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# **NEGOTIATING CITIZENSHIP THROUGH COMMUNAL WATER MANAGEMENT IN HIGHLAND ECUADOR**

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Ph.D. DEVELOPMENT STUDIES

NEGOTIATING CITIZENSHIP THROUGH COMMUNAL WATER MANAGEMENT  
IN HIGHLAND ECUADORSUMMARY

This research examines the formation of Water User Associations that administer communal drinking water supply systems in highland Ecuador and explores the ways in which they have become one of the many spaces through which indigenous and peasant *comunidades* negotiate and define citizenship rights. While policy debates and academic research have recognised that safe access to drinking water is an essential aspect of life in terms of wellbeing, health and productivity, less attention has been given to the cultural and political implications that accessing hydrological resources holds for marginalised groups in society. In other words, what are the uses and meanings that water acquires through time for local people? How and why different claims over water management become a source of power struggles and political contestation? Based on fieldwork and archival research the thesis explores the case of an indigenous and peasant *comunidad* of Otavalo, where during the past 30 years the establishment of drinking water supply systems has brought significant changes to the local population in terms of self-governance practices and forms of organisation. It argues that Water User Associations, originally introduced by the state to manage water, have become a space through which local communities negotiate local identities and articulate development aspirations. In this way, water has become an important political tool for a traditionally marginalised segment of the population who are, through their everyday practices of water management, demanding recognition of their rights *via à vis* the state. The thesis also shows, that despite the importance of these institutional arrangements access to water is also determined by power asymmetries and inequalities within the *comunidad*. By analysing user associations for drinking water systems, this thesis also contributes to an area of study that has been ignored by most of the existing water literature as it has tended to favour irrigation water management because it is considered more ‘traditional’ and part of the ‘hydrological culture’ of the Andes. This is important because there is an estimated 10,000 communal water management systems of which 6,600 to 7,000 are administering drinking water in the rural and peri-urban areas of Ecuador.

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## Acronyms

AIP	Misión Andina (Andean Indian Programme,)
CNRH	Consejo Nacional de Recursos Hídricos (National Council for Hydrological Resources)
CODENPE	Council for the Development of the Nationalities and Pueblos of Ecuador
CONAIE	Confederación de Nacionalidades Indígenas del Ecuador (Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador)
CONFENIAE	Confederación de Nacionalidades Indígenas de la Amazonia Ecuatoriana (Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of the Ecuadorian Amazon)
ECUARUNARI	Ecuadorunapac Riccharimui (Awakening of the Ecuadorian Indian)
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
FICI	Federación Indígena y Campesina de Imbabura (Federation of Indians and Peasants of Imbabura)
GEF	Global Environmental Facility
GTZ	German Technical Assistance
IDB	Inter American Development Bank
ILO	International Labour Organization
INAR	Instituto Nacional de Riego (National Irrigation Institute)
INERHI	Instituto Ecuatoriano de Recursos Hídricos
IEOS	Instituto Ecuatoriano de Obras Sanitarias (Ecuadorian Institute for Sanitary Works)
IMF	International Monetary Fund
MAGAP	Ministerio de Agricultura, Ganadería, Acuacultura y Pesca (Ministry of Agriculture, Husbandry, Aquaculture and Fishing)
MIDUVI	Ministerio de Desarrollo Urbano y Vivienda (Ministry of Urban Development and Housing)
MUPP-NP	Movimiento de Unidad Plurinacional Pachakutik Nuevo País
NGOs	non-governmental organisations
PPA	Proyecto Páramo Andino (Programme for the Conservation of the Biodiversity of the Central Highland Andes)
SAPSyRS	Subsecretaria de Agua Potable Saneamiento y Residuos Sólidos (Sub-secretariat for Water Supply, Sanitation and Solid Waste)
SENAGUA	Secretaria Nacional del Agua (National Water Secretariat)
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNEP	United Nations Environmental Programme
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
WHO	World Health Organization)
WUA	Juntas Administradoras de Agua Potable (Drinking Water User Associations)

## 1. Introduction

In September 2009, thousands of people from rural and peri-urban areas of Ecuador marched to Quito, the national capital, and to various provincial capitals. People who manage their own irrigation and drinking water at the communal level mobilised to protest against a proposed new water law. They believed that the new law would allow the state to take full control over the resource by centralising water governance through the authority of the recently formed SENAGUA (National Secretariat for Water), leaving the *Juntas Administradoras de Agua Potable* or Drinking Water User Associations (WUAs) without authority or power at the local level. The protestors managed to influence the decision makers, and in 2010 the National Assembly (Ecuadorian Congress) suspended negotiations over the proposed law. The following quotes are from people who participated in the various mobilisations:

*"It has cost us a lot to have water and we are well organised. It would not be fair if the government takes away this right from us"*

*María Isabel Gualotuña, member of La Vaqueria WUA*

*"We are autonomous; we want to be respected because we have worked for many years"*

*Eduardo Quimbiurco, Leader of the Comunidad de Ayora, Cayambe<sup>1</sup>*

Water management is a contentious issue in Ecuador, as these statements show, and this is not the first time it has been at the centre of social unrest. Increased and equitable access to water, the recognition of local forms of resource management and rejection of the privatisation of water rights were amongst the main issues that led to major indigenous and *campesino* (peasant) mobilisations that paralysed the country for many days both in 1990 and in 1994. Although not all the demands of the movement were met at the time, they managed to stop the privatisation of water rights and maintain some access to credit and other basic resources for rural development (Yashar 2005). In accordance with the demands of the indigenous movement in the 1990s, the 2009 protestors were defending what they

---

<sup>1</sup> *El Comercio*. 'Representantes de las juntas de agua fueron recibidos por la Asamblea' (23 September, 2009).

understand as their right to local autonomy in resource management. These later mobilisations, however, were distinct in that WUAs for domestic water systems played a more prominent role than in the protests of the 1990s.

While various authors have drawn attention to collective water management in the Andean region and Ecuador in connection with larger indigenous and peasant struggles about citizenship rights, (eg. Roth, Boelens et al. 2005; Zoomers 2006; Boelens 2008), most of these studies have concentrated on water for irrigation. As a result little attention has been paid to drinking water systems which have also, as indicated above, become important spaces for political contestation amongst marginalised segments of the population. This is significant because today there are an estimated 10,000 WUAs, of which approximately 6,000 are for drinking water only (SAPSyRS 2010). By analysing the history of the establishment of the WUA and the political and social meaning it holds in an indigenous and *campesino* community in present day highland Ecuador, this thesis seeks to fill this important gap in the research. At the same time, I seek to contribute to the understanding of how marginalised groups of people experience and claim citizenship rights on a daily basis (Gaventa 2002; Taylor and Wilson 2004; Cornwall and Coelho 2006; Mehta, Thompson et al. 2010). To that end, rather than focusing on the legal arena or the emergence of indigenous social movements (Guerrero 1993; León Trujillo 1994; Pallares 2002; Zamosc 2004; Yashar 2005; Pallares 2007) this thesis studies political agency in everyday water management. I argue that local collective water organisations have become key spaces through which indigenous and *campesino* populations in the Ecuadorian highlands define and contest the terms of citizenship.

### **Research objectives**

Drawing on ethnographic and historical research conducted in the Northern Andean region of Ecuador, the thesis will look at the establishment and role of local institutions, the WUA in particular, and how they have become an important platform through which the definition of citizenship rights is negotiated in Ecuador today. The thesis is not intended as a grand study of citizenship formation. Instead, emphasis is placed on the social and political history of water management, as well as people's everyday experiences of the

emergence, organisation and governance of the WUA because it is an important arena in which it is possible to locate and analyse the changing nature of the relationship between citizens and the state. It is precisely within these experiences or in what Lucy Taylor and Fiona Wilson (2004) call the “messiness of everyday life” that perceptions and practices of what constitutes citizenship rights are generated. Citizen action is not reduced to unreflective behaviour; on the contrary, these are well-thought-out actions, both collective and individual, of people who believe that the law “should be the same for all” (Assies, Calderón et al. 2005:11-12). Defending local ways of managing water is therefore fundamentally about breaking with historically constructed systems of exclusion, even if not always framed within the language of citizenship. At the same time, this thesis considers inequitable outcomes in terms of gender, age and class, which are embedded in these local organisations, or what Bina Agrawal (2001) has called ‘participatory exclusions’ of community cooperation. Thus, it is argued that while the WUAs provide important organisational platforms which, in addition to the local *cabildos* (community councils), foster autonomous forms of governance, the system is not always egalitarian, and yet most people are able to benefit from it and to use it to assert their citizenship rights.

By choosing water management practices as a vehicle to understand how citizenship is exercised on a daily basis, this thesis focuses on what has been defined as ‘active citizenship’ (Kabeer 2005; Abraham, Ngang-ling Chow et al. 2010). It examines the different ways in which people relate to the state, not simply as recipients but also as participants in the design and implementation of policy (Gaventa 2002; Cornwall and Coelho 2006; Newell and Wheeler 2006). From this perspective, rituals, meetings and competitions, amongst others, become political arenas where the negotiations of power between individuals, communities and the state take place (Taylor and Wilson 2004).

With these points in mind, this thesis asks: *how do communal water management systems influence local forms of social organisation and shape the way in which citizenship is exercised in Ecuador?*

In order to address this broad question, the analysis will be guided by three sub-questions.

- 1) *How have changes in state policies and practices influenced local level management and control of water resources over time?*
- 2) *How do local men and women experience everyday water management and contestation over resources?*
- 3) *How do communal systems of water management shape the assertion of different forms of citizenship in Ecuador?*

To address these questions, the thesis engages with literature and research on legal pluralism, citizenship and natural resource governance. Legal pluralism provides an important background to water management in the Andes as it analyses the debates concerning government policy to recognise local forms of resource allocation and the struggles of indigenous peoples to gain autonomy and manage water resources. (Trawick 2003; Boelens, Gentes et al. 2005; Boelens and Zwarteveen 2005; Boelens, Getches et al. 2006). To complement these debates, the thesis draws on the work of Andean historians, anthropologists and political scientists who show, from different analytical angles, that in its effort to incorporate the indigenous population, a rather weak state permitted, perhaps unintentionally, the formation of autonomous indigenous localities which now are considered important spaces of contention and civil action (Clark 1998; Pallares 2002; Lucero 2003; Clark 2005; Yashar 2005; Clark and Becker 2007; Colloredo-Mansfield 2009). This research also draws on citizenship literature and specifically on recent more plural conceptualisations of the term that, in addition to civil and political rights, include economic, social and cultural rights in their analysis (Young 1989; Kymlicka 1995; Gaventa 2002; Kabeer 2002; Kabeer 2005; Pallares 2007; Abraham, Ngang-ling Chow et al. 2010). In terms of natural resource governance, this thesis draws on literature that analyses institutions in relation to their historical, political, cultural and economic context (Mosse 1997; Cleaver 2000; Mosse 2003; Agrawal 2005). Together, these theoretical approaches create a conceptual framework through which it is possible to analyse and understand communal water systems, not only as a 'way' of managing water, but also as a politically embedded knowledge system through which indigenous and

peasant peoples in Ecuador contest the terms of citizenship. The theoretical framework underpinning this study will be analysed in detail in Chapter 2.

## **Background to the research**

### **State formation, ethnicity and citizenship in Ecuador**

To understand how citizenship is experienced on a daily basis by indigenous and *campesino* peoples in highland Ecuador, it is necessary to analyse their experiences in light of the political and social transformations brought about by the process of nation-state formation. It is the state that extends citizenship rights to people (or restricts them), and it is also the state that “privileges certain national political identities” (Yashar 2005:6). As these state-led political projects change, so does the definition of citizenship: its terms and conditions. In Ecuador, state formation, ethnicity and the changing definitions of citizenship need to be understood in relation to the geographic divisions of its territory. Ecuador is composed of four geographical zones that run from the north to the south of the country: the Pacific coastal lowlands to the west, the highland or Andean corridor in the centre, the Amazonian lowlands on the east, and the Galapagos Islands (Figure 1.1). Over the years, these geographical and ecological divisions have profoundly influenced economic development, social and cultural identities and the state’s capacity to govern. During Spanish rule, which lasted for approximately 350 years (early 1500s to early 1800s) the highlands were the political centre of the colony and as a result dominated the rest of the country both in economic and demographic terms. Regional differences became even more marked after independence. Divisions between the elite of each region affected processes of state formation in Ecuador and on various occasions almost led to the dissolution of the country (Clark and Becker 2007). These processes had significant consequences for the indigenous population.

Figure 1.1 Map of Ecuador<sup>2</sup>



During the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries the regional elites developed often divergent ideas of how to transform the natives into *mestizo* individuals or what was considered ‘possible’ citizens. At the same time, the coastal elite constantly sought to gain access to the indigenous labour force controlled by the highland *haciendas* (large estates). However, in the context of a weak state prone to internal disputes, subordinate groups were able to respond in proactive and creative ways. Thus, as Kim Clark and Marc Becker (2007:4) point out, rather than constituting passive recipients of the grievances of the elite and of state policy, “highland Indians have been central to the process of Ecuadorian state formation. At times, their actions led to the generation of new laws or government orders, and their political strategies sometimes affected state policy by stretching the meaning of government discourse, and in the process, transforming it.”

<sup>2</sup> Map retrieved from [www.ezilon.com](http://www.ezilon.com)



Although estimates vary, the indigenous population in Ecuador today represents between 7% and 30% of the country's 14 million inhabitants.<sup>3</sup> It is also the poorest segment of the population in terms of income and unsatisfied needs (Uquillas and Nieuwkoop 2003:3). There are 14 ethnic indigenous nationalities living in the three distinct geo-ecological zones of Ecuador: the Coast, the Andean highlands and the Amazon.<sup>4</sup> The largest nationality is the Quichua of the Andean region which comprises 16 sub-ethnic groups or *pueblos* (e.g. Otavalo, Cayambi, Saraguro) who share the same language, Quichua, but for reasons relating to their individual origin and cultural practices consider themselves different from each other (Pallares 2002:8). Their livelihoods depend mainly on agriculture but are also supported by a range of other activities such as migrant labour and commerce (Bebbington 1999). The economic roles developed by each *pueblo* have furthered differentiation and fostered distinct ethnic identities. For example, the Otavalo of the northern province of Imbabura have been successful in producing textiles that are sold locally and internationally. They travel extensively around the world selling their own and other indigenous peoples' artefacts. The Cañari of the southern province of Azuay have instead specialised in weaving Panama hats, partly because of limited land resources (Clark and Becker 2007). In addition to the formation of strong local identities, the entry of indigenous peoples into the market economy has led to a process of social stratification and the creation of an Indian elite that tends to reside in urban areas like Otavalo (*Ibid*).<sup>5</sup> Quichua indigenous identity should therefore be understood as the result of patterns of interactions between local traditions, Spanish colonialism, post-colonial republican nation-states and contemporary representations of indigeneity.

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<sup>3</sup> Various actors in Ecuador dispute the actual number of indigenous peoples. While the indigenous organisations such as the FEINE (Federación Ecuatoriana de Indígenas Evangélicos/ Ecuadorian Federation of Evangelist Indians) maintains that 30% of the population is indigenous (Chisaguano 2006), in the latest national census conducted in 2010, 7% of the total population self-identified as indigenous (INEC 2012). This last figure is based on a question that asked people how they self-identify; the options were: Indian, white, *mestizo*, Afro-Ecuadorian, *montubio* and other.

<sup>4</sup> Ethnic groups in Ecuador are often referred as *nationalities* and are also divided into *pueblos* or sub-ethnic groups. These terms were formally introduced after the 1997-98 Constitutional Assembly but were central to the indigenous movements' demands since the 1980s (see [www.codenpe.gov.ec](http://www.codenpe.gov.ec)).

<sup>5</sup> Although there are many indigenous peoples living in urban areas, most of them have close connections with rural communities which they visit or return to at different points in their lives (Colloredo-Mansfield 2009)

Academic studies have shown that the strong indigenous movement, which emerged during the 1990s in Ecuador, is a specific product of such protracted and dynamic interactions (Yashar 2005; Clark and Becker 2007; Pallares 2007). It has been suggested that in their effort to strengthen the nation-state, an elite-run, “heavily paternalistic” project to incorporate the indigenous population into the nation “allowed the formation of spaces that could be used for the promotion of subaltern projects” (Clark 2005:63). As part of a project to ‘make’ Indians into Ecuadorian peasants, the state introduced some important laws that included the *Ley de Comunas* in 1937 (to standardise local organisation along a corporatist, class based model and ideally homogenise rural communities) and two land reforms in 1964 and 1973 respectively. Although these structural changes provoked a political transformation in the rural areas they did not “subordinate Indians to a national project” (Yashar 2005:88). Instead, the state unintentionally established independent institutions or pockets for local autonomy, the *comuna/comunidad* (community), where self-governance of communal land and other social affairs were encouraged (Becker 1999; Korovkin 2001; Yashar 2005). The territorial character of the communities does not mean that they are predetermined, static or homogenous institutions/places. Neither does it mean that they are “synonymous with Andean indigenous peoples” (Colloredo-Mansfield 2009:19). Thus in this thesis the *comunidad* is assumed to be the result of a process of defining rights over land and other resources, which necessarily entails determining social as well as territorial boundaries which can and do change over time (Ibarra 2004).

This thesis suggests that in addition to the *comuna/comunidad*, the associations for managing domestic water that were introduced during the late 1970s have become a key space through which indigenous and *campesino* communities govern their territories and relate to the state and negotiate citizenship rights on a daily basis. This thesis does not advocate a communitarian approach to water management where the state is superfluous, but rather highlights how the Ecuadorian State’s lack of involvement and fragmented nature have resulted in a range of community-level initiatives through which citizenship is negotiated.

While there is a large body of literature dedicated to the study of the indigenous population and the rise of the indigenous movement in Ecuador (Guerrero 1989; Guerrero 1993; Clark 1998; Clark 1999; Guerrero 2000; Korovkin 2001; Pallares 2002; Guerrero 2003; Lucero 2003; Clark 2005; Yashar 2005; Clark and Becker 2007; Pallares 2007; Sattar 2007; Waters 2007; Williams 2007), less attention has been given to another group of people who also live in marginalised rural areas, often side by side with indigenous peoples, and yet not necessarily or always considering themselves Indian. In a similar way to the indigenous population, they have experienced systematic exclusion from citizenship rights. These people, who define themselves in class terms or as *campesino* (peasant), are a diverse group that includes poor *mestizos*, *indigenas* (Indians) and *blancos* (whites), whose livelihoods and identities are tied to small-scale agriculture and who live in rural *comunidades* which may be mixed (indigenous and *mestizo*) or *white-mestizo* only.<sup>6</sup> Many of these mixed communities are the product of the land reforms that took place in Ecuador in the 1960s and 1970s when large estates (*haciendas*) were divided and sold. As a result, both indigenous and non-indigenous rural workers moved with their families to land that previously belonged to the *haciendas*, and began to organise and form *comunidades* with their own rules and ways of administering their resources, especially land and water. Although not as vocal or as able to demonstrate ethnic ‘difference’ as the indigenous population, the fact that they belong to organised communities and are therefore in control of territories “allows them to demonstrate distinction” (Ng’weno 2007:28). It also facilitates their struggle to gain access to resources and exercise citizenship rights along similar lines to the indigenous population. As this thesis shows, both indigenous and *campesino* peoples manage water and other natural resources collectively, practices they consider part of their livelihoods and through which they relate to the state on a daily basis. In light of this, based on the case of a mixed Indian and mestizo community, this thesis will also include in its analysis those people who do not necessarily or always consider themselves ‘indigenous’ but are willing to and in fact do take part in indigenous-led demands as *campesino* citizens. Chapter 2 expands on this discussion.

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<sup>6</sup> At the end of the introduction I discuss the terms that refer to ethnic and social identity such as *indigena*, *mestizo* and *campesino*.

## **Changing notions of citizenship in Latin America**

The notion of citizenship in Latin America was originally “imposed by elite groups who had led the struggle for independence and moulded their constitutions on those of their ‘mother’ colonial countries” (Kabeer 2002:14). The newly formed republics did not recognise all of their inhabitants as citizens. Indians, who in many cases constituted the majority of the population, were instead given the status of subjects with very limited rights. Over the years, exclusion was accentuated and legitimised by racial constructions of the population that conceived of the ‘Indian’ as the counter-image in the white-*mestizo* citizenship project of the liberal republics. During the 20<sup>th</sup> century, confronted with increasing urbanisation and industrialisation, the ruling classes in Latin America became concerned with the problem of ‘incorporating the masses’ (Assies 2005:100). In the effort to expand the productive capacity of the countries’ inhabitants, populism and clientelistic hand-outs emerged. At the same time, the expansion of social policies that included education, health, credit and subsidies took place. It could be said that while some social rights were extended, political and civil rights remained limited (Assies 2005:101). In fact, it was only after a particularly repressive period characterised by military dictatorships that began in the 1960s and lasted well into the 1980s that more political and civil rights were extended to the majority of the population (at least officially). For instance, it was by allowing illiterate people (which included the majority of the indigenous population) to participate in electoral processes that the right to vote was finally extended to all Ecuadorians in 1979. Although some political and civil rights were either reinstated or created by the post-dictatorship democratic regimes, social rights previously broadened under the corporatist systems of the pre-dictatorship era were “never fully restored, let alone extended or universalised” (Assies, Calderón et al. 2005:6; Yashar 2005).

During the post-dictatorship period strong social movements with the “right to have rights” agenda emerged throughout the continent. In the context of democratisation processes and increasing neoliberal agendas during the 1980s and 1990s, these movements “became a device for questioning a broad range of injustices and exclusions considered sign of ‘non-

citizenship’” (Assies 2005:109). The large indigenous movement in Ecuador is a case in point.

### **Challenging exclusion**

During the 1990s indigenous movements strengthened their position as social and political agents to demand access to individual citizenship rights as well as the recognition of their collective rights (Guerrero 1993). Through alliances between diverse indigenous groups, social movements struggled to gain recognition for what they call the ‘*plurinational*’ Ecuador and in doing so demanded both the right to equality and the right to be different. This means “guaranteeing local sufficiency” (for example, access to land and water) and at the same time recognising local ways of managing these resources (Boelens and Dávila 1998:448). Various authors have argued that by pressing for access to more resources as well as for the recognition of Ecuador as a *plurinational* state, these organisations have succeeded in challenging prevailing notions of universal citizenship which in the Ecuadorian case translates into a model that obscures ethnic, social and gender differences under a uniform white-*mestizo* ethnic identity (Guerrero 1993; Guerrero 2003; Pallares 2007). In the particular case of water these debates have focused on demands for equal access to water resources and the recognition of local collective organisations to manage them (Pacari 1998). The emergence of the indigenous movement in relation to changing notions of citizenship rights will be examined in detail in Chapters 2 and 3.

### **Water and citizenship**

As a result of continuous civil society involvement, many Latin American states have extended a whole range of civil, political and social rights through new and innovative constitutions. Rights, such as the right to water or even the rights to the *Pachamama* (mother earth/nature), have been inscribed in the constitutions of a number of countries including Bolivia and Ecuador. Yet the struggle to realise those rights in practice still continues. Inequalities and exclusion are the rule rather than the exception. In this light, this thesis tries to show how in the everyday practices of water management, rural inhabitants who have been excluded from accessing certain rights based on their ethnicity (Indians)

or/and social class (*campesino*), contest such exclusion and demand the right to manage and control water resources at the local level. In order to understand the importance of water for indigenous and *campesino* populations, it is important to first look at the current situation in terms of access to and management of water resources in the country.

Physical shortages, environmental degradation, inadequate management and unequal social distribution of resources restrict access to water in Ecuador. The country has one of the highest levels of land ownership concentration in the world. While the smallest peasant households own around 30% of the irrigated land, large landowners own more than 50% (Zapata and Gasselin 2005). This is also reflected in unequal access to credit, technology and fundamentally water. In terms of access to water for human consumption, the statistics do not improve. As of December 2011 only 63% of the population had access to piped water (MIDUVI 2012). The imbalance is even greater if we look at the difference between rural and urban areas. In 2011, 39 % of the population in rural areas had access to piped water, in contrast to 83% in urban centres (MIDUVI 2012). There are social as well as regional differences in terms of access to water inside the house. According to a 2004 survey only 23% of those self-identified as indigenous and Afro-Ecuadorian had access to piped water inside and 37% outside their homes. (Borja Narajo 2002:22).

Water supply services in Ecuador are delivered by various kinds of providers. In urban areas, the local council is usually responsible for the service and generally there is a municipal water company operating the system, although in some cases the service is provided by a private company – for example, in the city of Guayaquil. In rural areas water is administered by WUAs which are, in theory, under the supervision of the Sub-secretariat for Water Supply, Sanitation and Solid Waste (SAPSyRS), which is part of the Ministry of Urban Development and Housing (MIDUVI). Due to a lack of human and financial resources, however, in practice the local users run most rural drinking water systems independently. The majority of these systems deliver water but the service is not always satisfactory in terms of reliability and coverage. In some places water is only available for a few hours a day (MIDUVI 2002). As noted earlier, there are an estimated 10,000 communal water management systems in the rural and peri-urban areas of Ecuador, of

which 6,600 to 7,000 are administering drinking water (SAPSyRS 2010). This means that between four and five million Ecuadorians are users and members of some kind of community-run water arrangement (Visscher, Quiroga et al. 1996). This thesis is not evaluating the WUA in terms of efficiency and capacity to deliver, but seeks to contribute to policies aimed at improving water provision in rural areas, by looking at why and how collective water management has gained political and cultural significance at the local level. In other words, this thesis seeks to increase understanding of the politics of decision-making within the WUA and its effects on access to water.

In the context of unequal access to hydrological resources, collective water management becomes a useful vehicle for understanding processes of citizenship formation because it is an arena in which negotiations over inclusion and exclusion take place. Questions such as who has access to water, when, why, and where are at the core of resource management and distribution (Castro 2006). In this sense, water management is fundamentally about power struggles and involves political engagement at different levels. Various authors have touched on the relationship between water and citizenship through related topics such as water rights (Beccar, Boelens et al. 2001; Boelens and Hoogendam 2001; Boelens and Zwarteveen 2005; Roth, Boelens et al. 2005; Zoomers 2006), water governance (Cleaver 2000; Cleaver and Franks 2005) and the right to essential water and sanitation services (Anand 2007; Mehta, Thompson et al. 2010). However, apart from Esteban Castro (2006) who studies the relationship between access to water and citizenship in the case of the Basin of Mexico, there are few studies in this academic area. Therefore, this thesis also aims to contribute to the theoretical and practical understandings of the links between water and citizenship rights.

Rather than only trying to explain why people cooperate and whether they do it efficiently, this thesis seeks to understand the effects that the introduction of the WUA has had in terms of the political, social and cultural dynamics of the *comunidad*. Put another way, it seeks to understand the meaning that having communally-based institutions to manage drinking water has acquired for local residents. Here, institutions are defined as “sites of social interaction, negotiation and contestation comprising heterogeneous actors having diverse

goals”(Mehta, Leach et al. 1999:7). In this sense, I adopt Mosse’s (1997:470) historically-situated and context-specific understanding of institutions where “these do not only manage resources, they also serve to reproduce relations of dominance and dependence, and provide the context for political strategy and status competition”. At the same time I draw from Cleaver’s (2000) study of the relationship between people and institutions, which suggests that “institutions are partial, intermittent and indeed often invisible, being located in the daily interaction of ordinary lives”. Instead of concentrating on the functionality and efficiency of common property institutions, these approaches allow us to see the politics involved in collective water management, and specifically in terms of this thesis, to relate collective forms of water management to the construction of citizenship in highland Ecuador.

### **Research site and methodology**

This research is based on fieldwork conducted in the rural areas of the Otavalo Canton (political-administrative division) in northern highland Ecuador. Otavalo is located in the province of Imbabura and has a high percentage of Quichua indigenous population subdivided into different *pueblos*, the Otavalo, Cayambi, Natabuela and Caranqui. Thanks to a large Saturday market featuring Indian arts and crafts, Otavalo and its surrounding areas have become one of the main tourist attractions in Ecuador. Otavalo Indians are known internationally for their prosperous textile business and “trade diaspora that stretches from Quito to Bogotá, Caracas, and Amsterdam”(Collaredo-Mansfeld 1998:189). The research focused on one indigenous and *campesino* community that lies on the slopes of mount Mojanda (4363 m), east of Otavalo town, specifically Mojandita de Curubi. Mojandita is an ethnically mixed locality where *mestizos*, whites and also Otavalo and Cayambi indigenous peoples live. Although most of the research was conducted there, I also spent time in neighbouring communities and met with people living in different places around the Mojanda area. These communities have piped water systems and in all cases water is managed by local WUAs. I chose this site because it had well established and organised *comunidades* located in an area of historical importance in terms of indigenous and peasant collective action. Also, there are significant historical archives and a large body of academic research conducted in Otavalo which provide useful data to contextualise my



study and help me understand the changing relationship between the state and the local population over time.

The data presented in this thesis was collected using a variety of research methods. I conducted ethnographic fieldwork between October 2008 and October 2009 and short visits to the field site in June 2010 and January 2011. This entailed living in the community and participating as much as possible on its everyday activities, particularly those related to water management (work parties or *mingas* and meetings). Additionally, I conducted a series of interviews with local residents as well as with indigenous leaders and state authorities. To complement this information, I carried out a large portion of my fieldwork in historical archives in Otavalo, Ibarra and Quito. The decision to adopt a variety of research methods was based on the idea that in order to understand citizenship and water management practices today it is also essential to analyse the history behind access and control over resources. As this thesis shows, contemporary experiences of resource management are best understood in relation to the complex and historical struggles to access resources and services amongst the indigenous and *campesino* communities in highland Ecuador. Both the methodologies employed and the choice of field site will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 2.

While reflecting on how and when citizenship is exercised, my own background and experiences also became part of the study. Given the social and cultural constructions around ethnicity and class that prevail in Ecuador I had to reflect constantly on my own background. I was born in the capital city Quito, into what would in Ecuador generally be considered a 'white' family, both 'labels' that have implications in terms of the relations that I developed in the field. It became essential for me to think not only about the way I was perceived by the people I interacted with, but also about my own perceptions of them and how this influenced my fieldwork. Positionality and the ways in which identity and ethnic perceptions influence experiences of citizenship will be discussed on Chapters 2, 4, 5 and 6.

Finally, it is important to mention that in order to live and conduct fieldwork in Mojandita de Curubi I had to seek and be granted permission from its Community Council, a process which took almost three months. I was officially introduced during a general meeting where people were able to ask questions about my work and, as a result, the majority of its residents were aware of my presence and the activities I conducted there. Permission to record interviews was also requested during individual meetings. Because I use information that might be compromising for some people, I have chosen to omit names or to use pseudonyms. In the few cases when real names are used I state it clearly. All place names are real.

### **Key terms**

So that the argument of this thesis may be clearly understood, I wish to clarify the meaning of some key terms relating to ethnic and class labels which are employed in the analysis. (A glossary of terms is also attached as an appendix). In Ecuador, ethnic identity is best understood in terms of self-identification, where the terms '*mestizo*', 'indigenous' and 'white' do not necessarily coincide with physical traits. These permeable ethnic boundaries need to be analysed as the result of historical processes, where collective self-representation is the product of confrontation and engagement between different groups of people and shaped by deep economic inequalities (Bourque 1997; Li 2000; Colloredo-Mansfield 2009). As De la Torre (2000:34) observes, in Ecuador ethnic, racial and class labels can change according to cultural and social practices.

The Ecuadorian racial and ethnic terms, *blanco* (white), *mestizo* (mixed blood) and *Indio* (Indian) are social and cultural constructs that refer to physical features and appearance, language, dress style, rural or urban origin, and Quichua or Spanish surnames. The fluidity of this system of racial ethnic stratification, where changing dress and hairstyle or learning to speak 'proper' Spanish, for example, can transform an Indian into a *mestizo* makes it difficult to differentiate clearly between these categories.

The terms *mestizo*, white-*mestizo*, *campesino* and Indian/indigenous employed in this thesis reflect their use and understanding in the Ecuadorian context. Because racism persists in Ecuador, and as a result people are systematically excluded and mistreated based on perceptions of race and ethnicity, it is important to know that these terms hold particular values that can change with place and circumstance. Thus, when describing people in the

thesis I have tried to use the term or label that each individual would use to identify themselves.

*Indian/indigenous* refers to those people who consider themselves Indigenous and whose identity is defined by the specific cultural practices of the particular ethnic group to which they belong.

*Mestizo* is a term used to describe a person who is racially mixed between Indian and white. In the Andean context however, an individual can also be considered or ‘become’ a *mestizo* depending on the way they dress, the language they speak and their livelihood choices. For instance, when or if an indigenous person decides to abandon their traditional clothing or hair style (markers of Indian identity) and perhaps even change their place of residence (generally from rural to urban areas), they might be considered or ‘become’ *mestizo*. It is possible to find families where the parents identify themselves as Indigenous or even white and the children as *mestizo*. It is also necessary to understand the term *mestizo* in the context of the history of nation-state formation after independence in Latin America and Ecuador in particular. Although all Ecuadorians were declared citizens of the newly formed nation in 1822, indigenous peoples remained as ‘subjects’ and did not (officially) enjoy the most fundamental rights until the late 20<sup>th</sup> century. In this context, and as a national policy, the state tried to transform Indians (considered backward and dirty) into proper ‘citizens’ which in practice meant ‘converting’ them, through education, into *mestizos* and incorporating them into mainstream society. In this light, *mestizo* could also be understood/interpreted/used as a form of ethnic and “class redeployment, where mixture is redefined as an empowering alternative that escapes rejection” (Ng'weno 2007:130). Although becoming or being a *mestizo* did not (and does not) guarantee complete access to resources and rights, it was seen and is understood by the majority of people as an ‘advancement’ and the first step towards attaining citizenship rights. It is in this context that people choose to ‘become’ *mestizos*, and perhaps in that way reduce exclusion, gain access to resources and escape poverty.

*Campesino* or peasant is essentially a class label to describe people who are tied to the land and derive their livelihoods from agricultural activities. These could be indigenous, *mestizo* or white people who see themselves as *campesino* in addition to or even taking priority over how they would describe themselves in terms of their ethnicity or race.

### **Thesis structure and argument**

The thesis is presented in three parts: the first one includes Chapter 1 (this introduction) and Chapter 2. Chapter 2 provides a discussion of the conceptual and methodological approach underlining the research. It begins with background on the definition and approach to citizenship that the thesis draws on. It then moves on to a discussion of the connection between water and citizenship, and with a brief overview of water-related literature. The final part of the chapter explores the methodological and ethical considerations underpinning this study.

The second part or the historical section of the thesis includes Chapters 3 and 4 and provides a background to the relationship between the indigenous/*campesino* population and the state in highland Ecuador. Here I see the state as a set of institutions, laws, authorities and techniques whose purpose is to govern and exert power (Agrawal 2005; Clark and Becker 2007; Colloredo-Mansfield 2009). The state and its policies are represented by and might include, the school, the schoolteacher, the health centre, the *jefe politico* (political lieutenant), or a project to build a new road. The thesis does not examine the administrative and jurisdictional aspects of the state in detail but instead looks at how state practices and policies have influenced collective water management over time. In this light, Chapter 3 shows how, in the effort to build a ‘modern’ nation state, the Ecuadorian ruling class tried to incorporate the indigenous population into the mainstream *mestizo* society. The chapter demonstrates how indigenous and *campesino* peoples rose out of these processes as political actors who engage in direct negotiations with the state and demand a particular, “differentiated” mode of citizenship (Pallares 2002; Pallares 2007). Drawing on historical documents written between 1930 and 1970, Chapter 4 examines the views that the ruling class and authorities held about indigenous peoples during this period, and how such views influenced policies to improve health and sanitation in Ecuador. The chapter

serves as a background to understanding why and how drinking water systems were first introduced in the rural areas in highland Ecuador, and why it is so significant that today these technological and institutional arrangements are considered an intrinsic part of the *comunidad*.

The third part of the thesis, the ethnographic section, explores the establishment of the drinking water systems and the Water Users Associations in Mojandita de Curubi, the community where I conducted field research. Rather than concentrating on the individual transformations that occurred in this *comunidad*'s households due to the arrival of piped water, in Chapter 5 I explore the institutional and social aspects of administering drinking water communally. Here I explore a number of questions: why and how do people gain access to water rights, and which people? How is water valued amongst the local users? Does it have a monetary value? Why do the WUAs control local manual labour today? As I discuss these issues, I show how from being almost forcibly introduced, these local systems of water management have become intrinsic to the social and political dynamics of the community.

By presenting an extended study of the work party or *minga*, Chapter 6 shows the types of negotiations, interventions and contestation that underlie local water management. It is argued that the *minga* is a powerful social institution through which community membership is symbolically and physically produced and through which the community's relationship with the state is articulated. This chapter and the thesis as a whole are not trying to argue that water is the sole element in this relationship; education, access to and control over land and the administration of justice, just to mention a few, are equally important (Garcia 2005; Colloredo-Mansfield 2009). Finally, Chapter 7, the conclusion, presents a summary of each chapter as well as the overall argument of the thesis. It also highlights some of the contributions of the study to the overall body of knowledge in this area, as well as some gaps and future research possibilities.

By tracing the history behind collective water management and discussing how it influences the relationship between marginalised populations and the state I hope to show

one fundamental point: that WUAs have become a key space through which indigenous and *campesino* populations in the Ecuadorian highlands negotiate and experience citizenship on a daily basis. While various authors have demonstrated how indigenous peoples use the organisational platforms of the *comunidad* and other types of associations to mobilise and demand change (Pallares 2002; Yashar 2005) very little has been studied in relation to the role communal water management plays in this process of state–citizen relations. In this light, I suggest that indigenous peoples’ adaptation and use of the 1979 Law that established the WUAs has become an important space to challenge as well as to relate to the state. Through management of water resources, local residents increase control over their communities and territories and therefore legitimise and assert what they understand as the right to self-determination and local autonomy.

## 2. Conceptual and methodological considerations

### Experiencing Citizenship

What does it mean to be a citizen? How and when do we experience it? As a person brought up in an urban setting, where communal organisation is very rare, my understanding of citizenship has been defined by my encounters with the state as an individual, as a *ciudadano* (citizen). My earliest memories of this kind of encounter took place when I was a child and are flashes from when I got my own *cédula* (the Ecuadorian identity card) for the first time. I remember going to the *registro civil* (registry), an old and dirty office crowded with people, where my mother fought her way through the different queues and offices. I recall a man taking my fingerprints and that outside the building we purchased a plastic cover for the much-needed piece of paper. On that day, I was officially registered as an Ecuadorian. Using an updated version of this same document, I voted for the first time when I was 19 and thus exercised my political right as a citizen. I have also participated in protests to demand changes in the political system, and felt the importance and power of exercising my civil rights. Generally then, a universal, liberal model of citizenship characterised by different rights and duties has defined my experiences: obtaining an official document, paying taxes, voting in elections, protesting, paying a water or electricity bill. In this sense, until I conducted research in a rural community in the Andes, my experiences of what it means to be a *ciudadano* had been varied, yet limited to my personal/individual interactions with the state.

Living in Mojandita de Curubi has allowed me to broaden my understanding of the meaning(s) and forms that citizenship can entail. Most importantly, I have learned that the relationship between the individual citizen and the state can also be mediated by the *comunidad*. Rather than belonging to the nation state only as individuals, many indigenous and peasant peoples also conceive their membership or citizenship in collective terms. People belong to a community that as a whole belongs to the state. It is therefore no surprise that one of the central demands of the indigenous movement in Ecuador has been

for the recognition of “indigenous nationalities as collective entities that meri[t] specific rights and concessions” (Pallares 2007:150).

The importance of collective rights and therefore citizenship as mediated by the community became clearer to me when I conducted research on water management practices in Ecuador. I learned that accessing water in most rural areas entails a lot more than paying a bill. Access to water is determined by the amount of labour invested in the building and maintenance of the water supply system as well as attending communal meetings. On a personal level, it meant that I was able to experience a different way of being a citizen in my own country. My status and relationship with the state was mediated by the communal organisation. Instead of registering for the service in an office in town and paying a monthly bill to them, having access to water in Mojandita de Curubi meant that I had to attend communal work parties and invest my time and labour in the water supply system. Only after that was I able to benefit (as part of a collective) from the right to access a particular source of water. I also learned that most other services and resources are similarly mediated by the communal structure. For instance, people in Mojandita, have contributed to and actively participate in activities related to the local school, the health centre, road building and maintenance, as well as a variety of development projects.

Although I was aware of the deep inequalities that prevail in Ecuador, conducting fieldwork also allowed me to confirm that, unlike my own case, for most people in marginalised rural areas, acquiring resources and attaining citizenship rights has been the result of extraordinary efforts and important processes of social and political change. This is no surprise given that belonging to the nation-state as citizens, rather than subjects with very few rights, is a relatively new status for most indigenous and peasant populations. For instance, the right to move freely (without the permission of the landlord), or to vote are recent gains, which only date back to the 1960s and 1970s respectively. In this light, I argue that the trajectory of citizenship formation in these historically marginalised communities has to be understood as the result of specific experiences of inclusion and exclusion. I use the case of water management practices in indigenous and peasant *comunidades* in the northern highlands as a vehicle to analyse how these processes of inclusion and exclusion



have been transformed over time, and with them the meaning and practices of citizenship in Ecuador.

In order to contextualise and understand citizenship formation as it has unfolded in the Ecuadorian highlands, in this chapter I present the conceptual and methodological approach underlining the research. The first part of the chapter presents an overview of the theoretical strands that provide the background to this thesis. It starts with the approach to citizenship that the thesis draws on. It then moves on to a discussion of the connection between water and citizenship, and finishes with an overview of water-related literature. The final part of the chapter explores the methodological and ethical aspects underpinning this research project.

### **Understanding citizenship**

The notion of citizenship historically emerged as a way of defining the status of the individual in relation to the city-states of ancient Greece. Modern understandings of citizenship, however, developed during the transformation from feudalism to capitalism in Europe which gave rise to the universal or liberal notion of citizenship where “individual rights are guaranteed by law and upheld by the state” (Kabeer 2002:24). Although the exact nature of these rights has changed over time, the categories developed by Marshall (1963) have been widely used to conceptualise contemporary definitions of citizenship. Based on the British experience, Marshall argued for a sequential path of citizenship formation that follows three different types of rights: civil, political and social. In general terms, civil rights are designed to protect individual freedoms and include amongst other elements: freedom of faith, freedom to own property, freedom of association and access to the justice system. Political rights commonly refer to the right to participate in government and vote in elections. The definition of social rights is more complex but generally refers to “the whole range from the right to a modicum of economic welfare and security to the right [...] to live according to the standards prevailing in the society” (Marshall 1963:72). Although widely used as a starting point to understand citizenship, the content and projected path of the rights formulated by Marshall have been challenged (c.f. Young 1989; Kabeer 2002; Abraham, Ngang-ling Chow et al. 2010).

Developed as an understanding of post World War II Great Britain, Marshall's outline of citizenship has been specifically challenged for its inability to explain trajectories of citizenship formation in other contexts, such as those of colonialism, or exclusion based on race and gender (Young 1989; Kabeer 2002; Abraham, Ngang-ling Chow et al. 2010). In the case of Latin America, where the content and logic of citizenship have not necessarily developed in a consistent or sequential way (Assies, Calderón et al. 2005; Yashar 2005:46) this criticism is particularly relevant. Instead of the linear extension of citizenship rights (civil, political, and social) outlined by Marshall (1963), most countries in the region, have seen uneven and highly conflicted processes of citizenship formation (Assies 2005; Yashar 2005). Although today, "official discourse and legislation [...] emphasise the full rights of any citizen, large majorities of the population experience the daily negation of such rights" (Assies, Calderón et al. 2005:10). Although some rights are granted, others are taken away at different points in time. In this context, some scholars explain what they consider as the "absence of citizenship" to be the product of the clientelism, irrationality and authoritarianism prevalent in the region (*Ibid*). More recent work, however, has concentrated on citizens' everyday experiences and highlighted the "social interaction, economic practices, cultural expression and the exercise of power in daily life" (Taylor and Wilson 2004:156) to show that citizenship in Latin America also needs to be understood "from below" (Assies, Calderón et al. 2005:12). Whilst still considering the legislative arena an important element of the struggle, this approach is more concerned with the ways in which people try to make citizenship rights meaningful in practice. The emphasis is therefore turned towards everyday experiences and interpretations of citizenship that can range from protests and collective action to the actual act of "forsaking the position of 'citizen' in order to obtain a more favourable outcome" during encounters with state officials and other powerful actors (Assies, Calderón et al. 2005:12).

This thesis draws on the latter approach to show how indigenous and peasant *comunidades* use local water management practices as a space to contest, define and claim citizenship in highland Ecuador. In order to study these processes, I engage with recent literature that has developed the notion of differentiated citizenship and advanced a view of citizenship as

active or practised rather than a status given by the state (Young 1989; Kymlicka 1995; Gaventa 2002; Kabeer 2002; Kabeer 2005; Cornwall and Coelho 2006; Pallares 2007; Abraham, Ngang-ling Chow et al. 2010).

### **Differentiated citizenship**

The question of plural understandings of citizenship has been widely explored within academic literature (Young 1989; Kymlicka 1995; Gaventa 2002; Kabeer 2002; Kabeer 2005; Pallares 2007; Abraham, Ngang-ling Chow et al. 2010). Rooted in the notion that entitling all citizens to the same rights does not prevent social inequalities (Yashar 2005) and has in some instances “marginalise[d] the already marginal and exacerbate[d] social exclusion” (Gaventa 2002:5), scholarly attention has turned to differentiated (Young 1989; Pallares 2007; Abraham, Ngang-ling Chow et al. 2010) or plural understandings of citizenship (Gaventa 2002). In this view, there is not one form of belonging (Kabeer 2002), but multiple experiences that can accommodate differences in power, gender, culture, class and ethnicity (Abraham, Ngang-ling Chow et al. 2010). In addition, classic liberal theory has also been challenged for privileging civil and political rights over economic, social and cultural rights. Based on the idea that people do not experience their rights separately, this perspective suggests that economic, cultural and social rights provide substance and meaning to civil and political rights and are therefore inseparable (Kabeer 2005:15).

By examining women’s experiences of everyday life and critiquing “state-defined citizenship for being constructed primarily in terms of a public identity and one that is essentially male defined”, feminist theorists have significantly contributed to this debate (Abraham, Ngang-ling Chow et al. 2010:8). They have argued that citizenship must deal with individual equality (access to resources) while recognising collective difference at the same time (*Ibid*). These demands are closely related to a notion of justice that “revolves around when it is fair for people to be treated the same and when it is fair that they should be treated differently” (Kabeer 2005:3). Following this view, self-determination is as important because it represents people’s ability to “exercise some degree of control over their lives” (*Ibid*, 5).

The issues raised by feminist and post-colonial scholars are at the core of indigenous people's struggles in Ecuador where local activists are trying to attain 'equality in difference' or ensure that citizenship "guarantee[s] local sufficiency and respect[s] local diversity" at the same time (Boelens and Dávila 1998:448). During the past 30 years important indigenous movements in Latin America, and in Ecuador in particular, have been contesting the terms, conditions and forms that belonging to the nation state should entail. By pressuring for the recognition of a *plurinational* state, they have challenged prevalent notions of liberal-universal citizenship, which have been translated into a model that obscures ethnic, social, and gender differences under a uniform white-*mestizo* identity. In contrast to countries such as South Africa or the United States where segregation was inscribed in the law and those affected fought "to be considered equal in the legal system", indigenous activists in Ecuador have struggled to "render themselves visible and different in a system in which their invisibility has led to their de facto exclusion" (Pallares 2007:153). The struggle has therefore been based on the legal recognition of Ecuador as a culturally plural state formed of different nationalities. This implies a "recognition of Indians as citizens of a different kind, with whom the state [has] to establish a relationship distinct from its relations with other citizens" (*Ibid*, 142). The historical roots of the relation between the state and indigenous populations will be further explored in Chapters 3 and 4.

Although in 2008 the 19th version of the Constitution, which declares in its first article that Ecuador is a *plurinational* state, was approved by popular vote, making these legal reforms real in practice has been a very different story (Boelens, Gentes et al. 2005; Anand 2007). Inequalities, exclusion and plain racism still underline the lives of most indigenous peoples as well as other poor and marginalised groups in Ecuador. It is, however, undeniable that an important political transformation has occurred: from having a status of 'subjects', Indigenous peoples are now legally recognised as differentiated citizens.<sup>7</sup> Most importantly this process, or what Andrés Guerrero (1993) calls "a reinterpretation of history from an indigenous point of view articulated through demands for autonomy, self-government and self-determination", has rendered social and political agents with demands previously unheard and unthought-of. Indigenous peoples have opened up an important platform for

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<sup>7</sup> 'Subjects' refers to people who are considered members of a group, community or nation-state but do not have, or are unable to fully practise citizenship rights.

direct negotiation between differentiated citizens (who demand a recognition of their collective as well as individual rights) and the state (Guerrero 1993:100). This process of transformation will be analysed in detail in Chapter 3. Considering the rich history behind these movements and the on-going struggles taking place, this thesis draws on the scholarly work on differentiated citizenship as a starting point to contextualize the ways in which people imagine and practise citizenship in their everyday lives through water management.

The notion of differentiated citizenship applied in this thesis is not limited to explaining *plurinationalism* or ethnically defined struggles. It is also used to understand how other people, who might see themselves as *campesino* (peasant) rather than, before, or in addition to indigenous and who, like the majority of the indigenous population, are poor and marginalised, perceive their rights as citizens. If indigenous rights and indigenous peoples become the only focus of the analysis, other groups of people, such as women and *campesinos*, who in the process of practising collective forms of water management engage in struggles to extend and claim their rights as differentiated citizens, might be ignored. In fact, except for a few studies that mention or deal with peasant issues (Bourque 1997; Bebbington 2000; Zamosc 2004; Himley 2009) most literature on rural areas of the Ecuadorian Andes focus on the indigenous question and on the processes of indigenous movement formation (Guerrero 1993; Colloredo-Mansfeld 1998; Korovkin 2001; Pallares 2002; Lucero 2003; Clark 2005; Yashar 2005; Clark and Becker 2007; Pallares 2007; Colloredo-Mansfield 2009).

The reasons behind the lack of research in this area might be both methodological as well as conceptual. In terms of methodology, it is very difficult to identify these people. Many actually live in what is generally known as indigenous communities and participate in communal activities defined as indigenous. But more complex still, some might see themselves as *mestizo* and *campesino* or even white but yet be considered indigenous *or mestizo* by others. It could also be that they might have been born into indigenous families but over the years, by deliberately transforming their labour activities, residence, use of language and clothing, ‘become’ *mestizo*. Although less common, it is also possible that someone previously known as mestizo or born into a *campesino* family might have become

‘indigenous’ through marriage or place of residence. Conceptually, this group of people is difficult to place within the political struggles taking place in the Andes. When are they indigenous, and when are they *mestizo*? Are they also *campesino*? How does their identity influence their political and cultural engagements? As Deborah Yashar (2005:7) observes, people in the Andes “can and do have several identities and can express those identities in different forums”. Chapter 6 looks in detail at how as different people - indigenous, *mestizo* and white - participate in collective water management, they also negotiate class, ethnicity and citizenship rights in relation to each other as well as the state.

