1. The hybrid of land taking and land making

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1 URBAN TRANSFORMATION, LAND TENURE AND COMMUNITY-LED INNOVATION IN A LAND DEVOURING WORLD

Questions of land tenure, security and access to land have been major concerns of citizens and migrants in most cities of the world. The role of urban policy in handling these concerns has been ambiguous. In cities of the North, urban development projects as part of a neoliberal New Urban Policy, have contributed to land speculation, land tenure transformation, confiscation of public space, rise of land values and gentrification in inner cities causing changes in urban land markets and intra-urban migration (Brenner & Theodore, 2003, Moulaert et al., 2003, Sassen, 2015, Tasan-Kok & Baeten, 2011). In cities of the South, due to similar neoliberal urban policies many communities and particularly settlements of urban poor have fallen victim to gentrification, eviction, displacement, lack of tenure rights and exclusion from appropriate and affordable urban services (drainage, water supply, waste collection, maintenance, and so on).

Over the last half century, these problems have provoked a diversity of reactions, ranging from outright negative attitudes or neglect by public agencies and urban professionals to a more empathic, constructive and often socio-politically innovative approach looking for potentially more positive and cooperative solutions. Following innovative research in the 1960s and 1970s, and under pressure of many community groups in cooperation with local and international NGOs, a first *series* of sites-and-services and upgrading programmes was launched in the 1970s (Quan & Payne, 2008, Hassan et al., 2015). As of that period, claims for land tenure and a more appropriate govern-

ance of land tenure rights received a growing socio-political response (Hardoy & Satterthwaite, 1982).

Although they were often steered according to a top-down logic, in these programmes the role of communities, their networks and movements became more prominent and, more recently, their socially innovative capabilities in building urban development led to a greater political impact. At the same time, this involvement produced new roles of citizens and tenants in governing land, public space and housing use rights. Central to these new roles are different forms of community-based control and governance of land and housing tenure systems. Community-based tenure governance implies that the rights to access, use, control and transfer of land are granted among members of the community that would then also take on responsibilities arising from such rights. Where the state is not sufficiently present or powerful, or neglects the land control process, community control often guarantees such rights (Chapter 2 by Pedro Abramo). Another important evolution in the governance of land and housing ownership and use rights is the rise of hybrid forms of formal and informal market regulation. As several chapters in this book argue, such hybrids can only work when social control by the communities, the peer groups, the families ... is sufficiently solid; or when the state opens up to the reality of informality as a source of governance and actively contributes to establishing governance hybrids.

The struggle over natural resources such as land, water and raw materials (ore, crude oil, sand, ...) has always been a significant strategy of economic, and especially capitalist economic expansion. Since the explosion of mass production and consumption during the Fordist period, this struggle has intensified again. The hunger for land in many fast-transforming cities is hard to satiate. Competing interests of big private capital or state-owned capital feed the struggle over urban land ownership and use. On the urban fringe and beyond, peasants holding their land under (quasi) customary tenure or long lease are increasingly facing the threat of dislocation, as cities expand outwards onto neighbouring land and agrobusiness accumulates land rights. Under the pressures of urbanisation, peasants and other disadvantaged groups struggle to hold onto small parcels of land and to protect fragile peri-urban ecosystems on which their livelihoods directly depend. This struggle should be situated as part of a global struggle against land grabbing in which international agrobusiness, extractive industries and urban land consumption dominate, with all negative consequences in terms of deforestation, water system disruption, resource depletion and precarious futures of small agricultural tenures/estates. The devastation of the Amazonian forests, benefitting the agrobusiness sector, is a case in point. At the same time, it is often underestimated how much *vacant* or *unutilised* land (customary, public, private, as well as 'contested') remains in (old) city centres. Such land either lays idle for speculative purposes

or simply remains underutilised due to poor planning or lack of development regulations or incentives. Part of this land could, for example, be made available for building housing for the low-income urban population, as a common space or as host of facilities.

