# Territorial Organization of Knowledge and Physical Spaces

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# Índice de contenido

# Executive Summary

This policy document focuses its research on how knowledge and physical spaces should be organized within a Social Knowledge Economy. The paper starts with a brief introduction on the concept of *Sumak Kawsay* and explains the idea of the FLOK Society project on building a Social Knowledge Economy.

It then criticizes the capitalistic system, addressing how the hegemony, utilitarianism and commodification of knowledge destroys local knowledge. It also analyses neoliberal approaches to city infrastructures, pointing out how they affect the development of cities.

The following section, "Alternative Models", presents different collaborative initiatives structures in Ecuador and in the world aimed to the creation of commons-knowledge and mutualized infrastructures, outside the conventional paths provided by the market and the state. The section shows how these self-organized initiatives propose alternative ways of providing what is necessary for communities, following the principle of self-governance and having the protagonism of participants as a key element on the construction of those knowledge systems. Then, four case studies are presented: two of them show successful experiences of self-governance based on systems of commons-knowledge generation through community participation. The following two are based on the mutualization of physical infrastructures and on the development and nurturing of cooperation within a community.

In the next section, *Ecuadorian policy framework,* the paper shows how the two focuses of the research - knowledge and physical spaces - are seen by the Constitution and in the National Plan for Good Living.

Finally, the paper presents policy recommendations for the Ecuadorian government. It argues that the building of a social knowledge economy requires new institutions to support and strengthen civic entities that choose to engage in building both immaterial and material community oriented goods and/or services and proposes the creation of several new institutions.

The concluding section introduces a set of policy recommendations to facilitate the creation and use of social knowledge by citizens, as well as to promote the development of a social knowledge economy based on cooperation, open knowledge, peer-to-peer production and material commons.


# 1. Introduction

Ecuador made a huge step towards the possibility of transitioning to a new economic and social model when the country introduced the idea of *sumak kawsay*[1] - or "harmonious coexistence"[2] as a right in its 2008 Constitution. The Constitution establishes that the Ecuadorian State should provide an integral economic, political, socio-cultural and environmental system to assure the achievement of *sumak kawsay*.

FLOK Society proposes that a society where knowledge is open, shared and can freely circulate is better positioned to achieve s*umak kawsay* (Barandiaran and Vazquez, 2013). The project aims to bring the ideas and experiences of the global open, shared and commons-

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[1] The concept of sumak kawsay - or buen vivir - has been well conveyed by Walsh: "*In its most general sense, buen vivir denotes, organizes, and constructs a system of knowledge and living based on the communion of humans and nature and on the spatial-temporal harmonious totality of existence. That is, on the necessary interrelation of beings, knowledges, logics, and rationalities of thought, action, existence, and living. This notion is part and parcel of the cosmovision, cosmology, or philosophy of the indigenous peoples of Abya Yala"* (Walsh 2010: 18)

[2] Although the translation of *sumak kawsay* into English has usually been "Good Living", it seems that "Harmonious Coexistence", as it has been used by some authors (Gudynas, Acosta 2011; Hidalgo, 2011 ) better reflects the broader idea of the term as understood within indigenous traditions.

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knowledge communities and frame them within the Ecuadorian context in order to formulate a transition proposition, through the recommendation of policy proposals.

This policy paper examines how a social knowledge economy can be built from a bottom-up perspective, through local communities self-governance and citizen participation. The paper also examines how public policy can favor knowledge creation and flow within communities and presents strategies and actions on implementing such ideas within the Ecuadorian context.

# 2. Critique to the Capitalist Models

Capitalism entails the enclosure and commodification of knowledge, while physical landscapes are reconfigured to uses that interest capitalism. The latter causes dramatic consequences to communities and territories, such as people gentrification (Harvey, 2014).

## 2.1. Hegemony and utilitarianism of knowledge

The prevailing Western knowledge system is seen as universal and applicable to all people at all times. By carrying out the idea that it is "superior", Western knowledge is placed in a dominant position, creating a situation of monopoly, where local knowledge systems are delegitimised, become invisible and gradually disappear (Shiva, 1993). One of the ways to deny the value and existence of local knowledge is by attributing it adjectives such as `primitive' and `unscientific' (ibid).

Since the type of knowledge used and the way it is generated and structured determine how nature and society are transformed, the prevalence of Western knowledge in the development of territories means that those who detain it will have more power over those whose knowledge is delegitimised, generating a system of inequalities and of intellectual colonisation through knowledge.

Traditional indigenous knowledge, for instance, has been seen as a devalued form of knowledge in the dominant Western culture (Tasiguano, Kakras *et al.*, 2014). Yet, community-based and local knowledge have been recognized by many as vital to the solution of complex problems, such as climate change.

In the best of the cases, local knowledge systems, under the capitalistic logic, may be considered by the dominant knowledge system, as long as they are useful to the latter. In its search for efficiency, capitalism will consider local knowledge that may provide efficient mechanisms of social regulation and resource allocation, disregarding any alternative proposals. (Davalos 2009).

The idea that Western knowledge originates from "developed" people, while local and indigenous knowledge systems are considered "non-developed", creates a power relationship where

local and indigenous systems of knowledge can be easily usurped by the dominant developed discourses.

