's city center, were already organized in sectors depending on the neighborhood in which they were living. Of the ten sectors, each had various representatives directly chosen by political leaders and the collective meetings were every Monday at 4pm⁴⁹ (Zapata and Sotelo 2016).

When on site, students and inhabitants were divided into 12 zones—the same ones Comité del

⁴⁹ Comité del Pueblo neighborhood, for being promoted by a left-wing party, self-constructed and designed by architects, can be compared to the case of Villa el Salvador in Peru. In Villa el Salvador though, an entire sector was planned as industrial, which was a farsighted choice that still nowadays supports the local Peruvian economy (Sotelo 1994).

Pueblo is divided by today—and through mingas, they physically implemented all the work, including clearing, and flattening grade and tracing roads (Fassin 1992). Mingas worked during weekends, day and sometimes night, they were attended by both men but mostly women, all future CdP inhabitants always had to prove to the leaders of their attendance, not just to mingas, but also to general political meetings in the city center (Fassin 1992; Borja 2011). Each family had a notebook on which the attendance was registered with stamps. From the interview to Zapata, he said that attending to political meeting wasn't compulsory, while talking with former inhabitants, they said it was absolutely mandatory in order to obtain the land title (Bravo 1980; Fassin 1992; Arias 2016).

Concerning the individual dwellings, even if some models were conceptually designed according to the 'class' of the inhabitants (proletarian, middle-class, etc.), they were never built as designed and when the inhabitants built their houses by themselves, it was without following any precise guideline: each dwelling was built over time by each family, with their own techniques and means⁵⁰. The first settlement was called 'media-aguila' and was generally positioned along the road (Zapata and Sotelo 2016).

Lived context and institutional participation

Walking through Comité del Pueblo nowadays can be astonishing: in little more than 40 years, it has evolved rapidly making it hard to recognize its unique history amongst other Quito's post-informal settlements. Densification has been impressive: at the beginning of the '80s the population was 10,000 people, and now it increased almost by five times with a current population of around 46,000 inhabitants (Borja 2011). As Bravo wrote, CdP

⁵⁰ Apart from envisioning in numbers the probable inhabitant growth for the future, we cannot really find a students' reflection on possible modifications of housing units over time. While for contemporary authors like John Turner, designing housing as a progressive unit, was a necessary step (Caminos 1969).



TISDYC handbook n°5, 1976. Source: Elaborated by the student of the FAU, UC, Quito.118.

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was planned for 5,000 families and around 23,000 inhabitants, but in the late '70s almost half of the plots were unoccupied. This happened for various reasons: in some cases, the owners waited for more services and infrastructure before moving (and they preferred to continue paying rent in the city center). In other cases, people discovered the location was too far from their work and they didn't want to lose their old clients. Others instead conserved the plot for their children (Bravo 1980). As can be seen in the image on the side, now it has many buildings with 4, 5 or even 6 floors.

Right now, public spaces and green areas are almost nonexistent. Productive sites were never realized and still with Godard's words: "it looks like a 'dormitory suburb' where the scarcity of infrastructure and services is worrying" (Godard 1998, 87).

As a matter of fact, most inhabitants continue to work in other parts of the city, so that the dependency to Quito during peak hours unleashes severe traffic congestion (Maximy 2000). From recent testimonies, the neighborhood doesn't practice any more mingas, nor assemblies and collective spirit is low. Finally, Comité del Pueblo is now known as a dangerous place particularly after the sun sets (El Colectivo 2015; Herdoiza 2015).

In ascertaining why all this has happened, several aspects of politics and design can be identified. Concerning over-densification, in 1975 the FAU concluded its involvement with Comité del Pueblo, deciding to concentrate on other cases that needed their limited and complimentary support. During my fieldwork, I discovered that as soon as the university departed from the neighborhood, people started selling parts of their plots to other members of their family, friends or strangers filling with buildings of the entire property and many of the new floors were rented.

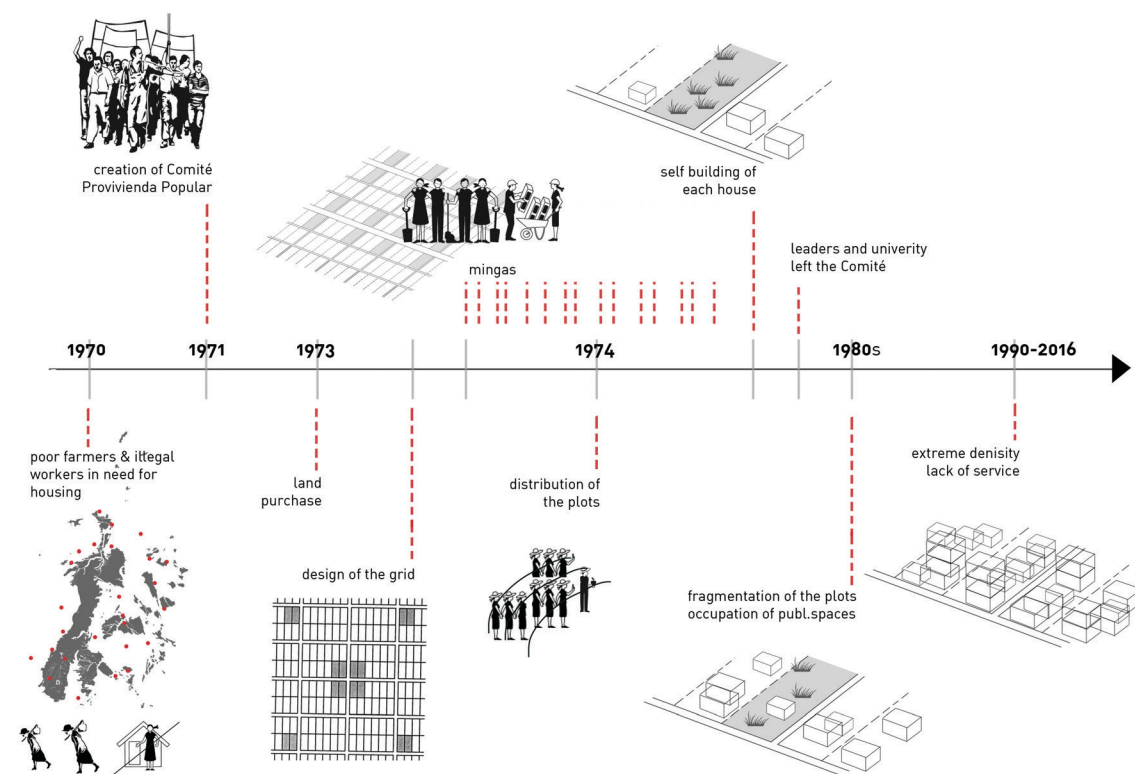
On public spaces and common areas then, the cause of their pulverization was another: in 1985 precisely 2,468 plots were confiscated to the committee by the government of León Febres Cordero, with the intention of turning down the popular organization. Areas for schools, playgrounds, communal halls, parks, etc. were deprived illegally to the community

and were given to militaries or relatives of the politicians (Zapata 2016; Arias 2016). This indeed justifies the lack of public spaces nowadays.

On the road network, designers made the mistake of not having envisioned that in 30 years almost every family would possess at least a car, so that most road sections are very narrow. Moreover, about the creation of commercial or industrial areas, as previously mentioned, it was a lack that even today would be almost unimaginable, due to the space's saturation. On other design issues regarding topography, the social scientist Gonzalo Bravo specified that the work of the students wasn't so accurate, and that the committee had to call external engineers to adapt the plan to the sloping ground, causing deep tensions between the faculty and the leader (Bravo 1980).

It's hard to criticize the perseverance, completeness and integrity of the students' work. Yet perhaps elements of over regulation—such as the above-mentioned example of the showers—coupled with the simultaneous economic restrictions, created a gap, perhaps avoidable if incremental stratagems would have been imagined. On the political representation then, looking at it in the aftermath, there are also many contradictions, the first and foremost: the fact of not having left much space to the people to organize by themselves. From Bravo's point of view indeed, the Comité as a political movement, adopted a structure very similar to the so called 'democratic centralism' of Leninist origin, which served to justify and legitimate a vertical and authoritarian structure where participation was minimal and reduced to execute the solutions coming from the top. Bravo insists on the fact that citizens were controlled by the party and that the participatory attitude was limited, furthermore, attempts to sensitize the people from the base were not stimulated and had curtailed creativity and imagination (Bravo 1980; Garcia 1985).

Nonetheless, a strong spirit of collectivity was present until the PCMLE (Communist Marxist Leninist Party of Ecuador) became involved in Comité management. 1978 indeed is still recognized by the former interviewed leaders, as a breakout for the party's political stability: it was the moment in



Study of the temporal evolution of Comité del Pueblo. Source: by the author

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which the Latin American Communist summit took place and it left strong rifts and tensions between the conservative core and the new Maoists⁵¹. This aspect contributed to the negligence of the party to accompany the growth of neighborhood leaders; substantial, overall in Latin American contexts, for an equitable and honest neighborhood course, sharp against the infringements and defender of the common good.

The moment in which CdP was developed was a complex and extraordinary economic conjuncture of oil exploitation, economic prosperity, the rise of capitalist development standards, migration to the city from rural areas and an unprecedented rise of the left-wing party. After having given a general panorama on methodological and design processes on which Comité del Pueblo was founded, I argue that this case is more than just a neighborhood located in the north-east of the city of Quito; but rather a rich model of social struggle, legality, controversies and solidarity between variegated actors.

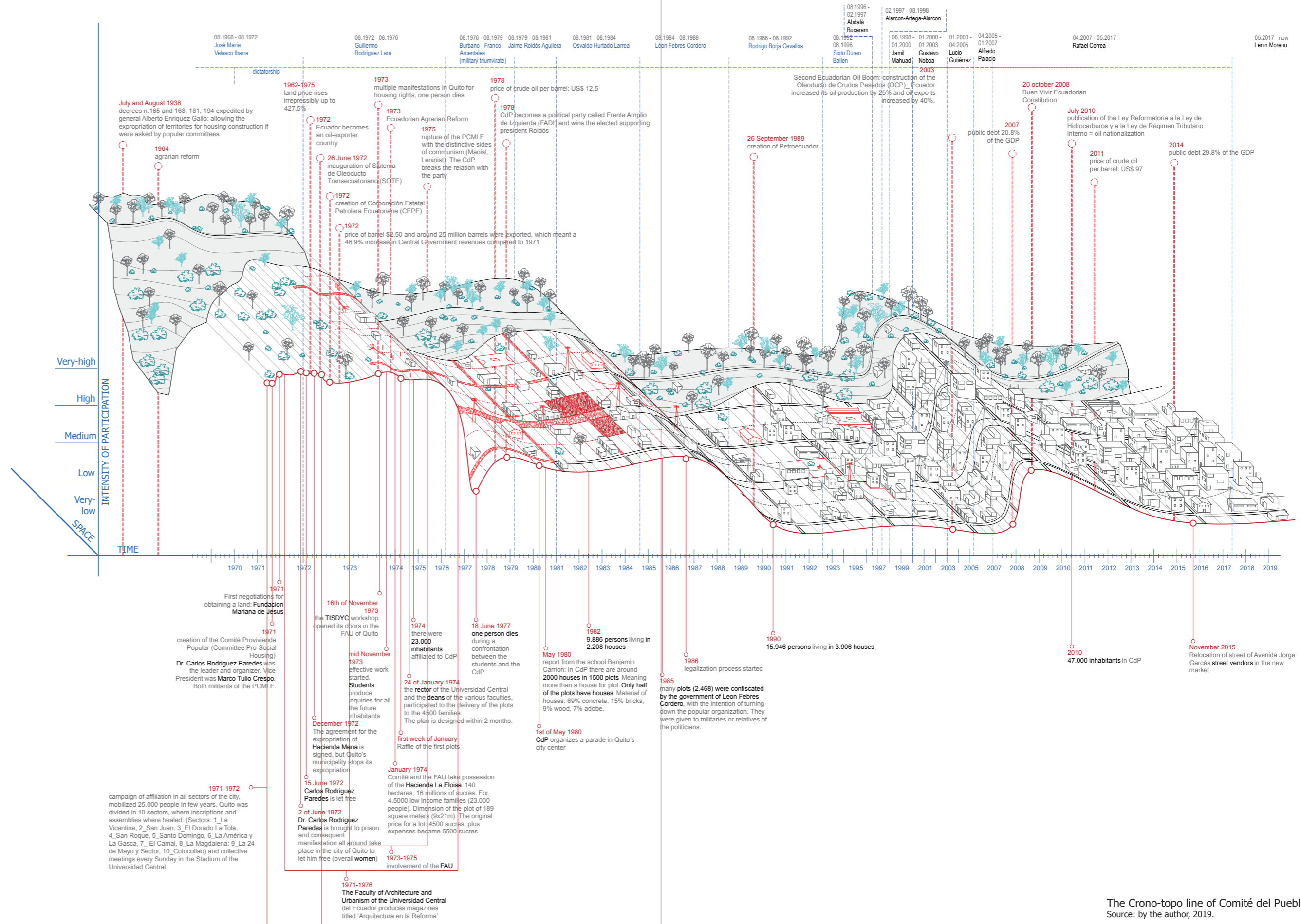
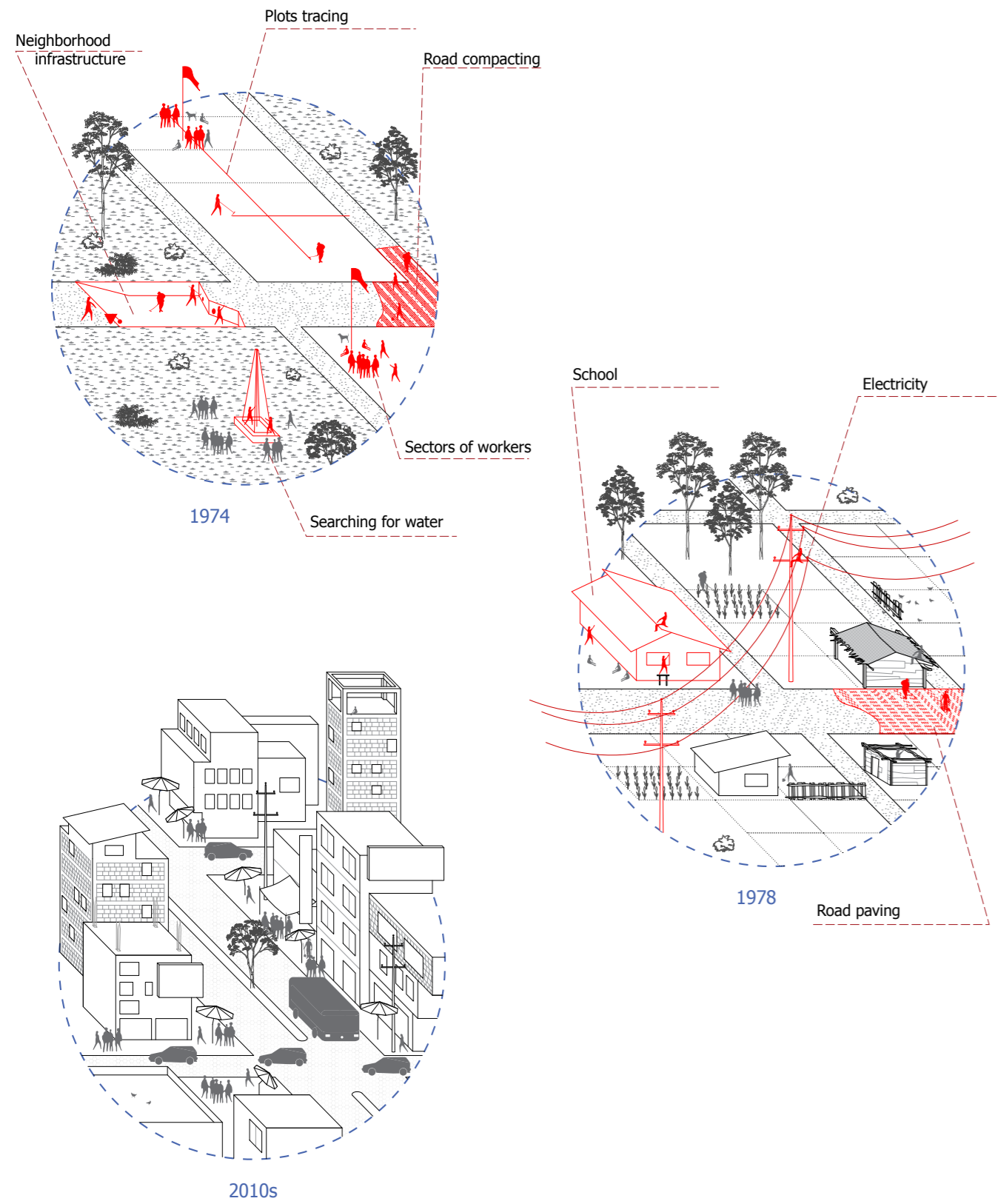
The originality of this case opens up unexplored paths for the time; precisely for the radical reflection on the social role of the urban designer. This perspective is very active nowadays (Boano 2014; Cruz 2015), considering that relinquishing top-down impositions, involving citizens development and learning from bottom-up practices are principles often recalled in institutional contexts. This cutting-age relationship between citizens/institutions/urban-space, was represented by the pedagogical role of the university by enhancing the interchange between academia, the social sector and a sole party; nowadays, this institutional opening towards people, can be caught in some aspects of the Ecuadorian Buen Vivir Constitution, precisely as mentioned in the other cases, the right to the city in article 31. This dictum opens the doors to renewed interactions between institutions and citizens.

