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# **Collective labor in practice.** Instances of Governmentality in the Third Wave of Lima's Popular Urbanizations.

Ph.D. Research Report – Executive Summary

Doctoral Program in Urban and Regional Development (32<sup>th</sup> Cycle)  
Politecnico di Torino – Università degli Studi di Torino

**Ph.D. Research Report – Executive Summary:**

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## Executive Summary

The purpose of the work has been to analyze the degree to which technologies of power shape the urban order in the third wave of what I called Peruvian popular urbanization (Schmid et al., 2018; Streule et al., 2020), starting with how the process of urban development and practices of collective labor known in Peru as "Faenas Comunales", are conducted at the local level.

The research has started on the idea that collective labor practices are generally read as tools in the strong hands of the poor but that governmental behavior elements remain far from them. This consideration has led to a strengthening of rhetorical discourses that include the traditional concepts of self-help activities and communities-driven development as an effective response to the urban poverty issue.

Therefore specific attention was drawn to the three primary aspects affecting the urban development in those areas. In essence, the formalization and regulatory layout of settlements, the framework of socio-technical systems to the basic services and facilities management, and the same practice of the *Faena Comunal* advocated by neighborhood organizations.

Although the association between the formalization process and the provision of services is more apparent, the role played by collective labor practices in them remains unclear. Indeed, the collective labor practices are not merely a question of vindication, legal struggles, and protest for land or housing but a way to "normalized" such settlement and the relations with external organizations such as third sector organizations, private sectors, and public agencies are crucial to trading such an aim.

### *A case study*

Peruvian cities have continued to grow through uncontrolled popular urbanizations, even though a sharp reduction of urban poverty and inequality in the living condition occurred in the last decades (Calderón Cockburn et al., 2015). However, the location, the environmental conditions of those last stages of popular urbanizations, their activities, and assets have changed substantially. *Popular urbanizations* now occupy residual and peripheral spaces on riversides and steep slopes with high gradients, in valleys subject to flooding, in private wasteland areas or reserves for public and collective projects (Alcocer et al., 2010; Ramírez Corzo & Riofrío, 2006; Velarde Herz, 2017).



Ilustración 1: practitioners performing Faena Comunal – Villa San Juan (source: photo repertoire)

La Nueva Rinconada's case study applies to the overmentioned description in Lima. Located in Pamplona Alta, it constitutes part of the northern boundary of the district of San Juan de Miraflores. Comprehensive 2.180.000 square meters of extension, the actual territory is occupied by agricultural and livestock plots and settlements on private and state land (Salcedo et al., 2017). Approximately 46.755 people are living there, subdivided in 138 neighborhood organizations (TECHO - Perú et al., 2018). Starting with simple plots on a sloping hill, La Nueva Rinconada today reached accessible paths for pedestrians and vehicles. The buildings turned from long-lasting materials and were assembled through self-help initiatives. However, twenty years after the invasion, the consequences of that framework are still visible. Land property conflict has caused an impasse between the invaders and the landowners; different land uses are incompatible with one another; basic services are far to be implemented while environmental risks far to be mitigated. Neighborhood organizations struggle with some of these issues through collective labor practices while pending resolution of the matter by external entities. Therefore the unit of analysis concerned those practices taking as an example the practice performed in EL Trebol, a neighborhood organization that belongs to La Nueva Rinconada.

### *A Theory/Methods Package*

A Practice-Based Methodology has been implemented to enlighten governmentality mechanisms affecting collective labor practices, the aims, norms, activities, and the body of knowledge of practitioners in *popular urbanizations*. It primarily considers Theodore Schatzki's (Schatzki, 1996, 2002, 2010, 2012) explicit ontology to build the theoretical background and adopt a sort of camera lens to zoom in into the accomplishment of a specific practice and then zooming out following the connectivity of this practice in its relational system (Nicolini, 2009, 2012; Nicolini & Monteiro, 2016). Therefore, the focus

moved from the inhabitants' viewpoint towards different institutional levels and way back.

The "zoom-in" movement has concerned a qualitative data-collection method such as direct observations followed by semi-structured interviews with practitioners during the performance of collective labor practices. On the other hand, the "zoom-out" has regards exploratory focus groups assisted by a local NGO to analyze settlements' legal and physical conditions and semi-structured interviews with key players of different external organizations involved in the development process of popular urbanization looking for collective labor practices network of interrelations and relations.

This Theory/Methods Package has tried to exemplify the interaction between the social



*Ilustración 2: Slope city - La Nueva Rinconada 2020 (source: photo repertoire)*

sphere and governmental technologies to deal with the issue of urban order in *popular urbanizations*.