Moreover, in the capitalistic system, knowledge is seen and is treated as a commodity. Neoliberal political systems are essentially engines of market enclosure (Bollier, 2010). By enclosing knowledge through the mechanism of Intellectual Property, it becomes a private property which can then be commercialized through the market. Under this logic, knowledge is no longer seen as integrated to nature and community (Simbaña 2011), but as a potential source for profit.

## 2.2. Neoliberal approaches to city infrastructures

Urban real estate is a prime target where capitalism has traditionally exhibited speculative and predatory behavior over the land. Land values increase without an analogous increase in wages or protection of vulnerable parts of the population (Davis & Palumbo, 2006; Statistics, 2014). Those left outside of the system have little to expect from the state for survival and for satisfying basic needs of shelter, exacerbating the phenomenon of poorly and haphazardly produced informal neighborhoods, sometimes lacking basic infrastructures of multiple endemic housing, health and environmental crises of found in many cities, especially in Latin America (McGuirk, 2014).

As the capitalist and neoliberal model of urban development incipiently invades every aspect of life, it affects everyone's well-being and behavior, since it colonizes the collective imaginary. Citizens' attention is constantly being redirected to products and services which form part of a model of achievement and happiness linked to constructed needs for possessions, while social relationships are relegated around a lifestyle which favors competitive consumption, rather than cooperative practices. Thus, practices favoring the wellbeing of a community and commons ethics are being undermined and deprived, in a context of urban spaces, buildings and infrastructures that suppress any expression of the commons.

Cities themselves become the stage of individual and collective struggles in the everyday life. Basic human infrastructures, such as housing, are no longer produced to satisfy needs of people, but are turned into commodities to fulfill the logic of profit[3]. In the past decades, housing has been seen as a possibility of speculative gain, and the recognition that every person needs a shelter has been left aside (Harvey, 2012). By 2020, it is estimated the world slum population will reach almost 1 billion[4]. Instead of policies which will alleviate the disparity, we see gated communities being created offering a "safe haven" for the affluent, in the midst of urban poverty and desolation.

Spaces induce specific types of behavior and emotions. In a global market economy most urban infrastructures and buildings are designed to facilitate consumption and cities can be seen as complex large scale "machines" engineered to promote more often than not the flow of

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[3] Business Insider estimates that medical bills are the root cause behind more than 60 percent of all personal bankruptcies in the United States each year.(Business Insider, 2011)

[4] United Nations General Assembly, report of the Special Rapporteur on adequate housing as a component of the right to an adequate standard of living and on the right to non-discrimination, August, 2012.

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capital, over social processes and a cooperative. (Harvey, 2000; Meretz, 2013; Polanyi, 2001) Corporate urban development serves primarily the flow of the capital, but not the processes and needs relating to the community or the people.

## 3. Alternative Models

A Social Knowledge Economy can only be achieved when the current logic preconized by capitalism is inversed: the creation and circulation of immaterial goods, such as knowledge, should be promoted, while basic physical infrastructures of quality, such as housing, should be made accessible to all citizens. It is necessary to create a culture of the commons[5] in Ecuador, as *"the commons have the potential to replace the commodity as the determining form of producing and reproducing societal living conditions."* [6]

A culture of the commons can only occur when the commons is reintegrated as the new logic of production and reproduction among communities and when community members are given the means to determine every aspect of their lives. Strategies addressing a new paradigm regarding the urban, rural and material commons, enhancing and favoring cooperative social relationships, should be designed.

Open knowledge, cooperative economies, peer-to-peer production and a commons-oriented society require infrastructures capable of supporting and nurturing these processes and needs, as well as appropriate legal infrastructures that will support and defend this type of society. Therefore, it is precisely at the juncture between territorialization of the commons strategies and a new peer-to-peer production economy paradigm where strategies and policy making efforts should be directed.

## 3.1. Knowledge Flow

The notion of development of a knowledge society  is based in people and their potential of creation. In order to build an inclusive Social Knowledge Economy, it is crucial that mechanisms that encompass an amalgam of viewpoints, traditions, experiences,  practices and contexts are facilitated by the government.  In this sense, it is fundamental to integrate the diversity of the Ecuadorian people as  significant and active players in the building of their communities.

One example of how the diversity of knowledge is being acknowledged is "Inteligencia Colectiva". The initiative recognizes the value of a multitude of knowledge - traditional, modern - informal - among communities and provides a platform where cities around the world can share knowledge and build their own repertoire of building techniques, facilitating the rescu-

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5 the commons has been can be defined as "*the creations of both nature and society that belong to all of us equally, and should be maintained for future generations*" (http://p2pfoundation.net/Category:Commons)
6 http://p2pfoundation.net/Category:Commons

ing of ancient and traditional expertise, as well as giving visibility to informal methods of construction[7].

## 3.2. Knowledge Flow within the Ecuadorian Rural Context

It is crucial to understand the dynamics of the Ecuadorian territories in the building of a Social Knowledge Economy. Territories in Ecuador are usually seen as pertaining to one of the following spaces: the urban - seen as modern and with access to infrastructures and services - and the rural, seen as a space mostly dedicated to agriculture. In rural areas, in despite of the lack of basic services, local communities have been developing social, cultural, environmental, and economic processes based on their own experiences, both individual and collective. Women and men, knowing their own realities and needs, have been taking the initiative to take care of the lives of human beings, the fauna and the flora.