Comité del Pueblo, even if more than forty years have passed, can be still considered as one of the few attempts to satisfy the right to the city of Quito, as Lefebvre conceived it; not indeed just the right to citizens to access services that the city offers, but the right to reshape the city under their own needs (Lefebvre 1974).

Finally, it is considered that this case of Comité del Pueblo could function as a litmus test to inspire citizens, politicians, urban designers, activists and academics. I believe indeed that further critical readings in this case could help rise reflections on the actual socio-political and economic situation and could possibly influence the conception of contemporary and culturally integrated, inclusive participatory processes. These considerations offer a way to change the trend of the actual government resorting to forensic participatory methodologies, oblivious to the Ecuadorian cultural and social setting.

⁵¹ Completely different perspective can be seen in the case of Villa el Salvador, where the CUAVES (*Comunidad Urbana Autogestionaria de Villa El Salvador*) had a strong political role for decades (Sotelo 1994).

Comité del Pueblo's Crono-topo line



The Crono-topo line of Comité del Pueblo
 Source: by the author, 2019.



Comuna de Santa Clara de San Millán, 9th of August 2015. Source: by the author

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Section 3.5

Lessons learned

Up to now, we have seen the evolution of three neighborhoods that showed stories of self-construction, fights, autonomy, corruption, direct-democracy: complex dimensions of one face of Quito that shouldn't remain neglected. These sectors are seen by most of Quito's inhabitants as the backside, the shame of the city, yet these hidden faces constitute the past and present history of most Ecuadorian urban neighborhoods. At first sight indeed, with the eyes of an architect or an urbanist, particularly from a European perspective, it is very easy to criticize these places: either for their esthetics, often precarious settlement structures, little coherence between the building styles, and lack of public spaces and services, etc. Raul Zibechi on this wrote:

"The classist categories, the blind trust in the forces of progress, the application of concepts coined for other realities, have distorted the reading of those spaces where the popular sectors oscillate between rebellion, the dependence of caudillos and the search for benefits from the State. It insists on considering the slums/borderlands/marginal areas as a kind of anomaly, almost always a problem" (Zibechi 2007, 188).

There is yet another side to this discourse that easily romanticizes the efforts of the poor, the excluded; the one flanked by feelings of displeasure because 'they' didn't have the same chances 'we did' and because the State took too long to provide support.

By closely describing and analyzing Atucucho, Santa Clara de San Millán and Comité del Pueblo, I have attempted to go beyond these platitudes. The crono-topo lines have helped combine the many data sets for each case. This method has become a way of

representing how self-constructed and self-managed neighborhoods are promoters of a complex net of interrelations between stakeholders where not only the ingenuity, but also the capacity of attracting people and funding is vital for the survival of the whole community. Starting from the assumption that these are spaces with emancipatory potentials, it is important to summarize both negative and positive lessons learned:

Being autonomous from the State, by decision or by force, requires enormous personal and collective efforts, time, and resources to provide missing services that in other cases the State shares equally between all citizens. Under an economic system that requires people to devote most of their time to a job, in the cases of Atucucho, Santa Clara de San Millán and Comité del Pueblo, finding this resource to meet community needs was almost a nightmare for some people (Fassin 1992). Moreover, concerning an issue of territorial scale, as we saw in all three cases, despite the existence of the neighborhood assemblies, not all events can be controlled locally: actions at the national and global extent may trigger effects on the small scale. Exemplary is the list of national events present on the top of each crono-topo line. An example that we saw is indeed how dollarization influenced the dropping out of collective works.

When observing the spatial configuration of the settlements, I noted living conditions that could be uncomfortable and potentially unsafe for inhabitants, including exaggerated densities, extreme narrow streets, construction on slopes, and lack of public spaces. Through analysis, I reached the conclusion that one of the causes of these design mistakes is



1_Neighborhood leaders of Atucucho 80s'. Source: Francisco Zapata.

2_Neighborhood assembly in Comité del Pueblo, September 2017. Source: <http://www.quitoinforma.gob.ec/>



View of Quito informal settlement. Fauillette 1996, 99.

set of stakeholders including universities, NGOs and International Aid Organizations are crucial.

This proposal reinforces Arturo Escobar's statement: "borderlands are the spaces par excellence where novel understandings and practices of design from ontological and autonomous perspectives might most effectively and radically take place" (Escobar 2017, 8).

In the three cases of Atucucho, Santa Clara de San Milán and Comité del Pueblo, we saw that internal decisions made through assemblies allowed each inhabitant to partake in direct democracy, making them responsible and engaged in their territory. Participation has characterized their entire history of community solidarity—with all exceptions—has been the keyword for their inhabitants. With all their contradictions, these communities show us alternative ways of embedded city making. They demonstrate how collective spaces can be co-created and collectively maintained.

The next chapter addresses how to envision a future based on these discoveries and the Buen Vivir principles for these neighborhoods and the entire Quito metropolis. By imagining a utopian future based on lessons learned from each case study, I attempt to envision how to resolve past mistakes by combining them with the institutional potentialities offered by the Buen Vivir framework. Under this lens, relations between the minga and multidisciplinary stakeholders are precious legacies for the contemporary Ecuadorian reformation of collective space.

a lack of experts' support, including engineers to avoid risks, economists to foster internal economy, urbanists to design scales of services, infrastructure and collective spaces. Moreover, I found out that development can possibly be fueled by other channels than the market, proving that progress is not at all cost monetizable. In this sense, a multidimensional

Chapter 4

Quitopia

This last chapter, called Quitopia—as the thesis title—is a proposition. I respond to the research question by envisioning a future for Quito, where the Buen Vivir Constitution is fully respected and the minga practice returns to the center of the collective spaces' creation and maintenance. This exercise of imagination proposes scenarios that are utopias. This fourth chapter is divided into five main sections. Initially I detail the problem statement and research question and I propose my answers. Secondly (section 4.2) there will be a short introduction on the use of scenarios and utopias as tools to open paths for the future of cities, and in a third moment I propose a stakeholder diagram that envisions the administrative reconfiguration of how mingas in Quitopia could be practiced and supported. The fourth part offers a scenario for the entire metropolitan scale and a set of maps identifying potential collective spaces that in the future are imagined as co-managed and improved together with the local communities.

Finally, in section 4.5, in order to better understand the relation between Quitopia and the Buen Vivir institutional framework, by continuing the crono-topo line of Atucucho, as an exemplary case, shows how a complex set of actors (citizens, urbanists, anthropologists, engineers...) co-design and produce the renewal of the neighborhood's collective spaces under the constant support of existing and precise Ecuadorian laws.

Revisiting what has been presented up to now, in the introduction I announce the problem statement and the research question that triggered the entire investigation; subsequently, I present the minga practice and its evolutions through time. After showing the methodologies of investigation used throughout the research, I present three case studies. At this point, after years of doctoral research digging into the complex Ecuadorian terrain, I offer some possible answers to these composite relations and challenges.

I would like to recall that the identified problem statement is: despite Ecuador's recent innovative Constitution giving ample space for involving citizens in territorial decision making and promoting to some extent local autonomy, I couldn't find recent experiences where these institutionalized aspects are put into practice. Along the research I discovered that when Quito's municipality attempts citizen involvement in decision making processes, yet it doesn't consider any culturally-based approaches and tends to over-impose structures external to local representative settings. Beyond the previously criticized mega-mingas programs, the history of collective city-making is never imbricated in actual territorial projects. Attempting to bridge this gap, the formulated research question is: considering the opportunities and challenges presented by the Buen Vivir on autonomy and participation, in what way can collective city-making reduce Quito's inequalities and what role can urbanism play in this setting?

As Chapter One illustrates, the Buen Vivir institutional framework allowed the re-emergence of many principles common to the pre-Hispanic Andean culture, including reciprocity, collectivity, the right to nature, respect for different urban cultures, etc. but also much contemporary attitudes like the right to the city. After the long process of the Ecuadorian Constituent Assembly (2007-2008), the involved members sent a message that was both utopic and innovative. Their desire for a development beyond the consolidation of capitalism set into motion a mode of innovation for Ecuador.

From my perspective, even though collective

Considering the opportunities and challenges presented by the Buen Vivir on autonomy and participation, in what way can collective city-making reduce Quito's inequalities and what role can urbanism play in this setting?

Section 4.1

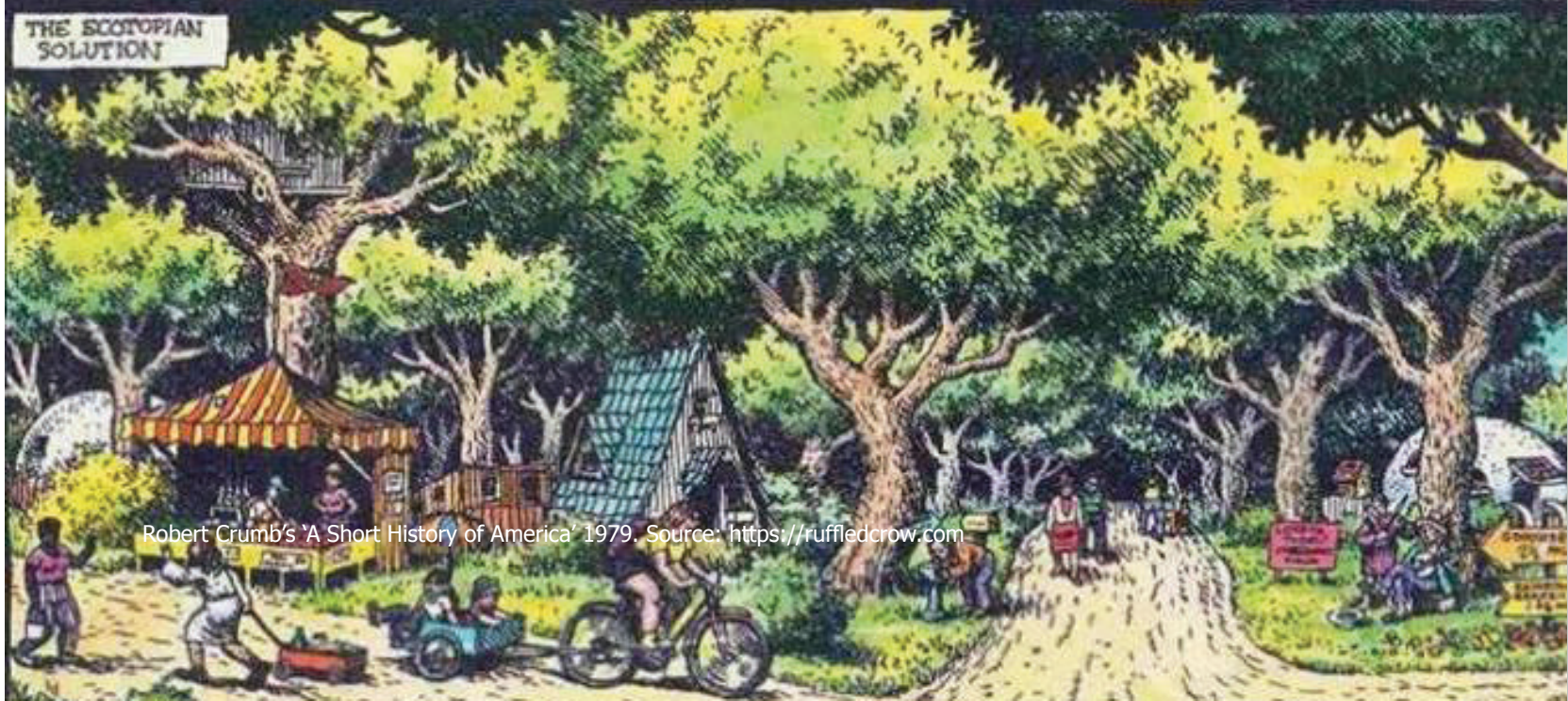
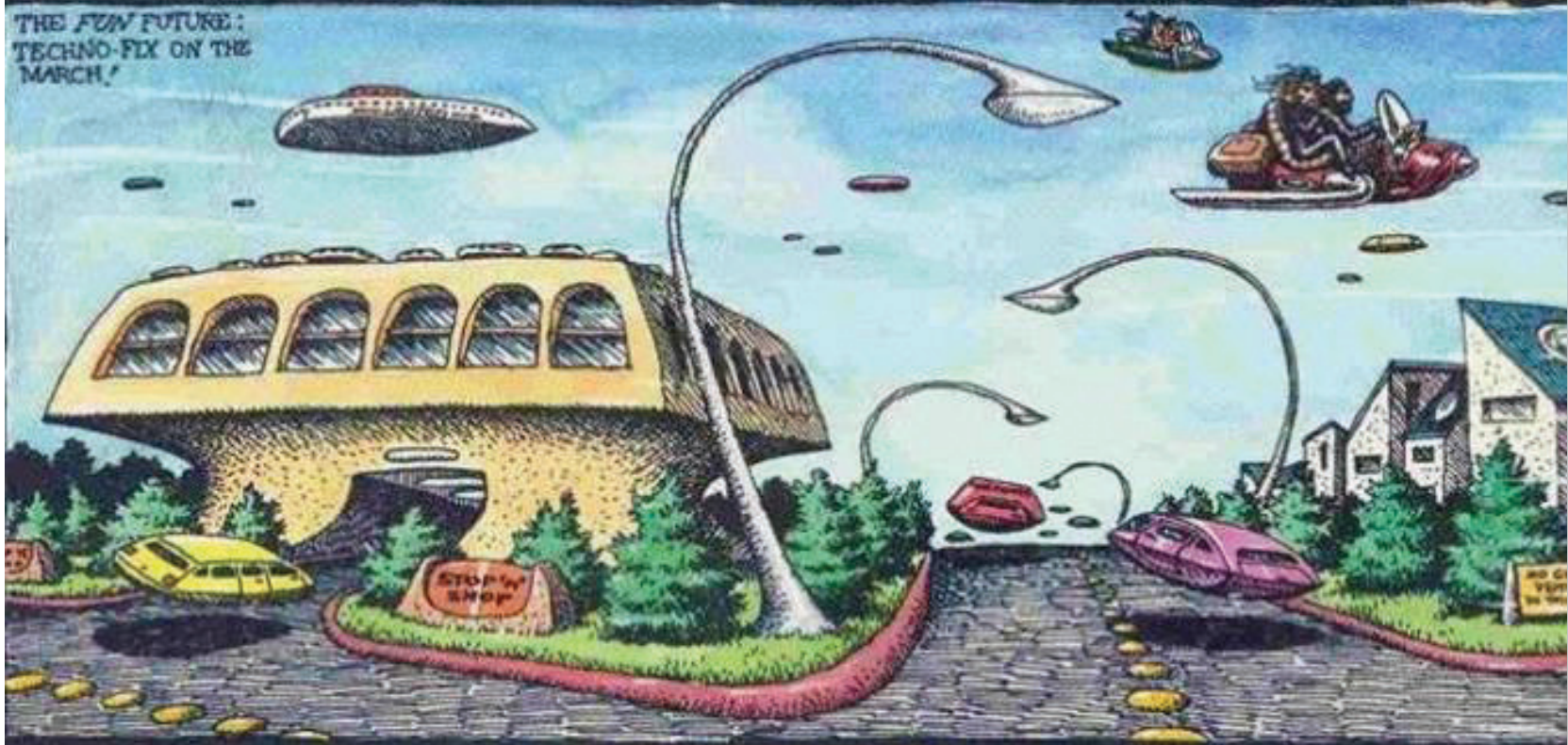
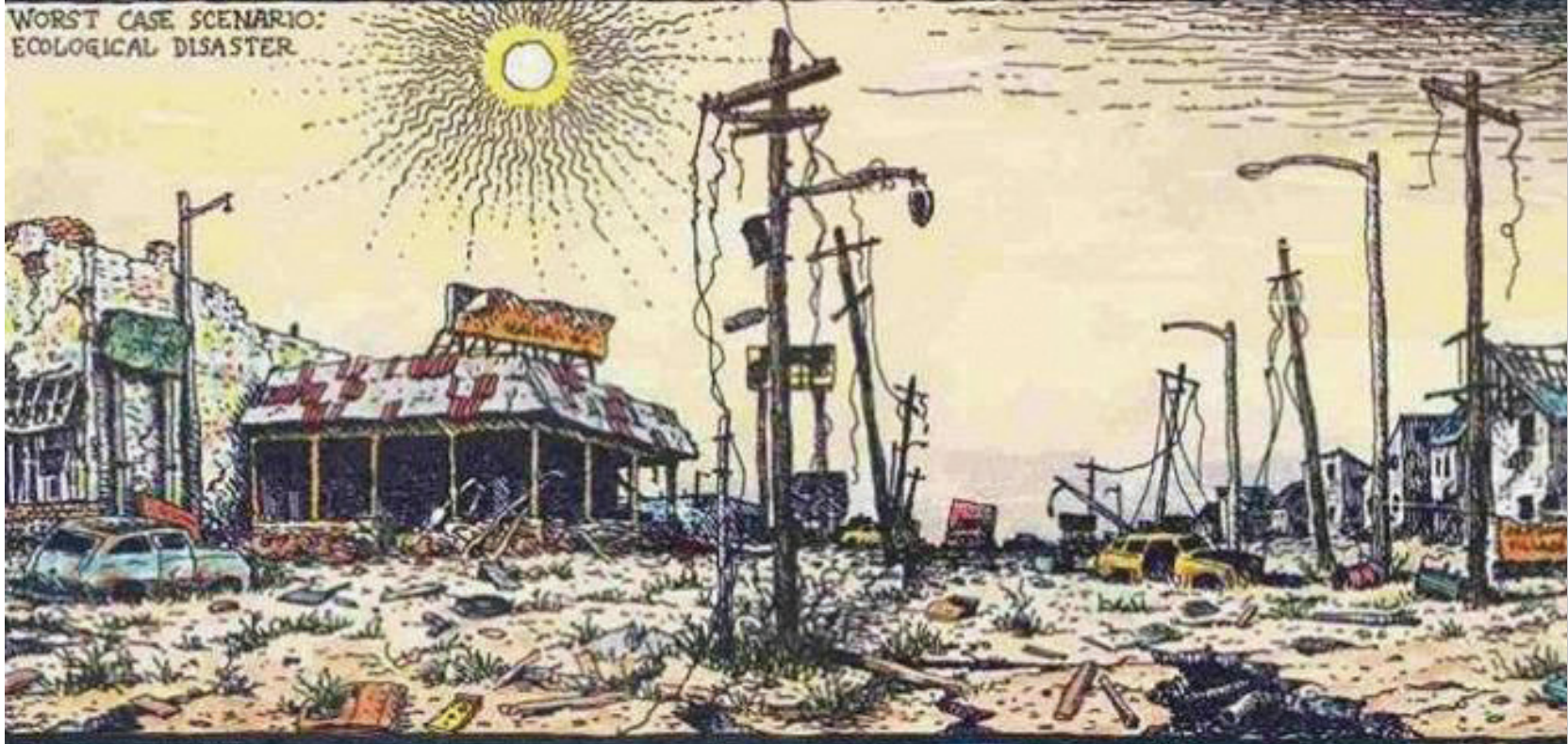
Research question and response