### *"Zoom-out" findings*

Urban order in La Nueva Rinconada refers to an oxymoron: A state of stability based on precariousness. The legacies of terrorism, migrations, neoliberal economic adjustment, and populist policies have shaped how the governmental system and spatial policies relate

to the last wave of popular urbanizations in ways that seem to perpetuate their marginalized position while simultaneously offering them prospects and hope for improvement. Such improvement is based on principles of competition, cooperation, information, and regulation conforming to an urban arena of social interaction called market-based urban order. The market-based urban order provides institutional technologies for the voluntary exchange of services -competencies- and materials -basic infrastructures and building materials- which allow external organizations to purchase and sell them to neighborhood organizations. Indeed, the governing system sets out requirements that can only be found on the market, endorsing what Peck (2009), Brenner (2009), Osborne, and Rose (1999) have reported in governmentality studies. They turn neighborhood organizations into "purchasers" who can choose to "buy" services from the range of options available (Rose, 1993). As a matter of fact, creating a formal organization, adopting an association register, drafting maps, receiving statements of conformities, and proceeding with plots subdivision enable a fruitful market transaction of goods, services, information, currency, or any combination of these that pass from one sector -which usually has less- to another -which usually has more- (Boudreau et al., 2016).

The market-based urban order works through various technologies to shape conducts and behaviors in neighborhood organizations. They can be resumed into five explicative categories relate to record, binding, advising/warning, advocacy/counseling, and assessment technologies.

*Record technologies* are related to boundaries definition, mapping, standardization procedures, institutionalization reflecting a "*logic of calculation*" (Amin & Thrift, 2017, p. 129) to render visible space over which government is to be exercised (Rose, 1999; Rose-Redwood, 2006, p.). They intend to recognize and categorize unclear situations to develop law enforcement measures. It was evident in the case of the "cooptation" of collective organizations and their classification under the Single Register of Social Association – RUAS. The inscriptions play a key role in the relational power configuration in which those organizations are recognized. Indeed, the governing system colonizes each neighborhood organization's space and indirectly coerce it giving the tolls to improve their performances and legitimacy (Rose, 1999; Strauch et al., 2015). Furthermore, the definition of the zones of exception of La Nueva Rinconada is imagined through a differentially administrated space within the urban fabric itself (Osborne & Rose, 1999; Roy, 2011). Typically, state agencies led this type of activity. However, the governing system hands over the mechanisms of knowledge production to the third sector. For example, TECHO Peru and PREDES have worked on electronic land cadastre in La Nueva Rinconada to enumerate and characterize neighborhood urbanization in popular urbanizations —collecting data that did not exist before and completing those that were insufficient.

The market-based urban order stands on standards, norms, and agreement to respects. *Binding technologies* attempt to standardize a measurement scale and implement a classification of a whole sector under "technical" evaluation. *Binding technologies* are

considered universally applicable, no matter the context and the time. For instance, standards required for the "reverse" planning process pursued through the *Basic Plot Plan* in the slope city imply, precisely, the same standards to build new urbanizations elsewhere. Also, the electrical installations must follow national sectorial standards that prefer the use of cables of certain material and defined thickness, connected to an advanced differential magnetic thermal switch. Another suitable example reported the attempt to define environmental risk situations throughout the Civil Defense evaluative documents and connection requirements to obtain the land-use change in La Nueva Rinconada. Those documents are adopted as "objective" and "neutral" by neighborhood organizations, public institutions and outline organizations despite the individual discretionary taken during their drafting.

In order to perpetuate, market-based urban order has to account for advising/warning and advocacy/counseling technologies that serve to convince neighborhood organizations to adopt third-party services and invest in their security, for example. On the one hand, Advising/warning technologies work under the *principle of information* setting a useful direction for urban development, sometimes even incentivizing it, as happened with the Luz del Sur *Warning Letter of Notification*. On the other hand, Advocacy/counseling technologies work under the *principle of cooperation*, as occurred with the TECHO NGO community team—which accompanied neighborhood organization activities focusing on the improvement of living conditions in popular urbanizations through the *Community Activity Plans* defining shared projects, objectives, resources, activities, deadlines, and responsibilities.

Lastly, the means by which value judgments are expressed are the *Assessment Technologies*. Such technologies systematically evaluate neighborhood organization activities and procedures to judge their work and further improve their future performance following the *competition principle*.

Governmental technologies also have their counterpart. Countre-conduct practices of resistance in La Nueva Rinconada are the fiduciary and clientelist practices, affecting and shaping the previous technologies (Ramos, 2016; Roniger, 2004). The administrative and political patronage can withhold market rules to meet priority needs, as occurred in the case of El Trebol *Basic Plot Plan* validation and exchange of goods and services given to the construction of *Local Comunal* in the time of local elections. Fiduciary and patronage practices belong anyway to the market-based urban order because they are creative elements that are never uniform or linear, easily hybridized within existing social order mechanisms (Osborne & Rose, 1999).