A valuable experience is that of the "*Sabiru Mamas*", women who have been transmitting their knowledge, customs and beliefs to heal/cure diseases, with a know-how on how to manage medicinal plants and have also become guardians of the seeds. It is important to note that most of the knowledge transmitted in rural areas are part of an oral tradition.

Another way to develop and improve the quality of life in rural areas is through "*mingas*", community works towards common goals - e.g., providing water supply to the community. *Mingas* have been extensively organized to improve roads, provide energy, improve communal areas - communal house, a sports field, educational areas, etc. Those are initiatives autonomously developed by communities, deeply rooted in the Ecuadorian culture. The principles of solidarity are also very present in rural territories. For instance, in the rural zone of Napo, 380 vending women of local products take turns when selling their products, in order not to saturate the market and as a way to allow each of them to have a minimum income for their families.

Those practices show how individual and collective local knowledge have enabled communities to live in rural areas.

## 3.3. Protagonism and interdependence

For more than two decades UNDP reports have been stressing citizen participation as a vital element of any strategy aiming human development (UNDP 1990; UNDP 1993; UNDP 2002; UNDP 2010).

The building of a Social Knowledge Economy requires mechanisms to allow communities to develop their own capacities and ideas. To achieve that, it is important that communal forms of governance are facilitated and stimulated (Moreno, 2013), enabling the protagonism of local communities. Smaller organizations are better positioned to develop solidarity and trust

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7  http://www.inteligenciascolectivas.org/

relationships and, in this model, the Partner State can act as a facilitator and strengthener of these needs.

In Montevideo, the *Consejos Vecinales* (Neighborhood Councils) channel citizens requests and proposals to government instances (Veneziano, 2005). Some cities, like Bologna, in Italy, go even further beyond, and are enabling public administrations to govern with their citizens.[8]

In May 2014, the "Ciudad-Escuela" initiative was launched in Madrid. This model of urban open source pedagogy proposes that any urban area can become a learning space - urban gardens, hacklabs, assemblies - where any community member can propose a new learning unit or improve an existing one.[9]

# 4. Territorialization of the Commons

In the recent years and in the context of the crisis and the refusal or inability of the state to subsidize community projects and culture, several types of physical urban spaces are being reclaimed and retrofitted as commons in order to accommodate various social processes. This includes the governance, the content and context of use, the ethics, the methods of production and quite often the very spatial characteristics of territories in urban and rural areas. Theaters, parks, airports, communal gardens and other types of urban spaces have recently unilaterally been declared by citizens as common good. Such notable cases in Europe expressing an urgent and spontaneous social need and exploring alternatives modes of social relations include cultural spaces (Teatro Vale, Rome), airports (Tempelhof, Berlin), parks (Navarinou park, Athens) and several other. There is no doubt that the physical commons are being safeguarded by social mobilization and social processes.(Block, 2009; Karagiannis & Marangos, 2013; Mestrum, 2014; Mies, 2014). Referenda have been initiated by the people, as well as collective action, for the restructuring of the legal system, as for example in the case of Teatro Valle, so as to address physical urban spaces under a new commons legislature. Commoning practices have often been referred to as informal practices in order to address activism or squatting practices outside of the current legal framework, seen as acts in defense of the commons, thus they are often controversial, political and polemic (Brillembourg, Feireiss, Klumpner, & et al, 2005). But addressing the right to the city and to the territory in a meaningful way, can only occur by acknowledging the significance of collective action and of self-organizing, as systems and complexity theory shows (Espinosa & Walker, 2011). The alienation of the urban phenomenon has been addressed in many cases through successful models of co-housing, intentional urban communities, socially minded and inclusive urban retrofitting of old neighborhoods and public spaces and innovative architecture and urban planning. (Lietaert, 2009; Meltzer, 2005; Rauscher, 2013; Williams, 2005).

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8 http://www.labgov.it/cities-as-commons-the-italian-constitution-find-application-in-bologna/

9 http://www.prototyping.es/uncategorized/ciudad-escuela-la-primera-pedagogia-urbana-open-source

## 4.1. Case Study 1 - Trade School

In 2010, three people created in New York a platform where any individual could teach whatever they were passionate about and students would, in exchange, give something that teachers needed: resources, ideas, skills, etc - anything, except money. The goal of the initiative, named "Trade School", was to create alternative learning spaces that would enhance community interaction and support and stimulate non-monetary exchanges among participants.

The principle is simple: anyone who wants to offer an activity post in a website what they want to teach and what they would like to receive in exchange; students agree to bring what is requested when registering for a class.

Since everyone has something to give and share, possibilities of activities are as numerous as there are people, skills, resources and creativity within a community: from photography, yoga or language classes to knot tying, composting and origami making. The exchanges requested from teachers are equally diverse: they can request help painting a kitchen, putting up a website, a hug or organic seeds.

Since its creation in 2010, the "Trade School' became a global movement aimed to exchange knowledge, to enhance community connection and to stimulate alternative, informal ways of education. The model has expanded to over 50 cities all over the world. At each new place the project expressed itself in different ways and have adapted to its new context, according to local communities needs and visions. Trade School Glasgow, for instance, has put an specific focus on social care and community development.


