KU LEUVEN

FACULTEIT SOCIALE WETENSCHAPPEN

Heritage Imaginaries in the Ecuadorian Andes: An Ethnography of Heritage Meaning-Making in Saraguro and Cuenca, Ecuador

Ana Elisa ASTUDILLO SALAZAR

Proefschrift aangeboden tot het verkrijgen van de
graad van Doctor in de Sociale en culturele antropologie

Promotor: Prof. Dr. Noël B. Salazar

Copromotor: Prof. Dr. Koenraad Van Balen

Onderzoekseenheid: Departement Sociale en Culturele Antropologie

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Abstract (English)

Cultural heritage is a set of meanings that anchor people to a cultural landscape, projecting stereotypes and expectations of themselves and others. In recent years, interest in incorporating culture and cultural heritage dimensions into North-South development cooperation has increased. Therefore, it is relevant to continue exploring how heritage and development interact in local contexts and cultural matrices, considering historical power relations where Western thought has been the authority on the symbolic, ideological, economic, and bureaucratic apparatus to define cultural heritage. This doctoral research is framed within the project *Innovative Governance Systems for Built Cultural Heritage, based on traditional Andean organisational principles in Ecuador* (TEAM-Minga) and the study sites of El Vado in Cuenca and Chukidel in Saraguro. To better understand heritage as a social product embedded in local cultural matrices and historical backgrounds and, thus, to enhance approaches to understanding heritage in the terms and meaning systems of local actors (either inhabitants or researchers), this dissertation asks how the inhabitants of Chukidel and El Vado and the researchers group comprehend heritage as a notion and use it to depict and interact with each other within the context of the TEAM-Minga project. I address this question by building on Critical Heritage Studies, the Ontological Turn, and developing imaginaries as analytical lens for heritage studies. In doing so, I address a gap in the anthropology of heritage. Here, imaginaries are critical as meaning-making devices that navigate how people assume and signify heritage and how heritage displays images and preconceptions that shape identities of the self and the other.

I conducted multi-sited ethnography as a researcher on the TEAM-Minga project and at the study sites from July 2019 to December 2023. I complemented the data with in-depth interviews, informal conversations, and digital ethnography. I analysed the data using open coding and established the analysis categories based on the results. I critically analyse heritage imaginaries in how people depict others and themselves within the frame of the TEAM-Minga project. I also analyse the imaginaries of heritage grounded in official notions, showing how people create meaning through a fabric of concepts and understandings, whereby one imaginary enables the existence of or gives meaning to another.

Furthermore, I delve into alter-native imaginaries arising from the changing dynamics of people's daily lives and other ways of imagining heritage from Andean ontologies. Finally, I go through the learnings, changes, and challenges in heritage imaginaries of the TEAM-Minga, bringing together tensions and paradoxical encounters between Andean ontologies and the Western notion of heritage. By taking imaginaries as an analytical lens and mainly drawing on the alter-native imaginaries displayed in the practices and experiences of local actors, I attempt to decentre and situate heritage reflection in other ontologies. I argue that exploring heritage imaginaries can significantly contribute to articulating practical knowledge and care of heritage in terms of the inhabitants. In this line, imaginaries can be an input to build languages that articulate various disciplines and positions with different claims, motivations, and knowledge frames, improving cooperation projects and heritage.

Abstract (Nederlands)

Cultureel erfgoed bestaat uit een geheel van betekenissen die mensen verankeren in een cultureel landschap, waarbij stereotypen en verwachtingen van zichzelf en anderen worden geprojecteerd. De afgelopen jaren is de belangstelling voor het integreren van cultuur- en cultureel-erfgoeddimensies in de Noord-Zuid-ontwikkelingssamenwerking toegenomen. Daarom is het relevant om te blijven onderzoeken hoe erfgoed en ontwikkeling op elkaar inwerken in lokale contexten en culturele matrixen, waarbij historische machtsverhoudingen in ogenschouw worden genomen waarin het westerse denken de autoriteit is geweest op het symbolische, ideologische, economische en bureaucratische vlak om cultureel erfgoed te definiëren. Dit doctoraatsonderzoek kadert binnen het project *Innovative Governance Systems for Built Cultural Heritage, gebaseerd op traditionele Andes-organisatieprincipes in Ecuador* (TEAM-Minga) en de studielocaties van El Vado in Cuenca en Chukidel in Saraguro. Om erfgoed beter te begrijpen als een sociaal product ingebed in lokale culturele matrixen en historische achtergronden en dus om de benaderingen voor het begrijpen van erfgoed in de woorden en betekenissystemen van lokale actoren (zowel inwoners als onderzoekers) te verbeteren, vraagt dit proefschrift zich af hoe de inwoners van Chukidel en El Vado en de TEAM-Minga onderzoeksgroep erfgoed begrijpen als een begrip en het gebruiken om elkaar af te beelden en met elkaar te interageren binnen de context van het TEAM-Minga-project. Ik beantwoord deze vraag door voort te bouwen op kritische erfgoedstudies, de ontologische wending in antropologie, en door ‘imaginaries’ te ontwikkelen als analytische lenzen voor erfgoedstudies. Daarmee adresseer ik een leemte verbeeldingen in de antropologie van erfgoed.. Hier zijn imaginaries van cruciaal belang als instrument om betekenis te geven aan de manier waarop mensen erfgoed aannemen en betekenen, en hoe erfgoed beelden en vooroordelen weergeeft die de identiteit van het zelf en de ander vormgeven.

Ik heb als onderzoeker multi-sited etnografie uitgevoerd in het TEAM-Minga-project en op de studielocaties, van juli 2019 tot december 2023. Ik heb de gegevens aangevuld met diepte-interviews, informele gesprekken en digitale etnografie. Ik analyseerde de gegevens met behulp van open codering en stelde op basis van de resultaten de analysecategorieën vast. Binnen het kader van het TEAM-Minga-project analyseer ik kritisch de verbeeldingskracht van erfgoed in de manier waarop mensen anderen en zichzelf verbeelden. Ik analyseer ook de imaginaries van erfgoed die gebaseerd zijn op officiële noties, en laat zien hoe mensen betekenis creëren door een weefsel van concepten en inzichten, waarbij de ene verbeelding het bestaan van een andere mogelijk maakt of betekenis geeft.

Verder verdiep ik me in alternatieve imaginaries die voortkomen uit de veranderende dynamiek van het dagelijkse leven van mensen en andere manieren om erfgoed uit de Andes-ontologieën voor te stellen. Ten slotte bespreek ik de lessen, veranderingen en uitdagingen in de erfgoed-imaginaries van het TEAM-Minga, waarbij ik spanningen en paradoxale ontmoetingen tussen Andes-ontologieën en de westerse notie van erfgoed samenbreng. Door imaginaries als analytische lenzen te nemen en vooral te putten uit de alternatieve imaginaries die naar voren komen in de praktijken en ervaringen van lokale actoren, probeer ik erfgoedreflectie te decentraliseren en te situeren in andere ontologieën. Ik beargumenteer dat het verkennen van

erfgoed-imaginaries aanzienlijk kan bijdragen aan het verwoorden van praktische wijsheid en zorg voor erfgoed in de begrippenkaders van bewoners. Imaginaries kunnen een bron vormen om een uitwisseling mogelijk te maken die verschillende disciplines en posities met verschillende claims, motivaties en kennisframes articuleren, waardoor samenwerkingsprojecten en erfgoedbeheer worden verbeterd op basis van nabijheid en praktische kennis met mensen.

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I am immensely grateful for the support network that make this research possible because, throughout this journey, I have felt cared for by many people from different spaces and geographies. Their encouragement reminded me that the most important is building respectful and caring relationships between people and our environment. Although during the PhD, the priorities seem to be upside down and the milestones are overwhelming, ultimately, what remains with me is the love and strength of all the people who have patiently and very generously supported this research.

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List of Abbreviations

AHD	Authorized Heritage Discourse
CIDAP	Interamerican Handcrafts and Popular Arts Centre
CONAIE	Confederación de Nacionalidades Indígenas del Ecuador
CPM	World Heritage City Preservation Management
FEPP	Fondo Ecuatoriano Populorum Progressio
GADC	Gobierno Autónomo Descentralizado de Cuenca
GADMIS	Gobierno Autónomo Descentralizado Municipal Intercultural de Saraguro
ICOMOS	International Council on Monuments and Sites
INPC	Instituto Nacional de Patrimonio Cultural
RLICC	Raymond Lemaire International Centre for Conservation (KU Leuven)
TEAM-Minga	Innovative governance systems for built cultural heritage based on traditional Andean organisational principles in Ecuador
UC	Universidad de Cuenca
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations, Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
VLIR-UOS	Higher education & science for sustainable development of the Flemish Interuniversity Council (VLIR)
WH	World Heritage
WHS	World Heritage Site
UN Tourism	United Nations World Tourism Organization

Glossary

Adobe	A type of earth construction based on the production of sun-dried clay bricks.
Consejo de Allyus	A council constituted by the authorities of the Chukidel, Gunudel, and Ilincho communes to manage community lands and the Raymies.
Anaco	A black rectangular fabric that Kichwa indigenous women tie around the waist as a long skirt.
Bahareque	A type of earth construction. It involves a material composed of reeds or sticks woven together and joined with a mixture of moist soil and straw.
Cabildo	It is the legal and representative council of the community government of the communes in Ecuador.
Capak	It is the president of the community council. The inhabitants of Chukidel refer to the council president (cabildo) as the Capak of the community.
Chakana	A stepped square or a square cross. The Chakana implies a spatial organisation concerning the cardinal points and cyclical conception of time. Also, in the Andean culture, the Chakana means a bridge between the universe and people and balance with the cosmos. (Giovannetti & Silva, 2020).
Chakra	A small orchard next to the family home, where corn, legumes, vegetables, and medicinal plants are grown for daily consumption.
Chashpiska	A traditional music of Saraguro.
El Vado	Urban neighbourhood of the city of Cuenca.
Inti Raymi	Inti in Kichwa means sun, and Raymi means celebration. The Andean cultures celebrate Inti Raymi, the winter solstice in the southern hemisphere, on June 21st. This

	festivity is linked to the agricultural period of harvest and ripening fruits.
Jimba	The long braid that characterises the hairstyle of the Saraguros.
Lagunas Chukidel Ayllullakta	Indigenous rural commune of the Saraguro canton
Laicha/o	Laicho/a: This word is a frequent term for the “white people”, especially the “urban white people” by the Kichwa indigenous people when they speak among themselves. It almost always has a pejorative character (González, 2015; Masson, 2005). In this case, the diminutive laichita shows a relationship of proximity or affection.
Mama Supalata	A ritual of gratitude for tender agricultural products and flowers. The character of Mama Supalata is the spirit of Mother Earth, the chakra, and the corn that is personified to bless each family by observing if they have fulfilled solidarity and reciprocity (Pacari, 2022).
Mestizo	It refers to a diverse cultural, racial, and class human group that involves different spectrums of miscegenation between the populations of the colonisers and the indigenous people in Latin America. There continue to be significant economic, social, and symbolic gaps between the white-mestizo and indigenous populations.
Minga	In Kichwa refers to collective and collaborative work for an objective or interest in common of the Andean culture.
Mishki	It sweet in Kichwa. It is a beverage derived from agave.
Mitimae/mitmakuna	It refers to populations that were forced to resettle during the expansion of the Inca empire.
Pacha	It means “world” or “universe.” The pacha is the articulation between time and space.
Pinshi	This Kichwa term means providing and contributing food prepared for family, religious, community festivities, or collective activities such as the minga. It is a way of collecting the food needed for joint events and

	guaranteeing the redistribution of this food during the events.
Priostazgo / Prioste	They are the people who host and sponsor religious and popular celebrations. The priostazgo has the objective of resource redistribution strengthening ties of kinship, friendship, and conviviality Pacari, 2008)
Raymi	Kichwa refers to the celebrations or festivities mainly linked to the solstices and agricultural cycles of the Andean Kichwa cultures.
Runa	Kichwa means person or human being. The inhabitants of Chukidel use the term runa to refer to the indigenous person.
Runa Kawsay	In Kichwa, Runa means person, and Kawsay means life. The inhabitants of Chukidel use Runa Kawsay to refer to the indigenous person's life.
San Juanito	It is a musical genre from the Ecuadorian Andes with a lively, danceable, and melancholic melody.
Sisashitana	It means throwing flowers in Kichwa and is part of celebrating tender agricultural products.
Taita(s)	Taita in Kichwa means father, but it also refers to the elder people.
Ushno	It is a stepped pyramid-shaped construction, and the inhabitants of Chukidel consider it a sacred space for ceremonies such as weddings.
Wiphala	A quadrangular of seven colours, a symbol of the Andean indigenous peoples, is used by indigenous movements in South America. The wiphala represents the organisational principles and worldview of the Andean people.

Part I: Introduction

Background

This dissertation arises from my interest in three dilemmas in heritage studies. First, the social construction of heritage implies the diversity of meanings of heritage and its correspondence with the meaning-making systems of each culture and power structure (imaginaries of heritage). Second, the notion and practice of heritage have affected how people know, conceive, and represent themselves and other populations and places (heritage imaginaries). In fact, myriad meanings of heritage coexist and are intertwined and in conflict as they disclose competing individual, collective, territorial, historical, and identitarian cultural projections and their manifestations in social practice (González, 2015). Third, people's different positions in the post-colonial and heterogeneous context of the Andes strengthen the analysis that problematises the definitions of heritage in alter-native systems of representation and meaning. Here, it is essential to explore heritage from the link with identity, understood as belonging and difference, and the tie with memory as the existence of a shared past between memory and oblivion. Throughout this dissertation, heritage refers to a social-spatial-historical and situated construction that implies embodiment, meaning-making, identification, and otherness dynamics (Eljuri, 2020; Smith, 2006). The interest of this research lies in exploring the construction of the meanings of heritage from the lived experience in daily life in contrast with the heritage discourses of experts and practitioners in academia, public management, and intergovernmental organisations.

As a point of departure, it is crucial to be clear that this doctoral research is framed within the project: Innovative governance systems for built cultural heritage based on traditional Andean organisational principles in Ecuador (TEAM-Minga). The TEAM-Minga project arises from the interest of the World Heritage City Preservation Management (CPM) research group of the University of Cuenca in partnership with Raymond Lemaire International Centre for Conservation (RLICC) of the KU Leuven in the research and management of cultural heritage for sustainable development.

A critical element in the background of the TEAM-Minga project and, therefore, of my doctoral research is the convergence of cultural heritage and development crystallised in north-south cooperation projects. There is an international and institutional structure where UNESCO is the main promotor of cultural heritage concepts and languages. UNESCO, as an intergovernmental organisation, has been engaged in the culture–development nexus pressured to the call to ‘rethink cultural heritage western concepts and the recognition of Other historical experiences from postcolonial territories’ (Wiktor-Mach, 2019, p. 1593-1594).

I joined the TEAM-Minga project as a social researcher and a doctoral student. While participating in the TEAM-Minga project, I found it particularly interesting to explore the heritage comprehensions and meanings previous to the management or governance of the heritage object. I reflected on one hand on how the making meaning process of heritage could also change how people interact with heritage, its uses, productions, management, and governance. On the other hand, I considered that the construction and settlement of innovative governance guidelines also imply the management of meaning systems and daily practices that produce and signify heritage.

After the first approaches to the study sites of Chukidel and El Vado, I observed that people - either researchers of the TEAM-Minga or inhabitants of the study sites- comprehend heritage in different ways. I also observed that people used heritage to depict persons and places, assuming different expectations and stereotypes of heritage actors. Hence, heritage comprehension and meaning-making are directly linked to how people interact with each other and organise the world. For this reason, I consider that addressing the meanings of heritage and how people depict other cultures through heritage is not only questioning the notion of heritage but also how the process of heritage meaning-making is a constant negotiation. Here, I consider imaginaries to become strategic in exploring heritage within meaning-making and othering processes. Imaginaries are 'socially transmitted representational assemblages that interact with people's imaginings and are used as meaning-making and world-shaping devices. The imaginary is a function of producing meanings and the product of this function' (Salazar, 2012b, p. 864).

Considering heritage as an imaginary made me wonder: What are the imaginaries of heritage and development in the cultural and historical-political background of the study sites? What are the comprehensions of development and heritage entangled in the international, inter-institutional networks and with local actors? How do the interests and expectations of each actor affect the notions of development and heritage? And how has development cooperation, in the case of cultural heritage, faced the colonial background and power relations in the sites where the projects are developed? How have heritage practitioners faced the institutional and academic limitations to address heritage as a dynamic and ever-changing social construction in people's daily lives? From these first questions, I focused on how people depict places, cultures, and identities of themselves and others through heritage discourses (heritage imaginaries). In other words, all kinds of imaginaries are at play in the broad field of heritage (including the study of it) and the understanding of heritage (imaginaries of heritage). I aim to analyse heritage imaginaries and imaginaries of heritage within an international cooperation project on heritage in contexts where history, identity, and space continue to be disputed by diverse positions and ways of life affected by their colonial baggage. Also, I explored the contributions of imaginaries as a lens to analyse and rethink heritage, situating heritage within non-western systems of meaning, ways of being, and inhabiting the world. Hence, the central question of this doctoral research delves into how the inhabitants of Chukidel and El Vado and the group of researchers comprehend heritage and how the different comprehensions of heritage shape the interactions, characterisation, and identification assigned to each within the context of the TEAM-Minga project.

Research Partners and Motivation

This doctoral research is grounded and comes from my personal experience within the development cooperation project: Innovative governance systems for built cultural heritage, based on traditional Andean organisation principles in Ecuador (TEAM-Minga) led by the research group World Heritage City Preservation Management (CPM) of the University of Cuenca in partnership with the Raymond Lemaire International Centre for Conservation

(RLICC) of the KU Leuven. The TEAM-Minga was granted VLIR-UOS south initiative funding[1], including a doctoral student position that I assumed. It is essential to introduce each actor linked to the TEAM-Minga project initiative. The network of actors that formulate, manage, finance, and execute the TEAM-Minga project comprises two research groups and universities corresponding to Ecuador and Belgium, the VLIR-UOS, the financing entity, and me. Each has different scales and roles. But all are looking to work on cultural heritage and its management in contexts foreign to their own. Before developing my positionality and role within the TEAM-Minga project, I first briefly present the TEAM-Minga project, and the actors involved.

First, the World Heritage City Preservation Management (CPM) research group was born in 2007 and composed of professors, researchers, and students of the Faculty of Architecture and Urbanism of the University of Cuenca. This group is consolidated after implementing the first research project with the Flemish Interuniversity Council VLIR-UOS funding in partnership with the Raymond Lemaire International Centre (RLICC) and after implementing the UNESCO Chair for Preventive Conservation (PRECOMOS). The CPM group investigates the following lines of research: monitoring, maintenance, and preventive conservation, as well as historic urban landscape and heritage as a development resource. Since 2011, this group has executed maintenance campaigns with the broad participation of institutions, academia, and local actors to recover minor vernacular architecture and knowledge of traditional Andean architecture. Since then, the CPM has conducted five maintenance campaigns in Cuenca's traditional urban neighbourhood and rural parishes in southern Ecuador. The community-based collaboration and multi-stakeholder experience in the maintenance campaigns aroused the interest in understanding the role and contribution of Minga[2] -as the organisational practice of Andean cultures, still present in rural sectors- to build heritage management models. Therefore, CPM's primary role within the TEAM-Minga is the formulation, management, and execution of the project. Likewise, CPM is a space for training on heritage conservation at the undergraduate and master's levels at the Faculty of Architecture of the University of Cuenca. In partnership with the RLICC, the CPM has also promoted doctoral training for researchers linked to the CPM projects at the KU Leuven.

Second, the relationship with the Raymond Lemaire International Centre for Conservation (RLICC) appears in the foundation of the CPM group as a Belgian promoter in the VLIR-UOS projects. The RLICC was founded in 1976 at the European College in Bruges; it became part of the Faculty of Engineering Sciences at the KU Leuven in 1981. This centre also focuses on studying heritage protection and management from an interdisciplinary, international, integrated, and critical perspective of past and actual practices in the field. Recently, the RLICC focused on preventive conservation and management of World Heritage, based on the adaptive (re)use of historic buildings and places and the potential role of heritage in (local) sustainable development. The RLICC has also sought to incorporate the importance of community

[1] Funding development cooperation in education, research, and social service between departments of Flemish universities and one in the South.
[2] The minka or minga is an Andean tradition of voluntary community or collective work for common or reciprocal purposes.

involvement and has focused on exploring how shared heritage valuing could lead to shared heritage management. Thereby, the RLICC research activities aim at achieving innovative forms of heritage management with local multi-stakeholder processes, organisational learning and capacity building, which promotes heritage as a production factor, contributes to the well-being of citizens and creates resilient local systems[3]. The role of the RLICC within the TEAM-Minga project is to monitor and advise the local research group and, follow up on the project execution and manage the project's financial resources. In this way, the interaction between the RLICC and the local context is through CPM's experience and the projects' results.