city-making is not present as a term in the Buen Vivir Constitutional and National framework, it is crucial to employ this tool overcoming urban inequalities. At the beginning of Chapter Three we saw how, both economically and spatially, Quito is still terribly unequal; as in most worldwide urban cases, the least privileged are located in the most peripheral and environmentally risky areas. Historical study of the neighborhoods Atucucho, Comuna de Santa Clara de San Millan and Comité del Pueblo however, proved that precisely these inhabitants, though stigmatized and excluded by other inhabitants of the metropolis and by Quito's public institutions, used their ingenuity to survive city. Community members and leaders within these neighborhoods cyclically co-decided, co-produced, and co-maintained their collective spaces. The crono-topo lines of each case elucidate that collective city-making hasn't been at all a linear process. Indeed, studying the motivations of actors involved in the assemblies and mingas, underlines how self-management is as empowering as it is complex. However, I believe that the many acts of collectively building piece by piece city portions, is a method of urban development that should be reconsidered vis à vis the search for alternatives to capitalism that the Ecuadorian Constitution looks for.

Moreover, from a territorial planning perspective, we saw that from one side Quito's municipality hasn't embraced the potentialities of the Constitution, and from the other—often recalled throughout this thesis—mingas and neighborhoods' self-organization are not free of contradictions. For these reasons I

feel that a joint effort, from both sides, should be made, but overall that institutions and citizens need to work hand in hand. Naturally, this process already has a long history in territorial planning, as illustrated in Chapter One, where citizens participation began to be recognized as a planning tool to foster inclusion in the '50s. However, what I propose is a leap forward to a utopia, where Buen Vivir principles are fully respected and where collective spaces are managed and maintained actively by the local citizens together with the support of different stakeholders, among which are urbanists.

Before digging into the more managerial proposal (section 4.3) and the spatial projects (sections 4.4 and 4.5), I would like to emphasize why it is useful to adopt scenarios to imagine urban futures, and why utopias, even if they are clearly unreachable, serve to progress the formation of new reachable ideas.



Robert Crumb's 'A Short History of America' 1979. Source: <https://ruffledcrow.com>

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Section 4.2 Scenarios and Utopias

Along the history of urbanism many utopic scenarios have been designed. Let's think about Broadacre city from Frank Lloyd Wright (1934-35), or Agronica by Andrea Branzi (1993-94), or the image here on the side of Robert Crumb's 'A Short History of America' (1979), where an Ecological Disaster, a Fun Future and The Ecotopian Solution are depicted. Other examples are the workshops organized by Warren Ziegler, founder of 'Futures-Invention Associates'—Denver 1976, to help different kinds of groups, including urban planners, envision futures that help them cross conflicts⁵².

Scenarios

Without further bringing up specific examples, let's see what scenarios are and why they are useful tools for the construction of the project of the city. Many urbanists, overall recently, decided to work through scenarios; from the IUAV University of Venice we have, for example, the works of Bernardo Secchi, Paola Viganò and Paola Pellegrini. From their perspective, scenario construction is not a methodological refinement, but an epistemological reversal. Bernardo Secchi wrote that the construction of scenarios makes the project of the city and the territory an operation profoundly different from the past (Secchi 2002). For Ash Amin, British Indian geographer, currently Chair in Geography at University of Cambridge, scenarios help indeed to think of an alternative from the imposition of design proposals dumped from above, dropped without any regard for the knowledge, preferences and lifestyles of the people (Amin 2014).

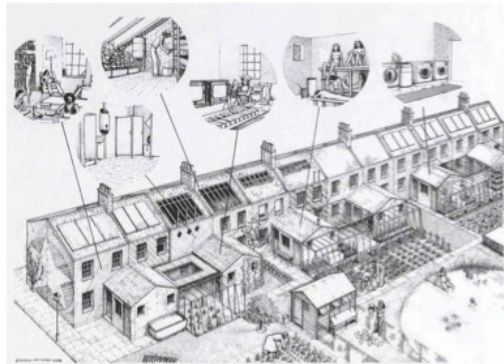
We must specify that scenario construction is very different from creating forecasts, which is the representation of technocratic images; as Ziegler reminds us, in the case of scenarios, the future is mobilized as a way to foster creative imagining. Thinking creatively in this sense means imagining dynamic, complex and uncertain futures (Ziegler 1991; d'Auria 2018). The construction of scenarios, as Paola Viganò wrote, is a flexible and at the same time rigorous instrument that questions the limits and the points of collapse of phenomena in progress or changes of course (Viganò 2002).

Manzini & Jégou, in their famous book "Sustainable everyday" (2003), promote the use of scenarios as a design methodology that enables us to draw what a given context might be like if certain conditions were met (Manzini & Jégou 2003). The question to imagine futures is normally "what if...?". Scenarios generally tend to be extreme, Secchi tells us that if in an over-determined field of phenomena—precisely that of urban transformations—some aspects are isolated and questions about what would happen if these phenomena reached their extreme or probable consequences are risen, we obtain images of the future, scenarios precisely, which are, at least partially, incompatible and it is this partial antagonism that makes them interesting (Secchi 2002). Viviana d'Auria on this tells us that a way of building scenarios starts from what is described as its objective and then takes a phenomenon to the extreme consequences (d'Auria 2018). What also is crucial in this process, is to take a clear and radical position.

The usefulness of building scenarios for Neil Brenner, Harvard professor of Urban Theory, is that: "speculative visions and scenarios serve to fuel

⁵² One of his most known workshops was titled 'A World without Weapons' in 1987.

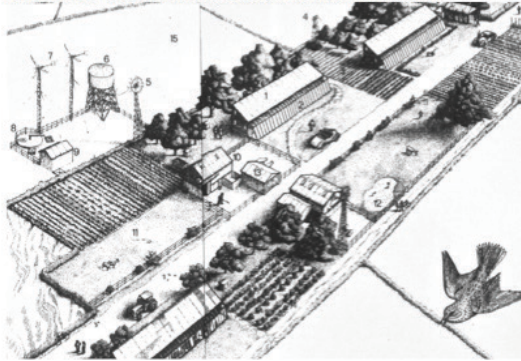
1. AUTONOMOUS TERRACES



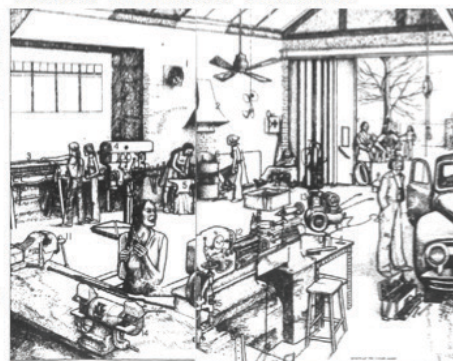
VISION 2/ COLLECTIVIZED GARDENS



VISION 3/ AUTONOMOUS HOUSING ESTATE



VISION 5/ COMMUNITY WORKSHOP



Source: Clifford Harper in 'Radical Technology' 1976. Retrived from: <http://greengalloway.blogspot.com>

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the debate on specific issues" and that should be "socially oriented and ethically motivated" (Brenner 2015, 137). Scenarios are hence tools, as Magnaghi wrote, "to raise the shot on the possible transformation horizons" (Magnaghi 2000, 154). They help to nurture creative discussions and debates on expectations and desires (Irwin et al. 2015; Magnaghi 2000).

Utopias

Let's then for a moment focus on the fact that in this chapter I'm not just proposing scenarios for Quito, but utopic scenarios. A Utopia is the idea, ideation or representation of an ideal civilization, fantastic, imaginary and unrealizable, parallel or alternative to the current world (Merriam Webster dictionary 2018; Treccani dictionary 2019). One of the first books of philosophy, famous for its utopian content is *The Republic* of Plato, where Plato formulates his political thought and ideas about how a society should work to achieve perfection.

However, the term 'utopia' itself recently completed the 500 year anniversary from its first use in the book written by Thomas More in 1516⁵³. He created the word from the combination of the Greek words *ou-* used to express a negation in general- and *topos-* which means place-, so the expression utopia etymologically means 'nowhere'. The concept of utopia was recurrent in European Renaissance literature, as shown by the well-known novels *The City of the Sun* written by Tommaso Campanella in 1623 or the *New Atlantis* by Francis Bacon in 1627, stories that, emulating the work of More, describe ideal communities and harmonic societies frequently located on imaginary islands protected by the ocean from all external interference (Giraldo 2014).

Why discuss again of utopias? As an extreme effort of imagination, as said by Paola Viganò during her *Honoris Causa Doctor* ceremony at the Université Catholique de Louvain, utopias start from a critical point of view of the current reality and conceive a world that is better than the present. Spaces in this projection are ambiguous and in continuous oscillation. Moreover, as written by Giraldo in his book on the *Buen Vivir*, utopia has the pretension to break the established order and imagine a different one, it has the immeasurable task of rewriting life, of helping us to question and rethink life in society. A utopia helps us to avoid reality as something natural, unbreakable, unmodifiable and without alternative (Giraldo 2014; Mannheim 1987).

Although today the word utopia is often used in a negative sense to denigrate an optimistic project that seems fantastical from the moment of its formulation, Stefano Rodotà writes in his book, *Solidarietà. Un'utopia necessaria* (*Solidarity. A necessary utopia*) (2014) that the utopian dimension is the condition that allows us to overcome social fragmentation and mechanisms of exclusion. Envisioning utopian scenarios for Quito is a challenge to reflect, to walk forward, as the Uruguayan writer Eduardo Galeano would say⁵⁴, in order to imagine a better society; a place where the Ecuadorian Constitution is the basis for opening up new radical possibilities. As we'll see in the next concluding sections, by taking the *Buen Vivir's* right to the city to an extreme, I imagine Quitopia: a city were collective and shared spaces are co-invented, co-produced and co-maintained, inclusively and in solidarity.

⁵³ For Thomas More, Utopia was a communal, rationally organized society, where houses and goods would be collective and not individual property, and people would spend their free time in reading and in art, as they would not be sent to war, except in extreme situations; therefore, this society would live in peace, happiness, justice and in full harmony of interests.

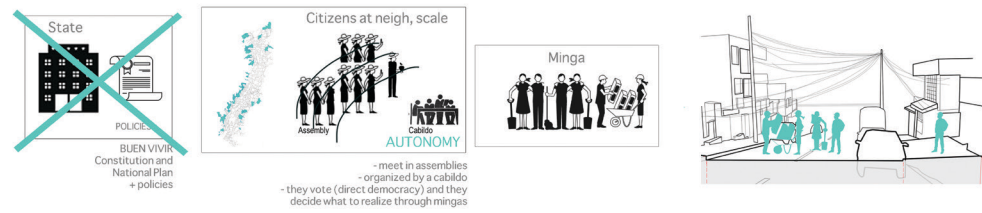
⁵⁴ Eduardo Galeano during the World Social Forum in Porto Alegre, Brazil in 2005 said: "What is Utopia for?" I ask myself that question every day: utopia is on the horizon, I approach two steps, she walks two steps away, I walk ten steps and the horizon takes ten more steps. Despite how much I walk, I will never reach it, but that's what utopias serve: to walk."