**"La Trueca" - a Trade School in Quito**

At the end of 2012, a group of nine women brought the "Trade School" concept to Quito, Ecuador, creating "La Trueca", the first Trade School of South America. "La Trueca" is a learning space that proposes to potentiate the qualities that every human being has.

Refusing the idea that learning can only happen through educational institutions or against monetary exchanges, "La Trueca" bases its work on four principles:

La iniciativa trata de romper con la idea de que para enseñar es necesario un entrenamiento formal o un título e incentiva que los participantes compartan todos los conocimientos que tienen a su alcance. De esa forma, la sabiduría de cada ser humano es valorada y cada participante tiene la oportunidad de expresarse como un ser único e irrepetible.

- Sharing: the initiative seeks to break up with the idea that it in order to teach one needs formal training or a degree and encourages participants to share all the knowledge they have. Thus, the wisdom of each human being is valued and each participant has the opportunity to express themselves as a unique and unrepeatable being.

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- Reciprocity: "La Trueca" recovers the *randi randi* Andean practice and challenges the supremacy of the economic system, that demands that a monetary value is placed on everything. The initiative invites people to use their creativity to find ways of exchanging that are not linked to monetization.

- Respect, trust and mutual support: "La Trueca" encourages the community to nurture relationships of trust, solidarity and mutual support.

- Horizontality: "La Trueca" works as a facilitator of meetings, where participants meet to share, exchange and develop new relationships. Power and information are totally decentralized and there are no hierarchies that impose knowledge.

Initially, the activities of "La Trueca" happened in private spaces, such as restaurants. In its third season, which started in 2014, the organizers decided to stimulate the occupation of public spaces - parks, neighbourhoods, squares, streets, buildings - to develop their activities. By positioning public spaces at the core of community interaction, "La Trueca" adds an important dimension to the initiative: it expands the idea of public spaces as areas of recreation and leisure and brings the idea of public spaces as Commons, resources belonging to all, available at any time, that may serve as a setting place to shape communities and to contribute to the strengthening of their cohesion. Besides, as public spaces are used as environments for the development of a multitude of activities, such as co-creation and artistic expression, they become lively, vibrant territories constantly energized and renovated by their citizens.

Since 2012, participants of the network "La Trueca" proposed inumerous activities on diverse themes, such as ballroom dance, cooking, urban gardens, and introduction to solar energy and language classes. The requested counterparts have been equally diverse, such as flowers, organic food and even a dentist appointment. The latest activities, proposed by "La Trueca" in May, 2014, include classes on photojournalism, the use of medicinal plants, knitting of mandalas and the making of songs out of poetry.

Trade Schools are not only about bartering: they provide a framework for community support and instigate a different behaviour within a community, based on solidarity, reciprocity and mutual support, which goes in the opposite direction of the individualistic behaviours encouraged by capitalism.


## 4.2. Case Study 2 - Comuna Tola Chica

The Comuna Tola Chica, located at the valley of Tumbaco, has existed for 70 years and it consists of 64 families and about 400 people living and working in a communal manner, in an area of 105 hectares. The community tries to preserve its cultural roots through the development of local projects, such as the School of Traditional Knowledge, and to stimulate ecological and sustainable local projects, like the building of a local communal house made with super-adobe.

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One of its greatest strengths is its communal organization model: decisions are made through a democratic system lead by an organizational council elected by the community to guide procedures. All decisions concerning the Comuna are taken in a collective, participatory way, through assemblies open to all residents. The elected leaders of the Comuna cannot take decisions without having the prior approval of the assembly, which is the highest authority of the Comuna. Land ownership is communal and all *comuneros* have the same rights over the lands. The total area of the comuna is equally divided among each resident, who can have three and no more lots each. The exit mechanisms are regulated and favor the strengthening of the comuna: when someone decides to leave, there is a priority scheme for the assignment of the related lands: family members have the first priority, followed by someone from the comuna.

Some of the responsibilities that are fully shared among residents include: political decisions, the handling of water issues, the work on large crop areas, the management of the sports, community school, events and training center areas. Other communal activities include two annual festivals and 12 mingas every year.

Through the practice of mingas, the residents, who are mostly indigenous, work collaboratively to improve the community. Some of the projects include the collective cleaning of streets, reforestation with local native plants, rain water harvesting for irrigation of crops and the building of a communal house made of superadobe, used for the meetings, where community projects can be discussed and approved (Madrid, 2011).

The *comuneros* of Comuna Tola Chica have been creative and adaptive on dealing with an important issue experienced by mostly comunas in the Metropolitan District of Quito, which is the increasing lack of interest of young people in the activities of the Comuna. To tackle that, Tola Chica has brought rock and cumbia to the traditional festivities. Another inventive idea to attract young people was through sports: the creation of the soccer team of the comuna has been successful in bringing a younger population to its lands.

Besides practising organic farming, the community has 12 protected areas for reforestation of the native forest. Reforestation is a very important issue in a region that suffers a severe dry season and needs trees to hold water in the ecosystem to supply the human, plant and animal communities. Almost 20 hectares of forest have been recovered through communal practices. Currently, activities around environmental issues are the ones which have the strongest force to gather *comuneros* towards communal activities.