Third, the VLIR-UOS is the platform of the Flemish Interuniversity Council and University Development Cooperation to promote sustainable development by supporting partnerships between Flemish universities and partner countries in the global south, searching for answers to international and local challenges. TEAM projects are medium-term initiatives that focus on a specific sustainable development challenge and strengthen the research and educational capacities of higher education and science institutions. In 2019, the project Innovative Governance Systems for Built Cultural Heritage, based on traditional Andean organisational principles in Ecuador (TEAM-Minga), was granted funding under the frame of the VLIR UOS TEAM project format[4]. It aligned with the VLIR-UOS criteria, and the policies related to the call. In this way, the role of the VLIR-UOS in the TEAM-Minga project is not only financing but also establishing the conditions and formats in the application and financial execution of the project, for example, aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals and the Theory of Change. In line with the schemes of the VLIR-UOS projects, the CPM became the local research group, and the southern counterpart and RLICC were the northern academic counterparts of the TEAM-Minga project.

Fourth, the TEAM-Minga project comes from CPM's previous experiences in the maintenance campaigns, sharing interests with the RLICC to improve heritage management and contribute to sustainable development through participatory and multi-stakeholder collaborative work. The project seeks to deepen understanding and activate traditional Andean knowledge of organisational principles / collective management in the South-Eastern Ecuadorian Highlands. The research question of the TEAM-Minga Project is how the academy, along with local and institutional actors, can formulate innovative governance systems [good management] for the built cultural heritage based on Andean traditional organisations and practices typical of local experience and culture.

The CPM and the RLICC are heritage research centres, mainly from the disciplines of architecture and conservation, which incorporate interdisciplinary practices in the projects and educational approaches, primarily through participatory methodologies. The research experience of CPM in partnership with RLICC in participative heritage management set a framework of practices with results even before the project, such as the Model Susudel (Cardoso, 2015). In this line, the TEAM-Minga project combines a social research interest

[3] Retrieved from the official RLICC web page: https://set.kuleuven.be/rlicc/home
[4] Retrieved from the official VLIR-UOS web page:
https://www.vliruos.be/en/projects/project/22?pid=4132

articulating architectural concerns to preventive conservation of the built cultural heritage; thus, the project study object is the social organisation, organisational principles, and organisation drivers to improve strategic relationships for local heritage management.

The project was developed taking as the central problem heritage at risk, linked to a (research on) preventive conservation and insights gained on the role of communities as custodians as well as giving meaning.

The TEAM-Minga aims to enhance management systems to overcome issues jeopardising local and vernacular heritage. The TEAM-Minga state two main development problems which threaten heritage in the southeast Ecuadorian highlands: Local responsibilities and lack of expertise since local government and communities do not have the knowledge and capacities required to preserve their built heritage resources and integrate them into local development and governance policies and the loss of knowledge on the self-design process and collective management of traditional architecture because of the gradual modernisation[5] (Tenze et al., 2023). The TEAM-Minga proposal stated that with the introduction of industrial alternatives for restoring traditional building materials, traditional architecture became associated with poverty conditions, causing local communities to no longer value their heritage, and the knowledge and expertise on sustainable maintenance and preservation of traditional vernacular architecture in line with Andean traditions disappeared (Call TEAM Projects and South Initiatives 2019: TEAM-Minga project proposal).

The TEAM-Minga project sought to build concrete tools that allow local stakeholders to develop local governance models and implement technical solutions based on local collaborative traditions. Therefore, the TEAM-Minga project's results aimed at creating user-oriented innovative governance guidelines. The project TEAM-Minga worked in three study sites, all located in the southwestern highlands of Ecuador. The research team chose the urban neighbourhood of the Vado in Cuenca, the rural parish Cochapata in Nabón, and the Kichwa-indigenous community Chukidel in Saraguro as Test Beds. (Call TEAM Projects and South Initiatives 2019: TEAM-Minga project proposal). Due to the workload, I have decided to reduce the study sites for the doctoral research to two, selecting Vado and Chukidel due to the greater accessibility and prior knowledge of these places.

[5] The TEAM-Minga project refers to a gradual modernisation as using industrial materials and techniques for construction to the detriment of architectural heritage assets.



Figure 1 Location of Cuenca and Saraguro in Ecuador

Chukidel in Saraguro and El Vado in Cuenca belong to different territorial administrations, organisational forms, population composition, economic activities, and urban life trajectories.

- The Vado is an urban neighbourhood in the historic centre of Cuenca city, populated mainly by *mestizos*[6] and immigrants[7]. Several neighbourhood organisations exist in El Vado, but no organisational entity brings together most neighbours and neighbourhood groups. In other words, in El Vado, no meeting space or organisation articulates its residents' various viewpoints. The growing touristic activities and cultural services in the historic centre of Cuenca, thus also in El Vado, has led to a continuous process of gentrification.
- On the other hand, Chukidel is an indigenous Kichwa-Saraguro[8] community in the Saraguro Municipality, and its main economic activities are linked to agriculture and tourism. The Saraguro territory is also going through a rapid urbanisation process. In Chukidel, most of the inhabitants are indigenous Saraguros. Chukidel territory is legally recognised as a commune, meaning the local government is the community council (*Cabildo*). It has autonomy from the GADMIS (Gobierno Autónomo Descentralizado Municipal Intercultural de Saraguro[9]) to manage the community lands. It holds an independent indigenous justice system, and the community assembly is the site of most crucial decision-making.

[6] Culturally and racially mixed people are associated with a mixture of white and indigenous people.
[7] In this case, it refers to economic immigrants from peripheral rural areas or from Venezuela and Colombia in conditions of vulnerable human mobility.
[8] The Saraguro population is part of the Kichwa indigenous nationality of the Ecuadorian south highlands. Most of the Saraguro population lives in the canton of Saraguro, located in the province of Loja, in communes as a legal-territorial determination for the autonomous and community management of the territory and indigenous justice.
[9] Decentralised Autonomous Government of the Intercultural Municipality of Saraguro

A close look at the study sites' context discloses that people, groups, institutions, or civilians who inhabit, work, transit and are embedded in the daily life in Chukidel in Saraguro and El Vado in Cuenca display heritage imaginaries by means of their social practices, normative, discourses, imagines, and representations. The study sites comprise diverse actors and their standpoints that legitimise, value, produce, or dispute cultural heritage as an imaginary and material referent situated in territorial and cultural matrices as an ever-changing socio-spatial production. Hence, it is crucial to consider that El Vado, Chukidel, and even the TEAM-Minga project are heterogeneous groups.

When I joined the TEAM-Minga project, there was already a consolidated research team, and the study sites were already selected[10]. The first year of the TEAM-Minga project focused on establishing study cases and building strategic relations with key actors within the study sites. Since the beginning as a member of the TEAM-Minga project, several questions came to mind regarding the network of actors involved in this project: from what perspectives does Project TEAM-Minga address cultural heritage in the Andean context, what was going to be my role in the CPM, how to approach the fieldwork, and my research interests. That was my first impulse for self-reflection. I assumed a position that would allow me to develop my questions and contributions to an already consolidated research team and face a new academic topic in my professional life.

Research Questions

This research addresses the TEAM-Minga project as a network that integrates the study site inhabitants, the TEAM-Minga group of researchers, and international cooperation agendas. Also, TEAM-Minga articulates different scales, geographies, spaces, and intentions/motivations from where heritage is disseminated, reproduced, and challenged. Within the TEAM-Minga network, it is crucial to consider the active role of the researchers in disseminating institutional and academic languages of heritage. Likewise, it is essential to contextualise the study sites of Chukidel and El Vado beyond their Andean condition as authentic heritage niches for academia and development cooperation. On a local scale, the inhabitants of Chukidel and El Vado have agendas and motivations that determine their interaction and imaginaries in the heritage field, particularly in this case, the interactions with Project TEAM-Minga. This doctoral research arises from the interest in exploring the different meaning systems, understandings, and representations of heritage within the TEAM-Minga project. Since the TEAM-Minga project seeks to develop innovative governance guidelines for built cultural heritage, the doctoral research considers it essential to explore the different understandings of heritage deployed when discussing what, how, in what terms, and with whom heritage is managed. Hence, I want to analyse heritage imaginaries within a complex network of inhabitants and academia grounded in an international cooperation project. I focus in

[10] The selection of the study sites was based on the fact that each of these sites expresses a different cultural dynamic that ranges from urban, peri-urban to rural, respectively. These three cases have been selected based on several criteria, among which is their heritage wealth, not only physical, but also that related to the current validity of ancestral organisational systems (García, 2019; Tenze et al., 2023).

particular on how inhabitants and researchers disclose heritage imaginaries and imaginaries of heritage in the frame of the TEAM-Minga project. Thus, the main research question is:

General Research Question

- How do the inhabitants of Chukidel and El Vado and the group of researchers comprehend heritage as a notion and use it to depict and interact with each other within the context of the TEAM-Minga project?

The use of the heritage notion generally takes for granted the comprehension of heritage, which is usually associated with the most mainstream ideas of heritage. In the context of the TEAM-Minga project, where each actor has a different background, territorial experiences, and identities, the first part of the question refers to delving into the imaginaries of heritage, that is, to the meanings people assign to the notion of heritage. In this way, I seek to shine a light on the understandings and terms from which each actor talks about heritage in the context of the TEAM-Minga Project. How heritage meaning-making is associated with how they relate to the past, memory, identity, and the principles or qualities that fit within the notion of heritage. Therefore, it is directly linked to the meaning systems of cultural and thought frameworks that order and make sense of the world. The second part of the question refers to how, based on understanding heritage, people establish identity referents of themselves and others and how they relate to each other. The actors who participated in TEAM-Minga have used various imaginaries to portray what defines the heritage of the study sites, how it is valued, and how it becomes meaningful. Through these characterisations, people see themselves and others, imagining the places (social and territorial) to which each subject belongs and, therefore, what is expected of them.

Secondary Questions

- How do inhabitants of the Chukidel and El Vado and researchers use heritage to depict themselves and others (heritage imaginaries) within the frame of the TEAM-Minga project?
- Which understandings of heritage as a concept (imaginaries of heritage) are disclosed by the actors involved in the frame of the TEAM-Minga project?
- Which are the alter-native heritage imaginaries identified within the dialogue of the TEAM-Minga project and the study sites?

General Research Objectives

This research explores heritage as a social production and a meaning-making process embedded in different meaning systems. Thus, the main objective of this research is to make evident the diverse standpoints, compensations, and relations with heritage at play within the implementation of an international cooperation project by identifying and analysing heritage imaginaries and imaginaries of heritage disclosed by inhabitants and academia. To better understand heritage as a social production embedded in local cultural matrices and historical backgrounds and, thus, to enhance approaches to understanding heritage in the terms and meaning systems of local actors (either inhabitants or researchers). In addition, I find that exploring heritage imaginaries within the framework of the TEAM-Minga project can

significantly contribute to integrating the dialogues and care of heritage in terms of the inhabitants as primary agents of meaning-making and managing heritage and can also enhance the design, implementation, and knowledge production of cooperation projects in coherence with the claims, motivation, and knowledge frames of local contexts.

Secondary Objectives

The secondary objectives are the following:

- To uncover what the heritage imaginaries and imaginaries of heritage display in the interaction between the study site inhabitants and the researchers and the understanding of different viewpoints, meaning-systems, and motivations during the design and development of a research cooperation project.
- To unravel how local actors display diverse imaginaries either assuming, (re)signifying, and/or contesting heritage in Chukidel and El Vado.
- To bring to light the alter-native heritage imaginaries that arose within the dialogue of the TEAM-Minga project and the study sites.

The three general concepts (heritage imaginaries, official imaginaries of heritage and alter-native heritage imaginaries) and the contribution of imaginaries as an analytical lens are aligned with the research questions and objectives. This theoretical coherence allows the organisation and analysis of the collected data and the structuring of the dissertation.

Structure of the Dissertation

I organised this dissertation into four parts that address the different phases of doctoral research. **The first part corresponds to the Introduction**, where I explain the background, the motivation, the questions, and the research objectives. The introduction includes the first chapter, Situating Heritage in the Global and Regional Scope. Chapter 1 problematises the research interest in the historical, institutional, and global structures of Cultural Heritage and the development cooperation as the foreground or foundation or basis where the TEAM-Minga project, the fieldwork, and this dissertation are embedded. To do so, I briefly review the relationship between cultural heritage and development cooperation, two concepts and institutional structures in the TEAM-Minga project. This chapter also grounds the authorised heritage discourse in the historical and social conditions of the Andes. Finally, in Chapter 1, I also analysed how the institutional and governmental structures work as the background that disseminates and produces official heritage imaginaries.

In the second part of the dissertation, I will develop the chapters on the theoretical and methodological framework for studying heritage imaginaries. The theoretical framework chapter is based on the article: Heritage Imaginaries and Imaginaries of Heritage: A Theoretical Framework to Rethink Heritage from ‘alter-native’ Ontologies (Astudillo & Salazar, 2023). The theoretical chapter goes through the dissertation's main concepts. First, I contextualise the dominant heritage notion and its origins and the contributions of critical heritage studies. Second, I briefly grounded cultural heritage as a social construct directly linked to historical readings, social memory, and identity. Third, the theoretical frame reflects how imaginaries unravel heritage within meaning-making systems. To do so, the last section

of this chapter focuses on the subjectivity-objectivity relationship, cultural heritage as situated knowledge, and rethinking heritage from alter-native ontologies. **The methodology framework chapter** outlines the details of how the ethnographic fieldwork was conducted within the TEAM-Minga project and the study sites, considering the systemic dynamics of the context in which imaginaries are studied, such as the networks of actors and meanings and, above all, the spaces where people and imaginaries converge or clash. This chapter also briefly explains the open coding data analysis using the NVivo software. Finally, I close the methodological chapter by developing my positionality as a researcher within the TEAM-Minga Project and in the study sites. I close the chapter by reviewing the ethical concerns faced during the investigation. The following third and fourth parts of the dissertation have the objective of uncovering what the heritage imaginaries and imaginaries of heritage display in the interaction between the study site inhabitants and the researchers and the understanding of different viewpoints, meaning systems, and motivations during the design and development of a research cooperation project.

This dissertation addresses imaginaries as situated knowledge. Hence, the analysis first required identifying imaginaries in visible manifestations and from what people say and do, mainly based on the participants' standpoints. Therefore, the **third part of this dissertation focuses on heritage imaginaries**, addressing the question: How do inhabitants of Chukidel, El Vado, and researchers display heritage imaginaries within the frame of the TEAM-Minga project? To do so, I analysed the fieldwork data to answer how people establish different identity referents for themselves and others. This third part of the dissertation is organised into four chapters. Chapter 4 addressed the general aspects to consider in Chukidel and El Vado and the shared aspects by the two study sites and the TEAM-Minga project as it is the Andean geographical context, the migration, and touristic dynamics present in both sites. Additionally, I briefly developed the social mobilisations and the COVID-19 pandemic as part of the socio-political context of the fieldwork. In the following three chapters, I developed an analysis of the heritage imaginaries displayed at each study site and the TEAM-Minga, considering their historical and territorial background and the various actors and standpoints involved in the TEAM-Minga project as inhabitants or researchers.

The fourth part of the dissertation is entitled Heritage Meaning Making, which analyses the understanding of heritage and deals with the different meanings, systems, and ways of understanding cultural heritage. This last part of the dissertation articulates the contributions of the theoretical framework, and the results of the field data open coding analysis to answer the question of which understandings of heritage as a concept (imaginaries of heritage) are revealed by the actors involved in the frame of the TEAM-Minga project? I analyse the different layers and comprehensions displayed and underlying heritage meaning-making to do so. This fourth part is divided into two chapters. **Chapter 8 analyses the imaginaries of heritage grounded in the official notions and understandings** that people express and share during fieldwork. I explore the meanings people take for granted and how people explain heritage. This chapter shows how people create meaning through a fabric of concepts and understandings, where one imaginary enables the existence of or gives meaning to another. In this chapter, I will address the articulation between imaginaries of heritage that come from people's experiences and official discourses. This chapter is organised into three main topics.

First, I address the understandings assumed to be part of common sense or unquestionable features when people explain what heritage is. Second, I analyse the understanding of heritage based on people's experience within tourism as one of the main spaces where heritage is disseminated and used. The third point addresses heritage as an identity reference.

Chapter 9 of the fourth part of the dissertation addresses the Alter-native Heritage Imaginaries that have become evident in the dialogues and reflections during the fieldwork. This chapter includes part of the analysis published in the article: Imaginaries of Heritage: An Ethnographic Approach to the Cultural Heritage of Saraguro (Ecuador) (Astudillo, 2022) regarding the notions of experience and resistance that emerged during the ethnography carried out in Chukidel, Saraguro. In this chapter, I ask what are the alter-native heritage imaginaries identified within the dialogue of the TEAM-Minga project and the study sites? This chapter answered the question developing three sections based on the information collected in situ. First, alter-native imaginaries arise from the changing dynamics of people's daily lives. The second topic looks more closely at other ways of imagining heritage from Andean Ontologies. The third topic explains how, in the research process of the TEAM-Minga project, changes are evident, and new ways of understanding heritage are incorporated from the field practice of the team of researchers in the study sites.

Finally, the dissertation ends with Chapter 10 on final reflections and conclusions addressing how local actors display diverse imaginaries either assuming, (re)signifying, or contesting heritage in Chukidel and El Vado. In this chapter, I briefly review the conclusions of each section and chapter and how these intersect. I also include in the conclusion the difference and articulation between the official and alter-native imaginaries of heritage from the social agency, conflict, and contradiction. Furthermore, I also reflect on the research's potentialities and limitations of the notion of imaginaries to analyse heritage in the study sites' contexts, and the cooperation for developing projects such as the TEAM-Minga.

1. Situating Heritage Globally and in the Andean Region

This chapter seeks to analyse the context of the research by problematising the different layers: local, international, historical, and institutional conditions that affect the production of heritage imaginaries in the concrete experiences of the study sites. This chapter has three purposes: first, it intends to situate this dissertation within the international and institutional conditions of official heritage discourse (e.g., UNESCO) and development cooperation, where the TEAM-Minga project and heritage imaginaries are embedded. To do this, I briefly review the relationship between Cultural Heritage and development cooperation as two concepts and institutional structures present in the TEAM-Minga project as an initiative of development cooperation. Second, the authorised heritage discourse should be grounded in the historical and social conditions of the Andes as a postcolonial territory. Finally, I situate the notion of heritage within the historical and institutional frame of the Ecuadorian national state. Through critical heritage studies, I address how cultural heritage has been a symbolic reference in the recent history of Ecuador. This study also deals with how institutional and governmental structures work, such as the background where heritage is disseminated and the place where heritage imaginaries are comprehended nowadays.

International and Institutional Structures of Heritage: AHD and Development

The International Institutions of Authorized Heritage Discourse

There are governmental and institutional structures that promote Authorized Heritage Discourse (Smith, 2006) in a global scope. Historically, hegemonic understandings, legal bodies, and cultural heritage organisations originated in European nation-states during the nineteenth century (Holtorf, 2011).

> In Europe, early legislation to protect monuments and works of art first appeared in Europe in the 15th century. Cultural heritage was first addressed in international law in 1907 and a body of international treaties and texts for its protection has been developed by UNESCO and other intergovernmental organisations since the 1950's. The 1954 Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict of UNESCO (henceforth the Hague Convention) is the earliest of these modern international texts and was developed in great part in response to the destruction and looting of monuments and works of art during the Second World War (Blake, 2000, p. 61).

Since the 1950s, the UN organisation has continuously developed several Conventions and Recommendations that materialised in UNESCO's international guidelines and policies on heritage management and preservation widely adopted by party states (Blake, 2000). In this way, UNESCO has become one of the main authorities regarding cultural heritage. UNESCO increased its efforts in 1972 with the start of the World Heritage Convention, conceived 'as a new provision for the international and collective protection of heritage with outstanding universal value' (Meskell, 2015, p. 6).