The situation is slowly improving thanks to a more socio-political conscious and educated third generation of urban dwellers in the lower income communities of the cities in the South who take part in civil society organisations and grassroots movements and in roles as academics or as members of advocacy groups. Local and national states have become aware of their limited power to deal with urban transformations and are opting for more reformative policies and policy frameworks which apparently are more pro-poor oriented and have opened up to the new community controlled tenancy systems and land markets that operate at the intersection of market dynamics and community control. Other states persist in the old evil of massively supporting privatisation and land grabbing, yet are increasingly confronted by community and grassroots movements and their networks.

As leading agents in the neoliberal market economy, real estate developers, financial institutions and land speculators are constantly seeking to gain access to inner- and peri-urban land. They are the big players in what Manuel Aalbers (2006) has called the financialisation of the real estate sector, a process by which investment in land and estate (up market housing, offices, various types of prestigious urban projects in the cultural and tourist sector, ...) has become an alternative to buying stock and which puts an additional stress on urban land and neighbourhood development. The urgent question here concerns how to reconcile the conflicting demands of land developers, city-dwellers, newly arriving migrants, peasants, and so on. These demands represent fundamentally different needs such as the vital need for housing, public space, healthy and green urban environment – including basic services for all layers of the population, but also high return real estate projects often involving the destruction of slums or low-end housing. Reconciliation of such conflictive demands is difficult. It may be relatively easy to restore public space and green the urban environment as part of a common or public interest. Much harder is the search for equity in the distribution of benefits associated with urban development in (peri-)urban locations. These concern, for example, the provision of affordable housing in sufficiently serviced areas. On this issue, Public Private Partnerships (PPPs), which in theory should provide a fraction of affordable housing in their development projects, have dramatically failed. In cities of the South the major part of demand for housing comes from the urban poor, making such PPP initiatives completely ineffective because of the mismatch between demand and supply (Tavares e Silva, Chapter 8). Moreover, in these cities, land ownership and tenancy regimes are very different from those in the ‘regulated’ Northern cities, which rely almost exclusively on the

legal manipulation of the formal markets. As Geoffrey Payne (Chapter 3) and Pedro Abramo (Chapter 2) show, the mix of formal and informal tenancy systems in cities in the South is quite complex, creating additional problems as well as new opportunities for the development of humane settlements and decent housing.

Thus, at its very core, land tenure is not just about who owns and uses land; it is also about who decides and regulates what is owned, which use rights are attached to it, when and for how long, how these use rights are discursively defined and guaranteed, and who has the power and resources to determine all these elements. This immediately reveals the socio-political dynamics of the design and operation of land tenure systems as they evolve with changes in the social, economic and political institutions. As a key pillar of community development, dynamics and conditions of land tenure systems need to be well understood to formulate more appropriate development alternatives and governance systems attuned to the interests of the urban society as a whole, and the needs of the poor and the vulnerable citizens and migrants in particular.

In response to the insufficiency and inappropriateness of current land governance modes and management tools and strategies to ensure tenure security, equitable access and distribution of the proceeds of land development, local community and international organisations, movements and networks, researchers and other practitioners are seeking to devise and implement strategies to tackle the challenges of contemporary urban development. These initiatives have led to a (re)conceptualisation of measures such as land sharing, community land trusts, starter titles and land readjustment, among others, to facilitate sharing of urban space under conditions of urban transformation. They have led to the justification and institutionalisation of various mixtures of formal and informal land and housing allocation systems (Payne, Chapter 3; Abramo, Chapter 2; Verschure, Chapter 5).

In many towns and cities, over the past decades, a wealth of experimental or common practices have emerged that illustrate well how communities can improve or take over the control of their land and how adapted and people-controlled governance systems can be established. As part of this movement, gentrification and evictions are seriously questioned and combated by local communities and by the national and international organisations and networks they have established or became part of. As such, this book seeks to generate state-of-the-art knowledge on collective action and policy in the area of land tenure and urban development. It specifically addresses:

- Tensions and conflicts over different types of land, land use and resources, and between governments, urban real estate actors, communities, small and large agriculture estates, and so on.