The projects of the Comuna follow the principles of sustainability: they aim to meet the needs of the local population through the conscious use of natural resources, in order to not compromise the needs of future generations. Some of the projects include:

1. Crop planting (maize, potatoes, peas, beans, beans, legumes and vegetables)
2. Organizational Strengthening: empowerment of communal forms of organization and government.
3. Recovery of the biodiversity of mountain Ilaló, a process going on for over 10 years, which involves the extension of remnant native forest and reforestation and environmental education.

4. Cultural identity: education and strengthening of community and ancestral action and the revitalization of artistic expressions and celebrations

5. Community Education:  the SAMAY Community School is a proposal that seeks to provide a holistic and intercultural education, based on the principles of Sumak Kawsay.

At the training and education zone of the Comuna, a superadobe construction provides a space for workshops and events, and it is served by dry toilets.

## 4.3. Case Study 3- The Tempelhof airport

The Tempelhof airport in Berlin (1923-2007) presents an interesting case study amongst a few global cases, where former airports that happen to be in the midst of metropolitan areas, are being contested, and have many chances to succeed, as urban commons. The former Berlin airport is a large plot of land, emotionally charged with heavy historical references. Since 2007, when officially closed, and while speculative discussions about its future have been raging, it has been used in the interim period as Public Park containing temporary activities, such as art exhibits, collective urban gardening and recreation.

The enormous popularity and success of the former airport in its new guise as park began to address the emergence of a commons ethics being developed among Berliners. In a recent Referendum over Tempelhof's future (25/5/2014) "no buildings" concept which expressed the people's vision won over the *Abgeordnetenhaus,* which was the municipal government's masterplan concept of development, that included a huge library and other buildings, a designed park, etc. The referendum now protects the Tempelhof Field from sale, development and partial privatization and makes it available to the public in its entirety, without any permanent restrictions.

The decision serves the future of leisure and recreation and its function as an inner-city cold air forming region and as a habitat for plants and animals, while its importance as a historic site and a place of remembrance is being recognized, and it provides the basis for a commons future for Tempelhof[10].

## 4.4. Case Study 4 - Alianza Solidaria

Alianza Solidaria is a cooperative in the south of Quito located in front of Quitumbe Terminal that, for the past twenty-five years, has been implementing housing and community development projects on thirty-six acres of land that is collectively owned.

Located in one of the poorest neighbourhoods of Quito, the project originally was initiated to tackle one of the biggest problems faced by local citizens, especially those with limited resources:  the lack of access to quality and affordable housing.  Over twenty five years,

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10 https://www.wahlen-berlin.de/abstimmungen/VE2014_TFeld/ErgebnisUeberblick.asp?sel1=6053&sel2=0799

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Alianza Solidaria has built Ecuador's largest housing cooperative, creating 500 quality affordable homes, self-financed by its members, and is completing the construction of 800 additional homes.

Ten years after the beginning of the project, the Alianza Solidaria community expanded its original idea of a housing cooperative and initiated the process of building a cooperative community. So, fifteen years ago, the cooperative started a new development model based on three                                                                                            pillars:

1) **The building of a cooperative community:** Alianza Solidaria realized that, within the initial development model, once houses were built and given to each member, cooperation among them would cease and peripheral issues, such as the provision of other basic services, would remain unsolved. In order to address that, cooperative decided to invest in the building of a cooperative community that would be autonomous and able to solve their own problems in a cooperative way. To achieve that, Alianza Solidaria developed two initiatives: firstly, it established that every member should follow 120 hours of training, where the philosophy of cooperation and how it could be developed and deepen would be transmitted to the members. Secondly, each member would need to participate in 100 community works (*mingas*).

Currently, this pillar is the most important element of the cooperative.

2) **Building of an habitat of quality:** the cooperative realized that the project would be enriched if it also invested in the building quality of the surroundings of the houses. So, through a series of *mingas* conducted by members, the community initiated a series of activities to enhance their surroundings: it has transformed a long abandoned garbage-filled ravine into a beautiful *commons* park, accessible to everyone, belonging or not to the community; it built Quito's first bicycle path, twelve years ago; members also designed and built a community school, jointly run by teachers, parents, students and community members.

3) **Housing:** the original idea of the project - build affordable housing of quality - is the third pillar of the new development model.

Alianza Solidaria understands that the building of a cooperative community is a dynamic process, in permanent construction. By mixing the ideas of cooperation given through training with practical activities (mingas), Alianza Solidaria was able to give autonomy to its community on the decision-making process and implementation on the needs for the community. It follows the principle that if a project cannot be managed by the community, it should not be done.

The most impressive collective construction of the cooperative is probably its community school: rooted in an innovative pedagogy model which was developed by parents, teachers, students and community members, the school is ranked as one of the best ecuadorian schools for the academic, sports, and cultural achievements attained by its students. The school gener-

ates the highest percentage of university admissions in the country and has won several prizes for its commitment to sustainability.

Houses at Alianza Solidaria costs 30% less than those available in the market, and offer a re-markable superior quality. They were intentionally built to face the ravine, normally seen a threat, to create a positive relationship between residents and their surroundings.

Alianza Solidaria has served more than 2,500 families. It has restored the native vegetation, consisting of 120 species, some of them considered in extinction. Besides, it restored the so-cial fabric that had been damaged by poverty and exclusion and reestablished the relationship between the community and its territory.

