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### The politics of public construction in a globalized world

*Imagining urban space in Ecuador*

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## Introduction: Imagining urban space in Ecuador



**Figure 0.1** Meme of Habitat III, based on Banksy's mural *Maid in London* (2016). Unknown author. Retrieved from personal Facebook page.

This study focuses on how projects of Ecuadorian public construction driven by the State and by city authorities are entangled with notions of globalization and modernity. To show this entanglement, I analyze the planning and construction process of four urban projects: the new *Mariscal Sucre* airport in Quito; the *Millennium Communities* in the Amazonian region; the *Yachay* university/technological hub located in the north of the country; and, finally, *local monuments* placed by municipal authorities on the northern coast. The first three case studies are State-driven and, due to their high cost and national impact, can be described as mega structures or mega projects (Flyvbjerg, 2014); the fourth provides an example of public construction driven by local interests. Each of these cases, approached through a close reading of planning documents, news coverage and interviews with key actors, and a fieldwork-based analysis of the projects' spatial situation and use, reveals aspects of the dynamic relationship between urban planning, politics, spatial imaginaries (local, national and global) and socio-cultural values. Taken together, they show how the authorities and technicians driving public construction shape urban space in accordance with what they perceive as a modern and/or globalized context. Each structure, in terms of its planning and/or realization, is seen to reflect the imaginaries, dreams and desired futures authorities and technicians had in mind.

Before describing the four projects in detail, to explain the theoretical background and context of my study I will provide a brief analysis of the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (HABITAT 3), which took place in October 2016 in the city of Quito. Since this conference is considered the major global summit to discuss and reach agreements between heads of state and civil society organizations concerning urban issues, it offers a good point of entry into the central issues of this study. The fact that it took place in Ecuador adds to its relevance: first, it triggered discussions among Ecuadorian academics, renewing interest in urban studies within the country; secondly, it mobilized the Ecuadorian authorities to try to present Quito to the visitors in the best light possible, using the kind of urban planning strategies and discourses I analyze and respond to in this study.

With the purpose of reinvigorating the global commitment to sustainable urbanization, assess accomplishments to date, address poverty and identify new and emerging challenges, participants from all over the world gathered for three days in Quito for HABITAT 3 (Habitat 3, 2016). Representatives of member states, local governments and municipalities, civil society organizations and foundations, as well as parliamentarians, professionals, researchers and many others discussed how cities and towns can be better planned and managed to fulfill their roles as drivers of sustainable development (Habitat 3, 2016). As a first illustrative point, during the HABITAT 3 Conference a myriad of commitments were affirmed through the *New Urban Agenda*, a 24-page document in which heads of state and government, ministers and other officials, with the participation of multiple stakeholders, expressed their shared vision of *cities for all* (New Urban Agenda, 2016, Art.11). When looking at the commitments and principles outlined in the 175 articles composing the Agenda, the diversity and range of topics contained in the notion *Housing and Sustainable Urban Development* is notable. The signatories refer to numerous issues and matters, including environment, education, politics, culture, governance, economy, health and gender. While this reflects how complex the understanding of urban phenomena has become, it is important to draw attention to the specific issues affecting particular regions, such as Latin America.

Mainly as a result of socio-economical changes that include technological transformations and the informalization and liberalization of the world economy (what Mattos calls “capitalist modernization” and what can also be defined as globalization), a “new urban form” has emerged in Latin America (Mattos, 2006, p. 60, author’s translation from Spanish). The urban form of industrial times, characterized by the

difference between center and periphery, has changed its morphology, organization and functioning. According to Mattos (2006), five main global tendencies can be observed in Latin American cities:

- 1) New productive structures such as cross-border production networks and global commodity chains have confirmed new centralities. The establishment of multinational enterprises and global firms has transformed the basic structure of urban agglomerations, so that the division center-periphery is no longer useful to characterize the cities.
- 2) Politics of liberalization, deregulation and flexibility have restructured labor conditions. This has increased the precariousness of the labor force and, with it, social inequalities, exclusion, segregation and fragmentation in the cities.
- 3) The increasing role of urban capital gains, carrying with it urban competitiveness and the use of city marketing to promote external investment, has expanded the importance of private real-estate investments and consolidated favorable conditions for the development of a capitalistic logic;
- 4) The dissemination and adoption of new communication and information technologies, and the rapid increase in the mobility of people, have boosted the expansion of urban areas and changed the behavior of families and enterprises. The “new urban” form that emerges from this is an “‘organizational architecture’ articulated around central productive systems, which became the core of the emerging territorial organization” (Mattos, 2006, p. 60, author’s translation from Spanish).
- 5) The proliferation of “architectonic artifacts”, which, “transcending the specific identity of each city, characterize a representative landscape of the globalized city, which coexists with extensive poor areas where misery, chaos and ugliness reach indescribable levels” (Mattos, 2006, p. 66, author’s translation from Spanish). These artifacts appear as new urban icons, considered representative of modernity, and play an important role in city-marketing strategies. Examples of this constructions are Puerto Madero in Buenos Aires or big buildings supporting the activities of global enterprises, such us luxury hotels, international chains and shopping malls. Consequently, a certain type of landscape is being reproduced, contributing to a tendency towards global urban uniformity (Mattos, 2006, p.67)

When describing the tendencies mentioned by Mattos, it becomes clear that the construction and design of a city “is a creature of policy, political decision making, and power structures” (Kelbaugh and Krankel, 2008, p. 4), involving, among others, the government, multinational enterprises, international chains, citizens and social experts. Consequently, in a globalized context, what is perceived as the urban and how its space is influenced and altered has become ambiguous, making it difficult to distinguish and define the main issues at stake and to identify those responsible for spatial transformations. New centralities and economic powers are taking the lead in producing social and structural change, but the role of the State as urban planner is still essential, yielding the following questions: how does the State – through its representatives – manage urban planning and how do state representatives perceive the projects they manage at the local, national and global levels?

A second revealing aspect of the HABITAT 3 Conference concerns the way it was criticized by various parties. This criticism came to the fore during the three days of the conference in alternative events promoted by universities and social organizations from Ecuador and abroad. For example, Fernando Carrión, expert on urban planning and one of the organizers of such side events, notes that instead of a summit of cities, HABITAT 3 became a commercial fair where “the institutions and people that came to the official meeting came mainly to show projects, legitimize their position and to sell illusions, more than to construct a horizon for cities” (F. Carrión, 2016, par. 1, author’s translation from Spanish). According to F. Carrión, the city was presented only as an object and citizens and local governments were excluded from the debate, so that the Urban Agenda was designed without engaging subjects, social movements or political parties, from an essentially abstract perspective (2016). One of the main critical side events was called Habitat 3 Alternativo; it brought together 170 speakers representing local governments, universities and social movements from all over the world, who subscribed to the “Manifiesto de Quito” [Quito’s Manifesto]. In this manifesto, they blame politicians and professionals for giving free reign to the global financial market and the private sector. Against this tendency, the cosigners assert the necessity of “reconquering a city for and by the citizens” and of acting towards spatial justice (Manifiesto, 2016, author’s translation from Spanish) in claiming what Henri Lefebvre in 1968 famously called “the right to the city”, referring to the right of the people to participate in shaping the city according to their own needs and aspirations rather than according to those of capital (Lefebvre, 1968/1996). Thus, while the focus of urban development lies increasingly on

commercial functions useful to global economic expansion and citizens' needs with regard to public space are scarcely considered, citizens claim the necessity of recovering the principle that, instead of the global economy, "it is ultimately people that define the city, and their actions that constitute its design" (Kelbaugh and Krankel, 2008, p.3).

Every society produces its own space and material forms according to its interests and internal dynamics. In this sense, the critical side events at the Conference reflect how the construction of urban space is a constant battlefield, a reflection of a political and social struggle (Vidler, 1992). This triggers further questions: what are the main interests guiding the State – in this case, the Ecuadorian government and local authorities – when transforming the urban environment? How are political decisions that affect urban space taken and which parties do they involve or exclude?

The third and last notable aspect of the Conference I want to highlight relates to the imaginaries and model cities leading urban transformations across the globe. The HABITAT 3 conference had material effects on the city of Quito, which sparked discussion from the moment the city started to prepare for the mega event. A meme based on Banksy's painting "Maid in London" (**Figure 0.1**), published on a private Facebook wall, gives a sense of how some citizens perceived these preparations. The image shows a maid who has swept up some dirt and is looking for a place to hide it. In advance of the conference, Quito, too, was cleaned up like never before and anything considered trash was hidden or camouflaged: bike racks were placed in the area of the meeting to give the impression of a bike-friendly city and walls that had for many years been grey were transformed into colorful art works to show Quito's commitment to the embellishment of public spaces. The zeal with which Quito was transformed to fit the model of a city characterized by adjectives such as *sustainable*, *historical*, *intelligent* and *safe* went so far as to ban traditional vendors from working during the days of the conference (disregarding the economic consequences for their families) and to replace a twenty-year-old monument in the park next to the conference with United Nations' tents, to give just two examples. One of the most accurate definitions of what happened in the city before and during the meeting was provided by a public employee who was not aware of the Conference. She said: "they say that some parts of Quito will be closed, and inside, they will construct something like cities of the first world..." (Public employee, personal communication, January 2016).