As the empirical chapters in the thesis show, when looking at water management practices in rural communities in the Ecuadorian Andes it is difficult to ignore people who identify themselves as *campesino* rather than or in addition to indigenous.<sup>8</sup> In this sense the research is seeking to contribute to an understanding of indigenous peoples as well as peasant populations who struggle to “articulate and claim their own perceptions and practices of citizenship in their everyday lives” (Gaventa 2002:9). To that end, it complements the notion of differentiated citizenship with an understanding of citizenship as active or practised “rather than as a given” (*Ibid*, 4).

### **Active and performed: citizenship from below**

Active citizenship provides a framework where it is possible to see the evolving and changing negotiations and contestations that shape citizenship (Abraham, Ngang-ling Chow et al. 2010:13). Rather than theorising it in terms of a status given by the state, these scholars emphasise on the notion citizenship as practice (Kabeer 2005) or as active (Abraham, Ngang-ling Chow et al. 2010). It follows the idea that citizens are not simply recipients of state policies or development interventions but active participants in its design (Gaventa 2002; Cornwall and Coelho 2006; Newell and Wheeler 2006; Pallares 2007). The notion of citizenship as practice becomes essential to the argument of this thesis, as it allows an understanding of how indigenous and peasant communities claim and redefine

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<sup>8</sup> I have chosen to define this group of people as *campesino* (peasant) for two reasons. First many of them have identified themselves as *campesinos*. Second, their livelihoods, even if diversified, are still strongly tied to agricultural activities.

their role as citizens as they practise a particular form of water management. As Lyla Mehta, et al. (2010:113) show, the ways in which marginal communities mobilise (participate, act) to claim rights, as well as the responses they get from the state, are essential to understanding how socio-economic rights make a difference to the lives of the poor.

By using the concept of active citizenship this thesis places emphasis on experiences of citizen engagement through collective water management. It tries to understand citizenship from below (Assies, Calderón et al. 2005), or how people experience it on a daily basis. This is directly linked to a range of relative identities each person may adopt or use according to the different ‘power encounters’ they experience on their everyday lives. These ‘encounters’ are not always equal exchanges, on the contrary, they also hide different forms of exclusion and violence against Indians, women or the poor (Polo Bonilla 2009:130). In this sense, people might be willing or forced to reproduce past (and present) forms of ethnic exclusion and gender-biased attitudes in order to gain access to particular resources. This means that the notion of active citizenship allows an understanding of why people might be willing to adopt distinct ethnic and class identities to access resources. Specifically, it helps explain when and why *campesinos* are willing to take part in activities generally considered indigenous, such as communal systems of water management. In this sense, active citizenship privileges agency over imposed categories, fluidity over rigidity, common sense over given identities.

The notion of active citizenship also allows the analysis to move away from the more ‘traditional’ realms of citizenship struggles (the legal arena) towards the less ‘official’ spaces people use as a platform to contest the terms and conditions of citizenship. Emphasis is placed on people’s ability and capacity to be and become political agents in and through different arenas. As Taylor and Wilson (2004:157) explain:

Ordinary people engage with the powerful in scenarios that, at first sight, seem to have little to do with the stuff of citizenship (funeral dances, religious acts, marching competitions, school gardens) yet in politicised contexts these activities have a great deal to do with the nitty-gritty negotiations of power,

reckoning up of political deals, exercise of political agency, declaration and redefinition of ‘belonging’ and, therefore, the very fabric of citizenship.

Following this perspective, this thesis shows how collective water management, including its technical as well as institutional aspects, provides a space in which ‘ordinary’ people engage with the state and other powerful actors to contest and assert their citizenship rights. It seeks to contribute to a wider understanding of water that goes beyond its technical and biophysical characteristics and focuses on the cultural and political implications that accessing hydrological resources holds for marginalised groups in society. In order to conduct such analysis, it is important to first discuss the connections between water and citizenship, to which I turn next.

### **Locating citizenship in the context of water**

As a resource surrounded by processes of inclusion and exclusion, water is connected to citizenship in a multiplicity of ways. While this relationship has been discussed in a direct manner by a limited number of authors such as Esteban Castro (2006), it is possible to say that many works have touched upon citizenship and water through related topics. Issues of legal pluralism and the right to collective forms of water management (Roth, Boelens et al. 2005; Boelens, Getches et al. 2006), water rights (Randolph Bruns and Meinzen-Dick 2000; Laurie, Andolina et al. 2002; Boelens, Getches et al. 2010; Mehta, Thompson et al. 2010), water governance (Cleaver and Franks 2005), the right to essential water and sanitation services (Mehta and Miroso 2004; Salman and McInerney-Lankford 2004; Anand 2007), water and discourses of hygiene (Wilson 2005), just to mention a few, are all related to citizenship.

The connection between water and citizenship is specifically treated by Castro (2006) in his book, *Water, Power and Citizenship*, where he analyses conflicts over water in the Basin of Mexico during the 1980s and 1990s. Castro places these conflicts within the “wider context of the struggle directed at expanding the scope and depth of substantive citizenship” (*Ibid*:188). Using the categories developed by Marshall (1963) as a starting point he connects water and citizenship as follows:



Water (property) rights can be considered a specification for the civil right to own property; the rights and duties involved in the governance and management of water resources and services is part of the sphere of political rights; and the universal right to essential water and sanitation services belongs in the group of social rights (2006:183).

In terms of the case study analysed in this thesis, i.e. collective water management practices in the Ecuadorian Andes, it is possible to identify the links between water and citizenship presented by Castro (2006) in different ways. First, collective water rights (or the right to collectively access one source of water) can be considered a civil right connected to the right to own property (*Ibid*). Additionally, the right to collectively manage water resources and services can be linked to what are generally understood as political rights, and specifically to the right to participate in government (resource governance). The two instances described above can also crucially be considered part of the rights of indigenous peoples to organise collectively, to self-determination and to plural legal systems. These sets of rights go beyond the traditional categories of civil, political and social and into the realm of economic and cultural rights (Kabeer 2005; Abraham, Ngang-ling Chow et al. 2010). While these connections are, on a conceptual level, particularly relevant to this thesis, the argument I try to develop here does not focus on these specific definitions but rather on the issue of citizenship rights and equity in relation to resource distribution and governance. In this way, I am interested in active citizenship, or in how rights are claimed by different people on a daily basis; that is, how citizens struggle to “play a more active part in decisions that affect their lives” (Gaventa 2002:2). This means that instead of trying to provide definitions of what is considered a social, a civil or a political right by specific individuals or groups, this thesis tries to understand how people engage in different processes such as collective water management, and activate what they believe to be their citizenship rights at different points in time. This thesis therefore concentrates on the political negotiations around water management as they unfold at the communal level. It studies local forms of collective organisation as well as the types of water rights that have developed in relation to them. Who has the right to water and why? How is this determined and by whom? Do women hold the same rights to water and decision-making power as men do? To situate these issues within the debates surrounding water, the next section looks at the literature water rights, legal pluralism, and common property resource management.

### **Access to and control over water resources**

Using water as a vehicle to understand processes of citizenship formation is based on the notion that access and control over water are an important source of power struggles as well as political engagement in any society. Because it involves “decisions about how water resources and services should be governed, by whom and for whom” (Castro 2006:4), it is possible to say that it is an arena where negotiations over exclusion and inclusion take place. In order to understand these negotiations it is necessary to first look at water rights as they constitute the fundamental basis for legitimising claims on water resources. In its most general definition, a water right is the right that authorises its holder to extract water from a particular source. It derives from the notion of property rights which can be defined as the “claims, entitlements and related obligations among people regarding the use and disposition of a scarce resource” (Meinzen-Dick and Nkonya 2005:2). As various authors suggest, rights do not involve a simple relationship between a person and an object (in this case, water) but are associated with particular social relationships and obligations (Randolph Bruns and Meinzen-Dick 2000; Meinzen-Dick and Nkonya 2005; Roth, Boelens et al. 2005). This means that the contents as well as the distribution of water rights are mediated and in many instances legitimised by gender, social and power relations, identity and culture. In relation to the latter point, it has been noted that “in the case of water, rights also have corresponding duties that apply to the rights-holder [...] often to provide money, labour, or other resources to maintain the water supply”(Meinzen-Dick and Nkonya 2005:2). As the ethnographic chapters in this thesis show, this is a crucial point given that the right to access water in the indigenous and peasant communities in highland Ecuador, in addition to a series of other rights (access and decision-making power), entails a range of duties that the users have to undertake. The right to access water depends on the amount of labour that the user has invested in the building and maintenance of the drinking water system.

Water rights have been categorised and typified in various ways; however the most widely recognised bases for claims are riparian and prior appropriation rights. Riparian refers to claims based on “ownership or possession of land along rivers, streams or over aquifers”

while prior appropriation is based on historic water usage (Meinzen-Dick and Nkonya 2005:29). Although this is a practical classification system for understanding water rights in some settings, excessive use of these categories by academics and policymakers alike has been criticised for obscuring a variety of claims employed by users to legitimise access to water (*Ibid*). This is particularly relevant in terms of the case study examined in this thesis, where, as explained in Chapter 5, rather than using riparian or prior appropriation, membership in a community and investment in water infrastructure and maintenance provide sufficient grounds to make a claim on water resources. Moreover, as will be further discussed in the historical as well as ethnographic chapters of this thesis, claims on water resources in highland Ecuador also include claims on decision-making power over those resources. This means that water rights, legitimised by membership and participation in community activities, are conceived as one indivisible right: the right to access and manage a particular source of water. This thesis argues that in the process of fighting for the recognition of this right (access and decision-making power over water), indigenous and *campesino* communities relate to the state and defy ‘liberal-universal’ definitions of citizenship.

A second system of water rights classification divides them into various levels: public, common and private rights, where ‘public’ refers to the rights held by the state, ‘common’ refers to communal water rights, and ‘private’ to those rights which are held by an individual or legal entity (Meizen-Dick and Nkonya 2005). This thesis is concerned with two specific sets of rights: on the one hand the right of a group of users to access water, and on the other, the rights of the individual users within that group to access the resource. It explores how indigenous and peasant communities gain and legitimise the right to access water *vis à vis* the state (communal right) and how that claim is then negotiated at the communal level by individual users (individual rights). Chapters 5 and 6 explore these issues in detail.

Water rights have also been classified as either formal (official titles, permits etc.) or informal (customary, social norms and practices) (De Soto and Litian 2001). The dualistic distinction between ‘formal state laws’ and ‘customary law’ has however been criticised for

failing to capture people's experiences and perceptions of the way in which water is managed at the local level (Randolph Bruns and Meinzen-Dick 2000:25). Instead, recent work recognises "the strategic use of multiple definitions of water rights originating from multiple normative frameworks to support conflicting resource claims [...]" (Roth, Boelens et al. 2005:14). Following the latter approach and rather than attempting to classify different rights and claims on water, this thesis seeks to understand people's experiences with water "access and control in which individuals draw upon a range of strategies for claiming and obtaining water" (Randolph Bruns and Meinzen-Dick 2000:24). It is precisely the interaction between formal and informal rights that legal pluralism analyses, and it is to this that we turn in the next section.

### **Legal pluralism**

Rather than only focusing on 'state' law, or 'informal' law, legal pluralism is a theoretical approach that emphasises the multiple and complex normative frameworks that underline access to resources (Randolph Bruns and Meinzen-Dick 2000). Legal pluralism's attention to different legal and normative frameworks has contributed important insights into the understanding of water rights in particular, and shown that users combine formal and informal rules to support their claims over often contested resources. In various case studies, the literature on legal pluralism in the Andes has illustrated how people, using a variety of normative orders, seek to maintain their collective rights to water and to define their own rules and language of resource distribution. Additionally, this body of literature has challenged technical approaches to water management and argued that water rights, and ultimately access to water, is a highly political and contested realm where power, perspective and knowledge-creation play important roles (Gelles 2000; Roth, Boelens et al. 2005; Boelens, Getches et al. 2006; Boelens 2008).

As a theoretical approach, legal pluralism has acknowledged water users' agency and use of different normative systems to manage and control their resources. In this light, legal pluralism studies in the Andes have been particularly interested in the creation of 'special laws' and in state attempts to 'recognise' traditional rules by either incorporating them into the formal legal system or accepting their practice in parallel with the state law. They have

argued that ‘institutionalising’ legal pluralism, risks freezing customary rights because incorporating them into the more fixed and ‘universal’ governmental laws can make them inflexible and difficult to adapt as circumstances require (Boelens and Zwarteveen 2005:152). These authors have also challenged ‘special laws’ drafted specifically to deal with water issues amongst indigenous peoples, on the grounds that they are based on essentialised ideological constructs of indigenous identity and peasant communities (Boelens, Gentes et al. 2005; Roth, Boelens et al. 2005). Additionally, literature on legal pluralism has strongly criticised various attempts to establish neo-liberal reforms in the water sector in many Andean countries (Boelens and Zwarteveen 2005; Zoomers 2006). According to them, market-oriented reforms are based on scientific and positivistic ideas which view local water law systems as inefficient and anomalous and thus resemble earlier, colonial attempts “to ‘civilise’ and ‘modernise’ peasants and indigenous peoples” (Boelens and Zwarteveen 2005:98). They argue that market allocation poses a serious threat to the livelihoods of indigenous peoples whose systems rely on collective rather than individual economic principles of water administration (*Ibid*). Although these works have provided important criticisms of neo-liberal and ‘recognition’ policies they have, as a result of their approach, framed their analysis in terms of antagonistic relationships and sharp distinctions between the state and the local indigenous and peasant *comunidad*. While they recognise that the law of the nation-state has shaped local legal practices, in their view the state is constantly trying to impose water governance models on local populations. Moreover, their focus on collective action has often left issues of social difference within the *comunidad*, as well as institutional history, insufficiently studied (Mehta, Marshall et al. 2007:26).

This thesis aims to further the analysis presented by the legal pluralism literature and study how past and present legal and state interventions have unfolded at the local level and in many cases strengthened collective systems of water management. It departs from a resistance-driven understanding of water management, and argues that in the process of negotiating access and control over water - which includes resistance as well as compromise - people have developed particular understandings of citizenship. It argues that rather than simply resisting past and present state interventions, indigenous and peasant communities (through their reinterpretation and use of state law and everyday practices of

communal organisation) are ultimately trying to secure access to resources and build viable livelihoods of their own (Bebbington 2000). At the same time, by looking at domestic water systems this thesis complements and adds a new perspective to the literature on the politics of water rights in the Andes which has, for the most part, concentrated on irrigation water. It argues that the notion of “hydraulic identities” developed by Lily Beccar, Rutgerd Boelens, & Paul Hoogendam (2001:39) also applies to collective arrangements that administer water for human consumption. In other words, that the construction and administration of piped water systems in highland Ecuador has allowed communities to consolidate a diverse system of water rights and to develop a general sense of belonging and identity in relation to it. Chapters 5 and 6 look at these processes in detail.

### **Community-Based Institutions**

Because this thesis deals with communal forms of water management, (specifically Water Users Associations and Communal Councils) to understand citizenship, the following section presents a brief discussion of the literature on common property resource management and institutions. It is important to note that this research project is not trying to measure efficiency or sustainability, but instead seeking to understand how local institutional arrangements that determine access and control of resources influence citizenship practices over time. For the purpose of the study, institutions, which may be formal or informal, are understood as “sites of social interaction, negotiation and contestation comprising heterogeneous actors having diverse goals”(Mehta, Leach et al. 1999:7). Additionally, common property regimes are understood as institutions through which “specific resources are owned collectively, where the collective has relative autonomy and authority to establish the rules, rights, obligations, and procedures regarding resource management and distribution” (Roth, Boelens et al. 2005:11)

There is a large body of empirical and theoretical research on common property resource management and specifically on how better to manage communal water and other natural resources in order to achieve its equitable and efficient use. Much of it has been either a continuation of or a reaction to Garrett Hardin’s *Tragedy of the Commons* (1968). Based on theories of rational choice, Hardin argued that whenever many individuals share scarce

environmental resources there will not be cooperation and resources could be depleted. Two basic alternatives arose: the state administration of the commons and private property rights systems. More recent work challenges these assumptions and suggests that resources can actually be managed through communal action and cooperation (Ostrom 1990; Ostrom 1992; Agrawal and Gibson 1999; Trawick 2001; Trawick 2003). There are two main theoretical schools that propose alternative views. The first is the institutional-economic approach which, based on rational-choice theory, argues that through the establishment of strong institutional arrangements to manage natural resources, individuals avoid free riding and seek economic rationality and cooperation (Ostrom 1990; Ostrom 1992). Rather than emphasising institutions, the second approach, which has been termed ‘moral economy’, examines tradition, social rights, value systems and moral codes to explain cooperative action (Trawick 2001).

Although both schools have provided interesting alternatives to Hardin’s thesis, they have tended to focus too much on institutions and local traditions, which has resulted in rather simplistic and a-historical images of communities (Mosse 1997; Leach, Mearns et al. 1999). There is also an underlying assumption that either through ‘strong institutions’ or ‘embedded traditions’, the relationship between the environment and people remains in equilibrium (Leach, Mearns et al. 1999; Agrawal 2005). By looking at communities as bounded and homogenous entities, these schools tend to pay little or no attention to the internal dynamics, local politics, and power structures of each place, which nevertheless play an important role in water management. Thus, this literature tends to assume that communal management is somehow more equitable and efficient and ignores questions of internal differentiation in water resource distribution and management (Mehta 2000).

Implicit in both institutional and traditionalist approaches is the idea that common property resource management should be autonomous from state systems and that communities “resolve problems and manage resources once they are freed from the burdens of external interference” (Mosse 2003:17). Opposition between the state and local users is taken for granted and is used to justify autonomy in resource management. Using historical evidence, this research proposes an alternative view and argues that state - community

relations are not always contradictory. In the case of water management practices amongst indigenous and *campesino* communities, state interventions that might be seen as negative or homogenising (Boelens and Zwarteveen 2005; Boelens 2008) have provided important benefits and spaces for the articulation of collective water governance (Chapter 3, 4 and 5). This study approaches institutions as part of the contexts within which they are located and recognises their susceptibility to change and transform over time (Mehta, Leach et al. 1999; Cleaver 2000). It takes a nuanced and historical view of communal institutions, and considers internal power relations and dynamics to show that communal forms of water management can also be exclusionary (Chapters 5 and 6).

An additional point in terms of the relation between common property resource management and the state has to do with the issues surrounding the responsibility to provide water and sanitation services. On the one hand, and as discussed above, various authors have highlighted the strengths of communal arrangements to manage resources, specially water, and in some cases even advocated the devolution of management responsibilities to local users (Ostrom 1990; Ribot, Agrawal et al. 2006). For these scholars, the underlying logic is that “local institutions have better knowledge of local needs, and when endowed with powers, are more likely to respond to local aspirations”(Ribot, Agrawal et al. 2006:1865). On the other hand, and as a result of international pressure for structural adjustment and market liberalisation, during the 1990s a strong move towards privatisation and decentralisation of state-owned public services took place in many countries in the world. In the quest to cut state spending and at the same time improve efficiency, these policies coincided with and even favoured community-driven development projects, mostly financed by NGOs, which in practice meant transferring the responsibilities for service provision from the state to the community (Mehta, Marshall et al. 2007:31). As a result some have argued that excessive obligation and autonomy on the part of the communities takes away the responsibilities of the state *vis à vis* its citizens and even supports the commoditisation of basic resources (Swyngedouw 1997; Swyngedouw 2005).

Critics of excessive community participation/responsibility in service provision also argue that expectations around citizen involvement can lead towards unequal access to resources



as well as unequal experiences of citizenship (Marquardt 2012). This becomes evident when looking at the differences between urban and rural residency in the Ecuadorian highlands where the rights and responsibilities tied to citizenship are clearly different. In other words, why should rural and peripheral communities be expected to contribute and organise to access water while urban or better-off neighbourhoods are not? Does this model encourage social equality and inclusion? While recognising the significance of this argument, this thesis focuses on local users' understandings of rights of water management. It makes a historical reading of the case and argues that even if the state has 'less' responsibility to deliver services when communities do 'all the work', this does not mean that local residents do not demand parallel services and attention from the state. On the contrary, many of the existing water provision arrangements have been built with technical assistance and materials provided by the state. Moreover, as Chapter 6 argues, asking the state to recognise communal rights over water management is an act that by definition acknowledges and creates specific state responsibilities in relation to its (communal) citizens. It obliges the state to recognise differentiated forms of citizenship. The next section discusses the methodological approach underpinning this research.

**Methodology: Understanding the construction of citizenship through local systems of water management.**

This doctoral study developed from a personal interest in the importance of water as a source of organisation in rural communities in the Andes. From the original idea of studying communal water management practices and how they have been transformed by social, political and ecological developments over time, the project, as a result of fieldwork, has developed into understanding citizenship trajectories in relation to water. This change took place as I learned more about the topic through qualitative research that entailed a combination of ethnographic fieldwork and archival research during a 12-month period in Ecuador. In addition to these research methodologies a large dose of serendipity (Pieke 2000), and personal adjustment also contributed to the study. In the following section I explore in detail the rationale for choosing the case study, the methodological approach, the ethical considerations and issues relating to my position as a researcher in Ecuador.

## The research site

Choosing the research site resulted from a combination of planning, connections and serendipity. During the design phase of the study I was awarded a grant from the Programme for the Conservation of the Biodiversity of the Central Highland Andes (PPA). The PPA is financed by the Global Environmental Facility (GEF) through the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP) and seeks to promote the sustainable use of natural resources available in the highland *páramo* ecosystem. Given my interest in water management practices, the Ecuadorian partner for the programme, ECOCIENCIA, directed me to one of their research pilot areas, Mojanda. There, they introduced me to a local indigenous leader, Don Roberto Tocagón, who became my first contact. Although I conducted research in this area, and kept close contact with Don Roberto, I was not directly involved with the project nor lived in a community where the PPA worked. I decided that living in the same community where the PPA operated could create confusion about my intentions and status as a researcher. Although I got the grant from them, I was not working directly for the project so I preferred to research in a different community where people would not necessarily relate me to the PPA project. Instead, after a number of visits, my partner and I moved to Mojandita de Curubi (Figure 2.1), where I conducted the bulk of my research. I chose this community mainly because it has a well-established Water User Association and has a diverse population, which includes indigenous and *mestizo* households as well as three hotels and small *haciendas* (farms). We got to know Mojandita de Curubi after staying at a hostel there, where we met a number of people who later became the main focus of my research. Locating a community where it was possible to conduct a study of water management practices and find a suitable house to rent took approximately three months. This included getting formal permission to conduct research from Mojandita's *cabildo* (community council), and making some renovations/changes to the rented building.

**Figure 2.1 View from Mojandita de Curubi**



Mojandita de Curubi, where I resided and spent most time during fieldwork in Ecuador, is located in the San Luis Parish, of the Otavalo Canton, Imbabura Province. The climate in this area is typical of the highland Andes, and the weather normally varies from 5-10 °C at night to 15-25 °C during the day. There are two main seasons, the rainy season between September and April and the dry or summer season between May and August. Mojandita de Curubi is 3.5 km away from the town of Otavalo and has a population of approximately 500 people or around 105 households. Mojandita has indigenous (Otavalo and Cayambi) as well as *mestizo* households, four medium size farms and three hotels serving tourists that visit the Otavalo area. The households are located next to a cobbled road that starts on the main Pan American Highway and climbs all the way to the Mojanda Lakes (3700m), a tourist attraction and also the source of water for various communities downstream (Figure 2.2). Mojandita de Curubi used to be part of the *Hacienda Mojanda* which was divided into smaller plots and sold during the 1960s to Indian families from the Otavalo area, and

*campesino* settlers that came from the Pichincha Province.<sup>9</sup> The first form of communal organisation in Mojandita took place during the 1970s when a group of local inhabitants got together to build a small primary school and formed a parents' association. In order to gain access to other resources, they organised and became a legally established community (*comuna*) in the 1970s with its own *cabildo* or elected community council. This is an important issue since it has to do with obtaining rights as a collective group, and therefore central to group-based struggles around citizenship. Today, in addition to the *comuna* and the *cabildo* there is a parents' association, a WUA and a less active cultural and environmental group called *Asociación Pacha Mama*. In terms of infrastructure, there is a functioning drinking water system, electricity, a primary school, a nursery, a health centre adjacent to the school, a communal building and a WUA building. Most households are located at different altitudinal levels ranging from 2600 to 3000 meters above sea level, and own small plots of land between 1-3 hectares each. Livelihoods strategies can vary greatly from one household to another and in general include subsistence and market oriented agriculture, and remunerated work in construction, in the local hostels, in the nearby town of Otavalo or in the flower industry. In addition, there are some artisan activities and national as well as international migration. Various local as well as international NGOs and voluntary groups have conducted development and conservation projects in this community.

Increased knowledge about the importance of the *páramo* ecosystem has led to a number of environmental conservation activities and projects to take place in the Mojanda area. These are high altitude tropical humid grasslands that lie between 3200 and 4200 meters above sea level with significant hydrological resources and rich biodiversity. Apart from being used for livestock herding and to grow crops, the *páramo* is particularly important because it provides most of the water for agriculture in the lower valleys and for consumption in urban areas throughout the Andean range in Venezuela, Colombia and Ecuador (Ecociencia 2008). Because Mojandita de Curubi is located on the main access road to the Mojanda Lakes and the *páramo* ecosystem where they lie, it has taken part on a number of

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<sup>9</sup> This is the period during the first land reform. Many large landowners decided to sell land instead of having it confiscated by the state.

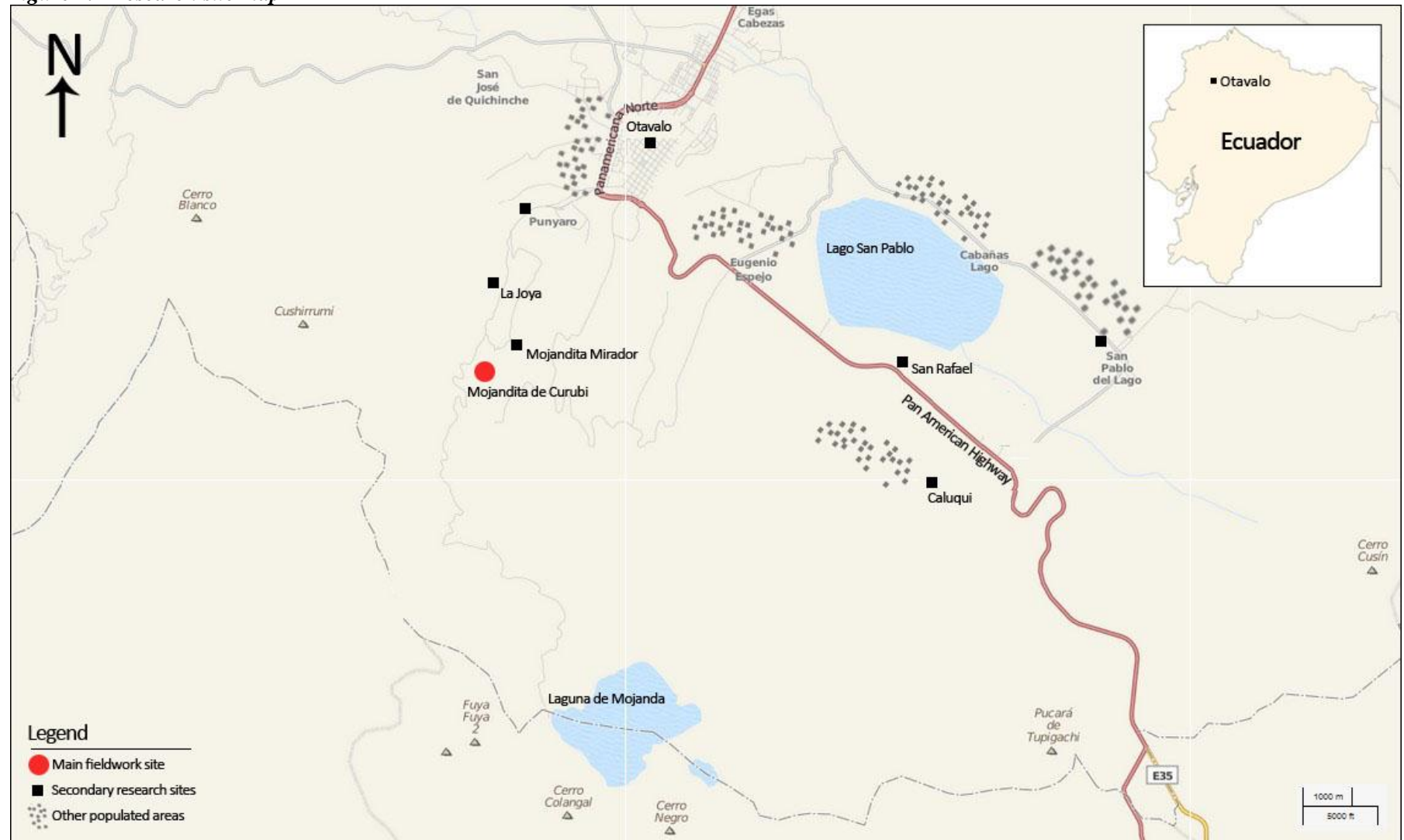
conservation initiatives originating from inside as well as outside the community.<sup>10</sup> Despite the communities' location, and rights to use the *páramo*, only a few households in the upper section of the community use this ecosystem on a daily basis. However, Mojandita de Curubi, like many of its neighbouring communities has taken part in struggles to increase their control over the *páramo* ecosystems. For example they have protested against the concession of the Mojanda Lakes to a company that was going to farm trout. They have also taken part in protests against a rancher who was going to introduce more cattle into the *páramo*. The main reason behind these protests has been protecting the hydrological resources located in the *páramo*, on which most communities downhill depend for human consumption and agricultural activities. Even if this thesis is not directly concerned with the struggles around the *páramo* taking place in the fieldwork area, it is important to note the existence of these processes as they have become another element of the larger indigenous and *campesino* demands to reassert control over rural lands and natural resources (Himley 2009). The practices around local water management discussed in this thesis are therefore taking place in the context of local communities' efforts to legitimise their authority in relation to a variety of natural resources.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> The Asociación Pacha Mama was established by a group of local residents with the objective of increasing awareness of the importance of the environment and the *páramo* ecosystem in particular. Additionally, the Otavalo City Council together with some Mojandita de Curubi's residents were part of an initiative to control the amount of tourist that went in and out of the Lakes as well as to maintain visited areas clean.

<sup>11</sup> For a detailed account of issues around the *páramo* ecosystem in Mojanda see: Armijos, MT. (2011). "Agua y Paramo: dialogo entre comunidades e iniciativas de conservación". *Propuestas Andinas* (4). Quito: CONDESAN, PPA.

**Figure 2.2 Research site map**



As much as the choice of field site, every aspect of the fieldwork arrangements influences its outcome. In my case I would like to reflect on two specific issues. First, my partner, Torgeir Kleiva, a Norwegian anthropologist with extensive experience in South America, accompanied me. This clearly had an effect on the way I carried my research as well as on the way the community perceived me. Living with him allowed me to feel more comfortable and safe during the fieldwork period. Also, I was able to reflect on my day's experiences with him, and generally able to spend my time in the field more freely. For instance, I was never put in a difficult situation as a single woman or felt threatened by anyone. The second aspect of the arrangements is that although I lived in the community, and thus had to participate in many of its activities, I was not living with a family. We rented a house from a *mestizo* woman who lives in Otavalo and has a small plot of land and a house in Mojandita which she often visits at the weekend.

A separate and independent housing arrangement has its advantages as well as its disadvantages. In order gain contact and connect with the local population on a daily basis, many researchers favour living with a family. However, living with my partner in a rented house, also had its advantages. It allowed us to have daily contact with our neighbours and at the same time left us free to decide when to engage in different local activities and avoid getting into or putting others into difficult situations. This became particularly relevant during long festival periods in the months of June and July when the *Inti Raymi* (sun solstice) as well as St. Peter and St. Paul days are celebrated. These feasts include large amounts of alcohol consumption and can last for days. Having our own place during these months was an advantage as we were able to choose when and for how long to participate in local festivities. Further details of the living arrangements and the politics of doing fieldwork in an indigenous and peasant community will be examined in Chapters 5 and 6.

In addition to the main field site of Mojandita, I often visited the town of Otavalo (3.5 km away) and different communities in the area. The Otavalo Canton is a highly populated region. Its rural territory is about 425 Km<sup>2</sup> with a density of 127 inhabitants per Km<sup>2</sup>. The short distances between communities, and the fact that I had a car, allowed me to make

repeated visits to neighbouring localities such as Caluquí (Don Roberto Tocagón's home), Mojandita Mirador, La Joya, San Pablo, San Rafael, Punyaro and others. During these trips I got to know the region better, meet a variety of local actors and gained a broader perspective on the research area. Finally it is important to mention that in addition to my twelve-month stay between 2008 and 2009 I have returned to the field site for short visits on two further occasions, in December 2010 and June 2011. The value of returning to the field has been noted by many anthropologists (Dresch, James et al. 2000). In terms of this study, returning to Mojandita has been particularly useful in enabling me to follow up on some themes and to get a better understanding of the place as I reflected on and reacted to my previous experiences. Most importantly, it has helped me to continue building on the relationships that began during my stay in Mojandita.

## **The Approach**

### **Participant Observation**

In terms of methodology, this study adopted a qualitative approach that consisted of ethnographic fieldwork and historical research. In order to understand how men and women experience day-to-day water management and contestation over resources, the main method applied was participant observation. This involved living in a *comunidad*, Mojandita de Curubi, and participating in local activities such as *mingas* (work parties), meetings, festivities and social mobilisations related to water governance in the area. In order to start with the different fieldwork activities, I hired a local research assistant, Fernando Chicaiza<sup>12</sup>, whom I had met while staying in one of the three hostels in Mojandita before moving to a rented house in the same community. Fernando is a *mestizo* man in his early thirties and is actively involved in the community. He participates in meetings and *mingas* and helps organise special events such as parties or sports tournaments. He is married to Susana who also works at the hostel. They live in the upper part of the community and have a small shop. Outside their house/shop there is a volleyball court and small football pitch where they organise sports activities and which is often busy with people either practising sports or waiting to get on the bus or *camionetas* (private hired transport) that pass by there.

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<sup>12</sup> This is his real name



As a young and active *comunero*, he provided invaluable information and contacts which constituted a useful starting point for my study. Fernando helped me organise interviews with different people, especially with elders in the community. He also helped organise and participated in two of the focus groups I conducted in Mojandita.

It is difficult to simplify the experiences of living and sharing with a group of people over long periods of time under the term ‘participant observation’. To begin with, it is a concept that has a strong orientation towards observing, or the visual, something that Paul Stoller (1989) describes in his book *The Taste of Ethnographic Things*. Here he suggests “that considering the senses of taste, smell and hearing as much as privileged sight will not only make ethnography more vivid and more accessible, but will render our accounts of others more faithful to the realities of the field – accounts which will then be more, rather than less, scientific” (1989:9). Following on this view, fieldwork as understood in this thesis is an experience of the body and thus of all the senses. For instance, while working in the *mingas* organised to clean roads or build tanks I learned about the importance of dedicating long hours of hard work under the strong Andean sun (see Chapter 5). I also learned the joy and need of dancing to local tunes in a cold night at 3000 m., and not to eat everything that is served during weddings.<sup>13</sup> In other words, I learned about this place and its people, not only by observing but also through my senses as I used my body to dig holes, dance or eat.

This brings me to the second point about ethnographic fieldwork, which is that it is not only a task of the present: it also involves important periods of reflection and remembering. As Wendy James (2000:69) observes, “seeing and doing is of the experienced moment, cast in a conceptual or ethnographic present, but inevitably it too comes recast in memory”. In other words, fieldwork does not end when the researcher leaves the ‘field site’. On the contrary, it is not uncommon to realise the relevance of what has been experienced long after the fieldwork ‘period’ is over. In this sense, writing this thesis has been very much

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<sup>13</sup> Traditionally, to show abundance as well as generosity, in weddings and other parties the hosts would serve large quantities of food. Coming from an urban background where different and many times ‘wrong’ ideas about the rural and the indigenous communities circulate, I had been taught that in ‘these’ type of parties you should eat everything not to disappoint the hosts. So, when my partner Torgeir and I were served a special menu of fish in addition to meat (also served before the other guests) we made the effort to finish everything. However, only a few minutes after we had finished (when we were already in a bit of pain!) we realised that everyone else was putting their leftover food on small plastic bags that were circulated by the hosts.

part of the fieldwork as I have reflected on and reanalysed different episodes of my stay in Ecuador.

## Interviews

I also gathered information through interviews and informal conversations. With the help of Fernando, the research assistant in Mojandita de Curubi, I selected individuals following a purposive sampling methodology and met with people that had been involved in the process of building the drinking water supply systems and WUAs. I also interviewed and spoke to younger members of the *comunidad* and other water related actors. In total, I conducted 35 open-ended interviews with community elders (men and women), local leaders, indigenous activists in Otavalo and water sector authorities in Ibarra (provincial capital) and Quito. Most of these interviews were recorded after getting verbal consent from each of the interviewees. There were a few people who chose not to be recorded but were happy to speak as I took some notes. Although I learned a lot from these more ‘formal interviews’, I was gathered most information through a series of informal conversations with local inhabitants in Mojandita de Curubi and other communities, as well as with a large *hacienda* owner in the Mojanda area, with the nurse at the local health centre and with the woman responsible for the historical archive in Otavalo. These conversations took place during *mingas*, protests or casual encounters during daily routines. For instance, I knew that if I sat outside my house in Mojandita, some neighbour would pass by and would surely start a conversation. Also, having a car (and specifically a pick-up truck) was a great asset during my stay in Otavalo. Every time my partner or I was driving out of or into Mojandita we would try to pick people up. Having space in the back of the vehicle was useful because often people were carrying things or animals to and from town. Giving people rides in the car was not only seen as a good gesture by most, but was a good way of meeting people and starting conversations. For instance, the nurse was always happy to meet us as it meant that she would arrive 45 minutes earlier than if she walked to or from the main road leading into Otavalo.

In addition to the activities described above, I conducted three focus groups in Mojandita de Curubi. At the first one we discussed general information about the community and

mapped the agricultural cycles, the community, and water management practices. Men and women, indigenous as well as *mestizo* participated in this focus group/workshop (Figure 2.3). The community council requested a second workshop to discuss water conservation issues. Because the WUA considered this workshop to be a public meeting and organised it, some 60 or more people attended. As Chapters 5 and 6 explain, it is mandatory for all the members of the WUA to attend general meetings. Attendance is registered in a list kept by the WUA's board and is used as the basis for granting to the users the right to access water (Figure 2.4). The third workshop was requested by the teachers at the local school and it also involved exploring issues around the importance of water and water conservation, although this time with the school children. As a result, I facilitated an art workshop at the Mojandita de Curubi School (Figure 2.5) with the assistance of a friend, Elisa Terán, who is a teacher and art therapist in Quito.

*Figure 2.3 Mapping the Community*





*Figure 2.4 WUA's meeting on water conservation, Mojandita de Curubi*



*Figure 2.5 Art workshop on the importance of water at the Mojandita de Curubi School*



## **Archival Research**

To complement the ethnographic fieldwork I conducted extensive historical research reviewing both secondary and primary resources in various libraries and historical archives in Quito (National Archives and Archives of the National Assembly), Ibarra (Museum Archive) and Otavalo (Archives of the Anthropological Institute and Archive of the Cantonal Political Administration). The idea of combining ethnographic fieldwork with historical research resulted from previous research experiences as well as my background as a historian (my Bachelors degree is in History). I thought that although archival research can be time consuming, as it was in this case, it would allow me to retrieve a variety of documents that would enhance original analysis as well as a historical contextualisation of local everyday experiences of water management. This information was useful when comparing and contrasting it with contemporary life histories and oral stories obtained in the communities.

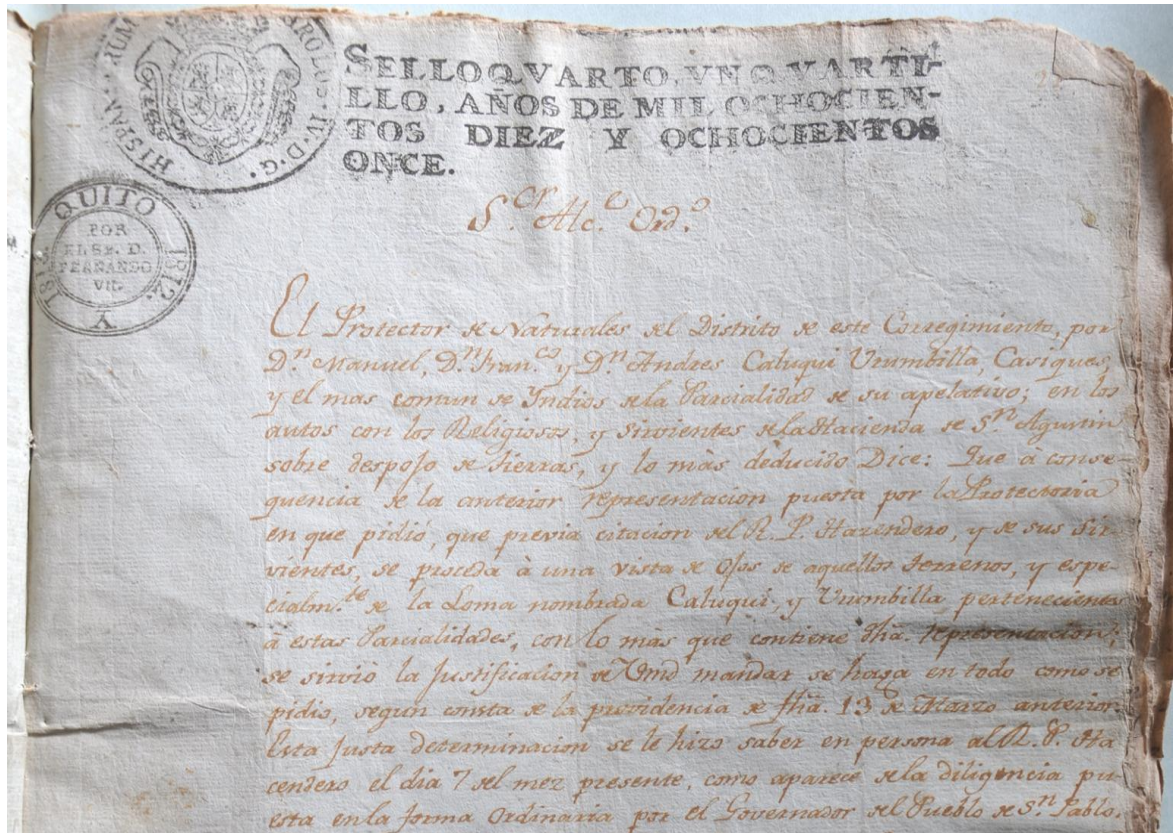
It is precisely when undertaking this comparative exercise that I realised the importance of water in the relationships indigenous and peasant people have with the state. Looking at the long-term processes of control, management and distribution of water resources and services in the Northern Highlands of Ecuador has rendered an interesting and little studied perspective on the formation of citizenship rights amongst historically marginalised communities such as those considered in this thesis. Together with the ethnographic material, the documents I obtained from the different archives gave me an invaluable perspective on the changing meanings and roles that water has had in mediating the relationship state-population. Aside from being a basic source of life and sustenance, water has ranged from being a tool used by the state to 'civilise' its 'subjects' (Chapter 4) to being used by those same people to demand their rights as Ecuadorian citizens (Chapters 5 and 6). It is precisely the trajectories of water management, and the ways in which they have influenced the struggles amongst the indigenous and peasant populations of the northern Andes region of Otavalo, that this thesis is concerned with.

Most of the documents I obtained were found in the Archives of the Anthropological Institute in Otavalo, where I conducted most of the archival research. This archive contains legal documents from the two public notaries in Otavalo and includes papers from shortly after the Spanish conquest, approximately 1600 AD, until 1935 (republican period). In addition to these, I found some important documents at the *Jefatura Politica* (*political administration*) of the Otavalo Canton. Most of the relevant documents found there are letters from the central government to the Parishes' authorities in the Canton, informing them about new laws or campaigns relating to water, hygiene and local uprisings. The documents found in the *Jefatura Politica* are from the period between 1890 and 1940. Finally, the documents found at the National Archives, the Archives of the National Assembly and the Museum Archive in Ibarra are not necessarily specific to the area but provide a general, national context to the topic.

A final note about the historical documents is that they need to be interpreted with caution. There are a range of worldviews, social structures and power relations behind them that need to be considered. The documents containing litigation processes between indigenous peoples and hacienda owners or even the state are a case in point. Although it is possible to find the position of the indigenous person recorded in most of these papers, it took at least two people's interpretation of that view before it was written down. During the colonial period, Indians were represented in legal matters by the 'Indian protector' who would translate from Quichua to Spanish in courts (the role of the 'protector' is noted in many of these documents) (Figure 2.6). From this translation, the *escribano* (person writing down the testimonies) chose what to write in the document.



Figure 2.6. Legal Document showing a case in which the Indians were represented by the 'Protector de Naturales', 1810-1811<sup>14</sup>.



In addition to the translation-interpretation problem, is important to consider the unequal power structures that indigenous peoples were subject to during and after the colonial period, which went beyond the 'language barrier' and defined the status and the relation between the state and its members. In the following passage, Guerrero (2003:303) explains the issue in detail.

The function of the scribe who produces the document is not entirely derived from his control over the writing. It is also not reduced to the problem of translating, from the tongue (oral Quechua) of the populations that the governor of natives represents, to the language (written Spanish) of the republic and its citizens. The unknown intermediary carries out at least two additional functions. On the one hand, he becomes a ventriloquist because he makes a voiceless indigenous authority speak in the public-state sphere [...] On the other hand as he writes the "representation" he is the author of a strategy. He carries out both functions insofar as he is an individual who possesses recognised presence in the public sphere, he knows the "rules of the game" in the

<sup>14</sup> The first line of the document says: "The 'Protector' of Indians of this District, and *Corregimiento*, in representation of Don Manuel, Don Francisco and Don Andres Caluqui Urumbilla, Caciques (leaders) and the most common of Indians of this locality [...] says: ...".



political field, and above all knows the functionaries personally. In short, he's a white-mestizo- a citizen. [...] Thus the intermediary agent neither transcribes, nor translates: he elaborates a complex practice that may be defined as "trans-writing" (trans-escritura). His writing seeks a performative effect that prolongs the text beyond words.

In this light, the written records quoted in this thesis are carefully interpreted with due regard to the context in which they were produced. They are used to understand how, in the process of state and citizenship formation, indigenous peoples began to 'speak for themselves' and demand to be heard and respected.

### **Positionality and Ethics**

As explained in Chapter 1, while living in the *comunidad* allowed me to participate in local activities, meet and learn from different people, it also posed a set of challenges to my field research. Specifically, and as I explain later in this thesis (Chapters 5 and 6), I had to learn about the rules and norms that entail living in a *comunidad*. This meant being aware of the power differences as well as the politics involved in any relationship between the researcher and the local population. I also had to constantly reflect on my position as an Ecuadorian coming from a privileged background and from the capital city, Quito, which has a particular meaning, especially in Ecuador where social, economical and racial differences influence social interaction (Colloredo-Mansfeld 1998). I grew up in Quito as part of an elite minority and received a privileged education in Ecuador as well as in the United States and the United Kingdom. As part of my research I had to be aware that my background also represents the *mestizo* mainstream culture which the indigenous and peasant organisations have been struggling against, especially through strong social movements during the past 30 years. In other words, I had to engage with the question of "how the research process is influenced by power relations and how researchers have the power to influence the research product through their own ideological and moral commitments and personal backgrounds" (Mehta 2007:8). In this light, it was essential to think not only about the way I was perceived by the people I interacted with, but also about my own perceptions about them, and how this affected the research product. For example, it took some time before I realised that my neighbours, an Otavalo Indigenous family, wouldn't give me small food presents (an Andean reciprocity tradition) because they

believed that since I came from the city and was therefore considered *mestizo* I didn't eat/like maize and other grains consumed in rural communities. In a similar manner, I am aware that the way I look (according to many in Otavalo "too tall to be Ecuadorian") and the way I speak Spanish, with a particular 'accent' that many people cannot identify (probably the result of my upbringing) influenced my research project. On the other hand, I also changed perceptions and learned about, for example, how indigenous families celebrate important occasions when I attended a wedding and two christenings in Mojandita de Curubi, particularly the one in which I became the *madrina* (Godmother) of an Otavaleño girl.

Becoming a *madrina* is perhaps the clearest example of the power relations prevalent in Ecuador and the way in which they became part of my research project and posed a series of ethical dilemmas. Although I was very happy and even flattered when I was asked to become a Godmother, I knew that this was going to be a difficult decision. Traditionally, indigenous and other families in disadvantaged positions have sought to find *compadre/comadre* (Godfather/Godmother or witnesses for weddings, confirmations and other celebrations) from a 'better off' background (including the *hacienda* owner) than their own. The idea is that when and if they need help in accessing resources (going to school, getting a job) or even conducting an official errand in town, they could seek help from the *compadres*. In return, every time the *compadre* visits he/she would get presents such as eggs, vegetables or even a whole chicken or a *cuy* (guinea pig). In my own case, accepting to become a *madrina* could be interpreted as accepting and even prolonging a history of uneven power relations, injustices and exclusion. At the same time, it could be seen as a way of accessing the 'informants' from the privileged position of a *compadre*. Additionally becoming a *madrina* entails a big responsibility that, as my mother put it after I consulted her on this issue: "*es para el resto de la vida*" ("it is a lifelong commitment"). After giving it some thought I decided to accept. Firstly, because this took place at the end of my stay in Mojandita de Curubi, I thought that it would not become a major issue in terms of the type of information I was able to obtain from people in the community. Secondly, and especially after living in Mojandita, I believe that it is possible to transform and have more equal, less power-biased relationships between indigenous peoples and *mestizo* Ecuadorians. In

accepting this ‘lifelong’ commitment’ I have therefore accepted a responsibility for the girl but also a personal responsibility, to try to change - even if on a personal level and on a rather limited scale - the way people from different classes and ethnic origins see and understand each other in Ecuador. Clearly, my background posed a series of dilemmas concerning my own biases and positionality, especially because I was trying to research questions of citizenship and marginality. This is why the way in which I obtained information while conducting fieldwork is also very important. In addition to asking formal permission and informing the community what I was researching, every time I met someone to conduct an interview I would explain that I was a student investigating water management practices and that the information they were giving me would be part of that research project. I also asked permission to record interviews: some agreed and others preferred not to be recorded. However as Lyla Mehta (2007:25) observes, ethical dilemmas transcend the basic and official codes that “stress informed consent, protecting the interests of subjects, maintaining confidentiality and preventing the disclosure of identities [...]”. They can also emerge in relation to reciprocity and what the local communities expect ‘in return’ for the information and knowledge given to the researcher (*Ibid*). In this respect, from the outset of my stay in Mojandita, I tried to keep my position and the ways in which I ‘gave back’ to the community as clear as possible. I never gave any money or donations for parties or communal works. Instead I tried to use the resources that I had to help the locals. For instance I would often transport people and materials in my pickup truck. As explained earlier, I also conducted two workshops which were requested by the local authorities and the school teachers. In this way, I was able to maintain a balance in terms of the expectations and demands that are entailed in researching in an indigenous and peasant community.

