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Public space betterment as empty infrastructure: Political temporality and geographies of privilege in Quito

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Abstract. Although public space has been recognised as playing a central role in human well-being in urban areas, its bare existence does not necessarily guarantee this positive outcome. How these spaces are created, used and accessed, and how they exclude citizens, especially subaltern groups, should be central to the creation of urban plans and policies. This working paper locates this discussion in the Ecuadorian capital of Quito, calling to evaluate the notion of “the public” and its use (and misuse) in urban policy and in the politics of the city. As well as articulating contemporary theoretical debates along with empirical analysis of the notion of public space, exclusion/inclusion and geographies of privilege,

historically contextualising back to the Inca pre-colonial era. The evident disconnect in Quito between the generation of public policy concerning public spaces and the creation of such spaces, led this paper to link questions of betterment in the process of urban development and the politics of exclusion. Drawing from personal experience in public management within the Municipality of Quito, data and theory, this paper undertakes a critique to the current model of production of space of Quito’s Municipal Government and challenges the notion that exclusively through the betterment or creation of public spaces, deep-rooted social injustices can be alleviated.

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List of acronyms

AP	Alianza PAIS
AZ	Administración Zonal (Administrative Zone)
DMQ	Distrito Metropolitano de Quito (Metropolitan District of Quito)
EPMMOP	Empresa Pública Metropolitana de Movilidad y Obras Públicas (Metropolitan Public Enterprise of Mobility and Public Works)
ICQ	Instituto de la Ciudad de Quito (Institute of the City of Quito)
IMPU	Instituto Metropolitano de Planificación Urbana (Metropolitan Institute of Urban Planning)
INEC	Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Censos (National Institute of Statistics and Census)
MDMQ	Municipio del Distrito Metropolitano de Quito (Municipality of the Metropolitan District of Quito)
NBI	Índice de Necesidades Básicas Insatisfechas del DMQ (Unsatisfied Basic Needs Index)
PMDOT	Plan Metropolitano de Desarrollo y Ordenamiento Territorial (Metropolitan Plan of Development and Territorial Order)
SDPC	Secretaría de Desarrollo Productivo y Competitividad (Secretariat of Productive Development and Competitiveness)
SENPLADES	Secretaría Nacional de Planificación y Desarrollo (National Secretariat of Planning and Development)
SGP	Secretaría General de Planificación (General Secretariat of Planning)
SK	Sumay Kausay
STHV	Secretaría de Territorio Hábitat y Vivienda (Secretariat of Territory, Habitat and Housing)
SUMA	Sociedad Unida Más Acción
UN-Habitat	United Nations Human Settlements Programme
USA	United States of America
WHO	World Health Organisation

1. Introduction

Simone uses the term '*cityness*' to refer to the city as a thing in the making (2010). Quito's *cityness*, like many other Latin-American cities, is being defined by rapid population shifts from rural to urban communities and the seemingly perpetual economic and political instability of the region (CAF, 2016). Local governments are at the forefront of dealing with *cityness*, a position that is made explicit in the vision of the current Municipal Administration of Quito (2014-2018): "*Capital del sol, ciudad próspera y atractiva, democrática y solidaria, centro estratégico y turístico, eje cultural de América*" ("Quito capital of the sun, prosperous and attractive city, democratic and solidary, strategic and tourist centre, cultural axis of America"¹) (MDMQ, 2017a). Through an emphasis on Quito's physical *cityness*, particularly in equipping the city with new infrastructure and 'upgrading' existing ones, the present local administration aims to position the city, nationally and internationally, as a modern and 'just' city. Moreover, having worked in various departments of the current Municipal Administration I could evidence that there is a particular interest in betterment projects for public spaces, especially parks and plazas, across the Andean capital.

There is an inherent discourse construction in both academic and vernacular fronts of the meaning and role of public space in cities. It is after all, as Carr et al. suggest, "the stage upon which the drama of communal life unfolds. The streets, the squares, and parks of a city give form to the ebb and flow of human exchange" (1992, p.3). This becomes all the more relevant with the current focus on the 'Lefebvrian' discourse on the right to the city and how these spaces can act as manifestations of citizens exerting said right (Goonewardena et al., 2008, in Stienen, 2009). However, there are caveats in seeking to form social life by forming space (Stienen, 2009), as beautification and aesthetics can be mistaken for social justice. If there is no engagement or acknowledgement of the local government on how these betterments address the city's issues of socio-economic inequality and entrenched privileges, do they become 'empty' infrastructure? Who are these betterments ultimately benefiting? My personal experience in the Municipality of Quito, working in urban design and planning projects for two years, led me to question the disconnect between public policies around public spaces and the projects being executed around the city.

Public spaces such as parks and plazas have the possibility to "mirror the way a society is organised, shaped by unequal distribution of power and resources, which

creates tension and conflict as well as collaboration and compromise" (Madanipour, 2010, p. 2). Thus, in a city where various types of privileges and inequalities exist, these spaces of the urban environment can act as manifestations of both sides of the spectrum: social integration and exclusion. Quito's *cityness* is a dialectic product of its apparent intractability of political and economic instability and the vision of the Municipal government who has focused on physical, rather than social transformation.

Current social structure conditions us to exercise what privileges we may have. If we want to undermine those privileges, we must change the structures within which we live so that we become different people in the process (Smith, 2013). If the emphasis is on aesthetics, is it problematic that these projects do not challenge said structures? An analysis of the betterment projects by the current Municipal administration of Quito can indicate if these initiatives can ever work against existing systems of oppression or in fact institutionalise them, if there are no policies and programmes as well (Young, 1990).

Additionally, park betterment projects are often seen as 'quick wins' and legitimisers for local administrations, as these are visible and tangible showcases of their work and efforts for the city (Madanipour, 2004). These parks can also act as displays of the exclusionary logic of the built environment insofar as it (re)produces or facilitates exclusion in society. The 'privileged', in terms of class, race, gender identity and sexual orientation are able to circumnavigate the poor provision of public space and infrastructure, while the urban poor or subaltern groups cannot. Quito, as well as the rest of Latin America, due to their "history of capitalist development", has failed to "integrate all their inhabitants as citizens with equal rights, equal protection, and equal representation", allowing hegemony to constitute the grounds for subalternity (Williams, 2002, p.6).

This working paper examines the history and discourse surrounding public space and how betterment projects can act as an apparatus of inclusion or exclusion in Quito, and argues that in isolation and with a focus only on aesthetics they cannot inherently be assets to cities, its citizens, or societies. It will do so in three subsequent chapters; the first chapter consists of a review of the literature around public spaces as instruments of governmentality, which can either recalibrate the social structure of a place or act as neo-colonial ventures that de facto reinforce privilege in the

city. The second chapter locates this theory in a historical overview of public space and exclusion in Latin America and Quito. This chapter aims to expose the transition and transformation of privilege in planning and public spaces in the context of Quito. The third and final chapter will analyse the current Municipal Administration (2014-2018) and what is considered a fixation on projects involving the betterment of public spaces in order to illustrate and ground

the theoretical and historical chapters discussed previously. This aims to contextualise and then visualise how these betterments aid in the inclusiveness of the city or further reinstate conditions of urban privilege.

If betterment projects in Quito are focused exclusively in the aesthetic element do they become ephemeral and dependant on political will? Who do they ultimately benefit?

NOTES TO CHAPTER 1

1. All translations in this Working Paper are responsibility of the author.

2. In or out – the politics of public space

2.1 What is public space?

In recent times there has been an extensive discussion around the meaning of public space and its purpose. Urban practitioners from the private and public sectors, decision makers, scholars, and citizens, participate in engaged discussions in order to understand what is ‘public’, what does it constitute, who uses it and most importantly who benefits from its existence.

This paper departs from Lefebvre’s idea that space is political and socially constructed (1974). Its conception and meaning is therefore relational; it is dependent on the interactions and relationships formed within the social construction between people and places. These relationships that emerge in space because of need, an established dominating system, or a more ludic nature, help set different gradients of *public-ness* or *private-ness* (Madanipour, 2003). Low and Smith (2006) note that these relations are manifestations of power and how a particular society has been shaped by these powers. This translates into space to how public or private they are, feel or appear to particular members of society, especially those with less power. Such relations give us a better understanding of “what urban space is really like” than the fixed definitions of ‘public’ and ‘private’ (Stevens, 2007, p.7). This relational understanding is not “only in terms of our perspective, but how the relations between the things we [try] to understand, our deeper ontological comprehension of the world and, ultimately, how we related to [the space] itself, influenced how we understood it” (Adey, 2006, p.76). Thus, this relationship is deeply political and according to Harvey, “it is the relational connectivity among public, quasipublic, and private spaces that counts when it comes to politics in the public sphere” (2006, p. 31). This invisible ‘relational connectivity’ manifests visibly in space: a park might seem public in relation to a gated community, but the park might seem private in relation to my gender and socio-economic class.

It is widely accepted that public spaces can be the nucleus of public life to those that have access to it. Carr et al. (1992, p.xi) define public space as “the common ground where people carry out the functional and ritual activities that bind community, whether in the normal routines of daily life or in periodic festivities”. This is not a novel notion; these common spaces have been identified as the backbone for strong communities repeatedly. Jacobs (1964), Gehl (2010), Lynch (1960), Whyte (1980), and Montgomery (2013), have all discussed the importance

of public space in cities (Jaramillo, 2016a). However, it is not only about the places existing but also about how these are conceived, Jacobs accurately notes that more often than not “paternalists [decision makers]... want to make impossibly profound changes, and they choose impossibly superficial means for doing so” (1964, p.217). Jacobs was referring to how authorities dealt with slums, but it can be easily translated to how local governments superficially manage very complex issues through of public spaces and why this is problematic.

Unfortunately, a majority of the literature fails to emphasise that not everywhere and certainly not everyone has access to this ‘nucleus of public life’. For instance, in many cultures women cannot be seen alone in public spaces, children and the elderly are more vulnerable when using public spaces, and in South Africa the non-white population constantly faces a threatening and dangerous reality when navigating public spaces (Dawson, 2006).

2.2 Inclusion vs. accessibility in public space

The vision for Quito of the current administration includes an intention to make the city democratic and caring; there is, therefore, an implicit intention of making it inclusive as well (MDMQ, 2017a). A city that not only acknowledges but values the diversity of its people can provide for their needs accordingly, including the planning of public spaces. If, as mentioned previously, public spaces can act as catalysts of inclusion in the city then their existence, betterment, and use should foster said inclusivity. Public spaces in Latin American cities could potentially aid in social inclusion, but because many of them have inherited models of development and planning from colonial rule or the North, they can be wrongly contextualised (Watson, 2009). The aspirational ideal that public space could become the stage where the relationship between space and society unfolds, and that it could potentially be one of inclusion, could be wrong.