From then on, a series of organisations, funds, and guidelines were created to provide an institutional structure for cultural heritage preservation and management. In a global scope,

the institutions and organisations involved in the heritage field are ‘UNESCO, World Heritage Center (WHC), the World Heritage Committee, the World Heritage Fund (WHF), the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS)’ (Meskell, 2015, p. 6), IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature’s). These entities turn out to be a network of heritage practitioners and experts who provide technical heritage language, notions, and guidelines widely disseminated in Conventions and Recommendations. As a counterpart, state parties are countries that adhere to the International Conventions of Heritage. ‘When a State Party nominates a property, it gives details of how the property is protected and provides a management plan for its maintenance States Parties also must protect WH values of the properties designated and are encouraged to report periodically on their condition’ (Jimura, 2018, p. 3). The guidelines of organisations such as UNESCO at the local level are translated into regulatory bodies on the use, management, and transformation of what is denominated as heritage.

The programs and discourses of international organisations have influenced perceptions and dynamics such as the consumption of culture and tourism, heritagisation, and official imaginaries of national identities. Consequently, they also affect how insiders and outsiders conceive local identity. An example of this is the designation of World Heritage Sites (WHS), which demands meeting six pre-established criteria to confer places a status of relevance based on a discourse that promotes a universal and standard value throughout humanity (Frey & Steiner, 2011). In the case of the WHS declaration of the historic centre of Cuenca, a variety of perceptions arose, and not all of them were necessarily in line with the technical arguments on which the declaration is based. However, several researchers (Eljuri, 2020; Hayes, 2020; Mancero, 2010; Molina et al., 2023) have shown that, in the case of Cuenca, the WHS status prompts a degree of pride among the city's inhabitants. Besides, on many occasions, ‘the heritage is associated with colonial architecture even though Cuenca mainly was built during the independence’ (Molina et al., 2023, p. 11). In Ecuador, Municipalities such as Cuenca and Quito have used the WHS declarations to promote city branding campaigns aimed at internationalisation and to encourage cultural heritage tourism (Castelo & Báez, 2015). People get to know official notions of heritages through legal instruments, discourse, and projects disseminated by UNESCO and public institutions, shaping how they imagine different places and local identities and what is and means their and others' heritage. While UNESCO affects forms of local perception and management of heritage on a global scale, local actors and organisations questioning affect official discourses on a local level. Hence, the local actors, supported by academics, have strongly critiqued the homogenous and hegemonic of official heritage discourses influencing organisations such as UNESCO, making them adaptable to more pluralistic visions.

Cultural Heritage and Cooperation for Development

The dissemination of UNESCO's heritage discourse has positioned cultural heritage as a transversal issue within urban planning, development objectives, tourism, human rights, the economy, and other domains. In the case of the bond between cultural heritage and development, UNESCO, as an intergovernmental organisation, has been engaged in the culture–development nexus since the 1950s, pressured to the call to ‘rethink cultural heritage

western concepts and the recognition of Other historical experiences from postcolonial territories' (Wiktor-Mach, 2019, p. 1594). However, since the 60s, the primary concern of international organisations such as the United Nations, World Bank, or the International Monetary Fund was to disseminate a development model still in line with a civilising work of insertion of underdeveloped countries in history, progress, and development dynamics, in a way, development cooperation entailed developed national states responsible for sharing scientific and technical knowledge with developing countries and thus intervening in managing their resources (Criollo et al., 2009). From the 1980s onwards, the notion of sustainability became mainstream, and there was an invigoration criticism of the economist perspective and the growing interpellations from dependency theories (Treacy, 2022), which influenced the development model, including a perspective of adjustment with a human face. This social turn of development proposed the need for social and cultural policy measures in adjustment programs, which international organisations later accepted as the social dimension and framed heritage as a driver for development (Dubois, 2002).

In this way, in 2011, after the ICOMOS Symposium entitled 'Heritage, a driver of development' and the establishment of the 'Declaration of Paris on Heritage as a Driver of Development,' heritage became one of the main interests of the development agendas. In 2015, cultural heritage was included in the UN Sustainable Development Goals and the New Urban Agenda, reflected in both the theoretical-methodological production of guidelines and the establishment of funds to promote projects and interventions under the heritage and development umbrella (Labadi et al., 2021). Besides, several private, public-state, and academic actors mobilised around the premise of heritage as a factor for sustainable development. In 2012, UNESCO consolidated the articulation between Heritage and Development on the 40th anniversary of the World Heritage Convention that focused on "World Heritage and Sustainable Development". Indeed, 'heritage as a tool for sustainable development has almost become a slogan' (Labadi, 2017, p. 45).

The notions of cultural heritage and development have been widely investigated and criticised (Escobar, 1995; Harrison, 2013; Labadi, 2007; McEwan & Mawdsley, 2012; Smith, 2006; Ziai, 2016), in part for the polyvalence of uses and meanings of these terms, and for being concepts directly linked to Western thought paradigms of well-being and economic growth. It is also important to highlight 'the redemptive power of heritage, a technique employed by nation-states and transnational organisations such as development cooperation to lift objects out of impoverished contexts, as a salvation that is not just embellished by oaths of commonality and belonging but also by the hopeful prospect of economic regeneration' (Del Mármol & Santamaría, 2019, p. 121). The influence of national and international cooperation and development projects in the study sites significantly imprints the experience and understanding of development and heritage notions linked to welfare practices. Hence, during fieldwork, the inhabitants of the study sites express perceptions assuming heritage as a profitable resource or label to improve economic incomes directly associated with tourism.

> It is very important, let's say right now, for Saraguro people also to identify ourselves as a tourist spot. That will also help a lot, let's say to the development and conservation of heritage (Chukidel inhabitant, male, chef and restaurant owner, approx. 40 years old, 2019)

Likewise, cultural heritage or development cooperation projects have not always considered power relations historically established in postcolonial contexts and, therefore, the geopolitical implications of foreign actors in the local context. In this line, it is essential to point out that 'despite a vibrant sense that global development governance is under significant pressure to reflect the changing nature and distribution of power, development cooperation may in some ways re-inscribe North-South hierarchies' (McEwan & Mawdsley, 2012, p. 1187). Also, it is essential to indicate the non-negotiated imposition of 'heritage' as a concept and tool of cultural appropriation from national and international academic and non-academic organisations. For instance, international organisations assume heritage as a virtue and features at risk of being preserved or as resources for development.

> For example, administrators writing the files sometimes had to be creative to imagine looming dangers and suggest appropriate interventions to thwart them; indeed, they often still do such creative somersaults even though this is no longer strictly required (Hafstein, 2018, p. 131).

Heritage or cooperation practitioners, or researchers in general, assume technical roles, and local actors are the recipients of assistance. Although the meanings of heritage are negotiated in the fieldwork and questioned by local actors, the themes and conditions in which the dialogues are established are generally predetermined by the technical or research groups reproducing vertical relationships where the enlightened outsider helps to generate capabilities, education, and development in the populations. For instance, as a member of the TEAM-Minga project, I could observe that the TEAM-Minga research group designed and implemented workshops with the local inhabitants around the notion of innovative governance for heritage. Terms such as governance, heritage and innovation are not part of the daily life language and are ambiguous in their purpose and orientation in people's everyday language. In this way, the research group assumed the role of explaining these notions to the locals, and they established the terms of the discussion. As a result, the inhabitants of the study sites perceived and interacted with the research group as if the researchers were the experts on the subject. Several residents also stated that the use of foreign terms confused them and, therefore, generated distrust.

> We have a situation here, you have those conceptions of heritage, and, out of the blue, those terms confuse us, the indigenous people. For instance, there are many technical terms that our comrade was saying like collective governability or governance, a term that sounds a bit scary, like we don't understand it. But, in reality, it is a process of mutual support, and we do it. We don't need it to have a globalised (standardised) title. (Chukidel inhabitant, Municipal Technician, and community leader, approx., male, 60 years old, feedback and listening workshop: Minga of knowledge and for taking care of the community heritage, 3 June 2021)

The TEAM-Minga project takes a participatory approach, both in the proposal and in its execution. This is shown in how the project facilitated encounters with local inhabitants, such as during workshops, interviews, and field visits to study sites.



Figure 2 Feedback and listening workshop. Source: TEAM-Minga. 22 May 2021, La Casa de los Arcos El Vado

The extent of the participation of the inhabitants of the study sites varied depending on each place. According to the results of the evaluation of internal capacities, the TEAM-Minga researchers expressed that the level of participation of the inhabitants of the study sites in the TEAM-Minga project has, above all, remained along the lines of community involvement and consultation (Internal Capability Building Evaluation Report, TEAM-Minga Project, 2022, p. 20). This means that the participation of the people from Chukidel and El Vado has mainly implied dialogue and constant interaction between the researchers and the individuals from the study sites. The involvement of people from the study sites did not mean their direct participation in the project's decision-making regarding the methodologies, objectives, and results previously defined. The people in the study sites who participated in the TEAM-Minga project's workshop knew their level of involvement, incidence, and even their role in the framework of academic research. It is from this awareness that, on many occasions, the people from the study sites questioned the benefits that the project could bring.

> We are Saraguros, you are not Saraguros. Well, I'm not saying that you do not know, you have your own cultural environment, your own way of seeing, and so do we. At some point you are researching, we are like the ones being researched, or so it seems at the moment, it is a reality. We have had conversations here with the council members, and with some community members. And well, after all this, someone will give some funding. (Chukidel inhabitant, Municipal Technician, and community leader, approx., male, 60 years old, feedback and listening workshop: Minga of knowledge and taking care of the community heritage, 3 June 2021)

Moreover, international organisations of cultural heritage and development cooperation have disseminated standardised models of management, conservation, and the conception of cultural heritage and development (Escobar, 1995). Therefore, it is critical not to overlook practices that encourage assistance dynamics in the fields of development and cultural heritage, maintaining inequitable relations on the knowledge production and economic models based on dominant imaginaries that divide countries between developed and developing countries (Ziai, 2016). Hence, development and heritage discourses and organisations face the great challenge of overcoming colonialism's basic structure, which continues to shape identities and socio-economic gaps.

Wiktor-Mach (2019) briefly reviews the link between development and cultural heritage, which helps to understand how they intertwine and operate. Wiktor-Mach (2019) highlights that ‘development has been mainly linked to economic growth, but since the 80s, countries

with a colonial background have sought to influence the global normative system. As a result, countries and social movements, especially in Latin America and Africa, warned about the limits of the economic development paradigm that does not include local experiences in each geography. In this way, 'during the World Decade for Cultural Development' (Wiktor-Mach, 2019, p. 1988-1997), the aim was to 'promote culture as a force in socio-economic development and political emancipation' (Wiktor-Mach, 2019, p. 1597). Despite this, 'UNESCO assumed the development should be rooted in cultural values and traditions of particular societies and development strategies should be 'people-centred, [and] culturally sensitive' (Wiktor-Mach, 2019, p. 1597). However, that statement did not change the meanings, or the approaches of development based on the material/quantitative economic growth, and the main concern in the cultural heritage field continued to be conservation.

Subsequently, development approaches embrace more critical positions that seek to rethink Western conceptualisations of heritage. Development and cultural heritage organisations such as the UN have incorporated more inclusive languages regarding culture and development, seemingly seeking their convergence and territorial relevance.

> In this way, UNESCO widely 'promotes the role of culture in fostering sustainable development as an enabler and as a driver, and there is a growing awareness of the need to secure resources to protect tangible and intangible heritage to be an element of the creative economy, which can be utilised in development initiatives at the local level. This trend may enormously impact the use of heritage by state and non-state actors. UNESCO has also succeeded in mobilising a wide network of supporters of its heritage–sustainability agenda (Wiktor-Mach, 2019, p. 1606).

The National State's adoption of cultural heritage and development of international agendas does not only imply the applying policies that address the dilemmas about these nations' cultural, historical, or economic management. It also means that governments are the official institutions that position imaginaries about national and local identities, affecting matters of collective rights, self-determination, and the territorial sovereignty of indigenous populations. Regarding city management, for example, in Cuenca before the WHS declaration, there was already a sense of urbanity that excluded peasant and indigenous people from the use of public space, which was stereotypically associated with disorder and insecurity (Garcés & Solo de Zaldívar, 2016; Kingman & Goetschel, 2005; Mancero, 2010). After the declaration of WHS, there were enhanced norms to control heritage areas and, in particular, public spaces (for example, the policies of the uses and occupation of historic urban areas in Cuenca), restricting spontaneous and informal activities as street vendors or artists (Eljuri, 2020; Hayes, 2020).

Nowadays, cultural heritage and development are notions taken for granted and mainly associated with official discourses (Escobar, 1995). People hold preconceptions about these notions and associate them with hegemonic uses, intentions, and agents, like the ones from the UN and UNESCO. Heritage and development are notions and practices within cultural, political, and economic systems that depict people and places through official imaginaries. The heritage and development notions are shaped by power structures between actors, not only in terms of north and south but between technicians-researchers and inhabitants of the communities, thus generating distance between those who play different roles.

Regional context: AHD in post-colonial territories

‘The institutional and discursive structures of heritage have operated differently in Western countries versus the rest of the world’ (Falser, 2015, p. 284). In the case of Latin America, its postcolonial condition determines the heritage imaginaries and its identity. There, imaginaries function as ‘unspoken representational systems [that] enact and construct peoples and places drawing upon colonial and postcolonial visions of the Self and the Other that circulate (both within and between cultures)’ (Salazar, 2009, p. 50).

The current reality of postcolonial territories cannot be understood without identifying the impacts of the colonial project and its continuity, which Lander (2000) explains as the colonial constitution of the modern project and Western rationality. In the same way, decolonial authors like Said (1978) and Quijano (1992) argue that the historical colonial power structures are based on the invention of the ‘Other’ with the West. The fundamental factor that guides the colonisation of the imaginary is the differentiation between colonisers/colonised based on the colonisers' superiority and the colonisers' inferiority, who must be civilised and educated within Western rationality. In Quijano's terms (1992), the relationship between the enlightened coloniser and the indigenous person who must be rescued, civilised, or developed is present in day-to-day relationships, reproducing essentialist or folkloric stereotypes. For example, the stereotypes that associate the urban centres as sites of knowledge and cultural production, in contrast to the countryside as a place of tradition and backwardness, whereas the current reality is much less black/white (Garcés & Solo de Zaldívar, 2016). This relationship is also present in development cooperation or academic research processes, in which gaps and differentiated assessments (values) are established between academic knowledge and the knowledge of the local populations.

In Latin America, colonial and pre-Hispanic legacies coexist. The tension between these two approaches is a fundamental condition of the context of the region. The population of Latin America has different readings of history, identity, and worlding-practices, as well as a broad spectrum of expressions, understandings, and representations that move within the range of different systems of meaning inherited by the civilisations that inhabited these territories. The contradictory existence of different rationalities in tension with each other, that combine the matrices of Western and Andean thought is necessary for the existence and expression of the contemporary Andean subject, who has incorporated this colonial tension and a worlding praxis to their experience (Quijano, 1992). However, the simultaneous existence of these two cultural matrices does not imply the end of the colonisation of the imaginary but rather a continuous dispute between the hegemonic imaginaries and the Others. For example, colonialism is evident in the social, political, and even territorial segregation to which indigenous populations have been relegated. Also, other symptoms of coloniality are the continuity of racism and the economic gaps between *mestizo* and indigenous people that persist over time. Likewise, the tensions caused by colonial baggage have also led to contestation processes among populations that do not fit into the hegemonic canons (or do not want to submit to them). Such is the case of some indigenous people who hold a persistent resistance and struggle for their collective rights, territory, and self-determination.

Andean Historical-Geographical Context

The Andes are a social space that responds to the historical experiences and shared sensibilities of those who inhabit this mountain range. These collective experiences configure a social agency from which the inhabitants become aware of themselves and the rest of the world. It is important to note that, currently, the populations that inhabit the Andes do not live in a dichotomy between the pre-Hispanic legacy and the colony. The contemporary Andean subject has woven the different narratives of history with their expectations of the future, as well as their local experience and global perspective. Following, I present briefly the most important qualities of the Andean context that framed the sites: El Vado neighbourhood in Cuenca, the Chukidel community in Saraguro, and the CPM research group that conducted the TEAM-Minga project.

The Andes are the most extended mountain range in the world, crossing seven South American countries (Venezuela, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia, Chile, and Argentina), bordering the coast of the Pacific Ocean. This geographical particularity has made the existence of diverse cultures possible. In the Andes, the human settlements are in hills, valleys, and plateaus. Highland topography significantly affects the vital dynamics of the communities. Besides the geographical and ecological conditions in the Andes, several historical-political milestones have marked the history of Andean human settlements.

In the case of Ecuador, the expansion of the Inca empire was the first conquest suffered by the native populations. Although the Incas ruled in Ecuador for only 80 years, they left two transcendental imprints: first, Kichwa was established as the official language of Tawantinsuyo[11] , and second, there was the implementation of population resettlements under the *mitmaqkuna*[12] system. Regarding the study sites, it is essential to note that the population of Saraguro is the result of these resettlements brought by the Incas who occupied territories of pre-Inca populations such as the Paltas and Cañaris (500 BC - 1500 AD) (Belote, 1998).

The Cañari city of Guapondelig was formerly located in the current territory of Cuenca. The Incas conquered Guapondelig, transforming the town into Tumipampa (Tomebamba), a fort for the northern expansion of Tawantinsuyu (Carpio, 1976). The spread of the Kichwa language unified a large part of the Andean population as a diverse community with close cultural ties based on forms of subsistence, especially agriculture, the Andean worldview, and the language (Garcés & Solo de Zaldívar, 2016)To this day, the Inca and Cañari presence remains in the archaeological sites of Todos Santos and Pumapungo, located in the Historic Centre of Cuenca. The arrival of the Spanish in Cuenca dates to 1533, and the Spanish founding of the city to 1557.

The Spanish colony reconfigured settlements in all their social and territorial dimensions based on the geopolitical relationship with the Spanish monarchy. The colony constitutes much more than a territorial occupation. It also constitutes the submission of native populations to the interests and rationality of Europe. In Ecuador, the elements that shaped the configuration of the towns and the design of the space were the expropriation and segregation of the native

[11] Inca Empire

[12] System of conquest through forced relocation of populations within the Inca Empire

populations, the production system (the hacienda in the highlands), and the Catholic church. These three elements configured part of the spatial centrality and served as devices of ideological and moral imposition (Garcés & Solo de Zaldívar, 2016).

During colonisation, the construction of Hispanic cities materialised the Spanish monarchy's ideological, economic, and territorial domination. The native populations were displaced into segregated villages or absorbed by the landowner system in rural areas, with an economic function of fulfilling forced labour such as the construction of roads and agricultural work. In this way, the populations were differentiated by their ethnic affiliation, origin, and language (Garcés & Solo de Zaldívar, 2016). Spatial differentiation implied that rurality and forced labour were designated to indigeneity, as well as modernity and urban centrality to the white population. These conditions are the basis of imaginaries about the white-mestizo and indigenous populations, both rural and urban. The imaginary of the indigenous relegated to rurality implies a historical amnesia about the achievements of pre-Hispanic cities, their cultural potential, and the social and political disposition of these centres of commerce and government such as Guapondelig and Tomebamba before the Spanish foundation of Cuenca. This selective amnesia plays a fundamental role in characterising and imagining indigenous people as inferior, a necessary condition to justify their subjugation and colonisation. Colonial history shaped the imaginaries of city and rurality, associated with Western modernity[13] and, second, with the traditional, especially in indigenous areas (Garcés & Solo de Zaldívar, 2016).

Specifically, the Vado neighbourhood emerged as a space on the edge of the colonial city, being one of the southern entrances to the city. In this peripheral sector were the people who carried out artisanal trades, such as the bakers (women who kneaded bread), carpenters, and mill workers, who were mainly indigenous. In this way, El Vado became embedded in an area of ethnic and spatial fragmentation intended for indigenous populations since colonial times. Even neighbourhoods next to El Vado were founded as Indigenous neighbourhoods, such as San Sebastián, where segregation was part of the colony's urban and labour planning but also continued during Republican times. Also, during the consolidation of the Nation-State, these spatial and social margins were reinforced not only in the rural peripheries but also within the cities, and the role of indigenous populations in the urban context was relegated to the margins of the city as workers in the businesses of the elites or in domestic service. Although there is a perception of the city as a white-mestizo space, the presence of indigenous people has always been fundamental to the reproduction of urban life, not only as rural providers but also in the services and jobs inherent to cities. Thus, from urban margins, such as El Vado, it is important to consider the ethnic and class differences that have shaped these spaces.