## **Conclusion**

I began this chapter with two guiding questions: what does it mean to be a citizen? And how and when do we experience it? These questions are at the core of the thesis and underline my main concern which is to understand how indigenous and *campesino* populations of northern Ecuador experience citizenship on a daily basis. What are the different platforms used by marginal groups to negotiate the terms and conditions of

belonging to the state? To that end I have chosen to base this study on literature that “takes issues of citizenship far beyond the setting out of rights in Constitutions and into the realm of social interaction, economic practices, cultural expression and the exercise of power in daily life” (Taylor and Wilson 2004:156). Additionally, the theoretical approaches discussed here, to citizenship, water and water rights, legal pluralism and institutions create a conceptual framework from which it is possible to understand communal water systems not only as a ‘way’ of managing water, but also as a politically embedded knowledge system through which indigenous and *campesino* communities contest the rights and responsibilities that citizenship entails in Ecuador.

While using literature on active and everyday forms on citizenship this thesis also aims at making a contribution to the understanding of differentiated citizenship or different experiences of belonging. Feminist and indigenous peoples’ theories on citizenship have highlighted the importance of belonging to one or many groups prior to or in addition to belonging to the state. They show that collective belonging has a consequence on how people imagine and experience their citizenship rights. A woman might for instance demand rights as a woman (collective difference) as much as an individual citizen (equal access to resources), or an indigenous person demands special rights that recognise his/her culture and traditions while also demanding equality *vis à vis* other non indigenous citizens. In this thesis, I will examine how indigenous and *campesino* individuals experience belonging to a community and the state through taking on a series of collective duties and responsibilities. Specifically, I will argue that these collective duties, examined in the case of communal water management and performed in terms of labour contributions, are a major mechanism for community building and a fundamental element of the way in which indigenous and *campesino* peoples experience citizenship.

The second section of the chapter presented the research site as well as the methodologies applied during field research and how they are connected to the analytical framework of this work. Combining ethnographic and historical methodologies is based on the idea that in order to understand how different people experience citizenship, it is necessary to consider the historical and political processes that have led to such experiences. Following

this methodology, this thesis shows how the realm of water is one of the many spaces used by marginalised rural populations to contest prevalent exclusionary practices and strive to attain equity in resource distribution and governance.

The next part of the thesis, divided into two chapters, presents a historical perspective of the relation between the state and the indigenous and peasant populations in highland Ecuador. It highlights the role that water has played in this relationship and how it has influenced processes of negotiation and ultimately the way in which citizenship is exercised in the country today.

### 3. From subjects to citizens: state formation and the emergence of differentiated citizenship in Ecuador

*Citizenship as a definition of the links between individuals and the nation state is a historical formation that adopts different frameworks and contents in relation to the type of rights and their extension and the historical processes and premises of its construction. In Ecuador, it took the short route of the negation of ethnic rights to a large section of the population, it created a shared notion of Indian subjects, as a result of the colonial origins of the state and the creole [criollo] civil society.*

Andrés Guerrero (1993:97)

Chapter 2 introduced the conceptual framework for the thesis and explored the theoretical connection between citizenship and water. This chapter provides a historical background to the trajectory of citizenship formation in Ecuador. Following Esteban Castro's (2006:30) observation that "understanding the development of citizenship requires a theoretical perspective of the long-term process of state formation", this chapter looks at the historical relationship between indigenous/peasant communities and the state in highland Ecuador. The analysis follows a theoretical approach which argues that despite the fact that Indians were systematically excluded from access to citizenship rights, they were essential in the process of state formation in Ecuador (Clark and Becker 2007). It shows that the state's attempt to convert Indians into white-*mestizo* citizens had unintended consequences which have deeply influenced the way citizenship is conceived and defined in Ecuador today. In this light the chapter analyses the rise of indigenous peoples as political actors who nowadays engage in direct negotiations with the state and demand a particular, "differentiated" mode of citizenship (Pallares 2002; Pallares 2007).<sup>15</sup>

The first part of this chapter presents an analysis of the historical relationship between the state and the indigenous population beginning with the colonial period. By studying the history behind local institutions such as the communal government, it shows that the post colonial arrangements introduced by the state to 'govern' and 'direct' the indigenous population have become a vehicle to contest exclusionary practices today. Special attention will be given to the role of water in crystallising indigenous peoples' positions *vis à vis* the

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<sup>15</sup> Pallares (2007) discusses the concept of differentiated citizenship as the model proposed by indigenous peoples struggles for "equality in difference" which incorporates the recognition of *pluriculturalism* as well.

state. The final section presents a short discussion of the formation of the indigenous movement.

### **Citizenship and the rise of the nation state**

The relationship between the state and the indigenous peoples during the Spanish colonial rule (approximately 1500 to 1820) and also during the Republican era (1822 to present) has been characterised by periods of variable degrees of state intervention reflected in distinct policies to address the ‘Indian Problem’ (See Table 3.1). During the colonial period the Spanish elite judged the majority of the indigenous peoples as ‘miserable’ and backward, almost ‘non-human’ beings. Even if they constituted an important source of ‘free’ labour and tax collection, they posed a series of administrative and political challenges to the colonial government. The question of how to deal with the Indian population, what kinds of rights to grant them, or even the types of laws that should apply to this segment of the population, were at the core of what the colonial and post-colonial elite called the ‘Indian Problem’ (Wilson 2003). The solutions around the ‘Indian Problem’ reflected the debate and fundamental tension between protecting and/or granting the Indian political equality (Prieto 2004:38). Hernán Ibarra (2004) calls these moments periods of “protection” and “unprotection” of the Indian population, while Deborah Yashar (2005) proposes an analysis of this relationship based on what she has termed “changing citizenship regimes”. Using these approaches as a starting point, the following section will explore the trajectory of citizenship formation in terms of the relationship between the indigenous population and the state in Ecuador. It will analyse how notions as well as practices of citizenship rights have changed over time as a result of the various social and political processes that have influenced this relationship.

During the colonial period, the population in the Spanish Americas was divided between the Spanish and Indian republics with different privileges and obligations corresponding to each group. Under this system indigenous people were considered colonial subjects and had to pay the *tributo*, or a head tax, to the crown (see *Table 3.1*). With time, this tax also became a way of ethnically classifying the population: “(s)he is Indian because (s)he pays the *tributo*” (Ibarra 2003:262). To facilitate its implementation as well as the control and

protection of this population, the *reducciones*, (political/geographical centres used to concentrate the indigenous peoples) were established. In addition to this, *encomiendas* (large amounts of land) were ‘trusted’ or ‘given’ to an *encomendero* or main authority to be ‘colonised’ and productively used and exploited. Indian chiefs or *caciques* of ‘free’ communities (those that did not belong to the *encomienda* structure) were in charge of collecting the tax and became important mediators between the colonial state and the indigenous population (Guerrero 1989). The two republic system also applied policies to protect the indigenous peoples from widespread abuses committed by the white and *mestizo* population (Clark and Becker 2007:8). *Protectores* (protectors) were assigned to ‘look after’ the *naturales* (natives) and help the majority who did not speak Spanish or understand the legal arrangements to file complaints and law suits to the colonial government. This constituted one of the earliest forms of legal interaction between the state and the indigenous population, where the Indian was, in some instances, able to take advantage of the system.<sup>16</sup> To that end, as Erin O’Connor (2007:70) points out, in addition to the *protector*, Indian men and women used state-sanctioned stereotypes and “emphasized their presumably childlike need for protection [...] to their own advantage whenever possible”. The use of such stereotypes can be identified in legal records from the colonial as well as early Republican times as the passage below shows.

The following passage is part of a large document containing the petition made by an Indian *Cacique* from the Otavalo area in the period between 1739 and 1761. The petition seeks to regain access to two water streams and some land that had been seized by a Church-owned *hacienda*. In addition to mentioning on various occasions the ‘miserable condition’ of the Indians, the protector also makes the case that the Indians need this land and these resources to pay the tribute (an important source of revenue for the Colonial administration). The document concludes with an indication that the water and land had been reassigned to the *Cacique* and the group of Indians he represented.

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<sup>16</sup> There are thousands of recorded court cases where it is possible to identify the role of the ‘Protector’, and sometimes find instances where the Indian actually won the case. Most of these procedures had to do with land acquisition and tribute payments.



*El defensor de Don Damacio Garcia Tulcanaza Cacique Principal y Gobernador de los pueblos de Tocache y Malchingui, Jurisdicción del Asiento de Otabalo, por su propio derecho y por el del comun de Indios de estos Pueblos, parezco ante usted [...] y digo, que aviéndose hallado estos **miserables Indios** despojados de la acequia de agua perteneciente a su pueblo por el Padre Fray Nicolás Ortiz [...] privando a los **desventurados Indios** [...] no solo de aquella acequia de agua sino también de otra. Que del tiempo inmemorial han estado gozando de sus salidas, montes y pastos [...] necesarios para la conservación conforme trasgresión de leyes y ordenanzas que previenen, que los Pueblos de Indios precisamente ayan de tener la indispensable comodidad de aguas, tierras, montes, salidas, y pastos [...] que les concede la chatolica piedad de su Magestad (Dios le guarde) atendiendo el bien y la comodidad de los Indios, y la utilidad que de esto se reporta en la paga de sus tributos [...] Pido y suplico que aviendo por demostrado los instrumentos [...] se sirva de proveer y mandar según y como llevo pedido [...] atento a la **natural miseria de estos Indios**[...].<sup>17</sup>*

The defender of Don Damacio Garcia Tulcanaza, Main Cacique<sup>18</sup> and Governor of the towns of Tocache and Malchingui, Jurisdiction of the Seat of Otabalo, by his own right and by the common right of the Indians of these Towns, I appear before you [...] and say that, having these **miserable Indians** found themselves stripped of the irrigation ditch that belongs to their town by Father Brother Nicolás Ortiz [...] who deprived the **unfortunate Indians** [...] not only of that irrigation ditch, but also of another. That from time immemorial they have enjoyed its outflows, hills and grasses [...] necessary for conservation according to the transgression of the laws and ordinances that foresee, that the Indian Peoples precisely must have the indispensable commodity of waters, lands, hills, outflows and grasses [...] that are granted to them by His Majesty's Catholic piety (God save him) seeing to the wellbeing and comfort of the Indians, and the profits from this that are reported in the payment of their tributes [...] I request and beg that taking the instruments as demonstrated [...] you proceed to provide and dispose as I have asked [...] attentive to the **natural misery of these Indians**[...].<sup>19</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Archivo Nacional de Historia/Quito. (ANH) Serie Indígenas, caja 51, expediente 11, 1739-1761. Passage from the original document, emphasis mine.

<sup>18</sup> Translation Note: The term *cacique* (which can also be found in English as *Cassique*) was used by the Spaniards to refer to the leaders of the indigenous tribes they encountered in the New World. The origin of the term comes from the Taino word for tribe leader or elder, used in the Antilles. While the term, by the late 19th Century, came to mean a political boss with excessive or authoritarian influence over a town, region or people, its use during the 18th Century in Spanish colonies was devoid of this negative sense.

(El Colegio de México, *Diccionario del Español Usual en México*,

<http://dem.colmex.mx/GridView.aspx?txtPalabra=cacique>; RAE, *Diccionario de la Lengua Española*,

[http://buscon.rae.es/draeI/SrvltConsulta?TIPO\\_BUS=3&LEMA=Cacique](http://buscon.rae.es/draeI/SrvltConsulta?TIPO_BUS=3&LEMA=Cacique); José Varela Ortega, *Los amigos políticos: Partidos, elecciones y caciquismo en la Restauración 1875-1900*), Junta de Castilla y León / Marcial Pons, Ediciones de Historia, S.A., 2001, ISBN: 84-95379-13-9 / 84-7846-993-1).

<sup>19</sup> All the translations of historical documents I found in the archives and I use in this thesis have been done with the help of Sabina Trigueros. All these passages will be presented together with the original in Spanish. I have chosen to include the original because of their particular use of words and language, which can explain and clearly show the logic behind many of the state's policies to incorporate the Indian into the nation.

The two republics formally lasted until independence in the 1820s, and despite the introduction of liberal ideas, levy collection continued and the indigenous population remained, in practice, second class citizens (Yashar 2005).<sup>20</sup> Independence from colonial rule meant that Indians occupied an ambiguous position: on the one hand, ‘free citizens’ and on the other ‘miserable subjects’ who had to pay taxes based on an ethnic classification system (Prieto 2004:25). In fact, “up to the mid-nineteenth century the republican state financed itself - to a level fluctuating around 15 to 30 per cent of its total income - by means of the levy” (Guerrero 2003:278). Additionally, the requirements established for citizenship which included “being married or at least 22 years of age, ownership of property [...] or engagement in an independent ‘useful’ profession or industry [...] and the ability to read and write” excluded most of the population (Clark and Becker 2007:9). It is possible to say that citizenship was conceived from the perspective of the elite as a privilege attached to the social and racial hierarchies of the predominating social and cultural norms (Taylor and Wilson 2004). The system derived from the colonial arrangement that extended “a *de facto* citizen treatment” to all adult, white-*mestizo* and Spanish speaking men (Guerrero 2000:9). In other words, citizenship rights were based on practice and habit inherited from the colonial period, which Guerrero (2000; 2003) has termed ‘*ciudadanía del sentido común*’ (common sense citizenship/ world of common sense). The ‘*ciudadanía del sentido común*’ covered (and still covers) everyday violence against Indians as well as against women (Polo Bonilla 2009). Although white-*mestizo* women were considered civilised, they lived under paternal and conjugal subordination that denied them full citizens’ rights. Created by a colonial social group that saw themselves as rational, civilized and white, the Indian - conceived in completely opposite terms as uncivilised and barbaric - was therefore automatically excluded from acquiring citizenship rights in early Republican times (*Ibid*).

During the first decades after independence, between 1830 and 1890, weak governments faced a challenge of state building and nation making which was deeply influenced by the need to “incorporate, or at least use productively, ‘the *indígena*’” (Williams 2007:38).

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<sup>20</sup> Liberal ideas at the time related to independence from the colonial powers and the formation of the republic as well as the ‘equality before the law’ principle. Despite that, only a small segment of the population met the citizenship requirements outlined by the new Republican authorities. (Clark and Becker 2007:9)

Following this logic, and in order to facilitate rural labour mobility much needed by large landowners and other entrepreneurs in the highlands and at the coast, in 1857 the tribute or levy was abolished, allowing some Indians living in the ‘free’ *comunidades* to move. The *protectores* and all special legal exceptions for indigenous people were eliminated in the same year (Ibarra 2004). This meant a temporary cessation of the use of ethnic categories, differentiated treatments and the introduction of the ‘formal’ application of the law to the white and Indian populations alike (See Table 3.1).

However, the latter’s status was still limited by citizenship rules that only a small percentage of Ecuadorians were able to fulfil.<sup>21</sup> Despite the abolition of the tribute, Indians remained a section of the population subjected to the practices of domination legitimised by tradition and old forms of exploitation, particularly on the *haciendas* via feudal labour arrangements (Guerrero 1993). Additionally, in order to build large infrastructure works such as roads and railway tracks, ‘free’ Indians, i.e. those who did not reside on a *hacienda*, were legally obliged to provide labour to the state (Williams 2007).<sup>22</sup> Through subsidiary forms of labour (inside and outside the *hacienda*) a frontier between white-*mestizo* citizens and Indian subjects was drawn, keeping divisions between these two groups almost intact (Ibarra 2003:263). Even if, with the abolition of the tribute in 1857, the ethnic administrative categories had formally disappeared from state discourse, in everyday practices the Indian was clearly identified and excluded on ethnic grounds from citizenship rights (Guerrero 1993; Guerrero 2003; Ibarra 2003). In the “world of common sense”, the Indian remained a subject (Guerrero 2003:274).

### **The liberal agenda and the debates on the Indian Condition 1895-1925**

At the turn of the century, legislation addressing the ‘Indian Problem’ was re-introduced with the Liberal Revolution (1895-1925) led by President Eloy Alfaro (See Table 3.1). The liberal leader’s intention was to ‘convert’ this segment of the population (which were still

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<sup>21</sup> Indians (men) were not able to vote or be elected because they did not write or speak Spanish, and did not own property (communal lands were not recognised as property).

<sup>22</sup> Obligatory labour contributions from free Indians pushed many who lived on and owned communal lands to move to the *haciendas* because those who lived on the *haciendas* did not have to work for the state. Once inside the *haciendas* they became tied to other types of coerced labour arrangements, i.e. *concertaje* and *huasipungo*.

seen in popular discourse and imagination as children who needed protection and guidance) into ‘citizens’ and at the same time to portray his government as a protector of the ‘miserable race’ (Ibarra 2004; Clark and Becker 2007). Once again the term *indio*, which had been abolished together with the tribute in 1857, re-entered legal discourses. In 1918 important laws were introduced which established minimum wages for peons, an eight-hour working day and the right for people to pay off their debts and leave haciendas or the *concertaje* system (a form of bondage labour) (Clark and Becker 2007). Again, one of the main objectives was to encourage labour mobility from the highlands to the cacao-producing lowlands; it was seen as a way to use the Indians ‘productively’. In this sense, the liberal project which gave particular importance to labour issues was also a class project that allowed Indians to migrate and become free and, crucially, ‘*mestizo*’ labourers at the coast (Clark 2005:57).

Indigenous peoples, frequently with the aid of the *tintillero* (unlicensed scribes/attorneys who replaced the *protector*), took advantage of the new legislation and “sued landowners, public employees and members of the clergy for breaking the new liberal rules” (Clark 2005; Baud 2007:84). Yet, as Mercedes Prieto (2004) notes, when the liberals introduced protection as the strategy to achieve political equality for the indigenous segments of the population, they not only accepted but at the same time reinforced the notion of “inferiority of the Indian race” (2004:44). It is possible to identify this contradiction in the laws introduced by the liberal government. Following the idea that Indians had to be protected from their ‘weak character’, Indian parties and celebrations (considered degenerative due to high alcohol consumption) were abolished by law in 1918, the same year that the laws to improve working conditions had been introduced (Ibarra 2003:266).

Central to the liberal project of nation-making was the introduction of secular education. It was believed that by teaching students about the concept of the nation, national pride and the celebration of important historical moments, it would be possible to unify the country and share a common notion of ‘Ecuadorianess’ (Sinnardet 2000). This constituted a model based on humanist, practical and secular principles in contrast to the earlier nation-building project led by the conservative leader Garcia Moreno (ruled 1859-1865, 1869-1875) which

connected Catholic views to patriotism and national identity (*Ibid*). Although coming from different political angles, the policies of both the conservative and the liberal governments of the 19<sup>th</sup> century were shaped by the need to incorporate the Indian, build a national community and extend the power of the state (Williams 2007:38).

The liberal state, dominated by the agro-export elite of the coast, “assumed a moral upper hand over highland landowners precisely by insisting on its own role as the protector of Indians from the abuses of both “‘traditional’ highland landowners and the Catholic Church (which was itself a large landowner)” (Clark 2005:55). As a result of their government programme, reforms introduced between 1904 and 1908 allowed the state to confiscate land owned by the Catholic Church (the main landowner in the country) and to rent it on short term contracts to private individuals. The state-owned haciendas were, however, places where unfair labour contracts, unfair treatment and debt continued to exist.

### **The hacienda**

During Republican times, *haciendas*, as a continuation of the large landed estates of the colonial period, remained important productive, social and political centres. Up until the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century these estates dominated the countryside by controlling land and water resources, and also the local indigenous population. Apart from constituting a “geographical space, the hacienda [has been], in effect, a consolidated power formation endowed with symbolic codes, rituals and mechanisms of repression and consensus making” (Guerrero 2003:295). It is possible to get a general idea of the extent of power and political influence the haciendas exerted in highland Ecuador by looking at land ownership statistics. Until 1954, when the first agrarian census was taken, and ten years before the first agrarian reform in the country, “2.1 per cent of the farms – those larger than 100 hectares – accounted for 64.4 per cent of all arable land” (Bretón Solo de Zaldívar 2008:591). In contrast to this, farms smaller than five hectares accounted for 7.2 per cent of all arable land (*Ibid*). Given that water rights were determined by land ownership (riparian rights), capital (resources to build infrastructure) and access to information (access to courts), the majority of water resources were also controlled by the landed elite. Water rights were acquired through court concessions, making it almost impossible for illiterate indigenous peoples

who did not speak Spanish to secure access to hydrological resources. Most hacienda owners who had capital and were also familiar with the legal system had irrigation canals built on their own properties. This also gave them the opportunity to control *acequias* (channels or streams) and sustain servile labour arrangements (Kincaid 2005:186).

The coerced labour systems that prevailed on the *hacienda* were based on two arrangements, *concertaje* and *huasipungo* where “most labourers were Quichua-speaking indigenous people [...] who grew their own food on hacienda land and were obligated to work for the landlords in return”(Lyons 2006:3). Under *concertaje* the patron, who was also responsible for keeping the books, gave money and/or food and other provisions to the *concierto* (labourer) in exchange for labour. Debt was passed on over generations, obliging Indians to remain indefinitely in the *haciendas*. The system was so pervasive that when the *hacienda* was sold, it included the Indians, or *conciertos*, living and working in that territory (Baud 2007). The other common form of servile labour was *huasipungo*, where the patron gave a piece of land to the Indian family in exchange for labour. In both instances, labour duties were extended to all members of the Indian household, who in addition to working on the *hacienda* for up to 6 days a week performed duties as domestic servants in the landlords’ country or city homes. Relationships were not limited to economic exchanges but extended into other spheres of life, forcing the Indians to become morally indebted to their patrons. Indigenous peoples had (and in many cases still have) to rely on their patrons or other powerful figures to access all kinds of resources (De La Torre 2000:35).

In addition to creating strong clientalistic and paternalistic relationships with the Indians residing on their land, landowners had strong bonds with independent indigenous communities. Over the years, as the thousands of legal cases in the archives show, *haciendas* appropriated land from neighbouring communities, obliging these people to rely on the landlords for access to “strategic resources such as pastureland, water, firewood and use of roads in exchange for [their] labour”(De La Torre 2000:35). Similarly to those who lived on the *hacienda*, members of these communities provided different types of services to the *hacienda*. For instance under the *yanapo* system they “worked for three to four days

a week in exchange for access to hacienda resources and the right to traverse hacienda property” (Williams 2007:123). As a result of these “social relations of domination”, the *hacienda* structure regulated the population well beyond its boundaries during the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries (Guerrero 2003). Rather than breaking with this system, the weak postcolonial states encouraged and relied on the *hacienda* to control the population, particularly between the abolition of the tribute and the liberal revolution (1857-1895). During this period, when differences between the Indians and other Ecuadorians were no longer legally recognised, the ‘ethnic administration’ of the population was therefore conferred to a series of intermediaries: the *hacienda*, the Catholic Church and some local authorities such as the *teniente politico* (political lieutenant) (*Ibid*).

In addition to the *hacendado* or the large landowner, other local power brokers known as *gamonales* who could for instance be the *teniente politico*, a medium-size landowner, or a local trader or businessman, also had a very important political position in the rural areas. Similar to the *hacendado*, these people exercised the role of mediator between the state and vulnerable local indigenous and peasant populations. These ‘mediators’ helped indigenous peoples to access resources but used their position to exploit the rural population to their own advantage, developing what Guerrero (2003) calls “strategies of domination”. Although the power of the *gamonal* diminished significantly after the agrarian reform that took place between the 1960s and 1970s, they had until then greatly influenced the political and social exclusion of indigenous peoples (Ibarra 2002). In other words, together with the *hacienda* structure and the Catholic Church, the *gamonales* played a pivotal role in developing and sustaining a widespread system of ethnic administration which maintained unequal power relations and systematically excluded the indigenous population from accessing resources and exercising their rights (Guerrero 1989; Ibarra 2002).

Over the years, and despite the laws introduced during the liberal period that lasted between 1895 and 1925, the little change in the feudal estates, coupled with the first forms of political organisation to access land, resulted in important peasant and indigenous struggles that anticipated the later consolidation and definition of communal territories (Ibarra 2004; Clark and Becker 2007). This was the case in the Otavalo area where the Indian

communities of Gualacata, Urumbilla and Caluqui had a long-standing dispute with the neighbouring Hacienda San Agustín, dating back to 1659. Legal records show that on repeated occasions (1659, 1669, 1797, 1812 and 1824) the indigenous *comunidades* lodged complaints against the priests over land, property and labour issues.<sup>23</sup> Even after the *hacienda* had been confiscated from the Church and rented out to private farmers, the problems continued. According to records from the *Jefatura Cantonal of Otavalo*, in 1935 indigenous people from the aforementioned communities refused to continue working for the *hacienda* and also to vacate land they had allegedly invaded, saying that they “*would rather die than leave, because that land belongs to them*”.<sup>24</sup>

### **The debates over land and water tenure arrangements and the modernisation of the Ecuadorian nation-state 1915-1935**

As a result of the cycle of land-related conflicts characterised by local protests and land take-overs that took place between 1915 and 1935, the debate on the ‘Indian Problem’ developed into a discussion about the land tenure arrangements and labour conditions prevailing in highland Ecuador. Some argued that, although painful, the dissolution of communal land ownership, until then loosely permitted, would allow greater agricultural production, an increase in state revenues and most importantly the improvement of the ‘indigenous race’ (Ibarra 2004). This position was developed by the landowner elite, who were also involved in the discussion of modernising Ecuador by improving agricultural output through the expansion of land ownership and by increasing production through capital investment (Clark 1998). Ideals of modernity and ethnic characterisation provided a background to the elite’s proposed solutions, which considered that the Indian was an obstacle for the development of agriculture and the nation as a whole (Clark 1998; Ibarra 2003:275; Kincaid 2005:190).

In contrast, one group of liberal intellectuals thought that the *comunidad* constituted a social and territorial space, which allowed the survival of the Indian population. For them,

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<sup>23</sup> Archivo Histórico /Instituto Otavaleño de Antropología (AHIOA), Escribanía Pública/Juicios, Notaría 1ª. (1800-14; 628) Caja 9.

<sup>24</sup> Archivo Jefatura Política del Cantón Otavalo/Libro Copiador de Oficios (LCO), 11 de septiembre de 1935, no.207.



the ‘problem’ rested on the existence of large haciendas, particularly those owned by the state and administered privately. The idea was that due to the exploitation system under which he/she lived, the Indian that worked and lived in the large estates was lazy and untrustworthy. By contrast, the Indian that lived in free communities had positive traits, was hard working, independent and able to defend his/her rights. A group of *indigenista* intellectuals, who had been for some time commenting on the “Indian Problem” and its potential for social unrest, played an important role in disseminating this point of view. The *indigenistas*, in addition to anthropologists, sociologists and other social scientists, included doctors, writers and artists who were interested in studying and making known the reality of the Indian population (Clark 1999). The liberal Pio Jaramillo Alvarado, who was a prominent figure and member of this group, argued that the land issue had to be resolved in order to find any viable future for the Ecuadorian nation and its large Indian population.<sup>25</sup> Influenced by international socialist ideas, in 1922 he published the essay “El Indio Ecuatoriano” (*The Ecuadorian Indian*) which became a sort of ‘*indigenista* manifesto’ for the group of intellectuals debating the ‘Indian Problem’ (Prieto 2004:70). It is precisely in this essay that the notion of the *campesino*, or peasant was introduced into the discussion. According to Jaramillo Alvarado, the issues regarding the Indian could be solved through the ‘*via campesina*’. Seen from the standpoint of the ‘worker’, once unfair labour conditions and the land tenure arrangements changed, the Indian could ‘become’ a modern agricultural worker, a *campesino* (Ibarra 2003:273). The following passage taken from his 1922 essay clearly summarises this idea:

Give them some pieces of land, cultivate their spirit and intelligence in the military barracks, guarantee them a secure salary, in short, respect their human existence and the Indian who nowadays is a dead weight [...] will become an active collaborator of great importance for agricultural development, basis and foundation of the national wealth [...] (Jaramillo cited by Ibarra 2003:274).

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<sup>25</sup> There was no clear knowledge of the actual numbers in terms of the indigenous population. All the discussions were based on what scientists, politicians and the social elite ‘believed to be’ a large number of Indians in the country. The first national census was only conducted in 1950. One of its objectives was to find out the ‘actual number’ of Indians in order to provide services to these groups and incorporate them into the national society. For a discussion of this census and other statistical projects conducted in Ecuador see Kim Clark (1998). ‘Race, ‘Culture’, and Mestizaje: The Statistical Construction of the Ecuadorian Nation’, 1930-1950. *Journal of Historical Sociology*. Vol.11. No 2.

For the advocate of the community, Jaramillo Alvarado, the solution to the ‘Indian Problem’ rested on a thorough reform of land tenure arrangements and the state’s support for communal organisation which would bring about an Indian ‘regeneration’ (Ibarra 2004). Although this *indigenista* thinker supported communal structures, he believed that they constituted the starting point to achieve progress amongst the native population, who, in his view, would naturally favour individual property ownership once they had reached ‘civilisation’ (Prieto 2004:141). This debate and the continuation of rural disputes constituted the basis for later legal reforms, including the introduction of the *Ley de Comunas* in 1937. These reforms would become the basis of the “corporatist citizenship regime” in Ecuador (Yashar 2005). Even if they proposed different solutions to the ‘Indian Problem’, both sides of the argument agreed on the need to ‘incorporate’ the indigenous population into the ‘civilised’ world and, as a result, reproduced the “traditional and paternalistic opposition between civilisation and barbarism” used to define the ideal Ecuadorian citizen by conservatives and liberals alike (Sinnardet 2000:113).

In addition to the debates around land tenure arrangements, the need to use water efficiently and introduce new technology became another element of the modernist discourse. In this view, water was seen as a key resource that could benefit the nation if used ‘appropriately’ - mostly geared towards developing industries and large public works. In contrast to these uses, and similarly to agriculture, the rhetoric employed by the elite “regarded traditional, indigenous practices relating to water usage as anachronistic, or at least inefficient, while industrial, recreational and agro-industrial uses of water were viewed as modern” (Kincaid 2005:194). These debates were reflected in the type of water projects that were undertaken at the time. For instance, in the Otavalo area, from 1914 onwards most requests and concessions of significant volumes of water from sources located outside the haciendas, such as lakes and rivers, were for industrial purposes (either for generating electricity to power textile factories or to increase agricultural production). In the following passage from 1914, Mr. Jarrin, a landowner from the Otavalo area, asks for the allocation of a large quantity of water from the Lake Mojanda in order to build an irrigation channel. He justifies the petition as follows:

*No dudo usted comprenderá lo grande de esta empresa y las enormes sumas de dinero que habrán que invertir en la obra que proyecto, la cual redundará en beneficio general de todos y representará un gran porvenir para el incremento de la agricultura nacional; razón esta poderosa para merecer el apoyo y decidida protección de todas las autoridades [...].*

I have no doubt you will understand the importance of this enterprise and the large quantities of money that will need to be invested in this work that I envision, which will be of general benefit to everyone and will greatly increase the national agricultural production. This is a powerful reason to merit the support and decisive protection from all the authorities [...].<sup>26</sup>

In the context of the nation-building project, water was seen as a resource that could bring progress to the country in the form of industries, hydro electrical projects, irrigation channels and public works such as potable water systems, public baths and *lavanderias* (shared clothes-washing facilities). To this end, in 1936, Federico Páez issued a new Water Law, which categorised water according to social use and prioritised the use of water that entailed a *public character*.<sup>27</sup> Public character was however defined in terms of the ‘public utility’ or benefits that these projects would bring to ‘the majority’ and therefore favoured all kinds of works that brought ‘progress’ to the nation. Industrial and municipal uses of water were prioritised. The following passages are taken from the mentioned law:

*Art. 2. El Ejecutivo podrá celebrar contratos para la construcción de diques en orden a mejorar las condiciones de navegación de los ríos, concediendo al contratista el derecho de aprovechar la fuerza hidráulica proveniente de la represa de las aguas.*

*Art. 3. Es obligación del Poder Ejecutivo por medio de la dirección de Obras Públicas, hacer el sondeo de las aguas subterráneas, artesianas, o no, con el objeto de auxiliar a las obras de provisión de agua e irrigación.*

*Art. 27. Las autoridades del orden administrativo están obligadas a prestar el apoyo que las Municipalidades requieren, para recuperar o conservar la posesión, uso y goce de las aguas que les pertenezcan o estén actualmente destinadas a los servicios de luz y fuerza eléctrica, higiene y sanidad de las poblaciones, agua potable y otros análogos, de carácter público.*

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*Art. 2. The Executive can arrange contracts for the construction of dams in order to improve the navigability of rivers, allowing the contractor to benefit from the hydraulic power coming from the dammed waters.*

<sup>26</sup> AHIOA. Escribanía Publica/Juicios, 1era Notaría (1914; 2349) Caja 95. *Título:* El Sr. José Eduardo Jarrín solicitando se le adjudique una cantidad de agua de la laguna de Mojanda.

<sup>27</sup> “Ley de Aguas” (Decreto 289) Registro Oficial no. 242. (July 17 1936).

*Art.3. It is the Executive's duty, through the Public Works Office, to conduct a study of underground waters, with the objective of supporting works for the provision of drinking and irrigation water.*

*Art. 27. The administrative authorities are obliged to support all Municipalities to recover and maintain the possession, use and enjoyment of the water that belongs to them or is currently destined for electricity services, hygiene and sanitation, potable water and other similar uses of public character.<sup>28</sup>*

The 1936 law, as well as the 1939 and 1942 laws that followed (amendments to the former), reflected a trend towards employing water for projects that encouraged capital-intensive agriculture, industries and tourism.<sup>29</sup> At the same time, these water laws reflected the urgent need, seen from the perspective of the state, to exert control over different types of water resources and bring some kind of order to water administration in the country. In essence these laws tried to encourage modernisation by first increasing the number of public water works and at the same time increasing the power and role of the state in managing the country's natural resources.

However, when the state granted large amounts of water for industrial use, indigenous communities or families that lived on the fringes of the *haciendas*, who relied on 'unlicensed' or 'not officially allocated' sources of water, were probably adversely affected. Although I was not able to find any lawsuit which included an Indian person or community opposing a water concession in this period, it is possible to infer from the procedure that these concessions followed that indigenous peoples were affected. Water rights were adjudicated through court concessions. Petitioners had to present their case to a local notary and explain and justify why and how they were going to use the water. They also had to "make a case that their project was beneficial to the public good and that it in no way infringed on the hydraulic rights of others" (Kincaid 2005:187) - hence the reasoning in the previous quote where Mr. Jarrin uses phrases like "benefit to everyone" and "will greatly increase the national agricultural production" to justify his intention. In essence he is saying that the project would be beneficial for the public good and for the

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<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.* Pg. 667-670.

<sup>29</sup> "Ley de Aguas" (Decreto 142) Registro Oficial no. 272. (October 27, 1939) and "Ley de Aguas" Registro Oficial no. 640. (October 14, 1942).

‘modernisation’ of the country.<sup>30</sup> Once the case was open, public written notices were posted for approximately 2 weeks in different parts of the closest town or village. The purpose of these written notices was to alert anyone who might feel affected by the concession and enable them to oppose it. These documents were written in Spanish and contained the details of the petition, who was asking for it and where the water was coming from. Yet, in addition to the fact that most indigenous peoples did not speak Spanish, the majority did not know how to read and write, making these notices useless and valueless in terms of giving indigenous peoples the opportunity to oppose the concessions. As a result, most of the concessions were granted to the industrial and agricultural elite who managed to secure access to large amounts of water (Kincaid 2005:187). Despite the unfairness of the water concession process, by the 1930s, as the example of contestation over water resources in the Otavalo area below shows, “indigenous communities had become more confident in their ability to challenge elite attempts to dictate water and land policy” (*Ibid* 211).

Otavalo, an area rich in water resources and with a large indigenous population, provides an excellent example for studying how the discourses about efficient use of water affected the local population. During the 1920s, 30s and 40s the municipality of Otavalo embarked on a number of water related projects. These projects, which were supported by the local elite, “ranged from building new hydroelectric plants to the diversion of waterways for streets and railroad tracks, from the canalisation of highland streams for potable water to the construction of roads designed to circumnavigate Lake San Pablo” (Kincaid 2005:218). The local indigenous population opposed most of these enterprises, especially those living on the shores of Lake San Pablo, where the municipality “sought to enhance the aesthetic of the lake” by building a road around it and encouraging tourism in the area, as well as using this water to generate power for the city of Otavalo (*Ibid* 244). Indigenous peoples opposed the projects because they believed their access and use of land and water resources, including the *tatora* reed, which they used to make rafts and mats, would be damaged. For the elite, however, the attitude of the Indians only reflected their ignorance and lack of understanding of modern technology and its benefits. The conflicts relating to public works

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<sup>30</sup> AHIOA. Escribanía Pública/Juicios, 1era Notaría (1914; 2349) Caja 95. *Título*: El Sr. José Eduardo Jarrín solicitando se le adjudique una cantidad de agua de la laguna de Mojanda.

and water, as Kenneth Kincaid (2005) shows in his thorough study of water contestation in Otavalo in early 20<sup>th</sup> century, “would become the basis for indigenous mobilisation in the 1940s. Complaints, petitions and letters to local and national leaders allowed them a voice and a presence in the national discourse on indigenous rights and resource management” (*Ibid* 245).

### **Education as a means towards incorporation**

After the collapse of international markets in 1929 there were at least 15 different governments that had to deal with the economic crisis which resulted from the lack of cocoa exports, and the political problems that ensued (Clark 2005:57). The modernist debates around the need to ‘incorporate’ the Indian into the nation state were therefore influenced by several factors: (i) the economic and political crisis of the 1920’s and 30’s in Ecuador; (ii) the government’s growing interest in creating new markets; (iii) the shortage of consumers and (iv) the inadequacies of the labour force (Sinnardet 2000; Lucero 2003:28). In both official and intellectual discourses the Indian population continued to be identified as a negative force in terms of national development. It was deemed a group that had to be educated and ‘civilised’ in order to become consumers and allow the national market to expand. The following passage taken from the *Bulletin of the Ministry of Production* in 1936 summarises these ideas.

Our economic misery, our disorganisation, the lack of development of our industry, all of this is due, without doubt, to the fact that the Indian represents a negative factor in the national economy. How could our economy be vigorous, how could there be organisation in the country, if the majority of the population remains culturally and economically opposed to Western civilisation? In the national market consumption is minimal, production is insignificant; if we were to be entirely truthful, the country’s economy is weak because the Indian does not consume (cited by Clark 1998:205)

In this context, education became key to the acculturation of the Indian and other poor populations in the country, which effectively meant creating *mestizo* individuals. Presumably this newly educated group of people would become productive and at the same time better consumers for the local market, allowing the nation to advance and progress (Sinnardet 2000:113). It was believed that through education it would be possible to

prepare the student of today to become the responsible and conscious citizen of tomorrow (*Ibid* 115). In this view as Clark (2005:59) notes, “full membership in the nation was itself classed: responsible citizenship was equated, in part, with supporting the national economy through full engagement with the market”.

The rural school became particularly important for the project to incorporate the masses and grant all Ecuadorians “the right to access civilisation” (Sinnardet 2000:116). The archives of the *Jefatura Cantonal in Otavalo* show how the schoolteacher and the local authorities came together on a daily basis in an effort to transform the rural, indigenous population. In the following passage from a telegraphic note sent on the 12<sup>th</sup> of January 1936, the teacher of a school located on a *hacienda*, asks the *teniente politico* and *jefe politico* in no uncertain terms to pressure the parents to send their children to school. Here she refers to the young Indians as *longos*, a term used specifically to describe indigenous children but also used as a term with negative connotations to describe attitudes supposedly held by Indians.

*En vista falta concurrencia longos escuela mi cargo, ruego usted se digne ordenar Teniente Político Quichinche fin tome medidas enérgicas contra padres familia y manden sus longos escuela, sin concurso autoridades mal se puede hacer labor. Saludo atentamente.- Profesora Mantilla de hacienda Pisalvo.*

*Given the lack of attendance of the longos [Indian children] at the school, I request the Political Lieutenant of Quichinche to take the necessary measures against the parents and to order them to send their longos to school; without your help there is very little I can do. Your sincerely.- Teacher Mantilla, hacienda Pisalvo.<sup>31</sup>*

Despite the state’s efforts to educate the rural population, lack of resources, poorly prepared teachers and resistance from the local population prevented rural schools in the 1920 and 1930s becoming a success. Because of lack of support – even opposition - from the local landowners, added to the political instability of the 1930s, only a limited number of schools survived (Sinnardet 2000). The role of education in achieving what was believed to be the ‘transformation’ of the indigenous population into ‘productive’ citizens nonetheless

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<sup>31</sup> Archivo Jefatura Política del Cantón Otavalo/LCO, 13 de enero de 1936, no. 24.

frequently appeared in the discourse about the modernisation of the nation-state. Moreover, and as Chapter 4 discusses in detail, education became very important in the effort to ‘civilise’ Indians by introducing what were believed to be ‘appropriate’ and hygienic uses of water.

### **The rise of the *comunidad* 1925-1945**

The debates about land tenure structures, water usage and the modernisation of the country proved very influential for the establishment of the 1937 *Ley de Organización y Régimen de Comunas* (Law for the Organisation of Communities) (See Table 3.1). The new legislation reflected conservative, liberal and socialist discourses which, based on moral ideals, focused on the need to protect and ‘improve’ the Indian population (Lucero 2003:31; Prieto 2004). The 1937 *Ley de Comunas* was introduced to recognise the community, or the different types and sizes of rural settlements, as institutions, and in that process “standardise local organisation and [...] make Indians into Ecuadorian peasants” (Yashar 2005:88). It was intended as a protectionist measure “to remove the factors that hindered progress and marginalised Indians and *campesinos*” (Prieto 2004:152). In addition to increasing control over the *comunidad*, by bringing them into the political administrative division of the state this law encouraged a particular form of organisation which would ideally promote the formation of cooperatives, in essence a more ‘rational’ form of production (Lucero 2003:29). It is possible to identify these notions in the first passages of the law, as decreed by Federico Páez in 1937.<sup>32</sup>

*Considerando:*

*Que la ley de División Territorial de la República no comprende los centros poblados, que con el nombre de Caseríos, Anejos, Barrios, Comunidades o Parcialidades **subsisten dentro de la nacionalidad a la que, es necesario incorporarles;***

*Que a los referidos centros poblados se debe establecerlos y reconocerlos con derechos y obligaciones propios, **para su desarrollo y desenvolvimiento sociales;***  
*Que hay que dotarles de la debida representación legal y administrativa **a fin de propender a su mejoramiento moral, intelectual y material;***

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<sup>32</sup> “Ley de Organización y Régimen de las Comunas”. (Decreto 142) Registro Oficial no. 558. (July 30 1937), p.1517. Highlights and translation mine.



*Decreta:*

*La siguiente Ley de Organización y Régimen de las Comunas*

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*Considering:*

*That the Law of Territorial Division of the Republic does not include the inhabited centres with the names of Caseríos, Anejos, Barrios, Comunidades, Parcialidades [different types of small human settlements] **that exist within the nation to which it is necessary to incorporate them;***

*That the referred settlements should become established and recognised **to promote their development and social advancement** with their own rights and duties; That it is necessary to provide them with the appropriate legal and administrative representation **in order to encourage their moral, intellectual and material improvement.***

*Dictates:*

*The following Law for the Organisation and Administration of Communities*

The new law was based on three guiding principles which reflected broader national debates (analysed in the previous section). First, it recognised all potential members of the communities, without distinctions based on ethnicity, as peasants. Second, by increasing the role of the state in conflict resolution, the new law tried to strengthen the presence of the state at the local level and reduce the traditional influence of the landed elite in rural areas. Finally, following national discourses about agricultural efficiency, this law proposed the “reorganisation of communities into ‘productive cooperatives’ with the hope of making them modern collective producers” (Kincaid 2005:127). In a communication sent to the *tenientes políticos* of the Otavalo Canton in 1938, a year after the promulgation of the law, the Minister of Social Protection explains the importance of the law as follows:

*En el deseo de dar organización a la vida campesina, de procurar la formación de núcleos sociales en los que se encuentre asidero la labor estatal tendiente al mejoramiento de la comunidad agraria [...] para que el Anejo, la Parcialidad y el Caserío puedan defender sus bienes colectivos y trabajar por el progreso del agregado se dictó la Ley de Comunas [...] en atención especial a que el fin de la ley es ordenar y regular la vida de esas pequeñas colectividades, acostumbrando al hombre de los campos a someterse a mínimas normas de las que va a desprenderse el bienestar del grupo [...]*

The Ley de Comunas was dictated with the desire of granting peasant life some kind of organisation, of helping the formation of social centres where it would be possible for the state to perform its duty and improve the agrarian community [...] so that the

Annex<sup>33</sup>, Parcel and Hamlet may defend their collective rights and work towards the progress of the aggregate [...] The final purpose of this law is to order and regulate the life of these small collectives, getting rural men into the habit of submitting to the minimum norms from which the group's wellbeing will ensue.<sup>34</sup>

As the passage above exemplifies, the *comuna* was introduced as a state-run model to administrate the rural population in the country. The inhabitants of the *comunidades* were recognised as *comuneros* regardless of land ownership, racial or social classification. The law was introduced in the hope that it would bridge racial divisions and at the same time “mediate conflicts between individual and collective interest while providing a path to assimilate isolated Indians into the dominant *mestizo* culture” (Becker 1999:538). Thus the rural population, which until that time had been systematically excluded, were considered “potential citizen[s] that demanded public administration” (Prieto 2004:153).

The *Ley de Comunas* did not ‘create’ Indigenous communities; it introduced a series of institutional arrangements into the already existing *parcialidades* or territories where extended families of Indians lived in the rural areas. In fact, indigenous communities had been recognised since the beginning of the Colonial administration. These were in turn based on the Andean *ayllu*, or extended family settlements, which later, with the establishment of colonial state, took on different forms (Collaredo-Mansfield 2009:16). In Ecuador, as the historical records show, there were many ‘independent’ or recognised indigenous communities with their own traditional authorities (*curaga*), who, during the colonial period, served as tax collectors and mediators between the state and the local population. By introducing a series of regulations the 1937 law “merely gave an existing institution legal recognition within the nation-state” (Becker 1999:540). First, and in order to become legally recognised as a *comuna*, settlements of more than 50 people had to form a *cabildo* or local council elected through general assembly. The local council includes president, vice president, treasurer, secretary and trustee (in Spanish *síndico*: person in charge of supervising and inspecting the *cabildo*'s actions). Second, once elected, the *cabildo* had to draft rules for the use and administration of communal belongings, which

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<sup>33</sup> TN: The term *anejo*, annex, refers to a small, rural parcel of land or township that is annexed to another town or parcel of land to form a municipality (RAE, *Diccionario de la Lengua Española*, [http://buscon.rae.es/draeI/SrvltConsulta?TIPO\\_BUS=3&LEMA=anejo](http://buscon.rae.es/draeI/SrvltConsulta?TIPO_BUS=3&LEMA=anejo)).

<sup>34</sup> Archivo Jefatura Política del Cantón Otavalo /LCO, 26 de marzo de 1938, no. 123.

could be land, water or other shared resources. These rules had to be approved by the community's general assembly and then by the Ministry of Social Protection. Communal land holdings were recognised and rules had to be drafted locally, and (as required by the law) considering the "existing uses and practices" pertaining to the communal possessions.<sup>35</sup> This meant that decision-making power was encouraged at the local level for the first time, with important consequences for the future.<sup>36</sup> Finally, the communal arrangement also included a centralised scheme for conflict resolution and state regulation assumed by the Ministry of Social Welfare, the equivalent of the present day Ministry of Agriculture (MAGAP). The MAGAP still has the responsibility and authority to approve the formation of the *comuna*, its internal statutes and its election procedures.

The 1937 legislation did not have immediate effects on the countryside and by 1947 only 12% of the rural communities in Ecuador had registered (Ibarra 2004). The living conditions in these settlements remained practically unchanged; for the most part *gamonales* or local landlords, *tenientes politicos* and the Catholic Church continued controlling the rural highland scene (Korovkin 2001). The *huasipungo* or feudal labour systems were still practised and the few *comunas* that had registered were generally located in between haciendas or in places with poor land quality (Waters 2007).

At the same time, indigenous peoples distrusted the purpose of the law and thought they would not benefit from it, refusing to organise and establish internal community statutes. In places with high levels of activism, Indians chose to form cooperatives instead. They "interpreted this legislation as a means for the elite to assimilate rural Indian communities into the emerging dominant *blanco-mestizo* culture and to undermine nascent leftist organizing efforts" (Becker 1999:535). In the particular case of Otavalo, the local authorities also encountered a series of problems while trying to introduce the new law and persuade the independent Indian localities to become legally recognised as *comunas*. When

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<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>36</sup> Although communal property was recognised through different legal decrees during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the state encouraged and allowed the sale of these types of landholdings in order to promote the expansion of both small and large private properties. While some scholars suggest that this was detrimental to the survival of communal lands (Sattar 2007) Others argue that communal property, even if under constant threat, continued to exist (Ibarra 2004)

asked by a superior why the law had met with little success in the Canton, the *Jefe Politico* of Otavalo replied:

*Todas las parcialidades de este cantón se componen, en su mayoría, de indios, los que casi en su totalidad, ignoran el idioma castellano [...] siendo además incapaces de coordinar sus ideas menos interpretarlas para darlas a conocer satisfactoriamente [...] El indio refractario a toda idea de civilización se mantiene en la mas crasa ignorancia y se aferra a creer firmemente que no va a beneficiarse, si no que se trata de arrebatarle sus propiedades [...] se afirma más y más en la ruda presunción de que se pretende engañarle.*

All the parcels of this canton are composed, in their majority, of Indians, of which the great majority ignore the Spanish language [...] and are in addition incapable of coordinating their ideas, much less interpreting them to make them known in a satisfactory way [...] The Indian, opposed to any and all idea of civilisation, remains in the basest ignorance and insists on the firm belief that they will not benefit, but that this is about seizing all their properties [...] and hold ever tighter to the rude presumption that the intent is to fool them.<sup>37</sup>

Although at first the indigenous peoples of the Otavalo Canton rejected the law, with time a number of communities achieved legal recognition. By 1947, 82 *comunidades* had been established in the Imbabura Province alone (Ibarra 2004). Contrary to what the authorities believed at first (see above passage), various communities decided to legalise their status because they thought they would be able to protect their land and solve long-standing disputes through the newly elected councils and the possibility of a direct rapport with the state. In other words, indigenous peoples recognised the potential of the new law to help them to access diverse resources and to diminish the role of the *gamonales* (local authorities, landowners and Church).<sup>38</sup>

As various authors have argued, despite its original failure the 1937 law laid the foundations for autonomous communities to develop (Yashar 2005), for a social and territorial system to emerge (Ibarra 2004), and for spaces where Indians would be able to practise “their own ways of life” (Lucero 2003:28). Most importantly, and as we will see in

<sup>37</sup> Archivo Jefatura Política del Cantón Otavalo/LCO, 19 de octubre de 1937, no. 282.