Public spaces can indeed make a city vibrant and diverse, bringing people together from different backgrounds to share a space when accessible to all, but not all spaces are the same, nor are the cities and people that live in them (Gehl, 2010). Potentially, they provide spaces of leisure, encounter, socialising, that help generate a sense of wellbeing and belonging for citizens, but they can also

provide a sense of fear, oppression, and agoraphobia to some users (Sivam et al., 2012). Stevens (2007) points out that the great thing about these spaces is that there is “possibility of action”, beyond some designated uses and practicality, there is a threshold that invites and includes.

Public spaces can act as great equalisers where both the privileged and the marginalised coexist because there is a sense that “it is uncommitted to prescribed users”, still this does not guarantee that everyone will feel this way (Lynch & Carr, 1995 in Stevens, 2007, p.201). Inclusivity may come from understanding the intersectional identities of the users of a space and this acknowledgment of diversity translated to its design (McCall, 2005). If these spaces are made comfortable, safe, attractive, and accessible for all the multiplicities of individuals: age, ethnicity, gender, race and socioeconomic background, then they, along with public transport and other public infrastructure, can be the ultimate apparatus of democratising the city. For Sandercock (1998) that is how we plan for inclusion, through spaces that foster empowerment and community. If these spaces are able to host such diverse actors and activities, then in a broader context they “strengthen social sustainability” (Gehl, 2010, p.28). The formation of strong communities is essential for a city and its resilience, as they form networks of support, economic, culture, and many others.

If successfully conceived, communal relationships with shared spaces have proven to be beneficial to the overall

wellbeing of humans and their development of a sense of place (Cattell et al., 2008). Urban parks in particular have been referred to as “the lungs of the city, [with] exposure to fresh air and sunlight, with the opportunity to stroll freely and relax, would serve as an antidote to the oppressive physical and psychological condition of city life” (Cranz, 1982; Heckscher & Robinson, 1997, in Carr et al., 1992, p.10). These spaces are of great importance for personal and group physical activities; in Quito free programmes of aerobics and yoga in parks across the city are extremely popular. Other services in public spaces include mobile free drop in clinics, pop up art exhibits and concerts, legal clinics and other information stations (EPMOP, 2017b). These programmes corroborate with the medical evidence of the positive impact these spaces have in mental and physical health of users (Kinver, 2014).

Wellbeing also comes from developing a sense of place. Public spaces are icons in the *imageability* of the city that help generate such connections (Lynch, 1960). Where you learned to ride a bicycle, where you earn your livelihood, where your favourite tree in the city stands; these collections of memories and everyday experiences give meaning to places beyond their physicality. This sentimental association is vital to foster a sense of belonging and consequently for the wellbeing of citizens (Cattell et al., 2008). Public spaces have the possibility of becoming epicentres for the development of mental and physical health of individuals and vital for a balanced ecosystem (Sivam et al., 2012).

Figure 2.1. Summer in the park. Parque Metropolitano La Armenia, Quito. Source: © Andrés Baquero, 2017a.



Additionally, public spaces play an important role in the globalised world where cities face the challenge of becoming more economically competitive (Hopfgatner & Vidosa, 2014). These public spaces act as foci of work that foster new forms of livelihoods within these spaces and their surroundings. A report on the Navarro Park in Quito, evidenced that the park's informal food sellers were earning over US\$10,000 monthly and consequently a series of business opened around the park to serve the great influx of visitors (SDPC, 2015). This 'spill over' effect is common around successful public spaces, where a variety of shops start to appear or improve due to the increased pedestrian traffic and permanence in public spaces. Studies also reveal that urban parks and public spaces are great attractors of tourists and strengthen economic activities of the area (NRPA, 2010; APA, 2002).

"Urban citizenship is about the right to be in and of the city" (Levy, 2009, p.53), public space is where this right can be exerted and manifested. It is where inclusivity can be nurtured by investing in social capital, wellness and economic development of its citizens. If properly done, these spaces can be truly public and a sense of collective identity and action can be formed (Carrión & Hanley, 2007). This is vital for a city because "even though public spaces are public in terms of ownership and access, these spaces 'belong' to the people" (Hernández, 2013, p.145).

2.3 Betterment: an apparatus of exclusion?

Levy (2013, p. 47) writes, "through providing access to essential activities, [this] enables diverse women and men, girls and boys to 'appropriate' their right to the city and to realize a fully rounded and substantive urban citizenship". This was in reference to access to public transport but it can be translated to the provision of public space. Literature shows that public spaces have the *potential* to generate inclusivity in the city but often, mainstream planning overlooks how they "are able to exercise" this choice (Levy, 2013). Access cannot be equated with inclusivity; diverse members of the city can have access to these spaces but not be included in them. Young (1990, p. 240) argues that having access places individuals in vulnerable positions as we interact with "those who are different, those who identify with different groups and have different opinions or different forms of life" than ourselves.

The planning of cities and public policies are often justified as acting in the interest of the public, but "the way this public interest has been defined is too narrow, and often privileges the elite" (Madanipour, 2010, p.8). As Averini (in Levy, 2013) notes, decision-making in cities follows the neoclassical economic paradigm of the 'rational man' who makes decisions in a social vacuum. This 'average' citizen

excludes women, children, the elderly and other categories of diversity, therefore assuming that "everyone benefits equally from development initiatives of a neutral state within the framework of modernisation and the 'modern project' of planning", as it is done through the betterment or creation of public spaces actually becomes exclusive to the oppressed segment of the urban dwellers of the city (Levy, 2009, p.ii). Consequently, access is sometimes mistakenly equated to only its spatial component; insinuating that if people are located close to a park or if the physical design is 'inclusive', it is enough. On the contrary, "public space design has a special responsibility to understand and serve the public good, which is only partly a matter of aesthetics" (Carr et al.1992, p.18). Focusing public space betterment purely on the physical dimension fails to recognise that for the most vulnerable members of the city moving, using and staying in a public space can be a very difficult experience (Law, 1999). Failure to recognise this it is to remove the political significance of the shaping of urban public space (Harvey, 2006).

Public spaces can also act as a project of self-promotion for a municipal administration; they "are used to project a positive image and to create new public displays for the city" (Madanipour, 2004, p.268). Focusing public funds into 'mega' projects of public space regeneration that does not necessarily reflect the needs of the most marginal and underserved areas of the city, is negligent and damaging for its citizens (Nkooe, 2015; Carr et al., 1992). Some local governments focus merely on the sanitation of public spaces to look modern and well maintained; these superficial efforts can remove any sense of ownership and makes some users feel unwelcome. Carr et al. (1992, p. 17) discuss how elaborate and expensive park designs do not account for the budget to maintain and manage them, resulting in neglected spaces that "do not age well".

In public space betterment it is vital to "dismantle systems of inequality" by understanding privilege (Kimmel, 2003, p.xxi). Yet, the discourse revolves around the forced exclusion of the urban poor or subaltern groups, rather than from the decided exclusion of the privileged. Privileged residents are able to circumnavigate the poor provision of public space "to avoid the ugliness, complexity and dangers of contemporary city life, and [...] having to interact with certain kinds of people" (Young, 1990, p.247). The powerful elites of the city can seclude to the comfort of their gated communities, country clubs, communal spaces (public only to those who are members or residents), and other places where they do not have to interact with strangers (Editorial El Caminante, 2017). In fact, more 'communal' spaces appear in order to emulate public spaces. Khon refers to such communal spaces as akin to "an artificial sweetener, which offers all of the pleasure without the calories, [...] promises the pleasure of sociability without the discomforts of the unfamiliar" (2011, p.186). The privileged can choose

when and where to use public spaces; the unprivileged do not have a choice (Madanipour, 2004). An effect of the betterment of public parks and plazas is the increase of the capital value of the surrounding and their property, which inherently excludes those who cannot afford it. These socio-economic distinctions have a strong physical manifestation in public spaces like a “mosaic of difference that is trapped within a limited space, bearing enormous pressures from within and without” (Madanipour, 2004, p. 271). The generic way of ‘improvement’ or creation of public spaces fails to recognise that “social life is considered too irreducibly complex” (McCall, 2005, p.1773). Public spaces are incomplete without

people. As Stevens (2007, p. 198) puts it, “if the users are not representative of the overall population can we ultimately call it public?”.

The focus of this section around public space in a dichotomous manner of inclusion or exclusion is not intended as an over-simplification of the discourse, but a way to frame the case study that follows. Understanding the multiple potentials and risks around public space, it is vital to note that those involved in the process of creation, management and betterment of public urban spaces “carry power; the power to encourage and include [...] and the power to discriminate and exclude’ (Healey, 1997, p.264 in Levy, 2009, p. viii).

3. Histories of privilege, the ‘public’ and space in Quito

3.1 ‘La Plaza’: pre-colonial hegemonic spaces

In order to understand the historical role of public space as a manifestation of privilege and exclusion in the context of Quito, it is necessary to address the notion of the ‘plaza’ in Latin America as the first public space. In pre-Columbian America plazas were literally and figuratively at the centre of all the cities of the Incan empire and were interconnected by the Inca Road (PNUMA et al., 2011; Hardoy, 1968). In this way, as well as being important civic centres, they were the precedent for exclusion and the perpetuation of socio-economic privilege in pre-colonial urban space.

As the Inca Empire successfully expanded beyond Cuzco, Quito developed as one of their state capitals (Hardoy, 1968). Urbanisation of the region consisted mainly of building roads, ceremonial religious centres, markets, squares, vast ‘canchones’ (empty spaces) and chambers (ibid.).

Quito was of a particularly functional relevance to the Incan Empire as it had a series of roads that were vital to its connectivity, and that consequently delimited the main plazas of the city (Pérgolis, 2002). These plazas served a similar purpose to its contemporary use, hosting social gatherings and encounters, commercial activities, etc.

Huayna Capac, the Incan founder of Quito had his palace built on the border of the plaza, along with other religious temples and the chambers of his court (Pérgolis, 2002). The architectural patterns of these settlements evidenced that the rest of the city was arranged by areas that hosted groups of the same social status, excluding those forced to live at the fringes (Hardoy, 1968). Hence, the history of urban space in Latin America and specifically Quito is simultaneously a history of topological inequality, of privileged centres and less privileged peripheries. The concentration of the political and economic power in the city gave it a hegemonic position that transcended on to the residents of a particular area and that served a particular purpose (Hardoy, 1968). Privilege therefore was not only about access to the city, but the possibility of playing a role in it. In fact, even the archaeological studies of these past urbanisations have “often concentrated on urban or urban-like sites, [...] because of their striking visibility as ruins, and [...] because they are the settlements most likely to yield the remains of the kind of elite culture so favoured by art historians and museums” (Schaedel, Hardoy & Stewart, 1978, p.58). The significance of the archaeological favouritism shows not only that there is a history of privilege in South America, but also that how we reconstruct past significances in the present *privileges* the urban centre.