- Theory and methodology in researching land tenure systems and community development and their use of innovative tools and strategies: community land trusts, land readjustment, value capture, and so on.
- Responsible policy debates and approaches in several countries in both the South and the North, examining the potential of formal and informal land allocation and use systems.
- Land tenure dynamics in their material, legal, socio-economic, socio-political, cultural dimensions, and the production of a sustainable built environment within a context of urban expansion, gentrification, displacement and conflicts in the city centre as well as its fringes.
- Transformation of land tenure systems through community participation and co-production processes based on socially innovative initiatives and bottom-up and bottom-linked governance seeking for a new division of responsibilities between markets, communities and the state.

2 THE GOVERNANCE OF LAND TENURE DYNAMICS

In the last decades, international research has documented many cases of new forms of enclosure and land grabbing through privatisation, speculation and land trafficking. Furthermore and more recently initiatives of de-closure, commoning and social innovation for community development have been highlighted (Borch & Kornberger, 2015; de Angelis, 2017; Helfrich, 2008; Helfrich & Haas, 2009, Huron, 2015; Moulaert et al., 2013, Moulaert & MacCallum 2019; Ostrom, 1990; Van den Broeck et al., forthcoming). Many of these are fundamentally questioning, but often also reviving, decennia-old relationships between the state, private sector and civil society. At the same time they have engaged with contemporary ways of organising society through new initiatives in the domain of socio-economic development (connecting local economies to their regional and/or national scales, transformation of land markets), by restoring service provision (self-organised or in cooperation with the state), democratising decision-making (building democracy from scratch or by better connecting direct and representative democracy through modes of bottom-linked governance, transfer of competences from the state to civil society) and developing culture and cultural activities (fusing old and new forms of land tenure as a cultural values). This includes re-establishing or introducing diversified mechanisms of land tenure.

There are different scientific leads for a common frame from which these initiatives and movements can be approached. These include: socio-economic analyses of the mechanisms of land tenure; studies of the production and the complementarity of formality and informality, and the production of different forms of cities (Abramo, 2012; de Angelis, 2003; Polanyi, 1944/2001);

political ecology analyses of land in nature–culture dynamics (Castree, 2003; Sevilla-Buitrago, 2015; Turner, 2017); governance approaches analysing social innovation and the transformational capacity of bottom-linked initiatives (MacCallum et al., 2009; Ostrom, 1990, 1999); socio-political approaches focusing on the repoliticisation of land tenure and urbanisation processes (Harvey, 2012; Kirwan et al., 2016; Metzger et al., 2014; Swyngedouw, 2005); literature on the production of informal and diverse land tenure systems (Mingione, 1991; Midheme & Moulaert, 2013; Roy, 2005); (pluralist) legal scholarship (di Robilant, 2014; Davy, 2012, 2014; Jacobs, 1998, 2016; Capra & Mattei, 2015; Ribot & Peluso, 2003); literature on the governance of the commons (Bollier, 2009; Helfrich, 2008; Helfrich & Haas, 2009; Huron, 2015; Linebaugh, 2008; Dardot & Laval, 2014); writings on global urbanisation and real estate mechanisms (Brenner & Theodore, 2003; Edwards, 1985, 1993; Massey, 1978; Massey & Catalano, 1978; Van den Broeck et al., forthcoming).

These literatures feed into a conceptual frame to analyse the transformation of land tenure and especially the ways land use rights and practices are governed. In cities and countries with a ‘weak’ state system, effective land use rights depend only marginally on land titles. Land titles do not guarantee fair treatment, unless they can be secured by institutions other than (land) markets (Goldfinch, 2015; Ribot & Peluso, 2003). Studying land tenure dynamics therefore requires a broad institutional analysis; it demands covering a wide diversity of forms of land tenure, understanding how involved actors transact and transform land use rights within the complex system of socio-political relations and struggle, as well as analysing the institutionalisation processes these actors are part of.