## 5. The Ecuadorian Political Framework - The Constitution and the National Plan of Good Living

The two main legal sets of rules that govern the country - the Constitution and the National Plan of Good Living - contain the foundations to stimulate profound structural changes on the current system. One of the main proposals of the government is the building of a "Social Knowledge Economy", which aims to "*satisfy needs, guarantee rights and potentialize individual, collective and territorial capacities*" (Ramirez, 2014).

The Constitution establishes the rights necessary to improve quality of life, which include access to water and food (Article 12), the right to live in a healthy environment (Article 14), the right to a safe, healthy habitat, to dignified housing regardless of one's social and economic status (Article 30) and exercising the "right to the city" (Article 31) and to good health (Article 32).

Furthermore, quality of life is framed within the Good Living regime in the National System for Social Inclusion and Equity (Article 340), in order to guarantee good-quality social services for health, exercise and free time, habitat and housing, transport and risk management. (p58). To reduce the quantitative national housing deficit to 9.0%, and the rural deficit by 5.0 percentage points. (p59) and to build spaces for social interaction and strengthen national identity, diverse identities, pluri-nationality and interculturality. (p64)

In regards to the National Plan of Good living, objective 3 calls for improvement to people's quality of life (p57), objective 5 to build spaces for social interaction and strengthen national identity, diverse identities, pluri-nationality and interculturality (p63) and objective consolidate the social and solidarity economic system, sustainably (p72) address

"*Living with dignity requires universal, uninterrupted access to superior goods, as well as a healthy environment, in order to achieve personal and collective goals. Quality of life begins by fully guaranteeing the rights of Good Living—water, food, health, education and housing —as a prerequisite for individual and social development*". Also "*living with dignity requires*

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*universal, uninterrupted access to superior goods, as well as a healthy environment, in order to achieve personal and collective goals. Quality of life begins by fully guaranteeing the rights of Good Living—water, food, health, education and housing—as a prerequisite for individual and social development*". (The National Plan of Good Living)

Moreover, the autonomy provided by the law, through the GADs (Decentralized Autonomous Governments) and "*Consejos Provinciales*" favors the building of a "Social Knowledge Economy" through local civic participation.

Article 238 of the 2008 Constitution defines how the GADs should work:

> "*Article 238. Decentralized autonomous governments shall have political, administrative and financial autonomy and shall be governed by the principles of solidarity, subsidiarity, inter-territorial equity, integration and public participation. Under no circumstances shall the exercise of autonomy allow for secession from the national territory.*"

Citizen participation in Ecuador contemplates five progressive stages: dialogue and consultation is a first level of involvement, followed by public deliberation, planning and management, decision making and, ultimately, social control. This participation structure aims citizens to directly exercise social control, after having gone through public deliberation and direct participatory planning mechanisms. (MONJE, 2014).

The Organic Law of Citizen Participation (LOPC) contemplates several mechanisms to enable citizen participation, which include:

1-Local planning councils (Art. 66) -. Spaces where development plans and local and sectoral policies are formulated.

2-Citizens sectoral councils (Art. 52) - Sectoral instances of dialogue, deliberation and monitoring of public policies at the national and sectoral levels.

3-Participatory Budgeting (Art. 67)


# 6. Ecuadorian policy recommendations with institutional Participation

The following public policies are recommended as a means to facilitate the creation and use of social knowledge by citizens, as well as to promote the development of a social knowledge economy based on cooperation, open knowledge, peer-to-peer production and material commons.


## 6.1. A New Institutional Framework for the Commons

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A transition to a commons-knowledge based society requires new institutions that support and strengthen civic entities that choose to engage in building both immaterial and material community oriented goods and/or services; that are committed to the values of cooperation, reciprocity and mutualization; that are working against the enclosure and the privatization of knowledge; and which are working towards the protection of physical commons

This document proposes the creation of the following institutions to create and protect the collective access and guarantee the governance of both immaterial and material commons:

**The Alliance of the Commons**[11]
An Alliance of the Commons is a civic and political entity, a network of peer-to-peer commons- oriented organizations that works towards the building of an economy of abundance and on building, strengthening and protecting the commons. It functions under the logic of non-rivalry and is not profit-oriented. The Alliance is also a meeting place and a platform to formulate policy proposals to enhance civic infrastructures for the commons. The Alliance could, in cooperation with the Chamber of the Commons (defined below) or autonomously, produce a social charter to reconstitute political forces around a pro-commons political agenda.

**The Chamber of the Commons**[12]
A Chamber of the Commons is an economic and political entity, a federated network of commons-oriented enterprises that is committed to help the advancement of the commons paradigm and of commons-oriented projects. While its equivalent in the capitalist system - the chambers of commerce - orients its work towards for-profit enterprises, the Chamber of the Commons puts its efforts on strengthening the emergent coalitions of commons-friendly ethical enterprises (non-profit, solidarity/ethical/social economy organizations, actors orienting their actions towards the common good). The Chamber of the Commons coordinates the needs of those organization and has a territorial focus: it has the key role of detecting the needs of the new commons enterprises and interfacing with territorial powers to express and obtain their infrastructural, policy and legal needs.

In cooperation with the civic alliance of the commons discussed above, the Chamber of the Commons could produce social charters to reconstitute politics around the priorities of a commons-oriented ethical economy.