Figure 3.1. San Pedro de Atacoma, a clear example of Incan fortified groupings previous to the Spanish Conquest. Source: Hardoy, 1973, p.507.



3.2 Colonial and post-colonial influenced planning

With the arrival of the Spanish conquistadors in the 16th century many of the Incan urban elements were adapted to the colonial urbanisation, “rather than an imposition of one culture upon the other, there was a partial fusion in which both lost certain of their inner innate and essential aspects” (Hardoy, 1968, p.115). Therefore, contrary to dominant architectural histories, the plaza as the original public space in Latin America goes beyond its Eurocentric conception as a ‘handout’ of colonial culture (Miller, 2001; Low, 2000). This process was not a romantic blend of spatial strategies; on the contrary colonial planning was highly violent and destructive. It can be argued that the preservation of indigenous forms was due in part to the practicality and efficiency in the conversion process demanded by the Spanish Crown. Furthermore, there was no parity; Spaniards ultimately controlled what aspects to preserve and which to erase. That the plaza ‘survived’ is possibly a testament to the universal quality of publicness and how it might have been seen as a neutral space, as opposed to a temple, a shrine or a political building. Given that the plaza is part of a *designed* spatial organisation, there is an implicit political function in its inclusion within the spatial template. Indeed “the plaza manifests the complex articulation between indigenous and European forms” and how they coexisted and continue to do so in contemporary Latin America (Ghannam, 2003, p. 631).

“Plazas are spatial representations of Latin American society and social hierarchy”, they are the built manifestation of power structures, social struggle and public life, transcending from pre-colonial, colonial, republic, and modern times (Low, 2000, p.33). This is particularly true in the case of Quito, which has one of the best-preserved historic centres in the world.

Figure 3.2. Plan of San Francisco de Quito, *Fondos Bibliográficos (Sección Siglo XVIII o Etapa Colonial)*. Source: ©Archivo Histórico del Guayas, 1748.



The iconic Plaza Grande, located in the centre of what was established as San Francisco de Quito in 1541 by the Spaniards, was and continues to be an important political symbol of the city, separating the head of the state, the local government, and the church (Pérgolis, 2002). Its renovations through time reflect the social and economic changes of the city, while maintaining its role as a place for encounter, work and politics (Ghannam, 2003).

Subsequently in postcolonial times, during the time of the Republic (particularly from 1830-1910), there was significant European influence in the formal urban transformation of Quito (Achig, 1983). Public spaces were shaped in accordance with urban tendencies of the time, roads were built throughout the city and two urban parks, Alameda and Ejido, were established. The first territorial regulatory plan written in 1945 by Guillermo Jones Odriozola, Uruguayan architect, guided this first wave of planned development (STHV, 2017c). In this plan he notes the importance of open green spaces, “with all their immense benefits [they] have really encouraging possibilities” (MDMQ, 1949, p. 9). However, this aspect of the regulatory plan competed with other elements of subsequent reforms included in regulatory documents emitted by the local government; these followed an exclusionary and privilege-led planning logic. The vast investment in infrastructure was destined to the northern part of the city, where the greatest concentration of wealth was located, Achig (1983, p. 57) notes:

“To the speculative action of the urban land and the allotment of it with a strictly commercial character, were attached the concrete manifestations of socio-economic segregation, actively preventing the entry of families of low economic resources in the north sector [of the city]”.

Following this logic there has been over 18 regulatory plans prepared and approved by the Municipal Council to be implemented, though none has successfully been carried out to this day, evidencing the city’s very own problem in developing and executing planning policy.

3.3 Cities as spectacle: empty infrastructure in globalised times

In the urbanisation of the colonies the urban grid was an important planning element brought as a process of territorial colonisation and ‘cultural transmission’ (Schaedel, Hardoy & Stewart, 1978). In recent decades there has been a new way of cultural transmission in Latin American cities, only this time it is not unidirectional but rather multi-directional as an effect of globalisation. Quito, like many other cities, faces the challenge of becoming economi-

cally productive in a globalised world, and in order to do so depends heavily on tourism and foreign investments (Hopfgatner & Vidosa, 2014). In fact, data shows that the tourism industry contributes on average 1% of the GDP of Ecuador, which is over \$970 million a year (MINTUR, 2017). Thus, “above all, the city has to appear as an innovative, exciting, creative, and safe place to live or to visit, to play and consume in” (Harvey, 1989, p.9). In order to do so, Quito looks out for everything that is making other cities around the world ‘smart’, ‘sustainable’, ‘competitive’ and can inject capital into the economy via infrastructure: Metrocables from Medellín, Metro from Spain, roads from China, public electric bicycles from Madrid, free Wi-Fi hotspots from Paris, and the list goes on.

Local and national governments face “the need to build upon in the attractiveness and image of the city”, mainly through the betterment of public spaces, to lure potential investors (Hopfgatner & Vidosa, 2014 p. 23). This need is only targeted to certain privileged parts of the city, those that are the most visible and where a lot of influential and powerful stakeholders are interested; the invisible and most vulnerable are rarely so lucky. Stienen (2009, p.112) summarises the state of “millennium urbanism”:

“The concern of urban governments all over the world [is], to take measures to improve the position of cities, within an expanding inter-urban competition. Built environments are regenerated; public spaces revitalized; and their aesthetic significance is made to play an important role in enhancing the commercial, consumer, and public value of cities for their citizens, tourists, and for capital.”

City authorities are more concerned in building an experience or a spectacle than tackling deeply rooted issues, such as exclusion of subaltern groups in public spaces, which makes positive projects lose their appeal (Brand & Dávila 2011; Stienen, 2009). This is particularly significant for Latin American cities that have specific historical trends that add its own set of pressures and political pathologies such as corruption, a steep inequality gap, international interventionism, etc. Quito is not exempt from these pressures; additionally with the geographical particularities of the territory, retrograde ideologies dominating planning and bureaucratic inefficiencies, seeking solutions internationally is very appealing to authorities.

In October 2016 an international event demanded public design and the capture of large scale funding in order to fulfil a generic global experience in Quito: Habitat III¹. There was extensive political calculation both by the national and local government behind hosting an event of this scale; works in Quito’s public space created for this event seem to now face the same challenges that Medellín’s social urbanism is facing:

“Concerns have been raised about future maintenance costs; the architecture has been criticised for its lack of originality and ostentation; some argue that the city administration has been carried away, [it] has overstretched its resources and [was] more concerned with constructing an image than transforming reality” (Brand & Dávila 2011, p. 656).

Politicians and major stakeholders have been deciding “what gets built where and how changes to the built environment are regulated” (Sklair, 2006, p. 25), leaving citizens as the spectators of the spectacle instead of taking an active role in how the city develops. In fact, the pushback to the event from many activists and organisations such as Resistencia Hábitat III who did not feel represented by the conference was dismissed quietly (Perry & Herd, 2016). And although building inclusive cities was one of the main objectives of the conference, there was no tangible contribution of the Municipal Administration of the efforts of how Quito could become more inclusive.

Large investments in infrastructure, such as Medellín’s Metrocables², without a doubt show “the high levels of political and financial commitment by the municipality, [but] the social impact of specific projects remains somewhat unclear” (see Brand & Dávila 2011, p. 656). Quito has witnessed similar attempts via the investment on public space infrastructure and park betterments that have proven to be politically beneficial to various administrations. The inauguration of neighbourhood parks or football fields has become a cliché of the legitimisation of the municipal mandate’s “socially progressive image”, increasing their approval in poor urban areas.

Figure 3.3. Barriers to inclusivity: Fences protect the main Habitat III site, while attendees queue into the distance. Source: © Francesca Perry, 2016.



Constructing a city with 'empty' infrastructure that promotes exclusion and privileges only a segment of the population continues to be prevalent in Quito. This social structure is visible in 'the use and occupation of space' where there is socio-economic segregation and distinct provision of infrastructure and services assigned by the privileged in order to "rationalise urban space according to its class interests" (Achig, 1983, p. 35). More impor-

tantly, as Brand and Dávila note on the case of Medellín, a "quick-fix approach motivated by short term political impact and publicity-conscious gain are unlikely to be successful" (Brand & Dávila 2011, p. 659). Further reaffirming privilege as the culmination of a history of power and biased planning, which perpetuates the 'global city program' trend, clearly lacking in inclusiveness and true social openness.

NOTES TO CHAPTER 3

1. Habitat III refers to the United Nations conference held the past October (2016) in Quito. The purpose of the conference that focuses on sustainable urban development and housing and happens every 20 years is to set a New Urban Agenda. About 45,000 people attended the conference, including major stakeholders, heads of state, and grassroots organisations (Habitat III, 2017; Perry & Herd, 2016).

2. Metrocables refers to a cable cart system implemented in Medellín, Colombia, as part of their integrated transport system. It has been an important example of how to successfully integrate public transport in difficult topographies and provide access to poor marginalised (and often neglected) communities.

4. Quito today, current manifestations of privilege

4.1 Sumak Kawsay: a new alternative of development

Ecuador experienced a radical political shift after the election of left wing leader Rafael Correa in 2007 (Lozano Castro, 2013). Following a streak of unstable governments and failed presidencies¹ from 1996 to 2007, Correa's political party of the "Revolución Ciudadana" (Citizen Revolution)², Alianza PAIS (AP), led the country into the so-called 'Socialism of the 21st century'³ (Presidencia de la República del Ecuador, 2008). This brought about many changes to strengthen the role of the State, challenging the country's previous neoliberal economic model, heavily sustained by the export of oil and the dependency on international agencies, as well as world super powers like the United States of America (USA) (The Real News Network, 2009; SENPLADES, 2009). This disruption was also internal, challenging the position and power of privileged groups in the country, placing the attention to the social development of the country and its most neglected members.

However, perhaps the most relevant contribution of Correa's government was introduced in the new National Constitution of the Republic of Ecuador (2008), with the first national planning system of Ecuador, the 'Plan Nacional del "Buen Vivir" or National Plan for "Good Living" (*Sumak Kawsay* in kichwa) (López, 2015). The *Buen Vivir* is grounded in the notion that in order to have a harmonious existence there must be a balance in every way between humans and other forms of life in the territory (Endara, 2014). This entailed "the introduction of government spatial planning as a State policy", something novel to the Ecuadorian territory (López, 2015, p. 297). In order to comply with this nationwide policy, local territorial plans had to be adapted to this new focus. This included a new Development Plan for Quito 2012-2022 that noted "each and every one of the objectives, policies, programmes and goals [would] contribute to promoting and consolidating the concepts of a fair and solidary society [of the *Buen Vivir*]" (MDMQ, 2011a, p.10).