<sup>38</sup> AJPCO/LCO, 19 de octubre de 1937, no. 282. In this communication, the *Jefe Politico* of Otavalo, notes how Calixto Isama, an Indian from a *comunidad* called Cachimued, had been trying to legalise his community and inciting others to do the same, because he thought they would be able to get the land that supposedly belonged to others.

later chapters, the law established a local, independent institution which gave Indians a channel for resistance to and negotiation with the state, and for “the pursuit of autonomy and the defence of its residents’ rights” in the future (Colloredo-Mansfield 2009:18). These possibilities however were only properly realised years later, during the land reforms of 1964 and 1973 (Yashar 2005).

**Table 3.1. State-Indian relations and its effects on citizenship rights**

<b>Period/ Year</b>	<b>Colonial Period 1500-1820</b>	<b>Independence 1822</b>	<b>Abolition of Indian Tax 1857</b>	<b>Liberal Rev. 1895-1925</b>	<b>Ley de Comunas 1937</b>	<b>Land Reform 1964 and 1973</b>	<b>Indigenous Social Movements 1980-2010</b>
<b><i>Cause/Source of transformation</i></b>	-Two separate Republics: Indian and Spanish: different laws applied to each group.	-One Republican State	- Abolition of head tax -Still forced to work for the state in large infrastructure works (roads, train tracks)	- Minimum wages, right to pay off debts and leave haciendas. Confiscation of Church-owned land.	Institutionalised Communities - Allowed communal land-holdings -Allowed for locally-drafted rules under state supervision.	- Limited land Redistribution -Abolition of <i>huasipungo</i> - Increase access to education and infrastructure in rural areas.	- Formation of National Indigenous Movements -Added ethnic component to struggles -Large mobilisations 1990,1992,1994,2001
<b><i>Citizenship Status for Indigenous Population</i></b>	- Legally Inferior. Had to pay tax to colonial state	-‘Equal’ in terms of the law, but still had to pay tax -No extension of universal rights to Indians. Remain as subjects of the state.	-Not able to fulfil citizenship requirements; remained second-class citizens/subjects.	-Remained second-class citizens that required ‘protection’. -Effort to incorporate them to the ‘nation state through education’.	- Remained second class citizens with no right to vote. Representation via left-leaning organisations and protests to gain land during 1940s	-Right to vote granted to illiterate (1979) - Increased access to social and economical resources	-Ecuador declared multicultural (1998) and <i>pluricultural</i> (2008) state - Increase in cultural rights
<b><i>Other Effects</i></b>	- Indians not allowed moving freely. Tax collection meant that it was in the state’s favour to protect the Indian	- Period of ‘un-protection’, no special legal representation.	- Moved from ‘free’ communities to <i>haciendas</i> in order to escape state-imposed labour. Once there, could not leave or move freely.	- New spaces for contention opened to Indians. Many sued hacienda owners, clergy and public officials.	- No immediate effect. Important for later land and ethnic struggles.	-Increased organisation at the local level. -Strengthened the indigenous community/orga nisations	-Entered political arena and electoral politics as major actors - Kept struggling for the recognition of autonomous spaces/territories for ‘self governance’.

### **The corporatist state and the land reforms 1960-1979**

Social unrest, international pressure and the initiative of a group of elite landowners prompted the land reform laws introduced in 1964 and 1973 (Pallares 2002; Waters 2007). Led by populist military governments, both land reforms provided the rural population with important material as well as political resources. During the 1950s significant economical, political and social changes began to take place. These included “rural-to-urban migration, the emergence of a middle class, changes in consumption and production, an enhanced role of the state, and international influences” (Waters 2007:124). Influenced by these transformations and with the objective of increasing their agricultural output, a section of the landowner elite – those with the most resources - invested in mechanised systems and replaced servile labour arrangements, *husipungo* and *yanapo*, with waged labour. In addition to this, there was increasing pressure from indigenous communities. They organised in cooperatives and *comunas* with the aid of a progressive wing of the Catholic Church and left leaning activists, and began to purchase land and demand changes. At the same time, the state, through an enlarged administrative apparatus, had increased its presence in the rural areas and following the modernist discourses of the 1930s and 1940s was actively involved in promoting industry. Finally, international events, such as the Bolivian revolution of 1952 and the Cuban revolution of 1959 pushed both the elite and the state towards reform in Ecuador (Waters 2007).

The first agrarian reform was enacted by a military government in 1964 as a result of the political and economic changes taking place in rural and urban areas as well as in the international arena. This legislation reflected the general trend towards the modernisation of the country and “aimed to expand the internal market, to develop import substitution industrialisation and to promote food production for the national market” (De La Torre 2000:39). Rather than providing actual and sustainable land re-distribution in the highlands, the new law encouraged colonisation of subtropical areas and the Amazon region which “permitted the expansion of arable land and the falsification of statistics on the real distribution of wealth” (Bretón Solo de Zaldívar 2008:593). Although it made only small changes in terms of land ownership, the first agrarian reform eliminated the *huasipungo*

system. This was the official end to feudal labour conditions that tied indigenous families to the *haciendas* and restricted their citizenship rights. In this way, the land reform also “implied the final undermining of the system of ethnic administration through private, local powers, wherein the large land-owner dominated indigenous peasants in alliance with the priest, the local political authority and the white *mestizo* inhabitants of highland towns” (Clark 2005:79). To accompany the transformation, the government invested in education and infrastructure and expanded health services and social security. At the same time, communities were encouraged to organise and take advantage of the resources available through new social programmes and credit schemes. As Yashar (2005:92) notes, it is precisely through this process that the military “institutionalized a corporatist citizen regime that incorporated Indians as peasants - extending civil and economic rights, although not political ones”.

The second land reform law passed by decree in 1973 by General Guillermo Rodríguez Lara’s government pushed for a greater transformation, which included a more active redistribution of land as well as investment in education, health and water infrastructure. Financially sustained by the petroleum and banana booms of the 1970s, the state was able to increase its presence at the local level and expand its corporatist structure (Yashar 2005:95). During this period a number of local organisations were institutionalised, including the Water User Association, set up to manage water for human consumption and irrigation at the local level (the effects of the introduction of the WUA will be discussed further in Chapters 4, 5 and 6). Gradually the state, through new programmes and institutions, replaced the role of the *haciendas* and became a permanent actor on the rural scene. It mediated in disputes over land and water and provided legal, economical and social resources for the communities (Pallares 2002:16). The state began to interact directly with the Indian and peasant populations, who were now considered in class terms to be productive agents or *campesinos*, rather than Indian subjects that required ‘administration’ (Guerrero, 1993).

Access to resources and the negotiation process that entailed acquiring land had a very important effect on the indigenous communities’ organisational arrangements. The reforms



strengthened communal structures and opened spaces where indigenous peoples were able to develop local authority systems (Yashar 2005:95). During these years, there was a significant increase in the legal establishment of *comunas* as well as the formation of local organisations such as cooperatives, associations, women's groups, and several other committees (Clark 2005). The land reforms also resulted in "greater economic and social mobility for an increasingly heterogeneous indigenous peasantry" (Bretón Solo de Zaldívar 2008:593). While some indigenous households had benefited from the abolition of the *huasipungo*, by which they had acquired some land from their previous *patrón*/landlord, others were forced to migrate to the lowlands and the cities in search for paid labour. Those who migrated, however, kept contact and "retained their affective, social, symbolic and economic ties with their communities of origin. This, in turn, enhanced the local allegiances out of which a new collective pan-indigenous identity could be constructed" (*Ibid*). At the same time, those who had stayed behind and had been able to access education and benefit from various development projects became more politically involved.

Despite some positive transformations, the land reform did not entirely transform the marginal and poverty-stricken situation of the Indian population, or even significantly redefine racial hierarchies (De La Torre 2000; Bretón Solo de Zaldívar 2008). It did however reconfigure local power structures, fundamentally by breaking with the old *hacienda* system and the domination associated with the *gamonales* that had defined highland Ecuador until then. These changes resulted in a "power vacuum in the countryside that allowed for the rise of the Indian organisations and the penetration of political parties into Indian communities" (De La Torre 2000:40). The breakup of traditional power structures in the rural areas also meant the demise of what Guerrero (1993; Guerrero 2003) calls the "ventriloquist representation", or the series of mediators/intermediaries that dominated and 'spoke for' the indigenous population. Through a process of grass-roots organisation the Indians/subjects became political actors, citizens who were to demand access to rights and resources by 'speaking for themselves' (Lucero 2003:32).

### **The rise of the indigenous movements: challenging incorporation from below**

The political circumstances surrounding the land reforms and the expansion of the state at the local level provided an important platform for the formation of the first indigenous organisations. Influenced by class-based Marxist ideas, indigenous activism in the countryside began during the late 1930s and was consolidated in the 1940s in the form of local cooperatives and unions that were concerned with demands relating to wages, access to land and working conditions (Becker 1999). The dispute over land that took place between the Indian communities of Gualacata and Caluqui, poor white inhabitants of the Gonzáles Suárez parish and the Hacienda San Agustín, is an interesting case of early activism.

*En el día lunes 30, del mes próximo pasado, desde las tres de la mañana, los moradores de la citada parroquia, al son de bombo, bocinas, churos y gritos se han congregado en la calle de dicha población, y luego han asaltado la hacienda mencionada, derrocando zangas y constituyéndose [...] en los potreros contiguos a la casa de habitación, en dónde han levantado chozas de pajas y ejercido actos de verdadera rebelión, como consta de los gritos de VIVA EL SOCIALISMO, VIVA NUESTRO DEFENSOR, ABAJO EL GOBIERNO, ABAJO LAS AUTORIDADES, MUERAN LOS ARRENDATARIOS.*

On Monday the 30<sup>th</sup>, of this next month past, starting at three o'clock in the morning, the inhabitants of the aforementioned parish, to the beat of bass drums, horns, *churos*<sup>39</sup> and yelling, have come together on the street of the village, and have then stormed the aforementioned *hacienda*, toppling barricades and setting themselves up in the pastures adjacent to the main house, where they have raised straw huts and performed acts of true rebellion, as proven by the chants of LONG LIVE SOCIALISM, LONG LIVE OUR DEFENDER, DOWN WITH GOVERNMENT, DOWN WITH THE AUTHORITIES, DEATH TO THE TENANTS.<sup>40</sup>

The most significant class-consciousness-based organisation that sought to mobilise Indians as semi-proletarian rural workers was the *Federación Ecuatoriana de Indios* (FEI - The Ecuadorian Federation of Indians). Founded in the 1940s, the FEI played an important role in pressuring the state for agrarian reform and creating throughout the highlands a strong

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<sup>39</sup> TN: The *churo*, also known as *quipa* or *caracol*, is a traditional musical instrument in the form of a conch, which may well be a natural conch or a reproduction of one in gold or ceramics (Pablo Guaña, *Instrumentos musicales andinos de Cayambe*, CICAY-Museo Cayambe / Centro de Investigación Cultural Cayambi, <http://www.scribd.com/doc/17151631/Instrumentos-Musicales-Andinos-de-Cayambe-Pablo-Guana>).

<sup>40</sup> AJPCO/LCO, 3 de octubre de 1935, no. 225.

network of local indigenous communities fighting to acquire land resources and improve labour conditions. In the view of these groups, a peasant class identity would allow indigenous people to advance their citizenship rights (Pallares 2002). Although the FEI had some prominent Indigenous leaders, such as Dolores Cacuago, well known for her struggles to promote bilingual education in the indigenous communities of Cayambe, the organisation's leadership was essentially composed of non-indigenous activists with ties to the Communist Party (Yashar 2005:100-1). As Guerrero argues (1993), the FEI had the role of "political ventriloquists" who "translated" the Indians' demands from their struggles with the *haciendas* to concepts of class rights at the policy level.

In the aftermath of the land reforms, new forms of rural organisation with greater ethnic awareness emerged. There is no single or simple explanation of the shift from *campesinismo* (class-based struggles) to *indianismo* (identity-based struggles): it was a process that took place as a variety of political and social developments converged (Pallares 2007). The state's promotion of the land reforms which weakened local landlords and encouraged community organisation undoubtedly supported the transformation (Yashar 2005:103). Additionally, a progressive wing of the Catholic Church tried to offer an alternative model to that of the class-based leftist movements by providing "credit, technical assistance, training, legal services and encourage community building" (*Ibid*). These projects basically encouraged a shift from the cooperative model to the *comunidad* and towards demands that had cultural and political elements in addition to economic claims (Pallares 2002; Yashar 2005). The scaling up of demands and organisations was however possible thanks to the existence of social and political networks formed through trade unions and Church-related activism of the previous decades (1940s-1970s) (Yashar 2005:100). The first organisations conceived along indigenous rather than peasant lines were the ECUARUNARI (Awakening of the Ecuadorean Indian) in the Andean region and the Shuar Federation of the Amazon region, founded in 1972 and 1964 respectively (Pallares 2002:16). Through these organisations, indigenous peoples began to publicly question and contest the *mestizo* national project (De La Torre 2000).

The transition to democracy in 1979, which ended with various episodes of military rule and brought new changes to the relationship between the state and the indigenous population in the country, also influenced indigenous organisation. During the 1960s and 1970s – in accordance with the integrationist paradigm - the Indian had ‘disappeared’ from official discourses and had been replaced by an ideally ‘transformed’ *campesino*. In contrast to this, the new democratic regime, inspired by *neoindigenismo*, “spoke of a nation that was characterized by ‘pluriculturalism’ referring to the respect for and support of indigenous peoples and cultures as a key component of national development”(Pallares 2007:143). In this sense, the state continued, albeit in a new manner, to play the role of the ‘protector’ of Indians. The new civilian government extended citizenship rights by, for example, granting the right to vote to the illiterate, and encouraging bilingual education in the Indian communities. However, the expansion of social rights, first laid down by the land reforms, could not be sustained and resources such as land, credit and education became “scarce commodities that were accessed unevenly by different ethnic groups” (Yashar 2005:98). This coincided with the reduction of state expenditure encouraged globally by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and with the erosion of the “corporatist” regime and the subsequent introduction of the neoliberal citizenship regime of the 1980s and 1990s (*Ibid*). The previous state-centred model was replaced with a series of projects led by non-governmental organisations (NGOs) as well as international institutions such as the World Bank and the Inter American Development Bank (IDB). Bretón Solo De Zaldívar (2008:596) calls this process the “privatisation, dispersion and ethnicisation of rural development”. In short, during the 1980s new, small-scale projects with ethnic awareness proliferated in highland Ecuador, replacing the structural changes envisioned in the reforms of the 1960s and 1970s.

Parallel with and as a result of the erosion of the corporatist model and the subsequent increase in ethnically-oriented development interventions, the 1980s was also a period that witnessed the up scaling of indigenous organisation. The CONAIE (Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities in Ecuador), formed in 1986, brought together three regional federations: the CONFENAIE (Confederation of Amazon Indigenous Nationalities), the COICE (Coordinator of Coastal Indians of Ecuador), and the ECUARUNARI (Andes).

Once consolidated, the indigenous organisations began to criticise the distribution of political and economical resources in the country and demand more inclusion, respect and autonomy. They also began to claim unfulfilled development promises of earlier years (Clark 2005; Yashar 2005). The class-peasant struggle over access to resources continued, but this time it included an ethnic component (Baud 2007:145).

Stronger movements with an agenda that more than ever dealt with ethnic identity first appeared in national politics in the 1990s. The CONAIE (Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities in Ecuador) gained attention at national and international level in 1990 when thousands of indigenous people managed to paralyse the country for a week and force direct negotiations between the social movement and the government. In this way, the ‘ventriloquist representation’ of indigenous interests that had prevailed until then was finally broken (Guerrero 1993). This uprising also “marked the transition from *campesinismo*, or peasant politics, to *indianismo*” or struggles that deal with ethnicity in addition to economic considerations (Pallares 2002:4). The CONAIE presented an agenda for negotiation which included 16 points or demands which can be divided into three categories: “1) ethnicity - the right to be recognized as a multi-ethnic population with equal rights, (i.e., no ethnic discrimination); 2) citizenship - equal rights to services; and 3) class - rights as peasants to land, fair prices, and so forth” (Yashar 2005:145).

The 1990s protest was the first of a string of events that would position indigenous organisations at the forefront of Ecuadorian politics. In 1992, a group of Amazonian Indians marched to the capital city, Quito, demanding a large amount of land which, after lengthy negotiation, was conceded to them. Later, in 1994, there was a national mobilisation against neoliberal reforms that included indigenous peoples from all the country. Once again, water, along with land resources, became one of the central aspects of the struggle as indigenous organisations fought against a new agrarian law drafted to benefit large, export-oriented farming. Even if not all the demands of the movement were met, they managed to prevent the privatisation of water resources and maintain some access to credit and other basic resources for rural development (Yashar 2005:148). By the end of

the decade, the CONAIE had joined other social movements to form a political party and participated in the drafting of the new Constitution in the 1997-98 Assembly.

Perhaps one of the most important aspects of the indigenous movement was the establishment of an agenda demanding the right to be different and the recognition of Ecuador as a *plurinational* state. In this view, Ecuador encompasses a variety of nationalities that entail spaces for autonomous governance of collective territories (Van Cott 2002:59). Although the Constituent Assembly of 1998, in which many indigenous representatives participated, did not incorporate the term *plurinational* into the new version of the Constitution, it recognised Ecuador as a *pluricultural state*, recognised collective rights and in practice incorporated the indigenous peoples' vision of differentiated groups within one nation (Van Cott 2002:60). Amalia Pallares (2007:141) explains the importance of this process as follows.

Negotiations over citizenship participation between Indians and the state hinged on the differences between the state's version of *pluriculturalism* as a new model of nationhood and indigenous activists' critique of this model, which led to another perspective that envisioned Ecuador as a compendium of multiple nations. This reenvisioning of Ecuador was both an end in itself and a means to renegotiate the forms, content, and meaning of citizenship, since a differentiated citizenship could be constructed only on the premise of a plural Ecuador.

As a result of these negotiations, the term *nacionalidades* (nationalities) entered discourses on indigenous representation and became institutionalised in the CODENPE (the Council for the Development of the Nationalities and Pueblos of Ecuador) a state entity that dealt with indigenous issues (Lucero 2003). As Guerrero (1993:100) observes, "the movement created a new social agent, strengthened and initiated demands that earlier would have been considered unthinkable and unpronounceable [...] ". The indigenous movement was however able to become a political actor because it had support from other sectors of Ecuadorian society, particularly during major mobilisations to oust presidents or to prevent neoliberal reforms during the 1990s. According to Leon Zamosc (2004) this was the case because in addition to its ethnic component, the movement included demands for improved social rights which not only appealed to the peasantry but also to other underprivileged Ecuadorians.

By 2000, the indigenous movement had been established as a major political actor in Ecuador, and Indian leaders had been elected to various positions at the local level through the political wing of the movement, the MUPP-NP (Movimiento de Unidad Plurinacional Pachakutik Nuevo País) and even appointed as Ministers for the national government. However, the tensions of entering electoral politics became evident when the CONAIE participated in the ousting by popular protest of President Mahuad in 2000 and President Gutierrez in 2003: governments that had Indian members. These events and a general lack of consensus amongst the different indigenous organisations have led to a fragmentation of the movement. Even if divided, the indigenous population and its many local and national organisations are still capable of mobilising and - most importantly - of positioning their demands in national political debates.<sup>41</sup> This is evident when looking at the recently approved Constitution of 2008 which, for example, recognises in its first article that Ecuador is a *multicultural* and *plurinational* Republic. It also expands communal rights, encourages local forms of social organisation and allows for local management and conservation of natural resources.

In general, and despite the changes that have occurred in the relationship between the state and the indigenous and *campesino* populations in rural Ecuador, it is important to note that old forms of social, political and cultural exclusion still persist. Even if Indigenous peoples have more resources to counter it, modern practices of what Guerrero (2000) calls *ciudadanía de sentido común* (exclusion based on old forms of ethnic domination) are still practised. Clientelism continues to operate “as one of the main mechanisms of political control and access to resources [... and] the poor still need to establish personalised relations with a broker who belongs to a wider network that can guarantee access to people with influence” (De La Torre 2000:43). The contemporary mediator is, for instance, the teacher in the local school, a better-off indigenous trader or artisan who lives in the city, or a white-*mestizo* acquaintance. In other words, they are people who, given their social position and access to education/information, are able to navigate the complicated and often corrupt state bureaucracies. The need for mediators is not only felt amongst the indigenous population; on the contrary, most poor people, regardless of their ethnic background, rely

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<sup>41</sup> Recent mobilisations portray this point clearly. In 2009, protests led by indigenous and peasant organisations prevented the approval by the Ecuadorian National Assembly of a proposed new water law.

on these actors in order to access state resources. Nevertheless, the problem of social exclusion is particularly significant for Ecuador's poor Indians.

In addition to this, Bretón Solo De Zaldívar (2008) notes a new wave of patronage as the result of what he calls the 'privatised' and 'ethnified' development interventions, or NGOs' and international organisations' cooperation in rural areas in highland Ecuador.

The struggle for ethnic citizenship - which, needless to say, is absolutely legitimate – has overshadowed attempts to bring about structural change, while at the same time the assistance model has been gathering momentum and limiting the scope of the indigenous movement. Little by little, thanks to the glittering array of development projects offered by the international co-operation agencies, the old indigenous organic intellectuals formed in the rough-and-tumble of the land struggle were replaced by, or turned into, real professional mediators [...] These effects include the increasingly rapid internal differentiation between a minority of indigenous technocrats and intellectuals settled in the cities and [...] a marginalized majority whose aspirations have less and less to do with the rhetoric of their (alleged) leaders and representatives.

In a similar vein, Lucero (2003:42) has pointed out at the fact that community and nationality, major symbols of the indigenous struggles, can also mask injustices and inequalities. As Chapters 5 and 6 of this thesis show, although the *comunidad* has served important organisational, political and cultural roles in the indigenous movement, "like all places, [it] is characterized by numerous divisions and asymmetries, many more than the discourse of community suggests" (Lucero 2003:40).

The past twenty years, marked by periods of widespread mobilisation, have nonetheless been very important for indigenous peoples in terms of acquiring rights that allow them to exercise a form of 'differentiated' citizenship, or the right to equality (equal access to resources) in difference (autonomy as indigenous communities). Even if legal transformations have not been easily translated into practice, and structural changes have not been properly addressed, it is possible to say that the indigenous movement has had a very important political and social effect. In essence, "it [has] questioned the model, the legal-political system, and the process and proposals of citizenship elaborated from the perspective of the national state and the white-*mestizo* civil society" (Guerrero 1993:99). In this sense, the debate around indigenous-peasant autonomy in the form of *plurinational*



citizenship has established an important basis for contention and continuing negotiation between the traditionally excluded section of the population and the state. In the particular case of water, the idea of *plurinational* citizenship is translated into a process of demanding equal access to water resources and at the same time, recognising the existing peasant and indigenous organisations that manage water, including their decision-making powers over the resource (Pacari 1998). Basically, collective water management is considered a citizenship right. As noted in the quote from Pallares (2007) above, the demands of the Indigenous movement have served as a means to an end as well as a tool for negotiation. The exercise of self-governance and the attributes that it entails, such as the administration of justice and of natural resources at the local level, should therefore be seen as the result of dynamic processes to demand inclusion from below and (re-) define citizenship rights in Ecuador. These demands are not exclusive to the indigenous peoples, and as chapters 5 and 6 show, poor, rural *mestizos* also take part in and use the indigenous platforms and struggles to articulate their demands and access resources.

## Conclusion

This chapter explored the changing relationship between the state and the indigenous population and highlighted the constant negotiation process behind the rights and duties that indigenous peoples were entitled to and/or had to perform. It showed that ‘*comunidad*’, ‘identity’, ‘nationalities’, and ‘citizenship’ are not given concepts but the product of historical transformations and contentious politics. These concepts/practices continue to be redefined, conceived and represented by indigenous and *campesino* peoples today. At the same time, this chapter analysed some of the unexpected effects of the inclusionary and protectionist policies imposed by the elite during the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Clark 2005; Yashar 2005). In this way, this chapter allows understanding the significance behind communal structures such as the *cabildo* (communal government) and the Water User Association, which were introduced, legalised and encouraged by the state throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century and are currently used to contest and negotiate many state-sponsored policies.

The review presented in this chapter also shows the significant role that labour contributions played in the relationship between the state and the indigenous/peasant

population. It revealed that historically indigenous peoples' rights and duties have been negotiated to a large extent in terms of obligatory labour duties. From the outset of the colonial administration, Indians' status as subjects was defined by the tribute they had to provide either in money, in kind or through forced labour in state projects or haciendas. After independence and despite the abolition of the tribute and a push towards liberal reforms, the difference between Indian subjects and *mestizo* citizens was still drawn in terms of the subsidiary forms of labour that applied to Indians inside and outside the *hacienda*. At the same time, the debate between highland and lowland elites on whether or not to allow labour mobility from the haciendas also influenced Indians' status. During the 20<sup>th</sup> century and with the strong move towards the modernisation and incorporation of the indigenous population into the projected *mestizo* nation-state, the debates moved towards a discussion of the land tenure arrangements while also maintaining the issue of labour conditions for rural workers in mind. It was only after the final abolition of the *concertaje* and *huasipungo* systems in the early 1960s, that indigenous peoples were able to move freely and that their status as subjects obliged to contribute through labour to the haciendas ended.

The importance of labour in determining indigenous people's relationship with the state did not mean that they were not able to take advantage, albeit to a limited degree, of the system. The success of what Guerrero (2003) calls 'ethnic administration', which sustained unequal power relations and systematically excluded the indigenous population from citizenship rights through labour duties and control, was based on a sort of pact between the indigenous communities and the state/haciendas. The Indians provided labour and in return the state/haciendas 'protected' the Indians and allowed a certain degree of local autonomy which assured tribute collection (money/labour) in the long run. Similarly to what Tristan Platt argues for the tribute paid by the indigenous population during the colonial period in Bolivia, in highland Ecuador this pact or system of tributation "guaranteed the rights of ethnic groups to retain [access to land] with a limited, but none the less real, margin of autonomy" (1984:6). With the abolition of the tribute and other political transformations that resulted from the Law of *Comunas* in 1937 and the later Land Reforms (1964 and

1973), local organization and autonomy was strengthened, yet labour remained an important aspect of the relationship between Indians and the state.

Labour in the form of communal duties to build and maintain different services in rural areas, as Chapters 4, 5 and 6 demonstrate, continues to be an important element in the struggle to legitimise local autonomy in resource management and thus in the terms that define the relationship between the indigenous population and the state. Although the basis for the relationship is different, and indigenous peoples are not providing labour directly to the patron or the state, labour duties continue to exist and influence how citizenship is exercised on a daily basis. While during the colonial and early republican periods labour contributions guaranteed limited access to resources and local autonomy and defined the Indians' status as subjects, today, labour contributions - made to the community and not directly to the state - guarantee local access to resources and decision-making power over them, and most importantly, define Indians and other rural residents as 'differentiated citizens'.

The next chapter outlines how water, and the ideals of cleanliness and hygiene attached to it by the Ecuadorian elites, were used as a vehicle to justify a range of policies which sought to incorporate the indigenous population into the nation state. It sets the basis required for deeper understanding of the increasing significance of water, a resource used by the national elite to exclude and control vast groups of the rural population during the 20<sup>th</sup> century, as a vehicle for marginalised people to claim and (re-) define citizenship rights in Ecuador.

#### **4. Water as a means of social control: imposing hygiene and the formation of citizens**

*Water resources of all kinds are never simply there, but are produced, used and given meaning by shifting social and political relationships*

*David Mosse (2003:3)*

The previous chapter examined the history behind the relationship between the state and the indigenous and peasant populations in highland Ecuador. It showed the various consequences, some unintended, of state policies to integrate the Indian into the nation-state. This chapter turns to the particular issues surrounding water within this relationship to show how notions of cleanliness and hygiene coupled with racial characterisation became a means of social control and integration during the process of state formation in Ecuador. In this sense, Chapter 4 provides the historical and institutional context within which drinking water systems exist in the indigenous and peasant communities in highland Ecuador today.

In this chapter I am not trying to dispute the benefits that access to safe drinking water can bring - and in fact has brought - to people in rural areas of the country. The objective is rather to show the logic behind these projects in order to better understand the meaning that water management systems have acquired for the indigenous and peasant communities of the Ecuadorian Andes. Apart from the growing international concern about access to water and sanitation, it is perhaps most important to note that the characteristics of the Ecuadorian case, where hygiene was equated with education and notions of civilization and modernity, allowed for a particular form of integration-led intervention to take place. The *mestizaje* project and thus the modernisation of Ecuador as a nation depended on incorporating the indigenous population. Although the project included various aspects, such as converting the Indians into productive members of and potential consumers within the national market (Chapter 3), it ultimately rested on changing what were believed to be the basic, negative characteristics of the indigenous race. Better housing, nutrition and hygiene were seen as essential for the transformation to happen. In this light, Chapter 4 shows that the establishment of drinking water systems in rural communities should be understood as part

of an effort to incorporate peasant and indigenous peoples into the Ecuadorian nation state. At the same time, it will show that contrary to its original purpose, and due to a series of political and institutional circumstances, this process resulted in increased local autonomy in resource management and control.

Using archival material drawn from official documents, books and art produced between 1930 and 1970, in the first section of the chapter I look at the way in which the elite viewed the Indian. Focusing on the body of the Indian, intellectuals, artists and policy makers managed to create an image of the indigenous population as backward and dirty. The second section examines how these ideas influenced policies to improve health and sanitation in Ecuador, where water took central stage in the process. In the last part of the chapter I continue examining the institutions and policies surrounding the water sector in the country, paying special attention to those relating to drinking water. This review reveals confusion and lack of organisation in the sector, which - similarly to the state policies analysed in the previous chapter - have had unintended consequences in terms of self-organisation and governance for the indigenous and peasant communities of the Andes. Most importantly this chapter tries to show the remarkable political transformation in the uses and meanings that water has acquired overtime. From being a tool to impose white-mestizo culture on the indigenous population, water has become a platform for indigenous organization and struggles to define and access citizenship rights.

### **Imaging (imagining) the Indian**

As the previous chapter explained, during the first part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the Ecuadorian government as well as the country's elite were increasingly concerned about the need to further consolidate the nation and convert it into a 'modern' state. Part of the project was to attain, in the view of the elite, a homogenous population and form the 'right' type of citizens: 'rational' and 'productive' members of society. The eugenics movement and its theories about racial categorisations, which originated in Europe, circulated amongst intellectual circles throughout Latin America and greatly influenced the elite's modernisation project (Carrión 2003). Equipped with theories that justified racial ranking

and placed the white-Caucasian race at the top of the list, Ecuadorian intellectuals began to apply them locally. However, unlike their European counterparts who believed that racial mixing was degenerative and wrong, local intellectuals argued that mixing, particularly that of white with Indian, would aid in the process of ‘improving’ the local population by cleansing, in an almost ‘purifying’ manner, the ‘degenerative’ and ‘defective’ characteristics of the Indian race, which was generally viewed as physically and morally weak (*Ibid*). Thus an important component of the project was attracting the ‘right’ kind of immigrants as other Latin American nations such as Chile, Argentina and Uruguay had managed to do. Due to the country’s economic and geographical position, Ecuador was unsuccessful with such an immigration plan, forcing the elite to deal with the ‘Indian Problem’ in a very different manner by opting for assimilation (Clark 1998:204). This meant integrating the indigenous population into the dominant, more European-like society and ‘transforming’ the Indians into citizens, mainly through education campaigns. The transformation/assimilation ideas developed into the *mestizaje* project which “assumed that by educating people, providing medical services and improving hygiene, Ecuador’s inhabitants would become more alike” (Clark 1998:204).<sup>42</sup> *Mestizaje* was seen as the ‘escape’ and the only path for the ‘salvation’ of the Indian. Through it, Indians would be able to ‘modify’ their culture and access the benefits that the state offered, i.e. access citizenship rights (Carrión 2003:54). It is in this context that education and hygiene became the axis of an encompassing patriotic mission to save the country from its ‘demise’ and create a white-*mestizo* nation-state based on homogenous cultural and social characteristics (Clark 1998; Colloredo-Mansfeld 1998).

The idea that races could be improved was very important to legitimise the *mestizaje* project. However, unlike European eugenics movements, which focused on improving race by preventing mixing, Ecuadorian intellectuals argued that race was a product not only of biology but also of different cultural processes. According to this view the ‘acculturation’ of the Indian was possible even without biological mixing (Carrión 2003). As Monsalve Pozo, a prominent thinker during the 1940s, explains below, the ‘Indian problem’,

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<sup>42</sup> The *mestizaje* as a nation-building project and ideology became a widespread phenomena in Latin America, especially after the Mexican, Jose Vasconcelos published in 1925 the essay “La Raza Cosmica” (The Cosmic Race) where he presents an idealised vision of the Latin American *mestizo*.

understood to be essentially behavioural, could also be ‘solved’ through education. He explains:

The individual who having the physical characteristics of an Indian has managed, through the work of educational factors, to systematise his existence and produce improvement is in a position to change, to transform and become equal in culture to any individual of the human race. It is because of this, as we know now, that many Indians have attained without the need of mixing, the category of white; and how many whites, also without mixing, have converted into Indians (Monsalve cited by Carrion, 2003: 32).

Parallel to the ideas that resulted from the eugenics movements, which is to say an effort that aimed for ‘racial improvement’, during the 1930s and 1940s a group of Ecuadorian doctors, lawyers, sociologists and anthropologists carried out a series of studies to scientifically define the basic characteristics, both positive and negative, of the indigenous population (Clark 1999:112). The main objective of these studies was to understand the situation of the indigenous population and find possible ways to incorporate them into the nation state. This group of intellectuals, also known as the *indigenista* movement, included writers and artists who tried to highlight the role of the Indian in society and started using Indians in portraits, as characters in books and most importantly as central figures in Ecuadorian history. However, in their quest to improve what they saw as a deplorable situation, the *indigenistas* managed to reinforce an image of the Indian as backward and incapable of rational thought as a result of poor nutrition, lack of hygiene and substandard living conditions.<sup>43</sup> Descriptions of the Indian as ‘intellectually empathic’ and ‘unable to experience pleasure’ were therefore circulated based on a series of ‘scientific’ tests and studies carried in different parts of the country.

Perhaps the most influential amongst this group was Dr. Pablo Arturo Suárez, a scientist and researcher who became a prominent social reformer and occupied various official posts in government and the Central University of Ecuador during the 1930s and 1940s. In 1934 he published a statistical study, *Contribution to the Study of the Working Class and Peasant Reality*, where he presented an extensive analysis of poor Ecuadorians’ living conditions. Suárez argued that people’s body type, personality and health are determined by nutrition,

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<sup>43</sup> See for example Suarez, Pablo Arturo (1934). *Contribución al Estudio de las Realidades entre las Clases Obreras y Campesinas*. Quito: Universidad Central; (1943) *La situación Real del Indio en el Ecuador*, América Indígena 2:1; Zúñiga, Neftali (1940). *Fenómenos de la realidad ecuatoriana*. Quito: Talleres Gráficos de Educación.

hygiene and housing which can also trigger diseases that can be transmitted to future generations.

Indian or white, mestizo or mulatto, if he demonstrates a moral and material deficit, if he has accommodated himself to a deficient, miserable physical environment, incompatible with human standards, he will necessarily be located in the lowest category, as a factor that is null, negative, or deficient, within the social whole (Suárez 1934 cited by Clark 1998:189).

In this view, not only body type and personality but general social problems such as alcoholism could be defined in medical terms and understood as product of “a destructive and disconcerting everyday physical environment” (Suárez 1934 cited by Clark 1998:191). Even if Suárez did not directly discuss *mestizaje*, his discourse around the degeneration of the Indian and the working class served as a basis to legitimise theories in favour of racial and cultural ‘improvement’ developed by others (Prieto 2004:181).

The definition of what were considered to be Indian features provided by the *indigenista* doctors and scholars in Ecuador was set in relation to a white-*mestizo* model, where the ‘normal’ and ‘adequate’ standards were to be found, in contrast to the characteristics attributed to the ‘other’ (the Indian) which were in turn abnormal, irregular, foreign and deficient (Carrión 2003:36). Mary Douglas’ (1966:2) observations that “dirt is essentially disorder” and that “there is not such a thing as absolute dirt: it exists on the eye of the beholder” are particularly relevant to understanding discourses about indigenous peoples in early 20<sup>th</sup> century Ecuador. In this case, the beholder who held the power of defining and setting values were the country’s elite, whose categorisations were based on idealised standards of living. These basically equated the Indian with dirt and disorder and the white-*mestizo* with cleanliness, purity and order. Moreover, as Douglas (1966:2) notes, because “dirt offends against order, [e]liminating it is not a negative movement, but a positive effort to organise the environment”. In this sense, the *indigenista* scholars saw themselves not only as protectors and guardians of the Indian race but also as part of a patriotic mission to transform the nation.

The project behind understanding and condemning the Indian’s situation as a way of improving it was not confined to scientific circles; it also penetrated the literary and artistic



realms in the country. During the 1930s and 1940s writers and painters, considered *indigenistas*, produced extensive works of art featuring Indians and their way of life. As argued by curator and art historian, Maria del Carmen Carrión (2003:70), these artists provided a visual image of the Indian matching the social and political discourse of the time. By portraying what they believed to be the misery of these people, the *indigenista* painters tried to avoid previously idealised artistic images that emphasised a strong and hardworking ‘good savage’. Instead, focusing on what they saw as the reality of the Indian, this group of artists deplored the poverty and the social drama that prevailed amongst the indigenous population. Images of an ancestral Indian with aristocratic influences (see Figures 4.1 and 4.2) were replaced by depictions of impoverished, miserable and deformed individuals (see Figure 4.3) (*Ibid* 58).

**Figure 4.1. ‘Gregorio y Carmela’ by Camilo Egas, 1916. Oil on Canvas, 0.75 x 1.85 m.**

**Banco Central del Ecuador Collection**



*Figure 4.2. 'Inti Raymi' by Victor Mideros. Oil on Canvas 0.60 x 0.60 m.*

*Banco Central del Ecuador Collection.*





*Figure 4.3. 'Mala Noticia' by Diógenes Paredes, 1945. Oil on Canvas, 1.30 x 1.63 m.*

*Banco Central del Ecuador Collection.*



This generation of artists, which included painters such as Diógenes Paredes, Eduardo Kingman and Oswaldo Guayasamín, depicted through their work what they saw as the truth in order to protest and denounce it. Their objective, reflected through various types of artistic output, had a clear element of paternalism that emphasised a social mission to help those who have been historically affected by society (Carrión 2003:70). These artists positioned themselves as fair and just individuals striving for social equality and improvement. Yet the image of the Indian they built originated from the viewpoint of the urban middle classes, who shared many of the ideals and views of the doctors, sociologists and hygienists of the period (Carrión 2003:68). Not surprisingly, the human body became the centre of attention and the vehicle to illustrate the differences between the *mestizo* and the Indian. In addition to the use of dark colours, many of these painters depicted deformed

and enlarged extremities to construct a ‘social identity’ of the Indian that highlighted what was thought to constitute their bad characteristics and at the same time emphasise the ‘dirty’ and ‘unhygienic’ environment in which they lived. Although at first these works of art, which in essence were trying to question abuse and exploitation, were not well received by critics or potential buyers, with time they gained a dominant position in the artistic circles of Ecuador. Ironically, the very people these artists were trying to ‘condemn’ for their role in the prevailing situation of the Indians, i.e. the local elite, acquired most of the pictures. The image of the Indian as backward and dirty, even deformed, and in need of help, was consequently reaffirmed amongst the elite, who to this day have these works of art in their homes.

### **Indian bodies: earth and dirt**

For the group of scholars researching and writing about indigenous peoples during the 1920s, 30s, and 40s in Ecuador, the way the Indian lived embodied the ‘Indian Problem’. According to them, the Indian race was not an inferior race (considered a racist approach), it was a race that had degenerated because of the environment in which it resided (Carrión 2003:40). It was also understood that this particular ‘environment’ was a product of historical injustices against the Indians which had forced them to live in such conditions and prevented them from adopting the ‘appropriate’ living standards, i.e. those of the white-*mestizo* society. All these factors were ‘reflected’ in the Indian body, which was seen as degenerate. In the following passage taken from a publication dating from 1944, the researcher and intellectual Luis León echoes these ideas.

The insufficient clothing, the lack of bodily cleanliness, the bad conditions of the hearth, the co-residence with domestic animals, the absolute ignorance of alimentary hygiene, the witchcraft and curing are the principal factors that favour the propagation of infectious and degenerative disease in the indigenous race (Luis León cited by Kincaid 2005:133).

Social-scientific studies as well as artistic depictions of the ‘miserable’ and ‘damaging’ environment produced by the *indigenista* intellectuals always emphasised the strong ties between the Indian and the soil/earth/land, in Spanish *tierra*. Thus Gonzalo Rubio Orbe, a prominent *indigenista*, observes that “the characteristic of the Indian is the land/soil. They

live incrustated in their plot forming an insoluble affective confusion” (cited by Carrión 2003:62). The remark was not confined to intellectual circles; it actually reflected a widespread set of beliefs used to construct racial categorisations at the time. As the images below show (Figures 4.4 and 4.5), notions of an interdependent connection between the Indian body and the soil/earth were also represented in artistic works. In both images, Diógenes Paredes depicts Indian women and men, all barefoot, in direct contact with a devastated nature paralleled, through the use of colours and textures, to an equally devastated Indian race (Carrión 2003:62). Ironically, for some *indigenistas*, it was this particular ‘connection to the earth’ combined with their ‘vigour for manual labour’ that would provide a path towards the Indian ‘rehabilitation’ (Prieto 2004:172). Within the modernist project’s ideals, if properly conducted and exploited this link would allow Indians to become peasants, which is to say productive and ‘useful’ members of society.



*Figure 4.4. 'Madrugada (Helada)' by Diógenes Paredes. Oil on Canvas, 80x90 m.*

*Diners Club del Ecuador Collection.*





*Figure 4.5. 'Las Cebolleras' by Diógenes Paredes. Oil on Canvas, 75 x 80 m.*

*Casa de la Cultura Ecuatoriana Collection*



To this day, earth and its association with Indian/rural life constitutes a very strong marker and maker of racial categorisations in the Andes. According to this logic, because soil is (related to) dirt, the close ties between the Indian and the soil not only accentuate their misery but also make them essentially ‘dirty’. Hence the commonly used insult of *indio sucio*, (dirty Indian). Moreover, as Benjamin Orlove (1998:208) notes, “the many different degrees of proximity of human bodies to the earth parallel the many different degrees of relative Indian and *mestizo* identity [...]”. In his article about racial identities in the Peruvian highlands, Orlove (1998) examines this notion and shows how in addition to agricultural activities and religious beliefs related to the *Pachamama* (Mother Earth), many

of the material objects that form part of the indigenous daily life ‘reinforce’ their proximity to the earth. For instance, the use of clay pots and open fires for cooking have become strong markers of ‘Indianness’. On their own, these features should only represent a particular way of preparing food; however, in the *mestizo* imagery created around the Indian, they are considered unhygienic and therefore wrong. The earth thus constitutes “an index of the *mestizo* concern about Indian dirtiness, a concern that is simultaneously real (food can be contaminated by soot from fires, by windblown dust) and constructed (the fear of Indian filth stems from a sense that Indian backwardness itself can be contaminating)” (Orlove 1998:214).

As in most cultures, food and the ways in which it is prepared have also created social and ethnic differentiation in the Andes. Not surprisingly, the Indian diet also became the focus of many investigations carried out by the *indigenista* doctors and physical anthropologists. Food was used as another ‘scientific’ factor to explain the ‘Indian problem’. For instance, Antonio Santiana, a prominent scientist, argued in 1941 that the high content of carbohydrates and starch in this diet was one of the causes of the so-called ‘Indian degeneration’. In his view, the produce consumed by the Indian provided the necessary energy to conduct physical work but was detrimental for intellectual development (Clark 1999:119). It is not clear whether these ‘scientific’ and not so well founded interpretations of the Indian diet have influenced the *mestizo*’s view of it. However, the fact is that generally the *mestizo* and to a certain extent the Indians saw and still see these foods as inferior compared to purchased and processed foods non-native to the Andes, such as rice and noodles (Orlove 1998:212). Perhaps this ranking is based on how close specific foods - and ways of preparing them - are to the earth, which in turn ‘dirties’ and ‘pollutes’. (Orlove 1998:213).

Footwear (or the lack of it) is another important marker of ‘Indianness’ as well as of social class in the Andes. While *mestizos* tend to wear shoes that prevent contact with the earth, the Indian would either be barefoot or often wear an *ojota/ushuta*, a type of straw, plastic or rubber sandal, more ‘open’ to earth (Orlove 1998:215). The emphasis on the feet can be clearly identified in most of the works produced by *indigenista* artists. In their paintings,



the Indian is always portrayed with large, scarred or even deformed feet to accentuate their misery as well as the link to the earth (see Figures 4.1-4.6). In the image below (Figure 4.6), Kingman has depicted a group of Indians, some wearing *ushutas*, others barefoot, working in a *minga* (communal work party) while the priest, a *mestizo* man wearing shoes, is heading the activity. As an *indigenista*, the artist uses this image to denounce the abuses committed by authorities such as priests, who used indigenous people to conduct labour intensive activities, in this case building a church.

**Figure 4.6. 'La Minga' by Eduardo Kingman, 193. Oil on Canvas, 1.14 x 1.33 m.**

**Banco Central del Ecuador Collection.**



Despite the strong connection between different Indian objects/activities and the earth, it is perhaps the house/hut that served as the strongest characteristic of what the *indigenistas* identified as the 'damaging Indian environment'. Made out of adobe bricks and dirt floors, these houses were considered the root cause of the lack of hygiene. In contrast to the *mestizo*-urban house, built with a variety of materials such as wood, cement, and linoleum - basically 'easy to clean surfaces' - the Indian home, made out of earth/soil/dirt, was and still is considered its complete opposite. These ideas are expressed clearly by Neptalí Zúñiga,

who in a social-scientific analysis of the Ecuadorian reality published in 1940, singled out living conditions as the source of Indian decadence.

The Indian has put his temperament in the construction of his hearth [...] the lowly, rustic houses with roofs of straw or tile, enclose a miserable way of life. The Indian lives in an unhealthy tenement house, in a place of reduced life, his biological development negatively influenced by food, the environment, the hygiene and the disorder (Zúñiga cited by Colloredo-Mansfield, 1998:190).

Even the *indigenista* scholar Pío Jaramillo Alvarado, who fiercely defended the indigenous population and successfully fought against the notion that Indians were simply ‘dead weight’ for society, held views that were not very different. After visiting a home in Otavalo in 1949 he describes it as follows:

And we could verify that in Otavalo the industrious Indian is intelligent and rich and consequently owner of magnificent arable lands. But, likewise, our astonishment was great when we visited a house of one of these industrious Indians and one could not differentiate his home life from that of the needy Indian. And we asked ourselves: if the Indian has been to school and is industrious and a property owner, what more is necessary to live at a level corresponding to his economic situation? Culture? With this word one says much, but in concrete cases it signifies very little or perhaps nothing (Jaramillo Alvarado cited by Colloredo-Mansfeld 1998:192).

Over the years, all the characteristics that supposedly made up the ‘negative’ Indian environment, the house made with adobe bricks, the food, as well as the agricultural and artisanal activities, have become strong symbols of ‘Indianness’. In what could be said to be a fixation with social and racial categorisations, these symbols have also been applied to other rural inhabitants that might not be ‘racially’ Indian. Although not all people working and living in highland Ecuador were racially Indians, as a group they became Indian because they embodied the ‘native spirit’ or the main characteristics of ‘Indianness’ (Prieto 2004:223). The elite therefore reinforced the equivalence between the indigenous people and the rural people. In this way the Indian and his/her closeness to earth/soil/dirt became a social category that included not only those who were racially Indian but also those that ‘lived like Indians’.

As a result of the various scientific studies and works of art produced during the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s in Ecuador, hygiene replaced natural phenotype classification and became the basis for dividing the population and characterising races (Colloredo-Mansfeld 1998:192). The urban middle classes constituted the ideal of a life that was defined by

cleanliness which separated the white-*mestizo* from the Indian and the “odours, textures and materials of rural life” (Colloredo-Mansfeld 1998:187). In his study of the history of water, Jean-Pierre Goubert (1986) discusses a very similar process during 19<sup>th</sup> century Europe, where the French elite passed harsh judgements on the peasant world, based on recent scientific findings about water and disease.

The enlightened elite described the physique, clothing and housing of the peasantry as the inadequacies and shortcomings characteristic of a class (or perhaps even a race) whom civilization had passed by. Because they did not wash themselves, peasants were placed in the same category as savages, infidels and even animals. They were more than just ‘aliens’, they were a living death (1986:216).

Furthermore, Goubert’s (1986:110) argument that the links between order, cleanliness and hygiene led to a strong connection between knowledge and power in 19<sup>th</sup> century Europe also resonates strongly in the Ecuadorian case. In fact, his reflection that these links “suited the purposes of science and the ruling classes” is clearly applicable. “As soon as uncleanness [is] presented as ‘an offence against orderliness’, it [becomes] a shameful superstition, damaging to health, in short an indication of peasant barbarousness if not of mental backwardness” (*Ibid*).

The ideas around hygiene and racial characteristics also allowed the elite to exclude the majority of Ecuadorians from accessing full citizenship rights. By following the hygienist logic, it became possible to distinguish between the ideal citizen (a productive, educated and ‘clean’ member of the Ecuadorian nation) and the Indian (a ‘dirty’, ‘backward’ and ‘stagnating’ element), counteracting the envisioned homogenous and modern *mestizo* state. This notion is clearly underlined by Taylor and Wilson (2004:159) who argue in their study about citizenship formation in Latin America that:

The claim of social disorder makes way from public order, while customs are challenged by code of law which reflects white, western values and which it calls civilization. The definition of ‘citizen’ as someone who is civilised [...] thus excludes from citizenship those who deviate from and operate outside of predominating social and cultural norms.

The next section turns to the ‘solutions’ provided by the scholars and scientists during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century to what they believed to be the source of the social stagnation and degeneration amongst the rural population in Ecuador.

### **Hygiene, cleanliness and water as the answer: policies to improve access to water and sanitation in rural areas in Ecuador**

Despite the situation described, depicted and constructed by the *indigenista* scholars and artists, and on a positive note for the modernist *mestizaje* project taking place at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Suárez and other social scientists argued that ‘bio-social’ problems could be solved through education, improved hygiene and nutrition. Most importantly, attitudes that supposedly characterised the Indian (melancholy, unbalanced personalities, untruthfulness) and made him/her distinctly different from other Ecuadorians could be changed over time. It was precisely the personality traits described by Suárez - which although thought to be transmitted between generations were still considered malleable - that very much legitimised and justified the idea of incorporating the Indian into the mainstream society through educational and hygiene projects. Thus, the “odours, textures and materials of rural life bec[a]me racial emblems as the white-*mestizo* elite constitute[d] themselves and their national authority by pursuing an elusive physical and moral ideal: cleanliness” (Colloredo-Mansfeld 1998:187).

The modernising project of the Ecuadorian elite resonates with similar plans to disseminate knowledge about the importance of clean water and hygiene during 19<sup>th</sup> century Europe as described by Goubert (1986:215) in the following passage.