Thirty-four million dollars were spent to accomplish the ideal of being a first world city for one week and to temporarily transform public spaces, streets and buildings,

making the city ready for the eyes of international visitors from all over the world (“Ecuador invertirá”, 2016). This aspect of the Conference reflects the eagerness on the part of Quito’s municipality and the central Ecuadorian government to have the city emulate the ideal image of the “first world city” promoted by HABITAT 3, even though this entailed an expensive transformation that would remain superficial and temporary. The quest to transform a city for the gaze of others raises questions such as: which ideals and imaginaries do urban development projects in Latin America and, in particular, Ecuador reflect and promote? How far will the authorities go to have their projects live up to these imaginaries and what can those who have to live with the results do to challenge them?

The issues that came to the fore in relation to Habitat 3 allow me to introduce the three focal points of this study: 1) the way in which Ecuadorian cities are being planned and constructed in a globalized context; 2) the notions of globalization, space and the city used by the politicians and authorities in charge of these urban transformations to promote them; and 3) the tensions between these ambitious political visions and the socio-cultural realities of the sites where the urban transformations take place. My analysis of the design and construction of four recent public construction projects in Ecuador aims to answer the following questions: what governmental discourses about and representations of modernity, development and globalization are operative in planning and promoting these urban projects? What political and social imaginaries do these projects aspire to realize? And how do the resulting constructions, once materialized, influence the way people live in urban space and construct their identities? The general objective of this study is to describe, from a critical perspective, the imaginaries of the city that guide urban projects supposed to advance the Ecuadorian nation’s or a particular city’s position in the globalized world. This introduction will proceed by outlining the national context in which the projects I analyze were developed, the projects themselves, the state of the art of urban studies in Ecuador and the theoretical framework and methodology of this study.

### **Urban planning and urban studies in Ecuador**

Since the government of the “Citizen Revolution” led by Rafael Correa and the Alianza PAIS party came to power in Ecuador in 2007, countless initiatives have been proposed and implemented with the aim of achieving structural and profound changes in Ecuador’s political, social and economic realms. Within a complex institutional machinery, one of the pillars of the bureaucratic new design has been the re-appropriation of the role of the

State as a main and undisputed planner. This process of state planning has been characterized by a set of laws that, at least in formal and legal terms, have been created with the resolute purpose of generating a “structural shift” in a country historically characterized by impermanent and continuous changes in the legal frame. According to the Constitution of Ecuador (2008), which was written and discussed at the beginning of Alianza PAIS’ mandate, with the participation of civil organizations and indigenous groups, any intervention in the Ecuadorian territory must take place following the objectives incorporated in a detailed country development plan or *Plan Nacional del Buen Vivir* [National Plan for Good Living]. Following this mandate, uncountable legal instruments and institutions were established to guarantee the strict organization of the planning process in the country. For example, alongside the laws, the Control Consejo de Participación Ciudadana y Control Social [Council for Citizen Participation and Social Control] and the National Secretariat of Planning and Development (SENPLADES) were established, with the latter in charge of checking that any activity by governmental institutions and local governments follows PNV mandates and obeys, step by step, the rules detailed by SENPLADES to realize any change or intervention in the territory.

Alongside this institutional and legal reinforcement of the planning process, a governmental discourse was adopted to initiate a radical turn designed to modify the relations of power that used to characterize Ecuadorian politics. The end of the “long neoliberal night” (a term used by president Correa to describe the economic and political Ecuadorian reality before his mandate), the re-construction of sovereignty and the reinforcement of the people’s power were seen to necessitate a new perspective on development, detached from the traditional one based only on economic growth and openly critical of the market-centric view. The principle of *Sumak Kawsay* or *Buen Vivir* (Good Living) replaced the concept of development and has been presented as an opportunity to build a new society in which the country’s cultural diversity and environment are recognized and protected (Acosta, 2010).

The notion of Buen Vivir was taken from the Kichwa concept of *Sumak Kawsay*, which alludes to a non-linear notion of growth that is not based on the binary opposition of underdevelopment and development.

The category of *Sumak Kawsay* assumes that the individual is part of a whole; the individual is a member of a community where all the elements must be in constant harmony and reciprocity. The person is charged with

spiritual, moral and intellectual energies and the community is the result of this interaction. The community is a territory; it is a group of people where history, cultural diversity and biology are manifested. (Calapucha, 2012, p. 38)

Thus, Sumak Kawsay or Buen Vivir is based on relationships of reciprocity and strong ties of mutual trust, not only between humans but also between humans and nature; it also alludes to knowledge about life that allows the person and the community to take care of the environment, which is in perfect condition, well maintained, protected and free from pollution (Calapucha, 2012).

In addition to and combined with the concept of Buen Vivir, the Constitution of Ecuador (2008) proclaims the *Rights of Nature*, the *pluricultural* reality of the country and the role of participation in the construction of any Development Plan. The Rights of Nature proposed in the Constitution of 2008 recognize, among others, that “Nature, or *Pacha Mama*, where life is reproduced and occurs, has the right to integral respect for its existence and for the maintenance and regeneration of its life cycles, structure, functions and evolutionary processes” (Art.71). When assuming a pluricultural reality, in formal terms, the planning process in a broad sense, then, is no longer exclusively conducted by a group of experts, but includes cultural diversity and local identity, in line with the conception of the country as a *plurinational* State. These developments (the discourse against neoliberalism and the affirmation of Buen Vivir, the Rights of Nature, participation and the plurinational State) were perceived by leftist groups, parties and social organizations inside and outside the country as signaling a turn from a neoliberal and capitalistic State to a new system of political and economic management implying epistemological changes and a redistribution of power.

This is the political context in which the cases selected for this study are located. During its ten years in power, Alianza PAIS has implemented, among other initiatives, many projects showing the powerful role of the State in transforming urban space. Big infrastructures, principally highways, schools and public buildings, have been promoted as a mark of progress. In this study, I adopt a critical perspective to show how the transformations achieved are guided by ideas of globalization and modernity adapted to the authorities’ interests, with a view to producing specific socio-cultural and economic transformations.

The four cases taken up in this study demonstrate (through their aesthetics and through the discourses that accompanied their construction) how the State and local authorities interpret and imagine the place of Ecuador and its cities within a globalized context and within the globally dominant narrative of modernity and development, and how they incorporate these ideas in urban space. All four cases are designed and implemented by the central State or local authorities. This means that the constructions are financed with public funds and designed to be used by citizens. For the purposes of my study, these projects are perceived as cultural artifacts and not only as public amenities addressing specific needs. This means considering the projects as forming part of global, national and local narratives, and functioning as repositories of cultural imaginations and socio-political visions, most notably related to ideas of modernity.

The first project, the new Mariscal Sucre International Airport, was inaugurated in February 2013 after a long process of negotiations that started in the 1970s (A. Carrión, 2016). While studies for the planning and design of the airport took place during the 1980s and 1990s, it was during the administration of Mayor Paco Moncayo (2000-2008) that the construction of the airport was promoted as a milestone for the modernization of the city and the country. In the early 2000s, CORPAQ (a public corporation that operated by private law) and the Canadian Commercial Corporation (chosen by international bidding) prepared the financial and technical proposal for the construction of the airport. Afterwards, the Quiport Corporation was established to manage the concession contract (A. Carrión, 2016). During the administration of Mayor Augusto Barrera, member of Alianza PAIS, the international bidding and concession were questioned and negotiations started to change the conditions of economic participation in project revenues. After these negotiations, according to A. Carrión, “the political discourse changed: from being the worst of neoliberal deals the project had become a model to follow in reclaiming the role of the State” (2016, p. 258). I selected this project as a case study because it is a good example of how socio-political visions are embedded in the realization of mega projects, and of how a mega project is used to configure an image of Ecuador as a globalized nation. The construction of the airport was closely followed by the media and became known by the general public not just for its magnitude (in financial terms) but also for the political debate it generated. In my analysis, I explore in particular how the political discourse positioned the new airport as a landmark for Ecuadorian progress and modernization, and how these ideas are conveyed in the material appearance of the airport as it was built.

The second project, the so-called “Millennium Communities”, is part of the economic and social development model initiated during the first term of President Rafael Correa, in which the development of infrastructure is considered one of the pillars for growth, progress and poverty alleviation. The first community, *Playas de Cuyabeno*, was inaugurated on October 1, 2013, and the second one, *Pañacocha*, on January 16, 2014. Both communities were constructed in the Amazon Region, a region that has been considered of geopolitical importance due to its natural resources for many decades. I have chosen this case because, first of all, the Millennium Communities were publicly presented by the government as heralding a new future for the Amazon region, and second, they allow me to explore the different interests involved in the construction of a mega project, in this case those of the government, the oil companies and the Kichwa indigenous community. For the government, the constructions represent the beginning of a new and wealthy era for the Amazon region, which, thanks to the benefits of oil exploitation, is marching towards modernization; for the indigenous community, the constructions represent a possibility to leave behind decades of poverty and marginalization, but also a departure from their traditional way of life; finally, for the oil companies, the communities represent the possibility to continue and expand the exploitation of the region. Analyzing the buildings of the communities and the discourses of the various actors involved, I explore in detail the imaginaries of modernization and development propagated by the authorities, as well as how, once materialized, the communities influence the spatial expression of cultural identity by the inhabitants.