The Constitution uses *Buen Vivir* to encapsulate a series of fundamental changes to 'how we live' in Ecuador, from new inclusive economic models, to the relationship between man and nature, and the vindication of subaltern groups and cultures (SENPLADES, 2009). This meant having for the first time a National Plan with a guiding ideology in direct opposition to the capital-driven model that

had led the country during the previous political cycles. In addition to reversing the model, the (significant) constitutional changes allowed Correa to streamline his political platform. This gave him an invaluable political capital, appealing to a kind of pre-colonial patriotism that remains strong until this day.

After a decade of ruling, Correa's administration significantly increased public spending as a way to reduce poverty, invested in social groups which had been traditionally neglected, increased the minimum wage, improved healthcare, education and infrastructure (Weisbrot, 2013). However, these social improvements came at a cost (Zibell, 2017): after years of an aggressive, populist, *macho*⁴ discourse, the country appears divided, in great debt due to the drop in oil prices and government overspending which "recorded a government debt equivalent to 39.60% of the country's GDP in 2016" (Trading Economics, 2017). Many of the great advancements made in the country have taken a hit with scandals of corruption, economic crisis, the exploitation of protected land for profit and public discontent (Mantilla, 2017; Palacios, 2016). Notwithstanding, former vice-president to Correa, Lenin Moreno, won the national elections this past April 2017 guaranteeing the continuity of the National Plan of *Buen Vivir*. This administrative transition will reveal if the *Buen Vivir* provides continuity in the efforts of achieving social equity, redistribution of wealth and education; or if it was only used as an ideological apparatus of the state (Caria & Domínguez, 2014).

4.2 If everything is public, then nothing is public

Regardless of the Plan Nacional of *Buen Vivir* that emphasizes the relationship of society and the territory, legal documents that govern the production and management of public space in Quito remain vague and mainly unsubstantiated (López, 2015). There is a Constitutional right to "the full enjoyment of the city and its public spaces, under the principles of sustainability, social justice, respect for different urban cultures and balance between urban and rural", but there is no definition of what 'public spaces' are (Asamblea Constituyente, 2008, art. 31). At the city level, the document containing the strategic plan for Quito (2015-2025), the Plan Metropolitano de Desarrollo y Ordenamiento Territorial (PMDOT) or Metropolitan

Plan of Development and Territorial Order, mentions *the controlling of, lack of, potential of, betterment of, better using of, increasing of, improvement of quality of public space* (MDMQ, 2015b). However, it again fails to explain what public space means in the context that it is being used. This may be partly because public space is wrongly misconstrued as something *too* quotidian.

Khon is right to point out why critical theory is essential when approaching quotidian matters of the city like this one, “[critical theory] is an approach that reads the city itself as a text in order to reveal patterns of domination, exclusion, and power relations that are difficult to recognize because of the way that they are taken for granted in our experience of daily life” (2011, p.195). The same can be said about public space and why it is constantly being taken for granted. Thus, it is worth speculating if the constitutional-legal model of *Buen Vivir* is exposed precisely in its inability to convey its idealism from the general, national scale and the abstract identity of a “new Ecuador”, to the specifics of the city or Simone’s *cityness* (2010). It seems that the policy of *Buen Vivir* is diluted, as one encounters the granular scale of public space- of the construction of the immediate environment, as if so much ideological grandeur did not fit in the daily lives of its people and their quotidian space; allowing the vices, prior to the *Buen Vivir*, of negative spatial practices that include some and exclude others to perpetuate in the territory.

As many other ‘malleable’ terms, *public space* often changes through time, institutions and contexts (Cornwall, 2006 in Jaramillo, 2016b). With every new municipal government, the concept carries a particular connotation and relevance or lack thereof and the newly inaugurated Municipal Administration of Quito, which came into office in May 2014, was not an exception. After what was widely perceived as a disappointing administration (2009-2014) (El Comercio, 2013), Mayor Augusto Barrera of the ruling party AP ran for re-election, losing to an inexperienced candidate of the opposing Sociedad Unida Más Acción (SUMA) party, Mauricio Rodas Espinel (CNE, 2016). The ascension of Rodas and his team, under the banner ‘Para vivir mejor’ (‘To live better’) can be understood, as Guzman suggests, as a case of the lesser of two evils, with both Barrera and Rodas seeking personal political ends: continuity of the ruling party and personal advancement in their political careers (2016).

Simultaneously in Guayaquil, AP failed to secure again a candidate in office⁵, this represented a severe loss for the national government and the AP movement, losing control over two key local governments. Rodas represented an alternative to the ‘Citizen Revolution’, his proposal positioned Quito as resilient, sustainable and multimodal (Carpenter-Arévalo, 2016). Despite this intentionality, there has been a discrepancy between the proposed vision and the public works that have been developed over these past three years.

Figure 4.1. Rodas after his victory in 2014 was announced. Source: © El Comercio, 2014.



Based on personal experience⁶, the Municipality's conceptualisation of 'public space' remains unclear, mis-used or open to interpretation. Official documents lack clear, constant definition, usually resorting to define public space as everything that is not private: parks, plazas, sidewalks, streets, etc. This loose definition can certainly become problematic when projects require specificity; *public space* is expanded to the point of losing a real, concrete meaning, as Adey (2006, p.76) suggests, "if everything is public then nothing is public anymore". The homogenisation of the term also risks overlooking the nuances that might show why some spaces are and feel more public than others, or why some spaces cater to a certain *kind* of population instead of others. Making these distinctions is undoubtedly complex, but acknowledging them contributes to underscore the importance of public space, its malleability, and how people are integral to the process –simultaneously shaping space and being shaped by it. The homogenisation of the term overlooks all the nuances that indicate why some places are and feel more public than others, and some are more for a certain 'kind' of public than others. Making those distinctions helps understand the importance of public spaces and how people shape and are shaped by them.

The inability of the current administration to establish this concept *prior* to the start of their betterment projects leaves the motivation or driving logic behind them unclear. It is harder to criticise bad administration of public funds if it is destined for betterment of public spaces, as they are perceived as for the *greater good*. If the premise of focusing on public spaces remains superficially in "the narrow policy discourse of 'social inclusion' [it] masks a greater complexity of entangled patterns and geographies of exclusionary and inclusionary situations and experiences" (Hall, 2005, p. 113). This encapsulates the implacable machinery of the production of space where, if resources exist, subjective or technical criteria are left aside. The political end of a particular administration replaces the articulation of clear and concrete concepts and postpones almost permanently any attempt to develop a lasting coherent legislative language.

4.3 Narrow valleys and deep inequality

Any analysis of Quito's public space is inevitably a consequence of the city's adaptation to its complicated topography. Located 2,800 meters above sea level, the Distrito Metropolitano de Quito (DMQ) has had an elongated expansion, stretching its 422,986 hectares across a valley engulfed in the Andean mountain range (STHV, 2017d) from the colonial city centre to the north towards south of the territory. Over the past three decades, Quito expanded extensively to the valleys to the east with little to no regulation or planning. Small rural towns like Cumbayá, Los Chillos and now Tumbaco (where the new airport is located), transformed into busy suburban centres that face challenges as

the peripheral zones at the extremes of the southern and northern parts of the city: low density areas with deficient provision of public transport and lack of access to other public services like health, education and public spaces (MDMQ, 2015a).

The territory of the DMQ is divided in eight Administrative Zones (AZ): Calderón, Centro-Manuela Saénz, Eloy Alfaro, Norte- Eugenio Espejo (includes the 'Norcentral' delegation), La Delicia (includes the 'Noroccidente' delegation), Los Chillos, Quitumbe, Tumbaco (includes the 'Aeropuerto' delegation) (see Figure 4.2). The delegations included in some of the AZ were designated in order to serve the specific needs of these territories more effectively (MDMQ, 2011b). The different AZ were established with the purpose of decentralising the services and management of the city, but remain under the jurisdiction of the MDMQ. Table 4.1 presents the territory and population distribution of the city by AZ.

Tumbaco and La Delicia hold the largest percentages of the territory (approximately 25% each), while still having a low population density (approximately 2 and 3 people per km²). Quitumbe, located at the south of the city, is one of the most densely populated areas of the city with 36 people per km², showing that 14% of the population lives in only 2% of the city's territory. Eloy Alfaro, also on the south of the city, houses the largest share of the population of the city (approx. 19%), the density however is low as it is 14% of the territory.

Figure 4.2. Map of the Administrative Zones of Quito. Source: elaborated by the author based on a map from STHV, 2017b.

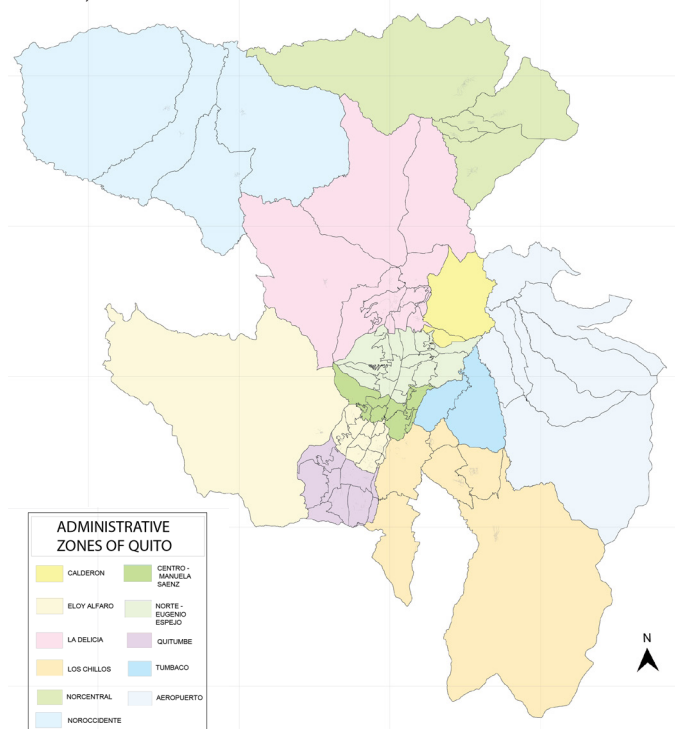


Table 4.1. Distribution of territory and population by Administrative Zone. Source: elaborated by author based on information from STHV, 2017a; ICQ, 2015.