Since land titling and tenancy are part of wider socio-economic and socio-political dynamics, which are currently predominantly market-oriented mechanisms, they are affected by national, regional and local contexts and their specificities in different continents and countries. Important dynamics or institutions forming these contexts are the persistence of hegemonic economic regimes (e.g. colonialism), ‘new’ economic dynamics inherent to globalised markets, state institutions, the impact of urban governmental regimes, self-organisation and informality as new forms of hybrid institutionalisation in between the formal/informal duality. Additionally, relationships between state, private sector and civil society including public, private and common land tenure need to be analysed from a governance perspective, which addresses the ecological, socio-economic, socio-political, and cultural mechanisms that produce unequal land access for various groups, favouring some, excluding others, and that are contested, negotiated, struggled over and changed by social movements and socially innovative initiatives.

These mechanisms are mediated/regulated/influenced/reinforced by the state and other institutions. Various allocation and distribution mechanisms

and hybrid governance forms (market, networks, centralised, solidarity oriented) exist and define the precise outcome of land tenure dynamics. Likewise, various property regimes exist (public, private, common) in hybrid coexistence. Mechanisms of unequal land access are also expressed in technical terms. Cadastre, property tax, credits, land fund, land titling, land laws, specific forms of parcellation and so on embody selectivities, which should be understood in their detail.

3 WHAT THIS BOOK DOES

Community-involved action research has manifested itself as a powerful research and mobilisation tool for community empowerment (relation building, visioning, institutional design, ...) as well as a refining of action research itself. Yet, as many community actions, policy studies and theoretical/methodological contributions on the transformation of land tenure show, reciprocal reinforcement between action and research is needed. There is a tendency in community building and the action research supporting it, to become too vision and action oriented at the local level, overlooking or at least underestimating the role of structural and institutional dynamics. Empirical urban research should thus focus more on the study of land markets, ownership relations and agency, real estate mechanisms and the role of big land owners and address critical questions: who owns the district, the neighbourhood and the adjacent areas? In which ways is the financial sector involved in land ownership and use rights? Moreover, is building relationships between the powerful agents, neighbourhood communities and city governments possible? In such structure and institution-aware empirical analysis, cadastre, ownership registers, capital and landowner structures become important instruments in analysis and visioning. Also, a particular focus is required on the impact of contemporary migration flows resulting from natural, economic, political, and military disasters, and their role in urbanisation processes and land tenure transformation.

This relinking of structural and institutional dynamics to community oriented action research will need a better grounding of theories of the urban and its wider geography and history. Moreover, while there has been a revalorisation of grand theory as a framework to look at community development and land tenure in cities as a whole, grand theory remains in need of grounding in action research settings (Joint Problematisation, see e.g. Cassinari & Moulaert 2014; Miciukiewicz et al., 2012; Segers et al., 2016). Through the way it organises the interaction between all relevant agents, action research should lead to diverse explanations connecting informality, institutions, illegality, the depoliticisation of policy-making and state institutions and institutionalisation processes, to the land struggles and governance practices of the communities.

Most chapters in this book focus on formal as well as informal land-based institutionalisation processes (see Pedro Abramo on Latin America, Geoffrey Payne on options for securing tenure for communities, Han Verschure on hopes for progress emerging from the UN Habitat trajectory), on how socio-political and socio-economic power relations and institutions have confirmed or challenged them, which new forms of land tenure have developed in reaction to exclusive enclosure and – maybe most of all – how communities have taken action to gain control of land and housing use rights as well as access to social services and public space.

The book examines land tenure transformations triggered by speculative private developments and government interventions but especially socially innovative civil action and community development in different countries (Pakistan, Peru, Brazil, Ghana, India, Ecuador, Mexico, Japan, Belgium). It covers cases documenting enclosure, privatisation, speculation, and land trafficking (e.g. land trafficking in Peru, land consumption in Brazil, speculation in Pakistan), as well as de-closure, commoning and social innovation initiatives and movements (e.g. the *Ejidos* in Mexico, *Mingas* in Ecuador, CSA in Belgium, informal power structures in Karachi). Such experiences challenge existing relations between the private sector, the state and civil society. They represent contemporary ways of organising economic development (local economies also in their relations to regional and/or national ones), providing services (state or self-organised), accessing and using public space, collective decision-making and governance (building democracy from scratch or through transformation of relations with state agencies and market players), building cultural identities and cultural activities (e.g. the *ejido* and the *minga* as a cultural value). Central to most chapters are diversified mechanisms of land and housing allocation and tenure, and the manner in which these can be restored, democratised or invented. Very remarkable is the increasing acceptance that contemporary land and housing allocation systems and tenancy regimes can no longer be reduced to institutional deals between the state and the formal market, but should also recognise the reality of informal housing and land markets, which often hybridise with the regular housing market and the local housing and land market regulatory systems. There are several critical socio-political questions to be raised vis-à-vis the hybridisation of formal and informal, state and market, civil society, ... as well as the growing and diversifying role of communities in acceding and controlling land and housing tenure.