The third project, Yachay, started in 2011 when SENPLADES (National Secretariat for Planning and Development) proposed to build a university for experimental technology research, which turned into a proposal to construct a city and technological hub. I take this project as a case study because, from its origin, it was considered by the government as a “Latin American Silicon Valley”, the first technological park in South America. The Yachay Project started with an external consultancy carried out by South Korean members of the Incheon Free Economic Zone IFEZ, which was in charge of the design of the Master Plan. Following the Korean guidelines, Yachay was expected to be a dynamic and creative urban territory populated by entrepreneurs capable of generating innovative knowledge in order to *transform the productive matrix* of Ecuador from the production and export of raw materials and natural resources (such as oil, bananas, roses, etc.) to the export of knowledge and technology. With an expected cost of USD 21 billion for the entire project (of which 1.1 billion would

be paid by the government over five years, from 2013 to 2017), the implementation of Yachay exemplified the political discourse that promoted the inclusion of Ecuador in a new global era. At the same time, it generated controversy over the limited involvement of Ecuadorian experts and, later, for scandals related to the high salaries paid to those managing the educational project. Since the Yachay project was widely promoted by the authorities and the media, the imaginaries guiding the transformation of the space can be clearly discerned. The first blueprints for the structures, the discourse of the technicians and authorities involved in its planning and construction, and the buildings itself provide insight into the fantasies, expectations and imaginaries about space and globalization guiding governmental projects in Ecuador.

In contrast to the first three projects, the fourth case I analyze concerns the construction of local monuments in the cities of Salcedo and Manta. These constructions do not respond to an initiative of the central government, but are the result of local management and respond to local motivations. In terms of their aesthetics, they are also completely different, and their *raison d'être*, at first sight, seems to be to embellish public spaces. Despite these important differences, however, this case study is relevant to my project because of the constellation of imaginaries (on the part of municipal authorities, commercial and tourism organizations and local inhabitants) involved in the design and construction of the monument. What makes it relevant to look at Salcedo's Ice Cream monument and Manta's Tuna and Manteña Chair monuments in relation to the airport, the Yachay project and the Millennium Communities is the way in which all these projects constitute responses to anxieties concerning a country's or a city's relation to the globalized context.

In terms of the relevance of this study to urban studies in general and the Ecuadorian urban studies field in particular, it aims to contribute to the development of a critical urbanism by studying Ecuadorian mega projects from a transdisciplinary perspective. A recent work by Bermúdez et al., published in 2016, and the Civitics dialogue that took place in Quito in March 2017 offer a good overview of developments in urban studies in Ecuador from 1990 to 2015.<sup>1</sup> According to these sources, urban studies

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<sup>1</sup> Earlier studies exist, but these are less relevant for the present work. See, for example, Fernando Carrión's article (1990) "La cuestión urbana en el Ecuador, síntesis" [The urban question in Ecuador, synthesis], published by the Faculty of Architecture and Urbanism of the Central University of Ecuador, which offers a good summary of a research project composed of three volumes that analyze urban studies in Ecuador and offer an extensive bibliography.

research in Ecuador has been divided between work focused on the city, based on demographic, physical and spatial criteria, and work on critical urbanism, which combines empirical analysis with theoretical approaches from the social sciences, in order to reveal and question the social, economic, productive, ethnographic and historical relations that configure the city (Bermúdez, et al., 2016). Inside both categories, the emphasis has been on studies of the main Ecuadorian cities: Quito, Guayaquil and Cuenca (Civitics, 2017). According to Bermúdez et al., many research centers and university faculties have consolidated the field of urban studies, and have diversified the topics of research. Some of the most renowned centers located in Quito are the research center Ciudad, founded in 1977; the General Secretariat and the Direction of Planning of Quito's municipality, which were very active until the early 2000s; the new research center ICQ, which is also part of Quito's municipality; the Urban Studies Master's program of the Latin American Faculty of Social Sciences – FLACSO – founded in 2006; the Public Policies and Territory Center (CITE), also part of FLACSO; and the Universidad Andina Simón Bolívar – UASB – and other universities which have incorporated urban studies in their programs (Bermúdez et al., 2016). It is also important to mention the work and contributions of Fernando Carrión, professor at the Latin American Faculty of Social Science and consultant for national and international organizations, who has written several studies about urban development, planning and policies, not only at the national level but also in the larger Latin American context. In Cuenca and Guayaquil, it is also possible to find important centers of research, such as the CER-G, IPUR and the Territorial-Urban Observatory in Guayaquil, and the University of Cuenca's research group *Investigación de Ciudad y Territorio* and *Llacta Lab*, among other initiatives (Civitic, 2017).

In terms of the topics addressed, they have changed in response to the social and economic context of the country. The period between 1980 and 1990 is called the “golden age” (Bermúdez, et al., 2016, p. 121) of urban studies in Ecuador. During this decade, among others, topics such as the territory as a social concept, urbanization, the organization of neighborhoods, rural-to-urban migration and residential segregation were highlighted. In the following decade, the country suffered an economic crisis known by the media, government and citizens as *el atraco bancario* [the bank robbery]. This crisis

originated in internal and international factors such as the “El Niño” current<sup>2</sup> and the fall in oil prices worldwide. As a result of the crisis, inflation rose to 56% in 1998, contrasting with the 10.2% average estimated for the other Latin American countries (CEPAL, 1998, quoted in Salgado, 1999). This difference is explained mainly by the national politics of the government of Sixto Durán Ballén (who came to power in 1994) and Jamil Mahuad Witt, which favored private enterprises and shareholders: in times of crisis, the Central Bank of Ecuador extended credit to avoid bankruptcy without success; subsequently, it started to return deposits from its own fund, impacting monetary policy and increasing inflation (Salgado, 1999). Strikes took place all over the country and the government (with President Jamil Mahuad taking over in 1998) was heavily criticized. Poverty levels, inequality and unemployment, which were already high before the crisis, all went up (Salgado, 1999).<sup>3</sup>

According to Bermúdez et al., in response to the crisis, the topics of urban studies research changed, giving priority to consultancies involved in public policies and specific projects. This change also resonated with the resolutions adopted by international organizations and at world conferences (such as HABITAT 2, held in 1996), which incorporated in the urban agenda topics such as decentralization, the regeneration of historical centers and the urban environment. Nevertheless, important publications also appeared in this period, including the *Serie Quito*, published by Quito’s municipality, analyzing the city from a cultural, archeological and urbanistic perspective, and the *Plan Distrito Metropolitano*, which addresses the importance of the city-region and topics of urban planning (Bermúdez et al, 2016).

During the first decade of the twenty-first century, research in urban studies in Ecuador decreased and most of the bibliography is composed of studies focused on Quito (Bermúdez et al., 2016). It is important, however, to mention the work on historical centers, urban segregation and urban history. With regard to the latter, the work of Eduardo Kingman (2006) about Quito and its relation to modernity and the strategies of power used to control the entrance of indigenous people and peasants into the urban

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<sup>2</sup> El Niño is the name of a warm current appearing annually around the month of December along the coast of Ecuador and Peru generating winds and warmer waters. The worst events occurred in 1982-1983 and 1997-1998, with heavy rains and floods ([http://ww2010.atmos.uiuc.edu/\(Gh\)/guides/mtr/elndef.xml](http://ww2010.atmos.uiuc.edu/(Gh)/guides/mtr/elndef.xml)).

<sup>3</sup> In her work *Desencadenantes y beneficiarios de la crisis económica en el Ecuador* [Triggers and beneficiaries of the economic crisis in Ecuador] (1999), Wilma Salgado analyzes in detail the national and international factors that generated the crisis.

dynamic is important, as well as works emphasizing the articulation between urban planning, cultural patrimony and life in neighborhoods using theory from cultural studies, urban anthropology, migration and cultural history.

From 2010 onwards, the increased role of the State in the definition of priorities implemented a new agenda in terms of urban studies; many studies by government institutions are required to resolve public policy issues and to address specific topics of urban and territorial planning, without analyzing the more structural problems faced by cities. Apart from these specific technocratic studies, the financial resources available for urban research are few (Bermúdez et al., 2016). Here it is important to highlight the design of development and territorial management plans, which, following national rules established in 2010, every administration (at the level of the *Juntas Parroquiales* and municipalities) must compose and update every five years in accordance with the National Plan for Buen Vivir. In the last decade, analyses of big urban projects have also seen the light, including several of Malecón 2000<sup>4</sup> (Allan 2010, Andrade 2005, Garcés 2013) and, more recently, of the new airport in Quito (Bayón, 2014; Carrión, 2016). Bermúdez et al. note that

In the last decade [2010-present] the production of knowledge and reflections have focused on topics related to ethnography, economy, political science and critical urbanism. The [topics] recently prioritized are: urban identities, urban segregation, disputes over public space, rural-urban interaction, gender relations, urban regeneration, urban communities, and the right to the city, among others. (2016, p.125, author's translation from Spanish)

Complementing this, both Bermúdez et al. (2016) and the Civitic group (2017) mention that the challenges for urban research in Ecuador include the necessity of studying the influence of economic and political cycles on the configuration of cities, updating spatial analysis and promoting transdisciplinary approaches.