Distribution of Quito's territory and population by Administrative Zone					
ADMINISTRATIVE ZONE	TOTAL AREA (HECTARES)	SHARE OF THE TERRITORY OF THE DMQ (%)	NUMBER OF HABITANT IN EACH AZ	SHARE OF TOTAL POPULATION OF QUITO (%)	POPULATION DENSITY (HABITANTS PER KM ²)
QUITUMBE	8,865.04	2.20	319,857.00	14.36	36.08
ELOY ALFARO	58,839.83	14.61	429,112.00	19.26	7.29
CENTRO - MANUELA SAENZ	4,787.86	1.19	217,509.00	9.76	45.43
NORTE - EUGENIO ESPEJO	50,073.40	12.43	422,242.00	18.95	8.43
'NORCENTRAL' DELEGATION	(INCLUDED IN EUGENIO ESPEJO)	(INCLUDED IN EUGENIO ESPEJO)	(INCLUDED IN EUGENIO ESPEJO)	(INCLUDED IN EUGENIO ESPEJO)	(INCLUDED IN EUGENIO ESPEJO)
LA DELICIA	100,435.65	24.94	351,963.00	15.80	3.50
'NOROCCIDENTAL' DELEGATION	(INCLUDED IN LA DELICIA)	(INCLUDED IN LA DELICIA)	(INCLUDED IN LA DELICIA)	(INCLUDED IN LA DELICIA)	(INCLUDED IN LA DELICIA)
LOS CHILLOS	67,150.00	16.67	166,812.00	7.49	2.48
CALDERON	12,722.33	3.16	162,915.00	7.31	12.81
TUMBACO	99,832.81	24.79	157,358.00	7.06	1.58
'AEROPUERTO' DELEGATION	(INCLUDED IN TUMBACO)	(INCLUDED IN TUMBACO)	INCLUDED IN TUMBACO)	INCLUDED IN TUMBACO)	INCLUDED IN TUMBACO)
TOTAL TERRITORY OF DMQ	402,706.92	100.00	2,227,768.00	100.00	5.53

That being said, the 'hyper centre'⁷ of the city holds the highest concentration of services, public infrastructure, transport, and jobs (MDMQ, 2015b). Although it can be seen in Table 4.1 that there is a significant segment of the population that lives in this area, there is an even more significant segment (approx. 80%) that does not. The further away from the centre the less accessible are public services and the longer the distances people have to move in order to reach them - these are the areas that house the poorer citizens. As Figure 4.3 exemplifies, the distribution of poor citizens throughout the territory shows the heterogeneity within the AZ. Figure 4.3 also shows the percentage of people within each AZ living below the DMQ's 'Índice de Necesidades Básicas Insatisfechas' (NBI) (Unsatisfied Basic Needs Index), this is the index used by the MDMQ to measure its citizens with a set of conditions considered indispensable to have the minimum standard of satisfactory living (ICQ, 2013).

Quitumbe, already noted as one of the most densely populated areas of the city, has more than 30% of its citizens living in poverty. On the other hand, Tumbaco has the highest percentage of poor citizens with a 46.3% of its population living below the NBI Index, and still houses some of the wealthiest suburbs in the country (ICQ, 2013, p.6) (See Figure 4.3). The data in the NBI index are averages, which does not make evident the very high degrees of disparity and inequality that are perpetuated in this urban model. This was a rural area that developed quickly and without planning, it left the original poorer residents neglected, while wealthy gated communities bought them out or developed around them.

Medium and high-income families are able to circumnavigate this neglect by use of privatised services. Wealthier areas scattered across the map represent the concentrated pockets of privilege that have the possibility to settle in any geographical location regardless of poor provision of services.

Figure 4.3. Percentage of poverty in the Distrito Metropolitano de Quito by AZ, as well as number of poor citizens by parish. Source: elaborated by author based on map found in ICQ, 2013.

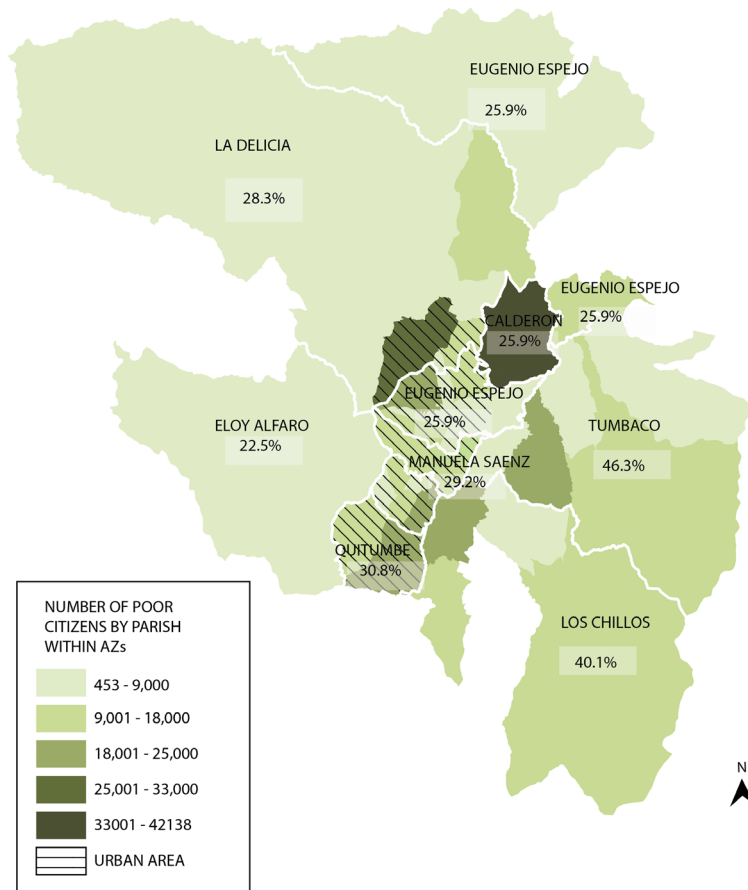


Figure 4.4. Stark contrast between wealthy gated communities and low-income neighbourhood in Cumbayá, AZ Tumbaco. Source: © Juan Diego Donoso, 2016.



Public Space in Quito's Development Plan

It has been characteristic of each Municipal Administration to create a distinct identity for the city. Unless the mayor was re-elected there is always a complete restructuring of the bureaucratic system, personnel, secretariats, and image of the municipality (logos, colours, slogans, etc.). However, the most significant change that comes with each new administration is a development plan for the city with the administrative and bureaucratic burden this implies.

Figure 4.5. Quito's Municipal Administration's logos. Source: elaborated by author based on information found in © Salgado, 2009.



The Rodas administration was no exception and at an extraordinary session of the Metropolitan Council the current PMDOT was approved - the document holds the new plan for the city (2015-2025). Distancing from the previous administration and AP, there is no explicit connection with the ideals of the *Buen Vivir* in this document. It does, however, acknowledge that there is still inequity in the distribution of resources throughout the territory and that there are severe problems of discrimination, exclusion and violence to segments or groups of the population like the youth, women, population LGBTI, among others. It also identifies "the lack of accessibility to basic services and quality public spaces in a significant part of the territory" as one of the problems hindering the quality of life of citizens (MDMQ, 2015b,

p.96). The 5th policy of the document titled "Escala Local" ("Local Scale") tries to address this deficit:

"Improve the quality of life of the citizens of the DMQ through the upgrading of the urban landscape, addressing the housing deficit and implementing measures of regenerating building construction and public space." (MDMQ, 2015b, p. 135)

Within this policy, objective 5.B is to "improve the quality of the public space of the DMQ"⁸. The strategic guidelines that accompany this objective refer solely to the creation of regulations for the quality of sidewalks, alliances with the private sector for the provision of urban furniture and a project to move electric cables underground (MDMQ, 2015b, p.136-137). Despite this being the only policy in regards to public space, there is no explanation of what it is, why it is important to improve its quality, what programmes could be implemented alongside it, or how the provision or betterment of it helps counteract inequality in the city. It fails to address the form these improvements would take, how they would be carried out and the impact it will have on the citizens that already use the space or its potential users. As it has been evidenced in many other cities, such as London, New York, and Berlin, betterment projects or 'urban regeneration' can often lead to gentrification, rise of land value and other processes that can lead to exclusion and displacement (Furbey, 1999; Lees, 2008). Latin American cities experiences it too: many favelas in Rio de Janeiro have seen the effects of becoming too 'chic' for its residents and the 'segregation by mega-project' that took place in Buenos Aires' Puerto Madero (Cummings, 2013; López-Morales, Shin & Lees, 2016). Evidencing the dangers of what can happen with betterment projects, if there are no legal frameworks that regulate the parameters and actors that determine who and how public space is produced and who uses it can be extremely dangerous (Hopfgatner & Vidosa, 2014).

Geographies of privilege

During the Rodas administration there has been a notable attention to the betterment of public spaces, particularly parks, plazas and sporting fields. It has been vastly publicised how it is a great part of how Quiteños are now able to 'live better'.

Indeed, the administration has been notorious for a large spending of public funds on advertisement. Although only 1% of the annual budget was destined for communications on every fiscal year of the administration, it still surpasses the budgets destined for the municipal education system, health infrastructure, and the legalisation of informal settlements, among many others (SGP, 2017).

Furthermore, there is a section called "Public Space and Green Urban Network"⁹ in the budget breakdown.

Figure 4.6. Some of the advertisements that can be seen all around the city. Source: images taken from ©El Universo, 2017; © Diario EL TELÉGRAFO, 2016.



Through a three-year span, the budget plummeted from US\$74 million to US\$1.5 million (SGP, 2017). Since there is not a more detailed breakdown of the spending available, it remains unclear what these public monies funded, and what was cut after the budget was sliced so severely.

The betterment, proposal and studies for public spaces have been one of the greatest focuses of the Empresa Pública Metropolitana de Movilidad y Obras Públicas (EPMMOP), the public enterprise in charge of the development and construction of mobility and public space infrastructure projects in the city (EPMMOP, 2017a). Projects of park and public space betterment are a priority for the EPMMOP and are all included in the reports as big ‘wins’ for the administration, as they reach the entirety of the city.

As it can be seen in Figure 4.7, there is seemingly good distribution and potential access¹⁰ to public spaces across the city particularly in its urban area. As mentioned above, the definition of public space is vague in all documents and therefore can irregularly include spaces other than parks and plazas in this map. The identification of these public spaces does not indicate the quality of said spaces. Taking a closer look to the actual distribution of space within administrative zones and the share that is dedicated to parks shows something different than the map.

Figure 4.7. Map of distribution of public space and poverty of the DMQ. Source: elaborated by the author based on map found ICQ, 2013 and map elaborated by Freire, 2017.