A key socio-political issue is whether or not the power of communities and municipalities is sufficiently substantial to guarantee that the new hybrid tenure regimes will be respected by all parties. Most chapters address the role of communities, their mobilisation and activism in pursuit of guaranteed land tenure and its different practical meanings (ownership, use rights, rights to improvement, access to proximity services, building public spaces, ...).

However, for several reasons, the risks of political colonisation or *tricks from the market* to privatise are always looming. The strong reliance on participation methods to mobilise community members, the lack of political and governance experience of communities and their leaders, the conflation of interests between private and state sector, the longevity of legal and juridical procedures over land rights, ... could, separately or in a lethal cocktail, paralyse the drive towards enduring land and housing tenure. Full of political risk are situations in which creative participation processes could fall into the trap of political naivety. Indeed, empowerment does not necessarily lead to robust socio-political power capable of engaging with a stubborn or opportunist state apparatus, often heavily orchestrated by private interests.

This leads us to the second critical socio-political concern: the time and space dynamics of the political system in the more limited sense of the term itself. State apparatuses change slowly. Even after revolutions or changes of regimes, the tendency to return to or continue old administrative practices is real. Administrative practices can only fundamentally change through well-founded learning processes. In addition, numerous are the cases where revolutionary leaders after a period of social innovation return to practices serving their self-interest. Furthermore, when the State becomes involved in the new types of hybrid governance between formal and informal land allocation and land use, the question remains if it is adequately powerful to exert its control functions effectively.

4 WHAT THE CHAPTERS TELL US

Many chapters address the delicate connections between (1) the condition and transformation of land and housing markets, (2) the role of multi-scalar regulation and state intervention, and (3) the involvement of communities in (re)commoning and building governance systems guaranteeing rights to land, housing, public space and social services. Each chapter has one or more foci connected to these three.

Chapter 2 'The COMP-FUSE city: informal land market and urban structure in Latin American metropolises' (*Pedro Abramo*) and Chapter 3 'Options for intervention: increasing tenure security for community development and urban transformation' (*Geoffrey Payne*) examine the contemporary genesis of hybrid land markets, between the formal and the informal, including the customary allocation systems. These chapters explain how new forms of tenancy and social control of tenancy rights have developed beyond state guarantee in big cities around the world. Abramo's focus is on Latin American cities, Payne's analysis is more generic and concerned with 'access to secure and affordable land for housing' (Chapter 3, p. 41) 'in countries at all levels of economic development' (Chapter 3, p. 56) Both chapters analyse developments towards,

and make proposals for, strengthening the role of local communities in governing land and housing markets. Both also stress the role of local intelligence in housing (market) dynamics. Abramo shows how the morphology of the city has an impact on the type of allocation system (submarket of land plots and the submarket for consolidated built slums).

Combining political ecology and an environmental governance perspective shows its utility in analysing the governance of land grabbing, as *Nienke Busscher, Robert Krueger and Constanza Parra* explain in Chapter 4. Putting these frameworks into dialogue, the authors have identified five key elements for understanding the governance of land grabbing: (1) past and present policies and practices enabling unequal land ownership and access; (2) the inter-relationship between social and environmental expressions; (3) geographical scales and multi-scalar analysis; (4) temporal dimensions; and (5) context and diversity. Although their analysis focuses on rural development, their methodology can be adapted to urban land ‘pre-emption’ or grabbing. In this context, quite relevant in their work for studying urban land dynamics is the following observation: ‘Complex historical land use arrangements and tenure affect the relationship between the causes and effects of land grabbing, notably the overlooked link between land grabbing and dispossession. In many countries, the enduring land tenure informality facilitates land grabbing’ (Chapter 4, p. 62). Their analysis also stresses the importance of rural and peri-urban land needed to provide cities with massive food supply.