Proud of its knowledge and utterly convinced of the certainty of its arguments, the scientific elite busied itself with making a distinction between the healthy and unhealthy and disseminating its message of hygiene and cleanliness. It wanted to separate wells from dunghills, liquid manure pits and privies and to remove cemeteries outside parishes’ boundaries. Death, dirt and chaos belonged on one side, life, cleanliness and order on the other.

The idea that advancing most Ecuadorians’ living conditions would allow building a viable nation quickly transcended to other realms of society and was put into practice by the authorities. This is not surprising given that many of the scientists commenting on the Indian problem served in strategic positions in various Ministries.<sup>44</sup> As Prieto (2004:175) observes in her study about Indian images in post-colonial Ecuador, the various initiatives

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<sup>44</sup> For instance *indigenistas* such as Carlos Andrade Marín, Leopoldo Chávez and Alfredo Pérez Guerrero all served as Ministers of Social Welfare and Work between 1940-1948. Also, Pablo Arturo Suárez was the Director of the Public Health Service.

around hygiene suggested by Suárez and other scholars at the time established the basis for justifying the intervention of the state, through local municipalities and health centres, in the matter of Indian bodies and homes. The following passage taken from a letter sent in March 1938 by the political administrator (*jefe politico*), the highest authority of the Otavalo Canton, to each one of its Parishes (*tenientes politicos*) is an excellent example of how the ideas about hygiene were disseminated by authorities in the rural areas.<sup>45</sup>

*En las varias visitas que he hecho a esa parroquia he tenido el desagrado de ver vagando por las calles de la población animales de toda clase, especialmente cerdos, lo cual además de ofrecer un espectáculo repugnante dice muy mal de los habitantes que, en sus hábitos de vida, se distinguen el desaseo, como si ignoraran los más elementales principios de higiene. También estos mismos animales suelen conservarlos en las casas en forma inadecuada, haciendo de sus pequeños patios y corredores corrales que constituyen focos de infección con amenazante peligro de la salubridad pública. Como esto no es posible de tolerar, so pena de incurrir en un crimen de lesa civilización, llamo la atención de Ud., para que, de una manera enérgica y sin contemplaciones de ninguna clase proceda a desterrar esta costumbre sancionando de acuerdo a la Ley a todo aquel que infrinja las disposiciones que dictare al respecto. [...] La Comisión de Sanidad visitara frecuentemente su jurisdicción e informara de su labor de Ud. en este sentido. [...] No olvide usted y tenga siempre presente que su labor benéfica en pro de su pueblo merecerá aprobación y apoyo de las autoridades superiores [...] Sea afable y no distinga privilegios, que todos tienen igual derecho, sobre todo para la raza indígena debe ser mayores sus cuidados y atenciones.*

In the several visits that I have made to this parish, I have had the misfortune to see animals of all kinds wandering through the streets, especially pigs, which in addition to offering a repugnant view, speaks very badly of the inhabitants whose living habits are distinguished by lack of cleanliness, **as if they ignored even the most basic principles of hygiene**. These same animals are also often kept in the homes in a most inadequate manner, turning their small courtyards and hallways into corrals that become sources of infection with menacing danger to public health. As this is intolerable, **lest it become a crime against civilisation**, I call Your attention to it, so that you, energetically and without any form of contemplation, may proceed to abolish this custom, sanctioning those who infringe the dispositions that I will dictate on the matter according to Law. [...] The Health Commission will make frequent visits to your jurisdiction and report on Your work regarding this matter. [...] Do not forget and always keep in mind that your beneficial work in favour of your people will merit approval and support from the superior authorities [...] Be affable and do not distinguish any for privilege, for all have the same rights; your care and attention must be greater for the indigenous race.<sup>46</sup>

<sup>45</sup> Parish is not related to Church membership but is a political-administrative division used by the Ecuadorian state. There are provinces, cantons, parishes and *comunidades*.

<sup>46</sup> Archivo Jefatura Política Cantón Otavalo/LCO, 3th March 1938, no. 63.

The previous passage clearly shows that ideally civilization was equated with hygiene. It also reveals an essential aspect of the project which is the central role that authorities were supposed to play as guardians of the masses. According to Suárez, changing the lower classes was the duty of the elite, whose attitude “must be, above all of tutelage, wise and just, and always eminently protective” (Suarez cited in Clark 1998:192). Because change and nation-building should in theory emerge from the ruling classes it was their responsibility to generate such transformation by making education available to all. The hacienda owner, the local policeman, the political lieutenant (*teniente politico*) at the parish level, the political administrators (*jefe politico*) at the cantonal level and especially the teacher all had to collaborate and help integrate the Indian by educating him/her and ultimately by changing his/her living conditions and practices. The Indian in turn was supposed to “take advantage of education to learn to rise above their environment and heredity, to become fully responsible citizens” (Clark 1998:203). The role of the authorities and particularly of the school and the teacher in transmitting knowledge about hygiene and morals is also highlighted by Goubert (1986) in the case of 19<sup>th</sup> century France.

Since it had long been the responsibility of the primary school teachers to teach morals and the rules of civility, it seemed logical to the political authorities of the time that they should give instructions in the principles and basic practices of hygiene. This is why schools, viewed as work spaces, and primary school teachers, seen as ‘the heirs and representatives of modern civilisation’, constituted two complementary channels for the diffusion of the proposed social and medical model. Both were responsible to a large extent for its cultural transmission.

In the effort to end the wrongs that had created the division between Indians and other Ecuadorians, improving people’s culture and most importantly hygiene became essential. “Consequently, public health initiatives took on both moral and nationalist aspects as improved sanitation could rescue the country from racial corruption” (Colloredo-Mansfeld 1998:190). Water and sanitation became essential tools in the state’s project to convert Indians into citizens. The following passages are taken from letters sent by the Sanitation Officer of the Imbabura Province to all the Parishes in the Otavalo Canton. These letters contain details of the various sanitary campaigns that took place in rural areas.

*Letter dated 7 May, 1934*

*Un gran porcentaje de enfermos con males que **comprende la Campaña Sanitaria en toda la República** se encuentran en las poblaciones rurales, y especialmente en los cacerios y ranchos de las haciendas, abandonados a su propia suerte, y sin encontrar la mano generosa que se apiade de sus dolencias y miseria de sus familias; para ellos van dirigidos los anhelos de la Sanidad y de preferencia el personal sanitario debe trabajar en las parroquias, en los caserios y en los ranchos de las haciendas.- De acuerdo con el Art. 60. del decreto mencionado, los propietarios, arrendatarios o administradores de las mismas, en donde se haga una Campaña Sanitaria están obligados a dar facilidades y prestar apoyo a las comisiones sanitarias.- [...] Estas disposiciones de los Decretos, Legislativo y Ejecutivo, que las creo sustanciales para la eficiencia de las Campañas, deben ser conocidas por los habitantes de las parroquias y por los propietarios, administradores y arrendatarios de haciendas a fin de que se de cumplimiento y se haga, cuanto antes, **labor en pro de la mejora del obrero, luchando, dentro de los medios posibles, por el saneamiento de los lugares donde viven.** Espero señor Jefe Político que Ud. deferirá el pedido de esta Delegación de Sanidad que no tiene otra mira que **la de trabajar por la salubridad de la población de Imbabura y con ella el progreso y engrandecimiento de sus habitantes** [...].*

A great percentage of people who have illnesses that are comprehended within **the Sanitation Campaign in place in the whole of the Republic**, are found in the rural areas, especially in the hamlets and houses located within the haciendas, abandoned to their own luck, and with no generous hand to take pity on their ailments and the misery of their families; it is to them that the aim of the Sanitation Campaign is directed [...] According to article 60 of the aforementioned decree, the owners, tenants or administrators of haciendas where a sanitary campaign is put into practice, are obliged to provide facilities and support the sanitary commissions[...]. These legislative and executive decrees, central to the efficiency of the campaign, should be known by all the Parishes' inhabitants and the hacienda's proprietors, tenants and administrators, with the aim of complying with them, and as soon as possible, **start the necessary labour to improve the worker's living conditions, fighting, within all the possible measures, for the cleanliness of the places they inhabit** [...]. I hope that you will duly pass on the call made by the Sanitation Department, which has no other purpose than to work for the **Imbabura province's sanitation and with it for the progress and enlightenment of its inhabitants.**<sup>47</sup>

*Letter dated 26, May 1934*

*Considerando:*

*Que los fondos Municipales son insuficientes y, por este motivo, los Municipios de la provincia no pueden atender debidamente y por su cuenta el barrido y aseo de las poblaciones:*

*Que es deber de todos los habitantes contribuir a mantener el aseo y la limpieza de las poblaciones, por honor de la parroquia y por conveniencia propia, ya que el aseo va encaminado directamente a mantener la salubridad individual y pública, base necesaria para la conservación de los pueblos.*

<sup>47</sup> Archivo Jefatura Política Cantón Otavalo /LCO, 7th May 1934, no. 104. Emphasis added

*Decreta:*

1.- *Todos los propietarios, arrendatarios o encargados de casas situadas frente a las calles, plazas, caminos de las poblaciones, barrerán diariamente, en las primeras horas de la mañana, el frente de sus casas.*

2.- *Las basuras y desechos serán arrojados en lugares distantes de las poblaciones; o enterrados en agujeros, para evitar que su descomposición sirva de criadero a las moscas.*

3.- *Toda casa situada dentro de las poblaciones tendrá obligatoriamente un pozo ciego, de un metro y medio de profundidad, donde deben arrojarse las inmundicias cubriéndoles inmediatamente con tierra o con cal para impedir que las moscas al posarse sobre ellas lleven las infecciones tíficas a los alimentos y sean la causa de los brotes epidémicos de tifoidea.*

4.- *Queda absolutamente prohibido el dejar que los cerdos anden vagando libremente por las calles, plazas y caminos de las poblaciones; y, que se los conserve en posilgas inmundas.*

5.- *Todo propietario, arrendatario o encargado de casas situadas en las poblaciones que deseara conservar cerdos en sus predios, construirá un corral alejado de las habitaciones, por lo menos unos diez metros, y se comprometerá a conservarlo en buen estado de limpieza y aseo. Para tener este derecho obtendrá del Teniente Politico, el respectivo permiso [...]*

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Considering:

That Municipal funds are insufficient and due to this, the Municipalities of the province cannot duly take charge, on their own, of the sweeping and cleaning of the inhabited centres:

That it is the duty of all the inhabitants to contribute to maintaining the cleanliness of the settlements, for the honour of the Parish and their own convenience, since cleanliness is directed towards keeping individual and public health, a necessary cornerstone for the conservation of the settlements.

## Decrees:

1.- All the owners, tenants or managers of homes situated in front of streets, plazas, roads of the inhabited centres, will sweep the front of their homes daily, during the first hours of the morning.

2.- Garbage and waste will be deposited in places far away from the inhabited areas; or buried in a hole, to prevent their decomposition becoming a breeding ground for flies.

3.- All homes will have, by law, a cesspit, one and a half metres deep, where filth must be thrown, and covered immediately with earth or lime, to make sure that flies may not stand on it and carry typhoid illnesses to food, and become the cause of outbreaks of typhoid fever epidemics.

4.- It is absolutely forbidden to allow pigs to wander freely on the streets, plazas and roads of the townships; and to keep them in filthy pigsties.

5.- Any owner, tenant or manager of a home within the townships who wishes to keep pigs on the grounds, must build a pig pen, at least 10 metres away from the living quarters, and must commit to keeping it in a clean and healthy state. To have this right, the owner, tenant or manager must obtain the necessary permit from the Political Lieutenant [...]<sup>48</sup>

<sup>48</sup> AJPCO/LCO, 26 May 1934, no. 116.



In addition to national and local sanitation campaigns such as those described in the previous passages, the Ecuadorian government signed various treaties between 1942 and 1956 with the United States of America and multilateral organisations such as the United Nations. These programmes focused on improving the living conditions of the rural population through the provision of infrastructure and education. Ultimately, the purpose of these projects was to shape Indians and peasants into *mestizos* or into ‘potential’ citizens. In 1942, the *Servicio Cooperativo Interamericano de Salud Pública* (Co-operative Health and Sanitation Programme in Ecuador) was established with funding from the United States of America.<sup>49</sup> The project originally targeted improving sewage systems, waste control and disease control in the main cities of Quito and Guayaquil. Shortly afterwards it expanded into other small cities and towns. The programme was extended several times in 1947, 1949 and 1953 until it was replaced by the IEOS (Ecuadorian Institute for Sanitary Works) in 1965.

Another essential component of the integration project carried out by the Ecuadorian state was the *Mision Andina* (Andean Indian Programme, AIP). This was established in 1956 as a multi-agency programme supported by the ILO (International Labour Organization) with technical assistance from the UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization), FAO (Food and Agriculture Organization) and WHO (World Health Organization). The general objective of the AIP in Ecuador was:

To achieve the economic, social and cultural development of the peasant population and ***their integration, as fast and efficiently as possible***, into the active life of the country through the modernisation of the productive systems and the general socio-economic structures of the rural sector [emphasis added] (Arbenoiz 1969:1).

The *Mision Andina* sought to improve living conditions and inequalities amongst the rural population by following the logic of integration, which in turn meant eliminating the characteristics that supposedly made Indians different from the white-*mestizo* society. To that end, the programme had various components including agrarian development, arts, crafts and small industries, and communal works. It was through the communal works unit

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<sup>49</sup> United Nations, *Treaty Series*, Vol 26, p. 379

of the programme that water and sanitation facilities were built in rural areas.<sup>50</sup> The purpose of this part of the Mision Andina was “to execute a series of physical works, which [were] considered necessary on the one hand to accelerate integration and on the other to humanise the precarious existence of the population” (Program) 1969:45).

It is interesting to note that as late as 1969, the logic and language used in these documents follows that laid down by scholars during the 1930s and 1940s when the incorporation of the rural population became a national priority that entailed making peasants more ‘human’, more ‘civilized’ and more ‘productive’ in relation to the rest of the Ecuadorian society. The following quote is taken from a report by the Education Officer of the programme. Most interestingly, it shows that the Indian was still viewed as the ‘main problem’ in Ecuador and an obstacle to progress.

The Indian is perhaps the main problem of Ecuador. Given their attitude against change and incorporation into the nation state, the Indians, who represent a large majority of the country’s total population, constitute an obstacle for progress (Arbenoiz 1969:3).

Thus through the provision of infrastructure such as schools, latrines and piped water, the *Mision Andina* was supporting the envisioned transformation. The infrastructure was constructed under a system of ‘self-help and mutual aid’ that rendered cost-effective results (Program) 1969:13). In other words, the members of the *comunidad*, without previous consultation, were supposed to build these systems, making it cheaper and easier to construct them and at the same time supporting the formation of the ideal, ‘productive’, social structure envisioned by the project. There was an underlying notion that collective work and effort, not of the ‘unorganised’ type that existed in the *comunidades* but guided by the programme, would aid the formation of more productive systems, i.e. cooperatives and associations. As Chapters 5 and 6 discuss, this model of intervention, where the community has to provide labour and/or materials, is the precursor of approaches applied today.

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<sup>50</sup> It is important to note that even if the Mision Andina generally referred to their target population as peasants, they were for the most part operating in indigenous areas such as the province of Chimborazo, Cotopaxi, and Imbabura and to a lesser extent in Loja, which had fewer indigenous inhabitants. The choice of words is no coincidence and follows the integration logic, which ideally ‘transformed’ Indians into productive peasants.

The decision making process, or why and how the piped water system should be built, was based on evaluations conducted exclusively by the *Mision Andina's* technicians. The AIP documents describe how the building sites were chosen as “an effort generally made in response to the *real necessities found by the members of the development or health teams* [emphasis added]” of the programme (Program) 1969:45), and not through a consultation process with the communities. Although the *Mision Andina* stopped functioning in the early 1970s, its model of intervention did not. The IEOS (Ecuadorian Institute for Sanitary Works), which had substituted the Co-operative Health and Sanitation Programme in 1965, continued operating under the same understanding of change that entailed delivering domestic water systems without prior consultation with the potential beneficiaries who, as part of the arrangement, had to provide the necessary labour for its construction (Borja Narajo 2002:55).

International pressure to improve water and sanitation also influenced national projects and provided additional political justification to conduct further infrastructure works. In 1961 the *Carta de Punta del Este*, a regional Latin American treaty, recommended targets in terms of water provision for the period from 1960 to 1970. In 1970 the United Nations General Assembly adopted Resolution 2626 which declared that every developing country should try to provide adequate water services to a certain proportion of its rural and urban population. In 1977 the United Nations Water Conference held in Mar del Plata, Argentina recommended declaring the first International Decade for Clean Drinking Water from 1981 to 1990 (Borja Narajo 2002:50). International concern over water corresponded with, and perhaps even strengthened, the nation-building project in Ecuador which emphasised ‘health and sanitation’ as a central aspect of its development agenda (See Table 4.1). It also coincided with the expansion of services and resources into the rural areas that took place during the military regimes of the 1960s and 1970s, when a corporatist model of development was put into practice. This period was characterised by what Yashar (2005:57) has termed the corporatist citizenship regime, during which the “state sought to capture political support and to control the masses with the creation of new modes of interest intermediation and social rights”. It was during these decades that the state, using revenues from petroleum exports, was able to extend its presence into rural areas by

establishing schools, health centres and improved social security schemes. Increasing access to water became an essential part of the plan. Next, we turn to the water and sanitation policies through which the state has intervened in rural communities from the late 20<sup>th</sup> century to the present day.

### **Intervention through water and sanitation provision, 1960-2012**

The following section continues with an analysis of the water management institutions and projects that supported early efforts to introduce hygiene and sanitation into rural areas of the country. Specifically, this section will look at the different institutional arrangements and policies that have been introduced to manage water in Ecuador, and the ways in which they have influenced water management at the local level in particular. It is important to understand the historical dimensions of these processes because, as later chapters will reveal, administering water at the local level has become a central aspect of communal everyday life, and of what is understood as a communal right to resource management.

In order to increase control over the water resources in the country and expand water and sanitation services, an important transformation in the administration of hydrological resources took place. First, in 1965 the *Instituto Ecuatoriano de Obras Sanitarias*, IEOS (Ecuadorian Institute for Sanitary Works) was established to continue with the activities carried out by the Inter-American Cooperative Health Program.<sup>51</sup> The IEOS was charged with drafting a national plan for water and sanitation that included building and, in some cases, operating new systems in the rural areas. The newly established institution was also in charge of providing technical assistance to municipalities for the planning, building and later administration of these systems. Following the creation of the IEOS, in 1966 the *Instituto Ecuatoriano de Recursos Hídricos*, INERHI (Ecuadorian Institute of Hydrological Resources) was established to improve water concession procedures.<sup>52</sup> This entity took over the duties of the Ministry of Agriculture and was responsible for authorising water use, resolving disputes and also improving irrigation infrastructure. The creation of these institutions coincided with the expansion of the Ecuadorian state into the

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<sup>51</sup> Decreto Supremo No. 179, Registro Oficial 430, 4 de febrero de 1965.

<sup>52</sup> Decreto Supremo No. 1551, Registro Oficial No. 158, 11 de Noviembre 1966.

rural areas through the provision of infrastructure and other resources discussed in Chapter 3 (See Table 4.1 for a timeline of transformations in the water sector in Ecuador).

**Table 4.1 Water Management Trajectories in Ecuador 1936 - 2012**

Year	Institution/ Law	Function	Role of the State	Changes to local/ collective organisation	National/International context
1936	Water Law	Categorised water use in terms of its 'public utility' and gave priority to industrial and municipal use	Water belongs to the state, but people are able to use it based on a system of riparian and prior appropriation rights. -Conflict resolution and water concession through judiciary system	Mentions the possibility of introducing administrators of water channels to improve the efficiency of irrigation	Effort towards the consolidation and modernisation of the nation state.
1939	Water Law Codification	- New section dealing with the use of channels and the use of residual water from industries.	- Water belongs to the State, but people are able to use it based on a system of riparian and prior appropriation rights.	-Allow irrigation channel users to form an association with its own set of rules.	
1943	Inter-American Cooperative Health Program	- Increase water and sanitation in urban areas	-State provided half of the funds while the USA government provided the other half as well as technical assistance.		- Improve water and sanitation in cities small towns in Ecuador
1965	Ecuadorian Institute of Sanitary Works (IEOS)	- Formulating a water and sanitation programme for the country. - Build and maintain drinking water systems.	- IEOS in charge of providing technical assistance, materials and centrally managing all water systems	- Continued working under system where communities provided unpaid labour as the <i>Mision Andina</i> had done.	- <i>Carta de Punta del Este 1961</i> : a regional Latin American treaty, recommending targets for water provision -Expansion of the state into rural areas
1966	Ecuadorian Institute of Hydrological Resources (INHERI)	- In charge of water resources in general. Specific task of granting water rights and building new irrigation systems.	- Conflict resolution became more bureaucratic. Technicians from the INERHI had to mediate.		-Expansion of the state into rural areas. - Land Reforms (1964, 1973)

Table 4.1 (cont.)

Year	Institution/ Law	Function	Role of the State	Changes to local/ collective organisation	National/International context
1972	Water Law	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Centralise control over water resources in Ecuador.</li> <li>- Introduced concept of watershed management and principles of conservation and protection of the environment.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- State takes control of all water resources for irrigation, drinking water provision, electricity and other productive activities.</li> <li>- All water resources belong to the state. Users have to renew their concessions.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Introduced/Formalised WUA when more than 5 users share the same source of water.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Corporatist development model led by military regime.</li> <li>- Effort to increase the role of the state in natural resource management.</li> </ul>
1979	Ley de Juntas Administradoras de Agua Potable y Alcantarillado	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Encourages the formation of local water user associations to administer drinking water systems.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- State should provide technical assistance and monitor the systems' finances and performance.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Rules and tariffs decided at local level.</li> <li>- Increased responsibilities of users at local level.</li> <li>- Institutionalised system where labour is provided by local community</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 1977 United Nations Water Conference held in Mar del Plata, Argentina declared the first International Decade for Clean Drinking Water from 1981 to 1990.</li> </ul>
1994	National Council for Hydrological Resources (CNRH)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- New institution to oversee water resources in the country.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Decentralisation of state responsibilities</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Neoliberal reforms, reduction of state presence in natural resource management led by the idea/need to increase efficiency in the sector.</li> </ul>
1994	Sub-secretariat for Water Supply, Sanitation and Solid Waste (SAPSyRS)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Replaced the IEOS.</li> <li>- In charge of overseeing water and sanitation projects.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Oversee the decentralisation of responsibilities to local governments and municipalities</li> <li>- Role of provider transformed towards role of regulator</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Increased responsibilities for local water providers.</li> <li>- Received less support and less monitoring</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Neoliberal reforms, reduction of state expenditure.</li> <li>- Increased presence of international organisations and donors in Water and Sanitation Provision.</li> </ul>

Table 4.1 (cont.)

<b>Year</b>	<b>Institution/ Law</b>	<b>Function</b>	<b>Role of the State</b>	<b>Changes to local/ collective organisation</b>	<b>National/International context</b>
1994	Discussion of New Water Law	- Tried to privatise water rights and introduce private companies for water and sanitation provision.		- Increased role of the community in service provision as well as in local governance practices.	- Large indigenous protests in the country against Neoliberal Reforms.
2008	National Water Secretariat (SENAGUA)	- Single most important institution to oversee all water-related issues	- Increase role of the state in overseeing water related issues.		
2008	New Constitution	- Water declared Human Right			- New Left-leaning government (2007 -2013) - Introduction of legal reforms
2009-2012	Discussion of new water law	- Improve water resource management in the country.	- Increase role of the state in resource management	- Law allows local/communal water management arrangements but increases controls over them	- Protests against new water law led by indigenous groups.



As part of an effort to increase state control over natural resources, the nationalist military government led by General Guillermo Rodríguez Lara also introduced a new Water Law in 1972.<sup>53</sup> This law replaced legislation which had hardly changed since 1936 and established important principles of water management in Ecuador (See Table 4.1). First it declared that all continental waters were in the public domain and introduced a rule that obliged all users to renew their water concessions of whatever kind through the INERHI. Although water had been state property since 1936, water rights for private use were legitimised by claims of historical use, or by ownership of land located near a body of water (prior appropriation and riparian rights). Second, user participation and Water User Associations (WUA) were institutionalised by this law (Borja Narajo 2002:54). In the Art. 76, the law states that when a group of five or more users share a source of water they must form an association with a board of directors appointed at a general users' meeting. Under this mandate, each WUA has its own internal constitution, some determined by law, but most adapted to the circumstances, accepted by general vote and approved by the state authority, which at the time was the INERHI (Kuffner 2005). Although other forms of cooperative or associative administration, generally of irrigation channels, were mentioned in earlier versions of the Water Law and had existed since the colonial period, the new law specified how and when WUAs would operate. This law also introduced the concept of watershed management and principles of conservation and protection of the environment.

With the establishment of the IEOS, INERHI, the new Water Law and the increase in financial resources brought by the petroleum boom, there was an important expansion of basic services in rural areas during the 1960s and especially during the 1970s (Kuffner 2005) (See Table 4.2). However, this intervention was not very different in form from that applied earlier by the Inter-American Cooperative Health Program. Rather than using technical and social criteria to choose the project sites, most were selected on the basis of their distance from the IEOS headquarters and whether there was easy access for delivering materials (Borja Narajo 2002:55). Most communities only became part of the project during the construction phase when they were 'obliged' to provide unpaid labour. The results of this became apparent when little or no use was

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<sup>53</sup> "Ley de Aguas" Decreto Supremo No. 369, Registro Oficial No. 69, 30 de Mayo de 1972.

made of sanitary facilities such as washing basins and latrines that had been placed ‘randomly’ by the IEOS technicians without prior consultation with the users (Borja Narajo 2002:56). The logic behind these projects was underlined by the urban *white-mestizo* ‘effort’ to bring civilization to the rural population, who were seen by the former as “empty recipients of information and knowledge” (Borja Narajo 2002:54).

Increasingly, the IEOS encountered more problems in sustaining service provision particularly in terms of management and maintenance of the newly installed water systems. Once the water network had been constructed, in urban areas the local municipality would be in charge of running and maintaining it, whereas the IEOS played the equivalent role in rural areas. However, managing hundreds of systems in the countryside became almost impossible to handle for this ill-equipped state body. The plan was badly affected in part by lack of funding but mainly by the difficulty of organising constant visits to and maintenance works in remote areas far away from the IEOS headquarters. As a response to this situation, the then military government of Ecuador established by decree the *Ley de Juntas Administradoras de Agua Potable y Alcantarillado* (Law for Drinking Water and Sewage User’s Associations).<sup>54</sup>

Although the Potable Water User Associations were formally introduced in 1979, similar systems for administering and regulating shared bodies of water already operated in most of the countryside. For example there were well established *acequia* or Channel Users’ Organisations that regulated how much each member could take to irrigate fields and water their animals, and when (Ruf and Gilot 1995). The novelty of the model introduced by the law in 1979 was that it specifically targeted water infrastructures for human consumption, and specified that each association had the right to create their own rules and that these WUAs could gain legal recognition by the state.

The Water User Association was envisioned as an institution that in addition to the already existing *cabildo* system introduced in 1937 (community council) and agricultural cooperatives encouraged during the 1960s, would strengthen the *comunidades*’ organisational capacity and thus their ability to participate in and benefit

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<sup>54</sup> “Ley de Juntas Administradoras de Agua Potable y Alcantarillado”. Decreto No. 3327, Registro Oficial No. 802 de 29 de marzo de 1979.

from the national economical and social structures available in the country. While trying to achieve efficiency, the state, by mediating social and productive relations at the local level, also tried to use these institutional arrangements to gain access to the *comunidad* (i.e. to further integrate them into the nation state). In other words, introducing the WUA was in line with the efficiency agenda and at the same time included a political and cultural *raison d'être* aimed at incorporating the indigenous population into the 'homogeneous' mainstream *white-mestizo* social group. The following passage is taken from the 1979 Law of Drinking Water User Associations (introduction section).

*Considering that the main problem in the provision of potable water and sewage systems in rural areas has been to achieve continuity in the operation and administration of the systems, due to a lack of appropriate organisations in charge of this function [...] it is **necessary to build local organizations at the community level that are able to, in an organised and collective manner, assume such responsibilities** [emphasis added].*

The law requires each WUA to present an annual summary of activities, including a financial report, to the state authorities. Because WUAs rarely met this requirement it rapidly became redundant, leaving most WUAs without any form of monitoring or evaluation, which can lead to mismanagement and corruption (Borja Narajo 2002). Additionally, and as a way of ensuring that the projects continued to operate, this law incorporated programs to train WUA's members in management, maintenance and sanitation-related issues. Gender differentiation continued and while men were trained on administration, women and children were taught 'how to improve household hygiene. This was also reflected in the fact that most WUAs were run by men and very few had women on their boards, something that can still be seen today (Borja Narajo 2002:56). Nevertheless, the 1979 law was a key element in the further institutionalisation of WUA in rural areas, which as Chapters 5 and 6 show, has gradually become an essential element of communal governance and autonomous resource management.

As various authors have pointed out, by introducing local organisational arrangements, the state, perhaps unintentionally, and most probably due to its fragmented and weak position, actually institutionalised autonomous spaces for indigenous and peasant self-governance, and therefore completely overturned its original political agenda (inclusion

into the mainstream *white-mestizo* society) (Korovkin 2001; Yashar 2005; Clark and Becker 2007).

Relatively autonomous local spaces were created where indigenous people could sustain their local indigenous identities and forms of governance. So too they gained institutional mechanisms to access the state and its resources. As such, many indigenous communities survived and grew beyond the de facto reach of the state (Yashar 2005:60).

Although various authors have analysed and highlighted the importance of these structures, most of the research has concentrated on communal arrangements (*cabildo*), land reforms and agricultural associations (Ibarra 2004; Yashar 2005). As a result, the role of the WUA in the processes of active organisation and citizenship formation has rarely been studied (Kincaid 2005). This thesis is therefore trying to argue that in addition to the communal organisation, local water management arrangements have been at the heart of indigenous and peasant organisation and demands for access to resources.

### **Recent Developments**

During the International Drinking Water Decade (1981 – 1990), the service coverage in Ecuador improved significantly, especially in rural areas (see Table 4.1). This period also served to reflect on the past projects and how they could have been more successful. First, following international trends that favoured decentralisation, the role of the state as the central service provider was challenged. At the same time there was also some reflection on how and when the beneficiaries had been included. The fact that communities were involved mostly in the systems' construction but not during their conceptualisation and design was seen as the main cause of the lack of continuity and sustainability of the water and sanitation projects (Visscher, Quiroga et al. 1996).

**Table 4.2 Population with access to safe drinking water in Ecuador (%), 1970-2008.**

YEAR	URBAN	RURAL	TOTAL
1970	76	7	34
1975	67	8	36
1980	79	20	50
1985	81	31	57
1990	63	44	55
1994	82	55	70
2000	81	51	71
2002	92	77	86
2004	97	89	94
2005	96	86	92
2008	97	88	94

Source: Gleick, Peter H. (2011)

To address these and other problems that resulted from the debt crisis of the 1980s, significant transformations of the water sector were introduced during the 1990s when the Ecuadorian government, like their counterparts in other Andean nations, embarked on a process of market oriented reform.<sup>55</sup> Parallel to discourses about scarcity, there was increasing pressure from international organisations to see water as an economic good and to increase efficiency and productivity in water use (Borja Narajo 2002; Boelens and Gelles 2005; Mehta, Marshall et al. 2007). In addition to the possibility of privatising water rights as a way of improving efficiency in water use, especially in the agricultural and industrial sectors, there was a push towards involving private companies in water and sanitation provision (Kuffner 2005). These policies met with strong opposition and caused social unrest, especially amongst indigenous and peasant organisations, who claimed that neo-liberal models are not compatible with their ways of managing water and that if these reforms were to be applied, particularly the privatisation of water rights, their livelihoods and cultures would be threatened (Yashar 2005). In this way, and for the first time, the collective administration of water resources, or the WUA that had been institutionalised by the military governments of

<sup>55</sup> During the 1980-1990 decade Ecuador's GDP decreased by about 2.1% annually and by 1990 the per capita income was 40% lower than in 1980 (Visscher, Quiroga et al. 1996).

the 60s and 70s, became a cradle of organisation for the indigenous and peasant population of Ecuador. Thus through the local systems of water management, the rural population began to demand the maintenance and recognition of these forms of resource governance as a citizenship right.

Major protests in 1994 and political instability prevented full re-structuring, and instead the central institutional and administrative systems of water governance in Ecuador were gradually replaced by regional and local projects financed by the World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank (Zapata and Gasselin 2005). As for general water management issues, the *Consejo Nacional de Recursos Hídricos* (CNRH, National Council for Water Resources) was founded in 1994 and functioned as an independent institution with limited competence and resources (Creamers, Ooijevaar et al. 2005). Institutions such as the INERHI and IEOS disappeared and their irrigation and sanitation programmes were transferred to the Ministry of Agriculture, Husbandry, Aquaculture and Fishing (MAGAP) and the Ministry of Urban Development and Housing (MIDUVI) respectively. Under this new institutional scheme, water and sanitation became the responsibility of the Sub-secretariat for Water Supply, Sanitation and Solid Waste (SAPSyRS) within the MIDUVI. Although water rights were not privatised, the state began to transform its role from service provider towards service regulator (See Table 4.1). Municipalities acquired the responsibility to provide, administer and operate water and sanitation (Solís Carrión 2006). While some towns and cities created or improved their own companies, others chose to hire services from private companies. (The city of Guayaquil is one example). As a consequence of all these changes, financial and institutional support from the state was largely withdrawn, leaving most local WUAs running on their own.

The weakening of the state's authority over water management which took place during the 1990s continued through the 2000s, leaving water-related issues in a legal vacuum characterised by institutional and administrative uncertainty (Kuffner 2005). After the disappearance of the IEOS during the 1990s most programs became smaller in scale and were generally financed by the US Agency for International Development (USAID), the World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank. Direct loans and agreements gradually replaced the activities previously carried out by the IEOS through projects

such WASH, FASBASE, and until recently PRAGUAS<sup>56</sup>. International organisations such as UNICEF, German Technical Assistance (GTZ), CARE and UNDP (United Nations Development Programme) also invested in the sector (MIDUVI 2002; Solís Carrión 2006). With the aid of these organisations, emphasis was given to strengthening municipal systems of water and sanitation provision, while the central state, through the Ministry's of Development and Health, would supervise, regulate and coordinate the sector's policies (MIDUVI 2002). There was much confusion about the responsibilities and roles of the different institutions and providers of water and sanitation: Water User Associations, Municipalities and ministries (Solís Carrión 2006).

In 2007, the election of a new Government led by President Rafael Correa saw a new round of reforms in the water sector (See Table 4.1). First, the *Secretaria Nacional del Agua* (National Water Secretariat - SENAGUA,) was established with the status of a Ministry to replace the National Council for Hydrological Resources (CNRH). Water was also a central topic in the recent legal reforms that took place in Ecuador, and in the latest version of the National Constitution (2008) access to clean water was declared a human right. Additionally, a new water law to replace that of 1972 has been under discussion since 2009. From early 2009 the National Assembly (Congress) drafted and discussed the new law with different sectors involved, including various indigenous organisations. However, lack of consensus and major protests led by the indigenous movements prevented its final approval by the Assembly in 2010. The main points of contention in the proposed law concerned the role of the state in terms of decision-making power and direct authority over water resources. Challenged by the need to increase and improve access to domestic and irrigation water and, at the same time, accept the autonomy of the WUAs, the sitting government brought forward a proposal that recognised the role of the WUAs as communitarian providers whilst also increasing the role of the state as regulator. Despite the fact that the law recognised communal and traditional forms of water management, thousands of people from peri-urban and rural areas who manage irrigation and drinking water at the local level marched to Quito and other cities or closed down main roads in protest (See Figure 4.7). According to them, the new law would allow the state to take full control over the resource and centralise

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<sup>56</sup> WASH: USAID's Water and Sanitation for Health Project, began in 1989. PRAGUAS: Rural and Small Towns Water Supply and Sanitation Project (World Bank loan executed by the MIDUVI 2000-2009). FASBSE: Proyecto de Fortalecimiento y Ampliación de los Servicios Básicos de Salud, run by the Ministry of Public Health.

water governance through the authority of the SENAGUA, leaving the Water User Associations without authority or power at the local level (*El Comercio*, 23, Sep, 2009).<sup>57</sup> In 2010, since consensus could not be gathered for approval in the National Assembly, the proposed law was archived until further notice.

**Figure 4.7 Indigenous and campesino communities gathered near Otavalo to protest against the proposed new Water Law. September 2009.**<sup>58</sup>



Even with the important efforts and significant increase in water services in the country during the past 50 years, only 19% of the rural population has access to drinking water inside the household and 40% outside or close to the house (Creamers, Ooijselaar et al. 2005; Terán 2005). Although various studies have pointed out the lack of community participation, projects continue to follow models which focus on the construction rather than on the sustainability of the systems (Borja Narajo 2002). Education and training components have not changed radically since the 1970s. For example, one of the main objectives in an on-going project carried out by the SAPSyRS is ‘improving’ the rural

<sup>57</sup> *El Comercio* (Quito). 2009: “Representantes de las juntas de agua fueron recibidos por la Asamblea” (September 23).

<sup>58</sup> My picture. September 2009



population's hygiene habits and practices and reducing waterborne diseases by encouraging personal cleanliness and hand washing (SAPSyRS 2010). Although these aspects of sanitation are important, most programmes continue to employ a particular 'civilising' language and understanding of the relationship between the project executor and its 'beneficiaries'. In other words, influenced by historically constructed notions about what are and what are not considered appropriate living conditions, a top-down approach to development interventions is still being applied.

At the same time, the roles and responsibilities of the state and the communities remain unclear (Solís Carrión 2006). On the one hand, as the protests that took place in 2009 showed, the communities that manage their drinking water systems through local WUAs see their role as providers as a right. In fact, despite problems with quality and quantity of water as well as with transparency in terms of fund administration, these systems are delivering water to approximately 4 million people in Ecuador (SAPSyRS 2010). On the other hand, the central state and the Ministry of Urban Development and Housing, which in theory should be supervising and offering technical support to the local WUAs, are not delivering. As a result, the approximately 7000 WUAs for domestic water that exist in Ecuador are left with a major task and very little support.

In summary, it is possible to say that the laws and reforms introduced since the 1970s combined with a lack of institutional support have led the WUAs to gain significant responsibilities and political position as local organisations. WUAs have gradually and perhaps unintentionally become more independent and autonomous. Although the 1972 Water Law and the 1979 Drinking Water User Association Law stated that the INERHI and IEOS should approve the internal rules of each irrigation and drinking WUA and obtain a yearly report from them, over time these requirements became a formality that only few complied with (Visscher, Quiroga et al. 1996). Furthermore, with the neoliberal reforms that favoured decentralisation policies and reconfigured the competence and resource availability of state bodies, these rules became obsolete.<sup>59</sup> Most drinking water systems that had been introduced without local consent went

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<sup>59</sup> INERHI was replaced in 1994 by the *Consejo Nacional de Recursos Hídricos* (CNRH) which functioned until 2008 as an independent institution with reduced competence and resources (Cremers et al. 2005:42). The IEOS was replaced by the Sub-secretariat for Water Supply, Sanitation and Solid Waste, which functions as part of the Ministry of Urban Development and Housing.

through a process of appropriation and reinterpretation of the governance arrangements and regulations that had been established at first.

Critics of excessive community participation/responsibility in service provision argue (Pacari 1998; Swyngedouw 2005; Marquardt 2012) that “governments – sometimes deliberately – alleviate themselves of certain responsibilities by expecting civil organisations to carry out those tasks” (Marquardt 2012:179). Through this process, citizenship rights and responsibilities are reconfigured and differences between urban and rural, *mestizo* and Indian are perhaps deepened. Although today rural communities in highland Ecuador expect and even request involvement in the building and maintenance of water systems, it is necessary to recognise that this model has an effect on social equality and inclusion. In other words, while rural and peripheral communities are expected to contribute and organise to access water, urban and especially the better-off neighbourhoods are not. These differences affect the way the state relates to its citizens, and citizens’ expectations of state service delivery, and most importantly hide “inequitable allocation of responsibility to solve problems” (*Ibid* 180). As later chapters will show in detail, increased autonomy has not necessarily translated into better or equal access to service, but has nevertheless opened important spaces for local organisation and self-regulating forms of natural resource management. Put in a different way, WUAs have become important platforms through which indigenous and *campesino* communities relate to the state and negotiate access to resources and citizenship rights.

## **Conclusion**

In this chapter I examined the national and international context in which water and sanitation projects first occurred in Ecuador. The first section looked at how, based on a series of scientific studies and artistic depictions produced between the 1920s and 1950s, academics and painters built an image of the Indian as dirty and unable to integrate into the nation state. These scholars argued that the unhygienic environment in which the majority of the indigenous population resided was reflected in what was considered to be a ‘degenerate’ Indian body. As a result of these views, campaigns to improve hygiene were implemented in rural areas of the country.

In the second section of the chapter I examined the various institutions and policies that followed early efforts to bring water and sanitation facilities to rural communities. It also looked at how the transformations in the way water has been managed by the state have allowed locally run drinking water systems to become autonomous and gain important responsibilities in terms of service provision at the local level.

In this sense, this chapter provides the background necessary to understand how and why water-related interventions took place in *comunidades* such as Mojandita de Curubi during the late 1970s and 1980s and how significant it is that these institutions are now considered central to the community (Chapter 5). The way water is managed, viewed and controlled today is the exact opposite of the homogenising *mestizo* project of the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century. Both the technologies and the institutions first introduced to ‘civilise’ the rural population have been re-interpreted in different ways to become thousands of autonomous, self-regulated water management organisations.

In addition to offering valuable background information on the changing history of early efforts to bring water and sanitation facilities to indigenous populations, this chapter also presents three important assertions that are central to the main argument of this thesis. First, that the state has been central to the processes of creating local organisations for water management. It is through state policies and the local’s interpretations and reactions to these same policies that WUAs have become important spaces through which indigenous and peasant communities demand autonomy. In this way, the chapter provides a historical grounding to the process of intervention – integration - reinterpretation, which most of the literature on water in the Andes has tended to assume and today defines as local traditions (Boelens 2008:8). Second, this chapter shows that access and control over water has deeply influenced the way rural populations experience their citizenship rights on a daily basis. From the early efforts to incorporate the rural population and form ‘proper’ citizens through policies to improve water provision and hygiene practices to the establishment of drinking water systems and the formation of WUAs, it is possible to say that water has also been an important aspect of the relationship between indigenous and peasant communities and the state. Third, this chapter shows that the labour duty system originally applied by the state for infrastructure building, also known as the ‘self-help and mutual-aid’ system, is now considered part of the communities’ rights it holds in relation to the state. Local

communities demand they contribute with the labour necessary to build any kind of infrastructure because they legitimise their decision-power over it based on the labour input they contributed towards the project. In other words, they gain ownership over local infrastructure during its building process. In line with the argument in the previous chapter, Chapter 4 also highlights the importance of labour duties in mediating the relationship between the state and the indigenous population. The next chapter explains in detail how the communities have appropriated this system of labour contribution, and why it is so important for the cohesion and sustainability to the communal organisation today.

Together Chapters 3 and 4 provided a historically grounded understanding of the relationship between the rural population and the state and showed that the state's policies have had a significant effect on communal water management practices. Most importantly, they have demonstrated that rather than a strong state 'imposing' itself on the local communities, weaknesses in the state apparatus and its abilities to intervene in rural areas are precisely at the core of local communities' autonomy as understood and practised today. The next two chapters turn to the ethnographic section of the thesis. By looking at the particular case of Mojandita de Curubi, an indigenous and peasant *comunidad* in the Northern highlands of Ecuador, these chapters examine the effects that the introduction of drinking water systems has had in terms of citizenship formation amongst a historically marginalised segment of the population.

## **5. The establishment of the piped water system and the Water User Association in Mojandita de Curubi**

The last chapter looked at how ideas and ideals of hygiene and cleanliness influenced policies to improve access to water and sanitation in rural areas in Ecuador. This chapter turns to the establishment of the piped water system and its user association in one particular community in highland Ecuador: Mojandita de Curubi. Rather than concentrating on the individual transformations that occurred in the *comunidad's* households after the arrival of piped water, in this chapter I explore the institutional and social effects of the establishment of drinking water systems. By carefully examining the formation of the Water User Association, this chapter will argue that an important form of social organisation emerged which has become central to the everyday functioning of the community. It will show how from being almost forcibly introduced, these local systems of water management have become intrinsic to the social and political dynamics of the community. It is precisely in the process of building and maintaining the water system that particular local conceptions and practices of resource management have developed. The notion of equity in resource distribution, for instance, is closely tied to the amount of labour each household has contributed to establishing and maintaining the system. Building the infrastructure with local labour allows people to take ownership of the resource and most importantly, claim the right to make decisions about it.

At the same time this chapter demonstrates that people that might not necessarily consider themselves indigenous, take part in collective activities, relate to the state through the communal structures and thus claim their rights through them. This shows that even if the *comunidad* is generally seen as a quintessentially indigenous organisation, other marginalised rural populations belong to it and use it as a vehicle to access resources on a daily basis. The case of *campesino* residents shows that it is not only indigenous Ecuadorians who are demanding the recognition of differentiated citizenship and of multiple forms and experiences of belonging to the nation state. *Campesino* populations are also, through their engagement in collective forms of resource management, actively claiming and redefining their role as citizens.

In the first part of the chapter I will present the history of the creation of the drinking water system in Mojandita de Curubi as told by those who participated in its construction. Through peoples' voices it becomes evident that although at first the water project was accepted only half-heartedly, after intense lobbying by the community leaders and other authorities, the *comuneros* slowly started taking part in building and organising processes. Here I underline the importance that the building of the system acquired over time among the community: it allowed people to take control and make decisions over the infrastructure as well as to establish a system of water rights. The second part of the chapter looks at the introduction of the Water User Association, how it functions, its rules, sanctions and general scope of influence. This later section examines the effects that administering drinking water locally has had on the community. The chapter finishes with a discussion of the various social, political and cultural functions that the WUA performs in the *comunidad*.

### **Intervention: the arrival of the drinking water system in Mojandita de Curubi**

Home to approximately 500 residents, Mojandita de Curubi lies on mountainous terrain on the slopes of Mount Mojanda at an altitude that ranges between 2600 and 3000 meters above sea level. Although Mojandita is only 3.5 km from Otavalo, it is outside what is considered the urban perimeter of the town. This community, a mix of indigenous and *mestizo* individuals, was founded by poor peasants who migrated here from other areas in the 1960s and 1970s to buy small plots of land from what used to be the Hacienda Mojanda. Although present day households' livelihood strategies are varied and include jobs in the town and other industries in the area, most families in Mojandita have between 1 to 3 hectares of land where they harvest a variety of crops for their own consumption as well as for the market (See Figure 5.1). Through communal effort, and with aid from the Ecuadorian state institutions and NGO's, Mojandita's residents have been able to obtain a range of services such as a primary school, a health centre, electricity and piped water.

**Figure 5.1** *Mojandita de Curubi's maize and quinoa fields*



Mojandita, like most other Andean rural communities, has relied on a combination of local labour and external aid to access resources. As this chapter demonstrates, it is precisely in the process of acquiring these services that communities like Mojandita strengthen their ties and boundaries in relation to neighbouring communities and the state. The formation and the history of the *comunidad* is understood by its residents in terms of the establishment of the *cabildo* and the WUA and the different periods during which various services have been obtained (See Table 5.1 for a timeline of service provision in Mojandita de Curubi).<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Unlike other indigenous and *campesino* communities, Mojandita de Curubi was not established by people that previously worked for the owner of what once was the local *hacienda*. They might have worked under the various systems of bonded labour that existed in highland Ecuador, but not for the Hacienda Mojanda's *patrón* (estate owner). Indians and *mestizos* that migrated to the area came from other places in the Imbabura or even the Pichincha province. For most of them, acquiring small plots of land was a very difficult process. While some of the current residents bought land directly from the previous hacienda owner, others purchased it from third parties, or arrived in Mojandita as agricultural workers and were only able to buy it after many years. In this sense, even though Mojandita is a product of the land reform (the hacienda owner decided voluntarily to sell the land), the community has not been built around a shared or single history of struggles around access to land, as many other indigenous and peasant communities in highland Ecuador have (for example Caluqui, a community that I often visited during fieldwork). Instead and as argued in this chapter, the (sense of) community in Mojandita has been built around the effort to access services and most importantly reassert control over them.

**Table 5.1 Timetable of services/institutions introduced in Mojandita de Curubi <sup>61</sup>**

YEAR	Source of Change	External Aid
1960	Community begins to organise	none
1975	Small classroom built by group of parents	uncertain
1975-80	Mojandita de Curubi Cabildo	none
1985	Establishment of piped water system	IEOS
1985	Improvements to the school	World Vision
1985-6	Community's meeting house built	uncertain
1986-7	Health centre	uncertain
1990-1	Electricity	Otavalo City Council
1997	Improvements to the health centre	Casa Mojanda
1998	Improvement to piped water system. New source of water added.	MIDUVI and Otavalo City Council
2002	Improvement to the health centre	Spanish NGO Guaguacuna
2002	Water User Association's meeting house built	uncertain
2006-7	Improvement to irrigation channels	CORSINOR /MAGAP
2007	Street lighting installed	Otavalo City Council

Using data from interviews as well as from participant observation during my stay in the Mojanda area, in this section I will present people's accounts of the introduction of piped water to the *comunidad*. The idea is to examine on the one hand how ideas of hygiene and progress influenced the introduction of piped water and on the other how people remember and understand it today. Why were there different views about the need for water? Why were there some people who refused to work? Did they acquire the right to water? How do people in Mojandita de Curubi interpret what happened in the 1980s today? What does it mean for the *comuneros* to have built the system themselves?