In addition to the colonial period, it is essential to highlight that the independence process (1809-1830 Independence Revolution), being a withe-mestizo political project, did not substantially change the reality of the indigenous population. During the Republican period, both in rural areas under the Hacienda system and in the consolidation of the cities, ethnic and

[13] In this case, Western modernity refers to the geocentric models of economic and urban development and European lifestyles that the elites sought to impose in the Andes (Garcés & Solo de Zaldívar, 2016).

class differentiation continued to reproduce exploitative relations of indigenous populations, in which they were often not even workers but considered part of the Hacienda's properties.

Another important historical milestone fundamental to the configuration of human settlements in the Ecuadorian Andes has been the agrarian reforms beginning with the commune law of 1937 that establishes collective property as a form of property recognised by the national state (Álvarez, 2002). The constitution of the communes as a territorial and legal delimitation of self-determined indigenous towns implied relative autonomy over territorial management and organisation, maintaining their own community government (*cabildo*) and indigenous justice system. However, the communes' law also involved segregating populations and the national state mechanism to ignore the indigenous population (Morales et al., 2015). For instance, the Saraguro population was reorganised between the *mestizo* parishes, the urban centre, and thirteen indigenous communes. Although the territorial recognition of a commune provides relative autonomy to indigenous populations for community management, there is a poor response from local governments regarding the needs and resources of these communities (Valcuende del Río et al., 2016).

In Saraguro, the urban centre is mainly a *mestizo* space; indigenous communes are in peripheral rural areas. During meetings with the community in Chukidel, the inhabitants expressed that there exists a weak relationship with the Municipality of Saraguro. This situation is also due to the mistrust of the indigenous population in the public administrators, who are generally *mestizo* and urban. The inhabitants of Chukidel point out that there is indifference towards the problems of the communes.

> The community doesn't have a strong relationship with the Municipality. It is a very basic one. Through the participatory budget, the Municipality donated materials for the construction of the roads and the community square, but they were materials foreign to the community's aesthetics, which, instead of contributing to the beauty of the community, were going to cause damage. So, there is no connection, there is no exchange between the council and the Municipality. (Inhabitant of Chukidel, architect, female, approx. 40 years old, 17 February 2021)

> Sometimes I believe that the administration recognises that indigenous people have rights, their own knowledge, and traditions. But, at the same time, they talk a lot and don't do anything, it's like "save yourselves". That's how I see it, like they leave us hanging. (Inhabitant of Chukidel, painter, male, approx. 67 years old, February 2020)

Finally, one of the fundamental historical milestones for the Andean populations, and even more so for Ecuador, was the indigenous uprising of the 1990s. The large mobilisations called for by the indigenous movement of Ecuador demanded the legalisation of land and territories for Indigenous nationalities free of charge; water for irrigation, consumption and anti-pollution policies; legalisation and financing of indigenous medicine; basic infrastructure for indigenous communities; the declaration of a Plurinational State, and protection and development of archaeological sites. The mobilisations definitely implied a transformation in cultural and state politics, where indigenous subjects became more active and visible political actors, allied with the working-class and popular sectors. The last two demands regarding the Plurinational State

and protecting archaeological sites are directly linked to the configuration of heritage imaginaries. It was a turn from a discursive construction of the nation as homogeneous and mestizo to recognising cultural diversity and the State's multi-ethnic vision. In this line, on the one hand, the State recognised the ethnic diversity, self-determination and territories; on the other hand, this indigenous diversity represented a capitalisable cultural resource in terms of the economy of cultural services.

In terms of the cultural matrix and the forms of coexistence in the Andes, it is essential to point out that the multi-ethnic composite of the population is one of the most significant and evident reasons for potential tensions and contradictions around heritage in the Andes, where 'the indigenous people have a particular way of perceiving and dialoguing with the past and its material vestiges, far distant from a patrimonial vision' (Absi et al., 2005: 4). The local ontologies of the Andes allow us to understand the multiple assemblages between subjectivities, memories, times, spaces, and identities. Also, they highlight how global hegemonic transformations impact them, rearticulating them and activating new uses of heritage and new ways of conceiving it.

The contributions of Silvia Rivera (2018) on the Ch'ixi cultural matrix claiming that different logics of thought and meaning exist simultaneously in the Andes imply that, although the AHD has been assumed to be widespread on a global scale, in parallel, the notion of heritage has also been contested and resignified from popular culture such as from the experience of indigenous populations, or from critical readings of history and official heritage (Kaltmeier & Rufer, 2017). Therefore, neither in the Andean territories nor on a global scale, there is a consensus on the understanding of heritage, which implies thinking about different worlds with different ways of experiencing. In each of them, there are heritages of those who were usually called Others (Fabian, 2002) and are located under the concept of alterity (Evens, 2008; Holbraad, 2009; Kapferer, 2007).

Heritage in the Ecuadorian National-State

Throughout history, cultural heritage has played a political role in establishing national and hegemonic identities and thus consolidating modern nation-states. Republics like Ecuador have used heritage to consolidate a national identity. It is important to remember that the term heritage was not present in the history of the national state identity foundation. Still, the founding of nation-states consolidated a projection of what we now call heritage. The formation of the Ecuadorian Republic, like many other countries in the region, was promoted by the white-*mestizo* political and economic elites, who sought independence from the Spanish monarchy but were not interested in changing the colonial disposition of power relations. These elites shaped the historical narratives and heritage references of a nation that emerged from the aspirations of a privileged sector. In this way, in Ecuador, the nation-state was constituted grounded on a historical narrative and an imagined national identity representing the elites and positioning a homogenous *mestizo* identity (Anderson, 1991) that did not leave a place for diverse indigenous cultures (Andrade, 2016).

Like other Latin American national states, Ecuador required a unifying discourse, thus establishing a homogeneous identity (Eljuri, 2020). The republican aspiration was to build an

Ecuadorian identity based on a shared past, which refers to a remote pre-Hispanic origin and mestizaje and colonial values that had to be legitimised, where everything modern would be equivalent to superior, while the popular (or traditional) would be related to going backwards.

In the 19th and mid-20th centuries, the notions of culture and national heritage were associated with tangible colonial and pre-Hispanic assets such as paintings, monuments, archaeological sites, and architecture (Eljuri, 2020). Later on, in 1944, the Benjamín Carrión Ecuadorian House of Culture was founded to promote a national identity. The following year, the Artistic Heritage Law was issued, which was later repealed in favour of the National Cultural Heritage Law. In 1976, during the Meeting on the Preservation and Utilization of Monuments and Sites of Artistic and Historical Value in Quito, was built the document known as the Norms of Quito, which states that the heritage assets are susceptible to becoming resources of progress (ICOMOS, 1967). Since the early seventies, the Organisation of American States worked in several areas where popular culture gained a special interest. This is how, in 1970, the American Folklore Bill was adopted, then the Interamerican Handcrafts and Popular Arts Bill in 1973, under whose recommendation the Interamerican Handcrafts and Popular Arts Centre -CIDAP - was created in 1975, with headquarters in the city of Cuenca (Eljuri, 2016). There was already an interest in popular and indigenous culture in the sixties when the Ecuadorian Folklore Institute was formed within a folklorist framework. Subsequently, in 1988, UNESCO adopted the "Recommendation on the Safeguarding of Traditional Culture and Folklore" which would promote an international interest in the preservation of the traditions and handcrafts of indigenous populations.

The national narratives and heritage management embraced the folklore approach to lead the recovery and recreation of the material expressions of indigenous cultures (Andrade, 2016). In this context, what we know today as intangible heritage was relegated to biased and, often, distorting visions, which framed the value of intangible heritage in the folklorisation[14] of culture (Eljuri, 2020). In 1949, the national state program called Indigenous Cultural Mission to the United States, was the first precedent to incorporate indigenous populations into tourism development and, consequently, to the debate about cultural heritage in Ecuador (Prieto & Varea, 2011). The initiative of the Indigenous Cultural Mission to the United States was a diplomatic visit by indigenous representatives to promote ethnic tourism to Ecuador, characterising indigenous practices from archaeologist approaches (Del Campo Tejedor, 2019). The Ecuadorian sociologist Nelson Reascos (2020) maintains that the imaginaries associated with folkloric stereotypes, such as official cultural heritage narratives and heritage tourism, are part of subtle racism that operates unconsciously, alienating the identity elements from their contexts, the social-economic gaps, and the demands of the collectives.

Government management of heritage responds primarily to economic interest. In this way, heritage has been a resource to promote tourism, aiming to boost the economy. Although governmental heritage management embraces a multicultural approach, it does not recognize

[14] Folklorisation is a process of alienation of representations and practices by disconnecting them from their histories, producing their fragmentation, discrimination, and commodification. Although the folkloric approach is presented under slogans such as "recovery of identity" and "cultural rescue," it has been producing a process of emptying historical-political contents (Romero, 2015).

the needs and expectations of the different population sectors (Gnecco, 2015; Žižek, 1998). The governmental incorporation of indigenous populations in cultural heritage debate and management is from a subordinate inclusion of diversity. In Ahumada's (2017) terms, the "multiculturalist" approach used by national states and international agencies to include indigenous populations operates as "conditioned inclusion," in which "the conditioned" implies a racialised dimension. The institutional management of heritage assumes the same protectionist and essentialist cultural frameworks of the AHD while applying norms and actions of the cultural and tourism market (Mújica, 2014). The national state heritage designations function to institutionalise cultural practices and representations of indigenous populations, coopting these representations outside of local contexts (Espinosa & Bustamante-Kuschel, 2022). In this way, the inclusion and participation of indigenous people in the cultural heritage promulgated by the national state does not imply a horizontal or value-free relationship (Žižek, 1998).

> These intercultural and multicultural policies influenced people; they provoked an essentialist bias in some communities. For example, in this community (Chukidel) a statute says that we must attend the *mingas* wearing an *anaco*, but that is uncomfortable, people would rather wear sweatpants. It is an imposition of the community statute, and that becomes counterproductive. They understand identity from a static point of view. Historically, this is linked to the fact that in the nineties we were told how we should be, and the question is: who defines what it means to be indigenous? Now, the issue is that young people are changing. Precisely, in the nineties, the cultural was separated from the political, and, as a response to the indigenous uprising in the 90s, the state found a solution by accepting their claims for revindication regarding their culture, identity, traditional clothing, etc., while claims to the land were left aside. It was, precisely, this cultural issue in the 90s that displaced the political dispute, and, at the end of the day, the state continues to monopolize what heritage is. (Inhabitant of Chukidel, male, scholar, approx. 43-year-old, Chukidel, 30 July 2022).

The government management designations or norms of heritage are linked with strategies to promote heritage tourism, taking, and enhancing a sense of authenticity based on reinvented traditions performed by local acts to co-opts the tourism economic influx (Herrera, 2014). Also, the tourist demand influences in self-exoticising exercises in commodification (Herrera, 2014), as mentioned in the previous testimony of an inhabitant of Chukidel, the community statute demands wearing traditional clothing to attend to collective work for the community (*Minga*) despite people preferring to use more comfortable outfits to do physical work. Another important example of the idea of wearing traditional clothing as an identity marker (Macas et al., 2003) is the need for more youth leaders to take on the role within the community governments. Still, the testimony of younger adults has pointed out that the most conservative views of the community involved in community government do not allow others to take on these roles, pointing out that they do not wear traditional clothing daily. These are examples of how cultural policies influence how people see themselves, creating standards or parameters of how indigeneity should be exercised. However, the *jimba*[15] and clothing are identity markers (Macas et al., 2003), they are not a determinant of identity.

[15] *Jimba* is the name of the long braid that characterises the hairstyle of the Saraguros.

> Yes, and many people, I believe it's the majority, about 99% of people, who think that wearing a dress, or building your house with adobe is heritage. I think so because it's a contribution to the system. It turns out we are not mummies, there are changes of the cultural or economic type, I think that we must accept them with awareness of this matrix. There are people who wear the hat, but don't have the cultural matrix, so these Saraguro are indigenous only because they dress like this or speak Kichwa? (Inhabitant of Chukidel, scholar, male, approx. 43 years old, 28 Abril 2021)

> Andean heritage conservation reproduces Eurocentric cultural and economic domination in urban centres and is therefore an important context that should be front and centre of the "layered meanings" that UNESCO seeks to recognise in its new Historic Urban Landscapes approach—an approach largely fixated on the stylistic clashes between historic assets and modern construction in densifying central urban areas. (...) that point out how a nostalgic modernisation of urban areas through cultural heritage conservation reflects elite longing for an idealised urban past of racist exploitation (Hayes, 2020, p. 3069).

It is important to note that Ecuador has four national sites inscribed on the World Heritage List: Quito (1978), Galápagos (1978), Sangay (1983) and Cuenca (1999). Also, Ecuador is part of the Qhapac Ñan (2014), a multinational heritage site that crosses over Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia, Argentina and Chile. The declarations classify heritage sites of natural interest, such as the Andean ecosystems of the moors, and cultural interest, such as the historical centres. In this way, the extensive cultural baggage and social struggles of the populations located in the sites of natural interest are not part of the landscape or the heritage assessments. This dichotomous understanding of heritage shows the categorising knowledge of heritage. For example, the TEAM-Minga project has a delimited cultural and material interest in vernacular architecture. During the fieldwork in Saraguro, people expressed that the mountains of Fierro Urco, such as wetlands and water sources, are not only a natural heritage but an experiential and cultural one. However, for projects like TEAM-Minga, the complexity of how the Saraguro people relate to the Fierro Urco Mountain, as one of the many examples of the interaction of the inhabitant with the surrounding, goes beyond ways of valuation and classification based on the traditional notion of heritage. In this way, Fierro Urco's experience remains outside the boundaries of the ways the TEAM-Minga assessed heritage, even more so if the research interest of the project is specified as vernacular-built cultural heritage. The Saraguro people's defence of Fierro Urco is based on an identity, cultural and political assessment in defence of their territory and water sources, intertwining cultural, political and environmental motivations.

The WHS declarations positioned Quito (1978) and Cuenca (1999) in the national imaginaries of people as references of national heritage linked to colonial and the urban-*mestizo* architecture. Hence, people associate heritage with colonial and urban architecture, which the central or local state must manage. Thus, heritage imaginaries are strongly related to heritage projects disseminated by public institutions and international organisations (Astudillo, 2022).

Throughout the history of the Ecuadorian state, the notion of cultural heritage had not even been present until the end of the XX century. Part of the consolidation of the nation-state is the configuration of a cohesive identity and, therefore, the need to roll out a series of identity markers that mould a national imaginary. Cultural heritage, as a more contemporary notion,

emerges intending to consolidate these identity referents that have served as a normative resource for the use and transformation of heritage spaces and assets and as an ideological instrument of power to depict populations from their ethnic condition folklorising their traditions and identities (Eljuri, 2020; Hayes, 2020; Mancero, 2010; Valcuende del Río et al., 2016). Here, the impact of the Indigenous uprising of 1990 resulted in the Nation-state recognizing the country's ethnic diversity, unveiling a homogeneous and hegemonic narrative of the populations as main mestizos. The government's recognition of the multi-ethnic state was a way of incorporating diversity into official interests and discourses. In this line, the inclusion of indigenous populations in the state management of heritage is aimed both at commercial use, as it was the initiative called the Indigenous Cultural Mission to the United States, as well as institutionalising and folklorising the representations of indigenous culture with a depoliticised result of the indigenous struggles and claims. For instance, although the official discourse seems to include diversities, it fails to integrate the uncomfortable historical elements that resulted from the conquest, the colony, and the structural violence that the consolidation of the Ecuadorian State implied. Likewise, the national state management of heritage has generated questions about the ways of approaching history and national identity representations (Muyolema, 2007), especially by social movements denouncing the institutionalising and folklorising effects of heritage policies (Hernàndez, 2006).

Concluding Remarks

In line with the general research question, this chapter situates international and institutional heritage conditions that produce and disseminate heritage imaginaries at play within the TEAM-Minga project. This chapter aims to unravel heritage imaginaries enmeshed in the historical institutional and international structures of cultural heritage and development cooperation that have shaped the terms and interpretations of heritage and development terms. The geopolitics of authoritative discourses involves the deployment of imaginaries that frame the centres of power and knowledge concerning post-colonial territories, as well as the awareness of each role in the North-South dynamic to establish relations for development cooperation in the heritage field.

On the regional and national scale, heritage imaginaries also respond to Ecuador’s historical and social background, as well as to the institutional configuration and the national projects of the modern national states in the Andean region. Additionally, state institutions, when aligning with AHD are running the risk of maintaining colonial or biased characterisations of populations and places, which is the case of some historical centres like Cuenca's or even of indigenous populations such as the Saraguro. The introduction highlights the structural conditions that shape the heritage imaginaries on a national scale: the pre-Hispanic past, the Spanish colony, the configuration of indigenous settlements and urban centres, the agrarian reforms, the organisation of the indigenous movement, and the approaches that the national state has applied to the management of heritage. While the contributions of critical heritage studies have significantly addressed heritage regarding coloniality, nation-states, Eurocentrism, and the institutionalisation of authoritative discourse, this research addresses the pending gap in the analysis of imaginaries at the level of people’s perceptions in social interactions and everyday dialogues, where these institutional frameworks of heritage and

development cooperation are grounded in how people perceive and attribute meaning to heritage.

The following chapter presents the theoretical and conceptual framework of this research. Situating heritage in international and institutional structures allows us to understand heritage as a socially and historically instituted construct at different scales. The theoretical framework proposes imaginaries as an analytical lens to approach heritage as a continuous creative process based on people's notions and experiences and as a tool to navigate heritage complexities, not as a preestablished notion but as a meaning-making practice.

Part II: Theorical and Methodological Framework

2. Theorical Frame: Linking Heritage and Imaginaries

This chapter develops the theoretical framework used in this doctoral research. It incorporates and deepens the reflection presented in the article 'Heritage imaginaries and imaginaries of heritage: A theoretical framework to rethink heritage from 'alter-native' ontologies' (Astudillo & Salazar, 2023). The chapter presents imaginaries as a theoretical and analytical tool for critical heritage studies. To do so, I contextualise the dominant heritage notion and its origins and the contributions of critical heritage studies (CHS) to unravel authorized discourses and power asymmetries in the heritage field. The theorical reflection is grounded in cultural heritage as a social construct directly linked to historical readings, social memory, and identity. The last section develops imaginaries´ theorical contributions to cultural heritage, reflecting on how cultural heritage as an imaginary operates and moves and how imaginaries enable the unravelling of heritage within meaning-making systems. Hence, the last section focuses on the subjectivity-objectivity relationship, cultural heritage as situated knowledge and rethinking heritage from alter-native ontologies.

Cultural Heritage Notion

As a point of departure, this section briefly revisits the origins of and context that shaped the contemporary dominant notion of heritage and the institutional shift from an excessive focus on the material to including cultural practices. This research understands heritage like Hernàndez's (2006) conceptualisation:

> The concept of cultural heritage could be described as a social construction, understood as a symbolic, subjective, processual, and reflexive selection of cultural elements (from the past) which are recycled, adapted, functionalised, revitalised, reconstructed, or reinvented in a context of modernity by means of mechanisms of mediation, conflict, dialogue, and negotiation in which social agents participate. These cultural elements transform themselves into a selective representation which articulates itself through a discourse on heritage values, which is specified or fixed in the form of a valuable cultural asset which expresses the historical-cultural identity of a community and can be used for the legitimization of power structures and allows the reproduction of market mechanisms (Hernàndez, 2006, p. 96).

As I embrace heritage as a social construction of modern societies, it is essential to historically situate the contemporary dominant notion of heritage. This section aims to present how modern heritage notions have evolved and operated, even more so when they unfold and are a widely accepted imaginary by global politics and individuals around the globe.

After World War II, western countries faced significant cultural loss (Testa, 2021) and secularisation, triggering the urgency to safeguard national icons (Forero & Hong, 2012). In this frame, UNESCO was founded in 1945 as an alliance to preserve peace and security through education, science, culture, and communications, focusing on strengthening the nation-building processes (Falser, 2015). As illustrated by UNESCO's foundation, the new organisation was to establish the 'intellectual and moral solidarity of mankind and thereby prevent the outbreak of another world war' (UNESCO, 1945). In this context, UNESCO positioned the meaning and uses of heritage to consolidate an identity and historical background for modern nations (Harrison & Hughes, 2010), becoming the leading heritage

institution exalting heritage as a universal value that allows institutionalisation, officialise and categorise the historic-identitarian referents that characterize a society. This heritage practice is materialised in the World Heritage as a UNESCO official designation determined by the World Heritage Committee based on criteria that evidence their outstanding universal value and its exceptionality to transcend national boundaries and to be of common importance for present and future generations of all humanity. Hence, this research highlights that the most popular heritage knowledge is commonly related to the modern nation-state, collective memory, and identity shaping each locality's official heritage discourses and cultural heritage uses.