Han Verschure’s Chapter 5, ‘What we learned from HABITAT 1976 to HABITAT 2016’, analyses the evolution and strategies regarding housing and settlement systems as they emerged from the policy debates in UN Habitat and its three World Conferences. Although in the different member countries there have been positive evolutions in recognising land as being ‘common’ and communities as having rights to land, these rights were often countered by evictions, land-grabbing, land-speculation, and so on. In spite of the fact that communities acting as driving forces to take more control of land and urban transformations are still relatively exceptional, many examples of landed commons exist worldwide and the struggle between absoluteness of private ownership and the more common/public ownership or management of land is very much alive.

Arif Hasan’s Chapter 6 ‘The changing nature of informal settlements in the megapolis in South Asia: the case of Karachi, Pakistan’ is a tangible illustration of these tensions and the search for new forms of settlement and housing rights. Different from many Brazilian cities, the earlier more centrally located informal settlements in Karachi are completely saturated, and land for informal development is only available on the fringe of the city, far away from work opportunities, entertainment, health and education facilities. The author presents an urban land reform that should improve the accessibility of

affordable and well-serviced housing for poor households. Such reform should stave off the ecological crisis dooming Karachi, it should impose maximum density regulations, tame the wild speculative behaviour of private speculators and make more centrally located state-owned land available for low income three- or four-storey housing estates. Arif Hasan observes that:

The informal densification of older settlements will continue. To make this sustainable, technical advice and managerial guidance will have to be provided to the informal developers, individual households and communities. The institutions (community and other informal ones) created as a result of this will have to be nurtured over time to eventually become a formal part of the planning process. (Chapter 6, p. 105)

He finishes his chapter by formulating advice for new ways of project development. Projects will continue to replace planning, he argues, but there are simple guidelines to check their social, economic and ecological relevance.

Chapters 7 to 10 cover cases of failing policy and planning. Most of them make the connection between state action, private market-led real estate development and ecological deterioration in metropolises. *Carlos Escalante Estrada and Liliana Miranda* in 'The hillside poor at risk? Land trafficking in Jose Carlos Mariátegui at the outskirts of Lima, Peru' (Chapter 7) make what we would call a social and political ecology analysis of *the social construction of disaster* as it is taking shape in the hilly fringes of Lima. The authors analyse the process of urbanisation and the creation of informal settlements, and explain how this particular expansion of the city has affected fragile ecosystems, increasing the risk of ecological disaster. More importantly, the analysis of different modalities of land access employing diverse forms of land occupation in which traffickers and neighbourhood leaders often find each other, gives a particular tangibility to the reality of land allocation in Lima. Public actors are occasionally involved, but state authorities keep having problems in recognising 'the relationship between the formal market (holding the best land [...]) and land traffickers [...], [thus not regulating and promoting] a formal market where the poorest can have access to land' (Chapter 7, p. 119).

Chapter 8 'Addressing the housing shortage without building cities: the Minha Casa Minha Vida Programme, Brazil' by *Carolina Tavares e Silva* covers a national housing finance programme targeting the average income and poorest groups of the society in Brazil. Especially in the last stage of its development the Minha Casa Minha Vida Programme (MCMV) missed the opportunity to promote urban social inclusion in addition to constructing housing units as it did not take into account the need of proximity to urban infrastructure and services. The programme was disconnected from the Brazilian National Housing Programme (PNH) and followed a highly market

financial logic. Symptomatic in this respect is that the largest number of housing units was built for middle-income classes.