Section 4.3

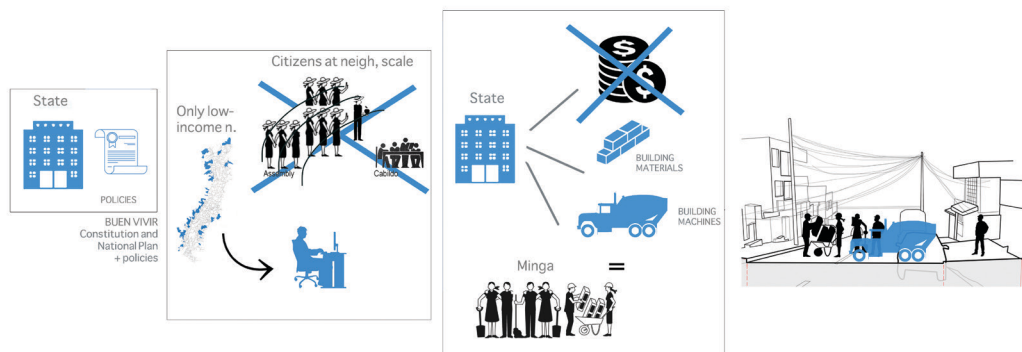
Quitopia's guidelines

Actuative proposal

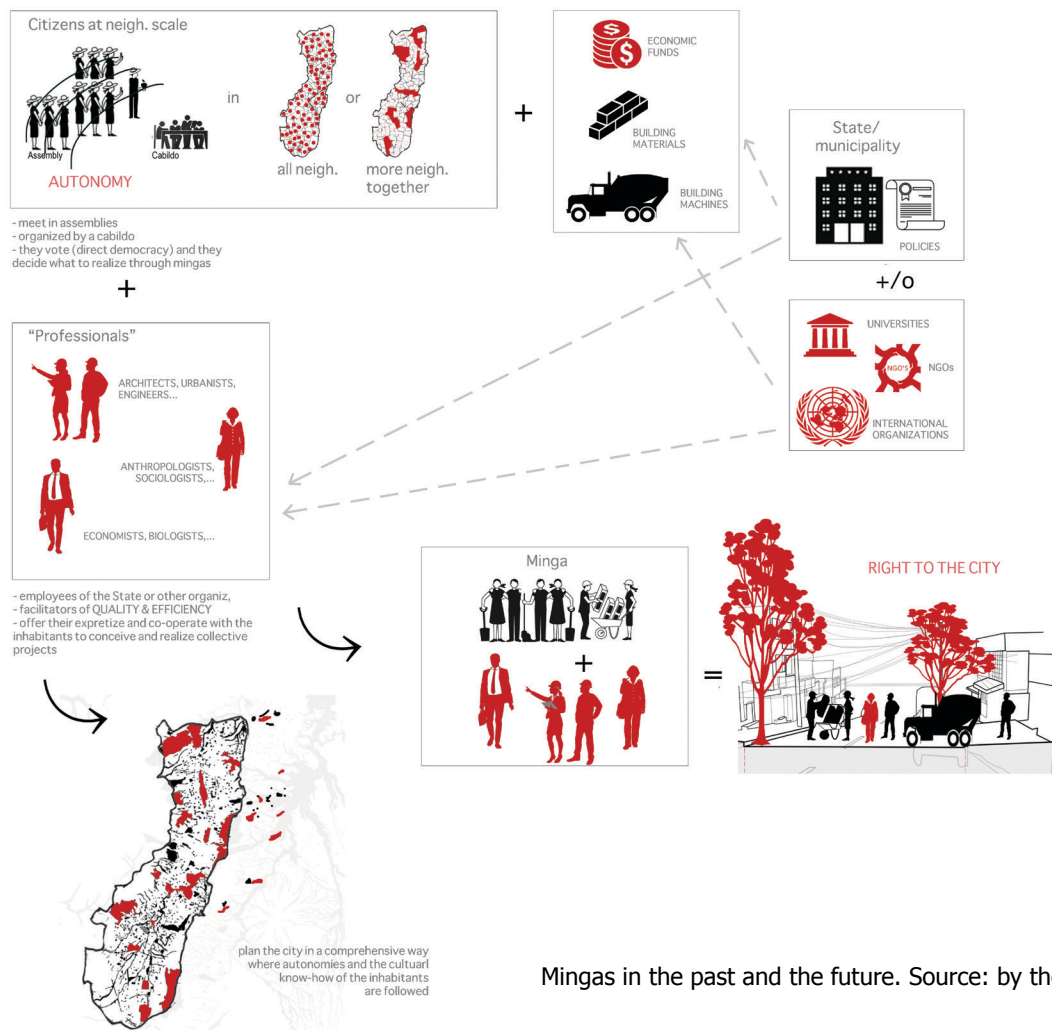
MINGAS before the BUEN VIVIR (2008)



MEGA-MINGAS



MINGAS IN QUITOPIA



Mingas in the past and the future. Source: by the author, 2018.

Connecting to the previous section, the reader might wonder what are these triple-co I placed before 'invention', 'production' and 'maintenance' of collective spaces. For Quitopia it means that the actors involved in these processes are many, and that the different phases concerning collective projects are shared. To be more precise, as will be illustrated, at the center of the proposed utopic scenarios, there is the minga practice. Before envisioning how, where, and with what support mingas could be practiced differently in the future, I graphically summarize what has changed between the self-managed mingas and the institutionalized ones.

As reiterated in the previous chapters, in neighborhoods that practice autonomous mingas, **decisions** are taken in assemblies through hand rise; while in the case of the mega-mingas, decisions are taken mostly directly from the municipal office, without always considering citizens' claims⁵⁵. Concerning the **realization process** of a self-managed minga, for example, a road paving in the first case is generally self-financed and undertaken by the local citizens. When the municipality is involved, citizens are flanked by public utility

companies machinery and technical support. The outcomes of these different mingas, however, are essentially just punctual projects devoid of a long-term urban plan.

Moreover, what is identified as deficient when talking of mega-mingas—as already criticized in Chapter Two—inhabitants are involved without remuneration and these kinds of mingas are practiced solely in marginal and poor neighborhoods. Yet in the self-managed cases, it is also true that clientelism and unfair management of resources have often employed inside Ecuadorian neighborhoods committees (Shmitt 2009; Rayner et al. 2015; Varela Torres 2013; Colloredo, 2007; Faas 2015). None of the two existing settings works fairly: one option is too susceptible to corruption and lack of technical rigorousness (self-managed mingas) and the other limits citizens' involvement and erases their right to autonomy.

What I purpose for **Quitopia** is a much more choral process:

- Decisions on the collective spaces' conception, creation and maintenance, isn't anymore solely in the hands of the municipality or private companies hired by the municipality alone, but it is mostly in the hands of their primary users: the citizens.
- Collective spaces such as squares, rivers, parks are equally of good quality and accessible to all citizens.
- Citizens alone don't decide what to do with their collective spaces, but are constantly flanked by experts, such as architects, urbanists, engineers, anthropologists, etc. These experts work capillary in all Quito's neighborhoods and are hired by the municipality.
- Roles of the experts are not to make citizens'

⁵⁵ As Luisa Changoluisa explains—in her translated interview present in the thesis annex—since the approval of the Ecuadorian Participation Law in 2009 (*Ley Orgánica de Participación Ciudadana*), if citizens feel their neighborhood needs infrastructural improvement, they can make a request to their parish, which will be discussed when the parishes' annual meeting on participatory budget (*presupuestos participativos*) is held.



Montage of Quitopia. Source: by the author, 2018.

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desires come true, but to listen, interpret and suggest proposals; a constant multidisciplinary act of reciprocal learning and negotiation (Awan et al. 2013). As Gustavo Esteva, one of the best-known advocates of post-development desired, in dialogue between citizens and professionals, the community is facilitated to problematize its territorial context, and contribute to imagine alternatives. The guiding objective for all the experts involved, is that by sharing their knowledge, they are making Quito more right, inclusive and solidary.

- Urbanists specifically, have a central role in supporting inhabitants in the reflections and decisions concerning collective spaces. They use their multi-scalar glance to look simultaneously at the local and metropolitan scale.

- Working at different scales, the multidisciplinary group of experts keeps neighborhoods together through the composition of a metropolitan plan—which guidelines are sketched in the next section—to build networks of inclusion for “leaving no one behind”⁵⁶.

It is important to notice that not all collective spaces have a local radius of influence. When talking of collective space, I'm indeed not just referring to neighborhood parks, or local sport fields, but I also consider big parks, for example the Parque Carolina, or long ravines like Quebrada Ortega, or rivers like the Rio Machangara. These elements shared between different neighborhoods, in Quitopia act as binding spines and they are renewed and maintained by their adjoining neighborhoods; so that nearby neighborhoods work collectively to face shared concerns, like for example the restoring of a contaminated ravine (*quebrada*) or the collective cleaning of a water stream. On the future of these

spaces, bigger and more comprehensive assemblies are organized. Like Magnaghi would say, this territorial strategy aims at the construction and management of a series of systems of relations between actors, a meta-design level composed by a multidisciplinary communication system (Magnaghi 2000).

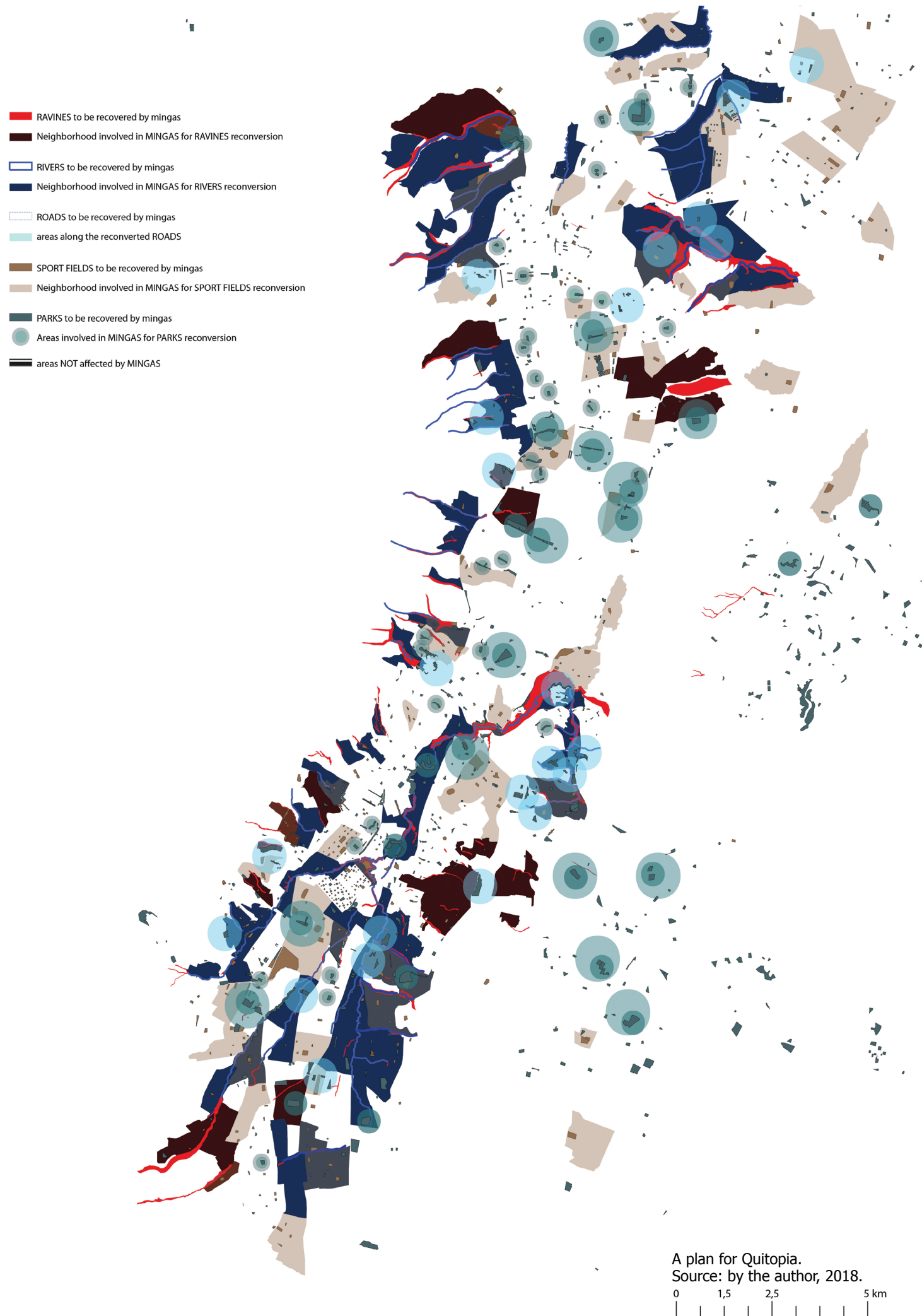
From an economic perspective, in Quitopia, communal minga practice re-orientates the mainstream client-based and for-profit design practices in the name of the Buen Vivir. More practically, the municipality doesn't spend anymore in private development companies; by decentralizing the responsibilities on the creation, production and maintenance of collective spaces, the municipality uses its resources to pay experts, finance necessary materials and remunerate minga participants.

On this last point, what if, let's suppose, as a Quito citizen, I don't want to participate in mingas? In Quitopia I won't be forced. If one doesn't fulfill a minimum amount of hours of mingas in a year—because collective space is both my responsibility and benefit—I'll have to pay a fine that will be reinvested in the collective spaces programme. Who instead accepts to participate, will be remunerated with a basic income fund⁵⁷.

Concerning the actors involved, learns from past multi-party collaborations Universities, NGOs and International funds actively support the local stakeholders. As Paola Pellegrini would say, Quitopia links actors, stakeholders and interest groups to influence the transformation of parts of the city and its entire territory (Pellegrini 2015).

⁵⁶ Such as the motto of the Sustainable Development Goals signed by all members of the United Nations: “As we embark on this great collective journey, we pledge that no one will be left behind. Recognizing that the dignity of the human person is fundamental, we wish to see the goals and targets met for all nations and peoples and for all segments of society. And we will endeavour to reach the furthest behind first” (2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development 2015).

⁵⁷ Potential to consider in this case is Eduardo Matarazzo Suplicy's—Brazilian politician, economist and professor—theory (2007). The possibility of distributing a basic income fund to each minga participant is a way to foster involvement, since by remunerating labor social justice and monetary equality may be ensured (Suplicy 2007).



A plan for Quitopia.
Source: by the author, 2018.

Quitopia. Collective city-making, participation and autonomy for Quito's urban future.

Section 4.4

Metropolitan utopia Quito as Quitopia

Clearly not all places in the city can be administered through co-management. In order to identify spaces appropriate for co-management, the map on the left of the following page underlines **Quito's spaces not managed under neighborhood assemblies and mingas**. These spaces include private buildings and properties, highways and arterial roads, and also public-private facilities. Due to the complexity of their use, these facilities and amenities require solely the intervention of expert figures⁵⁸. In this last category I also include hospitals, schools, universities, state and municipal buildings.

The map on the right side instead, illustrates **all Quito's potential spaces** in which a project could be co-invented, co-produced or co-maintained. As can be seen, these sites create a constellation of potentialities at different scales.

In order to justify this scenario, in the following pages I propose a delayering of this last metropolitan map. In these maps I show that for each different identified category, such as local roads, parks, local sport-fields, ravines and rivers, there are plenty of existing examples that have in recent history been co-managed through mingas. Once scattered

projects in Quito become potential sites in a territorial plan of Quitopia.

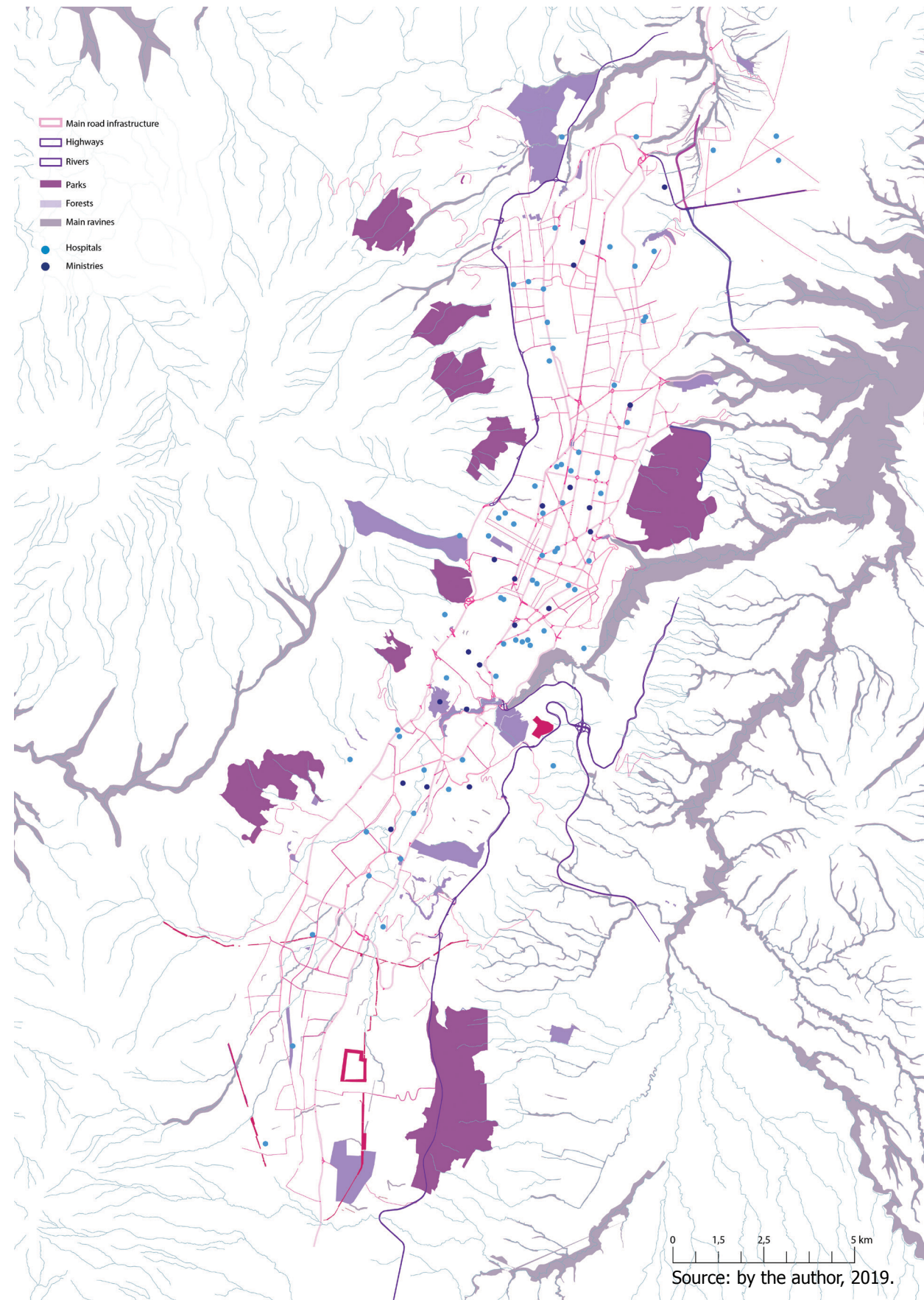
These two main faces of the city either managed by institutions or cooperatively can be, as Secchi would say, antagonistic images (Secchi 2002). The Italian urbanist, justifying the creation of scenarios, wrote that scenarios are the only concretely practicable ground to construct coherent urban and territorial policies. These maps indeed, following his teachings, are images produced by sometimes reductive presuppositions, by interests and by cultural backgrounds that are partially incompatible with each other (Secchi 2002).