Regarding the Latin American context, in their article “Latin American and Caribbean Urban Development” (2015), Christien Klaufus and Rivke Jaffe offer an overview of the state of urban studies in the region. According to them, despite some

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<sup>4</sup> Malecón 2000 is a 2.5 kilometer long boardwalk alongside the Guayas River. Its construction started under the administration of Mayor León Febres Cordero in 1999 and it was inaugurated in 2000 under Mayor Jaime Nebot.

important differences, it is possible to observe shared patterns of urban development and trends in urban research. The authors distinguish four patterns of Latin American urban life:

- 1) *Urban form and mobilities*. According to the authors, “smaller and secondary cities have grown, and peri-urbanization and con-urbanization processes have resulted in new and differently shaped urban regions, blurring the urban-rural divide” (Klaufus & Jaffe, 2015, p. 64). Together with this, urban to urban migration has increased.
- 2) *Climate change and sustainable urban development*. Cities in Latin America have developed climate change mitigation policies and the pattern of urban growth has been accompanied by “an awareness of the need to address urban environmental problems” (Klaufus & Jaffe, 2015, p. 65) and efforts to make cities more sustainable.
- 3) *Inequality, violence and exclusion*. Despite poverty reduction, social inequality persists and many cities feature great disparities between rich and poor residents, reflected in increased socio-spatial polarization. According to the authors, “these inequalities are often connected to insecurity, discrimination and everyday crime and violence, although it should be noted that there is major variation within the region” (Klaufus & Jaffe, 2015, p. 66). In this context, urban administrations implement ‘social urbanism’ policies, such as the construction of housing projects or the development of transport systems, as well as urban regeneration policies (connected to the global trend of producing creative and smart cities) that often carry with them gentrification and violent displacement.
- 4) *Social movements, democratization, participation*. The authors note that in recent years forms of collective claims-making in urban space have become more spontaneous, and that new forms of activism are emerging. In this context, “a range of cities has moved towards more participatory modes of governance, both in response to public indignation about political indifference or marginalization, and in connection to broader development trends” (Klaufus & Jaffe, 2015, p. 66)

This scenario has been analyzed through what Klaufus and Jaffe call “pendular paradigms”, meaning paradigms “alternating between a political economy approach and a more culturalist frame” (2015, p. 67). In twenty-first-century scholarship, they argue, discussions about urban development are dominated by a pragmatic and technocratic approach, emphasizing model cities. In response to this, the authors argue for an urban studies approach that goes beyond technocratic language and addresses politics more explicitly, focusing, for example, on the increasingly important role of Latin American mayors in urban development. In addition, they highlight the importance of studying “the transnational roots and routes of specific urban policy models or paradigms” (Klaufus & Jaffe, 2015, p. 69).

As it is possible to observe, the concerns reflected in the Ecuadorian urban studies, such as conflicts over space, urban development and the continuous production of inequality and exclusion, are very local and specific but, at the same time, shared within the larger Latin American context. In the same way, the topics addressed by Ecuadorian scholars match up with urban studies work on a more global scale by scholars such as Edward Soja, David Harvey and Doreen Massey, who have analyzed the transformation of cities such as Los Angeles, Paris and London, focusing on the relation between spatial transformation and capitalism.

In relation to this field of studies and the challenges mentioned, my study aims to contribute in various ways. First, it works towards the development of a transdisciplinary approach combining political, cultural and social perspectives. Second, it seeks to achieve a better understanding of the influence of modernization and globalization paradigms on urban environments in Ecuador. Some Ecuadorian studies related to my own work and focusing on cultural phenomena and cities that are important to mention are the work of Alfredo Santillán on public spaces and cultural dynamics, and the studies of Eduardo Kingman, who uses a historical and anthropological approach. Santillán for example, in his book *Imaginario Urbanos y Segregación Espacial* [Urban Imaginaries and Spatial Segregation] (2015), analyzes urban imaginaries in relation to sociospatial segregation in Quito, concluding that the city is crossed by an imaginary division between the north and the south that installs antagonistic values and morals. I, too, use the concept of imaginaries to understand my case studies and see spatial imaginaries as a fundamental factor influencing urban planning. The difference between my project and Santillán’s is that I focus on the imaginaries propagated by state and municipal authorities, which hold a key position with regard to the design and construction of urban mega-projects and city

monuments. Kingman's work (2009, 2012, 2014) addresses social history, social configurations, systems of power and imaginaries in a globalized context and urban cultures, mainly in Quito. Similarly, my study aims to contribute to the understanding of global transformations and their influence on the local context. However, unlike Kingman, I focus on present urban projects and the dynamics of their construction, particularly with regard to the political imaginaries authorities and technicians invoke in relation to the projects.

The 2016 book by art historian Alexandra Kennedy entitled *Elite y Nación en Obras. Visualidades y arquitectura en Ecuador 1840-1930* [Elite and Nation in works. Visualities and architecture in Ecuador 1849-1930] is important to mention since it focuses on the cultural dynamics of the construction of Ecuador as a nation in the 19th century from a visual, patrimonial, architectural and urban perspective. Kennedy offers an important analysis of the relation between the dominant classes and their effort to construct the Ecuadorian nation through material structures between 1849 and 1930. Through a historical analysis of literature, paintings, pictures and constructions, she unveils the imaginaries those in power selected and how architecture, for example, was of vital importance for the construction of a discourse of nation and modernity. While my study is focused on the present and on specific urban projects and political discourses, it shares the transdisciplinary perspective assumed by Kennedy and her interest in understanding the dynamic relation between political interests, urban ideals and plans towards modernization and the construction of a national identity.

Significantly, a critical perspective on public mega projects has started to emerge in Ecuadorian urban studies. In relation to my case studies, it is worth mentioning the works of A. Carrión (2016) and Bayón (2014) about Quito's airport, with the first focusing on the entrepreneurial approach to the airport's construction and the tensions between the actors involved in the project under different political regimes, and the second analyzing the implementation of public policies and the influence of different power relations on the construction. Using an ethnographic approach, Cielo et al. (2016) explore the Millennium Community project with a focus on the transformation of women's roles under conditions of hydrocarbon exploitation, while the study by Wilson and Bayón (2016) examines the communities as a "mere facade of modernity" and a "fantasy" reflecting the rent-based nature of Ecuadorian capitalism. Arturo Villavicencio's studies of the Yachay project (2014, 2016a, 2016b) criticize its educational proposal and the work of Ortiz, specifically his 2013 paper "The Illusion of

Technology as Ideological Interpellator,” discusses how the Yachay project is aggrandized and inserted into the imaginaries of Ecuadorian citizens as a symbol and pillar of a promised new hyper-technological society. I will come back to these works and how my own study supplements them when I analyze the projects in detail. Here, it is important to reiterate that my analysis focuses on Ecuadorian urban planning projects and their complex relation to notions of modernity, development and globalization, as well as the spatial imaginaries that emerge from this relation, as I will explain in the next section.

### **Modernity-development-globalization and spatial imaginaries**

The issues raised during the HABITAT 3 conference that I discussed earlier bring to the fore questions related to the role of the State in planning processes that unfold in a global context and the interests that underlie political decisions about urban transformations. These interests are inevitably accompanied by spatial imaginaries that are materialized as specific projects are carried out. Understanding the interplay between material and immaterial factors in urban management in a globalized context requires an interdisciplinary approach that mobilizes different theoretical perspectives. My analysis flows from the case studies and the emphasis placed, in their planning and construction, on the interrelated concepts of modernity-development-globalization and the notion of space and its imagination. What I call the modernity-development-globalization triad is central to the construction and planning of the Ecuadorian projects selected for this study. As I will explain below, when analyzing the motivations and interests of these projects’ initiators and promoters, it becomes clear that the notion of globalization is tied to those of modernity and development in imagining what Ecuadorian cities should ideally be like. In addition, the notions of space and spatial imaginaries bring to the fore the existence, in relation to the case studies, of competing visions of how the urban environment should be transformed. Before explaining in detail how these notions are expressed and materialized in the case studies I will describe the theoretical approaches to modernity, development, globalization and space I use in my investigation.