In Chapter 9, *Eden Tekpor Gbeckor-Kove* examines the state of urban planning, land management and informal urbanisation in Accra, capital of Ghana. Existent analyses have recognised two main reasons for the rapid informal urbanisation: the continuous dependence on an out-dated planning system as a colonial legacy; and the 'highly "unstable" land and land tenure system dominated by traditional/indigenous and private actors which operate largely outside the formal urban planning system' (Chapter 9, p. 136). The author points at the continuing top-down approach of the state authorities in the revision of the spatial planning system, also expressed in rigid stakeholder participation processes with very little opportunities for input from the inhabitants of the informal settlements, as a main reason for the failure to revise the land allocation and tenancy systems. This is a problem typical of many cities in the Global South.

Chapter 10 leads us back to the ecological dimensions of unleashed urbanisation by looking at the vulnerability of urban ecology of the city of Bangalore in India. Bangalore is situated on the Deccan Plateau of Peninsular India at a height of over 1000 m, creating difficulties of access to water. With the growing urbanisation, these problems have intensified, leading to what the authors *Anitha Suseelan and PVK Rameshwar* now consider as an ecological crisis. The authors use a political ecology perspective inspired by Swyngedouw (2005) to examine the politics of land tenures and administration 'to reveal the shifts in the process of governance, in particular moving from a participatory mechanism to a centralised one. The historical approach of the study presents comparisons between distinct landscape paradigms and their corresponding socio political processes, ecological vulnerabilities and regenerative capacities' (Chapter 10, p. 153). They conclude that 'the environmental crisis in Bangalore represents the inadequacy of understanding the vulnerability of water as a standalone technological event' (Chapter 10, p. 164).

Though many of the first 10 chapters deal with the role of community dynamics in sustaining, acting against or renovating land tenancy regimes and urban policy and planning, the following chapters focus on community dynamics properly speaking.

Chapter 11 'Co producing alternative urban imaginaries in the contested riverbank settlements of Guayaquil, Ecuador' by *Olga Peek, Nelson Carofilis and Viviana d'Auria* examines the linkages between household dynamics, community development, and the shifting environmental conditions of consolidated informal settlements in Guayaquil, Ecuador. The case study is the consolidated riverbank communities of Suburbio. Again we are confronted here with an ecologically sensitive area at the fringes of an expanding city, the first urban frontier consisting of mangrove marshlands of the city that transformed into

a densely populated area, housing about 20 per cent of the current urban population. Guayaquil's recent waterfront renewal project (Guayaquil Ecologico) woke up sleeping dragons. The project comes with evictions, disrespect of socio-cultural and economic practices as well with additional environmental disasters such as pollution, infrastructural dilapidation, water logging and salt intrusion, all of which led to new tensions between inhabitants and government agents and contestation from the local community. The analysis shows how oppressed communities 'lead mediation and co-production initiatives in a bottom-up approach, and what obstacles are found in engaging governments as actors to work with them' (Chapter 11, p. 168).

In Chapter 12, *Luis Angel Flores Hernandez* revisits the Mexican *Ejido* as a real opportunity to envision and implement alternative land tenures in Guadalajara, Mexico. The model of the *Ejido*, which emerged from the Mexican Revolution, 'has been applied as a process giving land to those who were dispossessed of it, granting "usufruct rights" to cultivate, manage its resources and inhabit it, thus implying the creation of autonomous communities' (Chapter 12, p. 181). Following the original discourse, the *Ejido* enables communal land tenure by peasants, but the state retains *ownership* of the land. 'In many cases, this institution encouraged practices of commoning and kinship among on-site custodians of the land, reinforcing community bonds, solidarity, and redistribution of wealth' (Chapter 12, p. 181). The author argues that the formulation of contemporary autonomous urban initiatives and socially innovative processes could find inspiration and useful practical applicability from the social, political, and ecological notions embodied in the *Ejido*. Such schemes could empower grassroots movements in their mobilisation against neo-liberalisation and the financialisation of the Latin American city.