Conscious of this, in the following image I represent Quitopia in a **metropolitan plan**. I take into consideration all potential spaces—represented previously—to be self-managed and I imagine which could be the radius of citizens' involvement for each kind of site. As can be seen, depending on the case, the radius either covers just a section of a neighborhood—like in the case of the people that could be involved in cleaning a little park, or more neighborhoods, like for example, in the cases of managing ravines and rivers.

⁵⁸ Quitopia, as a scenario in-progress, doesn't envision yet a management-shift of these existing amenities.

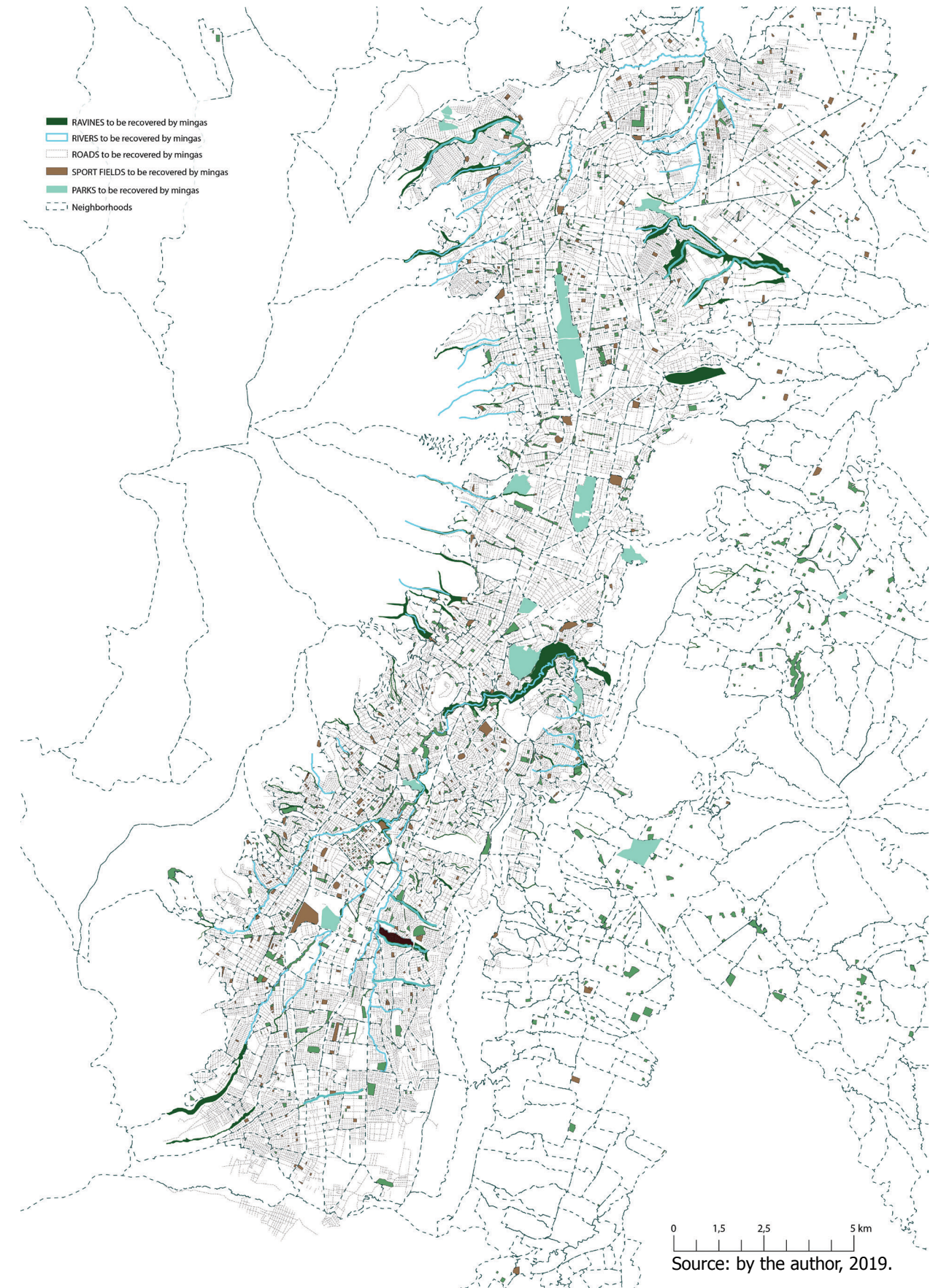
NO minga

Big infrastructure in the hands of the municipality and privates

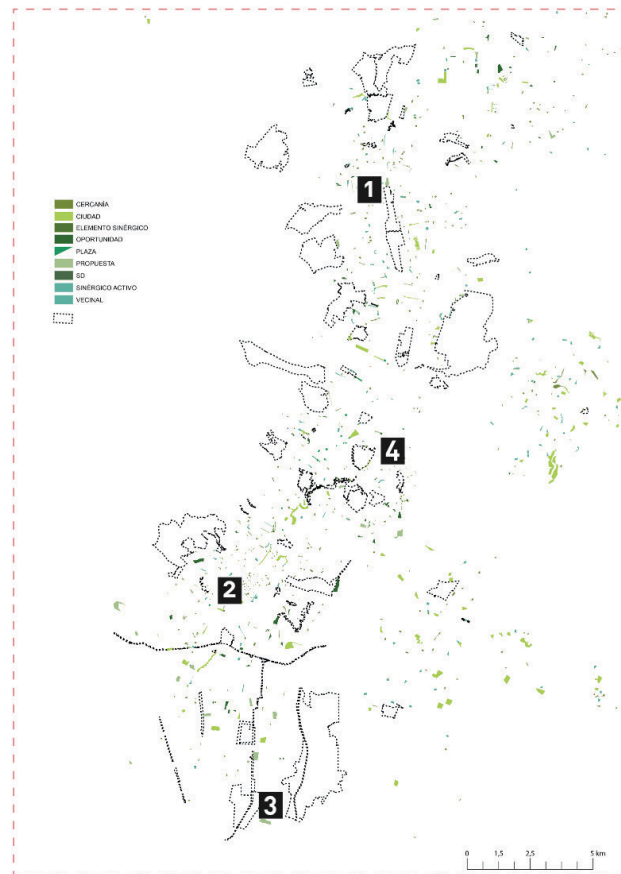


YES minga

Smaller common spaces co-managed at the neighborhood scale



LOCAL PARKS



- * conservation
- cleaning
- cutting
- ...

- * renovation
- construct playgrounds
- planting trees
- ...

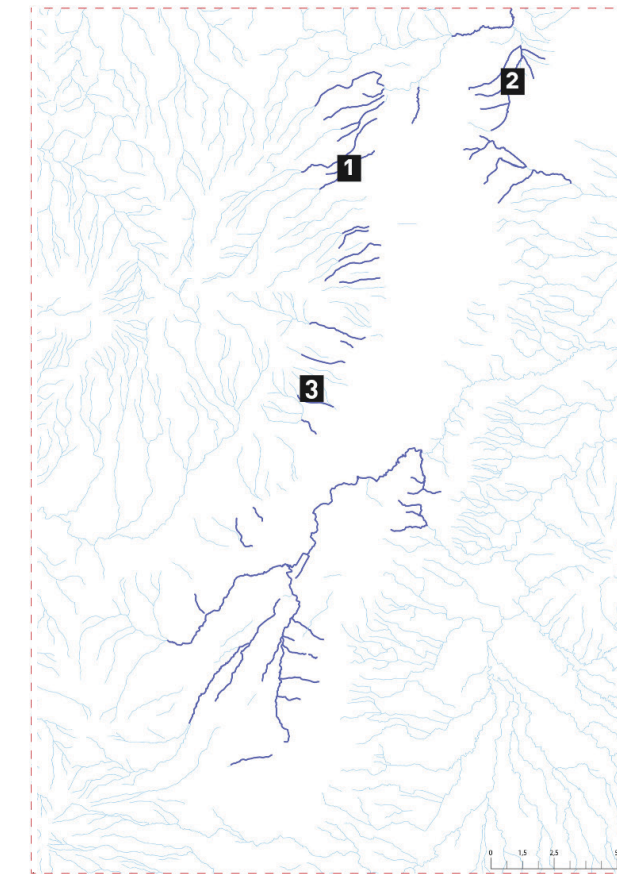
1 La Vicentina, 2015

2 La Mariscal, 2016

3 Quitumbe, 2015

4 Parque la Carolina, 2016

RIVERS

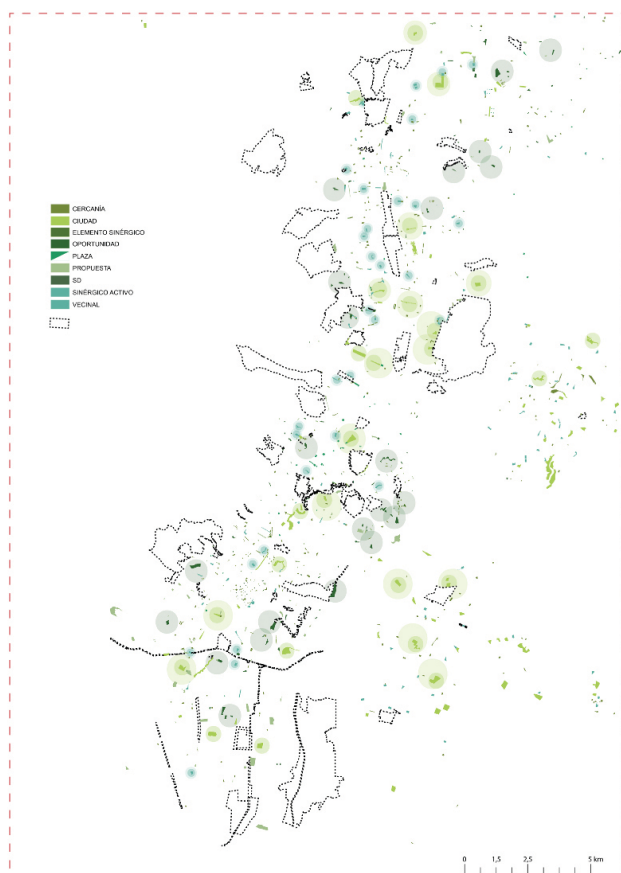


- water cleaning
- banks reconstruction
- walking paths
- ...

1 Comuna de Santa Clara de San Millan, 2017

2 Risull, 2011

3 Comuna de Santa Clara de San Millan, 2012



local parks:

- * conservation
- cleaning
- cutting
- ...

- * renovation
- construct playgrounds
- planting trees
- ...

possible areas involved in MINGAS

NEIGHBORHOOD scale



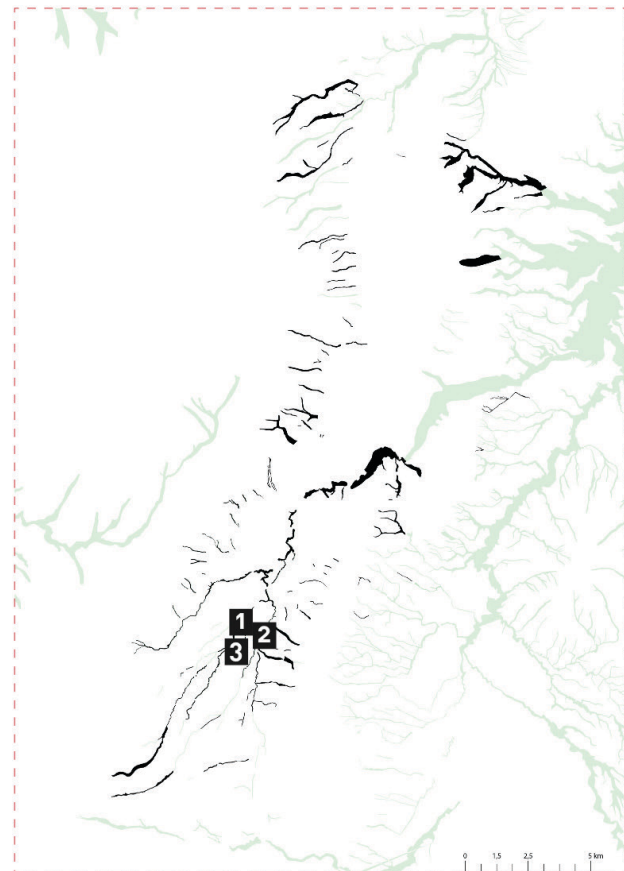
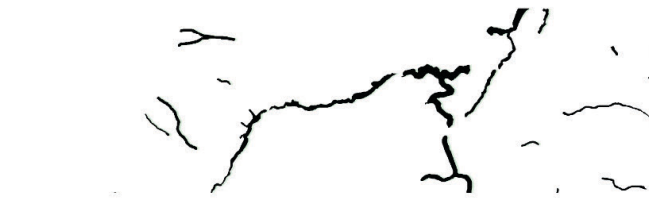
Rivers

- water cleaning
- banks reconstruction
- walking paths
- ...

more NEIGHBORHOODS together

RAVINES

- remove trash
- plant
- construct paths
- ...



SPORT-FIELDS

- paving
- build equipments
- ...



Quebradas

- remove trash
- plant
- construct paths
- ...



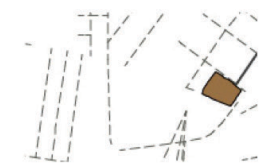
possible areas involved in MINGAS



more NEIGHBORHOODS together

sport fields:

- paving
- build equipments
- ...



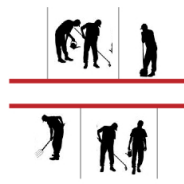
possible areas involved in MINGAS



NEIGHBORHOOD scale



NEIGHBORHOOD scale



BLOCK scale



Sketch of Quitopia, neighborhoods' networks and scales of intervention on collective spaces. Source: by the author, 2018.

Section 4.5

Neighborhood cooperation

Ash Amin writes: "in the making of the city along new lines – perhaps even for a fleeting moment – a new possible world emerges, new solidarities are formed, and the right of the disenfranchised to claim the city is exercised and shown to be possible" (Amin 2014, 157-158).

Quitopia models this remaking amongst familiar city lines. To deeply understand this work, in this section I zoom-in at the neighborhood level. To do so, I work with a case already deeply researched: Atucucho. Envisioning what might happen in Atucucho in Quitopia becomes a testing ground for the entire metropolis.