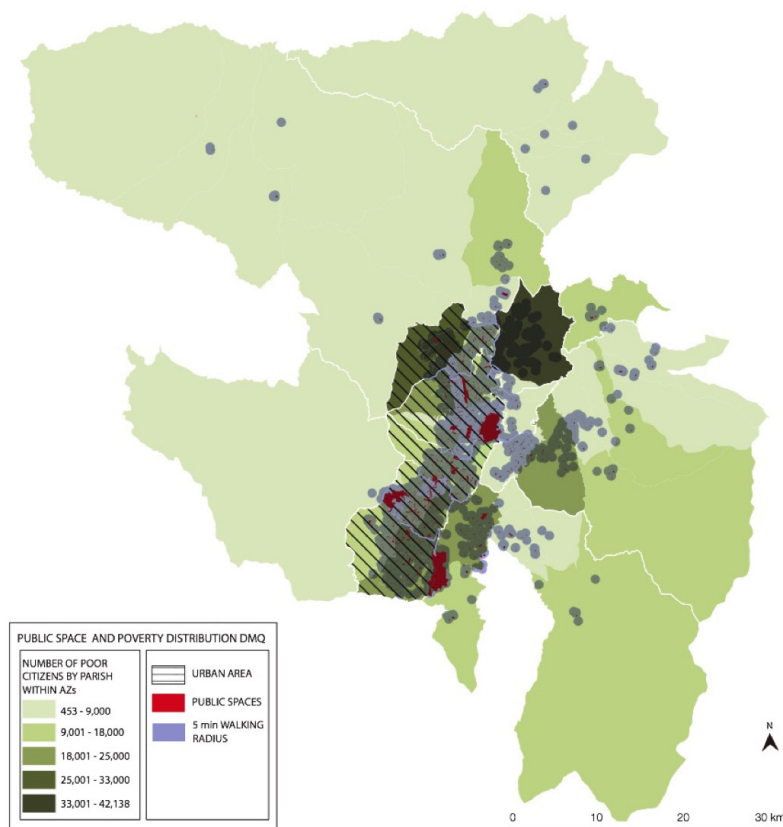


Table 4.2 exposes that although there are parks in every AZ there are less than 3m² of park per citizen in all of them. In Calderon, Manuela Saenz, La Delicia, Los Chillos, Calderón and Tumbaco there is less than a metre square of park per habitant. The World Health Organisation (WHO) suggests that cities should have a minimum of 9m² per habitant, Quito has a deficit having 7m² in total for the city and some parts of the city having as little as .01m² (Bagherian, 2013; STHV, 2017d).

As mentioned previously, it has been of great interest for the current Administration and particularly for the EPMMOP to develop projects of betterment and creation of public spaces. Table 4.3 details the projects done by EPMMOP during 2014-2017, the location and status of these projects.

The catchment area covers all of the AZs, ensuring the distribution and visualisation of progress throughout the city. However, ten of the 33 executed projects are located in the 'hyper centre' of the city, while Calderon and Los Chillos each only have one project each, spatialising a clear privi-

lege in certain areas over others. The majority of the projects in Eugenio Espejo are located in an even more privileged area, La Mariscal, where Habitat III conferences were hosted, and which were finished right before they took place in October 2016. This can allow us to "analyse how social actors normalize and rework privileges through space and how space makes privileges" (Twine & Gardener, 2013, p. xv).

Although it can be evidenced that there is public spaces and betterment projects across the city this does not guarantee that it is constructing a more inclusive city. There is no information pertaining the quality of said public spaces, including what would be the standards to be considered 'good' or 'beneficial' for the city. Access to these spaces, as the literature suggests, does not guarantee that they help dismantle privilege in the city or that they are advantageous for people by themselves. As Table 3 shows, none of the projects include programmes of maintenance or activation of these spaces. The lack of official information from the municipality to justify their existence beyond their aesthetic is notable.

Table 4.2. Distribution of parks in the territory as well as amount of parks per habitant by Administrative Zones. Source: elaborated by author based on information from EPMMOP, 2017d; Secretaría de Territorio Hábitat y Vivienda, 2017a.

Distribution of Quito's territory and areas designated to parks by administrative zone						
ADMINISTRATIVE ZONE	TOTAL AREA (HECTARES)	SHARE OF THE TERRITORY OF THE DMQ (%)	TOTAL AREA OF PARKS (HECTARES)	SHARE OF TERRITORY DESIGNATED TO PARKS (%)	TOTAL NUMBER OF PARKS	M ² OF PARKS PER HABITANT
QUITUMBE	8,865.04	2.20	754.95	8.52	136	2.4
ELOY ALFARO	58,839.83	14.61	444.91	0.76	216	1
CENTRO - MANUELA SAENZ	4,787.86	1.19	106.39	2.22	95	0.5
NORTE - EUGENIO ESPEJO	50,073.40	12.43	846.47	1.69	206	2
'NORCENTRAL' DELEGATION	(INCLUDED IN EUGENIO ESPEJO)	(INCLUDED IN EUGENIO ESPEJO)	(INCLUDED IN EUGENIO ESPEJO)	(INCLUDED IN EUGENIO ESPEJO)	(INCLUDED IN EUGENIO ESPEJO)	(INCLUDED IN EUGENIO ESPEJO)
LA DELICIA	100,435.65	24.94	91.85	0.09	107	0.3
'NOROCCIDENTAL' DELEGATION	(INCLUDED IN LA DELICIA)	(INCLUDED IN LA DELICIA)	(INCLUDED IN LA DELICIA)	(INCLUDED IN LA DELICIA)	(INCLUDED IN LA DELICIA)	(INCLUDED IN LA DELICIA)
LOS CHILLOS	67,150.00	16.67	66.64	0.10	39	0.4
CALDERON	12,722.33	3.16	21.43	0.17	60	0.1
TUMBACO	99,832.81	24.79	50.58	0.05	45	0.3
'AEROPUERTO' DELEGATION	(INCLUDED IN TUMBACO)	(INCLUDED IN TUMBACO)	(INCLUDED IN TUMBACO)	(INCLUDED IN TUMBACO)	(INCLUDED IN TUMBACO)	(INCLUDED IN TUMBACO)
TOTAL TERRITORY OF DMQ	402,706.92	100.00	2,383.22	13.60	904	7

Table 4.3. Public Space Projects developed by EPMMOP 2014-2017. Source: elaborated by author based on information from EPMMOP, 2017c.

Distribution of public space projects developed by EPMMOP (2014-2017) by Administrative Zone, type and date				
LOCATION (AZ)	PROJECT	TYPE	MONTH/YEAR STARTED	STATUS
Eugenio Espejo	Mi Calle – La Floresta (street public space)	New	2/16	COMPLETE
Eugenio Espejo	Parque Metropolitano Bicentenario	Betterment	6/16	IN COURSE
Eugenio Espejo	Parque La Carolina	Betterment	7/16	COMPLETE
Eugenio Espejo	Parque El Ejido	Betterment	9/16	COMPLETE
Eugenio Espejo	Parque Arbolito	Betterment	9/16	COMPLETE
Eugenio Espejo	Parque la Alameda	Betterment	9/16	COMPLETE
Eugenio Espejo	Public spaces Barrio Mariscal Sucre	Betterment	9/16	COMPLETE
Eugenio Espejo	Parque Navarro	Betterment	9/16	COMPLETE
Eugenio Espejo	Plaza de la Memoria	New	10/16	COMPLETE
Eugenio Espejo	Parque México	Betterment	11/16	COMPLETE
Tumbaco	Reservorio Cumbayá	Betterment	1/15	COMPLETE
Tumbaco	Parque Salome Reyes	Betterment	12/15	COMPLETE
Tumbaco	Parque La Viña	New	7/16	COMPLETE
Tumbaco	Parque Ecológico La Primavera I	New	3/17	COMPLETE
Aeropuerto	Rehabilitation Coliseo de Pifo	Betterment	7/16	COMPLETE
La Delicia	Parque Equinoccial	Betterment	7/14	COMPLETE
La Delicia	Parque Curiquingue -Pisulí	Betterment	4/16	COMPLETE
La Delicia	Parque Curiquingue – phase 1	Betterment	11/16	IN COURSE
La Delicia	Plaza de Egipto - El Condado	Betterment	1/17	COMPLETE
Calderon	Parque Lineal de Carapungo	Betterment	5/14	IN COURSE
Eloy Alfaro	Parque La Argelia	Betterment	6/16	IN COURSE
Eloy Alfaro	Public space rehabilitation and synthetic grass courts –La Argelia (Parques: calle cahuasqui, calle taday y calle charapoto)	Betterment	7/16	IN COURSE
Eloy Alfaro	Argelia-rehabilitation parks and public spaces in streets	Betterment	7/16	IN COURSE
Eloy Alfaro	Parque Juan Pio Montufar	Betterment	6/17	COMPLETE
Quitumbe	Parque de las Cuadras	Betterment	7/15	COMPLETE
Quitumbe	Parque de las Diversidades	New	6/16	COMPLETE
Quitumbe	Synthetic grass courts and parque Clemente Ballén	New	7/16	IN COURSE
Quitumbe	Parque Metropolitano Sur	Betterment	7/17	COMPLETE
Los Chillos	Parque Miranda	New	11/16	IN COURSE
Manuela Sáenz	Synthetic grass courts	New	4/16	IN COURSE
Manuela Sáenz	Synthetic grass courts, bleachers	New	5/16	IN COURSE
Manuela Sáenz	Synthetic grass courts, communal house, enclosure and bleachers	Betterment	7/16	COMPLETE

There is a clear agglomeration of public works destined to the 'hyper centre' of the city, evidencing that some areas of the city are of more interest than others. The Habitat III 'area' as well as other nearby areas that act as important centres of attraction of investment are privileged over other more 'invisible' ones. The site of the old airport is in process of transformation into the Bicentenario Park and a convention centre that intended to have an investment of more than \$US 65 million invested (Orozco and Paspuel, 2015).

Less than 5 kilometres away is located the La Carolina Park that recently received over \$US 4 million in a betterment project (EPMOP, 2016), both of these sites are part of the 'mega projects' of the city. This exemplifies a model that, instead of institutionalising an equitable transformation of the city's public spaces in the long term, the Municipality resorts to the *deus ex machina* of an extraordinary global event or project, which is not sustainable.

Moreover, there is a more disparate distribution between the development of public policies and legislative changes related to public spaces, and the number of physical projects completed during this administration. One could argue that this approach is not altogether bad, if there was a clear political framework developed simultaneously that will then facilitate the process, this was not the case.

A review of the Municipal ordinances¹¹ approved during the same period of time (2014-2017) as the projects noted before, shows that the emphasis on public spaces is quite different to the emphasis given to its actual physical mani-

festation. From 177 ordinances approved (2014-2017)¹², five are in regards to public space. The vast majority of the ordinances discussed and approved focus on the legalisation of human settlements and regularisation of neighbourhoods and roads. Ordinances that refer to public spaces are concerned only with their physical elements. As the Municipality that hosted Habitat III, there was no interest in developing a substantial legal framework or public policies that could set precedent in the local and Latin American level of the inclusive potential of public spaces in cities; instead there was a much more tangible and superficial result in preparing the city for said event.