Chapter 13 by *Saeed Ud Din Ahmed*, *Abid Mehmood* and *Alison M. Brown* examines the role of informal power structures in guaranteeing service provision and land tenure security in several districts of Karachi, Pakistan's largest town. This chapter shows the varied relationships between formal–informal governance and administration in the communities or districts and the type of institutionalisation of land tenancy as well as services provided in the areas. Ethnicity, history, religion, political bonds, and so on hold key roles in these institutionalisation processes. The failure of the formal government structures to provide services to the residents of Karachi generally, and to the case study area (North Nazimabad, in Karachi Central District) specifically, has led to the rise of informal power structures. These informal structures have produced community-bound social bonds, tenure statutes, service provision networks, and so on. While these mean a challenge to state governance, they show promising practices, yet holding the risk of excluding citizens and migrants who are not part of the community or do not abide to its cultural or religious habitus.

Chapter 14 ‘Self-government and social innovation in Atucucho, Quito’ by *Giulia Testori* examines a post-informal neighbourhood of Quito called Atucucho, looking at its modes of self-management and the creativity of its community, provides a good example of territorially based social innovation. The chapter covers the inhabitants’ struggle for land, from the first invasions, passing through the many endeavours to obtain land titles, up to their recent and slow legal achievements. Attention is given to the inherent social innovation initiatives that Atucucho’s inhabitants have developed through time, such as building networks of solidarity and empowerment (through the application of the *minga*, a form of solidarity relations that have grown through history in Latin American communities). These initiatives often served as tools to face and sometimes overcome the severe shortcomings of the State through the establishment of the *gobierno barrial*. The chapter evaluates whether Atucucho’s struggle can be acknowledged as an *alternative model* of urban self-governance and whether it can be seen as a reference for more inclusive and equitable urban realities inside the *Buen Vivir* institutional framework popular in Ecuador and in other Latin American countries.

Chapter 15 leads us to Japan, where *Okoko Anita Nyapala* reviews the significance of social and cultural identity for the governance of the aging district of Kawaura Machi in Amakusa City, Japan. Aging and shrinking cities and districts have become an important phenomenon in many countries around the world. The consequence is that many activities are no longer economically livable, public services are reduced or closed down and cultural life is impoverished because of the lack of activities and participants. The chapter studies the potential for renewed community development. It argues that valorising the cultural identity of the people and the place is primordial in assessing the development potential. Other important community aspects are public space and activities, their public management model in Tomitsu as well as future visions.

The book closes with two Belgian cases. In their chapter ‘Challenging the agro-industrial governance of land use rights: the experience of Community Supported Agriculture in peri-urban Flanders’ *Carmen Collado Solis* and *Pieter Van den Broeck* examine the potential of community supported agriculture initiatives to reduce food insecurity in cities. Indeed, as we have seen, part of the land grabbing/land taking dynamics is about the competition between agrobusiness, housing and (other) ecological functions over the use of land. In several cases covered in this book, we observe that urban expansion happens at the cost of small agricultural estates or traditional (semi) rural communities seeking to sustain their food needs, and thus the short supply chain. In addition, in cities in the Global North the invasion of rural land by urban and transportation structures has reduced the share of proximity agriculture and gardening in food supply, while that of global suppliers has increased. The authors examine

to what extent the Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) initiative is socially innovative (building local food growing and consuming communities) as well as capable of transforming current (local) Flemish agro-industrial mechanisms and its system of governing Land Use Rights (LURs). They find that CSA initiatives apply new concepts of sharing land uses and LURs, thus creating more sustainable relations between people, food and land, but that existing agro-industrial mechanisms are persistent.

The last chapter broadens the challenge of commoning and access/use to public or collective spaces including their socio-cultural relationships. *Asiya Sadiq, Kris Scheerlinck and Burak Pak* examine the case of Place Liedts – a poor neighbourhood and an important transport junction in Brussels and in particular, its upcoming metro/public space project. The documentation and analysis of the case reveals that, looking beyond the obvious signs of poverty, informality and related issues, there exists a thriving yet undocumented interface of formal and informal collective networks, space making processes and activities. These belong to different domains, occupying territories under different ownership, but that are still interconnected. They are appropriated by different users and different claims are laid upon them. However, Place Liedts can only reach its full potential of arrival infrastructures or upscaled local identities if there is a political and professional will to understand and explore the socio-spatial potentials of the formal and informal processes and the difficulties of the informal sector to present itself sufficiently.

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