Undoubtedly, UNESCO has promoted a heritagisation process implying that 'sites, structures, and memorabilia from spontaneous memorials are appropriated as heritage and seen as vehicles for the creation of historical authenticity – historicity' (Milošević, 2018, p. 2). After the Second World War, the wide dissemination of the UNESCO institutional heritage concept began positioning a universal imaginary of heritage over the diversities of Western societies ignoring each territory's cultural, historical, and economic differences. Then, the expansion of heritagisation beyond Western borders evidence that the predominant history of official heritage has rarely included non-western sociocultural processes related to the evolution of the concept (Forero & Hong, 2012). On the contrary, 'non-western heritage and culture are imagined and conceptualised within Western consciousness' (Silver, 1993, p. 317), perpetrating an asymmetrical relationship between the West and the rest. In post-colonial contexts, 'heritage displays, imaginaries of authenticity and exoticism that feed arguments to civilise, uplift, improve, and develop the colonial world by salvaging its ancient relics and sites' (Falser, 2015)In this line, the Western heritage imaginary also corresponds to a dominant notion over the diversities of Western territory that has operated to historicise and pacify the differences and gaps between Western nations. This same political operation has spread to the younger nations of the global south.

Therefore, in global scope, the official heritage notions are related to their political use in establishing national and hegemonic identities that modern nations require for their consolidation. Modern nations have long displayed heritage imaginaries as naturally given, timeless, authentic, true, ancestral, and inevitable, signifying and enhancing the authority of heritage as an unequivocal historical and identitarian reference. In this way, heritage has been a device of the colonisation of the past, guided by power elites and their institutionalised authority (Hall, 2004). Heritage imaginaries, as manifested in discursive practices, turn into devices that shape collective memory, establish borders, and designate identities. Therefore, official heritage implies remembering and forgetfulness dynamics, building historical narratives and collective memory to maintain the social order that governs each social context. Currently, transnational entities such as travel agencies and organisations such as UNESCO and ICOMOS operate and disseminate dominant understandings of heritages based on modern nations narratives as cultural and economic capitals that exalt the nostalgia, authenticity, and exoticism of local cultures (Eljuri, 2020).

The origin and history of the dominant heritage notion established foundational relationships and understandings to imagine heritage as displaying cultural and identitarian imaginaries of oneself and others (Ireland & Schofield, 2015). In this way, official heritage notions come with many assumptions, such as being modern and cultured and the idea that it is an expression of self-appreciation and cultural production. As conceived under Western rationality, the UNESCO heritage notion is based on ontological hierarchies and dualistic distinctions (Pfeifer, 2009). In other words, placing the origin of heritage in Europe defines the meaning and uses of heritage imaginaries based on a dichotomic Western paradigm. As a result, this Western and institutional understanding of heritage entails undialectical oppositions such as tangible/intangible, culture/nature, animate/inanimate, modern/traditional, white/black, and objective/subjective (Eaton & Turin, 2022). Therefore, heritage's identitarian and representational value is crisscrossed by antagonisms that create gaps between who or what fits in one of the poles. Hence, heritage understandings also disclose ways of thinking, experiencing, interacting, ordering, and othering the world.

Nowadays, official heritage notion and heritagisation are a global phenomenon everywhere: in legislation, conversations, or the media (González, 2015), disseminating mainstream ideas of identity, nationhood, and tourism. To an extent, heritage as a concept is taken for granted in daily life and disentangled from its institutional or Western origins, it has become a floating signifier (Weiss, 2007). Each discipline, public or private institution, political discourse, etcetera, has coined heritage as something to preserve, claim, or market. Consequently, heritage holds an ambivalent meaning. Even so, 'heritage appears as a fundamental dimension of all human societies, whether framed in terms of history, ontology, materiality, or identity' (Nicholas, 2022, p. 400).

Undoubtedly, cultural heritage is a complex phenomenon of current sociocultural realities, conceived in the nineteenth century and expanding ever since, co-opting more and more spaces of power and influence worldwide' (Del Mármol & Santamaría, 2019, p. 118). The expansion of heritage rhetoric and practices has increased the interconnectedness of horizons of interaction concerning institutionalised heritage discourses as it is UNESCO's heritage discourse that has a global scope permeating even in the most local contexts, and in consequence, generating a wide range of interests, actors, resources, languages, and dynamics. This dissertation engages within the debate of academia and social movements, which have deeply questioned the Eurocentric roots of cultural heritage, the cartesian understanding of culture, and the ideological and economic interests behind heritage policies.

Different perspectives, disciplines, scales, and spheres have problematised and developed understandings of heritage. However, some of these are more dominant than others (e.g., UNESCO); In this sense, the institutionalised discourses and uses of heritage from public administrators, NGOs, and tourism trends have been more visible and positioned than popular and local understandings. As a result, gaps have been created between who, how, and from where decisions are made about what heritage is, its benefits, and its management. In this way, cultural heritage (CH) has become a broad field of study and intervention, but it is also a field of dispute and inequitable relations.

Imaginaries as an Analytical Concept

> Imaginaries are socially transmitted representational assemblages that interact with people's personal imaginings and are used as meaning-making and world-shaping devices. The imaginary is a function of producing meanings and the product of this function (...). Many imaginaries are structured by dichotomies, sometimes difficult to discern in practice, that represent the world in paradigmatically linked binominals: nature-culture, here–there, male-female, inside–outside, and local-global (Salazar, 2012b, p. 864).

Several authors conceptualize imaginaries from different perspectives (Adams et al., 2015; Gaonkar, 2002; Salazar, 2012b; Strauss, 2006; Taylor, 2002). Therefore, this section does not intend to review the various imaginaries' notions but to focus on anthropological conceptualisations. Thus, I briefly review the notion of imaginaries, its implications, and how this research assumes imaginaries' concepts throughout this investigation.

The anthropology of imaginaries is the theoretical frame of this research, addressing imaginaries as 'representations that portray and signify the socio-spatial reality and oneself and others within it. The main precursors of the anthropology of imaginaries are Durand's (1960) contributions to relational models and archetypes that function as paradigms, Ricoeur's (1986) theory of productive imagination, and Castoriadis's (1987), which proposes that imaginaries are a culture's ethos. Accordingly, imaginaries are 'representations and ways of understanding' (Gaonkar, 2002, p. 4), that shape social interaction forms (Taylor, 2002) dynamics, and ideologies in the everyday world (Carrera, 2017).

Scholars commonly understand imaginaries as socially shared interpretative forms of our environment (Baeza, 2008). According to Castoriadis (1994), imaginaries are a magma of meanings in a permanent activity that defines and executes the world we inhabit. Along similar lines, other authors such as Anderson (1991) and Taylor (2003) point out that imaginaries are a cultural model or a widely shared implicit cognitive schema. They are unspoken schemas of interpretation, rather than explicit ideologies, building 'upon implicit understandings that underlie and make possible common practices' (Gaonkar, 2002a, p. 4)

In other words, imaginaries are how people 'imagine their social surroundings, often not expressed in theoretical terms; it becomes enacted in images, stories, and legends' (Taylor, 2002, p. 106-107). Imaginaries exist 'by virtue of representation or implicit understandings, even when they acquire immense institutional force; and they are the means by which individuals understand their identities and place in the world' (Gaonkar, 2002). They are constantly embodied in social life, practices, and institutions, determining personal identities and the social order (Kavoulakos, 2006). Although culturally shaped imaginaries influence collective behaviour, they are not necessarily acknowledged in public discourse or coterminous with implicit or covert culture (Salazar, 2012b).

Imaginaries arouse and diffuse in everyday networks where creativity transforms the established order. In this way, the constituent character of imaginaries manifests not as static understandings or manifestations but as a constant meaning-making process within collective configurations and identities. Since imaginaries operate differentiation and identification

dynamics, they enable the self-representation of collectivities. In this vein, Chanady (1999) states that 'imaginary meaning-making is essential for the emergence of all cultures. Therefore, Otherness is always present in meaning-making systems and hence in imaginaries. Castoriadis (1994) addresses the otherness and creativity of imaginaries through the notion of radical imaginaries. Considering otherness not only as a differentiation process but also as a power struggle, it is essential to consider the power relations that heritage imaginaries hold. Strauss (2006) states that we should reflect on, 'Whose imaginaries are these? For whom imaginaries are the curvature specific to every social space' (Strauss, 2006, p. 339).

Therefore, it becomes necessary to address the encounters and disputes between imaginaries not as unilinear dilemmas but as multilemmas (Villasante, 2007) by showing various positions, experiences, and interconnected knowledge beyond agreement or disagreement. In this framework, the constructivist entry of social imaginaries (Anderson, 1991; Baeza, 2008; Canclini, 1999; Castoriadis, 1987, 1994; Gaonkar, 2002; Taylor, 2002) allows us to overcome readings that naturalise and essentialise the conceptions of cultural heritage, such as assuming native peoples as entities of the past (Cerda, 2009; Licuime, 2014).

Another essential quality of imaginaries is their mobility. It means they are composed of shared and fluid knowledge; they are in a permanent encounter with each other and can clash with or be reinforced by each other (Salazar, 2012b). Moreover, as part of public culture, 'imaginaries can travel and provide new understandings to individuals distant from their source' (Strauss, 2006, p. 340). These encounters also generate tension and negotiation processes regarding how people create understandings from communities' differences and heterogeneity and the power relations between them.

In addition, imaginaries also function as a collective legitimator of the social constructions of reality in terms of socially shared plausibility, recognising it as reality (Baeza, 2011); that is, heritage imaginaries are not only interpretive and interactive schemes of patrimonial but also of meaning-making matrixes that allow the existence of heritage as itself embedded in each different form of agency (Hill, 2018). Imaginaries as collective legitimators are a constitutive element of institutional and everyday politics. Authoritative heritage imaginaries legitimise certain practices and agencies as a device of social control over identity and collective memory. For example, it has been the case of heritage and the idea of its protection at the emergence of the Modern Nation-State (Díaz, 2019). On the other hand, the imaginaries are meaning-making matrices that comprehend a social-based legitimising action. In this way, the legitimacy comes from the recognition and assimilation that signify, materialise, and embody heritage differently in everyday life and its particular geography beyond its official definition. Therefore, heritage and its social-based legitimacy cannot be subject to translations, alienation, or co-optation since they lose their significance and meaning outside its social context.

Within the heritage field, we encounter imaginaries that heritage actors deploy and the imaginaries of heritage notion. Heritage imaginaries refer to representations of oneself and others deployed by heritage discourses that portray and signify socio-spatial contexts — in other words, all kinds of imaginaries at play in the broad field of heritage (including the study

of it). Imaginaries of heritage refer to the understanding of heritage as a concept situated within meaning-making systems. Questioning what heritage is and means is closely linked with ontologies because it points to how people see, interact, and give meaning to their socio-spatial world. Thus, disentangling imaginaries of heritage reveals how the notion of heritage has been signified or translated into diverse ways of being, inhabiting, and comprehending the world (ontologies).

In summary, imaginaries exist at different sites and scales (Taylor, 2003). They are transmitted via official and popular communication channels, historical narratives, memories, and identities. Heritage imaginaries are crisscrossed by power relations that position some imaginaries, subjects, and institutionality as dominant over others. Therefore, addressing heritage imaginaries implies studying the meanings and perceptions of heritage rather than heritage objects. It involves delving into the signification processes and how people know themselves and the Other. Although several anthropological studies have embraced imaginaries in topics closely related to heritage, few investigations have studied heritage itself through the lens of imaginaries (Bereskin, 2019; Salazar, 2021; Salazar, 2012b; Vera, 2018; Wang & Marafa, 2021). Imaginaries comprehend heritage within cultural meaning systems, stressing how people signify, understand, experience, and create heritage. In doing so, imaginaries lead to complex and relational heritage views (Waterton & Watson, 2013). Therefore, this research aims to strengthen the imaginaries as a theorical and analytical entrance for critical heritage studies.

The limitations or benefits of using imaginaries as an analytical lens in heritage studies depend on the research objectives and the researcher's positionality. Imaginaries as social constructions are not fixed to certainties or unique truths regarding the notions, representations, or meaning-making of heritage, which could become an ambiguous category if contrasted with a historical and contextualised analysis. Still, the imaginaries' flexibility enables challenging pre-established notions and comprehensions of heritage.

The imaginaries lens appeals to a contextual and dialogic understanding of heritage to unpack the complexity of concrete experiences that signify heritage. Besides, it should also be noted that this analytical lens implies a challenge to interpreting what is addressed as heritage and its imaginaries and, above all, the researcher's set of imaginaries. It is crucial to consider the researcher's role in disseminating specific heritage imaginaries and, thus, conditioning the interpretations of heritage (D'Agostino, 2014).

Critical Heritage Studies: Unboxing the dominant notion of heritage

Currently, the 'drawing of heritage into neoliberal governmentality has complicated national and corporations' use of heritage, now commonly seeking to co-opt heritage to political and economic ends' (Gentry & Smith, 2019, p. 1149). In this context, around the turn of the millennium Critical Heritage Studies (CHS) were born against official and institutional heritage notions, considering the side effects on the identitarian consolidation, and recognition of diversities and differences in national historical narratives.

It is fundamental to recognise the prosperous path of critiques and analytical endeavours pursued within the social sciences that have strengthened the critical studies of heritage. CHS's approach discloses several discussions and questions on heritage origins and effects, addressing heritage as an ideological device of power, categorisation, and organisation both within and between nations and as a continuous process of construction and resignification of the past.

This dissertation is within the theoretical debates and is located within CHS, considering that CHS also incorporates the contributions of anthropological approaches, decolonial studies, and the ontological turn. From the anthropological entrance of this doctoral research, I understand heritage as an active and alive social construction and, therefore, a matter of the present (Waterton et al., 2017). It also implies acknowledging that the diversity, tensions, and disputes that constitute heritage have broken the consensus about heritage. Subsequently, several studies problematize how heritage has been embodied, used, practised, and signified in postcolonial contexts (Daly & Chan, 2015). Hence, the anthropological entrance explores current uses of the past that have been crucial to the emergence of new debates on subcultures, new identities, hidden voices, and multicultural discourse (Kaltmeier & Rufer, 2017) in the face of the homogenisation trend.

In this way, anthropology contributions within CHS positioned 'the impossibility that diverse cultures would share the idea of cultural heritage as conceived by the international community and adopted by the Convention' (Arantes, 2017, p. 21). The increased interest in discussions and reflections about the values, cultural matrixes, 'worlding' practices, and ontological identity logics (Labadi, 2007) became crucial to incorporate local communities' knowledge and participation. Furthermore, acknowledging the territorial context of identities and 'the way heritage reflects and constitutes a range of social practices - not least the ways of organisation. In this frame, World Heritage institutions adopted reform measures, which moved the venture from an elitist to an anthropological understanding of culture' (Brumann, 2018, p. 1211).

Although the 2003 UNESCO Convention on Intangible Heritage attempts to incorporate an inclusive perspective by locating at the forefront of the cultural heritage policy the individuals, groups, and communities as the beholders of heritage (Arantes, 2017), it still 'does not manage to embrace in practice cultural heritage from a perspective geopolitical interculturality' (Machuca, 2013, p. 65). As a result, in terms of Hill (2018, p. 1186), 'UNESCO has failed to prioritise these new types of heritage, given they were merely added to pre-existing heritage categories.' Consequently, Brumann (2018) claimed that after more than twenty years of the Global Strategy calling for 'anthropologising' World Heritage, 'it is still overwhelmingly architectural conservationists who pronounce the Outstanding Universal Value visible in the world heritage list and declarations' (Brumann, 2018, p.1225).

In addition, the decolonial studies and ontological turn in heritage anthropology embrace the theoretical contributions of the Actor-Network Theory (Latour, 1996) and explore the values associated with heritage structures that are allowed to change (Harrison, 2015). Ontological turn sheds light on alter-native heritages that 'recognise ontological plurality: that different forms of heritage practices enact different realities and hence work to assemble different futures have demolished the idea of heritage as singular and unanimous' (Harrison, 2015, p. 24). Harrison (2015), as one of the main authors of heritage ontological turn, addresses heritage as

multiple overlapping ontological fields (Harrison, 2015) and argues that 'embracing the dissolution of the separation of natural and cultural heritage enables to reorient and reconceptualise Heritage' (Harrison, 2015, p. 24), opening questions of what and how heritage can have a radical and transformative potential (Harrison, 2015).

The ontological turn incorporates the contributions of postcolonial studies and decolonial thinkers (De la Cadena, 2009; De Sousa Santos, 2011; Dussel, 1994; Escobar, 2012; Grosfoguel, 2018; Mignolo & Walsh, 2018; Quijano, 1988; Rivera, 2018) by emphasising 'the role of hybridity or contradiction in the constitution of cultural difference in postcolonial contexts' (Bhabha, 2012, p. 34), 'through the resistance of binary categories' (Liebmann, 2008, p. 74-75), and particularly revealing the ways the coloniality of knowledge has been embodied and crystallised in colonised territories. In other words, the epistemic subjugation and imposition of colonial logic over the colonised through the displacement of systems of meanings and ways of being, of imagining the world and existence of native peoples (Dussel, 1994). Thus, the revitalisation of the historical demands of excluded peoples such as black and indigenous populations, including their struggle for land, whether from neighbourhood experiences in the urban case or community experiences in rurality, has brought out debates on identity, hybridity, transculturation, and social imaginaries in the specificity of the historical-cultural experience of the continent (Lander, 2000). The approach to heritage through the ontological reflexivity and decoloniality of the imaginaries turns relevant not only in recognition of other kinds of heritage but, above all, as critical knowledge to question as well the current paradigms of development in the face of a civilisational (Lander, 2010) and environmental (Svampa, 2016) crisis, where heritage plays a substantial role in building more sustainable and fair societies (Harrison, 2015; Leff, 2012). I incorporate a decolonial approach in the doctoral research since it takes place in a post-colonial context, where the colonial and indigenous legacies continue negotiating territory and identity. Besides, the fieldwork is also crisscrossed by international north-south relations. I do this by delving into the power relations between academia and local actors in heritage imaginaries productions.

In summary, postcolonial readings, CHS, decolonial perspectives, and the anthropological turn establish an openness to Other cultural matrices where notions similar to heritage may or may not exist in the same terms and meanings. They also focus on the interactions and dynamics that build up local comprehension of heritage. These elements shed light on how agencies relate with the past, identity, and legacies as they enact inter-generational knowledge transfer and how it relates to the national/global/institutional official Heritage discourse. Finally, how heritage has been epistemically reinvented, reimagined, and redefined in diverse geographies (Kaltmeier & Raussert, 2020; Kaltmeier & Rufer, 2017).

The analytical endeavours of CHS embrace that 'heritage is rarely deployed innocently, in the absence of some form of claim toward a self-evident truth that is often divisive or exclusionary, defining the forms of difference it specifies as a function of the past. In doing so, 'heritage functions to normalise and historicise inequalities of many kinds' (Harrison, 2015, p. 40). Hence, one of the main contributions to CHS is the notion of Authorized Heritage Discourse (AHD) elaborated by Smith (2006). AHD has been fundamental in drawing attention to heritage knowledge/power effects. Smith (2006) defines the AHD as a 'professional technical

and aesthetic discourse that privileges expert values and knowledge about the past and its material manifestations and dominates and regulates professional heritage practices consequently institutionalising in state cultural agencies and amenity societies' (Smith, 2006, p. 11). Likewise, the CHS has focused on evidence of the institutional and ideological episteme of heritage as a product that originated from the consolidation of Western modern nations and the political uses of heritage in global scopes, such as the World Heritage Declarations as devices that operate under a western logic of totality and universality.

Other CHS authors focused on 'materialistic perspectives of Western heritage roots associated with imperatives of conservation, interpretation, and display' (Waterton & Watson, 2013, p. 546). Instead, they suggest that heritage should be taken as a social process (Skrede & Hølleland, 2018); hence, how the past is understood from our present, temporary, and spatial experience (Harvey, 2001). As well there are other critical interpretations, such as 'heritage as stand-ins for national substance, other social interpretations identify heritage objects as vehicles for class (Smith, 2006; Robertson, 2008), race (Littler, 2008), and gender (Smith, 2008) identities; or in terms of broader social forces such as neoliberalism (Breglia, 2006), tourism (Urry, 1990; Porter, 2008; Hodges, 2009), or development (Samuels, 2009)' (Hill, 2018, p. 1181).