In her essay “Modernity and Periphery: Toward a Global and Relational Analysis” (2002), Mary Louise Pratt analyzes the way in which modernity has been defined from metropolitan centers and imposed on the periphery, concluding that, from the perspective of the center (Northern Europe and North America), six characteristics are considered constitutive of modernity discourse:

- 1) The use of an “*array of features* considered constitutive or symptomatic of modernity” (Pratt, 2002, p. 23, italics in the original text), such as democracy, industrialization, a high-low culture distinction, urbanization, the hegemonization of instrumental rationality, the rise of science as a truth-seeking discourse, the rise of the individual and the idea of progress.
- 2) The establishment of diverse “narratives of origin” (Pratt, 2002, p. 24), with some authors, for example, locating this origin in the fifteenth century with the “discovery” of the so-called “new world” by Portuguese and Spanish conquerors, and others placing it in the mid-eighteenth century with the rise of science or the nineteenth century with the initiation of industrialization and urbanization, and the rise of the nation-state, among others.
- 3) The linking of these narratives of origin to a notion of otherness, which takes a variety of forms. In Pratt’s words: “modernity’s narratives of origin define it with respect to a range of others –feudalism, absolutism, the primitive (i.e., tribal or subsistence societies], the traditional (i.e., peasant and rural societies), the irrational (animals, non-Westerns, and women), and the underdeveloped or backward (the colonial/neocolonial world)” (2002, p. 25).
- 4) Universalizing and totalizing aspects, as well as a centralizing tendency that persists and, according to Pratt, is a form of “interpretive power that involves what might be called the *monopolistic use of categories*” (2002, p. 27).
- 5) An identity-creating aspect: following the ideas of Homi Bhabha, Pratt suggests that, by interpellating others from the center, modernity gives particular kinds of direction to Europe’s interactions with the rest of the world, producing an *identity discourse*. As Pratt notes: “I have found it quite helpful to think about modernity as an *identity discourse*, as Europe’s (or the white world’s) identity discourse as it assumed global dominance. The need for narratives of origins, distinctive features, and reified Others, and the policing of boundaries combined with the slippery capacity to create and erase otherness as needed are the signposts of identity discourses. Hence, the centrism of modernity is in part ethnocentrism, though it does not readily identify itself in this manner” (2002, p. 28, italics in the original text)
- 6) Modernity discourse contains tensions. Following Dussel, Pratt mentions “the *contradiction* between modernity’s need for fixed otherness, on the one hand,

and its diffusionist, subject-producing program, on the other hand” (2002, p. 28, italics in the original text). This contradiction comes with another one: in modernity discourse, individual liberty depends on the subordination or self-subordination of others. In Pratt’s words: “Liberty thus conceived depends a priori on the existence of population sectors that are by definition unfree, charged with the reproductive, custodial, and tutelary relations” (2002, p. 28).

In the various chapters composing this study, I will come back to this discourse of modernity from the center, pointing out how it is reproduced at different stages of the urban planning process and indicating how it is present in the statements of the different actors involved in Ecuadorian urban politics.

Pratt’s analysis of modernity from the center is aligned with other post-colonial arguments that see modernity as characterized by an epistemology that has a strictly binary character:

postcolonial thinkers in the tradition of Edward Said’s *Orientalism* (1978) and Homi Bhabha’s *The Location of Culture* (1994) have drawn attention to the fact that in academic, popular, artistic and political discourses, modernity has served as a spatio-temporal bias, cutting the world into different spaces and times: into the first and the third, the modern and the developing. This division has been accompanied by all kinds of judgemental binary categorisations – such as the distinction between rational and emotional, civilised and uncivilised, emancipated and suppressed – serving political objectives. (Dibazar et al., 2013, p. 646)

Each project analyzed in the present study shows, in a particular way, the persistence of this logic of modernity, mainly in the way those involved in the planning and construction process reaffirm the idea of progress and reassert binary categorizations. Complementing Pratt’s analysis, in my study I also address modernity according to the work of Walter Mignolo, who conceives modernity as a European narrative that hides a darker side, namely coloniality. Coloniality is a notion attributed to Anibal Quijano, who, in *Coloniality and modernity/rationality* (2007 [1999]), used it to refer to the structures of power and control originated by Europeans and emerging principally during the era of colonialism on the American continent. The colonial structure of power, composed of

political, social and cultural domination, “produced the specific social discriminations which later were codified as ‘racial’, ‘ethnic’, ‘anthropological’ or ‘national’, according to the times, agents, and populations involved” (Quijano, 2007 [1999], p. 168). Although political colonialism has been eliminated, continues Quijano, “the relationship between the European – also called ‘Western’ – culture, and the other, continues to be one of colonial domination [...] This relationship consists, in the first place, of a colonization of the imagination of the dominated; that is, it acts in the interior of that imagination, in a sense, it is a part of it” (2007 [1999], p.169). Quijano points to the influence of coloniality in the constitution of the European paradigm of modernity/rationality, arguing that “the coloniality of power had decisive implications in the constitution of the paradigm associated with the emergence of urban and capitalist social relations...” (2007 [1999], p. 172).

Mignolo, in *Coloniality: The darker side of modernity* (2009), expands the analysis of the relation between coloniality and modernity by arguing that coloniality is constitutive of modernity and that therefore there is no modernity without coloniality: they are two sides of the same coin. Following Karen Armstrong’s studies of Islam, Mignolo concludes that modernity emerged as a double colonization, of time and of space: “Colonisation of time was created by the simultaneous invention of the Middle Age in the process of conceptualizing the Renaissance; the colonization of space by the colonization and conquest of the New World. In the colonization of space, modernity encounters its darker side, coloniality” (2009, p. 42). According to Mignolo, in America, the idea of modernity as progress came together with, and is a synonym of, the idea of salvation and newness that emerged in the colonial process in the 16<sup>th</sup> century: “The invention of America was indeed the first step in the invention of non-European traditions that modernity was in charge of superseding by conversion [to Christianity], civilization and later by development” (2009, p. 43) When encountering people in America, Mignolo explains, legal theologians asked themselves: what to do with the ‘Indians’ and their land? ‘Indians’ were conceived as ontologically lesser human beings and, in consequence, not fully rational, although capable of being converted. Thus, the oppressive face of ‘coloniality’ was hidden by positing the invented inferior, a process that Mignolo designates as “the colonial difference”: “The colonial difference operates by converting differences into values and establishing a hierarchy of human beings ontologically and epistemically. Ontologically, it is assumed that there are inferior human beings. Epistemically, it is assumed that inferior human beings are rationally and aesthetically

deficient” (2009, p. 46). From this epistemic difference, concludes Mignolo, a whole colonial matrix of power was constructed that remains in operation until today, covering four domains:

1) the management and control of subjectivities (for example, Christian and secular education, yesterday and today, museums and universities, media and advertising today, etc.); 2) management and control of authority (for example, viceroalties in the Americas, British authority in India, US army, Politbureau in the Soviet Union, etc.); 3) management and control of economy (for example, by reinvesting of the surplus engendered by massive appropriation of land in America and Africa; massive exploitation of labour starting with the slave-trade; by foreign debts through the creation of economic institutions such as World Bank and IMF, etc.); and 4) management and control of knowledge (for example, theology and the invention of international law that set up a geo-political order of knowledge founded on European epistemic and aesthetic principles that legitimised the disqualifications over the centuries of non-European knowledge and non-Europeans aesthetic standards, from the Renaissance to the Enlightenment and from the Enlightenment to neo-liberal globalisation; philosophy). (Mignolo, 2009, p. 49)

These domains are interrelated and each “is disguised by a constant and changing rhetoric of modernity” (Mignolo, 2009, p. 49), meaning that the logic of modernity persists and is reflected in different discourses. This idea can be complemented with the *ciclo colonial* [colonial cycle] and *colonialismo interno* [internal colonialism] proposed by Silvia Rivera as referring to “mentalities and social practices that organize ways of living and sociability [...] structuring especially those conflicts and collective behaviors related with ethnicity, through what I call internal colonialism” (2010, p. 39, author’s translation from Spanish).

Pratt’s approach to modernity, the darker side of modernity described by Mignolo and the contributions of Rivera are taken as reference points for understanding the cases presented in this study, which all involve notions of modernity. Mignolo’s specific idea of modernity as inextricably linked with coloniality is reflected most clearly in the case of the Millennium Communities discussed in Chapter Three.

Together with the notion of modernity, another notion that has a strong presence in the cases analyzed is that of development. The relation between the discourses of modernity and development is lucidly described by Arturo Escobar in his article “The invention of development” (1999). According to Escobar (1999), the notions of salvation, newness and progress present in the discourse of modernity took a new turn after the Second World War, when the United States started an economic global project under the name of ‘development and modernization’. He argues that “[o]ne of the many changes that occurred in the early post World War II period was the “discovery” of mass poverty in Asia, Africa and Latin America [...] [t]his discovery was the starting point for an important restructuring of global culture and political economy ” (Escobar, 1999, p. 382). The Third World was discovered and with it came the idea that “something had to be done before the overall levels of instability and inequality in the world became intolerable” (Escobar, 1999, p. 382). The poor countries then “came to be similarly defined in relation to the standards of wealth of the more economically advantaged nations” (Escobar, 1999, p. 382) and the latter were considered as the ones with the capacity, in technological and financial terms, to guide the progress and development of the rest of the countries. During the 1940s and 1950s “[i]ndustrialization and modernization were seen as inevitable and necessary routes to such progress” and “capital investment was seen as the most important ingredient to achieve economic growth and development” (Escobar, 1999, p. 383). The capital came from abroad through new institutions such as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and UN technical agencies. Escobar identifies as the most important elements of development the process of capital formation “and the various factors associated with it: technology, population and resources, monetary and fiscal policies, industrialization, agricultural development, commerce and trade. There were also a series of factors linked to cultural considerations, such as education and the need to foster ‘modern’ cultural values” (1999, p. 383). The professed humanitarian concern concealed new forms of power and control, more subtle and refined, aimed at the poor, who “became the target of more sophisticated practices, of a variety of programs that seemed inescapable” (Escobar, 1999, p. 382).