**The Institute of the Commons**
Such institution would work as a hub for research (since the commons always retain an experimental and ever-changing character), implementation, coordination and dissemination of information, as well as a link between universities, researchers, architects, social workers, lawmakers, lawyers, and others, whose work would be relevant to the promotion of the urban/ rural and material commons and their effective contributions to a transition to a social knowl-

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11 As proposed at Michel Bauwens' FLOK Research Plan (Bauwens, 2014)
12 ibid.

edge and cooperative economy in Ecuador. The Institute of the Commons would perhaps be more inclusive and more pro-active in favoring and overseeing research and implementation.

**Local and Regional institutions**[13]

The above described Alliance, Chamber and Institute of the Commons acknowledge the diversity and history of local cultures and geographies and the three institutions support and recognize the right of local communities to decide on the ways they want to govern their local resources. The three institutions strongly support local, decentralized development and they understand that diverse bioregional economies are more self-sufficient, more resilient, more competitive and less vulnerable. Supported by the three entities, local, decentralized infrastructures will be created to allow regions to become as self-sufficient as possible in the production and distribution of resources, according to the natural functions and rhythms of their environment. Local "Observatories of Knowledge", managed by the community, should be created. They will ensure that the laws referring to the promotion of local knowledge at different legal instances: the Constitution, the National Plan of Good Living, COOTAD, GAD, etc, are being implemented and will follow the evolution of mechanisms to legally protect community commons.

**The Phyle**[14]

A Phyle is an economic entity, a transnational coalition of commons-oriented ethical enterprises that project ethical market power on a global scale. It creates an integrated economy around the commons and guarantee the autonomy and sustainability necessary to commons-producing communities. A Phyle has a glocal approach: while it creates a social, political and economic network at a global scale, mutualizing global cooperation, knowledge and solidarity, it supports the autonomous development of local and small communities. A Phyle is a way to globalize the small and the local.

## 6.2. Public Policies Recommendations:

**Creation of infrastructures and networks of knowledge for the Good Living**

Each community in Ecuador must have autonomy to generate, potentiate and make visible knowledge based on their identities, local practices, histories and territories. The awareness and appreciation of local and community knowledge represents a true democratization of knowledge.

Knowledge should be developed by and to the communities, following their own perspectives, notion and rhythm of development.

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13 adapted from James Quilligan concepts on bioregional economies (http://www.kosmosjournal.org/news/bioregional-economies/)

14 Adapted from the proposed concept at http://english.lasindias.com/phyles-and-the-new-communalism and from Michel Bauwens FLOK Research Plan

The following actions and strategies are associated with this public policy:

- **Promotion of local and regional knowledge communities:** this strategy aims to bring awareness to local communities on the importance and value of supporting local identities and knowledge, as well as on the value of supporting local institutions that promote the commons. The strategy can be achieved through campaigns to value, support and promote local knowledge and local commons-oriented institutions. Government should facilitate the use of public and community media for promoting local and regional knowledge and the commons.

- **Stimulation of knowledge creation by and to communities:** once communities have been sensibilized towards the importance of creating and preserving their local knowledge, programs to stimulate the generation of local knowledge should be put in place. Education programs to strengthen the overall capacity of the community to create local knowledge - which includes the systematization potentialization and valuing their knowledge - should be put in place by governments. Mechanisms to enhance local participation should be developed. Local "Knowledge Recovery and Preservation" centers, managed by the communities, would ensure the continuous creation of knowledge to / from community, as well as that a diversity of knowledge - scientific, non-scientific, popular, indigenous, afro-ecuadorian, etc, including the oral tradition, are recognized, respected and valued by the local, regional and national communities.

- **Creation of an ecosystem of instruments to empower citizens to become active participants and creators of a social knowledge economy**. This includes the facilitation of access of spaces for knowledge development and exchange, the promotion of continuous processes of dialogues for the social construction of knowledge and understanding of it as a common good. Government - through their local instances and supported by regional and national structures - should provide all the necessary means to local communities to facilitate the building of such ecosystem: spaces, training, conceptual instruments to enable citizens to formulate their own public policies. digital platforms, internet access, funding when necessary, etc

- **Strengthening of communautary alliances of local, regional and national organizations working on behalf of the commons and guided by ethical values**. As an initial step, criteria to be part of such alliances should be clearly defined. They should include economic ethics, solidarity economy, sustainable development, commons-oriented, peer-to-peer production and community-oriented activities. A mapping of existing initiatives should be done and be continuously updated by the community. This information should be made available through a website, where any Ecuadorian could see and contribute with further information.

- **Financial incentives to promote the commons**: government should develop programs to stimulate activities and enterprises committed to creating community commons value. For instance, provision of subsidies to enterprises/institutions that promote commons knowledge; creation of benefit mechanisms (coupons booklets, dis-

counts, etc) for those organizations, as well as for customers who choose to supply themselves from those organizations.

- **Promotion of territory-related knowledge:** government should insure that territories and lands are used according to their intrinsic characteristics. As an initial step, concepts to use the lands according to their characteristics should be established, in a process that would consider a holistic view of the cycles of nature, of the territory and of the people living in those lands. Locally-based and decentralized groups should be able to govern their own resources through negotiated rules and responsibilities for fair access and use.