In sum, this doctoral research chose CHS as a theoretical frame aiming to address heritages as a manifestation of contemporary relationships from a political and ideological reading on the past, memory, and identity. In other words, heritage makes visible and positions certain historical narratives, but moreover, heritage shapes social memory and identity references. Hence, although it is a cohesive element, it is also a device for categorising and controlling people and spaces in modern societies. From here, it is relevant to clarify the relationships between cultural heritage, history, memory, and identity as part of the same network configuring and displaying imaginaries.

The contributions of the CHS locate the notion of cultural heritage in the historical and structural intersections of power from where the heritage imaginaries are produced, disseminated, and assumed. It is fundamental for this dissertation both to assume and contribute to the critical entry to heritage studies by shedding light on the differences between geographies, agencies, and tensions that signify cultural heritage in the context of the Ecuadorian Andes and the framework of the international cooperation projects.

History, Social Memory, and Identity

Heritage is commonly understood as referring to historical objects (products) and traditions (processes) that are meaningful to groups of people and, therefore, valued by them (Salazar, 2021). Thus, this link with the past evokes nostalgia and remembering, taking part in heritage social production as a process of forgetting or erasing historical facts in favour of newly constructed representations of the past (Hobsbawm, 1992). Hence, heritage imaginaries contain 'history, social memory, and identity interpretations and representations selected according to the demands of the present and, in turn, bequeathed to an imagined future' (Graham et al., 2000, p. 3). The meanings of heritage are thus subjective and partly defined by societal

dynamics, including historical tension and social struggles over identity and territory (Harrison, 2013).

History is not a succession of events or a given reality but several interpretations of the past and imaginaries at play. History can be interpreted as an official way of remembering or memory. Thus, official narratives of history are institutionalised devices that settle a common ground to naturalise authority and control social structures. Cultural heritage is an expression of the imaginaries of official history; hence, for example, the cultural heritage of states like Ecuador are precisely the historical centres that exalt the colonial past, the republican architecture, and the heroes and patriots of the independence wars. History is a frame of reference about the past that also shapes how and what is remembered.

Social memory is a filter about the experiences and what our senses register. Thus, memory as a live experience is framed into the historical narrative depending on the person's positionality. Memory alludes to its function as a recapitulation instrument and how people engage with their pasts based on lived experiences. Therefore, memory is bound up in notions of belonging (or not belonging), ownership, and identity. The gaps in living conditions, political participation, or identitarian recognition make memories express and claim society's past differently. Therefore, memory is highly politicised, questioning referents of cultural heritage. Therefore, people construct memory from and in dialogue with power; the experience of life and remembrance are shaped in relation to the historical frameworks. Thus, memory always represents a struggle over power and is therefore implicated in the ‘who decides?’ (McDowell, 2008, p. 43). Likewise, memory implies a relationship with heritage as an evocation or nostalgia in the face of the constant cultural changes; therefore, every time an experience is memorised, it is reduced to a stereotype (De Brigard, 2017)Thus, collective memory also configures imaginaries as traditions and values that are part of a community's cultural heritage.

Institutionality, research, and heritage management dominated official narratives of history to shape memory. The live experience of the past through a heritage based on criteria of originality and antiquity has often frozen heritage in the past, ignoring the daily and diverse memories that are part of heritage's dynamic and ever-changing nature.

In sum, cultural heritage and its imaginaries are configured in the dialogue, interaction, and manifestation of the imaginaries of the past. History and memory are constructed from different positionalities, whether from official narratives that reproduce power structures or from alternative or questioning positions. Likewise, history and memory are configured at various scales, from personal experiences to collective and institutionalised narratives. People's imaginaries not only allude to the past but are essential for the configuration of the Others and their pasts, how they are seen and placed within social networks - and how this is equally important as an identity construction mechanism (Salazar, 2021).

Identification and Heritage

Regarding identification, imaginaries are singular matrices that shape perceptions, points of view, images, and understandings; they allow us to explore how people construct ideas about themselves, other people, places, and landscapes (Baeza, 2008). In this line, imaginaries are crucial to identification. Hence, this research understands the identification as a malleable and changing process rather than fixed identities crystallised in time or as mere cultural goods rooted in the past (Licuime, 2014; Silva, 2010). So, identification implies all the interactions, processes, and imaginaries that allow us to define who they (think they) are – in opposition to 'Others.'

There is a reciprocal relationship between cultural heritage and identity(ies). Identity is how collectives see themselves based on images forged by the actors and by what others think of them. Hence, identity refers to how subjects see, are seen, and interact with the material inheritances they do not control and are "given" (language, wealth, knowledge, dispositions, habits, etc.), allowing identification with a specific community. Identity is configured by cultural referents, demands, and projections from where subjects relate to cultural heritage and (re)signify heritage. This way, 'identity articulates class, gender, origin, belonging, race, etc., consolidating social and political agency. Likewise, identity moves between social frames, building in-between spaces, making it possible to develop new identity strategies.' (Bhabha, 2002, p. 19).

In this framework, imaginaries and heritage is an element in permanent interplay within the configuration of identities, either as an expression of identification/differentiation or as a signification process of how we imagine the origins and shared narratives that unite the community. Likewise, identity displays inclusion-exclusion dynamics (Eljuri, 2020). Therefore, cultural heritage can include and exclude, simultaneously destroying and strengthening new identities outside the status quo (Smith, 2011).

Currently, addressing identification also implies paradoxically articulating the process of globalisation and the claim of subaltern identities (Friedman, 2001). In sum, unboxing heritage implies exploring imaginaries related to identity and memory within the dynamics of cohesion, differentiation, forgetting, or inventing myths and legends that signify daily experiences. These dynamics and heritage imaginaries are grounded in nostalgia and stories from previous generations, and thus, also to the possibility of reinventing ourselves within and between identities, assuming or questioning the social-moral order.

Imaginaries as an Analytical Lens for Heritage Studies

Taking into account the contributions of anthropology of imaginaries, the central assessments of CHS on heritage as social and ideological production embedded in Western logic, history, and international interest; and the demands and interpellations of heritage from decolonial criticism, this section develops three epistemic and methodological axes that imaginaries enable to deconstruct, evidence or overcome in the field of cultural heritage. First, I address the subjectivity-materiality intersection to understand that materiality and subjectivity are not

dissociated dimensions but a single overlapping reality. This is expressed in the performative nature of heritage. Therefore, heritage is no mere exteriorisation or a visible result of belief systems. What the subjectivity-materiality intersection raises is that heritage imaginaries are meaning systems put into practice. Their materialisation, embodiment, and performance are itself the signification processes in action and the continuity of meaning systems. Hence, the articulation of heritage imaginaries to identity, history, and otherness are necessarily territorialised dynamics that configure epistemes beyond their visible expressions.

Second, this axis addresses heritage as situated knowledge from a methodological reflection and contribution. This section develops how imaginaries allow a more complex and situated approach to cultural heritage. In this way, contextualising heritage entails making visible how heritage is embedded in problematics and the social, spatial, and meaning networks. Hence, it is essential to develop contextualisation that situates heritage in social, geographic, and historical realities and thus also analyse how heritage is territorialised and assumed in each context. Based on the first two axes, I reflect on how imaginaries rethink heritage beyond its origins and Western ties. The section concludes by reflecting on how imaginaries are a strategic tool not only to resignify heritage but also to imagine what contemporary societies need to configure identity and social memories that make possible recognition and coexistence from the difference, overcoming the homogeneous and categorising views of heritage.

Imaginaries to Rethink Heritage Beyond Binary Distinctions

Western thought displays ‘many imaginaries structured by dichotomies, sometimes difficult to discern in practice, which represent the world in paradigmatically linked binomials’ (Salazar, 2012b, p. 864). From this perspective, official heritage notions entail undialectical oppositions of Western cultural ideology (Pfeifer, 2009). International or national institutions such as UNESCO and governments classify and manage heritage based on tangible or intangible and natural or cultural categorisations. Official imaginaries of heritage reproduce two essential dichotomies. The first one is the binary relationship between oneself and others. Although the distinction is necessary for identity, western logic conceives binaries as opposites. This creates very sharp boundaries between what is the Self and the Other. Hence, otherness is constructed as distant and antagonistic, not recognising both poles as equals within diversity.

The second dichotomy is the division between materiality/body/physics and ideas/metaphysics/spirit. The UNESCO heritage classification distinguishes material from intangible, and it is not only taxonomic. Above all, it is a stance about how heritage is understood from a dominant meaning-making system over ‘Other’ ontology. In this way, heritage imaginaries are grounded in dichotomic categories that create not only distance but also hierarchies between what is categorised as rational, academic, and expert knowledge vs. superstitions, religion, myth, beliefs, and popular understanding. The authority of official notions of heritage also operates as antagonistic, undermining other understandings (Falser, 2015). Standpoints that agreed with Authorized Heritage Discourse value heritage as an expression of being modern and cultured, assuming that heritage preservation is an expression

of self-appreciation and cultural production. By contrast, people who do not conceive heritage in line with the dominant thought are labelled negatively, such as not being cultured or modern, or their heritage is labelled as 'threatened' to justify external intervention. Although UNESCO has acknowledged that dichotomic characterisations of heritage are problematic, official imaginaries of heritage continue to reproduce old dichotomies and labels spawned by colonial thought (Campos & Del Mármol, 2017).

The imaginaries lens enables us to identify the categorical distinction made by official heritage imaginaries and to address heritage(s) as a relational meaning-making process. We stress that people produce and transmit imaginaries as part of their practical daily life. Imaginaries disclose material, performative, and embodied manifestations in which dichotomies (oneself/Others, tangible/intangible) are inherently experienced and produced interwoven in the practices of the people. History and identity create a common background and sense of belonging for collectives. Imaginaries of heritage are linked to history as part of the social subjectivity that displays heritages to reassure and disseminate authoritative narratives. Identity, then, is linked to imaginaries of heritage since it is constantly performing and socialising embodied comprehensions of history and how people perceive themselves and the others. It is essential to understand that the relationship between history and identity is not only theoretical, but it is also present in the material conditions, relationships, and expressions of self-identification that are reproduced in daily life.

Imaginaries are (re)productions of social-spatial realities, meaning that the subjectivity of imaginaries comes from and is transmitted in the physical/material world through buildings and uses of space, 'representations, interactions, monumental forms—created by people thinking and acting in the world-out-there' (Leite, 2014, p. 262). In this way, imaginaries disclose material, performative, and embodied manifestations. As Taylor (2002) pointed out, imaginaries are carried in legends, practices, ways of interaction, the social production of space, and individual as well as collective aesthetics. Therefore, far from providing an abstract explanation of culture, imaginaries focus on the mutually constitutive subjective-objective relationship. For this reason, Arruda (2015) maintains that 'imaginaries are expressed by means of the images that a social representation creates through the processes of anchoring and objectifying, which associate imaging and imagination' (Arruda, 2015, p. 130). Imaginaries are simultaneously meaning and manifestation. In other words, imaginaries entail traditional metaphysical conceptions and embodiments (James, 2019).

In this way, heritage imaginaries are linked to history as a creative process and can thus be considered an (authoritative) imaginary that displays heritages to reassure and disseminate authoritative subjectivities. Also, identity appears directly linked to history and imaginaries since, through the performance of identity, the collective subjectivity of imaginaries is socialised and materialised. Identity as a representation is displayed in practices, aesthetics, behaviours, and feelings embodied in people's way of being/doing. Imaginaries allow people to self-identify with a group based on shared historical experiences. Therefore, 'identity here is to be understood broadly, involving all processes and products that help people determine

who they (think they) are – in opposition to others' (Salazar, 2021, p. 3). This way, heritage involves history (subjective dimension) and identity (performative dimension).

Therefore, the classification of heritage as intangible and tangible is not only a taxonomic debate but also says something about how to understand the heritage object. Imaginaries enable a complex approach to heritage, characterising all patrimonial objects as symbolic representations (Marschall, 2016) that inherently hold values and historical discourses beyond their material condition and display controversies of politics of representation.

Heritage Imaginaries and the Joint History-Identity-Otherness

Imaginaries originate from people's need for identification/differentiation, in other words, to see themselves as a unity and be perceived by others in a local-to-global context. Besides, imaginaries also come from the permanent and unconscious practice of characterising, situating, and interacting with differences, with how to imagine other places and societies. In this sense, imaginaries analyse heritage as an identity representation that operates in a double sense: self-identity and otherness. Studying imaginaries implies considering processes of differentiation whereby the self and the other are interwoven.

The history-identity-otherness complex aims to make evident social positionalities and intersectionalities. Historical narratives of heritage materialize objects/places from where subjects build their place in the world and position themselves in the face of dominant narratives (Kaltmeier & Rufer, 2017). In the case of post-colonial contexts, heritage imaginaries reproduce colonial power relations in a tense relation with local understandings and claims of identarian recognition. Along these lines, Anibal Quijano (2000) explains that identity-otherness in Latin America continues reproducing coloniality's foundations. Indeed, 'in the context of developing countries, imaginaries draw upon colonial and postcolonial visions of Self and other that circulate (both within and between cultures) through global entertainment media, (travel) literature, and academic writings in disciplines such as anthropology, archaeology, and history' (Salazar, 2009, p. 50).

Dominant heritage imaginaries produce otherness, enforcing how otherness should be seen and experienced (Forero & Hong, 2012). In this logic, 'non-western heritage and culture are imagined and conceptualised within Western consciousness' (Silver, 199, p. 317), perpetrating an asymmetrical relationship between the West and the rest. On a local scale, people simultaneously navigate imaginaries of heritage from distinct cultural matrices brought by colonisation or consumerism (Harrison & Hughes, 2010). It is, therefore, relevant to strengthen the reflexivity about imaginaries to address heritage, avoiding polarisation between Western/non-Western societies as mutually excluded ontologies.

In the case of Latin America, as it is in Ecuador, the modern states founded under the interests of the criollos (Spanish people born in South America) and white-mixed elites located in the historical urban centres display heritage as a device to represent and exalt the colonial past.

Currently, the traditions of Indigenous people have been included as national heritages to change the aesthetics of the national discourse, but not to question the official history of these territories as it is evident, in the case of Ecuador that holds two World Heritage Sites, namely the historic centres of Quito and Cuenca, based on their colonial preservation. Subsequently, in Ecuador at the end of the 20th century, the incorporation of Indigenous peoples into the cultural heritage rhetoric through tourism dynamics ended up folklorising them (Del Campo Tejedor, 2019; Eljuri, 2020). The participation of the Indigenous within the heritage field comes with a series of imaginaries about how they should be and participate in national politics. Although narratives of touristification and heritagisation claim vindication for Indigenous populations, they often end up reproducing racialised and colonial stereotypes as the rural Indigenous versus the urban *mestizo* and the ancestral Indigenous versus the modern *mestizo*.

Simultaneously, heritage imaginaries as situated meaning-making constructs are grounded in dilemmas and problematics of place, such as the tensions between the *mestizo,* the Indigenous, the colonial, and the ancestral as contemporary constructs. The research of Cabrera (2019), Eljuri (2020), and Hayes (2020) sheds light on how heritage conservation in the Andes promoted imaginaries of heritage from the experiences of the World Heritage Site designations of Cuenca and Quito as colonial historical centres. This shows how official heritage displays imaginaries associated with Eurocentric cultural and economic domination in urban centres in contrast with the folklorisation of Indigenous populations.

Despite, the significant impact of official heritage imaginaries, authors such as Rivera (2018) highlight the relevance of perspectives that understand indigeneity far removed from purism. Imaginaries of heritage from the Andean experience question the dichotomy of self-identity vs. otherness. The Andean principle of alterity points to comprehending identity from multiple positionalities, integrating different cultural matrices as complementary or contradictory identity and heritage elements (Vasantkumar, 2022). Young people in the Andes have built their identity by mixing cultural references and stereotypes surrounding them. Here, alterity implies weaving the contradictions and the possibility of various practices of identity and heritage in the same context (Vasantkumar, 2022).

Interconnectivity: The High Mobility of Heritage Imaginaries

> Nowadays social imagination is no longer framed by solid institutions (…) Social imagination depends on all sorts of flows that Appadurai described: tourism, media, universal charity and so on. Traditional institutions, in Durkheim's vocabulary, have not disappeared, but they are in competition with global flows which are significant sites of production of images and emotions (Rautenberg, 2010, p. 130)

Human interconnectivity through media, social networks, and transport has shortened distances and increased the amount of mobility. 'Imaginaries move with people, within media or physically, providing new understandings to people distant from their source' (Strauss, 2006, p. 340). For example, in a significant way, heritage imaginaries disseminated by UNESCO, UN Tourism, and development cooperation agencies carry power relations mobilised by geopolitical and economic centres. These encounters generate tensions and negotiation processes about how people interpret differences and heterogeneity related to their heritage.

Heritage as an imaginary has not only circulated for a considerable time but has a broad scope. The dominant and institutionalised notions of heritage have spread from their Eurocentric origin, disseminating systems of values and ways of classifying, caring for, conserving, and managing heritage to distant geographies and cultural contexts. In this process, heritage communities and places have been portrayed as ideal imaginaries, such as touristic destinations becoming pictures and postcards that travel and spread as referents to understand distant realities, foreign cultures, and diverse people.

Heritage as mobile, fluid, and changing imaginaries reveals two interrelated aspects of identity: on the one hand, what an actor or group thinks of itself, and on the other, what others think of that group or actor. In this way, identity factors are always multiple. Likewise, the construction of heritage meaning depends on a dialogue between local and non-local imaginaries[16]. In these encounters, people select models and forms from the social world and then articulate their imaginaries corresponding to constant translations between cultural matrices. Hence, imaginaries are restructured and understood in different languages and conditions (Rautenberg, 2010).

Imaginaries Contextualizing Heritage as Situated Knowledge

> Heritage as complex cultural construction that intersects with the past, memory, identity, and territory. It is within the heritage context that cultural practices, codified under the influence of judgments, bound together around authenticity, are condensed, reified, and reinvented. (Santamarina & Beltran, 2016, p. 15).

Imaginaries as situated knowledge is deeply entangled with identity and territoriality, shaping specific dynamics of intersubjectivity, social memory, and sense of belonging that (re)signify heritage. Furthermore, imaginaries configure identity territories where specific sociocultural processes occur that correspond to different social appropriation expectations and possibilities. In addition, imaginaries also function as a collective legitimator of the social constructions of reality (Baeza, 2008); that is, heritage imaginaries ‘are not only interpretive and interactive schemes of patrimonial but also of meaning-making matrixes that allow the existence of heritage as itself embedded in each different form of agency’ (Hill, 2018, p.1180). Thus, anchoring imaginaries to local agencies enables' redefining ontological, epistemological, and anthropological problematics’ (Adams et al., 2015, p. 16). In this way ‘social imaginaries field provide rich, non-reductive understandings of the multi-faceted aspects of contemporary worlds´ (Adams et al., 2015, p. 16). Analysing the context as a social network that links people, the environment, and its organisation allows us to delve into the changing dynamics that

[16] The local and the non-local, rather than being exclusionary social and territorial spaces where people move, is a spectrum of proximity, identification, distance, and differentiation. The local and the non-local also depend on scales. For example, the TEAM-Minga researchers are locals in the Andes' national or regional context, and within the international partnership with the RRLIC, the University of Cuenca is characterized as the ‘local University’. However, the TEAM-Minga researchers are non-local actors in relation to the study sites. Another example is that people in both study sites no longer live in those places but continue interacting with the neighbourhood or community; they keep their sense of belonging to the place and to a collective identity either as Vadeños or Saraguros. They can, thus, be conceived as both local and non-local actors.

produce and spread imaginaries of heritage.

For the last forty years, supranational agents such as UNESCO and commercial stakeholders (tourism, advertising) have highly mediatised heritage, which has had a profound deterritorialising effect (Hernàndez, 2006). Within this context, we focus on the need to situate and contextualise heritage practices and meaning-making processes. Imaginaries serve as a lens to make visible the structures and contexts in which heritages are produced, displayed, and experienced (Strauss, 2006). The ethnographic fieldwork on imaginaries provides a non-reductive understandings of the multi-faceted aspects of contemporary societies (Adams et al., 2015). By analysing the context as a social network that links people with the environment allows us to delve into the changing dynamics that produce and spread heritage imaginaries and imaginaries of heritage.
Imaginaries enable us to retrace where the mainstream ideas and images about heritage originate, laying bare underlying power relations. In this way, imaginaries contribute to a more complex contextualisation. By questioning how realities are created, this analytical lens maintains a critical view of both objects and practices (Akor, 2015). For example, the problematisation of heritage in the Andes raises questions such as how local actors participate in identity politics and intercultural organisations to create new forms of identification and negotiate the fluid boundaries of their constituencies (Rappaport, 2007), how contextualised heritage and cultural discourses within a colonial system characterised by ethnic classifications were explicitly recognised as operating simultaneously as tools for domination and as vehicles for resistance (Rappaport, 2002), how the notion of heritage became a central input for political revindications from the basis (Kaltmeier & Rufer, 2017), and how the uses of past and history constitute heritage imaginaries.