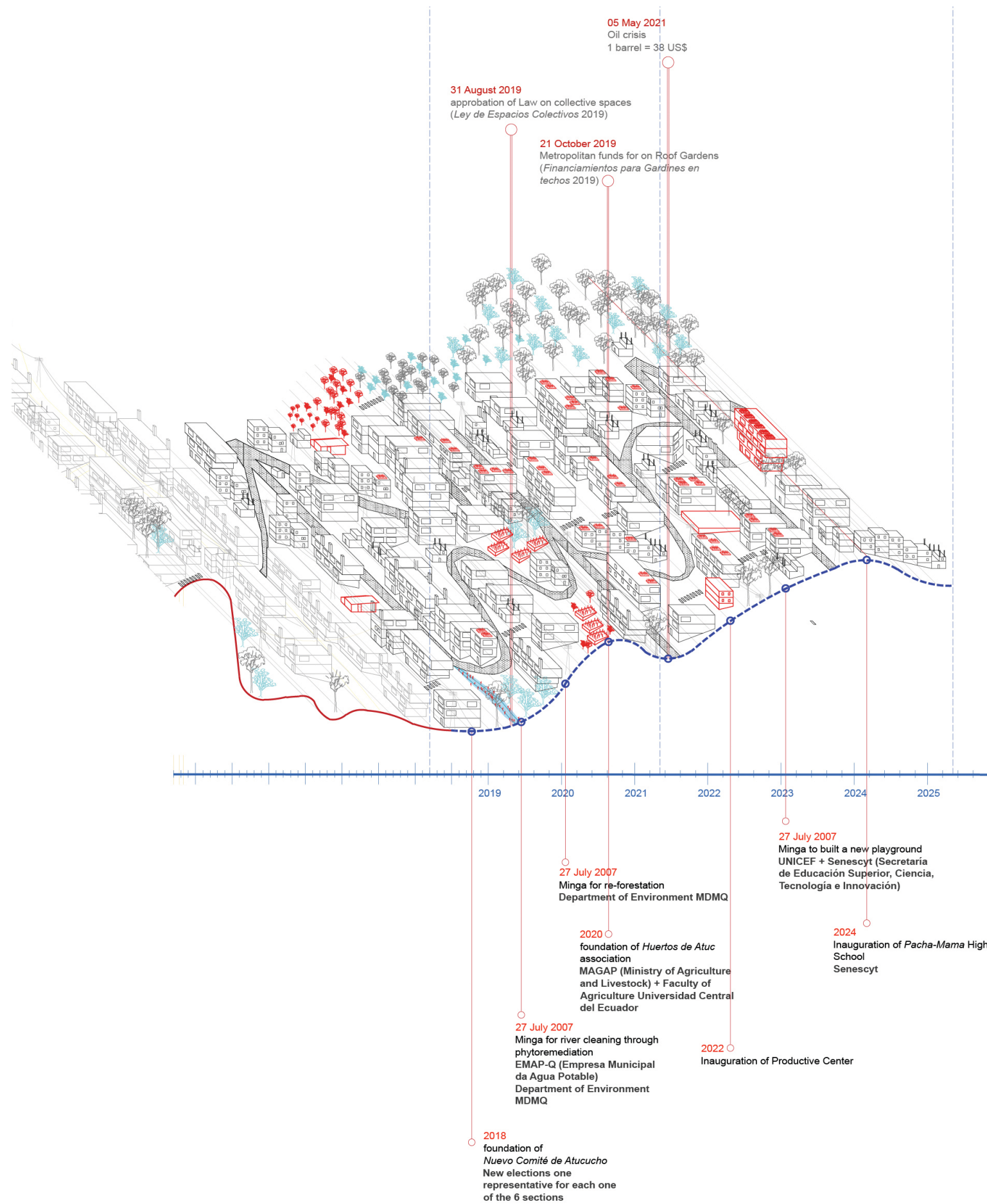
I revisit hence the crono-topo line illustrated in the previous chapter. By defining sets of existing collective spaces, I imagine what they could become if they were co-managed by Atucucho's citizens together with the experts. Each vision that I propose is described through the actors involved and the existing specific Ecuadorian legal framework that made it possible.

Most of the interventions can be seen—at the following page—by looking at the extension of the crono-topo line of Atucucho as part of Quitopia. To understand it better I offer different zoom-in. The first one is about Atucucho's central park. As it is now, the little park needs many improvements; there is no shadow, no games for children, the lawn is ruined and in a corner there is a big pile of trash. An anthropologist, hired by the Quito municipality, organizes various assemblies in Atucucho's communal house. He/she facilitates the various meetings and encourages dialogue between the interested citizens and stakeholders. The architect,

having heard citizens' desires, brings a model to the assembly and together they discuss various spatial proposals. Due to some doubts on the Pichincha's endemic natural species, to the next meeting a biologist who explains the various kinds of shrubs and local medicinal herbs is invited. Once decisions are taken by direct democracy, the economist, also hired by the municipality, helps understand what strategies can be economically feasible and what has to be discarded or adapted. When the municipality approves the funds, mingas start to take place. Each time that the various actors gather, as part of the long tradition, volunteers prepare refreshment for the tired workers. The Constitution of the Buen Vivir has been respected from many points of view: enforce participation (art. 16; 61; 95; 97; 100; 204-210; 238...), give right to nature (art. 10; 71-74...), strengthen solidarity (art. 27; 32; 34; 66; 85...), made the neighborhood work as a basic unit of participation (art. 248)...and instead than spending its funding in hiring a company, the municipality invested it into a more comprehensive and inclusive project.

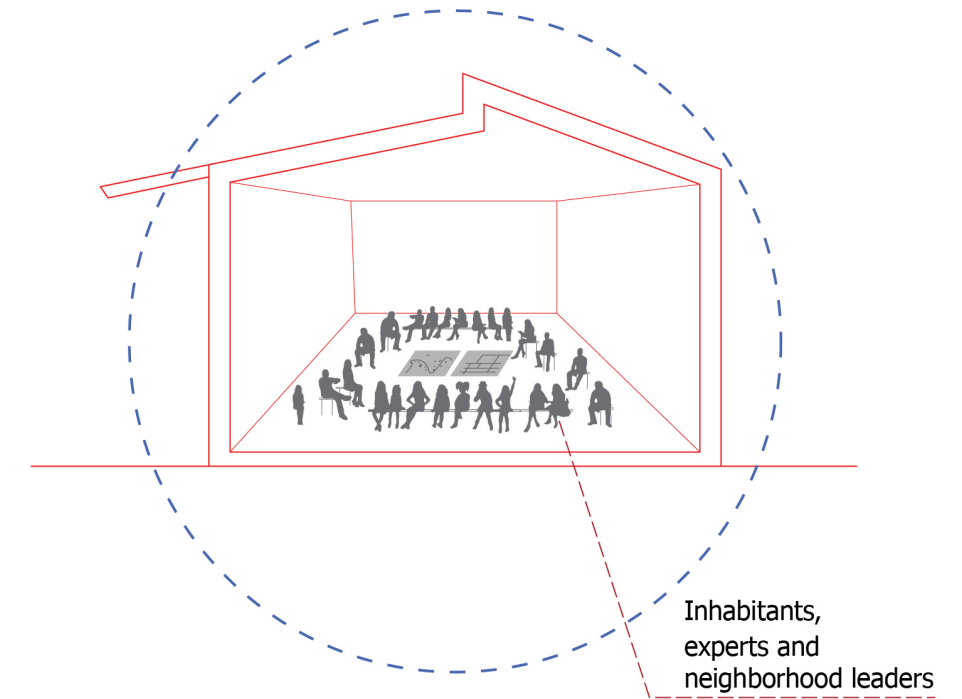
Quitopia, however, is not just about the peripheries, but it is a territorial scenario for the entire metropolis, what happens hence in a touristic and fancy neighborhood like Mariscal Sucre? Its central square, Plaza Foch, pumping hart of Quito's nightlife, has become the subject of discussion in the neighborhoods' last assemblies. As all Quito's is preparing to the annual marathon, a group of Mariscal Sucre's young citizens proposed to transform Plaza Foch into the best marathon's stage. Many ideas came up, such as a stage for concerts, an artisanal stand of energetic beverages and decorative arch made of Quito's roses. After various discussions, the assembly's president asked

Quitopia in the case of Atucucho

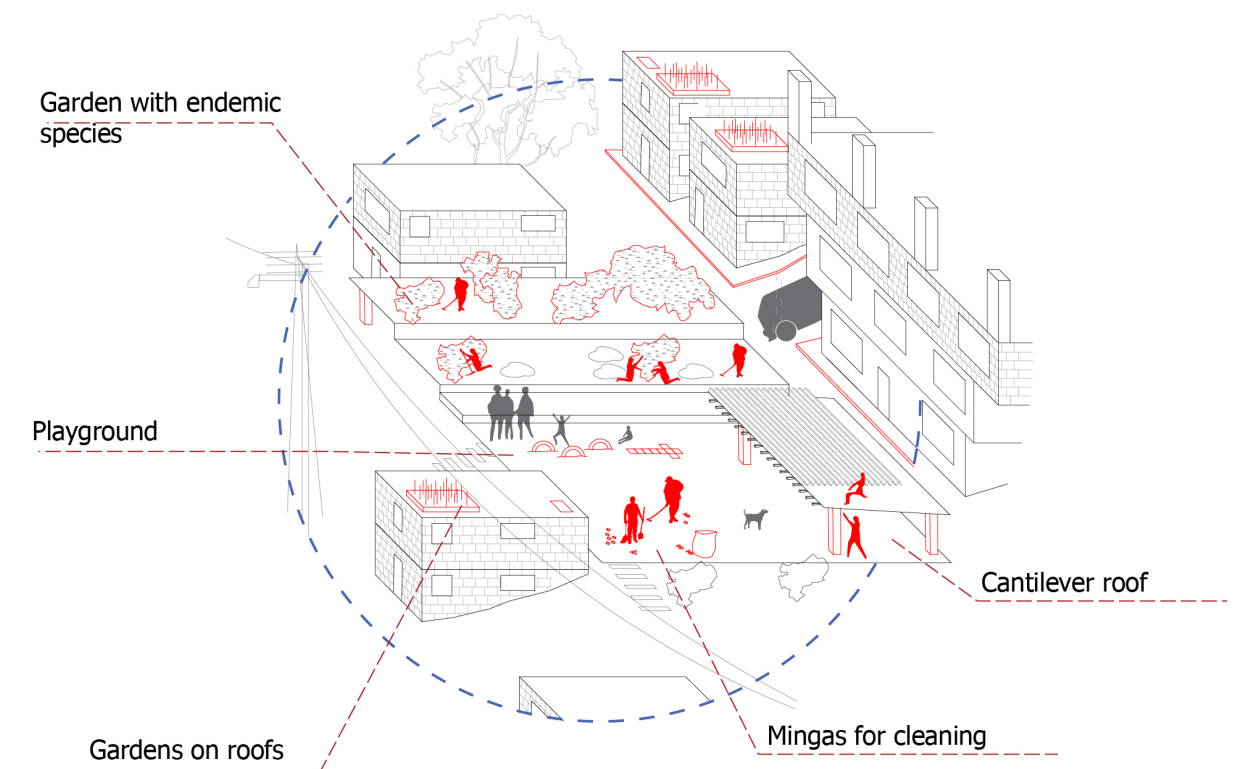


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The decision making process inside the assembly



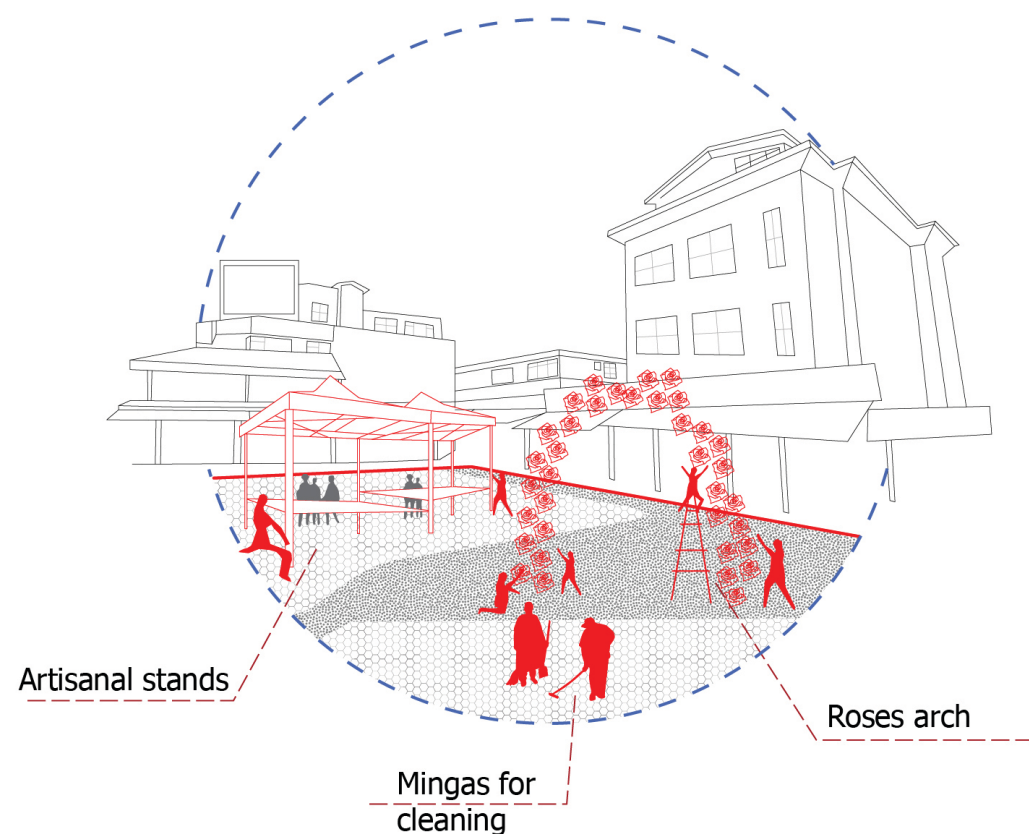
Atucucho's central park in the future





Plaza Foch, Quito. Source: <https://pitt2ecuador.wordpress.com>

Plaza Foch in Quitopia



Quitopia. Collective city-making, participation and autonomy for Quito's urban future.

Quito's municipality the support of the Ecuadorian Music Conservatory for helping up the setting of the stage; the representative of the artisanal group of the Ilalò mountain to organize the stands, and Quito's botanic garden for the arch. In the third assembly the various roles between citizens and experts are shared and they organized two weekends of mingas. In the first Sunday morning they prepared the wooden structure for the arch and in the second one they settled the missing organizational material. Also in this case, many Buen Vivir constitutional principles were respected, a part from the ones valued in the previous case—such as participation and solidarity—there are also: the right to practice sport and entertain (art. 24; 39; 45; 381-382) and foster artisanal commerce (art. 306; 348).

There might also be another sort of case, where the scale of citizens involved exceeds the neighborhood unit, such in the case of recovering a contaminated ravine (see next page). The case of the Río Machángara is exemplary. During the last decades it turned out to be a trash dump that crosses most of the central neighborhoods of Quito. Tired of such contaminated receptacle and waste of a great natural resource, in Quitopia many of the interested neighborhoods created a temporal inter-neighborhood assembly, where the territorial issue is discussed at a broader scale. Citizens, together with their neighborhood leaders, after having diagnosed problematic findings and potentials for the natural area, asked Quito's municipality to be flanked by the support of multiple experts. Aside from biologists and engineers, the technical knowledge of the urbanists in this example is crucial. Not just bridges, boardwalk and terraces able to offer safe and pleasant panoramic view-points on the *quebrada* are designed; but each single project is part of a metropolitan view, which considers simultaneously water flows, mobility, corridors of green areas, etc. These three cases in Quitopia have been presented to place attention on the fact that the urban interventions might be minute or mighty, so the role of the experts, who need to be able to exercise their knowledge in different contexts and scales.

Conclusions on the Chapter

Conclusively, the utopic scenario that I purpose is "far from any primordialist call to go back" and does not "urge anyone to return to huts and dugouts" (Tlostanova 2017, 9), but rather envisions 'alternatives' that many decolonial and post-neoliberal authors—mostly from the social sciences—aspire to (Esteva, Manzini, Stravides, Escobar, Harvey, Negri and Hardt, Deleuze and Guattari, etc.). Arturo Escobar (2016) points out that the claim for autonomy—integral to my utopic scenario—represents a struggle for liberation beyond capitalism and for a new type of society in harmony with other cultures. Under this lens, mingas are more than just an opportunity for reinforcing collective spatial reproduction.

"Considering the opportunities and challenges presented by the Buen Vivir on autonomy and participation, in what way can collective city-making reduce Quito's inequalities and what role can urbanism play in this setting?" To continue answering the research question of, mingas provide a social institution that have the potential to bring together the organizational, cultural, religious and political spheres of residents (De la Torre and Peralta 2004). In fact, one of the most fascinating aspects of mingas is that, as Colloredo and Mansfeld note, this kind of shared labor increases the circulation of several socio-political and cultural dimensions:

"whether it be water, electricity, news, entertainment, or people, this shared 'base' is a kind of human-made commons that underwrites the vitality of private holdings largely by interconnecting them" (Colloredo and Mansfeld 2007, 98).

Participating in the co-invention, co-production and co-management of city's collective spaces strengthens dialogue, empowering and consolidating community.