The new discourse of development took the place of the one of modernity and modernization. In this process, according to Escobar, “everything was subjected to the eye of the new experts, the poor dwellings of the rural masses, the vast agricultural fields, cities, households, factories, hospital, schools, public offices, towns and regions, and in the last instance, the world as a whole” (1999, p. 383). Escobar notes that the discourse

of development carried with it one of underdevelopment and covered the entire cultural, economic and political geography of the so-called Third World. Under this discourse of development, “indigenous populations had to become ‘modernized’, where modernization meant the adoption of the ‘right’ values, namely those held by the white minority or mestizo majority and, in general, those embodied in the ideal of the cultivated European” (Escobar, 1999, p. 384). In other words, the primary idea was that “economic development would lead to social modernization characterized by the emergence of new values, most of which would resemble those of Western industrialized societies” (Chen & Ren, 2016, p. 17). This discourse of development permeates all the cases presented in this study, but most notably the Yachay project discussed in Chapter Two. As I will show, even though the Ecuadorian political discourse seeks to keep its distance from the developed vs. undeveloped dichotomy, this dichotomy remains present in the planning and construction of urban projects.

After the developmentalism boom, globalization entered the stage. As noted by Wallerstein, “academic buzz words and fads are fickle and usually last but a decade or two. Development was suddenly out. Globalization arrived in its wake” (2005, p. 1265). It was in the 1990s, after the Washington Consensus,<sup>5</sup> when the discourse of globalization became popular (Wallerstein 2000; 2005) to indicate an array of new technologies, new economic relationships, new social processes and new political developments (Powell, 2014). Apart from the economic, communicational and structural changes linked to the notion of globalization, it has been defined as “the compression of the world and the intensification of consciousness of the world as a whole” (Robertson & Khondker, 1998, quoted in Chen & Ren, 2016). Rather than seeing globalization as involving only homogenization, it is argued that globalization and localization are coexisting, interdependent processes that can imply either the fragmentation or the integration of values depending on the characteristics of the local context.

According to Wallerstein (2000), globalization is a misleading concept, since what is described as globalization has been happening for 500 years. From this

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<sup>5</sup> In 1989, a set of economic policy recommendations for developing countries became known under the name of the Washington Consensus. This consensus refers to “the level of agreement between the International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank, and U.S Department of the Treasury on those policy recommendations. All shared the view, typically labelled neoliberal, that the operation of the free market and the reduction of state involvement were crucial to development in the global South” (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2015).

perspective, both modernity and globalization can be understood as processes linked to the expansion of the economic sphere. For Wallerstein (2000), from 1450 to the present, globalization has been articulated with the emergence of the capitalist world economy, and nowadays, more than a newly globalized world with clear rules, the world is experiencing a moment of transition with an uncertain outcome. In this study, I take modernism and globalization as referring to tendencies inherent to capitalist development (Mattos, 2006) that adopt different modalities according to the context and the strategies used by the dominant actors of capitalist development.

It is not the purpose of this work to describe in detail the many approaches to globalization and its various discourses. What I explore is the relation between this notion and spatial transformations. According to Saskia Sassen (2005), globalization is marked by the geographic dispersal of economic activities and the simultaneous integration of such geographically dispersed activities, which feed the growth of central corporate functions (2005, p. 28). The world economy is passing through a phase characterized by the “ascendance of information technologies and an associated increase in the mobility and liquidity of capital” (2005, p. 27), which requires a new type of conceptual architecture. In this context, it is possible to see the emergence of what Sassen calls “global cities” and “the global-city region”. Sassen’s hypothesis is that “the economic fortunes of these cities become increasingly disconnected from their broader hinterlands or even their national economies [...] [and that] the growing of numbers of high-level professionals and high profit making specialized service firms have the effect of raising the degree of spatial and socio-economic inequality evident in these cities” (2005, p. 30). In line with Sassen’s analysis of the social and cultural impacts of modernity and globalization on the construction and development of cities, Jonathan Bach, in his 2011 article “Modernity and the urban imagination in economic zones”, explores the construction of economic zones and its relation with urban development. Exploring the development of economic and export-oriented zones across the world over the last 40 years, he argues that the division of certain territories into zones is not arbitrary, but a cultural phenomenon. An economic zone is defined as a “designated physical area in which different rules apply to corporations, and by extension workers, than in the rest of a given state [...] [and are] intended primarily for quick increases in export, employment or regional development” (Bach, 2001, p. 100). Examples of economic zones range from maquiladora factories in Mexico to Songdo City in South Korea, which was the model for Yachay.

While at first only a handful of demarcated national spaces gave export industries special incentives, allowing companies to pay fewer taxes and to move goods in and out with minimal regulation, customs or tariffs, these spaces multiplied and became central to the contemporary export-oriented industrialization stage of global capitalist development (Sum, 2001), playing an especially important historic role in the rise of the Asian ‘Tigers’ and, later, China as an economic power. (Bach, 2001, p. 99)

Following this development, Bach adopts the concept of the “Zone”, which “signifies a shift in the socio-spatial formation of late modernity as export zones turn from a pragmatic space for the production of exports into a place, imagined and lived” (Bach, 2011, p. 99). With this, Bach refers to the way in which the development of economic zones has carried with it a transformation of urban space that incorporates classically modernist ideals. As a key location for the production of space in response to changing modes of capital accumulation, the intersection of networks, markets and political rules turns the Zone into a new form of urban imagination that recombines scales, functions and identities (Bach, 2011). The Zone is, among other things, a space to try out free market reforms, attract investors, create networks and establish new forms of value chains; its prominence draws from its discursive power as a modernist fantasy of rationality and new beginnings that becomes part of a political discourse about urban futures (Bach, 2011, p. 109). With the configuration of Zones, certain types of knowledge and populations are privileged, cultivated and cared for, while others are reduced to a lower status. The Zones thus become a way to regulate the (bio) political as well as the economic (Bach, 2011, p. 104). Over time, exceeding its primary objective of economic development, the planning of the Zone has become an attempt to create an imagined and ideal city, which, erected inside an existing city, becomes a hybrid zone/city, an urban form that Bach calls the *Ex-city*. The *Ex-city* refers to the Zone as an emergent urban zone that follows a logic of sovereignty and accumulation. The prefix “ex” is utilized to denote “the way the Zone fashions urban space out of the mix of exports, excess, exception, and exhibition. [...] the *Ex-city* is also ‘ex’ in other ways: external to older urban areas, extroverted as it performs its function as nodes of export, investment, and modernity, exotic in its lure of modern life” (Bach, 2011, p. 116). In other words, a Zone becomes an *Ex-city*, blurring the categories between a city and an economic zone (Bach, 2011, p. 106). When constructing a Zone, authorities, investors, technicians and other actors can

thus create a whole new urban-economic environment according to their ideals, subjectivity and interests. In Chapter Two, I discuss the Yachay Project in the light of Bach's concept of the Zone, which is important for understanding the aspiration on the part of the Ecuadorian authorities to become part of the globalized world.

With regard to social and economic transformations, it is not only the strategies used by dominant actors to confront and be part of global changes that are crucial; what is fundamental is the role of the "imagined worlds" these strategies carry with them. According to Appadurai, extending Benedict Anderson, imagined worlds are "the multiple worlds which are constituted by the historically situated imaginations of persons and groups spread around the globe" (1990, p. 33). Appadurai (1990) argues that to understand the complexity of the current global economy (which exhibits certain fundamental disjunctures between economy, culture and politics), it is crucial to look at how these imagined worlds are mobilized and affected by global cultural flows in five constellations: ethnoscapes, mediascapes, technoscapes, finanscapes and ideoscapes. The precise role imagined worlds play in urban planning in Ecuador will be discussed in Chapter Two. What is important to note here is that, when thinking about urban transformations in the context of globalization, it is through these imagined worlds that the managers of urban space will generate the conditions to transform the space. In other words, they will put in place urban imaginaries, which, according to Edward Soja, consist of "the mental or cognitive mappings of urban reality and the interpretive grids through which we think about, experience, evaluate, and decide to act in the places, spaces, and communities in which we live" (2000, p. 324). The intimate relation between imagined worlds or urban imaginaries and urban transformations comes to the fore particularly clearly in my analysis of the Yachay project. The way in which this project was advertised and the public discourses the authorities employed to sustain the investment are good examples of how strongly the imagination influences the process of urban planning.

To clarify the relationship between imagined worlds or urban imaginaries and the spatial transformations implemented by national and local authorities in Ecuador, I will invoke the multi-faceted notion of space proposed by Henri Lefebvre. The Marxist analysis of space made by Lefebvre in *The production of space* (1974) defines space as a social product, a field where various types of space overlap. With his theory, Lefebvre aims to construct a theoretical unity between fields. As he explains:

The fields we are concerned with are, first, the *physical*-nature, the Cosmos; secondly, the *mental*, including logical and formal abstractions; and thirdly, the *social*. In other words, we are concerned with logic-epistemological space, the space of social practice, the space occupied by sensory phenomena, including products of the imagination such as projects and projections, symbols and Utopias. (Lefebvre, 1974, p. 11-12)

From the juxtaposition of these fields Lefebvre concludes that every society has its own spatial practices and forges “its own – *appropriated* – space”, “with its own specific time or times (the rhythm of daily life), and its particular centers and polycentrism” (Lefebvre, 1974, p. 31). Any space is a *produced space* that contains and dissimulates social relationships and forges a set of relations between objects and products (Lefebvre, 1974, p. 83). Understanding produced space demands the critical analysis of the production of the categories through which this space is read and decoded in specific periods, and, in this process, the role of imagination is crucial.