Contextualisation necessarily implies problematising social reality. This means disentangling the borders, location, historical trajectories, tensions, sense of belonging, and meaning-making systems that enable distinct positions, demands, and disputes to coexist. Hernàndez (2006, p. 94) points out that it is important to ‘problematise the imagined community as a space of symbolic disputes and negotiations through which individuals and groups try to annex things global to their practices of modernity’. Therefore, contextualisation reveals communities and imaginaries as disputed fields that demystify communities' homogeneity. For instance, heritage declarations project a homogeneous imaginary of heritage communities and sites. In this way, the myth of homogeneity becomes visible and, in turn, contributes to overcoming essentialist views that anchor collectives’ existence, identity, and heritage to a fixed cultural, temporal, and economic condition in an immutable and unique way. Instead, imaginaries contextualize heritage to understand that identities are fluid socio-cultural realities created and continuously recreated (Falcón, 2002).

As a methodological contribution, contextualisation and anthropological reflexivity focus on the fact that imaginaries reside in sociocultural experience, people’s apprehension of the world, and their interpretations within the inherent relation between facts and meanings (Carrera, 2017). This means that imaginaries are also part of the material and social reality.

Finally, imaginaries as a problematisation lens contribute ontologically and methodologically to cultural heritage. Addressing heritage-as-imaginaries implies systematically understanding each culture's social complexity and epistemic constructs, providing a situational and embodied context (Latour, 1996) that can be disentangled through ethnographic and historical methods. Thus, contextualizing heritage imaginaries enables a constant reinvention of identity and territory. Akor (2015, p. 78) mentions that 'problematisation as an approach will continually reconstitute our ways to inhabit and our scope of knowledge'. Also, Harrison (2015, p. 24) highlights that 'imaginaries address how heritage practices enact different realities and work to assemble different futures, breaking the idea of singular and unanimous heritage'. In this way, imaginaries ground heritage in a territory constituted by a heterogenous social corpus transmitted from generation to generation (Santamarina & Beltran, 2016) but also hold the complexity of standpoints, tensions, and controversies within the societies that signify those heritages. Hence, to contextualise imaginaries bring to light the multiple positions, tensions, and controversies within societies that signify, practice, and (re)produce heritage imaginaries in diverse ways as part of one context (Vasantkumar, 2022). These multiple imaginaries are linked to different rationalities, practices, and scales, such as the local scale (rooted in an Andean worldview), a global scale (for the commercialisation of tourism), or the national scale (for multiculturalist discourses).

Imaginaries as an analytical lens allow problematising heritage, providing a situational and embodied context that can be disentangled through ethnographic and historical methods. Here, we highlight three outputs of contextualizing heritage as situated knowledge: (1) to demystify essentialist heritage imaginaries and heritage as a homogeneous representation of collectivities; (2) to enhance the analyses on the existence of multiple rationalities implies delving into the interaction and correspondence of multiple imaginaries of heritage and heritage imaginaries; and (3) to problematize the disputes, negotiations, and tensions that arise from the multiplicities of people's positionalities.

Imaginaries Beyond Western Ontologies

> Social imaginary unleashes phenomenological questions of the world open onto interrogations of the ontological conditions of human modes of being-in-the-world and the forms of meaning of the multi-faceted aspects of contemporary worlds doing justice to varieties of rationality (Adams et al., 2015, p. 15).

The first two sections of this chapter addressed imaginaries as a reflexive tool, questioning notions of heritage as taken for granted and retracing how these notions have been configured and moved between different ontologies. Imaginaries play a pivotal role in placing heritage in other cultural contexts. Imaginaries make it possible to reflect critically and be aware of ideas taken for granted to rethink heritage in other contexts and, therefore, in other ontologies and epistemologies. Here, contextualizing heritage imaginaries permits us to move between cultural matrices and assess how heritage imaginaries and imaginaries of heritage change. Gaonkar (2002) and Castoriadis (1994) highlighted the changes that imaginaries undergo, insisting on imaginaries' transformative and creative capacity. Imaginaries place heritage in other contexts and show how these are configured as new meanings with different implications.

Considering the pluralities of modern societies, heritage imaginaries circulate between different universes of meaning, histories, and socio-political positions. Thus, Gaonkar (1999) refers to alternative modernities as 'cultural ontologies of multiple civilisations to arrive at a portrait of various modernities' (Adams et al., 2015, p. 40). Hence, imaginaries allow us to explore how meaning-making systems function as alternative, peripheral epistemologies. While alter-native subjects claim non-hegemonic frameworks, they also configure, assume, question, or signify heritage imaginaries. Moreover, placing heritage imaginaries in alternative cultural matrices implies an analysis that acknowledges the interconnectivity and fluidity with which imaginaries circulate inside and outside heritage communities.

Harrison (2015) is one of the leading pioneers working on heritage ontologies and contextualizing them in non-western cultural matrices, always in dialogue with AHD geopolitics. The (official) cultural heritage discourse is dissonant with Indigenous people's ontologies since the foundation of cultural heritage reproduces modern Western thought in contradiction with otherness in postcolonial geographies. Harrison addresses heritage as multiple overlapping ontological fields and argues that, for example, 'embracing the dissolution of the separation of natural and cultural heritage enables one to reorient and reconceptualize Heritage' (2015, p. 24), opening questions of what and how heritage can have radical and transformative potential.

Imaginaries of heritage and heritage imaginaries circulate between different rationalities, histories, and socio-political positions. In doing so, imaginaries unleash interrogations on human modes of being-in-the-world and the forms of the meaning of the multi-faceted aspects of contemporary worlds doing justice to varieties of rationality (Adams et al., 2015). Here alter-native ontologies are other ways of comprehending people's identity as distant from authorized heritage preconceptions. They are mainly based on local experiences that change the terms and conditions to understand heritage as a situated knowledge instead of a mainstream idea. Here, as other authors I insist on imaginaries' transformative and creative capacity (Castoriadis, 1994; Gaonkar, 2002) embedded in modern societies' pluralities.

It is essential to remark that exploring diversity has long been an interest of authorized heritage. In contrast, addressing imaginaries in the heritage field presents diverse plausible ontologies rather than relativist understandings. Thus, exploring alter-native imaginaries in a local context reveals how various practices coexist in the same context. Moreover, alter-native imaginaries such as the Andean cultures' alterity principle, call us to focus on the interaction, coexistence and movement between different meaning systems and representations rather than on the production of Otherness that multiculturalism incites.

> Alter-native imaginaries, then, are based on different entry-points and standpoints, opening space for varying degrees of self-reflexion (...) Creating alter-native heritage imaginaries means reframing the ontology of heritage to allow people to think and act untethered by authorized heritage discourses. Alter-native imaginaries encourage re-interpreting heritage to uncover hidden or obscured values and meanings, and to de-essentialize existing ones. They create contexts for thinking and enabling different

> heritage ethics while remaining critically cognizant of hegemonic discourses. (Salazar, 2021, p. 4).

Here, it is decisive that (re)imagining heritage beyond Western ontologies does not fall into the assumption that rationalities and ways of being and doing the world are essentialised in search of difference. Instead, it means exploring other, and local, forms of modernity[17], reinventing the ancient, and reclaiming the contemporary. Rivera (2018) and Vasantkumar (2022) precisely remark that the analysis of societies should evidence the different practical and symbolic ways of making the world that coexist. Hence, exploring alter-native heritage imaginaries is not stereotyping the Other, but politicising new ways of making or questioning heritage.

As mentioned before, authorized or dominant heritage tends to naturalize the existence of groups to give a sense of precedence and continuity, displacing the political dimension, the inequalities, and the differences that configure society (Kingman & Goetschel, 2005). However, subaltern subjects display imaginaries that call to recover the political dimension of heritage, linking it to historical and collective claims such as the right for territory, autonomy, social and economic justice, self-determination, and the rights of nature. Imaginaries claiming social revindication highlight that the meaning-making of heritage must come from the difference, the fissures, and the gaps that contest the memory and the space and resources of territory and society.

In summary, the ontological and reflexive aspects of imaginaries, together with the contributions of CHS (Critical Heritage Studies), decolonial perspectives, and the anthropological turn, establish an openness to focus the study of heritage on the interactions and dynamics that build up local and alter-native comprehensions of heritage. However, overcoming institutionalised notions of what is assumed as heritage requires a change of perspective, thus shifting the locus of enunciation and production of heritage imaginaries. Therefore, it is critical to shed light on how people relate to the past, identity, and legacies as they enact inter-generational knowledge transfer and the relation with the national/global/institutional official heritage discourse. Finally, heritage is being epistemically reinvented, reimagined, and redefined in diverse geographies (Kaltmeier & Raussert, 2020; Kaltmeier & Rufer, 2017).

Concluding remarks

This chapter provided the theoretical framework to understand heritage imaginaries as social constructs and dynamic meaning-making processes in permanent negotiation and change for each society's identity, history, and memory. I first examined the dominant notions of heritage, origins, and politics from a historical perspective, as they have been the official discourses of UNESCO, modern nations, and travel agencies. Second, imaginaries allow us to identify the holistic understanding of heritage as situated collective knowledge and manifestations.

[17] I am referring to the various ways societies reemerged after the period and paradigm of Western modernity between the Renaissance and the Enlightenment, taking as an essential reference the conquest of America and coloniality as part of the modern project (Clavo, 2016).

Imaginaries will enable us to intertwine heritage meaning-making with the ontologies of each culture. Therefore, heritage is understanding a place, its temporality, history, and collectivity. Addressing heritage imaginaries also implies taking diverse ontologies into account. Third, exploring heritage imaginaries demands incorporating the CHS's contributions to developing a transversal and historical analysis of power relations in heritage studies. Hence, this research considers that heritage imaginaries are traversed by historical structures of colonial, geopolitical, economic, and symbolic power between Western power centres and non-Western societies.

Since imaginaries operate as meaning-making systems or socially shared interpretative forms, embodied and reproduced in everyday life and language, they enable us to render visible heritage imaginaries displayed within social networks such as the TEAM-Minga, Chukidel, and El Vado. The theoretical framework proposes that the analysis of heritage imaginaries should consider the following three axes. First, addressing heritage-as-imaginaries implies acknowledging that the intersections of subjectivity-materiality, history-identity-otherness, and mobility-interconnectivity are constitutive conditions and interconnected aspects of heritage as a dynamic and changing social construct. Second, heritage imaginaries are undeniably situated knowledge. This means that they are created and reproduced in a social-spatial reality where the objective/corporal experience enables the existence and significance of heritage. Therefore, heritage as situated knowledge involves intersectionalities and places that inhabit each actor. In this way, problematisation entails researching heritage imaginaries, considering power networks and place, social, historical, and economic tensions and inequalities that demystify communities as homogeneous entities and present them as contested entities. Third, imaginaries allow heritage to be placed outside of Western ontologies. Imaginaries as systems of meaning and representation allow moving from criticism to resignification and creating new understandings of heritage that call for other relationships between people, the environment, and their (hi)stories. Within this research, I consider that inhabitants can also hold other imaginaries not necessarily linked with the notion of heritage, which operate as an identitarian and collective reference, and also build history and memory grounded in meaning-making systems and worlding practices.

It is essential to highlight that although there are AHD, local actors are not passive recipients of top-down discursive constructions. Instead, it is fundamental to consider the agency of local actors, either enhancing and embracing official discourses or finding diverse and creative ways to re-appropriate or contest them. The social production of the meanings and representations of heritage results from interactions between different people. In the following chapters, I will develop precisely how local actors, based on their own experiences, are active agents in creating meaning for heritage.

In this context, social imaginaries' reflexivity and situated-knowledge approach acknowledge lifelong resistances in post-colonial contexts, where the traditional notions of heritage have been contested by popular knowledge and relational worlds (Kaltmeier & Rufer, 2017). It also addresses local reconfigurations of heritage manifested in using and adapting several practices, such as the (re)creation of rituals, showing how heritage has been reappropriated and resignified from those territories (Licuime, 2014, p. 106).

Regarding how heritage imaginaries are assumed, (re)signified, and contested by local actors in Chukidel, El Vado, and the TEAM-Minga project, imaginaries boost not only a critical analysis but also function as a theoretical and analytical lens that expands the possibilities for understanding, using, and socially producing heritage. It is fundamental to acknowledge that heritage is a socio-historical and situated construction crisscrossed by contextual contestations and power relations. Likewise, heritage is a global phenomenon with geopolitical implications whereby hegemonic discourses have established the terms and conditions to produce and understand it. From the origins and genealogy that heritage has taken, it comes with dominant imaginaries about memory, territory, identity, and history that characterize the world and those who inhabit it. Therefore, the use and significance of heritage is highly political and depends on the actors who promote it.

The theoretical framework brings together the conceptual contributions of critical heritage studies and scholarship on imaginaries to explore the different understandings of heritage deployed during the TEAM-Minga experience in El Vado and Chukidel. The theoretical framework further develops imaginaries as an analytical lens and the key concepts with which it is proposed to answer the general research question: How do the inhabitants of Chukidel and El Vado and the group of researchers understand heritage as a notion and use it to depict and interact with each other within the context of the TEAM-Minga project? Throughout the dissertation, it is essential to consider the contributions of imaginaries as an analytical lens, keeping in mind: First, a critical analysis of imaginaries unveils the dichotomous and hegemonic logics present in understandings of heritage. It is crucial to consider that the construction of identity, otherness, historical narratives, and memory are the sources from which people produce and signify heritage imaginaries. It is essential to approach imaginaries as situated knowledge. The dissertation develops a context analysis in the following chapter. This chapter evidenced the historical structures that determine the social, symbolic, and political conditions, as well as the different standpoints and views on heritage among the actors involved in this research. Third, the analysis of imaginaries implies a reflexive process of understanding how heritage is signified outside of official notions and contexts.

3. Methodology

This chapter presents the methodological approach applied during the doctoral research. As this dissertation is methodologically framed within the anthropology of imaginaries (Carrera, 2017; Carretero, 2003, 2017), the study is based on ethnographic fieldwork conducted over three years to delve into heritage imaginaries during the TEAM-Minga project in the territories of Chukidel and El Vado. I conducted ethnographic fieldwork and secondary sources review because it enabled me to delve into heritage imaginaries embedded in local meaning systems and the sociocultural context in which these imaginaries occur. Therefore, the research implemented the ethnographic approach to identify how and which heritage imaginaries are displayed by local actors in the Andean territories of Chukidel and El Vado within the frame of an academic international cooperation project.

I address TEAM-Minga, on the one hand, as an active actor producing and disseminating heritage notions in the local context. On the other hand, I consider the TEAM-Minga network established by the academic research group to implement the project. The methodological frame for both collecting data and data analysis considered the systemic dynamics of the context in which imaginaries are studied, such as the networks of actors and meanings and, above all, the spaces where people and imaginaries converge or clash. This doctoral research is therefore based on multi-sited ethnographic fieldwork to move between the network of actors and imaginaries of heritage (Amelina et al., 2012; Falzon, 2016; Hannerz, 2003; Marcus, 1995).

This dissertation addresses imaginaries as situated knowledge. Hence, the analysis first required identifying imaginaries in visible manifestations and from what people say and do, mainly based on the participants' standpoints. Besides, the data analysis aims to situate imaginaries in their socio-historical context and the meaning systems to which they belong. The methodological approach for the data analysis adopts a grounded theory approach to prioritize an inductive study based on ethnographic fieldwork. The analysis departs from the contextualisation as the first moment to reveal the social structures where imaginaries are enacted. From this perspective, the methodological framework explores not only how imaginaries are characterised, ‘maintained, reproduced and reinforced, but also how they are challenged, contested, and transformed’ (Salazar, 2012b, p. 867).

This chapter is structured into four main methodological themes. First, I present ethnographic research as a framework for data collection based on the multi-sited approach and the different data collection techniques such as participant observation, in-depth interviews and digital ethnography. Second, I explain how the data analysis was developed through open coding and using the NVivo software. Third, I build my positionality as a researcher within the TEAM-Minga Project and in the study sites. Finally, I will go through the ethical concerns faced during the investigation.

Ethnographic research

Ethnographic fieldwork is central to anthropology and was the primary method used for this research. Ethnography implies a 'way of knowing how people collectively organize, understand, and live in the world' (McGranahan, 2018, p. 1). For the last four years, I have researched how people understand and signify heritage within the TEAM-Minga project, the El Vado neighbourhood in Cuenca, and the indigenous community of Chukidel in Saraguro. By analysing the perceptions, interpretation, and association of heritage and how they are produced and expressed, I identify heritage imaginaries and imaginaries of heritage embedded in the practices, relations, and projections of the actors.

The ethnographic fieldwork was conducted mainly in Spanish, as it is the researcher's and the participant's mother tongue. As part of the interview protocol, I always begin by introducing the objective and scope of this research and asking for the informants' consent on the use of this information. I have committed to protect their anonymity by omitting the informants' names. In turn, they have verbally consented to include their testimonies as part of this ethnography. I applied several data collection techniques pertinent to the moments and contexts of the fieldwork, such as participant observation, informal conversations, in-depth interviews, literature review, and online ethnography.

This dissertation used ethnography to explore the tacit aspects of subjectivity and belonging. Thus, ethnographic work was the primary methodological approach to research as it allowed me to approach how people signify heritage and display heritage imaginaries. This research used the methods of participant observation, in-depth interviews, digital ethnography, and literature review to address heritage notions and comprehensions in the daily context of people in their own terms, conditions, and meaning systems of each study site. Thus, the ethnographic fieldwork allowed me to determine the different standpoints and understandings of heritage within the TEAM-Minga project. These methods were selected because they allow us to identify how imaginaries become visible through different expressions, whether practices, texts, images, or reflective processes during conversations, interviews, or workshops.

In what follows, I explain what entails multi-sited ethnography as the main technique applied for data gathering, the different conditions and challenges to accessing the field, and the application of participant observation and in-depth interviews.

Multi-sited Ethnography: The TEAM-Minga as a Network

Multi-sited ethnography (Falzon, 2016; Marcus, 1995) focuses on the circulation of meanings, objects, and identities in different spaces (Marcus, 1995, p. 96). According to Ryzewski (2012), multi-sited ethnography 'has been the most creative, critical, and interesting in the study of distributed knowledge systems, providing a sense of the diverse structures and systemic interests brought together in multi-sited imaginaries' (Ryzewski, 2012, p. 245). Multi-sited ethnography contributes two aspects to imaginaries research in the heritage field. In the first place, it sheds light on the tensions between the universalist approach of dominant heritage discourses and the diversity of local heritage imaginaries, 'which may resist, contest, or be instrumentalised to some degree by industry, tourism, or politics' (De Suremain, 2019, p. 22). Secondly, multi-sited ethnography points out the pivotal 'role played by the historical

consciousness held in collective and individual memory that shapes identity and self-recognition' (Ryzewski, 2012, p. 247).

During fieldwork, I followed the TEAM-Minga network participants in their social activities, their territories, and daily life. I accessed different groups and contexts of local actors in which diverse practices, notions, and meanings of heritage were displayed. The research group CPM, the *Cabildo*[18] in Chukidel, and the neighbourhoods committee in El Vado were some of the organisational spaces in which I conducted participant observation. Multisited ethnography allowed me to explore fieldwork as a complex network of actors, collectives, and territories. For this reason, I constantly interacted with different imaginaries of heritage and heritage imaginaries. The encounters between the actors were of particular interest to explore how people deployed imaginaries in response to the various influences of the other actors in the network. For example, relevant spaces to observe how participants enacted imaginaries were the TEAM-Minga project research group (workshops) interventions in El Vado or Chukidel.

Access to the Field: Initial Negotiations and Challenges to Access the Study Sites

It should be noted that my fieldwork was strongly affected by the Covid-19 pandemic. The fieldwork was meant to begin in January 2020. Although I visited Chukidel and El Vado between January and February 2020, by March 2020, the lockdown jeopardised face-to-face visits to the field sites and work with the TEAM-Minga research group. The fieldwork during 2020 involved, above all, online ethnography and online meetings with local actors and the research group.

The in-person fieldwork was undertaken between February 2021 and July 2021 in Chukidel Saraguro and from June 2022 and December 2022 in El Vado. In addition, simultaneously, from June 2019 to December 2022, I conducted ethnography within the research group CPM as a researcher of the TEAM-Minga project.