There are then other aspects of the minga inspirational to the envisioning of social alternatives, such as its endorsement of pre-capitalist organizational forms (Ramirez 1980). Spatial production offered by this organizational form differs completely from one led

by financial profit, whether private or public⁵⁹. This makes areas built through mingas fundamentally more progressive:

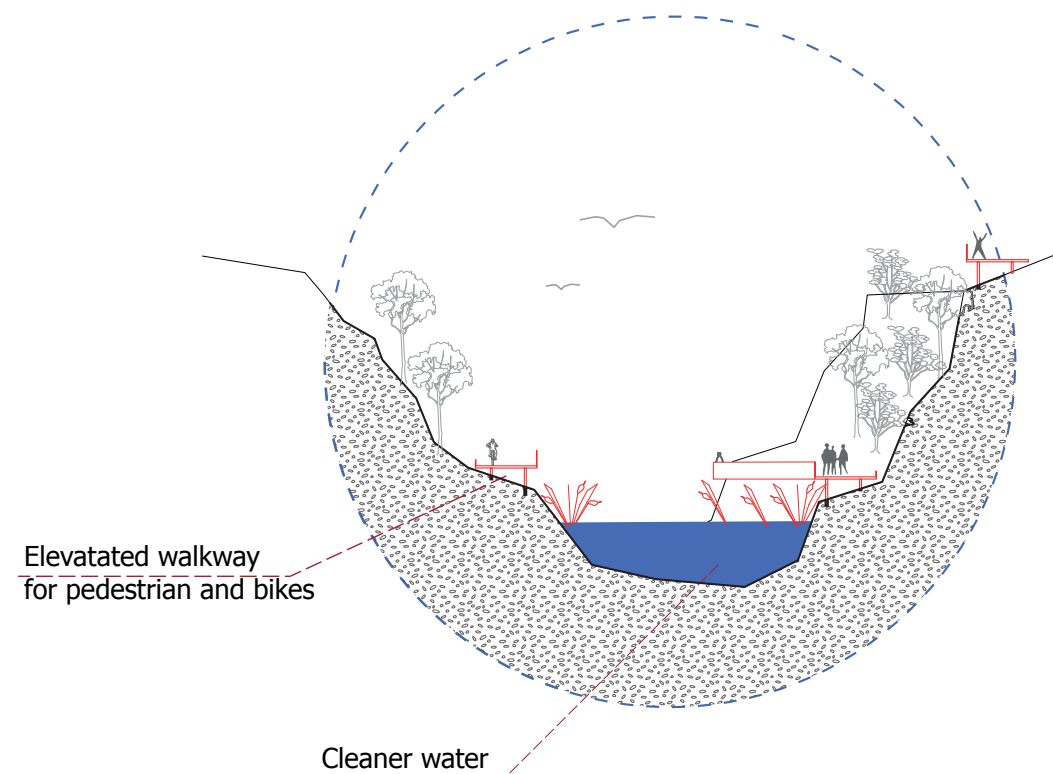
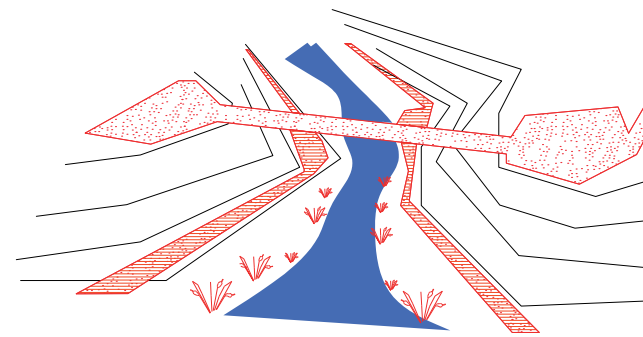
“to move away from product-based well-being we need to value community assets more highly” (Manzini and Jégou 2003, 48).

Furthermore, as Ramirez writes (1980), the product of a minga is not for commercialization, but for self-sufficiency, an aspect which helps conserve a ‘natural’ system; one more way to connect to Buen Vivir.

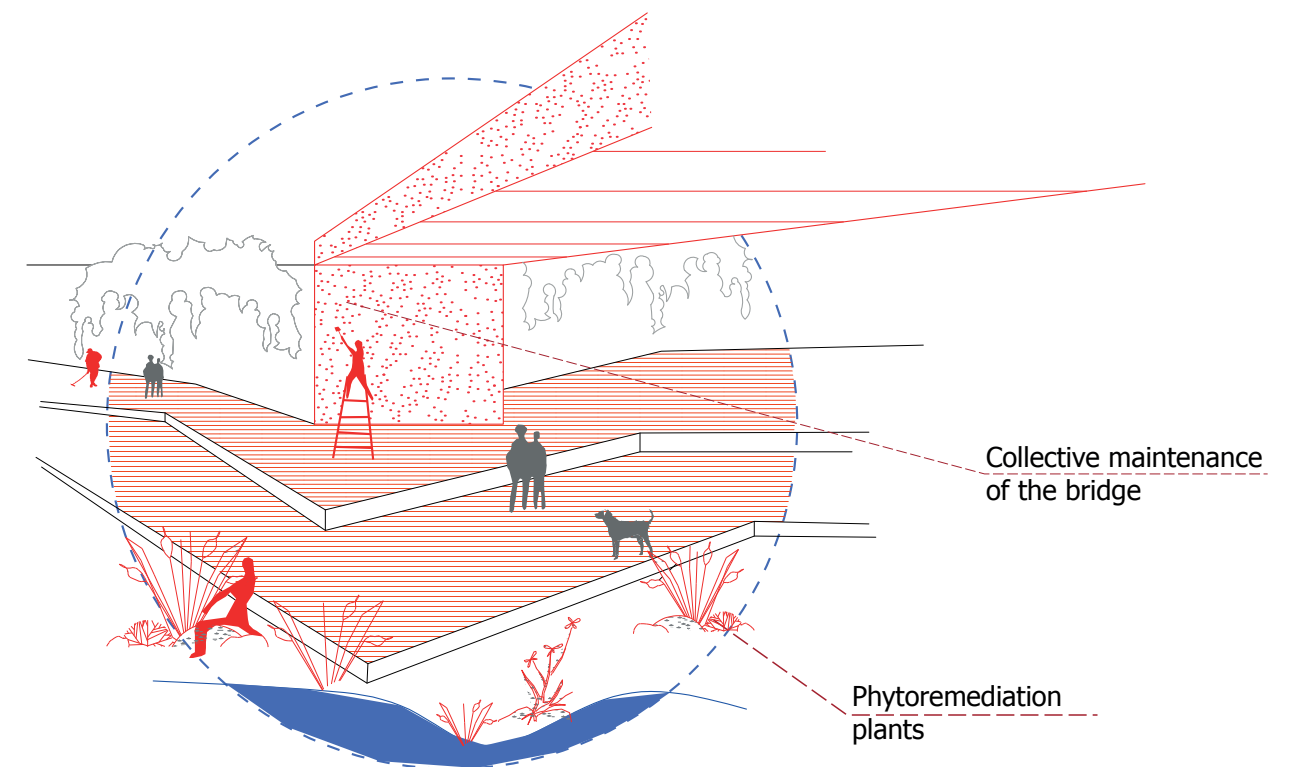
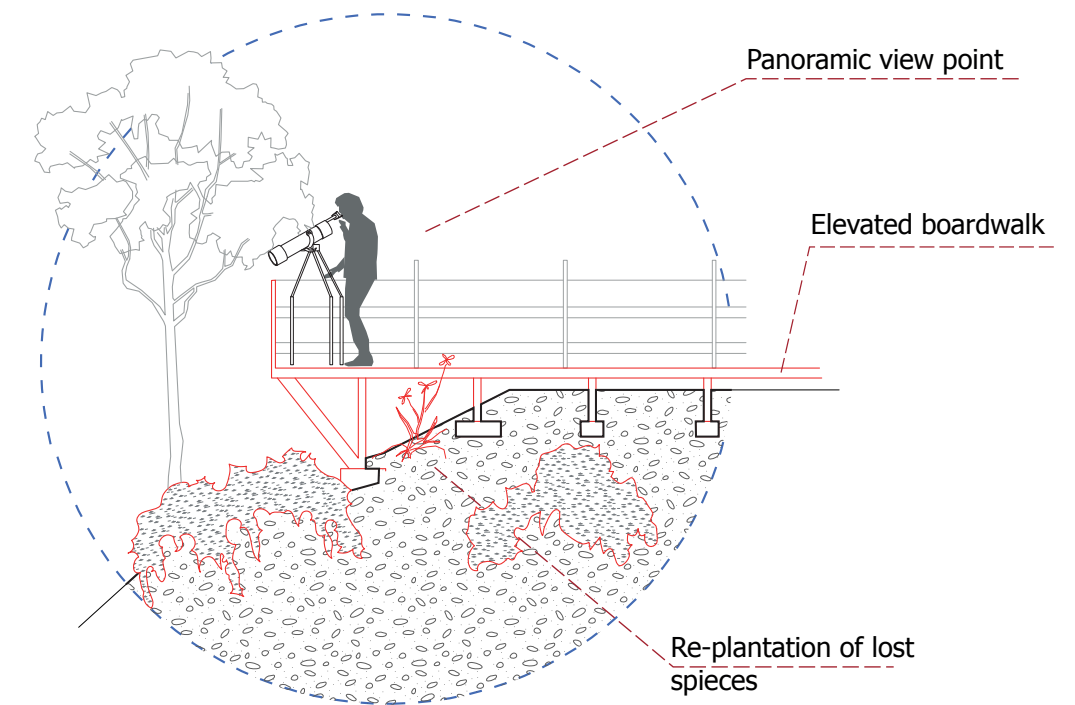
Quitopia is finally the Buen Vivir manifested; a utopic city where shared responsibilities enforces respect, sustainability, and safety amongst all citizens.

⁵⁹ The proposed remuneration to who assists to mingas in Quitopia with a basic fund, is not seen as a ... but as a social contribution.

Reconversion of Río Machángara



Quitopia. Collective city-making, participation and autonomy for Quito's urban future.



As a result of close literature review, empirical research, and dedicated field work, I would like to describe how this thesis evolves knowledge and production of inclusive city-making in an Ecuadorian context and beyond.

Initially I offered a reading of the Ecuadorian Constitution of the Buen Vivir; excavating its many articles in order to underline the collaborative potentialities this institutional framework could offer and I detailed how participation and autonomy are treated. Through a broad literature review on these topics I then revealed how Quito's municipality has failed to take advantage of what these concepts meant for the Ecuadorian history of city-making. Throughout this critique, I underlined that urban participation for decision-making, though trendy at the present, is not itself the only key to solve the problems of contemporary metropolises. Local know-how is central to implement participatory processes, yet, I argued, institutionalized cultural practices (such as the mega-minga) don't necessarily entail sustainable access to resources and support for participants.

While conducting on-site research on Andean city-making, I came to learn about the ancient practice of self-management and self-construction: minga. Embracing a multidisciplinary perspective, I addressed a research gap on the practice, offering a comprehensive reading of minga's evolution from pre-Inca times up to current days, providing an unprecedented reconstruction of how a set of mingas were organized and how they have impacted Ecuadorian collective spaces. Moreover, to help distinguish the different kinds of mingas, I proposed two categories: the fundamental and the auxiliary ones. However, I also underlined that many local organizations have been overshadowed by profiteering, criminal or clientelist interests. Conscious not to fall into the romanticization of the practice, I constantly elucidated both potentials and challenges of the minga system.

Confirming that in Quito, as in many other places, low-income people live in the most environmentally risky and peripheral areas, I selected three neighborhoods where mingas have been vital for their spatial conformation. Focusing the research

to particular cases, I identified Atucucho, Comuna Santa Clara de San Millán and Comité del Pueblo. The historical and spatial analysis of these cases allowed me to discover that the practice of the minga can be a resilient tool to overcome scarcity in contexts where public and private funding are not equally distributed throughout a city. These case studies clarified that social networks of reciprocal exchange are not just a means to collectively realize an objective, but are inherently a significant social structure.

Central outcomes of the three analyzed case studies hasn't merited praise of the dubious physical products of the mingas, rather it is the innovative network of actors involved in the production processes that deserve attention. These methods show a way of doing urbanism—without urbanists and without the state—that doesn't necessarily bring to the same imbalanced outcomes of better-known examples, such as *colonias populares* or *favelas*. In Atucucho, Comuna Santa Clara de San Millán and Comité del Pueblo, private houses were built mostly individually, but roads, sewer systems, electricity, squares, communal houses, churches, etc. were decided through assemblies and built collectively. By bringing to light, for example, the ostracized case of Comité del Pueblo, likely the biggest ever-built collective neighborhood in Latin America, I detached it from the political obscurantism that still characterizes it. I revealed how urban projects can be orchestrated by not only the municipality and private investors, but also by people, universities, NGOs, and international funders. By looking, for example, at the role of the '90s fountains located in Atucucho's corners, or the construction of a recent vegetable garden in Santa Clara, I came to discover that aside from objects, collectively-built spaces have served as social binders. These places of socialization are embedded in the sacred, carriers of collective values; and inspirational resources over the apparently unstoppable individualization and fragmentation of the contemporary city (Kingman 2006; Amin 2014).

To give relevance to the ample methodologies I used to analyze the case studies, I then dedicated a short part of the thesis to illustrate how fieldwork has been fundamental in providing both positive

Thesis conclusions

and negative perspectives on the self-built and self-managed neighborhoods. Going door to door with families gave me the chance to form an original archive of past mingas, showing not only the process, but also the evolution of spaces.

By introducing the crono-topo line, I invented a methodology of representation which offers a readable narrative that combines what saw through pictures, actors, events time and space along history. The crono-topo line also serves as a palimpsest to reason on possible actors, policies, and spaces in the future. By introducing this representation method, I show how urbanism and urban planning with research rooted in anthropology, economy, social science are practices that should work hand in hand in the city's design.

In the final chapter, I disclose the thesis' title: Quitopia. Quitopia is an invented utopic scenario for Quito that responds to the Buen Vivir principles of participation, autonomy, reciprocity, solidarity and the right to the city. Quitopia is presented as both a management strategy and as spatial images where collective spaces are co-decided, co-produced and co-maintained. These scenarios are based not just in utopian ideas, but in concrete institutional frameworks and real cultural heritage. I demonstrate how neighborhood assemblies can work when shaping collective spaces, giving new roles for both the municipality and the many professional figures that could contribute to more inclusive and quantitative outcomes. With this offered metropolitan plan, I respect the premise that local community members and experts are the decision makers of their territory. Conclusively, by describing the potential role of the urbanist in this setting, I place them equally as a listener and

mediator, nonetheless as experts able to pull the strings of planning the city with an inter-scalar glance.

Throughout this urban proposal, many questions remain open, such as: how to maintain the intensity of participation inside neighborhoods? How to allow fewer working hours for the workers who participate to mingas? To what extent are decisions made between citizens and experts in assemblies? If using the same method to envision other future contexts, how to decide when local culture is really socially innovative and worthy to be reconsidered for the future?

As a conclusive wish for Quito's municipality, I hope it takes more advantage of the many existing laws on participation and autonomy, shifting from a position of control to a role as a facilitator. Delocalization of responsibilities for the management of collective spaces can be enacted without losing a bold and complex metropolitan view. This thesis serves as an invitation to touch subjects that often seem untouchable, something as sacred as a constitution. Further, concerning the minga practice, I wish more studies on its use and impacts throughout the Andean Region were embraced and that other comparable experiences of collective city-making as we saw in Uzbekistan, Ruanda, and Finland, were investigated in this direction.

Selected
Interviews

María Luisa Changoluisa

Secretaría de Coordinación Territorial y Participación
Municipio Metropolitano de Quito.

Quito, 28th of October 2016

(translated from Spanish to English)

The Council of Citizen Participation and Social Control (*Consejo de Participación Ciudadana y Control Social*): is the body in charge of making all the regulations on participation at the national level. The Council enacted the Law on Citizen Participation and Social Control. And this is the fifth power of the State. The Council then is who dictates the general regulations.

While the Secretary of Territorial Coordination and Citizen Participation (*Secretaría de Coordinación Territorial y Participación Ciudadana*) works at the local level. Each municipality has a secretary. This establishes the policies at the local level. The secretary is divided into different sections: 1) The Directorate of Citizen Participation (is the one that articulates the policies and apply them in the territory). 2) The Direction of Rural Parishes 3) The Direction of Territory.

In each Zonal Administration (*Administración Zonal*) there is a department, which is the one that is linked to the community and belongs to the Directorate of Citizen Participation (*Dirección de Participación Ciudadana*). There are territorial managers (*Gestores*) who work in the territory and each manager has 5-6 neighborhoods under his charge.

Then from the Secretariat of Territorial Coordination and Citizen Participation the policy is dictated, the one who lands them are the Directors of participative management (*Directores de gestión participativa*).

The urban and rural parishes (*Parroquias*) are the ones that manage the theme of the Participatory Budget (*Presupuesto Participativo*). Each Parish has a participation meeting—usually

mid-November—where it is decided, together with the neighborhood representatives how the budget is distributed.