### *"Zoom-in" findings*

The market-based urban order neither prevails over the opposition of neighborhood organizations and nor imposes an agenda on them, but mainly influences their desires, beliefs, and judgments in ways that they work towards supporting it. Doing so has required a change reaching beyond legal frameworks into practical domains, altering

peoples' perceptions of what is "normal" and establishing new moral frameworks to guide urban development activities.

Indeed, data has shown that none of the external organizations have directly co-opted such practice such as in the case of *Mega Minga* in Ecuador (Klaufus, 2010; Testori & D'Auria, 2018), *Mutirão* in Brazil (Cavalcanti et al., 2004), or the *Programa de Pavimentación Participativa* in Chile (Gramsch, 2003) where district municipalities, federal and national governments directly promoted and organized collective labor practices to provide infrastructure, housing, and services in marginal areas. As a matter of fact, the logic of cooptation sets in only if the government system recognizes that its agenda, legitimacy, or its standard practices are questioned—as the case in the nineties due to terrorism and structural economic changes (Holdo, 2019). In the last wave of popular urbanization, there is no need for the cooptation of collective labor practices; the *Faena Comunal* is in the hand of already disciplined neighborhood organizations. Therefore the research confirms that legal principles and institutionalized governing technologies have bounded neighborhood organizations in line with previous studies (Díaz-Albertini Figueras, 1991; Díaz-Albertini Figueras & Melgar Paz, 2012; Tanaka & Trivelli, 2002). Neighborhood organizations have neither actively evolved into an arena for local social activists to demand changes in the government's priorities nor are positioning themselves as agents of change—questioning the objectives of formalization and development of their settlements. Indeed, practitioners have a detailed knowledge of the strategy used to pursue their desires inside the existing urban order and actively cooperated with outside organizations to reach what they call "comprehensive development" through collective activities.

In light of the above, if we were to redefine collective labor practices in popular urbanizations, we should say that they are not an expression of culture and tradition or an attempt of cooptation. They are neither a spontaneity and participative expression nor an example of resistance against the market rules and its formal system. Instead, they resemble a form of *production technology* inside the market-based urban order, which has embraced the external competition and information principles with the main scope the settlement normalization besides the traditional internal cooperation and regulation ones.

A technology of production based on spatial normalization permits practitioners to produce, transform, or manipulate things through which neighborhood organizations can fulfill external commitments and internal goals and provide the basic material adjustment for going forward with the urban development process. In this account, the *Faena Comunal* have remarkable merit considering that there is no construction, such as collective buildings, streets, staircases, roads, retaining walls, terrace walls, platforms, or infrastructure systems that have not partially or integrally been made and improved for the collective effort of local practitioners.

*Engagement with the Academic Community*

Moving away from a naïf vision of self-help, as voluntarily and autonomous, this research unveils current urban order in popular urbanizations from a poststructuralist point of view linked to Latin American studies based on the social production of habitat –*la Producción social del habitat* (Connolly, 2013; Del Río, 2015; Duhau & Giglia, 2008).

Such positions has emerged in the second year of research, during the participation at Grupo Interdisciplinario de Investigación en Ciudades y Territorios Urbanos (INCITU) of the Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú. Furthermore, after moving to Amsterdam with an Erasmus + program, this position has been developed within the urban research group headed by Dr. Christien Klaufus at the Centre for Latin American Research and Documentation (CEDLA-UvA). The collaboration with them and the Latin American Studies Programme (LASP) members provided constructive feedback and guidance on different parts of this thesis. Finally, the poststructuralist point of view results reinforced from a Ph.D. pre-defense in February 2020 at the PUCP in Lima, discussing with Jeremy Roberts from the University Rennes 2 and Tania Herrera Romero from the National University of San Marcos.

Furthermore, due to its ontological and epistemological assumption, the research moves Practice-Based studies postulate to Governmentality studies to deal with the topic of power as an effect, approaching in such way to two sociological communities of thought (Gherardi, 2012; Nicolini, 2012; Nicolini & Monteiro, 2016; Osborne & Rose, 1999; Rose, 1989; Watson, 2017). One of the two communities was derisively consulted. In fact, the research benefited from participation in the summer school of practice-based Studies for two consecutive years at the University of Warwick, Coventry, UK.

- Practice & Process Studies: An Advanced Introduction 15-18 July 2019
- Practice, Process, and Issues of Scale in Global Challenges 13-16 July 2020

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