For Lefebvre, produced space has three dimensions: conceived, lived and perceived space. *Conceived space* (or “representations of space”) refers to conceptualized space or space constructed by professionals and technocrats (architects, engineers, developers, urbanists, etc.):

Within the spatial practice of modern society, the architect ensconces himself in his own space. He has a representation of this space, one which is bound to graphic elements – to sheets of paper, plans, elevations, sections, perspective views of façades, modules, and so on. This conceived space is thought by those who make use of it to be true, despite the fact – or perhaps because of the fact – that it is geometrical: because it is a medium for objects, an object itself, and a locus of the objectification of plans. (Lefebvre, 1974, p. 361)

This dimension is the one I used the most in my analysis, since I focus specifically on the authorities’ representations of the spaces in which the projects are to take shape, which are seen to convey imagined urban futures or, in Appadurai’s terms, imagined worlds. Lefebvre argues that space is always conceived through an ideology, ideas of power and knowledge, which are also always embedded in this representation. Conceived space is

the dominant space of any society because it is intimately “tied to the relations of production and to the ‘order’ which those relations impose, and hence to knowledge, to signs, to codes, and to ‘frontal’ relations” (Lefebvre, 1974, p. 33). It finds objective expression in large-scale constructions such as monuments and towers, factories and office blocks (Merrifield, 2006).

The second dimension Lefebvre refers to is that of *lived* space (or “spaces of representation”), which alludes to the space of everyday experience. In this dimension, space is experienced through complex symbols and images devised by its inhabitants and users. In this dimension the role of the imagination is less prominent than in the case of conceived space. As Merrifield explains: “Spaces of representation are the café on the corner, the block facing the park, the third street on the right after the Cedar Tavern, near the post office” (2006, p. 110). Representational space may be linked to the underground and clandestine aspects of social life, and does not obey rules of consistency or cohesiveness. Nor does it involve too much rationality; it is more felt than thought, alive, fluid and dynamic (Lefebvre, 1974).

Finally, with *perceived space* (or “spatial practices”) Lefebvre alludes to the idea of space as a social product or practice: “[spatial practice] embraces production and reproduction, and the particular locations and spatial sets characteristic of each social formation. Spatial practice ensures continuity and some degree of cohesion” (Lefebvre, 1974, p. 33). This third dimension is related to people’s perceptions of the world and “everyday ordinariness” as explained by Merrifield: “Thus spatial practices structure lived reality, include routes and networks, patterns and interactions that connect places and people, images with reality, work with leisure” (2006, p. 110). In a sense, this sphere is very similar to that of lived space, but perceived space is more related to how people use the space rather than (as in lived space) how people feel about the space. Lefebvre’s distinction between *perceived*, *conceived* and *lived* space is crucial for this study, as it makes clear how the perspective of planners and politicians and that of everyday users of the space may diverge or clash. I will refer to the different dimensions of space when I analyze each of the case studies, but they feature especially prominently in my exploration of the conflicts between planners and users that arose around the construction of the new airport in Quito (Chapter One) and the Millennium communities in the Amazon region (Chapter Three).

The concepts described in this section compose the background of my study and I will refer to them when analyzing the four projects. Throughout the analysis of the

discourses and the process of construction of these projects, the triad modernity-development-globalization emerges as the conceptual narrative within which the structures are thought and imagined. In a national context that is perceived by the authorities as in need of development in order to fully participate in the globalized world, urban mega projects and even local monuments are connected to a notion of progress. This notion of progress finds expression in an imagined future that carries with it specific ideas about urban space and its transformation. The imagined futures mobilized in relation to the projects selected for this study, I will show, incarnate the authorities' fears and dreams regarding Ecuador's position in the world, constituting a political statement about how to reposition the local and the national in relation to the global.

### **Methodology**

My study is principally qualitative and adopts the approach of cultural analysis as developed by Mieke Bal. Cultural analysis is defined as an interdisciplinary and critical practice (Bal, 1999) that, focusing on a detailed analysis of cultural objects, artifacts, rituals and events, possesses five main characteristics: it is interdisciplinary, theoretically grounded, has social relevance, focuses on the object through close reading, and puts the emphasis on the present (Bal, 2016). The interdisciplinary focus means that cultural analysis is not bound to any one discipline; rather, it initiates a conversation among the different fields of study that converge in the analysis of a specific cultural object. The fact that cultural analysis is theoretically grounded refers to the way it uses theories to explore objects, while also aiming for the analysis of cultural objects to advance theorization. Significantly, for Bal, theory does not have a status of master discourse, but is one of the discourses to interact with the object (Bal, 2016). The analyst then “conduct[s] a meeting between several [methods], a meeting in which the object participates, so that, together, objects and methods can become a new, not firmly delineated field” (Bal, 2002, p. 4). The social relevance of cultural analysis lies in its reflection on the society from which the object necessarily emerges; the analysis of cultural objects should generate discussion and, ideally, a transformation of the cultural, social or political realm. The fourth principle emphasizes the primacy of the cultural object, which, through the method of close reading taken from literary studies, is analyzed in-depth, assuming that every detail matters. The fifth and final principle of the cultural analysis approach concerns its focus on the present, which also conditions its treatment of the historical dimension of the objects it analyzes: “It is based on a keen awareness of the critic's situatedness in the present, the social and

cultural present from which we look, and look back, at the objects that are always already of the past, objects that we take to define our present culture” (Bal, 1999, p. 1). The principles of cultural analysis proposed by Bal are crucial for my study since, together with an interdisciplinary selection of readings, I explore cultural objects (in this case, the megastructures and monuments) in relation to politics and urban planning in order to generate a dialogue between both fields.

The case studies themselves are approached through field observation, in-depth interviews and the analysis of documents pertaining to the planning and construction of the projects.<sup>6</sup> The four projects are positioned as *paradigmatic cases*. According to Bent Flyvbjerg, a specialist in megaprojects, a paradigmatic case is one that highlights characteristics of the phenomenon under study and has a metaphorical and prototypical value: “a paradigmatic case transcends any sort of rule-based criteria. No standard exists for the paradigmatic case because it sets the standard” (2006, p. 16). In this study, the phenomenon analyzed concerns the planning of Ecuadorian public constructions and its relation with notions of globalization and modernity; each selected case highlights particular aspects of how this relation is reflected in the imaginaries and discourses invoked by the national or local authorities when designing and implementing public structures.

For each case study, the cultural analysis approach is brought to bear on the projects’ material form, planning documents, media coverage and data gathered through fieldwork in Ecuador, comprising field observation, in-depth interviews with key and secondary participants in the projects (authorities and technicians in charge of the projects, beneficiaries, etc.) and informal conversations. The fieldwork is essential to this study not only because it provides access to first-hand information about the projects and their planning not available in secondary documents, but also because it provides insight into the experiences, points of view and feelings of various involved parties about the selected projects. Including the voices of key actors allows me to grasp the dialectical dynamic between space, objects (infrastructures), social relationships, interests and feelings that constitutes the urban planning process. In each case, I gathered perspectives

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<sup>6</sup> With regard to the interviewees, some agreed to being referred to by name, while others preferred to remain anonymous or I considered it appropriate to keep them anonymous. In the latter cases, I have assigned the interviewees a participant number and refer to them by their position and role in the project in question. See the Annexes for a complete list of interviewees.

on the projects from the people in charge or closely involved in their realization as conceived space, as well as from those using the projects as lived and perceived space to understand and situate these perspectives in relation to each other. Frequently, this reveals tensions having to do with the different imaginaries of the city held by different groups of people standing in various relationships to the planning process.

It is important to point out that using the qualitative approach of cultural analysis to analyze a small number of case studies in detail means that the cases are highly context-dependent and cannot be analyzed using a predictive theory. As Flyvbjerg (2006) asserts, however, “[t]hat knowledge cannot be formally generalized does not mean that it cannot enter into the collective process of knowledge accumulation in a given field or in a society” (p. 10). What he means by this is that the description and analysis of a particular case study can have value in the process of accumulating knowledge, to promote discussions and to detect the limitations of and tensions within or between certain theories or notions prevalent in a particular field of knowledge. In this study, each case is explored from different theoretical perspectives, bringing together cultural studies, political science, architecture and urban studies. Through the case studies, which are looked at in the social and political contexts in which they were produced and in which they are currently experienced, I aim to arrive at a better understanding of the processes behind urban (mega-) constructions and their relationship with modernity and globalization.