It is not entirely clear how and when the initiative to construct the piped water system first emerged in Mojandita de Curubi. There are different versions of how it all began, but it seems that a range of circumstances, both within and outside the community, coincided during the early 1980s and resulted in the construction of the piped water system in 1985. Like many other communities in the Andes, people in Mojandita had

<sup>61</sup> The information on this table was gathered during a focus group in the community where we discussed the history of Mojandita de Curubi. Some of the sources of external aid were unclear or uncertain.



traditionally fetched water from streams, *pucyos* (water springs in Quichua) or from an open channel, locally known as the *acequia*, which started upstream and finished in La Joya, the downstream neighbouring *comunidad*. Unlike the few who lived near a spring, most people had to collect water from the channel that was also used to wash clothes, to feed and clean animals, to dispose of household rubbish and to flush wastewater. To avoid getting polluted water from the *acequia*, people would wake up early in the morning to collect it before others began using and polluting it. Others would instead walk for at least an hour to the nearby river that flows from upstream *páramo* springs and is usually very clean. Although there were many instances when children as well as grownups would get ill, presumably from drinking contaminated water, it was only after a schoolgirl died in the early 1980s that the idea of installing pipes began to circulate around the *comunidad*. Two teachers at the local school played an important role in this respect (white-*mestizo* who live in Otavalo and travel every day to the *comunidad*). One of the teachers, who is also the director of the school, explained the situation as follows:

*There were two of us in charge of all the children from first to sixth grade. One day one of the girls stopped coming to class, and as we do even these days here in the countryside, we went to look for her at home. Here is not like in the cities, that when a child misbehaves he is sent home, no, here we thank God when they actually come to class! So we went to look for her, and then someone told us that she was ill and that she had been taken to the curandero [the healer]. We went there [curandero's house] and found the poor girl while they were bathing her with nettle leaves, flowers, I don't know... with a lot of things. Then we asked why don't you take her to the hospital? They said no, that the curandero was going to heal her there. So the other teacher and I went to the hospital and immediately the sanitary inspector was sent to get the girl. He took her to the hospital and found out that she had some kind of kidney illness that was not possible to cure. After three days she passed away. As you would imagine, the comunidad and the family were very upset with us; "It is the teacher's responsibility!" Under those circumstances **we needed a professional view, from those who know**. They came from the hospital to analyse the water that was from the acequia, which starts in huts [upper community] and goes all the way to La Joya [downstream neighbouring community] and was used both by animals and people. Then they [sanitary inspectors] blamed the water [for the girl's death], which was the normal thing to do. At that point, we began to work and find out ways to at least pipe the water [my emphasis].*

*Gerardo Crespo  
Head Teacher at the Federico Gonzales Suárez # 2 School  
Mojandita de Curubi*

This passage tells us a lot about the underlying circumstances, cultural practices and power struggles in rural Ecuador that still persist. First, as discussed in Chapters 3 and

4, it shows the role teachers had and still have in ‘incorporating’ the indigenous and rural population into the nation-state, which in practice meant (and means) ‘incorporating’ them into the mainstream white-*mestizo* society. In this respect, it also shows the effort that these teachers would make to educate children, having all grades in one classroom and even going to find them in their houses. Second, the cultural differences in beliefs about health are also quite evident in this passage. While for the teachers going to the *curandero* was considered (almost) ‘barbaric’, for the girl’s family and other community members, it was the natural place to go. As a result, the state in the form of the teachers and the hospital staff *had* to intervene. I am not trying to judge the teachers here, but instead trying to understand their roles and most importantly their duties, given the historical context and background to the situation. In this respect, it is knowledge and the social and cultural values attached to it that become the most important aspects to analyse. The different actors as well as their beliefs and traditions are clearly contrasted, with the *curandero* on one side and the ‘professional view’ from ‘those who know’ on the other. It is precisely these types of everyday experiences that are at the core of the demands for inclusion and differentiated citizenship in Ecuador today.

The girl’s death gave the teachers a compelling reason to campaign amongst the *comuneros* (community members), especially amongst those who were sending their children to school. It became an opportunity to ‘educate’ parents about household hygiene and living conditions and to further integrate the local population into what is thought of as mainstream *mestizo* society. The tragedy coincided with the work that World Vision, an international Christian NGO, was conducting in the area. They were supporting communities in building schools and sanitary facilities. At first the teachers approached World Vision, who were willing to help, but withdrew due to the community’s slow response and also funding issues. As an alternative the teachers, together with some local leaders, approached the IEOS (Ecuadorian Institute of Sanitary Works) and managed to get their support to work in Mojandita de Curubi and La Joya to provide the *acequia* users with piped water. Following the ‘self-help and mutual-aid’ model discussed in Chapter 4, the IEOS agreed to provide material and technical support while the community had to supply labour and find the possible water source. This meant that local residents would basically get involved in the building phase of the project, while leaving its design, planning and conceptualisation to the ‘experts’. Under

this model *participation* was narrowly conceived, and was restricted to local people contributing their labour to the construction of the system and attending meetings called by the community leaders (Borja Narajo 2002:52-56).

Despite the approval from the IEOS, getting the project started was not a straightforward process and at first the majority of *comuneros* were reluctant to work to install the tanks and pipes that would bring water to their households. According to the both of the school's teachers I interviewed, this attitude could be explained in terms of "lack of knowledge" about the importance of clean water and hygiene. The teachers' understanding of the situation was not only based on but also reinforced the common assumption that the rural population was ignorant about the need for clean water and better sanitation. It also followed the idea that the duty of those who 'know' was to bring 'civilization' to 'passive' recipients of knowledge (Borja Narajo 2002:54). The following passages are taken from the interview I conducted with two teachers at the Mojandita de Curubi school in May 2009.

*There was lack of interest because they did not feel the need to have something they didn't know about. They did not know that by drinking water from the acequia, they would always contract illnesses that would lead to their death. But they did not believe that.*

Miguel Alvarez

*[...] they would not **recognise** the importance of the potable water programme. We would get materials, we would give them latrines, but they would not build their latrine, they would make corrals for the pigs [...] in order for people to have conscience about the value of water, to know how to use water [...] we have fought, and are still working on that [...]*

Gerardo Crespo

However according to Mojandita's inhabitants, some *comuneros* could not believe that they would ever get water in each of their homes, while others did not see the need (they had access to other sources of clean water) and therefore had no incentive to work. Rather than simply an issue of knowledge of the importance of having access to clean water, the unwillingness to work had more to do with practicalities and the likelihood of change. People wondered whether the promise would ever become reality, and most importantly if it would be worth providing free labour towards that end. Pedro Quispe, an Otavalo Indian who was the leader of the Upper La Joya *comunidad* and played a central role during the systems' construction, explained people's first reaction to the possibility of piped water.

*We did not want piped water, improved water... why piped? What was the need for piped water? We had been living fine with the acequia water...*

Rita Chicaiza, a middle-aged Cayambi indigenous woman, who soon after marriage had moved with her husband from a nearby *comunidad* to Mojandita, also participated in the construction of the system. Similar to Pedro Quispe, when telling about the *comuneros* reactions she said:

*They wouldn't believe, most people did not believe that water would arrive. A neighbour said: "Nooo... there won't be any water, it will not be seen..."*

Don Vicente Andrade, one of the first settlers in Mojandita de Curubi who in addition to actively participating in the construction process helped find the source from where it became possible to collect and pipe water, also thinks people did not believe that it was going to happen.

*Some would listen, others wouldn't, did not want to. I remember everything... [they would say]: "How are we going to bring water? When are we going to get the water?" But things are not like that, we have to work, we have to do it, to see whether it is possible or not.*

Convincing people to work was a very difficult task which entailed the continuous efforts of both the teachers and a few local leaders. To gather the necessary support, they called various general community meetings and went house to house talking to the local residents. In the next passage Rita Chicaiza describes the effort undertaken by her now deceased husband, a former community leader, to try and convince people.

*My husband who spoke Quichua and Spanish, used to say: "The water is going to pass through your home, in your doorstep you will have the tap, it will not be far away like in other comunidades. This will come to each household, you should take it with a good attitude, you should not reject it just like that... I have called you to the meetings, and you don't want to participate, but you are still in time, there is still time, we have to build small tanks, reservoirs, there is still time to help covering the pipes, laying tubes, there is time, keep working, keep supporting, don't be like that, think that you will have water here in your doorstep". Like that, talking to them, he managed to convince people to work, and the water was installed...*

Once the majority of the *comuneros* in Mojandita de Curubi and La Joya agreed, the piped water system was built in several phases using the *minga* arrangement. Traditionally across the Andes, agricultural and building activities that require intense labour have been done by calling for a work party, *faena* (term used in Peru) or *minga* (Quichua term used in Ecuador). The *minga* has been the usual way of helping each

other during the planting and harvesting seasons, when more than the individual household's labour is required (CEPCU 1999). A *minga* also takes place when a single household needs extra help to construct a house or undertake some other type of labour intensive activity. Extended family members and neighbours are summoned to the *minga*. In return, those who attend get plenty of food and drink and the right to ask for help when needed. It is thought that the *minga* originated in pre-Columbian forms of social and political organisation amongst the indigenous civilisations. During the colonial and early republican period *mingas* were also conducted inside the hacienda systems and used as a mechanism to support state-sponsored infrastructure works where labour intensive activities were often required (Clark and Becker 2007). While *mingas* for agricultural activities are no longer so usual, *mingas* related to communal resources or to building and maintaining different kinds of infrastructure at the local level are a common practice in the Otavalo area (CEPCU 1999).

After a suitable water source was located and approved by the IEOS's technicians, materials were delivered to Mojandita. Over a period of many weeks - even months - of communal work, the local residents had to carry sand, cement and large metal pipes to the building site, which is located at about 3066m above sea level (a 30 minute uphill walk on a small path from the road). Later, ditches were dug to lay the main pipe, which goes downhill to where the central collection and treatment tank was built approximately 3 km from the spring (Figures 5.2, 5.3 and 5.4). From this tank, and using the natural inclination of the terrain, a number of pipes were directed to the inhabited areas in Mojandita and to Upper La Joya. Smaller pipes that branch out of the main one were used to connect single households. Finally each household had to prepare to dispose of the wastewater. A system was put in place that is still used in most households today: water from washing and cleaning is directed to the fields and water used in toilets is collected in septic tanks. Today there are approximately 100 households connected to the system.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Although there are approximately 105 households in Mojandita de Curubi, not all of them have access to water from the piped water system. Around 15-20 households get their water from the neighbouring community, Mojanda Mirador. Households located in the upper section of the *comunidad* and therefore above the spring or source of water are not served by the piped water system as it works with gravity. Finally, around 20 households in the upper section of la Joya (located below Mojandita de Curubi) access water from Mojandita de Curubi.



***Figure 5.2. Francisco Chiza, President of the WUA in Mojandita de Curubi, showing one of two springs where water is collected, 2009.***



***Figure 5.3. Main pipe that takes water from the spring to the collection tank***





**Figure 5.4.** *The central collection tank, Mojandita de Curubi, 2009*



In addition to the long working hours, carrying materials and hard, physical labour that were described to me, in Mojandita many believe that building the water system also cost the lives of some people in the *comunidad*. The rationale behind this belief is closely related to the importance of reciprocity in Andean cosmology. Similar to the *minga* arrangement where once you help someone out you can ask for help in return when needed, people believe that nature, or mother earth, took these lives in return for allowing the *comunidad* to use that particular source of water or *pogyo* (quichua). Margarita Chancozo, a Cayambi indigenous woman who came from the neighbouring province of Pichincha to live in Mojandita de Curubi during the 1970s, explained to me that her husband, who had been actively involved in the building process, had had a dream where a man with a large hat, looking like a *patrón* (landowner) was asking her husband to ‘offer’ him two persons. At first, he didn’t know what it meant, but not long after he had the dream, Matias Cruz died while working in a *minga*, after being hit by rubble that fell off the side of the road. Later Margarita herself had a miscarriage and lost her *wawita* (baby girl), making it two lives lost, or ‘given’ during the building process; precisely what the man in the dream had asked for. Margarita’s miscarriage also holds a particular meaning in the local belief system which advises that pregnant women should not work or stand close to water because it can bring bad luck (stop the

water flow) or harm them. This notion was again explained to me while I was participating in a *minga*, and a young woman who was pregnant was told to go as far away as possible from the *pogyo*, otherwise she would bring bad luck to the water system. Fifteen years after the water system was completed, it was necessary to expand it and Margarita's husband dreamed again. This time, it was a group of Otavaleño Indians, wearing their traditional clothes (black trousers and white shirts with poncho) asking for beer.

*That was the dream, they were asking for beer. So a group of people went to drop food and beer, up there in the water spring, in the pogyo, the one for the new system. That is the water that we use now. It is nice, that water...*

### **The meaning of water**

Although at first people in Mojandita de Curubi were reluctant to work, the fact that they ended up building the system themselves holds a significant meaning. It is precisely because of communal work that today residents of Mojandita de Curubi have a school, electricity and water. This also means that 'progress', as it is sometimes called, or what is understood as development for the community, is the product of their own effort. Collective work parties or the *minga* system have allowed marginal localities like Mojandita de Curubi to access services that the state has been unable to provide and at the same time to increase the ability to control them at the communal level. Through communal work, people have invested in improving a particular place and in its local institutions as a way of extending "the degree to which they can exercise control over their conditions of existence" (Bebbington 2000:513). Margarita Chancozo describes in the next passage the significance of community effort.

*When they started looking for water they found it up in the mountain, a water spring, and then the piped water project began. Then we worked, everyone did, we did it through the minga. This water is product of the minga, of the effort of all the community members. We are always working. It is our collective strength, men and women working. I worked too, also my husband, making the tanks to collect drinking water*

Acquiring infrastructure through local effort and work has created an important sense of responsibility, belonging, resource ownership and general improvement in Mojandita de Curubi. In this respect, communal work has been central in creating a sense of community as well as in building community boundaries (Bourque 1997). These effects are not confined to the this particular site; other studies of communal water management



have observed similar outcomes in the Andes and elsewhere (Boelens and Hoogendam 2001). For instance, Clay Arnold (2008) argues that “the experience of building and maintaining the historic *acequia* system through which water was shared by community members was transformative in building a sense of community among the residents of northern New Mexico”(Ingram, Whiteley et al. 2008:13). Furthermore, Boelens (2006) argues that in addition to creating a sense of community, the collective effort put into the construction and administration of water systems in the Andes has allowed communities to consolidate a diverse system of water rights and build what he has termed “hydraulic identity”. Hydraulic identity refers to the fact that users identify with a water system and that their identity is often expressed in relation to it, which entails a general consensus of cooperation and adherence to the rules established by the association or group (Beccar, Boelens et al. 2001:39). Although this concept refers specifically to collective systems of irrigation water, I argue and demonstrate throughout this chapter and thesis that the notion of “hydraulic identity” can also be applied in the case of drinking water systems. The establishment of locally-operated domestic water arrangements has resulted in an important sense of community, provided a strong platform for self organisation and a mechanism for allocating water rights, all of which are aspects of resource access and distribution which local residents consider to be central to their cultural and political practices.

As noted in Chapter 4, increased autonomy and excessive community involvement in service provision, can be seen as a way of relieving the state of its responsibilities as well as of its financial obligations (Mehta, Marshall et al. 2007; Marquardt 2012). It could even be said that transferring rights and responsibilities to local water user groups allows neoliberalism, or an agenda inspired by privatisation and decentralisation, to thrive. While taking these points into account, in this chapter I am interested in discussing how these increased ‘responsibilities’ have unfolded at the local level, and most importantly how they have influenced people’s experiences of citizenship. I suggest that in the context of a history of marginality, acquiring services, especially through a self-help model, has had important consequences on the way in which local users claim and legitimise access and governance over natural resources, to which we turn in the next section.

### **‘Constructing’ water rights**

While collective work has allowed marginal areas such as Mojandita to improve their infrastructure and service provision and build a sense of community, it has also established a mechanism of resource access, or water rights. Put in a different way and borrowing from Jesse Ribot and Nancy Peluso’s “A Theory of Access” (2003), collective work constitutes the mechanism by which access is gained, maintained and controlled at the communal level. Most importantly, this means that constructing the infrastructure using local labour has given the community the power to decide which users are included in (or excluded from) the piped water system. Ruf and Gilot (1995) describe similar processes in their study of water rights in an irrigation channel in the north of Ecuador, where communal work has allowed local residents to legitimise the use and distribution of resources, specially water.

The construction of an infrastructure constitutes the beginning of a social process that places the access to the water in the centre of the socioeconomic relationship between water users and those ones who are recognised as such. It is necessary to consider that the group of founders of a canal had to appropriate a resource, indeed by means as the work of the water intake, but also through the general recognition of other people who reside in the region. It means holding a title to defend from additional demands and to prohibit all new work of intake that could modify the flow caught by the first canal.

It is precisely through participating in or contributing to the construction of infrastructure that users establish collective and individual rights to access water. On one hand, as the community builds a system, they acquire the right to benefit from and use a particular source of water *vis à vis* other potential users (neighbouring communities, farms, industries, etc.). This right is generally recognised by the state in the form of specific drinking water concessions granted to the community. On the other hand, during the construction process, and based on the amount of time, effort and work invested, households gain the right to access the resource at the household level. In other words, those households who have actively taken part in the *minga* or many *mingas* carried out to construct and maintain the water system gain the right to use the service. Acquiring the right to access water also means gaining the right to participate in decision-making in relation to the water system, or what in practice means the power to define the criteria of how, when and why to include (or exclude) different actors in the arrangement (Boelens and Doornbos 2001:284).

Although this is a generalised practice across the Andean region, each community has

its own way of ‘dividing’ water and ‘measuring’ participation, and therefore of allocating water resources (Boelens and Doornbos 2001; Boelens and Hoogendam 2001; Gelles and Boelens 2003). Moreover, as Rutgerd Boelens (2006:30) notes, “these multiple forms of water rights are imbued in the historical, political, economical, ecological, cultural, agro-ecological and socio-legal relations which determine the nature, the value and the function of water and the rights attached to it, which are also closely related to each community’s identity”. Once translated into larger political debates, such rather diverse systems of allocating water rights could be seen as a quintessential example of the struggles for the recognition of differentiated citizenship in Ecuador. While communities fight for access to water (for equality *vis à vis* other actors, industries, farms etc.) they also fight for the recognition and maintenance of their diverse forms of controlling the resource (for the right to difference).

Given how central participation is in establishing water rights, ‘measuring’ it has become a vital aspect of the arrangement.<sup>63</sup> Since building infrastructure normally requires more than one outing or *minga* to be completed, the *raya* is used. The *raya* (which translates to line) is a counting system to determine how many times a household has contributed. At the beginning of each *minga*, the community’s secretary calls the names of all heads of household registered on a list, and notes if they are present by drawing a line next to their names. Each household has the obligation to send a man, woman or young adult to the *minga* in order to be registered as having contributed a day’s work, i.e. to obtain a *raya*. Because there are particular jobs that require more effort than others, participating in one difficult *minga* can account for more than one *raya*. Also a household can contribute more than one person in a particular *minga* day, which would then count for two *rayas*. Alternatively, as we will see in Chapter 6, residents might contribute in kind, with vehicles to transport materials or with the actual cement, sand etc., needed for construction and maintenance of the system. Households that are unable to contribute work because its members are too old or ill are allowed to contribute food and/or drink, and in some instances do not have to contribute.

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<sup>63</sup> Participation is broadly defined and encompasses contributions in the form of labour, time, money, expertise, materials etc. In the context of the Andean practices this means equal reciprocal exchanges (of labour, money etc) that have allowed the community to gain access to different resources. When applied to the Water User Associations it means sharing the responsibilities of building, maintenance and decision-making processes relating to the water infrastructure.

To be able to finish constructing the water system and at the same time to gain the right to access water, Mojandita de Curubi's *comuneros* had decided that every potential user (household) had to accumulate 100 *rayas*. If they failed to comply, they would have to contribute with money or in kind (food and other). In this context, as Don Vicente Andrade and Rita Chicaiza note in the following quotes, time was very important because it reflected the opportunities a household had to work in a *minga* and complete the pre-established number of *rayas* and thus avoid paying for work hours, or *rayas* in money.

*We wanted everyone to have water, but people wouldn't listen. We would call people, we would visit each household so that they would get out and work... I wonder what they were thinking, perhaps that we were lazy, that we were just letting time pass by. We went all the way to La Joya, it was for their own good, not only for mine. Those who did not participate and did not get all the rayas, did not get water. In order to get this water, each person had to complete 100 rayas. [...] those who were later convinced to work, worked, but had to pay with money to complete all the rayas. This is because they didn't listen in time [emphasis added].*

Don Vicente Andrade

*Many wouldn't believe, not one, many, so they did not work until they saw that it was going to happen, that there was going to be piped water. They had to pay to get it [...] The community refused to give water to those who did not work. Some remained without water; one does not have water until now. He goes around looking for water, and now that the acequia is not running, he has to ask the neighbours for it [emphasis added].*

Rita Chicaiza

In the following passage Jaime Anrango, an Otavalo indigenous leader who served as president of Mojandita de Curubi, explains how residents acquire the right to use water today, given that the system has already been built and the opportunity to contribute to its construction is obviously gone. He also shows that the right to access water not only depends on the construction process but also on the ability of the users to continue contributing towards the system's maintenance and operation, or what in essence means sharing the responsibility in the long term. The right to access water has to be earned over time with work invested in the improvement of the community.

*In the comunidad, those who have access to water are those comuneros that live there and that are permanently performing communal work. There are some however that even if they live in the comunidad do not collaborate with the local processes or the communal work. So there are two tariff systems for allocating [new] concessions [gaining the right to use water]. For the young people who,*

*from an early stage, have been collaborating there is low cost in contrast to those who also live in the community but don't participate and therefore have to pay the double. This is a decision taken by the majority in the comunidad, because it is not fair that some work and others only profit from the end result [...] The majority though, and independently of that, have worked hard for the improvement of the comunidad.*

As we can see in the previous passages, involvement/participation is also used to 'measure' active membership in the *comunidad*. In many of the interviews I conducted people described themselves as active members of the community, in contrast to those more passive ones who rarely take part in local activities. For example, Don Vicente Andrade (in his seventies) describes himself as a peasant and active *comunero*, which means that he takes part in (including organising) most communal activities, such as *mingas*, meetings and festivities, even though he lives in the upper limits of Mojandita, at 3000m, and it takes him at least 45 minutes to an hour to walk down to the main meeting and working areas, which are located at 2700m. Inactive or less active members of the community, would, in contrast to Don Vicente, not attend meetings and *mingas* and risk losing (or never gaining) rights. This is the case of José Vega, one of the few local inhabitants who did not participate in the construction of the system and does not have access to water today. He still gets his water from the nearby *acequia* or from neighbours. Being an active *comunero* is equated with following the local forms of membership, which rest on the obligation to participate in the social and political life of the community and are as a result embedded in processes of access and exclusion (Kabeer 2002).

Active participation is so closely tied to the right to access water that when a young person turns 18 (even if they live with their parents or are unmarried) they start working in the *mingas* and accumulating their own set of *rayas* (working days). Involvement in communal activities from an early age is a way of securing the right to water and other privileges so that by the time he/she forms their own family they will have earned access to the various services available locally, especially water. This custom is a general practice in rural areas and should also be understood as part of the internal rules that each *comunidad* has, where belonging through participation is highly valued and seriously respected. If analysed from a rights perspective, this bears a remarkable resemblance to the notion of citizenship and is an excellent representation for it. While in the national context a person who turns 18 years old automatically has the right to

vote and thus officially becomes an active Ecuadorian citizen, in the community context, turning 18 means acquiring both the right to share and the responsibility to contribute. Involvement - as in voting and taking part of the communal activities - is the means to officially become Ecuadorian as much as it is to become a *comunero*.

Despite the *minga* and *raya* systems being central, nevertheless differences exist amongst those who provide labour in the community. While most poor households in the *comunidad* send one family member to work in every *minga*, others who are better off tend to pay a *jornalero* or a person to replace them. This means that even if they are, in theory, contributing towards different communal activities, the more privileged members of the *comunidad* are not always directly involved in the system. In addition to class differences, racial stereotypes also define the local and political interactions. Because the *minga* is viewed as an indigenous and peasant tradition, some who see themselves as *mestizo* and urban (modern / detached from the land) choose not to participate in it, and instead prefer to pay fines, pay someone else to go or contribute in other ways (vehicles for transport, food or drink for parties). Yet this lack of involvement is not meekly accepted by the rest of the community, and through small symbolic acts of resistance such as imposing higher water rates for the hostel and hacienda owners or by suspending the water provision without prior notification, these attitudes of class and racial differentiation are challenged and contested. Most telling is the fact that the majority of these less active individuals are not referred to as *compañeros* or colleagues/comrades, neither are they individually identified as *comuneros* or community members, both of which are usual terms used to describe membership and belonging to the *comunidad*. This topic is further analysed in Chapter 6, where I look at the *minga* in detail.

Active, and, most importantly, physical effort is therefore used to maintain a sense of equality amongst the users as much as it serves as a mechanism to evaluate and exclude others (refuse the right to access water). This social valuation arrangement assesses effort in different ways, and gives more value to physical effort than to donations of for instance, food and money. Although a monetary value is given to physical labour it only constitutes a way of 'evening out' or equalising the different contributions made by the users, but as explained above it does not have the same significance or meaning as actual physical labour. In this way, the fact that the system was built by its users and

that each time they contributed was and continues to be accounted for also creates a particular notion of equity amongst those who have earned the right to access water.

### **The value of water**

Unlike potable water systems in most Ecuadorian towns and cities, where gaining and maintaining the right to access water has a 'price' or monetary value, as demonstrated in the previous section, in most rural and peri-urban communities it is acquired by the act of contributing towards its building and maintenance. Work and especially continuous participation gives water a value that is difficult to measure in monetary terms. This was explained by Rita Chicaiza who described to me the difference between the water she has in her home in the outskirts of Otavalo, for which she had to pay 1.5 million *Sucres* (the former Ecuadorian currency) and the one she uses in Mojandita de Curubi, for which she and her husband worked so hard. Doña Rita referred to the water in Otavalo as "bought water", water that had a price. A new water connection can also have a monetary value in the *comunidad*, but only when a person has been unable to complete all the *rayas* (as expressed in the above quotes), or when a new user arrives in the community (builds a new house) and has to 'compensate' for the work others did in the past. In short, the value of water is measured against the effort that individual households and the community as a whole have put into constructing and maintaining the system. Similarly to Arnold's (2009:55) observation in relation to the residents of the San Luis Valley in the United States, "water is not simply a natural resource for ever more efficient or profitable consumption, the underlying assumption of many market-related policy proposals. Water is much more. It is also a social good, the basis for, among other things, uniquely valued identities, relationships, and civic associations."

Water has a variety of meanings and values that cannot be separated from the *comunidad*. As expressed by Nina Pacari (1998:281), a high profile indigenous leader in Ecuador, the "indigenous world understands water as *a part of the whole*". Water entails productive, social and cultural values, which, I would argue, are shared by indigenous and *mestizo-campesinos* alike. The piped water system in Mojandita de Curubi is the result of collective effort, which is in turn used to value the resource against specific criteria, developed locally over a long period of time. It reflects hours, days and months of heavy manual labour, money and other resources invested in establishing it as well as a shared responsibility to maintain it. As a result, both indigenous and *mestizo-*

*campesinos* “understand water as an intrinsically communal social good. [... It] signifies what its provision both requires and sustains – participation with others in a common life” (Clay Arnold 2009:43). Water has at the same time acquired a significant political value, particularly in terms of legitimising decision-making over resource distribution at the local level (Boelens 2006). By managing water collectively, local residents articulate a relationship with the state; they exert what they consider their right to access and control it locally; they become political agents.

The first part of the chapter showed that even if at first piped water technology was presented by the teachers as a way of improving hygiene and living conditions in the community (a view not necessarily shared by most people), it seems that during and after the building process the community took control and symbolically appropriated the system (or at least the majority who participated and today have water). Even if at first some felt they did not need it while others thought it would not happen, it was precisely through communal work that the technology was internalised by most. Through long working days, food, money, time and even with some lives, Mojandita’s *comuneros* invested heavily in the building of the piped water system. All the types of investment and effort put into its construction are nowadays used to legitimise autonomy and thus the different ways in which Mojandita and other communities decide to use and manage resources locally.

Patterns of access and exclusion are defined locally and determined by the principle of contribution or active membership. This has direct repercussions on how and by whom access to water is gained as well as on the general rules that are applied to run the Water User Association. In this context, the value water holds for people goes beyond its benefits as a natural resource: water also symbolises a political, social and cultural resource. The next section discusses such issues in detail, and explores the impact that managing water has on different aspects of social life in the *comunidad*. It analyses what ensued once the system was installed and a Water User Association formed to operate it.



### **Introducing the Water User Association: beyond access, towards resource control and claiming citizenship rights**

In this section I examine the introduction of the WUA in one specific community in highland Ecuador. Using data collected in Mojandita de Curubi I explore the rules of water management and discuss the political and cultural effects that WUAs have had at the local level. This section also indicates some of the negative effects that result from collective water management, such as unequal power struggles for resource control between people of different ethnic origin, social class and gender. I will argue that through the rules and the sanctions exercised by the WUAs the communities' internal dynamics have been transformed and are today inseparable from water management. I will also suggest that in addition to the *cabildo* or local community council, the Water User Association has gained considerable power at the local level, and has since become an important vehicle of political and social agency for the indigenous and *campesino* communities, a topic that has not previously been directly addressed by academic research on the Ecuadorian Andes (Korovkin 2001; Yashar 2005; Clark and Becker 2007; Colloredo-Mansfield 2009).

Once the pipes and tanks were installed and ready to run in Mojandita de Curubi, the Water User Association was introduced by the IEOS (Ecuadorian Institute of Sanitary Works) to manage the new infrastructure. To comply with the 1979 law regulating drinking water management, the system's users, in this case representatives from most Mojandita's households and some from La Joya (the system only serves a few households in the neighbouring community La Joya), formed a WUA or formally known as the *Junta de Usuarios de Agua Potable de Mojandita de Curubi*. The new form of association included a governing board elected every two years, consisting of a president, secretary, treasurer and two council members (normally one of them plays the role of the system's operator). Only the treasurer and the operator are entitled to receive monetary remuneration from monthly water fees, while the others are honorary posts. The first governing board of the WUA in Mojandita was formed by a group of both indigenous and *mestizo* men that had, together with the teachers, worked hard to gather support inside and outside the *comunidad* to make the water project a reality. Additionally, as stipulated in the 1979 law, the users had to discuss and decide the rules that would apply to their own association and then present these to the IEOS for final

approval. These rules are loosely based on a template provided originally by the IEOS and today by the Sub-secretariat for Water Supply, Sanitation and Solid Waste (SAPSyRS).

In theory once a WUA is established and legally recognised under the Water User Association Law of 1979, the state, *via* the IEOS (today the Sub-secretariat for Water Supply, Sanitation and Solid Waste SAPSyRS) has an obligation to train its members and especially its elected officers in various administrative and operational skills. However, in Mojandita, only a few people, mostly men, have received formal training in management and on how to operate the system. This is for example training in how to fix broken pipes or even in basic tasks such as applying chlorine or other purifying agents to the water in the main collection tanks. As a result, most of the people serving on the WUA's governing board have been taught different skills from previous leaders or are chosen because they have some kind of practical knowledge that can be applied to their particular job. Similarly to other cases reported in Ecuador (Visscher, Quiroga et al. 1996), the members of the WUA's board in Mojandita are generally men. Women (and children) have been targeted instead through hygiene education campaigns led by the teachers and the local nurse.

As observed in other parts of Ecuador, lack of training, differences between women and men, lack of funds, as well as environmental degradation have directly affected the efficiency, quality, sustainability and equity of the system in Mojandita (Visscher, Quiroga et al. 1996; Borja Narajo 2002). There is a lot of room for improvement to the system's infrastructure (new pipes, larger collection tanks), transparency mechanisms (how monthly fees are used), gender equality in terms of leadership positions, and conservation of the water resources. In terms of the state's role and competence, there is also a lot of confusion about by whom, when and how support should be provided (Solís Carrión 2006). As explained in Chapter 4, this is due to the fact that the institutional and legal frameworks related to water in Ecuador are very tenuous and fragmented between different state bodies (National Secretariat of Water, Ministry of Urban Development and Housing, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Environment) and different administrative levels (national, province, and municipal). In fact, on repeated occasions, several Mojandita residents and leaders mentioned the lack of state support especially in terms of training provision and infrastructure-technological improvement.

However, at the same time they expressed quite clearly that the system's rules, sanctions and operation should be the *comunidad's* responsibility, despite the problems mentioned above (lack of transparency, efficiency, etc.). All of these factors which are in practice hindering the performance and sustainability of piped water arrangements are shared by many rural communities and are therefore reflected in the broader indigenous and peasant political demand for equality in difference, or equal access to resources while allowing difference in terms of decision making over them.

### **The rules of water management: managing the technology, managing the community?**

The 1979 Law allows each association to decide and establish their own rules, based on a template provided by the state, but taking into account the variety of geographical locations, technologies and operational requirements. In order to gain legal status these rules have to be approved by the IEOS, but since its closure the SAPSyRS (Sub-secretariat for Water Supply, Sanitation and Solid Waste) has taken on this responsibility. When it is considered necessary, WUAs are able to change or add new rules which also have to be officially approved. The regulations approved by each WUA are generally drafted into 10-12 articles, each containing a series of sub-clauses describing the rules. The openness of this arrangement has been crucial in terms of the political effects that the WUA has had on communal organisation and on legitimising the notion of a right to self-governance over natural resources that prevails amongst indigenous and *campesino comunidades* in highland Ecuador. To exemplify the types of documents that have been drafted, I will describe and explain the outcome of some of the rules currently applied in Mojandita de Curubi. From the different rules, rights, obligations and sanctions listed below, it becomes evident that participation, *mingas* and local labour are central to the arrangement. Moreover, rather than being a fixed system, the rules that sustain the WUA are constantly re-negotiated.

The document used by the WUA in Mojandita de Curubi starts with an article that deals with the association's meetings, the topics that should be discussed in such meetings and how often they should take place. The second article describes the types of connection or service that exist in the *comunidad*. These are divided into two categories: residential (all households that use water for human consumption) and commercial (proprietors of haciendas and hotels). In the Mojandita case, this is important because

there are three small country hotels/hostels and a few *haciendas* in the area that require more water. Following the distinction between the two categories of water users, this article moves on to describe the most basic rule of any WUA, the right to access water. As I explained in the previous section of this chapter, the right to access water is closely tied to involvement in the construction *and* maintenance of the system and applies to all users even if they are in the “commercial” category.

*Art 2. b) To approve a domestic connection, the WUA will review the community participation list; and see whether the petitioner has completed the number of work days or mingas, which will be valued according to the value established at the time of the petition.*

This means that if a petitioner wants to gain what is locally known as the “connection right”, but has not completed the predetermined number of *mingas*, he/she would have to pay a pre-established monetary amount, equivalent to the working days that were entailed in building the system. This amount would be double if the person soliciting a new connection lived in the community during the building process but chose not to work. At the time of my fieldwork in Mojandita, new users that had not resided in the community during the construction and improvement of the system had to pay US \$150 while those who had resided there but not worked would have had to pay US \$300. The price is higher for non-domestic connections with commercial purposes such as those intended for hostels and larger farms. As a result of these rules, installing a new connection can be very expensive and poor people who have recently arrived and are located on the fringes of the community, with very little land, are generally unable to pay for it and therefore become dependent on other, unreliable and difficult-to-reach water sources such as the channel or the river. Alternatively, they might start attending *mingas* until they complete a certain number of *rayas* so that the monetary value is reduced by ‘discounting’ the work days provided. As explained earlier in this chapter, young people start participating in collective work parties at an early stage to accumulate *rayas* for the future when they might want or need to gain access to the water system. Contributions in the form of materials, or offering a vehicle for transport, also count towards gaining and maintaining the right to access water. Gaining the right to water is therefore negotiated, and is decided on an individual basis. This gives a lot of power to the board of the WUA, who take a final decision based on their assessment and/or valuation of the number of *rayas* or other types of contributions a particular household has completed. Not surprisingly, some people I interviewed believe that this

system can be unfair and that there have been instances where the community's leaders and the WUA board have 'bent' the rules to benefit, penalise or exclude potential users.

In terms of gender issues, it is important to note that the right to access water is registered under the name of the "head of household", a status that is generally associated with men" (Boelens and Zwarteveen 2003:151). This has implications for who has the ultimate decision over the resource, and could become a source of gender inequality (*Ibid*). In practice however, because many of the men in Mojandita and other *comunidades* have nowadays different forms of paid labour activities, or are simply engaged elsewhere, women and/or young members of the households participate in *mingas* and general assemblies on a regular basis. Still, given that many of these activities are seen as masculine tasks, women's participation in the *mingas* and assemblies is not necessarily valued equally to that of men, something that might also contribute to reducing women's role in water management to the private sphere. The value of labour is nonetheless negotiated between different users, and in the *mingas* I attended, many of the women either worked alongside men conducting 'difficult or masculine' tasks, such as digging a ditch, or did other, 'easier' tasks, that tended to be more time consuming or that, even if easier, are still indispensable. This could be for instance, clearing and cleaning the path of the pipes, or adding chlorine to the main collection tank. Although women also attend and vote in meetings, I observed that men still participate and speak more. Yet, at the end of the day, both men's and women's contributions are credited in the collective activities list with the same *raya*, which means that (literally) 'on paper' their effort has the same value and allows the household to maintain its right to access water in the long term. Women's ability to negotiate their (sometimes disadvantaged) position is also differentiated and "depends on their bargaining power *vis à vis* the State, the community, and the family"(Agrawal 2001:1624). Negotiations over gender issues in the *comunidad* will be further explored in Chapter 6.

Once the right to access water is gained, the user immediately becomes a member with specific rights and obligations. As stated in the following articles, the right to access water is as important as the right to decide how to manage the resource - which in practice means the right to participate and vote in the general assembly. Voting is important because most decisions regarding the WUA are decided by the general

assembly. This right is also gained and maintained through active participation in communal activities. The Mojandita WUA lists the following as the users' rights: a) to elect and be elected as member of the WUA; b) to receive an appropriate service without any kind of discrimination; c) to receive cordial and respectful treatment from the WUA and its operator; d) when the user is older than 65 he/she can choose whether or not to participate in *mingas* and meetings; e) widowed women can provide food instead of labour in the *minga*; f) households have the right to make up for *minga* work they have not done by sending two people to the next one. Once again, it is possible to see that the users' rights are closely tied to the *minga* and its organisational process. The document then moves on to describe the user's responsibilities (obligations) which are to: a) be present in person at meetings; b) preserve and maintain the household connection in perfect condition and prevent leakages; c) use water for household and hygiene purposes and not for irrigation and other agricultural activities; d) respect the WUA's members and its governing board since they are benefiting the community; e) attend all *mingas* for the improvement and maintenance of the system in person or by sending a representative when necessary; and f) pay the monthly fee equivalent to 15 m3 of water (and extras if applied).

Another very important power acquired by the WUA's members is that of setting water tariffs. Because the 1979 law allows each association to decide and approve tariffs, water costs differ from place to place and depend on criteria developed by each association, as well as on whether the WUA has meters installed in each household. In the case of Mojandita de Curubi, when individual households use less than 15 m3 of water per month they pay a fee of US \$1.50. If they use more, they have to pay extra. In other communities like Caluqui where meters have not been installed, the fee is US \$1.50 a month regardless of the quantity used. Generally, water tariffs in the Mojanda area range from US \$0.50 to US \$3.00 per month. Price is a contentious issue that triggers a lot of debate amongst the WUA's members. Unlike larger public water systems operating in the cities, most rural associations are able to charge an almost symbolic amount that barely covers the costs of operating the system (paying the operator and treasurer plus buying a few materials) because the users themselves provide the labour required for maintenance. According to most people I interviewed, the fact that they built and maintain the system makes them its legitimate owners and therefore they feel they should not pay for using it. They agree that a fee is necessary to

cover basic costs but are not prepared to pay for the water itself because as Rodrigo Fernandez, an Otavalo indigenous man, observes in the next passage, according to local tradition and cosmology water *does not have* a monetary value. Deciding water tariffs is, as a result, at the core of the protests in 2009 to maintain decision-making power over the water resources administered locally.<sup>64</sup>

*We are always ready to take part in the struggle for water, we are convinced that it is not supposed to be commercialised, it should not be privatised, **water is not for sale, water is life...***

### **Establishing sanctions**

Establishing rules entails establishing sanctions and it is through these regulatory ‘tools’ that the effects of the Water User Association on communal dynamics become clearer. Based on the 1979 legislation which allows WUAs to sanction users, the document drafted by the WUAs in Mojandita lists one principal sanction, which is temporarily suspending the water service when a user: a) fails to pay water tariffs for more than three months; b) has inadequately installed household water and sanitary facilities; c) has built a clandestine connection; d) has used water for other than domestic purposes; and e) has made unsupported claims about any member of the WUA’s board. To be reconnected to the service, the user has to pay all fees and get official approval from the WUA. In addition to the above cases, the WUA can *indefinitely* suspend water service for: a) not complying with water tariffs for more than four months, or other fines and sanctions imposed by the WUA and the General Assembly (these fines are levied for not attending *mingas* and not paying tariffs); b) not repairing malfunctioning water and sanitation facilities; and c) in the case of physical or verbal abuse to any member of the WUA’s governing board.

Similar sanctions are applied in other *comunidades* in the area, such as Caluquí, and are also supported by the internal community regulations which state that those who do not comply with all the rules established by the local *cabildo* (council) can be sanctioned by

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<sup>64</sup> This is a topic that has been discussed extensively and in detail by Boelens and Zwarteveen (2005), Boelens (2006), Pacari (1998). It is also important to consider that maintaining the right to decide water tariffs locally was one of the reasons why WUAs protested against the proposed water law in 2009 (see Chapter 4). Although the law did not say that WUAs would lose this right, the protestors felt that other aspects of the law would affect their decision-making abilities over the resource and that as a result their power to decide tariffs could potentially be undermined.

losing one or more privileges and rights as a *comunero*. In this context, water becomes a 'valuable privilege' easy to use as a sanction because the community is in control of it and as a result is able to decide to suspend the service when required. This means that, in theory, if a person does not comply with local regulations, which range from environmental conservation to children's education to name but two, they could lose their privileges as *comuneros*, including their right to access water. Apart from a number of isolated cases, water service suspension is in most instances only applied to deal with issues related to the WUAs. Nonetheless, the threat is there and as such water has become an important aspect of local governance. For some *comuneros* this threat has become a reality, which is often interpreted as misuse of power. For instance, Don Julio Jimenez, a campesino-*mestizo* resident who came to Mojandita de Curubi from the neighbouring province of Pichincha more than 30 years ago, and has served as the WUA operator for 20 years, mentioned that in the past, the *cabildo* has actually used water to coerce people into attending political mobilisations in and around Otavalo. If they did not attend, their service was suspended, something that he considered to be an abuse of power (*Interview 2, May 2009*).

In addition to the formal sanctions described above, there are also a number of fines that can be applied when the rules are breached. In Mojandita de Curubi these are: a) for not attending a *minga*, US \$8; b) for not attending a general meeting, US \$5; c) for not completing activities commissioned by the WUA, US \$8; and d) for having no meter (or a broken one) or for having water leakages, US \$8. Also, if a user fails to pay the monthly tariffs interest at 10% is added to the total amount due. Although all these fines should be equally applied to all the WUA's members including its governing board, there are some who because of their position or link to the WUA's board are able to pay with food or other forms of contribution, delay paying the fines, or even evade payment altogether.

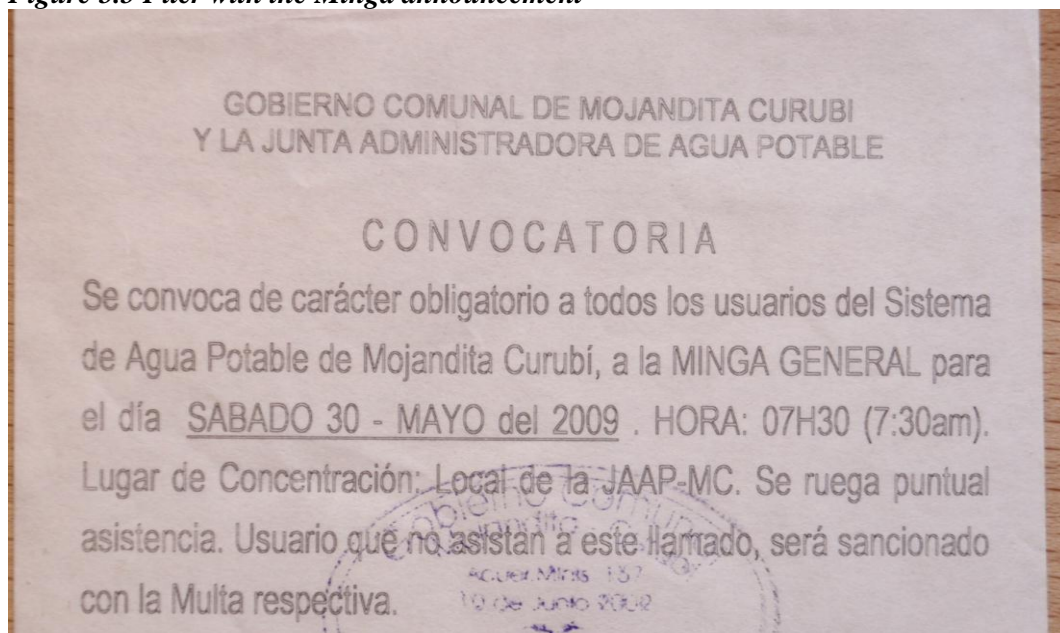
The fact that sanctions and fines related to water are negotiable and malleable (allowing some to take advantage of the system while others have to conform to the rules), has also allowed many *comunidades* to use water as an important regulatory 'tool' to govern in areas that transcend resource management (Agrawal 2005). In other words, because these rules are interpreted locally they have become an important tool for maintaining community boundaries and sustaining communal structures. The President of Mojandita



de Curubi's *cabildo*, Jaime Anrango, explained to me that earlier when there was no real threat or mechanism to impose sanctions, people stopped attending *mingas* and meetings. Participation was very low and in Mojandita it reached its lowest point around 10 years ago. Local leaders realised that while most people attended the water *mingas* very few would participate in *mingas* organised by the *cabildo* to work on other projects such as roads, communal buildings and general infrastructure maintenance. In this light, following the example of other *comunidades* in the area, Mojandita de Curubi and Caluqui unified the *minga* call-up process and every time a *minga* is arranged, regardless of its final purpose, the WUA's name is included in the call. This has a very important practical as well as political effect. It means that failing to attend a *minga* which has also been called by the WUA could lead to water service suspension (as specified in the WUA's regulations). The leaders ensure that everyone knows about the work party or meeting by distributing small handbills (pictured in the photo below) to all households and/or by announcing the *minga* on the local radio. Attendance is therefore obligatory for all the WUA's users. The heading in the following picture reads (Figure 5.5):

*The Community Government of Mojandita de Curubi and the Water User Association call all the users of the water system to a mandatory GENERAL MINGA on Saturday 30th May, 2009. Time: 07:30. Place: WUA's meeting house. Please be on time. Users that do not attend will be sanctioned with the corresponding fine. It is signed by the President of the Comunidad and the President of the WUA.*

**Figure 5.5 Flier with the Minga announcement**



Calling for general *mingas* (which might or might not include activities related to water) in a unified manner has been successful and now more people are participating. According to Gerardo Crespo, the teacher in Mojandita de Curubi, water has increasingly gained importance because it is used as a fine to sanction people for work that has not been done.

*Nowadays it is water that gets everything done, if there is a minga to clean the road, and people don't work, it is through water that they will be 'charged' [sanctioned]. If someone does not participate in the minga they risk being cut off from the system. This means that water is a medium to 'charge' people for work that has not been done.*

Because it controls water, the WUA is also able to control labour at the communal level. This means that as an institution it has gained significant power over a vital aspect of communal life in the Andes, the *minga*. Consequently, WUAs compete with the local *cabildo* over their standing and power amongst the community members. At the same time, local leaders are gaining more power precisely because they are able to control labour through water. In some cases, this power struggle has pushed *comunidades* like Caluqui to unify the calling process (as explained above), merge the WUAs into the *cabildo* and manage both institutions under the *cabildo*. A similar move was proposed in Mojandita de Curubi but at a general meeting called in December 2009 to elect new representatives and discuss possible regulation changes, most people opposed the idea. In the next passage, the President of Mojandita de Curubi's *cabildo*, Jaime Anrango, explains the logic behind the idea of unifying the *minga* announcement process and potentially merging both institutions.

*There used to be disagreement between the Junta and the cabildo. Just because the Junta is legally recognised, it wanted to go one way, while the Cabildo would go the other way. Then, after analysing with the current leaders, we came to the conclusion that the Junta was created by the cabildo, and that there should be close coordination of activities between the two entities [...] Right now at the national level, indigenous organisations, and specifically the FICI [Federation of Indians and Peasants of Imbabura], are debating different proposals in this respect. In the past the Junta tried to organise some projects without respecting the cabildo's authority; that is why in this comunidad we are working on it. **Ultimately, the decision will be taken by the general assembly, independently of what the MIDUVI [Ministry of Urban Development and Housing] says, because at the end of the day, it is us that take the decision, and it is for our own benefit. Just because they [MIDUVI] are an outside institution they cannot come and impose on us [emphasis mine].***

The previous passage shows three important aspects of communal water management in highland Ecuador. First, it reflects the importance that WUAs have gained as an

institution that sustains self-governance practices in the *comunidad*. Second, it shows the kinds of tensions that exist at the communal, regional and national level where as a result of the increased political power of the WUAs and the relative loss of the *cabildo*'s authority, indigenous leaders have been obliged to fight to maintain the central and historical position of the communal government. Finally, in the last part of the passage, Jaime Anrango describes a fundamental aspect of the communal relationship with the state, namely, the demand to retain autonomy and self governance over local issues, particularly natural resources. In a similar way, Marco Guatemala, the President of the FICI, highlights in the next passage the increased tension between the *cabildo* and the *Junta de Agua* (Interview January 2011).<sup>65</sup>

*The President of the Junta de Agua is sometimes able to gather more support than the cabildo. Yet we insist that the cabildo is the principal authority and that only under it could any other organisation lie. We have proposed that the cabildo should be the main authority, because when it is not operated in that way, and when another authority called the President de la Junta [president of the WUA] exists, conflicts arise. There are discussions because when the cabildo calls for a work party and the Junta de Aguas does the same, then the comunidad prefers to go to the water minga. This has created confusion, and we have requested that the MIDUVI and the MAGAP [Ministry of Agriculture, Husbandry, Aquaculture and Fishing] analyse this problem.*

It is interesting to note Marco Guatemala's observation on the indigenous movement's demands to the MIDUVI and MAGAP, which are the two government bodies responsible for recognising and regulating (and thus legitimising) the *Junta de Aguas* and the *cabildo*. Although it is possible to interpret such a request as a contradiction to Jaime Anrango's statement (that the *comunidades* would ultimately make the final decision on this issue locally), it can also be interpreted as part of the constant negotiation process between the communities and the state. This process encompasses both positions, which are not entirely contradictory, but rather are part of the same agenda: asking for equality in difference, asking to be recognised as citizens. Basically, soliciting the state to intervene (and recognise the need to merge both institutions) shows that although indigenous and *campesino* communities are demanding control of their resources (Jaime Anrango's position), they are doing it within the context of the Ecuadorian nation state (whose authority is acknowledged via the request). Moreover, and central to this thesis' argument, Marco Guatemala's remark shows the pivotal role that local institutions play in mediating the *comunidades*' relationship with the state. In

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<sup>65</sup> This is the real name of the person.

other words, it highlights how these institutions constitute a platform through which local residents are able to relate to the state and articulate their demands. They become political agents/actors who, in the process of demanding recognition of their authority over local issues and resources as exercised through the WUA and the *cabildo*, claim their rights as (differentiated) citizens of Ecuador.

### **Following the rules: contributing and participating**

The importance of the Water User Association in terms of governance practices, of attending *mingas* and meetings, of paying monthly water fees and above all of the power dynamics in the *comunidad*, became very clear to me a few months into my stay in Mojandita de Curubi. I had been away for almost a week, and a few minutes after returning, while I was getting ready to clean the house, I realised there was no running water. At first I thought that perhaps the service had been suspended across the whole community, either because there had been another mudslide that had broken the pipes or, as is quite normal during *mingas*, to conduct some type of maintenance in the system. I then went to talk to Lucila, my closest neighbour, who told me that they had water and pointed at her daughter who was actually washing clothes at that particular moment. I asked her what the problem could be in my house. She got a bit nervous and told me that perhaps my water service had been suspended. She then said that the previous Saturday, during the *minga*, she had seen a few people outside my house. I went back to look around the water meter and found some signs that the soil covering the pipes had been moved.