The neighborhoods now have to settle as Neighborhood Councils (*Consejos Barriales*), each neighborhood has to have one. What we realized is that in many cases they already exist and there are neighborhood representatives who have been there for years and who believe they are the owners of the neighborhood. What the new Ordinance of 2016 seeks, is that there be a change of directive. What the ordinance provides is that there are workshops and schools for neighborhood leaders. But now there is much distrust on the part of the people for what was done with the previous administrations that sometimes offered them resources but not always fulfilled the promise. So now there is a break between the municipality and the people of the neighborhoods. Especially those who are in the peripheries, those who are not regularized.

The un-regularized neighborhoods always need an assembly that is under the control of MIDUVI. And this helps them to request works and regularize their neighborhood. Without assembly they can not legalize their neighborhood and ask for legal status. For example, where co-management works are done, the MIDUVI helps them collect money for mingas 50-50.

While the pro-improvement committees (*Comités pro-mejoras*) are the previous neighborhood organizations that self-organized by themselves. In the center of the city there are rather neighborhood organizations called *Cabildos* (which are not the communes), in the historic center there are 7 or 8 councils I think.

There are hence many ways to participate and the system is quite complex.

The GADs are the municipalities and also the rural parishes (*parroquias rurales*), not the urban ones (*parroquias urbanas*). The rural parishes being GADs can implement several things through their competences, but being a new organism, local representatives often do not know many things and neither how to do them.

Urban parishes instead, which are not GADs, are below the municipalities, so they have not much autonomy in decisions.

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However yes, the Basic Units of Participation (*Unidades Básicas de Participación*), which appear in article 248 of the Constitution and in article 306 of COOTAD, are places of participative management, such as the meetings of the Zonal Administrations. (e.d. However, the constitution says that the Basic Units of Participation can also be neighborhoods ?! This is not clear.)

With the new regulations, Atucucho like other neighborhoods, if they want to ask something to the municipality, they have to build a neighborhood assembly. And if they already have one form of assembly, they should register it with the municipality in the secretary. As they are conformed now, they can not ask for anything from the budget.

The Neighborhood Councils or Neighborhood Assemblies must comply with certain requirements. Who wants to be president of the assembly has to present to the municipality a registry with 50 members who support him/her. And then they have to have elections, and they have to choose at least one president and a vice president and respect gender parity. So for women to begin to have a leading role in the assemblies. Before in many assemblies' direction there were almost only men. Then they have to sign an act saying that the persons who voted cannot be less than 15 people. And they need to have a parliamentary procedure where the voting process is recorded. The vote can be by hand raise or by secret ballot, as they wish. And finally they have to have a basic statute.

Regarding the *Casas Somos*, formerly called Community Development Centers (CDC), they are mainly municipal buildings distributed throughout the city for cultural activities and activities to strengthen the social fabric. But yes, at first people get excited and participate, and then it goes down. So the municipality there proposes projects for children, elderly, internet basics or micro-entrepreneurship bases. Part of the workshops are financed by the Zonal Administrations. What has been tried is not to put the Casas Somos in charge of people of the neighborhood, because what happens is that they then become owners and favor only some sectors. There are around 34 of Casas Somos in Quito.

If it is very complex to understand.

The role of the managers (*Gestores*) that we talked about before, is that they go to the neighborhoods and prepare them to make a list of the works that the neighborhood needs. They do it in order to present it to the Parish of their neighborhood and gestores help them out prioritize the most important things in the list. Citizens can do two types of works, small and giant (like a new road). So the parish administration decides which works the EPMOP or the local organization has to do. In this second case they send a technician to see the neighborhood. Participatory budgets are assigned in the parishes through: 1) Unsatisfied basic needs 2) Housing density 3) Population.

Ordinance 16 also says that all organizations, of any kind, have to register at the municipality and have to declare their funds telling to the government how much they received as donation and how much is they spent. It is a way to control people to know where they are receiving the money from. And also to control the international funds...for example that the United States does not interfere. So what the government does in the end is to restrict participation. But at the same time it is a way to include everyone, women and young people. What it is mostly wanted is to remove the client mechanism between citizens.

There are things that the municipality works articulately and not.

Yes, the recovery of ravines could perhaps be done collectively between several neighborhoods, maybe through Federations financed by the Secretary of the Environment for example; it is something complicated but that could be done.

Yes a register of what was done through minga in Quito is missing, and there are no studies on this either, but the municipality realized that if the minga works, they can have a big impact. Last year Minga de la Quiteñidad was made and many people were raised. People care about collaborating and having their streets clean or collect garbage....and if it is true, that 50-50 mingas are not very fair because those who participate in these mingas pay taxes like everyone else.

Mario Unda

Professor of Sociology at the Universidad Central del Ecuador. Director of CIUDAD Investigation Center.

Quito, 2nd of Noviembre 2016

(translated from Spanish to English)

Participation in some moments goes up-up and then down, and so it is always. Now we are at a low moment. There are several reasons for these downturns. One is that people are relatively covered by services such as water, electricity, sewerage, transportation. the things for which people previously met and participated, now they already have them.

The Ecuadorian society in general has been individualized. Collective practices are less and less common. The most modern tendency is being individual.

This has greatly favored the market creating more inequalities. Culturally there has also been a decline in participatory processes. The minga is less and less practiced.

Also the technocratic and regulatory manner in which the State has worked participation has contributed to devalue participation. This idea that everything has to be regulated, breaks spontaneity. People adapt to this because they know that if they don't do it, the state does not help them, but it ends up being a kind of imposture.

One can say that the Buen Vivir Constitution opens many spaces but people do not use it, and I think that many things came out from the illumination of the technocrat and not from the everyday life of the people.

In all formalized Buen Vivir, the real strong thing was the Constituent process, because people were encouraged by it. It felt that politicians paid attention

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to the proposals of the people, the sense of self-esteem rose, but then the government imposed everything...and the local governments tend to do the same as the central government, because finally it is convenient to instrumentalize the participation of the people.

We have to consider that culturally here, in the collective unconscious there is an authoritarian tendency, typical of these societies, but also a participatory tendency. However, the authoritarian substratum is much stronger and the final ends demotivating participation...and people do not have time to participate in things where no-one listens to them.

The issue of neighborhood councils (*consejos barriales*) could have been a good idea if there was a process of preparation and construction but put only as a hierarchical structure is useless. The neighborhoods in most cases had neighborhood committees, then women's associations, youth groups, associations of taxi drivers, ... but suddenly they build them up a new structure, which ends up being more negative than positive. Being imposed loses its validity and becomes a pure bureaucratic instance.

The client dynamic is very strong, in the municipality and in the neighborhoods. Some of the inhabitants want to get out of this, but others don't, they do it because in this way they maintain their local power, because being in a clientelist network always allows you in some way to obtain resources and establish an inward power.

A fundamental issue is the decline in participation. With Barrera, assemblies were assembled mainly to establish how to distribute the participatory budgets. At the end, any neighborhood is related to a political party and moves around it. Atucucho for example is linked to "Alianza Pais", autonomy in reality there is not much. The tendency towards autonomy has weakened.

The same minga is very limited, there is not everywhere and does not attract many people and the environmental issue here has not yet been very socially assimilated. Mingas for environmental issues

are still marginal, but there are examples to teach that something can be done. The management issue of *quebradas* (ravines) for example...I agree that there should be federations like *mancomunidades* around the streams.

Another issue, yes, the Constitution talks a lot about participation, yes, there is an ordinance that talks about participation, etc. It should be discussed with people regarding potentialities. And yes, you can start with small things and then see, but the little things are quickly depleted, so there must be a broader vision and this wider environment is not there now.

The important thing should be that people evaluate how things are going and that they have a judgment about the limits of their collective doing, highlighting the difficulties for making them be more sustainable. I am pessimistic in the short term, but quite optimistic in the medium term. Because it takes time to deal with social, cultural and not just political issues...in order that people take their time to remember what was done collectively, and for those who never participated, like young people, make their new experiences. The fact that there are experiences, with the idea of future federations, allows you to think that something that can be done.

Adrián Augusto Barrera Guarderas

Doctor in Sociology and Political Science, Master in Contemporary Studies in Latin America, Master in Political Science, Doctor of Medicine, Mayor of the Metropolitan District of Quito (2009-2014), Expert in Habitat III, Secretary of the Secretariat of Higher Education, Science, Technology and Innovation (2017-2018). Researcher, consultant and teacher.

FLACSO Quito, 19th April 2017.

(translated from Spanish to English)

When we speak of popular settlements, there are usually more epic phases, such as when the occupation takes place and organization in house blocks is organized.

In the case of the Commune that you analyze, it must be said that it has always had an identity different from the rest of Quito. Entirely is headed by a very complicated conflict, which is the always more difficult conditions of sustainability of the communal land for being a model that is not subordinated by the market. The internal tensions have to do with the extension mechanisms of the urban limits.

The concept minga in our three case studies acquires forms, syncretisms and different modifications in each case, because they have very different rationalities.

If we talk about mingas 50-50, they were already promoted during the era of President Paco Moncayo. When my administration started, we said that this was an unfair model for the popular sectors, because for example, if the municipality had to invest on mobility around the large shopping centers, there the municipality invested 100. But 50-50 mingas were done because there was a lot of demand for interventions, because in this way what was needed was solved much more quickly, although I do agree that it is unfair to treat the rich and the poor differently. Remember also that it is a complicated model at an administrative level, because citizens also have to pay for the work, so they have to open

a bank account. Of course, the topic of reciprocity and community work is nice, but often there are issues of micro-management, regarding who buys the materials, who pays the food afterwards. While the "maintenance mingas" are simpler in this sense.

I understand that this mega-minga model is a cooptation model. Now the autonomy of the organizations in many neighborhoods of Quito is often violated and in many cases the municipality imposes external organizations on top of the existing ones as part of the Law of Participation of Decree 016. I also do not agree with the change of Community Development Centers (CDC) to the Casas Somos, because these last ones are partisan.

It seems we have returned to the 1990s, when there was a model of co-optation, weakening and fragmentation of the autonomous organization and an imposition of an institutional framework. For example, who calls the meetings of the participatory budgets (presupuesto participativa) is a manager (gerente) who is external to the community, which is a brutal level of control and destruction of any perspective of autonomy.

As you say, there are cycles of local participation, initially there is a strong economic need and popular movements are formed. Then, when there is provision of services, the struggle declines and we are now in a phase of co-optation by the state of the local organization.

There is a strong problem in the GADs of the 33 rural parishes, because they are extremely broad and by local representatives management is impossible... There is no true model of territorial coordination in the municipality of Quito. Now I can tell you that we are in a very weak moment. On the one hand there is the state overregulation, and on the other a depletion of the local leadership structure. But what I think it begins to subsist again in a more reactive, more anti-institutional participation / mobilization (ex. El Condado neighborhood and Quitocable, Quitumbe neighborhood rising because they do not obtain infrastructural works, the case of Algeria and Via Guayasamin, ...). At this moment there are signs of recomposition of the autonomous social organization of the government or municipality.

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What should be done by the institutions is to establish a policy of respect for autonomy. If for example there are Neighborhood Committees, the municipality does not have to bother its directive, but it should open participatory mechanisms.

It must also be said that in the time of the PCMLE (Marxist Communist Leninist Party) and the revolutionary struggles, they ended up leaving micro-clientelist powers. The leaders in some cases controlled the neighborhoods for 20-25 years and charged people a kind of lease for their own land. What happens is that a popular defense structure becomes a lumpen structure that works in an almost mafia-like way.

With the Barrera administration, what we tried to do was try to break this structure through the delivery of land titles, in such a way this would allow the inhabitants of the social sectors to free themselves from a 'neighborhood owner'.

We have to reflect a lot on these dynamics, on the lenses with which we see all this from the academic point of view and the political point of view. I have had great and eternal discussions with my friend Mario Unda on the subject of participation. I think that the processes of cognitive liberation and construction of popular subjects is not a pure one, and also not eternal, but contingent, organization can conform and can disappear ... the story is an open-ended novel ... it is a dynamic process.

If we talk about the Ecuador case, we must consider that the constitution of a popular national subject in our Andean society is a little different from a national subject in Brazil or Argentina. And this is for several reasons, because ours is a much more Post-colonial society, where a series of characteristics of the culture are deeply penetrated by ethnic distinction. This question is very harsh. Still one that has the skin a little dark or a half-rare surname, he/she is also scrubbed in the academy.

This is Quito, there are people who go to demonstrate outside the CNE and who will see go to see bulls in corridas; this is a strongly dominant and hegemonic culture still. This is why it is important to note that if we talk about urbanization process, what happened

is not automatically an industrialization process, it is a process of decomposition transfers of rural structures. So if there is no worker substratum that generates a syndical culture, there is a model of urbanization that sometimes generates a popular culture of subordination and articulation between the logic of clientele and negotiation for survival. Which is a very Andean form of urban process, which has the wonder that is the minga.

What you are doing with your thesis is central at this time. We must build a narrative that is sufficiently contemporary to incorporate these various reflections. It would be really important that the political and cultural sense of the minga could have a great performative power in the sense that you express the common, especially because the logic of reciprocity is very much alive in Quito.

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- Antonio Silva (28 August 2015). Architect living in the Comuna of Santa Clara.
- Augusto Barrera (19 April 2017). Former mayor of Quito 2007-2014.
- Carlos Arias (10 November 2016) former political leader of CdP,
- David Harvey (12 August 2015) Geographer at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York
- Edwin Muñoz (September-November 2016) former political leader of CdP
- Francisco Zapata (September-December 2016), former political leader of Comité del Pueblo, September-November 2016
- Henri Allan (07 August 2015) Professor of Sociology at the Universidad Central del Ecuador.
- Henri Godard (10 November 2016) Professor of Geography at the Universidad Andina del Ecuador.
- Isabel Muñoz (23 August 2015) Responsible for HABITAT project for Women's empowerment.
- Jacobo Herdoiza (24 August 2015) Secretary of Territory, Habitat and Housing of the Metropolitan District of Quito
- Jaime Erazo (19 August 2015) professor of Architecture at FLACSO Ecuador.
- Javier Alvarado (11 November 2016) Expert of Ecuadorian social movements.
- Juan (2 September 2015) old inhabitant of CdP.
- Juan Tendorio (7 August 2015). Atacocha's leader and Banco Comunitario de Atacocha's responsible.
- Maria Belen Granja Bastidas (18 November 2016) Professor of Architecture at the Universidad Central del Ecuador.
- Maria Luisa Changoluisa (2 November 2016) Secretaría de Coordinación Territorial y Participación Municipio Metropolitano de Quito.
- Mario Unda (15 November 2016). Professor of Sociology of Universidad Central del Ecuador.
- Patricia Palacio (17 August 2015) Professor of Architecture at the Universidad Central del Ecuador.
- Roberto Pozo (11 November 2016) Secretary of Environment of Quito.
- Ruben Sotelo (30 October 2016) old inhabitant of CdP.
- Taylor Herrera (10 November 2016). Comité Pro-mejoras's president, Quito, 2nd September 2015.
- Victor Cochambay (15 August 2015) Former president of Comuna de Santa Clara de San Millan.

Glossary

100RC: 100 Resilient Cities

BV: Buen Vivir

CdP: Comité del Pueblo

CEDOCUT: Ecuadorian Confederation of Workers Unitary Class Organizations (*Confederación Ecuatoriana de Organizaciones Clasistas Unitarias de Trabajadores*)

CONAIE: Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador (*Confederación de Nacionalidades Indígenas del Ecuador*)

COOTAD: Organic Code of Territorial Organization, Autonomy and Decentralization (*Código Orgánico de Organización Territorial, Autonomía y Decentralización*)

CPCCS: Council for Public Participation and Social Control (*Consejo de Participación y Control Social*)

EMASEO: The Metropolitan Public Toilet Company of Quito (*La Empresa Pública Metropolitana de Aseo de Quito*)

EPMMOP: Metropolitan Public Mobility and Public Works Company (*Empresa Pública Metropolitana de Movilidad y Obras Públicas*)

GAD: Decentralized Autonomous Government (*Gobierno Autónomo Descentralizado*)

INEC: National Institute of Statistics and Census (*Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Censos*)

NGO: Non-governmental organization

PMCL: PCMLE: Communist Marxist Leninist Party of Ecuador (*Partido Comunista Marxista Leninista del Ecuador*)

PNBV: Buen Vivir National Plan (*Plano Nacional del Buen Vivir*)

SENPLADES: National Secretariat of Planning and Development (*Secretaría Nacional de Planificación y Desarrollo*)

STHV: Secretariat of Territory, Habitat and Housing (*Secretaría de Territorio, Hábitat y Vivienda -Municipio de Quito*)

UNCHS: United Nations Human Settlement Programme

Quitopia. Collective city-making, participation and autonomy for Quito's urban future.