This approach allows me to test theoretical perspectives against the praxis of the projects and their specific contexts. It also responds to a political and personal conviction that the construction of knowledge must be a continuous praxis of self-reflexivity. As Lauren Berlant argues when reflecting on the case, it is “the expert who makes the case. But who counts as expert is often an effect of the impact of the case the expert makes. Therefore the case is always pedagogical, itself an agent. [...] As an expressive form of expertise and explanation the case points to something bigger, too, an offering of an account of the event and the world” (2007, pp. 664-665). The approach proposed by Berlant shares with cultural analysis a view of the object of study (the case) as an active, living agent that establishes a dialogue with the subject (the expert), a dialogue in the course of which subject and object are both transformed and become mutually dependent (Bal, 2013, p. 3). In this way, each case becomes a mirror of the context and reality where it is located, but also a mirror of the interests that guide me as the analyst. This perspective is complemented by Flyvbjerg’s idea that a case study methodology is important for the development of a nuanced view of reality, “including the view that human behavior

cannot meaningfully be understood as simply the rule-governed acts found at the lowest levels of the learning process, and in much theory” (2006, p. 6). Maintaining a great distance from the object of study and a lack of feedback can lead to “ritual academic blind alleys, where the effect and usefulness of research becomes unclear and untested” (Flyvbjerg, 2006, p. 6). I use Flyvbjerg’s and Berlant’s approaches to the case study not to deny the usefulness of theory; on the contrary, it is my aim to bring to light, through my detailed analysis of the case studies, the tensions that manifest between theory and practice in order to promote a nuanced discussion and understanding of how the Ecuadorian urban planning process is developing in a modernized and globalized context.

### **Chapter outline**

Chapter One focuses on the Mariscal Sucre airport in Quito, opened in 2013. Following arguments about space by, among others, Marc Augé, Henri Lefebvre and Edward Soja, I explore the *lived* dimension of the space reflected in the old Mariscal Sucre Airport, the *conceived* space of the new Mariscal Sucre airport and how these notions are reflected in the realized new airport structure. To explore the lived dimension of the airport, I examine the history of the old airport and the way the space was occupied, felt and experienced by the users. As a main reference for this part of my analysis, I use the construction of a sculpture referred to as the Wailing Wall, situated close to the airport’s fence and designed to honor the thousands of Ecuadorians who left the country at the end of the 1990s to escape the economic crisis. The Wailing Wall, I argue, materialized the lived emotions experienced in the airport, undermining in that way the idea of the airport as a non-place (Augé, 1999). The sculpture and the controversies it generated also reveal the conflicting spatial imaginaries of the company in charge of the airport’s management, Quiport, and the municipality of Quito. In the second part of the chapter, I analyze the new airport as a *conceived* space. I discuss how, in the political discourse about it, the new airport is conceived as a utilitarian space that will allow Ecuador to present itself as a globalized nation through the transformation of Quito into a *city-region*. In addition, I trace how this spatial imaginary, which relies on connecting the new airport to narratives of progress and modernity, is materialized in and around the new structure. Comparing this new structure with the old Quito airport, I argue that the former reflects a detachment from national and local identities, instead attaching itself to a global identity composed of international and commercial symbols and brands. The rhythm and richness of the dynamic relationship between the old airport and everyday city life have been replaced

by a space submitted to an ideology based on consumption and functionality. I conclude that the conception of space underlying the construction of Quito's new airport separates the human from nature, geography, space, history and culture, and produces a wide gap between the space as conceived, on the one hand, and as lived and perceived on the other.

Chapter Two focuses on the construction of Yachay, the first Ecuadorian city of knowledge. Located in the Imbabura province, this monumental project was conceived by the Ecuadorian government as a technological center of research, innovation and technology, having as its main model the South Korean city of Songdo. In my analysis I explore how imagined worlds (Appadurai, 1990) or urban imaginations (Soja, 2000) played a major role in the planning and design of the project, as well as how the legacy of modernist architecture influenced the project and how it was positioned in relation to Ecuador's quest to participate, on an equal basis with other nations, in globalization processes. I point out the tensions between the conceived or imagined Yachay and the realized and experienced Yachay. With regard to the former, the first designs for Yachay expose two main fantasies on the part of the authorities: first, that Yachay would serve to achieve a "second independency" by generating technological knowledge that would change the economy of the country and its position in the global economy; and second, that Yachay would inaugurate a Zone (in Bach's terms) and that its space could be controlled in accordance with the ideals of modernist urban planning. These fantasies resulted in a design for a megacomplex of enormous buildings similar to those of Songdo city and were disseminated through a publicity campaign promoting Yachay as a symbol of the transformation of Ecuador. In this effort to publicize Yachay, the authorities deployed what Appadurai calls techno-, media- and ideoscapes (1990), which produce imagined worlds that serve to configure the new global order. With regard to the realized and experienced Yachay, I describe how the original plans could not be fully realized, pointing out the discrepancies between the fantasies of the authorities and the implementation of the project. Among other points, I describe how the Korean consultants who drew up the first plans faced opposition from Ecuadorian architects with regard to the scale and design of the buildings, leading to changes in the design. In the end, I argue, the Yachay project failed in the compensatory function as a techno-fantastic space it was assigned by the authorities (which I theorize through Foucault's concept of heterotopia) because, during its implementation, the authorities were forced to take into account the social and economic realities of both the area in which it was built and Ecuador as a whole.

Chapter Three explores the spatial and cultural transformations that are taking place in the Ecuadorian Amazon region under an extractivist development model. Taking as a case study the Millennium Communities project Playas de Cuyabeno, and mobilizing the theoretical perspectives of, among others, Henry Lefebvre, Anthony Vidler, Walter Mignolo, Michel Foucault and Michel de Certeau, I analyze from a critical perspective the origins and configurations of a space and architecture of extractivism in the Amazon forest. Specifically, I explore the relation between, on the one hand, the model of development and the political discourse underlying the urban planning process in the Amazon region, and, on the other, the conception of the Millennium Communities, the functionalities and aesthetics of the realized buildings, and the responses of the inhabitants to the new space. What I argue is that, discursively, the Ecuadorian legal framework and authorities claim to be distant from neoliberal tendencies and to promote the conservation of nature through the promotion of the Rights of Nature and the achievement of Buen Vivir. Yet the model of development behind the construction of the Millennium Communities is that of new extractivism, which presents the exploitation of natural resources as the main road to progress. I note that this model is accompanied by a political discourse centered on the construction of a positive imaginary of oil extraction that links extraction with radical improvements in the quality of life in the Amazon region. The reality, however, is different. I note how the Millennium Communities, like the Yachay project, are constructed according to a modernist approach in which the new constructions do not consider the history and existing socio-cultural dynamics of the space, and in line with a political discourse that echoes the colonial rhetoric of salvation, civilization and progress. Analyzing the realized structures, I argue that there is no creativity and diversity in the use of materials, and no relation with the environment or local practices. The spatial transformation implemented by the government brings with it a desire to discipline the inhabitants of the community, imposing an ideal of urbanity and a vision of the future that serves political purposes and happily coexists with oil extraction, while reaffirming modernist ideas of progress and development. I finalize my analysis by showing how the response of the inhabitants to the new space reflects the elusive spirit of cultural practice and its capacity to escape homogeneity by creating new forms of inhabiting the designed spaces.

In Chapter Four, finally, I explore the construction of three local monuments and their significance in urban space: the Monument to the Ice Cream located in the city of Salcedo and the Monument to the Tuna and the Monument to the Manteña Chair in the

coastal city of Manta. My analysis of these structures, which I conceptualize as (un)conventional monuments because they united aspects of traditional and non-traditional or counter-monuments, focuses on three aspects: the planning and reception of the monuments, their relation to the space in which they are situated and their role in processes of local identity formation. By whom and with what objectives were these monuments constructed and how were they received? Which ideas about space and globalization do these structures reflect? How do these structures aid in the formation and expression of an urban identity and how do they evoke the level of the global in addition to that of the local? My analysis shows that these monuments uncover different imaginaries of the authorities and inhabitants in relation to local identity, specifically in terms of whether such an identity should be linked to the city's past (by referencing history or folklore), present (by referencing prevalent industries) or future (by expanding markets and attracting tourists). Thus, in the case of the Ice Cream, I explore how the structure was placed with the double intention of honoring ice cream producers of the past and present, and to create a focal point that would generate national and global tourism. Once placed, the monument was contested by those arguing that it should not honor a commercial activity but important events or people from the canton's history. In addition, my analysis makes clear that the monuments not only (or even primarily) aim to shape the city's identity for its inhabitants, but also for people from the outside, fulfilling the commercial role of a city branding instrument. For example, when I analyze the Manteña Chair, I demonstrate how its multiple representations in Manta suggest that this particular symbol of the indigenous past is highly valued mainly because it is seen as likely to please tourists. In sum, in this chapter I argue that the line between the monuments as representations/reinforcements of a local identity and as part of a city branding strategy is consistently blurred. The consequence of this is that the monuments' transformation of urban space is not so much a reflection of the needs or aspirations of the local community as of a desire for legitimacy in an economic globalized context on the part of the authorities.

Although the chapters can be read separately, considering the four projects together gives a greater degree of insight into the politics of public urban construction and how these politics relate to globalization in the Ecuadorian context, as I will explain in the conclusion of my study.