The usual way of suspending the water service is to dig a hole where the pipes leading to the house are buried, something that only the operator, with all his years of experience, knows about. Once the pipe is found, it is cut with a knife, bent and tied with a string to prevent the liquid from flowing. Although this way of suspending the system might seem a bit drastic, and also damaging for the actual infrastructure, it allows the WUA to have control over when the household is actually reconnected. Simply closing the tap located next to the meter would not serve the purpose since it is easy to tamper with and therefore to reconnect. Cutting the pipe allows the WUA to monitor and control the reconnection process. Once the fines have been settled and the WUA gives approval, the operator is allowed to carry out the required work to repair

the connection. Although repairing the pipe is not necessarily the most difficult task, it does require some skill and materials. This gives the operator, and hence the WUA, more power over it. On the other side of the coin, the fact that the sanction of suspending the water requires time (find the pipe, dig a hole) and skill (leave it properly sealed to prevent leakage and re-connection), also gives the household affected by the decision the opportunity to try to convince the WUA's leaders not to go ahead with the planned suspension. (In my case this was clearly not possible because on top of the fact that I had not been notified about the decision, I was not present when it was done.)

Once I had confirmed that the soil had been removed and that probably my water connection was suspended, I got very confused and did not know what to do. Why would they do that? What are they trying to tell me? Perhaps is a sign that I shouldn't be here? I thought, "They want me to leave". I went back to my neighbour and asked her about the procedure to get the water service reinstated. She explained that I had to speak to water operator and settle the fines with the treasurer, because probably the lady who owned the house where I lived had not been attending *mingas* and paying the monthly tariffs (which turned out to be the case). I had rented a house from a *mestizo* woman who lived in Otavalo and only used her place in Mojandita on occasional weekends and rarely participated in communal activities. The agreement was that I would pay the rent and she would pay the utilities. She had never explained to me about the obligation to attend *mingas* and meetings - maybe because she thought she could continue doing as she had always done, just paying the fines for not attending meetings and *mingas*.

I went to look for the *operador*, Don Julio, in his house, but he was somewhere else picking potatoes. His wife told me that she would send one of her grandsons to look for him and that I should go back later. Meanwhile, after consulting with the neighbour, I went to town and bought the materials that were needed to fix the connection, a piece of pipe and glue. I went back to look for the operator three more times but still was unable to find him. I decided to wait outside my house instead. Hours later, late in the afternoon, Don Julio arrived with his son to fix the connection. At first he was nervous, perhaps as much as I was. He said that he felt really bad about it, that he did not want to cut the service off but that some people (meaning some of the leaders) had pressured him to do it. He kept apologising and telling me how much power the community leaders have today and that they should have not done this to me. While he fixed the

pipe, he told me that the lady who owned the house where I was staying had not paid for three months and had not attended meetings and *mingas*, which was enough to suspend the system. Nonetheless, as he rightly pointed out I should have received a warning notice before the suspension. From then on, after speaking to the landlady, I began to attend and work in the *mingas* and pay the bills myself. I did not attend all the meetings because I did not have the status of a *comunero*, and therefore was unable to vote in place of the actual house owner.

Having the water suspended could be interpreted in many different ways and was one of the most important lessons I learned about living in a *comunidad*. Not only did I learn the hard way about the rules that apply to water users, I also learned about the sanctions and the different ways in which they can be applied. It was clearly signalled to me that there was a positionality issue between the *comuneros* and myself. They were reasserting our relative social positions and they had the ability to exert power over me through water. This meant that I had to adjust to a completely new form of living and *belonging* to a place where membership rules are different from the ones I was accustomed to as an urban-*mestizo* citizen, with another set of obligations and privileges. This translated into experiencing a completely new form of practising citizenship in my own country. It had a different meaning and form because I had first and foremost to follow the internal rules of the *comunidad*, basically to participate and contribute and not simply hang around asking questions. If I wanted to be there I had to do what everyone else in the community did: work in the *mingas*, give back, reciprocate or follow the Andean principle of *randi randi* (equal reciprocal work).

Ultimately, looking back at what happened that day, it became clearer to me that the WUA plays a very important role in the *comunidad's* governance. Through the control of a basic need, water, it has become possible to collectively impose and enforce rules that have created a unique social structure. Here it is important to note that, as the school teacher Gerardo Crespo, the President of the *comunidad* Jaime Anrango, and the Indigenous leader Marco Guatemala all pointed out, although today people attend *mingas* because water is used as a mechanism to sanction, they also participate in them for many other reasons. Reducing the success attained by the WUA in drawing people together merely to its power to suspend water provision would over-simplify the complex social and political processes entailed in managing a resource locally, as well

as the cultural meaning that these institutions hold for the *comunidad's* residents. People attend *mingas* because, as noted earlier in the chapter, there is a strong sense of responsibility and a will to retain collective access to and control over resources, which is made possible through the local governance institutions. Moreover, local residents rely on these institutions as platforms to access state resources and articulate their demands.

## Conclusion

This chapter showed that the establishment of the piped water systems and the WUA have strengthened the communal organisation and furthered its ability to be autonomous and self regulate activities. By enhancing local processes of organisation and catalysing the relation between the state and the *comunidades*, the introduction of the WUA successfully achieved one of its original objectives. That is, to “build local organisations at the community level that are able, in an organised and collective manner, to assume” the responsibility to manage water. At the same time however, and in contrast to the original objective of the Water Users Association Law of 1979, the WUA has become an institutional platform used by indigenous and *campesino* populations to: (1) develop collective and autonomous regulatory systems of resource management; (2) create a sense of community through which it becomes possible to relate to and negotiate with the state; and (3) create political subjects that claim access to resources and citizenship rights.

This chapter has also shown that collective forms of organisation do not guarantee equality or efficiency. Some residents are not able to access water because they are too poor to ‘get connected’ to the system, to be included in the community. Women are also being left out, especially from decision-making processes, as they remain excluded from most leadership roles, either because they are confined by tradition to the private/inside the household sphere or because they themselves feel they have enough work as it is. Actually, most men see leadership positions as a burden and almost as a punishment. On the issue of leadership, this chapter also presented a number of cases where abuse of power by various leaders caused disagreement and general disappointment. The fact is that lack of transparency, abuse of power within the *comunidad* and new government-sponsored policies designed to target the individual rather than the collective (individual

cash transfers, new political parties, laws to reorganise water management, etc.) could undermine and even endanger collective forms of social organisation in the long run.

Despite these drawbacks, it is clear that the ‘institutional capacity’ of the *Junta de Aguas* (WUA), has exceeded its ‘managerial’ and ‘technical’ roles to undertake in addition a fundamentally political role as a regulator inside the community and a mediator in relation to the state. This phenomenon can be compared to Arun Agrawal’s (2005) analysis of community forest management in India. By looking at processes of decentralisation and participation, or what he calls “new technologies of government”, the author shows that the establishment of institutions and regulations to manage forestry in Kumaon, India,

is not only about the formation of a new sphere [... but also ] about shifts in the relationships between states and localities [...*governmentalized localities*], [...] the emergence of new regulatory spaces within localities where social actions around the environment [take] form [...*regulatory communities*]. [...] And] the constitution of *environmental subjects* - people who have come to think and act in new ways in relation to the environmental domain being governed [...] (2005:6-7).

Within the very different historical and political context of the WUAs case studied here, the three aspects of institutional formation in common property resource management discussed by Agrawal (2005) have other outcomes. To understand the ‘governmentalized locality’ in Ecuador it is necessary to consider the state-indigenous/*campesino* relations and the claims to access resources beyond water that have been analysed in this thesis. Furthermore, the emergence of local ‘regulatory communities’ must be understood as part of the acceptance and reproduction of local forms of disciplining (rules and sanctions established by the *Cabildo* and the WUAs). Finally, it is also possible to say that ‘environmental subjects’ have resulted from these processes. Although related to the environment they are fundamentally interested in the respect and recognition of local forms of resource management, in other words, local autonomy.

By describing the ‘other’ or political, cultural and social outcomes of the establishment of the piped water systems and the WUA, this chapter has also revealed that institutions are not static, and that they change and adapt to new circumstances. The power struggles between the *cabildo* and the WUA is a good example of the type of challenges faced by local institutional arrangements. Although the *cabildo* served a very important



role during the formation of the indigenous social movements in Ecuador (Chapter 3), its traditional role as the main authority in the *comunidad* is nowadays disputed by the WUA. Different solutions to this problem have been presented within the *comunidades*, and it is difficult to know whether the *cabildo* or the WUA will sustain its power in the long run. What is clear is that despite these power struggles and differences, to quote Colloredo-Mansfeld's (2009:210), people are still "fighting like a community; they are taking on outsiders and fighting each other at the same time". This idea is clearly explained by Marco Guatemala, president of the FICI.

*The Indigenous Movement has a clear picture of the role water plays in the comunidades. First, because water is managed locally, it plays an organisational and identity role. Second, it constitutes a space for institutional debate. When the cabildo does not work, the Junta does and despite these weaknesses, water strengthens the system of communal government. We have seen that the Junta is able to get more support than the cabildo and that is why we need to keep looking for ways to strengthen both issues related to water and those related to the communal government. In the future this could become a source of disagreement between the different authorities, which would end up debilitating the community, the people, our brothers and sisters that live in their territories, and only strengthening the state system, leaving us without anything (sin pan ni pedazo). (Interview January 2011).*

Managing water and other resources collectively entails differences, disagreements and inequality between and within the communities. At the same time though, and in order to maintain the right to control water at the local level (and through this organisational process access other resources) the community has to come together and agree to follow certain rules and norms. If these collective responsibilities are not managed well, the *comunidad* as a whole may lose the right to control their resources. Most importantly, they may lose the ability to negotiate with the state through their communal institutional arrangements, and as Marco Guatemala put it, end up "*sin pan, ni pedazo*" (without anything).

At the heart of these collective responsibilities lie the labour duties that each household is obliged to provide towards the community betterment, nowadays controlled to a large extent by the WUAs. Involvement and participation measured in terms of labour contributions is used to define community membership and therefore to grant (or refuse) the right to profit from services and other benefits that exist in this place. It is possible to say that labour is used as a form of taxation system through which people contribute to the community and at the same time gain the right to benefit from it. Labour is also

used to maintain a sense of equality among the *comuneros* as everyone is bounded, in one way or another, to contribute. These same labour contributions are used to legitimise autonomy in resource management or what in practice means the right to decide over water resources locally.

The importance of labour in creating community boundaries, and legitimising local management practices will be further explored in the next chapter. By presenting a study of the *minga*, or the work party, in Mojandita de Curubi, it will analyse the effects that managing water has had on residents' daily lives. It looks in detail at how based on collective labour duties people negotiate their position, or class, gender and race within the *comunidad*, while as a group they also articulate demands in relation to the state.

## 6. Everyday experiences of communal water management: an extended study of the *minga*

— ¿Y usted sale a las mingas?

— Si puedo, dando gracias a Diosito, si puedo. Cuando no estoy ocupada o si estoy enferma ahí si no salgo, de ahí cuando estoy bien, me voy no más, me gusta ir a la minga...

— Do you attend *mingas*?

— If I can, thanking God, if I can. When I am busy or if I am ill I don't go. Otherwise when I am well, I go. I like to go to the *minga*...

Margarita Chancozo

The previous chapter examined the history of the establishment of the drinking water system and the WUA that accompanies it in Mojandita de Curubi. It identified some of the general effects that these technological and institutional changes have brought to the *comunidad*. Through this analysis, it revealed how water has transcended its function as a vital resource and become a central element in the social and political dynamics of the *comunidad*. It also showed that the WUAs have become a political platform to articulate collective demands to the state. By presenting an extended study of the work party or *minga* this chapter considers these processes of change in detail and shows the types of negotiations, interventions and contestation that underlie local water management. What kind of power struggles and patterns of conflict and cooperation emerge from managing water collectively? How do women, young *comuneros* or older people experience it? What kind of role does water play in the creation of community boundaries? How have local ways of managing water become spaces for claiming different forms of citizenship?

As an event that takes place on a regular basis (every two months or as needed), bringing together the majority of the community members to repair and maintain the water system and other communal services, the *minga* is a useful entry point to explore collective water management and the ways in which different social groups experience it. The *minga* plays a range of practical and symbolic roles. First, *mingas* are employed to build physical infrastructure, which means that a series of collective work parties are called for by the local government or *cabildo* until the construction of a particular public work has been completed. This could be a water system, a road, a school, etc. The right to access water and other services is gained through participation in the

*minga*. Households that provide a pre-determined amount of labour, known as *rayas* (turns) towards different kinds of infrastructure construction and maintenance are allowed to benefit from the new service. Moreover, failure to attend communal work parties or general assemblies or pay monthly water bills can result in a user's water service being suspended.

In terms of its symbolic effects, the *minga* is particularly important as a marker and maker of community boundaries. Through the *minga* and the labour effort that it entails, a series of reciprocal exchanges between individual households and the community are established. Regular attendance at the *minga* is one of the criteria used to consider someone an active *comunero*: someone who in addition to being recognised by others as a member of the community is also respected for their continuous involvement. In a similar manner to rituals such as festivals or processions, the *minga*, nowadays geared around the water endeavour, reinforces the ties between people and a place (Bourque 1997). It represents the collective effort and personal investments made to improve and at the same time increase control of a particular physical territory. 'Place' in this context "would be less something that people defended, and more something whose means and practices of production they aimed to control" (Bebbington 2000:498). In this way, the *minga* and the reciprocal relationship that it entails create individual as well as group identity (Ferraro 2004) which in turn help define their relationship *vis à vis* the state.

In this light, in this chapter I will argue that the *minga* plays a twofold role: it is a powerful social institution through which community membership is symbolically and physically articulated. As a result of its significant role in defining community boundaries (who attends? who doesn't? investment in a physical territory), the *minga* also helps shape the relation between the community and the state (local residents become political agents as they attempt to legitimise the right to access, manage and make decisions about local resources). Put in a different way, the chapter argues that water and the *mingas* organised around it have become an important political arena where the terms of citizenship are negotiated on a daily basis. Drawing on historical and ethnographic research, this chapter shows that water has gained an important role in shaping the negotiations over the definition of citizenship at the local level, something that has not yet been properly explored in the literature on indigenous and peasant

citizenship in the Andes (c.f. Guerrero 1993; Korovkin 2001; Yashar 2005; Pallares 2007).<sup>66</sup>

At the same time, this chapter seeks to enhance the understanding of the *minga* as an important institution in the contemporary Andean *comunidad*. Scholars have studied the *minga* in relation to its role during the colonial and early Republican states' control over manual labour (Williams 2007), in terms of the Andean peasant community's relations of reciprocity and labour (Gose 1991; Mayer 2002; Ferraro 2004; Harris 2010), its effects on enhancing communal identity (Bourque 1997; Korovkin 2001; Ferraro 2004), legitimising local control over resources and establishing community-state relations (Korovkin 2001; Mayer 2002; Colloredo-Mansfield 2009).<sup>67</sup> However, despite the fact that the *minga* and other forms of reciprocal labour that exist in the Andes have been analysed and mentioned in a number of studies, there are no detailed accounts of the *minga* that focus on each of its elements or stages. Moreover, there is not much written about the *minga* as a local institution with significant effects on the social and political negotiations that take place inside and outside the *comunidad*, within the household, between households, and in relation to the state. This chapter seeks to expand on this analysis and include the subject of water in the discussion. To that end, it will highlight the ways in which water influences the *comunidad's* ability to organise a *minga* and invest in improving a particular place.

The chapter is divided into three sections. The first section explores some of the theoretical issues related to the *minga*. The second section presents a detailed case study of the *minga* by analysing the different elements that entail a work party (organising it, counting work by keeping lists, division of labour). The last part of the chapter discusses the implications that *mingas* have for the members of the community and their relationship to the state, in light of the overarching theme of the construction of citizenship that the thesis is aiming to develop.

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<sup>66</sup> These scholars have concentrated on issues of access to land as well as to differentiated forms of citizenship. The issue of water as another central element in the struggle to access resources has been less explored and only briefly touched on as an important concern for the indigenous and peasant communities, but not in relation to broader struggles to gain full citizenship.

<sup>67</sup> For instance Mayer (2002) shows that in Peru there are different types of reciprocity exchanges with different rules and names: *voluntad*, *waje-waje*, *minka*, *varoyoq*. Harris (2010) describes reciprocity amongst Aymara indigenous people in the North of Potosi: *manu*, *chuqu* and *minka*. Bourque (1997) describes service exchanges in the Central Andes of Ecuador: *redimpa* or *cambio de mano*. Ferraro (2004) also analyses reciprocity and debt in northern Ecuador: *manu* and *deuda*. Gose (1991) examines two different forms of labor exchanges in a community in Peru, *ayni* and *mink'a*.

## The minga

Various forms of collective work practised today in the Andean region have been traced back to the governance practices of the Inca state. It is thought that during Inca times peasants did not pay their tribute in kind, or produce, but in days of labour, either in communal lands or towards large infrastructure projects (Harris 2010). This practice was later adopted and adapted by the Spanish colonial authorities and lasted until well after independence as a way to advance different kinds of public work projects which required considerable input of labour (Williams 2007). As discussed in Chapter 4, the *minga* was also central to the expansion of basic services into rural areas between the 1940s and 1970s. Most roads, schools, drinking water systems, etc. were built using free local labour organised through collective work parties. As a legacy of these historical processes, collective work today is a practice that takes place at the local level, organised independently by each *cabildo* (elected communal council) and used to build and maintain different types of physical infrastructure for the benefit of a particular community or communities. Although today's forms of communal work are generally not imposed from the outside and are not obligatory, in the sense that they are not a legal obligation as they were during the colonial and early republican times, they could still be described as a form of local taxation system defined by a sense of duty and owing (Mayer 2002).<sup>68</sup> Even if in principle attending the *minga* is voluntary, the privileges that are tied to it, such as the right to access water or the status of active *comunero*, plus the possibility of a fine, make it a binding obligation for most (Chapter 5). Additionally, there is an overarching notion holding the system together which is that individual household contributions are for the good of the whole community (Mayer 2002). This is something that was constantly mentioned during conversations I had with people in Mojandita de Curubi. Jaime Anrango, an Otavalo indigenous man and the President of the *cabildo* at the time, told me that through better coordination of collective work parties (i.e. being jointly called by the Water User Association and *cabildo* plus stricter fines) “*people once again believe in what the community has and understand that working is not for each individual's benefit but for the benefit of all*” (Interview, 11, Sep. 2009).

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<sup>68</sup> During the colonial and early Republican periods, the state, in addition to having an Indian head tax, passed a series of laws obliging indigenous peoples that did not live inside *haciendas* to provide free labour towards building large infrastructure projects, such as the railway project in Ecuador during the 1860s.

It is true that using labour available locally clearly serves a utilitarian purpose by which it is possible to build and maintain infrastructure. Labour, organised in the form of *mingas*, allows the community to access resources, to maintain a certain flow of goods and to carry out traditional festivities that otherwise would be difficult to sustain. As such, *mingas* are efforts that facilitate and “increase circulation of all kinds, whether of water, electricity, news, entertainment, or people” (Colloredo-Mansfield 2009:101). However, given its collective nature, the *minga* is also a marker and reminder that those who take part in it are by definition benefiting the community and are, as a result, confirming their ties with a particular place and a group of people (membership). In this way contribution in the form of labour emphasises the ties between community members (Bourque 1997) and creates in the individual a sense of responsibility to the community. This contribution could also be seen as the establishment of a long-term reciprocal relationship between the household and the community.

In addition to its practical and symbolic elements the *minga* also has an effect in terms of the communities’ relationship with the state. As discussed earlier in this thesis the *minga* is precisely what allows the state to be ‘off the hook’. In other words, because local communities are able to organise, build and access resources via the *minga*, the state is able to transfer its responsibilities to the community (Mehta, Marshall et al. 2007; Marquardt 2012). On the other side of the coin and as Tanya Korovkin (2001:50) suggests, autonomy in areas of governance such as “building infrastructure, monitoring education, and punishing thieves” has allowed indigenous communities in Otavalo to change local power relationships, maintain political distance from ruling parties and most importantly recreate their identity and redefine their demands *vis à vis* the state. In terms of the argument presented in this thesis, the *minga* has therefore evolved into a central element in the negotiations about local practices of resource governance and access to basic services, and thus everyday experiences of citizenship among indigenous and *campesino* communities. As a result, it is possible to say that the *minga* plays an important role in sustaining local autonomous governance while also allowing the state, in some instances, to avoid and divert their attention from providing services to marginalised communities. Further discussion on this particular issue will be presented at the end of this chapter.

As is the case with all collective activities, the *minga* is not a simple practice; it entails asymmetrical relationships, contestation as well as cooperation, between a range of actors at different points before, during and after the event. These interactions take place covertly and overtly through people's body language, choice/assignment of labour activity, public opinion, gossip and silence. Even if people attend and contribute towards the *minga*, not all do it in the same way and for the same reasons. Negotiations around the *minga* reflect the "varied interests of men and women, of urban labourers and peasant farmers, of project beneficiaries and the excluded" (Colloredo-Mansfield 2009:101). Considering the different practical as well as symbolic aspects of the communal work party, it is possible to say that the *minga* constitutes a useful starting point to explore how processes of cooperation and contestation result from managing water locally. Starting from the moment the community leaders organise the *minga*, moving on to its announcement and then to the actual day when local residents undertake various labour-intensive tasks, the next section turns to an in-depth analysis of the communal work party. The descriptions and analysis that follow are drawn from my own observations and experiences during three *mingas* I attended in Mojandita de Curubi between January 2009 and September 2009. I will also draw on conversations and interviews with local residents where different aspects of the *minga* were discussed. I will refer to and analyse various moments during those events which can be used to better understand the effects that water management has on individual people as well as on the relationship between the community and the state, viewed from a citizenship perspective.

### **Organising the *minga*: negotiation begins**

As the main authority in the *comunidad*, the *cabildo* or the community council is in charge of deciding when and why a general *minga* (for building infrastructure or maintenance) is to be carried out. Elected on a yearly basis, the *cabildo* is composed of a president, vice-president, treasurer, secretary, and three councillors. Organising and calling for specific water-related communal work parties is however the responsibility of the Water User Associations and not of the *cabildo*. Yet in the context of ever-stronger WUA (ability to control labour through water), the *cabildo* members feel a constant need to legitimise and strengthen their authority and power. Differences in opinion as well as rivalries between these two institutions and their officials are therefore common and surface all the time, as happened during my stay in Mojandita.



For instance, on more than one occasion the *cabildo* decided *ad hoc* to call for a *minga* using the WUA's name without having discussed it with its officers in advance. As Chapter 5 showed, by calling for a joint *minga* (WUA and *cabildo*) the *cabildo* secures higher attendance rates and therefore more control over the community. In addition, by making the announcement without the prior consent of the WUA, they reinforce the established hierarchy of different communal organizations. The *cabildo* is traditionally the main authority in the *comunidad* and the WUA should be, and in fact is, subordinate to the *cabildo*'s decision making power.

Negotiation between different authorities is therefore at the core of every *minga* undertaking and it starts the moment the local *cabildo* and/or WUA decide there is a need to call for a communal work party. Is it going to be a joint *minga* or a specific water-related event? Which activities are to be prioritised? Would it involve adding the water connection needed by the new occupants of the new house behind the school or clearing a mudslide so that a number of families can access their homes more easily? When is it going to be? The first step then is to summon the officials to a meeting to discuss the need for the *minga*, possible dates and how it will be organised. Given the rivalries between the *cabildo* and the WUA this is not straightforward. It is not uncommon for there to be secrecy and little information sharing between the authorities during the organisation process. On more than one occasion I observed how officers serving in the WUA did not know there would be a joint *minga* until the calls were actually distributed. Don Julio, the Operator of the WUA, expressed his frustration in relation to this issue and told me that he had sometimes got to know about an upcoming *minga* either from rumours circulating amongst neighbours in the *comunidad* or simply from the call papers distributed by the *cabildo* councillors a few days before the event.

Once the decision to carry out a *minga* has been somehow settled between the authorities, the *cabildo* is set in motion to draft, print and distribute the calls in the form of small flyers (see Figure 5.5, Chapter 5). While the secretary is in charge of drafting and printing the papers, the *vocales* or councillors of the *cabildo* become responsible for distributing them in the areas of the community they live in.<sup>69</sup> One person who has this job is Don Muñoz an Otavalo indigenous man who lives with his family close to the house I rented in Mojandita de Curubi. He distributes the papers and informs each

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<sup>69</sup> The *vocales* are in charge of overseeing various groups that are part of the community such the school parents' group or the health centre, all under the authority of the *cabildo* or council.

household two or three days before the *minga*, which usually takes place on a Saturday or a Sunday. When unable to find residents in their homes, he places the paper under the door, hoping that someone might see it later. This is not an easy job; it entails walking around the neighbourhood for a long time, tracking down people but most of all evading angry dogs (although many think, including me, that Don Muñoz' dogs are the scariest in the neighbourhood!).

In addition to spreading the call by word of mouth or distributing papers, calls for specific *mingas* in Mojandita de Curubi are often announced by megaphone from a car driving around the community. Additionally a local radio station, Radio Ilumán, which serves the Otavalo area and has most of its programmes in Quichua, often broadcasts calls. Apart from being one of the few radio stations that includes services for local communities and residents, such as announcing festival dates or *mingas*, it is also used by various indigenous organisations as a space to strengthen the Quichua people's identity. Normally, the person or community that wants to broadcast an announcement has to pay a small amount, about US \$0.50 – US \$1.

The choice of using radio, and this station in particular, is not random. It is at the core of rivalries and power struggles between local leaders to justify their authority. Although each one of them has their own network of families, friends and acquaintances who support their decisions when they consider them appropriate, they are elected because they are seen as part of the larger effort to “advance community goals” (Colloredo-Mansfield 2009:134) and as a result, they need to constantly make themselves visible and legitimise their posts through identifiable actions. Each community official, the President of the *cabildo*, the President of the WUA, the Secretary, or the Treasurer, just to mention a few, also brings with him/her their particular interests and backgrounds.

In this light, for Jaime Anrango, the President of the *comunidad* at the time and an active indigenous leader in the provincial movement (FICI), a seemingly practical action like announcing the forthcoming work party on the radio serves many different functions. First, it helps show the community residents that he is able to voice the *comunidad's* interests in different spaces and that he is able to exert some kind of influence in a public space (even if in an unconventional one such as a local radio station). Because this is seen as a fundamental requirement for becoming a strong local

leader, Jaime's capacity to use arenas with regional influence like this radio station adds legitimacy to his leadership role inside and outside the area of the *comunidad*. By announcing the *minga* on the radio, Jaime Anrango positions himself *vis à vis* not only other leaders in the *comunidad* but also leaders in the wider Mojanda area, and demonstrates his ability to organise and call for a *minga* on a regular basis (something that is becoming increasingly difficult, as people living in other communities have reported).

I often wondered why people in Mojandita would not say much about this radio issue, especially those who do not see themselves as indigenous and do not even speak Quichua and therefore do not tune in that radio station. I only got to know about it by chance as I was trying to find another programme and heard some familiar words being spoken in Quichua: Mojandita de Curubi and *minga*. I immediately knew what they were talking about because I had received the flyer the day before. What would the residents of Mojandita gain from such an endeavour? Why they do not comment much about it? A possible explanation is that announcing the *minga* on the radio, even for a relatively small population of approximately 105 households, apart from legitimising Jaime's position (which could be argued to benefit the community in general), had other 'side effects' that might also serve the *comunidad*. Publicising the *minga* beyond the *comunidad* meant that people in neighbouring localities as well as some state authorities would notice that Mojandita's residents are capable of organising on a regular basis and that it has 'good' leaders. This would of course add to the natural rivalry between communities but most importantly it would position Mojandita as a well run and strong *comunidad*, willing to invest in its territory and make it a better place to live in (Bebbington 2000). It is a sign of what Rudi Colloredo-Mansfeld (2009:122) calls "effective politics" defined as the "visibility of leaders who exercise power within a place and who can influence outsiders with interests in that place".

### **Household negotiations: who attends the minga?**

For most residents, the *minga* starts when two important decisions need to be made within each household: whether they can/will attend and who will be sent to represent the household. Similarly to the negotiations that take place between the community leaders, within each household roles and duties are considered when deciding who goes and when. Because household activities are so diverse in places such as Mojandita, the

decision might be taken on the grounds of whether that day was set aside to go to town, visit family members elsewhere, work in the fields, complete a week of paid labour on a construction site, take tourists staying in the local hostel on a trip to the Mojanda lakes or go to a computer training course in Otavalo. For instance, my neighbours the Molinas, an Otavalo indigenous family, would generally send Ana, the eldest daughter, to the *minga*. This is because on a typical Saturday her father, Don Alfredo, and her husband Arturo would usually be busy with a series of temporary construction works in the nearest city, Ibarra. Ana's mother Lucila would go to Quito to visit her brother, while Cecilia, the second eldest daughter, would be working on the flower plantation in the Cayambe area. Jimena, the third eldest would go to her weekend job at a stationery shop in Otavalo, while the fourth, Miguel, as well as the youngest, Miriam, would work at the '*Casa del Jean*' (The House of Jeans) in Otavalo. Yet decisions on who gets to go are not necessarily simple: they have to do with the perceived 'value' and importance of the different activities as well as the role of each household member. In the case of my neighbours, paid labour is seen as an essential, basic activity. Lucila's visit to town is also ranked higher given her position in the household as the head woman. So the only person that does not have a remunerated job and would be willing to go is sent: in this case Ana. When I asked Ana why she went and not her brother or younger sister she told me that going to the *minga* is actually important for her because it is her way of contributing to the household, given that she lives there with her husband and daughter.

Ana's case exemplifies at the household level the concept of earning the right to benefit from a service. Every time there is a *minga*, each person within the household (as is the case of the household at the community level) has the opportunity to contribute and earn/maintain/legitimise their rights to access and benefit from different resources.<sup>70</sup> Although Ana represents the Molinas' household most of the time, her parents or brother also go to the *minga* sometimes. In a later conversation I had with her, she told me that her brother had recently attended the *minga*: "*It was his turn*", she said. This could be interpreted as his turn to contribute to the household but also to learn and experience the *minga* and the physical effort that it entails. Coincidentally, he attended a 'difficult' *minga* during which people had to clear a landslide that was cutting off the water flow. Communal work lasted all day.

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<sup>70</sup> Colloredo-Mansfeld (2009:104-105) reports a similar account of a family in Otavalo.

The case of the Molina household also illustrates local practices and their relevance to development and change. As with many families in Mojandita, the Molina's livelihoods are based on not only agricultural activities but also paid jobs outside the *comunidad*. The fact that despite this they still participate in the *minga* is very significant. It reinforces Bebbington's (2000:500) observation on "the different parts of a larger whole in which rural people are engaged all the time: the challenge of securing a viable way of guaranteeing the material basis for their livelihood and, at the same time, building something of their own". Even if their jobs and activities no longer depend solely on local resources, residents of Mojandita are willing to perform their duties in the community they belong to. Colloredo-Mansfeld (2009:114-115) notes a similar process in La Compañía, a community not far from Mojandita, whose residents have moved away to work but returned to build their homes. Investing in that particular place has a special social, cultural and political meaning.

The deterritorialization of careers does not mean their dematerialization. Even as residents have moved off to compete in far-flung market places, they return to build their homes and La Compañía becomes defined less through production than consumption. The merchant's showy "trophy" house, the peasant-artisan's new television, and the maid's celebration of a baptism all materialize uneven earnings as tangible, though greatly varying, accomplishments. Through architecture, furnishings, and fiestas, people claim status. But more than that, they use commodities to create the cultural and social continuities that production lacks [...] If the expenditures are personal, the effect is collective. Architecture, even among the most economical cement block homes, encodes a neighbourhood's history of high-status styles and shared tastes to achieve an aesthetic tied to place [...] fiestas join hosts, compadres, and guests through baskets of cooked chicken, guinea pig and potatoes, cauldrons of soup, and days of amplified music, allowing a reimagining of shared values and accomplishments.

In this sense, the *minga* is one of the principal spaces/institutions/moments through which the *comuneros* reinforce shared values and shared memories of what they have individually and collectively invested in a particular place. It is also a moment when differences between households become evident as people decide why, how and when to participate in the collective work party.

Although there is a general notion of duty and owing underlying the *minga*, people are not necessarily eager to attend and work for many hours, sometimes without much to

eat and drink.<sup>71</sup> *Comuneros* understand the importance of contributing (based on a mixed sense of responsibility and obligation), yet most of them would rather be working in their own fields or conducting other activities. This is often reflected in the fact that the household representative sent to the *minga* is a younger person (man or woman), whose labour is not always seen as essential towards the household's maintenance or internal power structures. Different household members take turns or might even hire someone instead of going themselves. Nonetheless, even if attending the communal work party is considered by some to be a burden, it is generally seen not as a punishment but more as something that has to be done for the benefit of each household and the community as a whole.<sup>72</sup>

Mojandita's residents are very diverse; they come from different places, different social classes and even different indigenous backgrounds (Otavalo and Cayambi), something that is reflected in how decisions around the *minga* are taken. For instance, Don Vicente, one of the oldest members of the community actually lives in what is considered to be the last house in the *comunidad* at its upper limits (where it is more difficult to access services and benefits). Yet he chooses to go himself as the head of the household rather than asking one of his children or his wife (who is a lot younger than him). For Don Vicente, who has participated in the construction of the school, the piped water system and the legal establishment of the *comunidad*, taking part in each *minga* is a matter of pride and responsibility. Going to the *minga* for him is a must, a duty that has to be fulfilled. When I asked him whether or not he still attends *mingas* on a regular basis, he seemed rather surprised by my question and replied:

*Do I go to the minga? I still work in the minga, I have not stopped working in the minga, I don't stay at home, I always go to the minga or the community meetings.*

Don Vicente's answer, as well as Ana's reasons for attending the *minga* as a representative of her household, need to be understood in the context of the rules and practices of Andean reciprocity and the value that labour holds within it (Harris 2010). As it was during the times of the Inca state, the most common household contributions

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<sup>71</sup> Bourque (1997) reports a similar sentiment in Sucre a peasant and indigenous community in the Central Andes of Ecuador.

<sup>72</sup> Other duties such as serving in roles of authority (president of the *cabildo* or WUA) are considered, in some instances, to be a punishment, such as when a household has not contributed a person to a leadership post in a long time.

towards the community are in the form of labour, skills or “services, rather than as a surrender of a portion of one’s crops, of goods in kind, or of money” (Mayer 2002:124). Although transactions involving money and goods do take place (Ferraro 2004), Andean reciprocity, widely practised in the region, is generally defined by exchanges of personal services between households in order to help a family member, a friend or a *compadre* build a house, plough a field or prepare for a feast. Even if names and types of exchanges vary from place to place, the general principle guiding the system is that “any service rendered between equals in a symmetrical exchange should be returned at a later time with the same service, resulting in a completed cycle of exchanges that cancel out all debts. What [is] given [has] to be returned” (Mayer 2002:109).

At the communal level this principle is articulated every time there is a *minga*. The work party is considered an opportunity for individual households to serve and be served or to take “turns to help each other” (Mayer 2002:130). Underlying the *minga* lies a strong notion “of duty and owing, and the moral obligation to repay what has been received” (Ferraro 2004:78). In practice it means that individual labour contributions invested in a place, over long periods of time, from which the whole community benefits, are ‘repaid’ every time there is a *minga*. Thus the communal work party is an opportunity to serve those who have served in the past, as well as those who are serving on that day. Every time there is a *minga*, a cycle of reciprocal exchanges between different households in the *comunidad* is opened and closed. (It could also remain open for later closure). Ultimately, through the *minga* households gain and maintain the right to benefit from different services. In this way Don Vicente’s response and emphasis on work has a significant meaning. It underlines his relationship with the community, which is based on the labour and long-term investments he has made in a place called Mojandita.

In contrast to Don Vicente’s case, not all households are either willing or able to send someone every time. For some, going to the *minga* might not be worth the effort. This is the case for households excluded from the benefits that the community offers because they live on its periphery; they are marginalised either geographically or socially. Maybe they are too high up to be connected to the water service or too new and poor to have acquired any service at all. For others, however, not attending the *minga* and paying fines or choosing to pay a third person to attend the *minga* and work in their

place has to do with their privileged positions (social differentiation). More well-off households would prefer to pay, either because they cannot work as they are busy doing business somewhere else or just because they do not personally work in the *mingas*. Here is where social and ethnic differences between households in Mojandita become more evident. Because working in the *minga* - and specifically participating in manual labour - is seen by most urban *mestizo* as something that only the poor peasants or indigenous peoples do, for those who see themselves as belonging to a different social class - defined by wealth and race, and richer and urban as opposed to peasant/indigenous and rural - attending the *minga* is simply not something they would consider.<sup>73</sup> They might of course, as other households such as the Molina', have activities to conduct that they view as more important/profitable and therefore justify their personal unavailability on the grounds that they are busy. Yet underlying it lays the fact that a farm owner or the hotel owner will probably never work in the *minga*. Because of their class or ethnicity, they do not belong to the working/peasant/indigenous category and are not 'used' or 'supposed' to attend *mingas*. Most telling is the fact that the word used to describe the person who is paid to work in the *minga*, *peón*, is the same one used for rural day labourers who have unstable jobs in the *haciendas* and are generally poor. Although some of these more powerful households do contribute to the *minga* (by sending someone/paying fines/food) their contribution is done primarily to fulfil the duty and access resources (water, electricity, better road). When I asked Jaime Anrango about the community boundaries and who belongs to it, he stated:

*There are many people, mostly mestizo, who have not been part of the community's building process. Most of all those that call themselves hacendados (landowners), they have never participated in any communal work. At the end of the day they use the public roads and they should contribute. There have been one or two that in one way or another have helped: they have contributed, collaborated with the community. The rest are, well, they see themselves as gamonales (local power brokers), don't help, and just use everything and destroy the páramo (highland grasslands) too.*

Why is this accepted? Why are they still enjoying access to water and other services in the community? It is possible to say that on the surface it has to do with power structures established by social position. Yet, the 'more' powerful people are also regarded as instrumental to the community. In addition to providing jobs for many (hotel, farm), they are considered 'useful' because they know and have connections

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<sup>73</sup> For a similar account of power relations through labour exchanges see Peter Gose (1991).



with other powerful people and processes that might in turn, in a later time, benefit the *comunidad* or some of its individual members. For example, one of the hotel owners, an American lady, contacted a group of doctors that travel to developing countries and provide free services. As a result, these doctors have visited Mojandita on three different occasions and benefited many of its residents. Despite the outcome, the fact remains that non-labour contributions are not accounted for in the same way. In other words, other forms of contribution, however large and important, do not entail a symmetrical exchange articulated through labour inputs during the *minga*. The result is that even if they are accepted by the community, most of the more powerful residents are not considered proper or 'real' *comuneros*, and are, for example, asked to pay more money for their water as well as for their water connections. These are the 'weapons of the weak' (Scott 1985; Korovkin 2000) at play in the negotiation of what qualifies as a good - and most of all equal - contribution towards the community and its rules of membership.

### **On list making and division of labour: negotiating class, gender roles and race**

#### **The list**

As the papers distributed to call for the *minga* indicate, people start gathering outside the WUA's house around 7:30 in the morning. Although the meeting place might vary depending on the activity planned for the day, most times *cabildo* authorities would ask residents to meet outside the WUA's house because it is located in the centre of the *comunidad*, which in practice means that it is half way along the road to the 'end' of Mojandita de Curubi. This can also be a point of contention. People who live in the *comunidad*'s peripheries complain they have to walk for up to half an hour to get to the meeting place to then walk out again to the work sites. Nonetheless, as time for the meeting approaches, people gradually arrive, each with a tool (shovel, machete, hoe) for what could arguably be the most important moment of the *minga*, calling the list. At the beginning of every *minga*, the community secretary calls the names of all households in Mojandita and registers attendance. All households that have water connections are on the register, listed by the name of the 'head of household' (which may be a man or woman). The list is not static. As new households are formed or new families arrive in the community they are included, even if they might not yet enjoy full access to resources. Once they attend the *minga* for the first time, their name remains on the

register so that they start accumulating *rayas* (turns) to gain the right to access water or other services later on. Moreover, the list might include households on the fringes of the community that sometimes work for Mojandita de Curubi, where their water comes from, and other times for the neighbouring community, Mojandita Mirador, where they access other services as well as hold the right to vote for and serve on the *cabildo*.

As the Community Secretary calls out the list, people pay close attention not only to when their name might be called out but also to other people's names. It is the moment when contributions are publicly scrutinised and "publicly acknowledged" (Mayer 2002:128). Did someone come from that household? Who was sent? Should they really be counted? As Enrique Mayer (2002:128) argues, this is the moment when the *minga* participants ensure that "everyone share[s] equally in the tasks the community impose[s]. Work performed [has] to be counted". Slowly, the secretary goes through the list, marking a line next to each household that has sent someone and leaving blank spaces next to the names of those who have not. It is not uncommon to hear expressions of discontent and discussions of whether young boys/girls (around 13-14 years old) should be counted. Food contributions are also evaluated and are only accepted if the person is ill or a widower<sup>74</sup>. My presence did not pass without notice either, and as I nervously replied "*aquí*" (here) after my landlady's name was called out, Jaime Anrango, the *comunidad*'s President, commented quickly: "*Are you going to work?*"

On the advice of Don Julio, the WUA Operator, I had decided that in addition to attending the *minga* to observe, I would also work and justify my presence. This decision was also influenced by the fact that a few months earlier, my own water service had been suspended as my landlady had not attended *mingas* and assemblies for some time (Chapter 5). In this context, Jaime's "*you*" had a lot of meaning: Are *you*, a city girl, really going to work? Are *you* able to work? How would *you* contribute? The question, in addition to exposing my position as an outsider in front of the community residents also placed me in the category of those who live in Mojandita but contribute in 'other' non-labour forms. Was I really thinking of digging a hole or cleaning the water tanks? In theory I had not been asked to be there, and I could have just paid the fines as my landlady always did, or contribute to the community by helping them draft official letters (something that was actually suggested to me when I first arrived). The truth is

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<sup>74</sup> In the past, food was accepted as a valid contribution but in recent years it was decided that food should not replace labour as too few people were turning up to work (see Chapter 5 for longer discussion).

that I was and remain an outsider, a young woman from the city, who barely understands the physical effort that the *minga* entails.

Just when all my modest attempts to take part in a central community activity seemed to be failing, Doña Consuelo intervened. Almost yelling, as she usually does, she said rather defiantly to the President of the *comunidad*: “*Are you saying that because she is a woman she can’t work? You know that we can and we do contribute to these mingas as well!*” Jaime just nodded and told the Secretary, Maria Perugachi, to continue calling the names on the list. I felt great relief, which was reinforced when I looked around me and found some familiar smiling faces. On a personal level, the comment had a special meaning. Was my presence and work beginning to be accepted by some community members? A few months earlier, during the start of a *minga*, when I was introduced to the *comunidad* for the first time as a researcher who was going to work on water issues, it had been Doña Consuelo who had questioned my intentions. In front of all the people waiting for the list to be called out, with her usual defiant tone, she asked if I was there to spy on their water system and to see whether it would be possible to pipe their water to Otavalo. Not long before my arrival, the mayor of Otavalo had expressed similar intentions, which made studying water-related issues rather controversial at that particular moment.

In the context of the contestations that take place during the *minga* and the *comunidad*’s everyday events, Doña Consuelo’s remarks were not random. First, because Doña Consuelo was relatively new to the community, her membership was sometimes questioned. Other residents commented on her way of talking and her background being different and unusual. She is a *mestizo* woman from farther north, closer to the border with Colombia, and lives with her son in one of the newer houses on the edge of the community. Similar to many poor peasants from the Ecuadorian highlands, Doña Consuelo and her husband who is an indigenous Otavalo had first arrived in the Mojanda area to work clearing land in higher forest and *páramo* areas, far away from the reach of services at the upper fringes of Mojandita. Because these places can only be reached by foot or horse and as a result are not connected to the water service shared by everyone else they are not considered to be within the *comunidad*’s boundaries. By the time Doña Consuelo and her husband had a child and he was old enough to go to school they decided to move ‘down’ to the *comunidad*. Her husband, however, still lives and

works in the mountains while she and her son stay in Mojandita. Given Doña Consuelo's personal circumstances it is very important for her to publicly highlight her contribution and emphasise her commitment to the *comunidad* - something she clearly did on both occasions. Second, by questioning Jaime's comment on my capacity to work, not only did she help legitimise my presence there but also used it as an opportunity to legitimise all the women that participate in the *minga*, including herself. Although women's labour contribution is accounted for, men are naturally able to do heavier work which is necessary during the *mingas* and therefore often considered more valuable. Finally, Doña Consuelo's reply to the President had a significant effect in terms of my presence there: it 'equalised' me in relation to other women in the community. My background and status (urban and privileged) as well as my physical appearance (taller than most present there) were put aside. I became one more woman contributing her labour towards the *minga* effort. My role as a contributor would be counted in the same way as that of Margarita Chancozo, a middle-aged Cayambi indigenous woman, or Adriana Perugachi, a young *mestizo* mother working at the local hotel.

What Doña Consuelo did for me with her comment, the list does for people's status in general. As a document that contains records of labour contributions, credited next to each household with a series of lines, it equalises different households or "makes people convertible" (Colloredo-Mansfield 2009:104). A young, unemployed indigenous woman like Ana is accounted for in equal terms to Juan Guerrero, a white-*mestizo* man in his forties who works for one of the local hotels, Casa Mojanda, as a tourist guide. Regardless of the job they perform during the *minga*, both would gain one *raya* (line) next to their household's name. Because they fulfil the same function (a *raya* on the list), "households frequently make use of this reductionism to adapt whatever disposable resources they have to get on the list" (Ibid 2009:104). In this light, the moment the list is read out is crucial to know who and how others are contributing. "From an individual's point of view, the concern with equity [is] a matter of making sure that the others contribut[e] as much as oneself or, from a more selfish perspective, that one contribute[s] only as little as others would let one get away with" (Mayer 2002:128).

At the communal level though, list-keeping transcends individual households' concerns about equality and becomes a central element in the creation and maintenance of the *comunidad*'s physical and symbolic boundaries. Colloredo-Mansfeld (2009:105) clearly explains this point:

Lists are thus a device to strip away individual uniqueness to create a generalized resident made exchangeable through labour value [...] This commoditization lets communities gain power from their rosters and ledgers to defend their territory. The councils can convert diverse economic and social capital of individual households into a common labour pool, creating a mechanism of public finance through their circulation of resources and residents [...] The lists offer leaders of a community an instrument to channel action, lengthen or shorten commitments, and raise or lower their cash value via fines.

Lists reflect the ability of each community to improve and access resources through individual household contributions and accumulation of *rayas* (turns). Crucially, however, for the system to function and for it to be sustainable in the long run people need to contribute to the collective activities. They need to take part in the *mingas* and continually legitimise the system. In this sense, water has become fundamental for the *minga* to retain its function and for the list to exist. People in Mojandita and other neighbouring communities, as a result of a joint Water User Association and *cabildo* call, are once again participating in the communal work parties. Jaime Anrango, President of the community, explained the importance of having joint *mingas* as follows:

*With that objective in mind, we have tried to make a general minga. This means that it is not only for water related issues, but for everything, because at the end of the day it is for the development of the comunidad. Today we have a participation rate of around 75%, which is a great improvement. There are always households that do not contribute, that is why this year we have been implementing water service suspension, because, and I repeat, it is not only about a few people working and the rest looking on as passive spectators. We all benefit from the services available in the comunidad.*

The role water has acquired in relation to the *minga* system as well as towards the *comunidad*'s sustainability is perhaps a point that has been overlooked by some Andean studies conducted in the area (c.f. Korovkin 2001; Castañeda 2008; Colloredo-Mansfield 2009). Community leaders have been pushed to keep general *minga* lists as a way of justifying their joint calls between Water Users Associations and *cabildos* (Chapter 5). It is possible that when special projects begin separate lists might be kept, but generally joint lists are becoming the norm. This is exemplified by the fact that the

right to access water is maintained by participating in all *mingas* regardless of their (water or non-water) nature and participation is accounted for using the same lists. Water has become instrumental in controlling labour and to a large extent in keeping the *minga* system afloat.

### **Division of labour**

The ‘social levelling’ created by the lists breaks down the moment people choose or are sent to undertake the different chores that any *minga* entails. Once again, age, class, gender and race influence negotiations between people. Who gets to dig the ditch for the new water connection? Who gets to clean the water tanks? Who goes to town to buy the large cement tubes that are needed under a small bridge in the *comunidad*? After the list has been called out and the secretary has registered households present and absent, small groups of people are formed and sent off to start working on the different tasks for the day. In practice chores are assigned depending on what kind of tools or ‘special services’ each household is able to contribute, which are, as we will see next, also defined by social status and background.

Most people arrive to the *minga* with manual tools such as a shovel, a machete or a hoe, all necessary to carry out basic *minga* activities (digging, clearing shrubs, cleaning tanks). Other economically better off households would contribute their small truck, generally used to take people and materials around, or a cement mixer when for instance a new water tank has to be built. The choice of tool – including the vehicle or mixer - is very important because it is pivotal in determining what kind of activity each person will perform and how their contribution will be accounted for. For example, many women tend to bring hoes and sometimes machetes because that allows them to undertake activities such as clearing the path next to the main water pipes, viewed as less physically demanding than digging. However, when required, women are ready to participate in more difficult chores, something that they are proud of and see as a way to legitimise the value of their work. When I asked Margarita Chancozo about the activities that women conduct during the *minga* she said:

*We work just like the men, with the shovel, with the hoe. If they ask me to go with the machete, I can also do it.*

Skills are also important when determining who does what during the *minga*. Diverse livelihood activities mean that many *comuneros* have, for example, good construction skills (they tend to be poorer men) or have deep knowledge of the technologies behind the drinking water system (mostly men who have worked for the WUA). For instance, during one of the *mingas* I attended, Fernando Chicaiza, the young *mestizo* man who was my research assistant and who amongst his other skills is good at building, was put in charge of a group of men who were asked to construct a new water tank. Don Julio, the WUA Operator, is a peasant who migrated to Mojandita de Curubi more than 30 years ago from Puéllaro and is known for his ability to install and fix all kinds of water connections, often improvising the use of materials. Given his skills and position as Operator, Don Julio has to go to different working sites during the *minga* and supervise diverse water-related tasks such as fixing pipes or setting up new connections.