This discrepancy between tangible and intangible efforts in the area of public space shows a disconnect between the materialization of public space and the motivation or understanding of how these spaces contribute to the city and its users. Development plans and ordinances show a shortcoming of an institutional conceptual definition that is transferred to the territory leaving few spaces that truly fulfil symbolic and meaningful functions, such as social integration and sense of belonging. Unfortunately, many public spaces across the DMQ remain as superficial beautification projects that act only as tokens of 'work is done across the city'.

The lack of continuity between municipal administrations evidenced throughout the years in Quito, foretells that if there are no structural changes rooted in public policies, there is no guarantee that any of the betterment projects will be carried out in the next administration. Cities in Colombia, such as Bogotá and Medellín, have confirmed the importance of continuity between municipal administrations in order to guarantee the success and

Figure 4.8. Parque Metropolitano Bicentenario, former airport of Quito located in the AZ Eugenio Espejo. Source: ©Baquero, 2017b.



Figure 4.9. Parque de la Carolina and Parque Metropolitano in the distance, both located in the AZ Eugenio Espejo. Source: ©Baquero, 2017c.



progression of development and projects of their cities (Coupé, Brand and Dávila, 2013; Dávila 2015). The Mockus-Peñalosa-Mockus administrations in Bogota and the Fajardo-Salazar-Gaviria administrations in Medellín, were decisive in the transformation of these cities and the successful development of key projects for both cities (the Transmilenio and Metrocables, respectively) (Coupé, Brand and Dávila, 2013; Dávila 2015).

Projects of betterment and creation of public spaces that were dedicated a significant amount of time and resources run the risk of becoming empty infrastructure that is temporally dependent to the current political will, with limited legacy to the physicality of the works. The consequences will be more complex, and different ac-

ording to each space. Projects in privileged areas will have, for a number of reasons, longer useful lives because they satisfy the bourgeois or aspirational needs of the settlers. Projects that do depend mainly on state support and are in more vulnerable areas are more likely to fail due to this political abandonment. Although the disjunctive is not perfectly clear, certainly the projects fall under the category of beautification more than a reconfiguration of the planning system. The discourse cannot be pinned down as a binary conception of either/or, precisely, on many occasions, political goodwill is myopic and it lacks the maturity and intelligence to make comprehensive public design policies, and falls into the easiness of structural pressures of the electoral cycles, business lobbies and national policies.

NOTES TO CHAPTER 4

1. This instability included an impeached president (Bucaram 96-97), two overthrown presidents (Mahuad 98-00 and Gutierrez 03-05) and all the interim presidents in between (Alarcón, Arteaga, Alarcón (again), Noboa and Palacio) (Presidencia de la República del Ecuador, 2008).

2. The “Revolución Ciudadana” (Citizen Revolution), refers to the political project of Rafael Correa and his government. Correa coined the term because of the significant political changes it proposed and later implemented in the new Ecuadorian Constitution.

3. ‘Socialism of the 21st century’ refers to the political model adopted by Correa’s government, in which the State takes a protagonist role in order to propel the economy. Additionally it emphasises the need for collective action and prioritising people over the market (Ecuador Inmediato, 2007).

4. The macho discourse in Latin American cultures refers to the ultra-masculine essence of Latin American men. Typically it is indicative of a repressive culture of machismo, where men as the dominant and superior gender socially and sexually remains unchallenged (Girman & Dececco, 2005).

5. María Duarte and Viviana Bonilla of AP lost to right wing leader Jaime Nebot in 2009 and 2014 respectively (Municipalidad de Guayaquil, 2014).

6. These insights are based on my work in various departments

of the current Municipality of Quito between 2014 and 2016. The projects I was involved with dealt mainly with the use public space and community participation.

7. ‘Hyper-centre’ is a term coined and used by the Municipal Administration of Quito to refer to a zone in the north-central part of the city. It is located within the Administrative Zone Eugenio Espejo and it has the three Bus Rapid Transit lines within it and the first line of Metro de Quito in the making.

8. Note that in the PMDOT it has not been mentioned what public space is or how it has been defined or understood by the Municipal Administration.

9. There is no clarification in the budget breakdown or in any other official documents what this section includes or excludes.

10. Access here only noted as a five-minute walk radius around each public space.

11. A Municipal ordinance is a government issued law, enforceable at local level, with a sanctioning process that starts at sectorial commissions before entering the floor of the local council in order to be approved or dismissed.

12. In the Appendices section of this working paper, Table 1 details all the ordinances that have been approved (2014-2017) and their area of focus (the areas are used in the PMDOT and are based on indicators determined by UN-Habitat and the Instituto de la Ciudad de Quito (ICQ)) (MDMQ, 2015b).

5. Conclusions: A critique of 'pure' betterment

The aim of this paper was to examine the history and discourse surrounding public space and how betterment projects for parks and other public spaces in Quito can act as an apparatus of inclusion or exclusion, and argues that if these projects do not involve structural changes in public policies they will act as empty infrastructure that remains at an aesthetic level temporal to the current political will.

The vast literature and theoretical discourse surrounding public space goes beyond the personal relationships developed by individuals with and in them, it goes deep into intricate power and social structures that only privilege some. Examined through this lens, the inclusion-exclusionary logic leads the discussion in an important direction that surpasses the binary conception of its effect in public space. Furthermore, understanding the history of public space in Quito exposes that it has been an inherently political space that carries a legacy of privileged elites and neglected subaltern groups.

The analysis of the current Municipal Administration (from 2014-2018) and their approach towards public space, particularly through betterment projects for parks and plazas has allowed us to elucidate the damaging power of empty infrastructure that does not go beyond beautification in isolation. The Municipality overuses betterment projects as an allusion that work is being done for 'everyone's benefit'. This vague prerogative of 'everyone's benefit' is not necessarily the promise of socio-economic wellbeing, or gender equality, or social integration. Wealth distribution and access to public spaces have proven not to be necessarily contingent, accessibility does not mean inclusivity nor a disruption of privilege in the city. There are many other factors that have been neglected by the Municipality when motivated to create new or better public spaces, mainly the intention behind the creation of said spaces. If the Municipality is not explicit or clear about the intentionality of these efforts then the parks that are bettered may be temporal to this administration due to end by 2018.

The Rodas administration has not interrogated the value of public space itself and it is evident in the vague allusions to it in the legal frameworks that govern the city. That there is or is not public space should not be quantified in a way that suggests all public space is of the same value. There may well be public spaces in poorer areas but if they are obviously of much poorer quality or if they

are less accessible, or if, most importantly, there are other collective factors which are much more prevalent in the area that may affect people's socio-economic situations (crime, low quality education, poor transport infrastructure, high unemployment, etc.) then the betterment of these is questionable. It is reductive to talk about public space in terms of how 'good' they look. If the municipality cannot acknowledge that public space can coexist with on-going social issues such as crime, poor socio-economic situations, exclusion and discrimination, among others, then the motivations of continual implementation and betterment of public space needs to be challenged. Young notes that it is a mistake to reduce social justice to distribution because it focuses on:

"the allocation of material goods such as things, resources, income, and wealth, or on the distribution of social positions, especially jobs. This focus tends to ignore the social structure and institutional context that often help determine distributive patterns" (1990, p.17).

If projects are not accompanied by legal frameworks that cause a radical shift of the social structure of how the city is experienced, then they remain superficial and temporal to the political will of the actors in charge. The city's upper and middle classes will always be able to circumnavigate inadequate provision of services and public spaces, subaltern groups cannot. They can only enjoy the upgraded spaces while they are there because there is nothing to ensure that they could enjoy these clean, safe, upgraded spaces forever (Stienen, 2009). Betterment projects are reduced to self-promotion tools for the local government to project a new image, which can attract investment and voters (Madanipour, 2004).

There are great difficulties in public management, and there should be no excuses for systems that fail their people. However, it must be recognised that problems often come from historical legacies that are extremely difficult to reverse in one electoral cycle. This is where vices perpetuate, no doubt, but it is fair to a certain degree to recognize the intent of placing public space in social discourse, even if the results are sometimes contradictory. Understanding that parks and other public spaces have a transformative capacity if they are included in a long-term framework as part of the city's project and vision

is essential. Quality public spaces along with access to services and programmes that encourage social integration through these, could potentially guarantee that they do not remain or become derelict spaces of the city. Isolated efforts for the upkeep and betterment of parks and plazas without a holistic understanding of their potential effects is indicative that the city continues to perpetuate a neoliberal model despite all that nationalist ideological construction (Buen Vivir). The current betterment projects indicate that the current administration is creating a biased 'cityness'. "Public" space became a segregating agent that perpetuates social and spatial divisions, since those in poorer areas will be more likely to disappear once this administration concludes.

There is a need for critical reflection as researchers, urban practitioners and citizens about investment of resources and time on betterment projects. As it has been evidenced there is no legal framework that will ensure these projects continue beyond 2018, questioning if the electoral calendar guides the production of public policy. The fact that there is public space across the city does not mean that it is of quality; beautification is not enough to challenge privilege and exclusion manifested throughout the territory. Betterment projects will continue to distract from the real challenges and discussions about the future of Quito: unemployment, violence, daily injustices, inequality, and the plummeting economy, while we let the beautiful parks elevate Quito to the condition of 'metropolis'.