- **Declare knowledge as a commons:** knowledge, in all its diversity, should be recognized as beneficial for the development of the Ecuadorian society and be declared a commons. The legal recognition of the sharing of knowledge for non-commercial purposes is a formal way to accept an economy of abundance and accept a paradigm change towards a "Social Knowledge Economy". Knowledge of community "*sabedoras y sabedores*" should be recognized and must be part of a national policy where not only academic qualifications are quantified, but also those daily practices that contribute to development.

## 6.3. Public Policies on Physical Spaces and Infrastructures for the Good Living

- **Provision of quality basic services to all citizens, through the dissemination of knowledge of organizational alternatives in the provision of those services.** Two case studies presented in the paper show how communities in Ecuador are providing their own basic services, such as housing, in an autonomous way. The idea of getting local communities involved in the provision of their basic services should become a national policy. Some of the key actions associated with this policy are:

  - The gaps and potentials related to the supply of basic services should be identified
  - Promotion of organizational alternatives, such as cooperatives, in the provision of those services among communities.
  - Development of training plans in line with the practices and resources of local spaces.
  - Development of a culture of cooperation among communities.
  - Communities and governments should receive training on how they could co-develop basic services for the communities. The advantages of co-development should be stressed.
  - Implementation of local and traditional knowledge in the relevant ministries, avoiding standardization / homogenisation in the provision of services.

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- **Public spaces should be declared communal property and have a community management.** Public spaces should be recognized as a commons good and their development should be oriented towards the Good Living of local communities. They should be co-managed by local communities, in partnership with the Autonomous Decentralized Governments (GAD's), as spaces for knowledge, self-determination, liberation and equality. As an example, the paper presents how the old Mariscal-Sucre airport could become an urban commons for innovation.

  The old Mariscal-Sucre airport, which was transformed into *Parque Bicentenario de Quito*, a space that has been functioning as an open urban park available to citizens for recreation and cultural activities, represents a grand urban space with an untapped potential to become a prototypical social and productive urban commons for social, community-base and commoning activities, as well as for innovative applications of open knowledge and peer-to-peer production, for experimental open manufacturing and co-operative economy startups and projects, taking advantage of the vast hangar spaces which could easily be retrofitted for such purposes. In addition, the conditions for establishing community centers complemented with communal social spaces, public libraries, workshops, community gardens and other spaces addressing the needs of each community should be discussed. Some projects of large scale might require initial subsidies and support by the municipality or other state funds. Other smaller projects, initiated by communities, could be completely autonomous and self-funded. This urban commons for innovation and social development could house some or all of the institutions (Chamber for the Commons, Alliance of the Commons and the Institute of the commons) previously proposed.

- **Development of digital platforms accessible to all citizens, in both rural and urban areas:** a challenge to be achieved in Ecuador is the building of inclusive processes and tools for internal, external and global information flows. It is necessary to achieve greater coverage of communications and internet services, as well as to empower communities in the use of those tools, by providing them access and through continuous popular programs and shared learning. A key point is that the autonomous governments (GADs) should be involved in all these processes, and appropriate budgets and training should be given to their representatives. Online courses should be offered to community members that are willing to contribute to the development of their communities, neighborhoods, parishes, cantons, provinces and the country in general.

- **Participatory budgeting to finance physical infrastructures for good living:** Participatory budgeting has demonstrated its high value on overcoming inequality in living standards amongst city residents[15] lacking access to public amenities (water, sanitation, health care facilities, and schools) and should become a public policy in Ecuador to tackle the provision of basic services to communities. Local communities, through neighborhoods, regional, and citywide assemblies, should identify spending priorities and vote on which of those to implement. Participants of the assemblies should come from diverse economic and political backgrounds and assemblies should be held in a way to facilitate maximum participation and interaction. Governments should respond to citizen concerns voted in the assemblies.

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15 The first full participatory budgeting process was developed in the city of Porto Alegre, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Participatory_budgeting#Porto_Alegre

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# 7. Concluding remarks

The proliferation of collaborative initiatives that stimulate the creation and exchange of knowledge based in solidarity and reciprocity and that encourage the mutualization of infrastructures through cooperative communities is one of the signs that civil society is looking for alternative models to interact with their peers and with nature.

Ecuador presents a favorable environment for the establishment of a Social Knowledge Economy; the country already has a legal framework supporting its implementation and solidarity and reciprocity practices, such as the *minga* and *ranti-ranti*[16], are part of the Ecuadorian culture. Glocal approaches can bring the best experiences of knowledge-communities around the world and be adapted to local Ecuadorian realities: these experiences are focused in the traditions, cultures and expressions of local communities, while linked with a wider global network that can provide complementary knowledge and support when needed. The presented case studies show that cooperative communities are capable of self-organization and are able to produce systems of knowledge-exchange and of mutualization of spaces and infrastructures through cooperation and solidarity. Local initiatives of knowledge creation/expansion and the establishment of initiatives where local population can co-produce basic services for their communities can be carried out through Autonomous Decentralized Governments (GADs), which provide several mechanisms of citizen participation and organisation through the Organic Law of Citizen Participation (LOPC).

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16 http://www.elcomercio.com/noticias/Ranti-ranti_0_97790361.html

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