**Figure 6.1.** *A diverse group of people (men, women, indigenous, mestizo, young and old) cleaning a water tank.*



The *minga* is also an opportunity to learn new skills and teach younger and new *comuneros* the value and importance of labour. For example, Doña Consuelo has been learning how to add chlorine to the main tank. This frees Don Julio and allows him to carry out other tasks during the *minga* and even if he still supervises the job, for Doña

Consuelo, a single woman, head of household and relatively new community member, it represents an opportunity. A good WUA Operator is mostly judged by how often and how well he (they are almost always men) adds chlorine to the tank. By being assigned to the task, she is taking on a big responsibility, which allows her to demonstrate her commitment to the community. The *minga* is also used as a teaching experience for younger members, generally boys, who are normally sent to do the less popular tasks – more demanding physically or in terms of time – such as getting inside the tanks to clean them, or going to the remotest water source and clearing the shrubs around it. Young people are usually sent with an older, well-respected member of the community who will supervise them and make sure they work hard. The *minga* becomes an opportunity to teach younger community members how much effort it entails to access different services, and at the same time to teach them to respect local institutions and traditions. It is commonly thought that younger people do not value the *comunidad* as they should and are only biding their time until they can move to the city and become urban (and thus refrain from working on agricultural activities). Quite a few of the younger *comuneros* (teenage boys and girls) would actually wear what are considered to be urban and expensive outfits, even during the *minga*: jeans, black t-shirts, body piercings and hair styled with large amounts of gel.<sup>75</sup>

There is of course an element of practicality involved in the choice/assignment of labour activity. The objective remains to get as much profit as possible from each person. This became clear to me through my own experience of the *minga*. After the incident during the list calling, I was rather nervous of what would happen next. As I stood there while the community officers announced the day's activities and assigned responsibilities to different people, I wondered: What kind of activity would I be sent to do? Which group should I join? Can I actually choose? Should I just leave? Once again, someone intervened. Don Julio came towards me and said: "*You come with us*". I joined a large

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<sup>75</sup> Choice of clothing also reflects other processes of change taking place within each household and the *comunidad* in general. Although this is the topic for another study, it is interesting to note the heterogeneity as well as significance/meaning that clothing holds in Andean *comunidades* such as Mojandita de Curubi. Older Indigenous women tend to maintain their traditional clothing, while their children, both men and women, might wear western clothing, which are for most people a marker of *mestizaje*. In other words, they have become *mestizo* by choice of clothing and activity. At the same time, there are some younger people that wear both, traditional clothing for special occasions and on a daily basis what would be considered urban, alternative clothing (black t-shirts, piercings etc). Of course there are other markers of race and class like the long braid for Otavalo men. Keeping it, regardless of the clothing choice, is a strong signifier of indigenous identity. For discussions on similar topics see Marisol De la Cadena (1995).



group of people who were sent to dig a 15m long ditch through the schoolyard for a new water connection. The objective was to get a smaller pipe from the main running in front of the school building to a newly built house behind the school. I had brought a shovel to the *minga*, which meant that I was put to help remove the soil as other people with hoes would loosen it ahead of me. This was no easy task, and the first lesson learnt was that a shovel was not exactly the most practical tool for digging. It turned out to be a lot of work. Nonetheless, I put as much effort in as I could as I had a lot at stake. I had an immediate as well as a long-term concern in mind. First, I had to demonstrate, there and then to all those people who had heard Jaime's comment and Doña Consuelo's response to it that I could do the work. Beyond that, I felt that this was an opportunity to legitimise my presence as a researcher who wanted to participate in the life of the *comunidad* (not 'steal' the water as had been suggested).

Under a hot Andean sun at almost 3000m, I worked hard next to 15-20 other people including the community Secretary, Maria Perugachi, Juan Guerrero, Doña Consuelo, Ana Molina, Don Julio Jimenez and others. For hours we dug a ditch that would allow Hernan Suárez and his family to have water in their newly built home. With the objective clearly in mind, I began to understand why labour efforts were so highly valued in the *comunidad*. There were a few breaks to rest and drink some soda which was distributed by the secretary.<sup>76</sup> At some point my efforts to impress my co-workers had an effect and I was actually complemented on my working skills by some of the people around. Right after one of the breaks, the secretary walked towards me and told me that the President, Jaime, wanted to know if I could help them by using my vehicle to bring some materials from Otavalo. During my months of fieldwork in Ecuador, I used a pickup truck for transport. In addition to facilitating my work, it was a good way of blending in since many locals own similar vehicles. Also, it allowed me to meet many people during my daily activities, as I picked them up on their way to town or took them back to the community. Although there is local transportation in and around Mojandita (buses and small private vehicles) it is well regarded to give people rides whenever possible because the terrain is quite steep and it takes people between 30-60 minutes or more to go on foot from the community into town or vice versa.

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<sup>76</sup> Traditionally alcohol would be a central element during any communal work party. During the *mingas* I attended in Mojandita only a few people, mostly men, consumed alcohol. However, during other *mingas* in neighbouring communities or parties organised to help family or friends with agricultural activities or building projects, alcohol is still widely distributed. It is one of the 'gifts' used to recompense those who are helping (c.f. Mayer 2002).

During the *minga*, my vehicle also became an opportunity both for me to contribute and for the locals to benefit. In addition to moving people around to some of the assigned work places for the day, I was asked to go to Otavalo with the treasurer of the Water User Association, Carlos Anrango, to buy some large cement pipes which were needed to build a bridge on a side road in Mojandita. My potential as a contributor to the *minga* was maximised through the vehicle. Although I could keep working on the digging project, I was clearly more ‘useful’ as a transporter. In this way, my contribution helped the community save time and the significant cost of otherwise having to hire transport. Carlos and I did two trips with the large pipes as well as other shorter trips inside the community. Similar to my own experience, people’s skills and tools are carefully considered when assigning labour duties at the start of the communal work party. This means that what you know and bring to the *minga* (e.g. tools, transport) in addition to your status (age, gender, class) becomes central in the negotiations over division of labour. It is a circular connection: status influences the kind of knowledge and tools a person is able to contribute, which in turn determines the labour activity assigned during the *minga*, which again reflects social status.

As a result, the better off, who either have a special skill/position or are able to provide a particularly ‘useful’ tool for the required tasks, do less or no manual work. For instance, once they have done a few return trips, those who contribute the use of a vehicle are allowed to leave. They have ‘paid’ their dues and their contribution has been recorded. The local official’s position is also a case in point, in terms of effort invested. Given his role as overseer and organiser of the *minga*, the President of the community at the time, Jaime, would move around the different work sites making sure people were conducting their assigned task. In practice though, it meant that he, who also owned a car, would drive up and down the *comunidad* and would not get physically involved in any of the more demanding activities. In contrast, people who contribute manual labour (who tend to be poorer men and women) stay for longer hours carrying out the harder tasks, such as digging a ditch, clearing bushes or fixing pipes. Thus, underlying each person’s experience of communal water management lays the fact that age, class, gender and race differences heavily influence choice/assignment of work. This is not static because through the *minga*, social status can also be negotiated over time. As people’s personal circumstances change, perhaps by gaining access to some tools or new types of knowledge, or even becoming officials in the local *cabildo*, their role in

the *minga* could potentially change. In this light, as much as every communal work party is an opportunity to publicly acknowledge commitment and establish boundaries (internal/external), it is also an opportunity to contest given social status and positions within the community itself.

### **Rules and Sanctions**

While those who participate and attend the *minga* negotiate their position and form of contribution through their labour assignment, for those who are not taking part in the process at all the *minga* could potentially be a crucial moment for negotiating exclusion. In addition to various maintenance and building activities, the *minga* is also a day during which the local authorities expose households that have breached communal rules and have not paid fees, not attended *mingas* and/or not paid fines. At the start of the day while people are separated into working groups, a smaller delegation of local officers, which generally includes the President of the WUA, the Operator, the President of the *comunidad* and a few other supporters, walk to a number of households that have previously been identified for breaking the rules. Once they arrive outside the house, if no one is there to contest the decision and perhaps convince the officials not to carry out the suspension, the Operator (who knows where the pipes are laid), first closes the connection, then digs away some soil to find the pipe, makes a cut and bends the tube to prevent further leakage. Finally, the pipe is tied up and the Operator covers the area with soil, or leaves it as it was found. Even if rudimentary, it is a fast and efficient way of suspending the service.

This is by no means a simple process and it entails difficult negotiations between the different actors involved, i.e. the authorities or law enforcers and the ‘affected’, or those who broke the rules. First, in terms of the households that are actually sanctioned, having to confront the authorities can potentially be a difficult moment, but it can also be a time to explain the reasons behind their lack of contribution to the *comunidad*. In other words, they can negotiate the terms of their exclusion. Sometimes residents are able to convince the delegation to allow them to pay the fines and pledge that they will take part in future *mingas*. Second, the acts of suspension also entail some awkward discussions between the authorities about who is to be punished and why. For some of the officers themselves, this is a very stressful moment. They might have family or friendship ties with the household that is about to be sanctioned or simply think it is not

fair, and that people should be given another opportunity or be properly informed of what is going to happen well in advance. One of the officials at the time, the WUA Operator Julio Jimenez, felt that sanctions through water service suspension were too harsh. He told me that some of the communal leaders use it to impose their own political agendas on the rest of the residents. For him, this attitude could be compared to that of *gamonales*, or local *caudillos*/power brokers who are used to imposing their will whatever the cost. The Operator's position clearly contrasts with the reasoning of the *comunidad's* President Jaime Anrango, who firmly believes that these measures are necessary to ensure long-term commitment to the *comunidad*.

Third, there are some contradictions in which households are actually sanctioned. The less powerful might suffer the consequences of breaking the rules while the ones with more connections in the local *cabildo*, or of a higher status in the *comunidad* might get away with their actions. During my stay in Mojandita, there was a case of three households using the same water meter, something that is not permitted by the WUA. Because each house must have its own meter, their service had to be suspended for breaching a basic WUA rule. In practice though, because one of those households was the residence of an older man who had served as a WUA President in the past, the sanction was not imposed, even though there were constant threats of doing it.

Another example in terms of how different households get penalised could be my own landlady, Eva Rosero. Although she lost her water service on several occasions (including once while I lived there), she always managed to get reconnected relatively easily. According to the established rules, in order to get reconnected offenders need to pay the fines and also get official approval from the WUA. My landlady would, however, just make a phone call to the community President or WUA treasurer to settle the fine, which she would not always pay in money. When I contacted her after the service had been suspended, she told me not to worry, that she would call the treasurer of the WUA and then stop by his place to pay the fine and give him some sodas for the next *minga*, which according to her, would suffice. Through looking carefully at her reasoning and actions it is possible to identify a number of the contradictions, inequalities and negotiations that occur on a daily basis in the *comunidad*, as well as outside its 'boundaries'. Her place in the community was rather ambiguous. She was not a permanent resident, but had some land and a house used on the occasional

weekend, which my partner and I had rented for one year. In terms of her land, she had a deal with a very poor, old, indigenous couple who planted different types of crops (maize, beans) on her plot and in return, or as 'rent' payment, gave her half of the yield. What happened in reality was that during harvest season she would arrive from town unexpectedly with her family and stomp through the fields to grab as much as they could while the old couple could only look on silently. The episodes of paying the fine and harvesting exemplify some of the tensions between urban and rural, indigenous and *mestizo* that exist in many Andean localities. Because of her position as a *mestizo* woman from town, not only would she not work in the *mingas* (seen as a peasant/indigenous tradition) but she felt entitled to pay the fines with sodas, which in her own reasoning, was more than enough. A similar reasoning explains her actions in relation to the old couple who worked her land.

Why were her 'gifts' in the form of sodas accepted? Why could she continue arriving at the plot to harvest at any time? Is this attitude really accepted? A possible explanation is that perhaps her way of dealing with the *comunidad*, as with other more powerful residents, is not necessarily confronted overtly. Instead, community members might show disapproval or discontent by, for example, never informing her before her water service was suspended (contrary to the rules). Furthermore, she is considered an outsider to the community who does not take part in symmetrical reciprocal exchanges with other residents and does not participate in local festivals. As a result, she does not have the status of a *comunero* and at best she is called *vecina* (neighbour). This means that even if she has access to some services, she is not entitled to the same benefits as those who live in the *comunidad*. For instance, she cannot get help from other people to build a house or clear a field. Instead, she has to hire a *peón* to do it because nobody in the *comunidad* would support her through exchanges of labour.<sup>77</sup>

A final point in terms of the water suspension relates to its public character. Cutting off a household's water supply during the *minga*, i.e. enacting the sanction very publicly, serves a range of purposes. Because it is done at the same time as everyone else is working in the *minga*, it gains some degree of general approval by the majority. Why should they get away with not working while the rest of us are making a lot of effort? In addition to reprimanding the wrongdoers, public enactment enables the authorities to

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<sup>77</sup> For a similar account of the relationships between mestizo and indigenous residents in a community in Peru see Peter Gose (1991).

show others what might happen if they stop contributing. For practical reasons, it is also easier to impose sanctions during the *minga* day when most community officials are around, specially the Operator who has to physically make the cut. On a symbolic level, it emphasises membership by distinguishing the insiders from the outsiders, those who are eligible to benefit from the services from those who are not, citizens from non-citizens.

As the different tasks are completed, digging ditches, clearing paths, adding chlorine to the main water collection tank or sanctioning WUA members, the residents who participated in the *minga* return to their homes. Another day of hard work for the community has been accomplished, and Mojandita's residents have once again demonstrated their capacity to work together, to make their community a better place and in that process reassert their territorial authority. They have been able to protect "the ideal of self-determination" (Colloredo-Mansfield 2009:209) *vis à vis* other communities and most importantly the Ecuadorian state. As the next section argues, although the state might seem to be invisible during collective work parties, it is also a very important element/actor in the *minga*.

### ***Water, community boundaries and the state***

It might seem the state, in the form of the cantonal municipality to which rural communities belong, or even the national government through its different agencies, is practically absent from the local development projects achieved through the *minga*. On the rare occasions when the state is involved, it provides materials and unreliable technical support in terms design, training and follow-up to infrastructure projects conducted within the *comunidad*. As various critics of decentralisation and devolution processes and development models have pointed out, by institutionalising and encouraging governance at the local level, the state is avoiding its responsibilities and perhaps even eroding the capacity of citizens to demand services and access resources (Swyngedouw 2005; Mehta, Marshall et al. 2007; Marquardt 2012). As Marquardt (2012) argues, the fact that acquiring some citizenship rights is defined by participation in the form of manual labour in already marginal rural and peri-urban communities in the Andes only underscores deep social and economical inequalities. It legitimises a differential system for accessing resources and rights. Moreover, from the perspective of what the *minga* as an institution is able to achieve in terms of physical improvements

to the *comunidad*, the state could be seen to be irrelevant. It does not provide much support but still the communities are, through their own organisational processes, able to make some small, but significant (and valued) improvements to their localities.

Despite the problems regarding the ‘invisibility’ of the state, when analysed from the point of view of the rural population’s political and social struggles to access resources and “compose livelihoods aimed at making a living, and making it meaningful” (Bebbington 2000:501) the state is always present; not in a physical way (little and unreliable support for infrastructure and other development projects) but it is however always in mind. First, as residents of a *comunidad* perform and re-enact the *minga*, in addition to improving the place where the *comunidad* is located they are trying to increase the extent to which they control it. Thus, their efforts are, in addition to improving livelihoods, geared towards legitimising - *vis à vis* the state - what is locally understood as a right to govern over a socially and physically defined territory (Boelens, Gentes et al. 2005:166-167). The *comunidad*’s residents are not deliberately pushing the state away or resisting it; on the contrary, the aim is to get more and better support but on their own terms, which in practice is ‘the right to equality and the right to be different’. Bettina Ng’weno’s (2007:9) study of two Afro-Colombian communities’ efforts to access land shows this point clearly:

The history of the claims places them as part of ongoing struggles over land and access to productive resources and over securing life and livelihood as rural Colombians who have not been the center of concern of the government [...] these claims represent a more general and unified attempt at self-definition as communities (ethnically, ideologically and territorially) on the one hand and at political opening (as citizens and constituencies) on the other.

The fact that indigenous and peasant communities such as Mojandita de Curubi have decided to get legal recognition of their *cabildos* and WUAs from the state and are willing and able to organise *mingas* communicates and demonstrates their intention to relate to the state and demand the resources they have been historically deprived of. In this sense, every time there is a *minga*, the *comuneros* become political agents with specific claims. As Ng’weno (2007:72-73) explains, claiming “ties the claimants to the state in specific ways. It structures forms of rule for the local and national administration, which has to respond to the official demands made on it through legal suits, claiming procedures, and public demonstrations”.

Seen from the *comunidad* residents' perspective, the *minga* is a form of public demonstration of citizenship rights in action. It becomes a vehicle for establishing internal community boundaries, and at the same time, for creating a relationship with the state through political participation that emphasises local ways of self-governance. Here it is possible to say that self-determination is defined in terms "of greater control over local decision making and [at the same time] more effective participation in national representative structures" (Korovkin 2001:44). Rather than victims who are resisting state interventions, every time there is a *minga*, the *comuneros* are actively engaging with it as its members, as its citizens. They are demanding more support (equality) on their own terms (difference).

## Conclusion

In this chapter I have argued that the *minga* plays a significant role within the indigenous and peasant community: it defines internal membership and because of its labour-intensive or 'investment' nature it helps define the relationship between the community and the state. Specifically it showed that labour has a number of symbolic and practical meanings within the indigenous and peasant *comunidad*. Labour contributions 1) allow residents to enhance the places where they live by accessing resources that otherwise would be difficult to get; 2) generates a system of rights at the local level; 3) through list-keeping it equalises community members via reciprocal exchanges (or what are considered its equivalent); 4) helps maintain community boundaries; and 5) it is at the core of the relationship between communities and the state. Yet, as this chapter also shows, boundaries and membership are not homogeneously created; contestation and conflict are also present. During the *minga*, age, gender, class and ethnicity are also negotiated and contested. This means that although people are willing to invest in a place, to create boundaries and criteria of membership, not all of them contribute in the same way or for the same reasons.

In terms of one of the aims of this thesis, which is to understand everyday citizenship, the chapter demonstrates how and why labour contributions remain a significant aspect of the process through which indigenous and peasant communities negotiate and exercise their citizenship rights. While in the colonial and post-colonial period, labour duties were part of a state taxation system imposed on the indigenous populations



(Chapter 3 and 4), today, labour duties are claimed as part of the indigenous and peasant peoples' cultural and political rights.

Equally important for the argument of this thesis, the chapter examines how through the legally recognised right to manage water resources, communities are able to organise and control labour at the local level. As discussed in Chapter 5, the development and transformation in the duties performed by the WUA has resulted in water acquiring a particular role within the *comunidad*. It allows for labour control and therefore to legitimise autonomy in decision-making over local issues. Put in a different way, water has become an important marker of community membership and local investment, or what Bebbington (2000) calls "place making". Both the importance of labour in the exercise of citizenship for marginal people and the significance of water in this process is something that has been overlooked by literature on indigenous citizenship in the Andes and literature on water in the Andes respectively. This point will be further discussed in the Conclusion to which we turn now.

## 7. Conclusion

In August 2009, indigenous men and women from various communities in the Imbabura Province met at the FICI's office in Otavalo to discuss the national water law which had been proposed by President Rafael Correa's government earlier that year. During the meeting a number of leaders stood up to speak and explain why they were opposing the law. The following passage is part of the speech that Blanca Chancoso, an Otavalo indigenous woman and leader of the Imantag Community, gave during that meeting.<sup>78</sup>

*Compañeros, there is a lot to say about water and about our experiences [...] Perhaps some of our compañeros and leaders are very young, perhaps they have not experienced what we have and do not care about what is going on with the SENAGUA. How is it possible that they [SENAGUA] want to institutionalise and organise what our elders have already done? In the past, we could not take water from the streams, from the acequias. Only the haciendas were allowed to. If a young person wanted to bathe there, the mayordomos [hacienda's caretakers] would kill them. Even the mayordomos who were indigenous, they behaved like gamonales, like our enemies, working for the patrón.*

*All of what I am telling you seemed to be things of the past, but it seems that they want to do the same again. Without anybody's help, today, we have irrigation channels; we have potable water. We have achieved this through the self-effort and self-determination [autogestión y autodeterminación] of the indigenous and campesino peoples. We have done this through our own effort; when we did it, nobody gave us a hand, let alone the 'foot' [nadie nos dio la mano, peor la pata], not even the Municipality. We have it because of our own effort. Perhaps as a gross error, as a mistake, the agency before the SENAGUA had the 'courtesy' to give us the concessions to use irrigation and drinking water.*

*We got together [arrimamos el hombro] and worked, we got some support from various agencies from abroad. The Municipality, the Ministry - they did not put a cent into these systems. Still, this does not mean that the water is ours. This crooked law might come and we are going to be left with the pipes from the drinking water systems and the acequias of the irrigation channels, but with no water. [...] To be left with the acequias and without water, that will not be fair. That a new water redistribution process is necessary for the equitable access to the resource is very true [...] If it is necessary to redistribute water amongst the Imantag's comuneros, we will do it. We will fight for the best form of redistribution to take place, but to send the water to the hacendados, so that they let it run without using it, we will not comply with that.*

The preceding chapters of this thesis documented and analysed a remarkable transformation in the terms and conditions under which water has been accessed and controlled amongst indigenous and *campesino* communities in Highland Ecuador. I have chosen to begin the concluding chapter with a passage from Blanca Chancoso's

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<sup>78</sup> This is the real name of the person.

speech because it illustrates the consequences of these transformations. It underlines the long and sometimes troubled history of people's access to water as well as the meaning the process holds for marginalised communities. Her speech highlights this thesis' main concern: that collective water management has become a key space where it is possible to understand citizenship from below, and a platform through which marginal communities mobilise to claim rights on a daily basis.

First, Blanca Chancoso's speech starts by summarising the history of discrimination and inequality behind accessing water and other resources for marginalised rural communities, a point that Chapters 3, 4 and 5 discussed in detail. This part of her speech highlights a central topic of this study, i.e. the political and cultural implications that accessing hydrological resources can have for marginalised groups in society. Second, Blanca Chancoso also underlines the importance of communal labour and decision making, or what she specifically calls "*autogestión y autodeterminación*" (self-management and self-determination), in relation to irrigation and drinking water systems. In other words, her speech illustrates one of the key arguments of this thesis, which is that indigenous and peasant communities legitimise and claim their rights on a daily basis by taking on collective responsibilities and duties. Third, she highlights that similarly to and in addition to the organisations connected with irrigation water, WUAs for drinking water have become important arenas of self-governance practices which indigenous and *campesino* communities often consider part of their identity, something that literature on water in the Andes has overlooked (c.f. Boelens and Zwarteveen 2005; Roth, Boelens et al. 2005; Boelens, Getches et al. 2010). Fourth, when mentioning that communities gained the right to use water for irrigation and human consumption perhaps as a result of what she calls an 'error' or the 'courtesy' on the part of the state, she touches upon another central argument of the dissertation, namely, the often unintended and yet crucial consequences of the shifting of relationships between the state and local communities, as highlighted in Chapters 3, 4 and 5.

Finally, her speech illustrates that although access to water can and does create a sense of community and a common purpose to 'fight as one' and defend what is considered as a right, inequality and disagreement also occur within these 'bounded' localities. On the one hand, as discussed in Chapters 5 and 6, by referring to the need for redistribution of water resources in Imantag, Blanca Chancoso's speech suggests that far from being an

equitable and agreed allocation system, access to water is constantly under negotiation within the communities. On the other hand, when repeatedly referring to the SENAGUA and the new water law, the speech shows that policies in relation to water management practices change all the time, and as a result they catalyse constant debate and negotiation *vis à vis* the state.

In this final chapter I present a summary of the discussions and the arguments and highlight the theoretical and practical implications and contributions of this study. I also present some challenges and opportunities for future research on this important topic. The following section returns to the research questions established in the introduction of the dissertation to explain how they have been answered.

### **Summary of the research questions and discussion**

This thesis was divided into three parts. The first section included the introduction and the conceptual and methodological frameworks, Chapters 1 and 2 respectively. The second part, Chapters 3 and 4 were based on detail historical analysis of indigenous peoples-state relations, while the third and final part of the thesis, Chapters 5 and 6, embodied the ethnographic section. Chapter 1, which served as the introduction, presented the aims of the research and explained the general political and historical context of communal drinking water management practices in Ecuador. The chapter also posed the main research question guiding this study: *how do communal water management systems influence local forms of social organisation and shape the way in which citizenship is exercised in Ecuador?*

In order to address this question, the thesis engaged with diverse strands of academic literature, which were introduced and explored in Chapter 2. This chapter began by presenting the approach to citizenship that the thesis drew on. It explored the concepts of differentiated and active citizenship, which provided the theoretical background necessary to understand the construction of ‘citizenship from below’. In other words, it allowed the analysis to move away from the more ‘traditional’ realms of citizenship struggles (the legal arena) towards the less ‘official’ spaces people use as a platform to contest the terms and conditions of citizenship; the space in question in this study being

collective water management. Here I also argued that it is necessary to expand the understanding of organisational processes within indigenous communities to include *campesino* populations, who also live in rural areas and take part in a variety of communal management practices. This was also reflected on my choice of fieldwork site: a relatively recently formed mixed indigenous and *mestizo* community.

Chapter 2 also presented a discussion of the connection between water and citizenship as well as an overview of relevant water-related literature. Specifically, it examined the literature on legal pluralism, natural resource management and water rights, showing how it would be applied in this study and also where this thesis diverged from those theoretical strands. The final part of the chapter explored the methodological and ethical aspects of this research project. Here I suggested that in order to understand how different people experience citizenship today it is necessary to combine ethnographic and historical methodologies as they provide a long-term perspective on the political and social processes that have led to such experiences.

Based on the discussion of citizenship and water in the second chapter, Chapters 3 and 4 moved on to explain the social and political processes that have resulted in indigenous and *campesino* communities considering access and control over water (and other resources) to be a citizenship right. In this way Chapters 3 and 4 constituted the historical section of the thesis and sought to answer one of the sub-questions that guided this investigation: *How have changes in state policies and practices influenced local level management and control of water resources over time?*

Through in-depth historical analysis and the use of secondary and primary sources from archival research conducted in Otavalo and Quito, Chapter 3 analysed the relationship between indigenous/peasant communities and the state in highland Ecuador. By following a theoretical approach which argues that despite the fact that Indians were systematically excluded from access to citizenship rights, they were essential in the process of state formation in Ecuador (Clark and Becker 2007), Chapter 3 showed that the state's attempt to convert Indians into white-*mestizo* citizens had unintended consequences, some of which were positive for the indigenous population. Thus, the chapter argued that state policies, which throughout the 20th century encouraged communal arrangements such as the *cabildo*, allowed the formation of strong local

institutions that today are used to contest state policies as well as to claim citizenship rights. Based on this argument, Chapter 3 challenged the entrenched understanding of indigenous resistance *vis à vis* the state (c.f. Boelens and Zwartveen 2005; Roth, Boelens et al. 2005; Boelens 2009), and provided a long term view that recognises the engagements between the indigenous and peasant communities and other external actors as contentious negotiation processes.

Chapter 3 also highlighted how Indians and other marginal peoples' citizenship rights have been to a large extent negotiated in terms of labour contributions. It showed that from the outset of the Colonial period, bonded labour systems defined indigenous peoples' status/rights and that this could be compared to what Tristan Platt (1984) calls a 'pact' between the state and Indian communities, particularly those who did not belong to the haciendas. This pact, which in practice was a tributation system, allowed indigenous peoples to retain a small but nonetheless real margin of autonomy at the local level. As a result of changes in legislation and the extension of rights to indigenous populations in Ecuador, bonded labour was abolished but as Chapters 4, 5 and 6 showed, labour still remains a significant aspect of the process through which indigenous peoples rights are recognised and negotiated in Ecuador.

While Chapter 3 examined the general terms of the relationship between the state and the indigenous and peasant population in Highland Ecuador, Chapter 4 discussed the role of water resources within this relationship. Using archival material drawn from official documents, books and art produced between 1930 and 1970, Chapter 4 examined how notions of the Indian as backward and dirty influenced policies to improve health and sanitation in Ecuador. It also showed how policy changes in the water sector have allowed WUAs gradually - and perhaps unintentionally - to become more independent and autonomous. Chapter 4 also introduced the topic of 'self-help and mutual aid' system established by a series of development initiatives targeting the indigenous population. This system is nowadays considered an intrinsic part of the indigenous community and most importantly, it is the basis through which citizenship is experienced on a daily basis by many Ecuadorians. In relation to this last point, Chapter 4 also considered some of the challenges of communal resource management and recognised that despite the political and cultural importance gained by local institutions, autonomy can also bring significant responsibilities into already marginalised

populations, which might allow the state to ‘relieve itself’ of its own obligations and potentially deepen social and economic inequalities.

In summary, Chapters 3 and 4 demonstrated that changes in state policies and practices have profoundly influenced management and control of resources at the local level. They suggested that rather than a strong state ‘imposing’ itself on the local communities, weaknesses in the state apparatus and its ability to intervene in rural areas are at the core of what local communities understand as self-effort and self-governance: practices through which these same communities contest exclusion, demand autonomy and therefore claim citizenship rights today.

Chapters 5 and 6, which constituted the ethnographic section of the thesis, addressed the second sub-question guiding this research: *How do local men and women experience everyday water management and contestation over resources?* By looking at the case of Mojandita de Curubi, an indigenous and peasant *comunidad* in the Northern highlands of Ecuador, Chapter 5 examined the history as well as the effects of the introduction of the drinking water system and the WUA. Through local peoples’ own voices, Chapter 5 showed how the establishment of this particular water infrastructure and the institutional arrangements that accompany it have strengthened the communal organisation and furthered its ability to regulate its own activities - to be autonomous. In this respect, Chapter 5 demonstrated that the WUA has exceeded its ‘managerial’ and ‘technical’ roles to also undertake a crucial political function within the community. It was argued that this phenomenon can be compared to what Arun Agrawal (2005:7) calls “the regulatory community” or new regulatory spaces within localities where social interaction takes place.

Chapter 5 also highlighted the importance that building the water infrastructure with local labour has acquired over time. This system was introduced by the state in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, and has basically allowed people to legitimise the control and the decision-making over the infrastructure and the resource, and as a result to establish a complex system of water rights. This chapter also explained that collective forms of organisation do not guarantee equality or efficiency, and showed that poorer, recently established residents and women can be excluded from accessing water, from decision-making processes and also from leadership roles within the water management organisations. At

the same time this chapter demonstrated that people who might not necessarily consider themselves indigenous also take part in collective activities such as water management and use it as a vehicle to access resources on a daily basis.

Through an extended study of the *minga* (work party) in Mojandita de Curubi, Chapter 6 moved on to examine how local water management influences the dynamics of class, gender, and race within the *comunidad*, while also allowing local demands and development aspirations to be articulated to the state. In this way Chapter 6 sought to expand on the academic understanding of the contemporary communal work party and incorporate the question of water into the analysis. It was argued that although the *minga* and other forms of reciprocal labour that exist in the Andes have been analysed or mentioned in a number of studies, there are no detailed accounts of the *minga* that focus on each of its elements or that consider the role of water within its organisational process. Chapter 6 demonstrated that while the *minga* is used to establish internal community boundaries, it also helps create a relationship with the state through political participation that emphasises local methods of self-governance. In this way, Chapter 6 showed that marginal people's experiences of citizenship are expressed in term of the labour contributions and responsibilities they acquire as members of a community. It also shows that although labour is experienced in a different way (it is not imposed by the state), it continues to be important in the negotiation of the terms and conditions that define citizenship for indigenous and peasant populations.

The third and final sub-question guiding this study was: *How do communal systems of water management shape the assertion of different forms of citizenship in Ecuador?* This question was addressed throughout the empirical chapters of this thesis. While Chapters 3 and 4 provided the historical background necessary to understand the trajectories of citizenship formation amongst indigenous and peasant communities, Chapters 5 and 6 demonstrated how the WUAs which administer drinking water systems have become a key space where differentiated forms of citizenship are experienced and claimed within the communities and in relation to the state. In this way, drawing on historical and ethnographic research, the empirical chapters of this thesis showed that water has gained an important role in shaping the negotiations over the definition of citizenship at the local level. Specifically, by controlling local labour, water has increased local communities' ability to organise and legitimise the extent to



which they control their territories, and thus to further their demands for autonomy. The next section examines how this research project contributes to academic literature and policy debates.

### **Contribution to the literature**

Given that this thesis is based on a combination of literatures, it also aims at contributing into these academic debates from different angles. In this section I will explain how this research specifically contributes to four bodies of literature: water and legal pluralism in the Andes, Andean studies, active and everyday forms of citizenship and common property resource management.

#### ***Water management in the Andes***

The introduction to this thesis as well as the passage at the beginning of this conclusion pointed out that the protests that took place in 2009 against the new water law were part of a long history of social mobilisation over the question of water. The unique and important element of this latest round of protests was the fact that although previous protests had involved users of irrigation and drinking water, this time WUAs for drinking water took centre stage in the mobilisations. Even if various authors have studied the politics involved in collective water management in Ecuador, most of this body of literature has concentrated on irrigation, paying little or no attention to WUAs for domestic water (c.f. Boelens and Zwarteveen 2005; Roth, Boelens et al. 2005; Boelens, Getches et al. 2010). This thesis has, therefore, sought to fill this research gap and further the understanding of the political and cultural implications of rural localities managing their own drinking water systems. As suggested in Chapters 5 and 6, diverse schemes of water rights and strong WUAs have also developed in relation to drinking water and become important spaces for communal decision-making (Agrawal 2005) and political contestation in relation to the state. This thesis has therefore contributed to the literature by demonstrating that WUAs for drinking water have become important arenas of self-governance which indigenous and *campesino* communities often consider to be an element of their identity and claim as part of their citizenship rights.

The process of identity formation in relation to collective water management systems is something that literature on water in the Andes has termed ‘hydraulic identities’ (Beccar, Boelens et al. 2001:39). Although this concept refers specifically to collective irrigation systems, I have demonstrated throughout this thesis that the concept of “hydraulic identity” can also be applied to the case of piped water systems. The establishment of local organisations for the development and management of domestic water systems has resulted in an important sense of community, provided a sound platform for self-organisation and created a mechanism for allocating water rights, all of which are aspects of resource access and distribution that local residents have come to consider central to their cultural and political practices.

Furthermore, the historical perspective on the formation of local water management structures applied in this thesis challenges the literature on water in the Andes. Specifically, Chapters 3 and 4 showed that rather than the sharp contradictions between the state and the local communities described by this body of literature (Boelens, Getches et al. 2010), WUAs and the systems of water rights that accompany them are a product of the often unintended effects of the shifting relationships between the state and the rural population. Through historical analysis and the use of secondary and primary sources from archival research conducted in Otavalo and Quito, this thesis challenged embedded understandings of indigenous resistance, and sought to provide a long term view that seriously considers the engagements between the indigenous and peasant communities and external actors (state, NGOs etc.) as contentious negotiation processes rather than immediate responses of resistance to intervention. This perspective follows from the observation made by Anthony Bebbington (2000:514) in relation to rural Andean communities, “that subalterns are not merely victims who resist, but also agents who have succeeded in opening spaces within states and markets. They have used these spaces to build new types of hybrid livelihoods, institutions, and landscapes [...]”.

### *Andean Studies*

Employing a combination of historical and ethnographic research has also allowed this study to contribute to broader field of academic literature that studies the Ecuadorian Andes (c.f. Guerrero 1993; Korovkin 2000; Korovkin 2001; Guerrero 2003; Yashar

2005; Clark and Becker 2007; Polo Bonilla 2009). As demonstrated in Chapters 3, 4, 5 and 6, in addition to resources such as land and education, water has been at the core of indigenous and peasant organisation and demands to access and control local resources and attain citizenship rights. Apart from a historical analysis of water in Otavalo conducted by Kenneth Kincaid (2005), Andean scholars have not analysed in detail how and why water resources are essential for the indigenous communities and most importantly, how this influences indigenous and other marginal communities claims of citizenship rights in Ecuador.

Another important insight provided by this thesis is the significance of labour as: 1) a mechanism of community building; and 2) a central element in the claims of marginal people for citizenship rights. Although communal work parties or *mingas* have been analysed by various authors, the historical significance of collective duties in mediating rights has not been properly addressed by the literature on ethnic politics in the Andes (c.f. Guerrero 1993; Korovkin 2000; Korovkin 2001; Yashar 2005; Pallares 2007) neither by anthropological studies that examine the indigenous and peasant communities in Ecuador (c.f. Bourque 1997; Colloredo-Mansfield 2009).

The prominence of collective work duties in creating social boundaries in rural communities becomes particularly relevant in the cases of post-land reform settlements, such as Mojandita de Curubi. Although a result of the transformations that took place in land tenure patterns after the land reform, these communities are not based on a shared history of struggles for land with neighbouring haciendas as other, independent indigenous communities or hacienda workers (*huasipungueros*) might be. Instead these communities, formed by residents who are coming from different ethnic backgrounds and think of themselves as diverse, are product of the local resident's effort to build a place of their own, access services and resources and reassert control over them. It is precisely in the process of acquiring these services that communities like Mojandita strengthen their ties and boundaries. In this context, labour becomes particularly important and controlling it vital. This thesis has shown that nowadays and as a result of the transformation in the local institutional responsibilities, water has become an important mechanism of labour control in the indigenous and peasant community. Neither the importance of water, nor the significance of labour for post-land reform,

ethnically-diverse communities has been properly studied by literature in the Ecuadorian Andes.

It is possible to say that through the choice of case study this thesis also challenges essentialist positions with respect to what has been generally assumed to be indigenous traditions and institutions. It shows that even if the *comunidad* is considered a quintessentially indigenous form of organisation, other marginal rural inhabitants also belong to it and most importantly, exercise and experience their citizenship rights through it. Thus this contributes to the understanding of *campesino* populations something that only a limited number of studies of the Ecuadorian Andes has done (c.f. Bourque 1997; Bebbington 2000; Zamosc 2004; Himley 2009)

This brings me to the last point I want to make in relation to literature about rural Andean populations in Ecuador. While in this thesis I have sought to show how water has been historically important and influenced the relationship between the rural population and the state, I have also introduced an important question for the future, namely whether access and control over water is becoming more important than land in the negotiations over citizenship rights for indigenous and peasant communities in highland Ecuador. Without dismissing the importance of land yet considering the fact that many rural households no longer depend on agricultural activities for their livelihoods, the issue of water (and control over labour associated with it) become very relevant. It forces us to think beyond traditional research boundaries and to challenge embedded understandings of the rural indigenous and peasant community as mainly struggling to control land. In this sense, by looking at people's daily lives, this thesis has demonstrated that marginal populations in rural areas claim and legitimise their rights as citizens through a variety of forms.

### ***Citizenship***

This thesis also contributes to recent literature that has advanced a view of citizenship as active or practised rather than a status given by the state (Young 1989; Kymlicka 1995; Gaventa 2002; Kabeer 2002; Taylor and Wilson 2004; Assies, Calderón et al. 2005; Kabeer 2005; Cornwall and Coelho 2006; Pallares 2007; Abraham, Ngang-ling Chow et al. 2010). Attention was given to what Lucy Taylor and Fiona Wilson (2004)

call the “messiness of everyday life”, or spaces and platforms ranging from rituals to collective action, through which people make citizenship rights meaningful in practice. In this light and drawing on my empirical material, I have demonstrated how negotiations and experiences around accessing and managing water for domestic use constitute an important part of how citizenship is experienced and practised by marginalised groups in the Ecuadorian Andes. Following this argument, this thesis also helps to clarify the links between water and citizenship. It looks beyond the notion that access to water is a fundamental right - the right to water as examined in the literature (Mehta and Miroso 2004; Anand 2007) - to include the idea that the right to manage the resource can also be considered an important element of citizenship.

Once again, it is important to note the significance of collective labour taken on by local residents in this process. As shown in this thesis, indigenous and peasant residents claim their rights as citizens by acquiring a series of collective responsibilities and duties that are then transformed into political and cultural rights recognised by the state (recognition of differentiated citizenship). Although literature on everyday forms of citizenship focuses on people’s ability and capacity to be and become political agents in and through different arenas (funeral dances, religious acts, competitions, communal gardens), it has not analysed in detail the prior emphasis given to collective duties as a way of claiming citizenship rights.

At the same time, this research also contributes to the literature on differentiated forms of citizenship which suggests that there is not one form of belonging or of being a citizen but multiple experiences that can accommodate differences in power, gender, culture, class and ethnicity (Young 1989; Gaventa 2002; Abraham, Ngang-ling Chow et al. 2010). As argued in Chapters 5, and 6, through communal water management differentiated forms of citizenship are routinely put into practice when a *minga* is conducted, when rules are followed or broken and when sanctions are imposed. Rather than belonging to the nation state only as individuals, many indigenous and peasant peoples also conceive of their membership or citizenship in collective terms.

At a different level, but directly linked to the study of how citizenship is experienced by people in Ecuador, it is possible to say that my own background and accounts reflected on this work could be seen as a contribution to the literature. Without noticing at first,

the fact that I am Ecuadorian born into an urban setting became part of the research process in unexpected ways. During fieldwork, I was able to practise ‘citizenship’ from a collective point of view and contrast it to a more familiar understanding of citizenship in the urban areas, where the individual is viewed as the average - *mestizo* - citizen. Although my own background became ‘useful’ and part of the process of understanding the whole question of citizenship formation in Ecuador, it also presented a number of challenges, which I have reflected upon at various points in this thesis. Even though I have tried to overcome and reflect on the various biases and ethical dilemmas posed by my own ethnic and socioeconomic identity, this thesis is inevitably a product of these same experiences, thoughts and dilemmas. It has been written from the perspective of a woman born in the capital city, in the Ecuadorian highlands. I often wonder how other people - perhaps foreigners, or even Ecuadorians from a different background - might have experienced conducting the type of research I did and what resulted from it. In this sense, this thesis could be seen as an ethnography of everyday citizenship and therefore a contribution to the understanding of how people claim their rights on a daily basis.

### ***Common Property Resource Management***

This study also contributes to policy debates around natural resource management and development in Ecuador and beyond. By showing that WUAs have been a result of a broader political and social context (chapters 3, 4) and that recently they have taken on additional functions in the communities (5, 6), this thesis contributes to the understanding of resource management and local institutions (Ostrom 1992; Cleaver 2000; Agrawal 2001). It shows that WUAs function as part of a whole, and that their existence and sustainability rest on the cultural, political and social realities of specific geographical locations. Specifically in terms of the WUAs’ principal function, delivering water, this thesis has shown that although these institutions are able to provide the service through a complex system of water rights and labour duties, inequalities, lack of accountability and managerial faults do exist and could be considered a potential threat to the sustainability of these arrangements in the future.

This thesis also contributes to policy debates surrounding nature conservation and the role that local actors and users can or might play in these initiatives. Drawing on historical and ethnographic material, I have argued that in addition to accessing

resources, controlling them has become a major concern for rural Andean communities. This group of people views decision-making over local resources as a citizenship right. This right is claimed, legitimised and defended on a daily basis through the organisational processes of the WUAs and the *minga*. In this area, this thesis reaffirms Matthew Himley's (2009:841) assertion that initiatives that aim at the conservation of natural resources "require careful attention to both the historical landscape claims of rural Andean communities as well as the contextual factors that shape rural livelihoods, and, in turn, to the interests that resource users bring to their encounters with conservation". It shows that far from being passive 'recipients' of development projects, indigenous and peasant communities demand to be active participants in their design and implementation.

In this section I have summarised a number of ways in which I hope this thesis contributes to both academic and policy debates in the Andes. In the final section of this chapter I will explore some research gaps identified during the course of this study and set out a number of potential areas for future investigation.

### **Gaps and future research**

In this thesis I have highlighted and analysed the importance of WUAs for drinking water in rural highland Ecuador in terms of citizenship formation. To that end, I focused on one particular indigenous and *campesino* community, Mojandita de Curubi. The research could have benefited from comparative research in other localities in the area as well as in other highland regions of Ecuador, which would have required considerably more time as well as more 'space' in this thesis for analysis. Future research could be conducted in other communities with different ethnic, cultural and political structures. A more systematic comparison between water management for domestic purposes and other uses (especially agriculture and possibly mining) might highlight differences and similarities in approaches to collective action and water resource management.

It would be most interesting to analyse the effects of collective water management in peri-urban areas or include other rural areas in different parts of Ecuador, where the indigenous movement is not so active. From their involvement in the protests against

the new water law in 2009, it is clear that many peri-urban communities with established WUAs are prepared to defend their roles as service deliverers. Yet more could be known about the dynamics between residents, and about how and why, for instance, collective management practices such as the *minga* are employed in peri-urban areas, and whether - and if so how - these differ from their equivalents in rural areas. Other issues that could be investigated relate to local residents' perceptions of 'the right to the city', and the state's responsibilities to deliver various services (c.f. Swyngedouw 2005; Marquardt 2012). When is self-help an undue burden and when does it provide a platform for identity and citizenship? How do people who feel marginal manage to take hold of and appropriate a space for self-governance?

In relation to the role of the state, this study could have benefited greatly from expanding the analysis of the obligations and responsibilities of the state. In particular, I feel that more analysis of how state authorities and the system in general (laws, institutions, etc.) justify communal systems for drinking water as a legitimate model of development could have complemented the 'local' view provided by this thesis. Additional analysis of how these local institutions might potentially 'relieve' the state of its 'duties' is still required and could be an interesting research project for the future. Here it would be important to understand how the state justifies the fact that rural residents are required to be actively involved in various types of service delivery projects, whereas urban residents are not expected to participate in the same ways. It would be interesting to conduct further historical research on the role of labour in defining citizenship rights for indigenous communities and how this model has been applied to other poor Ecuadorians. How do these practices resonate with early 20<sup>th</sup> century policies to incorporate the indigenous population into the mainstream *mestizo* society? Clearly, a system with such differential 'participatory' expectations affects the ways in which rural and urban individuals experience citizenship and belonging to the nation-state.

### **What next?**

As pointed out by Blanca Chancoso in the passage quoted at the beginning of this chapter, there is a long history of struggles about access to and control over water resources amongst indigenous and *campesino* communities, and the nature of the



struggles has changed - and keeps changing - as state-citizen relations alter. The present-day situation in Ecuador is no exception, and since the current government led by President Rafael Correa took over in 2007, the role played by the state has undergone a number of changes. In general, it could be said that in contrast to policies followed by governments during the 1990s and early 2000s that favoured the reduction of state functions, this government has tended to expand the state. For instance, it has created more ministries, increased the role of the state as provider of services and regulator of natural resources and also implemented a variety of major cash-transfer schemes.

When Blanca Chancoso says: *“How is it possible that they [SENAGUA] want to institutionalise and organise what our elders have already done?”* and, *“This crooked law might come and we are going to be left with the pipes from the drinking water systems and the acequias of the irrigation channels, but with no water. [...]”*, she is specifically referring to the effort pursued by Correa’s government to increase state presence in natural resource management through recently created state institutions such as the SENAGUA. These are, of course, her interpretations of recent policies to reorganise the water sector, interpretations shared by many indigenous leaders who see these changes as government efforts to take control of the resources and decision-making processes at the local level. Yet my point is that these proposals and potential changes are a source of discussion and negotiation between the local communities and the state.

Whether these reforms are necessary or not, good or bad, is a topic beyond the scope of this discussion and thesis but one that nevertheless poses interesting challenges and questions that relate to this research. For example, how would communal water management institutions and practices transform and adapt in response to new and different state policies or even environmental changes? Would locally managed WUAs be able to provide water in the long term? What kinds of spaces where citizenship rights are negotiated will open (and/or close) as political, social and environmental changes take place in Ecuador? And perhaps most relevant for this research, would indigenous and peasant communities continue taking on labour responsibilities and negotiating the terms of belonging (autonomy) in relation to these collective duties?

As I was concluding this thesis, in March 2012, a large group of indigenous and *campesino* peoples walked from the Zamora Chinchipe province in the south of Ecuador to the capital city, Quito. They were protesting against large-scale open pit mining which is about to start operating for the first time in the country. As in other places in the Andean region where large mining companies operate, people feel this type of extractive industry will affect their livelihoods and, most importantly, damage the water and other natural resources they depend on. The march, led by a number of indigenous and *campesino* leaders, began on the 8<sup>th</sup> of March, on Women's Day (symbolically compared to the day of Mother Earth) and arrived in Quito on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of March, on World Water Day. Despite the fact that fewer people than expected took part in this mobilisation, those who did reminded the Ecuadorian government and society in general that indigenous and *campesino* organisations are able and willing to mobilise like they did during the 1990s and early 2000s. Most importantly though, these recent mobilisations demonstrate that people experience and practice their citizenship rights in diverse arenas and through a variety of platforms that can change all the time. From the *cabildo* to the WUAs, from land and education to water resources, marginalised communities in Ecuador have negotiated and continue to negotiate the terms and conditions of belonging to the state: they continue to claim and exercise their citizenship rights 'from below'.

## 8. Glossary

<i>acequias</i>	water channels or streams
<i>anejo</i>	small, rural parcel of land or township that is annexed to another town or parcel of land to form a municipality
<i>cabildo</i>	local community council elected through the general assembly
<i>cacique</i>	Indian chiefs
<i>camionetas</i>	pickup trucks used as hired transport
<i>campesinismo</i>	class-based struggles
<i>campesino</i>	peasant, agricultural worker
<i>cédula</i>	national identification
<i>ciudadano</i>	citizen
<i>compadre</i>	godparents or witnesses for weddings, confirmations and other celebrations
<i>compañeros</i>	comrade, colleague
<i>comuna</i>	legally established community
<i>comunero</i>	community member who holds special rights and obligations
<i>concertaje</i>	coerced labour system
<i>concierto</i>	labourer under the <i>concertaje</i> bondage system
<i>cuy</i>	guinea pig
<i>encomendero</i>	person who was granted or trusted with large amounts of land and people by the Spanish colonial state
<i>escribano</i>	scribe, or person writing down the testimonies in courts
<i>gamonales</i>	local power brokers
<i>hacendado</i>	large landowner
<i>hacienda</i>	private landed states
<i>huasipungo</i>	form of bonded labour under which indigenous peoples worked for 3 to 6 days a week in return for the use of a small plot of land
<i>indianismo</i>	identity-based struggles, or struggles that in addition to economic aspects deal with ethnicity
<i>indígena</i>	Indian, member of the indigenous population
<i>indigenista</i>	group of intellectuals interested in studying and making known the reality of the Indian population during the early 20 <sup>th</sup> century
<i>Jefatura Política</i>	political administration
<i>lavanderias</i>	shared clothes-washing facilities
<i>longos</i>	young Indians
<i>madrina</i>	godmother
<i>mayordomos</i>	caretaker or overseer at the <i>hacienda</i>
<i>mestizo</i>	mixed race (usually white/indigenous)
<i>minga comunal</i>	work party
<i>nacionalidades</i>	nationalities
<i>naturales</i>	natives

<i>ojota/ushuta,</i>	straw, plastic or rubber sandal
<i>páramo</i>	tropical highland grasslands located between 3200 and 4200 m.
<i>parcialidad</i>	territory or community where indigenous families resided
<i>patrón</i>	owner of a hacienda or estate
<i>protectores</i>	protectors
<i>pucyos</i>	water springs in Quichua
<i>raya</i>	a line written in a register to account for each time a household participates in the <i>minga</i>
<i>reducciones</i>	political/geographical
<i>registro civil</i>	registry
<i>síndico</i>	person in charge of supervising and inspecting the <i>cabildo's</i> actions
<i>teniente político</i>	political lieutenant
<i>tintillero</i>	unlicensed scribes/attorneys who replaced the <i>protector</i>
<i>tributo</i>	head tax payable to the crown or state
<i>vecina</i>	neighbour
<i>yanapo</i>	system where indigenous families worked for three to four days a week in exchange for access to hacienda resources (pastures) and the right to traverse hacienda property

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\* These are peoples' real names.