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Appendix

Table 1. Municipal Ordinances 2014-2017 by area of focus. Source: elaborated by author based on information found © MDMQ, 2017b

Municipal ordinances approved (2014-2017) by area of interest							
YEAR PASSED	Ecology and environment	Social Development	Quality of life	Infrastructure	Productivity	Governance	Legalization of Human Settlements and Housing
2016						ORDM - 148 PRESUPUESTO GENERAL DEL MDMQ. 2017. pdf	
2016					ORDM - 149 Régimen Administrativo de Turismo.pdf		
2017							ORDM - 150 Balcones del Sur - Asentamiento - Ref. ORDM 238. pdf
2017							ORDM - 151 Proyecto Sur - Asentamiento - Ref. ORDM 3489 y 0040.pdf
2017							ORDM - 152 Praderas del Sur - Asentamiento - Ref. ORDM 129. pdf
2017							ORDM - 153 Valle de Marianitas - Asentamiento - Ref. ORDM 190. pdf
2017							ORDM - 154 El Arbolito 2 - Asentamiento - Ref. ORDM 168. pdf

YEAR PASSED	Ecology and environment	Social Development	Quality of life	Infrastructure	Productivity	Governance	Legalization of Human Settlements and Housing
2017							ORDM - 155 Campo Alegre - Urbanización - Ref. ORDM 069. pdf
2017							ORDM - 156 Urbanización Marianita de Jesús.pdf
2017							ORDM - 157 Puembo - Urbanización.pdf
2017							ORDM - 158 Colinas del Sol - Asentamiento. pdf
2017							ORDM - 159 SECAP - Urbanización.pdf
2017						ORDM - 160 Régimen Administrativo de Suelo - Reforma ORDM 172 y 432.pdf	
2017				ORDM - 161 Centro de Convenciones Metropolitano Ciudad de Quito.pdf			
2017							ORDM - 162 Ex alumnos Lasallanos Cuarta Etapa - Urbanización.pdf
2017							ORDM - 163 La Primavera de los Servidores del Ministerio de Ambiente - Urbanización.pdf

YEAR PASSED	Ecology and environment	Social Development	Quality of life	Infrastructure	Productivity	Governance	Legalization of Human Settlements and Housing
2017				ORDM - 164 Designación vial Redondel Av. Antonio José de Sucre y Manuel Córdova Galarza.pdf			
2017				ORDM - 165 Designación vial Barrio Los Pinos - Parroquia Tumbaco.pdf			
2017				ORDM - 166 Designación vial Barrio San José de la Salle - Parroquia Conocoto.pdf			
2017				ORDM - 167 Designación vial Barrio Reina del Cisne - Parroquia Calderón.pdf			
2017				ORDM - 168 Designación vial Barrio Aymesa - Parroquia Turubamba.pdf			
2017						ORDM - 169 Bienes Inmuebles Urbanos Mostrencos - Procedimiento. pdf	
2017				ORDM - 170 Sistema de Estacionamientos y Terminales Terrestres del DMQ..pdf			

YEAR PASSED	Ecology and environment	Social Development	Quality of life	Infrastructure	Productivity	Governance	Legalization of Human Settlements and Housing
2017							ORDM - 171 La Tolita del Sector San Carlos de Calderón - Reforma.pdf
2017							ORDM - 172 Vista Hermosa - Asentamiento - Predio 5007069.pdf
2017							ORDM - 173 Los Guayacanes - Asentamiento - Predio 1332424.pdf
2017							ORDM - 174 El Guabo - Asentamiento - Reforma.pdf
2017	ORDM - 175 Tasas de Recolección y Tratamiento de Residuos Sólidos.pdf						
2017							ORDM - 176 Nueva Jerusalén - Asentamiento - Fraccionamiento. pdf
2017			ORDM - 177 Prestación - Servicio de Taxi en el D.MQ. pdf				

YEAR PASSED	Ecology and environment	Social Development	Quality of life	Infrastructure	Productivity	Governance	Legalization of Human Settlements and Housing
2017							ORDM - 178 Campo Alegre de Bellavista de Calderón -Reformatoria Ord. 0408.pdf
2017							ORDM - 179 Tierra Mia - Etapa 14 - Asentamiento Predio 5137312.pdf
2017							ORDM - 180 Nueva Vida - Reformatoria Ord. 0085.pdf
2017							ORDM - 181 El Muelle Segunda Etapa - Asentamiento -Predios 641081 - 641091.pdf

Figure 1. Map of location of public spaces in Administrative Zones of Quito

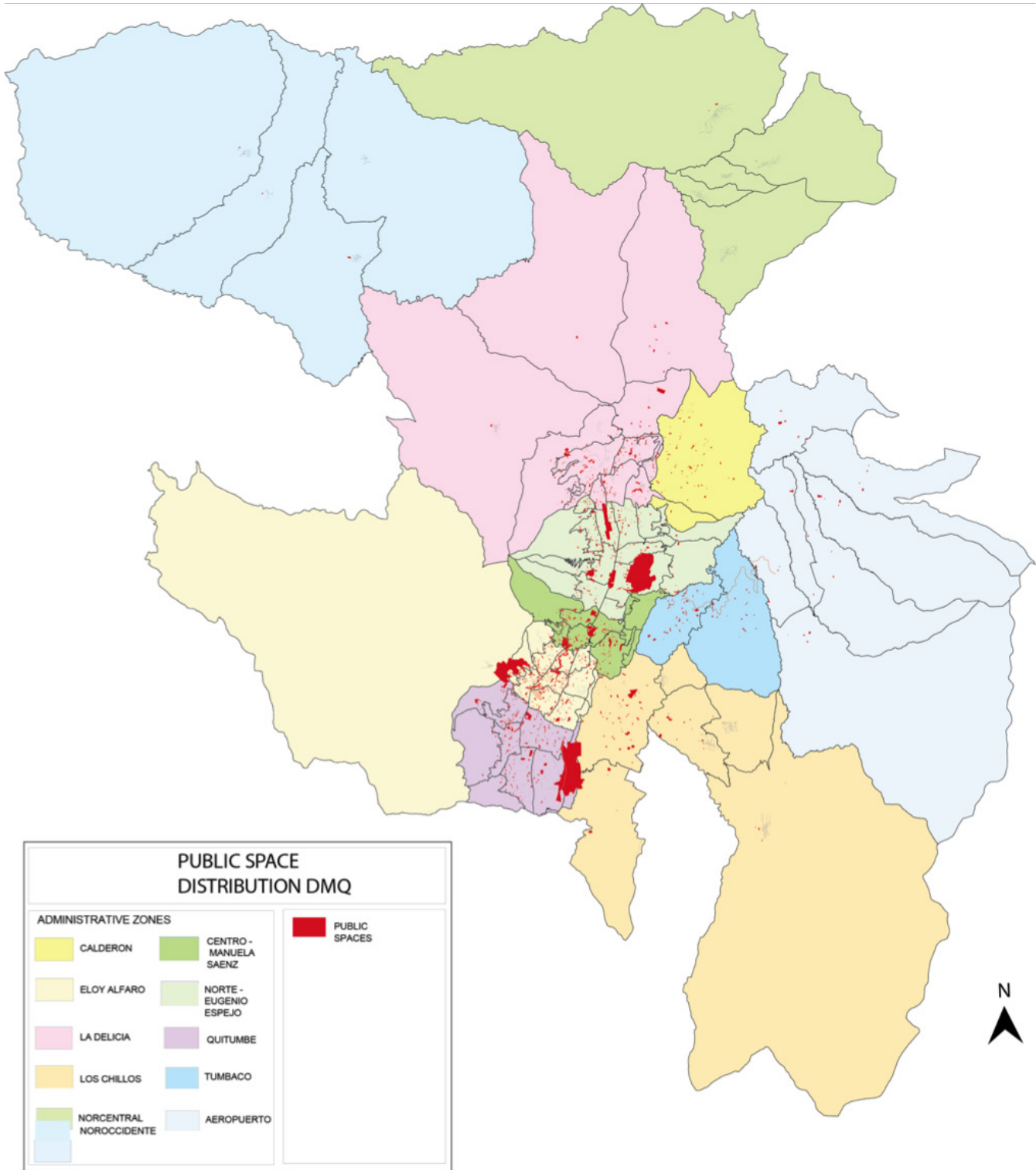
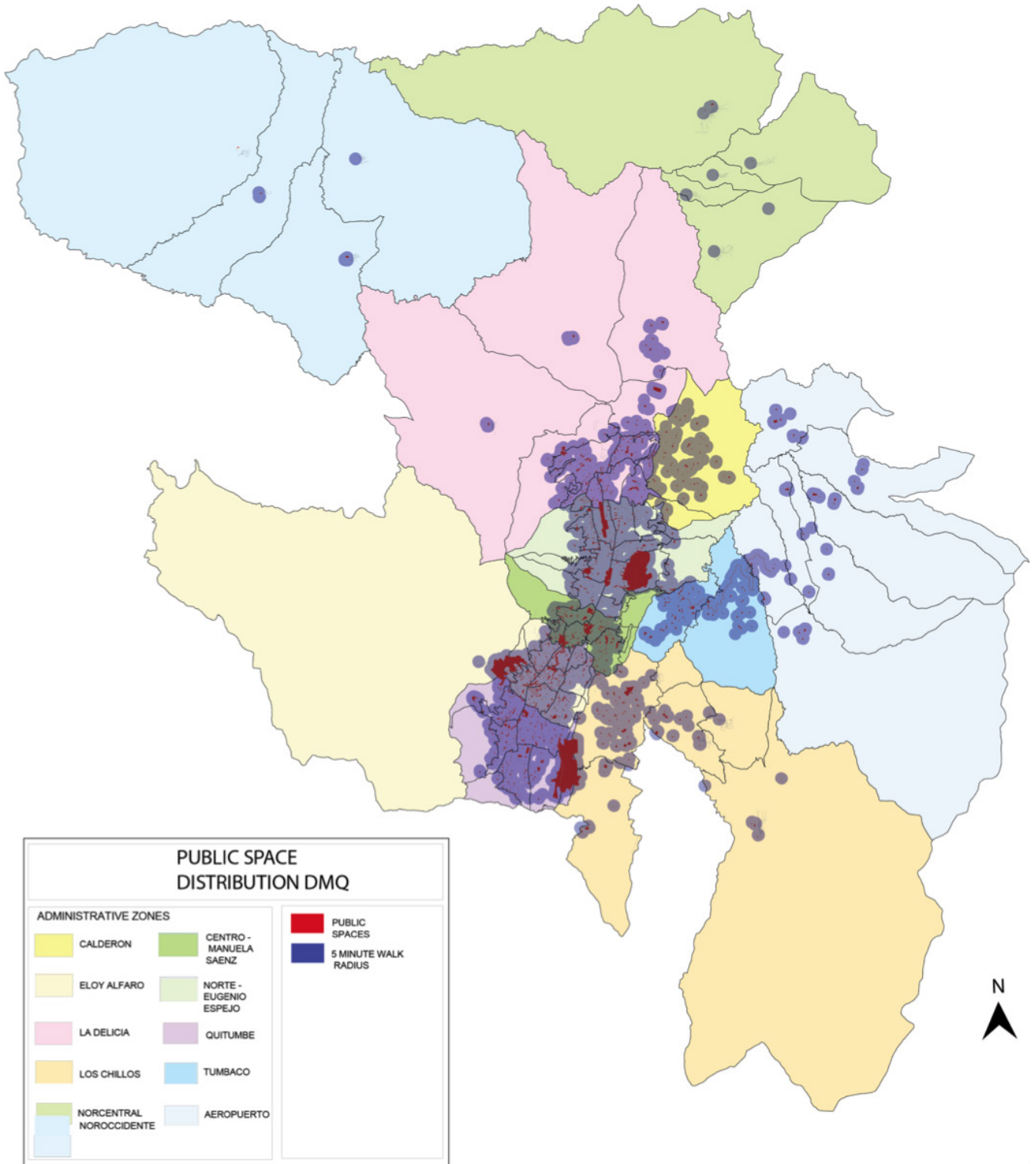


Figure 2. Map of location of public spaces in Administrative Zones of Quito with 5-minute walking radius



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