My access to the field sites was directly influenced by my role as a doctoral student and research member of the TEAM-Minga project. The TEAM-Minga project began a year before I joined it as a doctoral student and as a researcher in the project. By then, the TEAM-Minga project had already selected Chukidel and El Vado as study cases. This doctoral research followed the TEAM-Minga project in Chukidel and El Vado, mainly applying participant observation in the activities and interventions of the project. In addition, I extended the ethnography outside the project activities to capture perceptions of the inhabitants of El Vado and Chukidel beyond the spaces designed and arranged by the TEAM-Minga project in Chukidel and El Vado.

Establishing honest and trustworthy relationships is fundamental to negotiating access by clarifying what the research will entail (Hammersley, 2020). Therefore, from the beginning, I expressed and cleared up the doctoral research interest to address the heritage imaginaries and imaginaries of heritage throughout the TEAM-Minga project in the field sites of Chukidel and

[18] The council (*Cabildo*) is the legal and representative body of the commune, composed of five members, who will exercise the functions of president (*Capak*), vice president (vice-*Capak*), treasurer, trustee, and secretary.

El Vado. To do this, I summed up the research objectives with the TEAM-Minga research group on several occasions, such as the doctoral annual reports and meetings with the local promotor. In Chukidel, the doctoral research objectives were explained in the meetings with community leaders and prior to each interview. Likewise, in El Vado, in-depth interviews included a brief introduction explaining the doctoral research objectives and what the research entailed.

Regarding El Vado and Chukidel, I initially visited those field sites during the first workshops implemented by the TEAM-Minga project in 2019. In January and February 2020 and later on from February 2021, I worked with gatekeepers; they were allies during the fieldwork visits, enabling access and interaction in the communities (Guber, 2016). The gatekeepers selected were two architects working on the TEAM-Minga project. They managed the project's fieldwork in Chukidel and El Vado and had previous experience with or inhabited the field sites.

Access to Chukidel was facilitated by an informant who worked on the TEAM-Minga project. Her role within the project was as a local informant to negotiate the project activities implemented in the community. This person integrated me into two strategic spaces for the fieldwork in Chukidel.

First, when I moved to the community in 2021, she introduced me to a family who hosted me during my stay in Chukidel. Living with a host family enabled me to know the community's daily life, share informal conversations with the residents of the community, and meet other inhabitants through family ties or friends of the host family. This was important because living with a local family enabled me to dialogue with local actors who were not participating in the TEAM-Minga activities and to explore different heritage perspectives.

Second, the local informant also invited me to join the *Taller Saraguro* Collective [19], a group of young architects from Saraguro interested in territorial community planning of Chukidel. I collaborated with them in designing, applying, and systematising the participatory diagnosis for the Chukidel community work plan (2021). Through my collaboration with *Taller Saraguro*, I could participate in the *Cabildo* meetings and the participative diagnosis workshop. Taller Saraguro designed the methodology and the content of the workshops, and the *Cabildo* convened the participation of community representatives for the participatory diagnosis. These workshops were exclusively open to the inhabitants of Chukidel and *Taller Saraguro* members. Therefore, my involvement in these meetings was strongly criticised. My inclusion in these meetings was negotiated based on my collaboration with Taller Saraguro and my stay with the host family. The collaboration with *Taller Saraguro* for the participatory diagnosis allowed me to access internal community discussion spaces. In this way, I could access better proximity to observe the terms in which the problems of culture and identity are discussed in an organisational context of the community. Later on, this relationship with the *Cabildo* and the support of the local informant opened the way for the workshops and meetings of the TEAM-Minga project in Chukidel to be conducted.

[19] A collective of young architects from Chukidel who are interested in territorial planning and community administration.

The dialogue with the communitarian leaders and Taller Saraguro members also guided my access to the fieldwork in Chukidel. On the one hand, the colleagues of Taller Saraguro, as Saraguro inhabitants who had carried out their master's and bachelor's research in Chukidel, guided me on how to request permission and dialogue with community leaders. Community leaders and the ex-Capack[20] suggested how to be transparent about the doctoral research objectives, my relationship with the TEAM-Minga project, and my collaboration with the collective Taller Saraguro during the communitarian meetings.

During fieldwork in Chukidel, I also conducted the workshops carried out within the frame of the TEAM-Minga project, and I participated in the participatory diagnosis workshops as part of my collaboration with the Taller Saraguro collective. In both cases, I closed these two processes by systematising and writing the analysis report of the collected information. I delivered the two reports to the *Cabildo*, in print and digitally.

In El Vado, the fieldwork was carried out through continuous neighbourhood visits. The accessibility for the interviews was mediated on the one hand by the TEAM-Minga project contacts in the neighbourhoods and on the other by my personal approach to neighbourhood residents who had not attended TEAM-Minga project workshops. In El Vado, no organisation brings together all the neighbourhood groups. Therefore, the interaction with local actors was through interviews, attending the Project TEAM-Minga workshops, and participant observation of cultural activities carried out by different neighbourhood actors.

It is important to note that my presence at the two field sites had different implications, and the initial negotiation and access were also subjected to each context's conditions. First, I was transparent about the research objectives, what they entail, and my relationship with the TEAM-Minga project. Both in Chukidel and El Vado, it should be noted that the continuous presence of researchers, particularly on issues of culture and heritage, has generated a general distrust of the presence of the researchers as well as fatigue of interviews and workshops. This was the first challenge to access the dialogues and interactions in the field. People at the field sites are no longer interested in collaborating with researchers and reject their constant requests for interviews or workshops.

> Many researchers come, they interpret us, and they never do anything for the community and then they publish in English (Second participatory diagnosis workshop, 4 March 2021)

In the case of Chukidel, I had the opportunity to present my doctoral research objectives on more than one occasion during the meetings with the *Cabildo*. I was also strongly questioned thoroughly, and a collective discussion was held to allow my participation in the meetings and the application of my research. In El Vado, access depended on personal predisposition. The access to the field in El Vado did not rely on an extended discussion with the community as it did in Chukidel. I was transparent in all my interactions by presenting myself and the aim and scope of the doctoral research.

[20] The *Capak*, in Kichwa, means leader, and it refers to the president of the community council (*Cabildo*).



Figure 3 Picture by Edwin Vacacela. The second participatory diagnosis workshop with Cabildo and Taller Saraguro's members is on 4 March 2021, in the community house of Chukidel.

In Chukidel, my presence entailed access and negotiation, which dealt with my conditions as a person who does not reside permanently in the community. I was an urban, young, mixed-race woman who did not fit the profile of Chukidel community members. The community leaders directly questioned the differences in my origin and profession and how they called me *laicha,* clarifying the distance between local actors and my participation as an external agent. Still, the transparency and acceptance of my involvement in the participative diagnosis and the accompaniment of Taller Saraguro allowed me access to daily and community discussion spaces.

By contrast, in El Vado, my presence in the neighbourhood did not seem intrusive as I am an inhabitant of Cuenca, but neither did it allow for proximity to the neighbourhood's everyday life and organisation spaces. I conducted fieldwork, above all, as a passerby and interviewer. During the fieldwork, racial differences were a silent topic in El Vado. It is essential to understand how heritage imaginaries contain racialised perceptions of people. However, racial differences are not directly addressed, as in Chukidel; they are implicitly present in people's comments and the demographic composition.

Participant Observation

Participant observation is the centrepiece of ethnography (Pfadenhauer & Grenz, 2015). Participant observation entails an embodied and placed experience in the territorialities and social networks through long-term involvement and coexistence in the spaces where research is developed (Marshall & Rossman, 1989). Participant observation seeks to minimise the distance between the researcher and their study interest. Here, the researcher assumes a mobile position to comprehend how local actors -in this case, inhabitants of the study sites and the research group of the TEAM-Minga- make sense of their world by taking part in their social universe and embracing a more active role in the field (Seim, 2019). The participant observation also allows for informal conversations to be established to answer questions that could arise from sustained contact in the fieldwork.

My degree of participation varied throughout the fieldwork. I participated in different contexts and activities within the TEAM-Minga, El Vado, and Chukidel. My role as a doctoral student and TEAM-Minga researcher constantly overlapped. The participant observation within the

TEAM-Minga was a permanent task. For this reason, it is relevant to disaggregate the spaces, activities, and interactions that configured the fieldwork.

The Participant Observation within the TEAM-Minga

First, the participant observation within the World Heritage City (CPM) research group, more specifically as a researcher of the TEAM-Minga project, enabled me to understand how academic initiatives are conducted and the effects on local communities. Also, participating in the activities and meetings of the research group was strategic in identifying the imaginaries employed to describe and relate to the research interest (cultural heritage) and the participants during the fieldwork. As a project member, the fieldwork entailed my participation in all the project activities. I participated in the meetings and internal reflections of the TEAM-Minga research group for the design, application, and analysis of information, such as once a week in the coordination meetings and meetings for theoretical reflection and analysis of the information gathered in workshops. I was also responsible for designing and conducting the TEAM-Minga research group capacity-building evaluation. During the research group meeting, I could document the imaginaries of heritage and the heritage imaginaries that guided the research interest and its interaction with the territory and local actors.

I also participated in the design, application, analysis, and systematisation of the workshops TEAM-Minga has implemented with local actors and in the territories. In the case of Chukidel, my participation also involved negotiating with the *Cabildo* to conduct the workshops and their operationalisation and systematisation in the case of El Vado. Regarding the workshops developed within the framework of the TEAM-Minga project, I participated in and coordinated four workshops in Chukidel, and I participated in eight workshops in El Vado (Annex I).



Figure 4 Source: TEAM-Minga. TEAM-Minga's listening and return workshop in El Vado. 21 May 2021, in the Casa de los Arcos in El Vado.



Figure 5 Source: TEAM-Minga. TEAM-Minga´s listening-return workshop. 3 June 2021 at Chukidel Community House Saraguro.

A significant part of the fieldwork was the TEAM-Minga project fieldwork itself. Since I was involved in designing and implementing the project's on-site activities, I often had the opportunity to include questions for doctoral research for both local stakeholders and the research group in the TEAM-Mings methodologies. Likewise, the doctoral research fieldwork consisted of reviewing the stakeholder mappings used in the initial stage of the TEAM-Minga project as a reference for the stakeholders considered to develop heritage management systems and, above all, the people or standpoints left out of the project mappings.

The TEAM-Minga project designed and implemented the spaces where heritage is discussed in the territory. In this way, the project is in itself a channel through which people get to know and discuss heritage. The workshops were designed based on the project agenda. They are spaces of encounter where communication plays an important role, not only by enacting imaginaries but also in constructing knowledge crisscrossed by pre-established relations of power, such as the relationship between the researcher and the local actors. For this reason, the workshops and activities conducted in the territories by the project were essential scenarios for the participant observation to identify imaginaries that arose in the interaction between the different standpoints and actors of the network.

Participant Observation in Chukidel

The context of the participant observation in Chukidel was during my stay in Saraguro, the permanent presence (February-July 2021) in the community and the roles I assumed to include myself in the community and family organisation activities. First, moving in with a host family allowed for participation in everyday and familiar activities. The host family was an important channel to access the community leaders and to be able to share informal conversations from a gender and generational perspective. The host family's father is an important figure in the community due to his firm position in recovering the Saraguro culture and being critical of external processes. He was one of the people who promoted the recovery of *Inti Raymi* (in 1986), and he served several times as *Capak* of the *Cabildo*. He is also a recognised musician

and a member of the *Runa Kawsay* cultural and sports group. The mother also played a fundamental role in the fieldwork, as she accompanied and integrated me into the community celebrations and explained to me the functioning of the community in terms of organisation and justice. From the role of caring, she often works as a healer using her knowledge of medicinal plants. On many occasions, she does cleaning[21] and takes part in the organisation of the rituals in the community. She is also a craftswoman and textile producer.

Furthermore, the siblings, young people 25, 32, and 35 years of age who have completed university studies or higher education in music, allowed me to be part of their daily lives and conversations. I could discuss common concerns of the young population of Ecuador regarding the lack of employment and opportunities to improve their quality of life, as well as observe the interest of young people in participating in community activities, especially as leisure spaces. I could see how their representation of Saraguro identity has changed, for example, regarding the use of traditional clothing. I had much in common with the middle daughter, especially because we are the same age and studied at the same university during the same years. She was enrolled in economics, and I studied sociology.

Migration is a significant condition in Ecuador, particularly in the rural areas of the Southern Highlands. Many of the families in Ecuador have relatives who have migrated to countries such as the United States, Spain, or France. In the case of the host family in Chukidel, I could share a visit by the family members who live in France and the relationship between financial aid and local investment, especially in construction. They shared with me informal conversations expressing the need to return to Saraguro to rediscover their identity. Likewise, the family's sons have also emigrated out of the country for short periods in search of jobs. Thus, migration continues to appear as an option to improve economic income.

Also, the stay with a host family in Chukidel allowed me to observe closely how urban and rural life are intertwined, for example, the father's administrative work as a municipal technician, the commercialisation of agricultural and handicraft products in Saraguro's urban Centre, and the need to acquire products that are available only in large cities like Cuenca, such as dyes, and thread for textiles. On many occasions, on my trips to the city, they asked me to bring paints and threads, which allowed me to know the city of Cuenca's strategic commercial points linked to the needs of the family and, by extension, of people who share the same economic activity of the textile crafts.

Second, my collaboration with Taller Saraguro, which enabled me to conduct participant observation in the workshops for the participatory diagnosis of the community plan, was essential to understanding how culture, identity, and heritage are discussed among Saraguros and outside with other interlocutors. Community leaders and representatives of organisations participated in these workshops, as well as members of the Taller Saraguro collective. Three workshops were held in the communal house of Chukidel addressing the following topics: Infrastructure, territory, and mobility (February 25, 2021), economy, organisation, and participation (March 4, 2021), culture and identity, and psycho-social problematics in the

[21] A procedure that consists of rubbing the patient's body with aromatic herbs such as rosemary, nettle, santamaria, and rue to "clean" the discomfort of the body, generally, in a complementary way, liquor and smoke are used.

context of Chukidel (11 March 2021). In these workshops, the people constantly brought to the table memories as part of a reflective process on how the community has changed because of long-lasting problems like migration, globalisation, the economic crisis, and discrimination. In these spaces, I could meet representatives of groups such as Indigenous Justice, the community tourism network, and the group of women with whom I conducted in-depth interviews.

Furthermore, the participative diagnosis workshops allowed local actors who were critical of my presence to get to know me. These meetings allowed local actors to continue asking about my positions and opinions, finding common points, and overcoming stereotypes. In these dialogues, I also observed diverse viewpoints within the community. I understood the apprehension and mistrust of opening up to strangers based on previous negative experiences with international cooperation, research, and discrimination. It allowed me to be transparent about my research and the TEAM-Minga project objectives and scope. It enabled me to establish a close relationship with the *Cabildo*, which later made it possible to carry out the TEAM-Minga workshops and identify strategic actors to conduct in-depth interviews.

In addition, during the fieldwork in Chukidel, I participated in the community celebrations of the *Kapac Raymi, Inti Raymi, Kulla Raymi, Pawkar Raymi, Mama Supalata*, and *Sisashitana*. The *Raymis* in Saraguro are symbolic and spiritual celebrations within the Andean cosmovision.



Figure 6 Inty Raymi, 30 July 2022, Chukidel, Saraguro

These rituals are linked with the agricultural calendar and the sacredness of elements such as the sun and corn. The *Raymis* are held at the inter-community level, which is managed by the Allyus council and constituted by the *Capaks* of the communities of Chukidel, Gunudel, and Ilincho of Saraguro for the care of the grazing lands shared by these three communities. Each of these communities organises and carries out one of the *Raymi*s. During the celebration of the *Raymis*, the community leaders transfer the command baton, the leadership of the Allyus council.

Participant Observation in El Vado

During participant observation in the El Vado neighbourhood, I reconsidered my relationship with that neighbourhood as part of the city where I live. El Vado is a transit space to access the historic centre; in my personal life, El Vado has been part of my daily landscape due to its proximity to the University of Cuenca. As part of participant observation, I conducted continuous walking visits in the neighbourhood at different times and days to capture the daily dynamics of the area, the use of public spaces, and the stimulus to the neighbourhood is subjected to (pollution, vehicular traffic, the difficulty of mobility) that I previously overlooked as a passerby. During these tours, I had the opportunity to establish informal conversations, especially with neighbours who do not live in the centrality of the neighbourhood around the *Plaza de la Cruz del Vado* (Cross of El Vado Square) or La Condamine Street. I focused on interacting with neighbours living near President Cordova Street and included their perceptions and points of view.

Another participant observation context in El Vado were the workshops conducted by the TEAM-Minga project. It is important to emphasise that El Vado has no unifying organisation, unlike the *Cabildo* in Chukidel. In collaboration with particular neighbours, the TEAM-Minga project arranged the calls and conducted the workshops. These workshops were strategic to observe how the scope of the TEAM-Minga network in El Vado is defined by the affinity to the University of Cuenca, the same understandings, and the relationships that the CPM group had previously established in the neighbourhood. Since a specific group of neighbours, long-term residents and families organised in the neighbourhood committee, participated in the TEAM-Minga workshops, it enabled me to explore the projections, positions, and views of the most conservative group in the neighbourhood.



Figure 7 Co-creation and Participatory Planning Workshop. 12 November 2022. In Casa de La Lira, El Vado.

In these workshops, people expressed their standpoints and conflicts with other actors and initiatives in the area that are not included in the neighbourhood committee. In this context, I sought to contact actors who disagreed or did not participate in the workshops to discuss different visions of heritage in the interviews. Finally, another scenario where I conducted participant observation in El Vado were the cultural activities of the different actors in the neighbourhood. For example, the events in the neighbourhood are New Year's Eve, organised by the neighbourhood council, the music fest of the French Alliance, the Forbidden Tales

theatre project at the *El Prohibido* Cultural Centre, and music festivals organised by the Municipality Culture Department. Some of these events took place in the *Plaza de la Cruz del Vado*, which is always a disputed space between residents and municipal institutions.



Figure 8 New Year's Eve Fest organised by the El Vado´s neighbourhood committee, 31 December 2022, El Vado.

To sum up, the participatory observation was conducted to explore the different spaces inside and outside the project where heritage imaginaries were displayed in the Chukidel and El Vado. Participant observation was conducted both from my role as a project member in the project's field activities and in the participant observation applied in each of the territories outside the framework of the project. First, I gained access to the territories of Chukidel and El Vado through my participation in the TEAM-Minga workshops, spaces designed within the framework of the project, where the local actors interacted with the research group of the TEAM-Minga project. In the workshops and activities conducted by the TEAM-Minga research group, the imaginaries were evidenced in the languages, questions, and devices designed for collecting data and in the responses, positions, and reflections of local actors. Second, to explore different standpoints in the contexts of El Vado and Chukidel aside from TEAM-Minga´s activities, I conducted in-depth interviews with actors who do not always share the same point of view. In addition, the participant observation also followed the daily life in El Vado and Chukidel, establishing informal conversations and taking part in the activities of the inhabitants. It also implied participation in the neighbourhood or community's organisational and cultural activities organised by each territory's different actors.

In-depth Interviews

In-depth interviews facilitate a closer look at the points of interest that arise from fieldwork and deepen and unbox reflections on the narratives of heritage that have been assumed, (re) signified, and contested by local actors. Hence, I conducted semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders as part of the fieldwork. These types of interviews are helpful ‘to gain an in-depth understanding of a particular phenomenon within a particular cultural context’ (Zhang & Wildemuth, 2009, p. 9). This interview model establishes open questions that facilitate the interaction between the researcher and the informant and keeps the study's objective present in the dialogues. Also, this kind of interview is an open script that encourages the interviewees to relate experiences and perspectives relevant to the research interest. This flexibility allows us to generate new questions and address other topics according to the course of the conversation.

I interviewed forty-six persons, twenty-eight from Chukidel and Saraguro and seventeen neighbours and workers in El Vado. I met the interviewees during participant observation or through snowball sampling, using the contacts and suggestions provided by other informants (Noy, 2008). The interviewees were selected based on access to contact through the TEAM-Minga project agenda. This snowballing allowed me to interview people not related to the TEAM-Minga project, and even though I explicitly considered generational differences, there was a lack of youth participation in the TEAM-Minga project and in the interviews applied.

In Chukidel, I interviewed fourteen women and fourteen men between thirty and eighty years old; 61% of the interviewees were in their 50s and 60s, 28% were in their 30s and 40s, and 11% of people interviewed were over 70 years old. Of the twenty-eight people interviewed in Chukidel, sixteen have university studies. Likewise, sixteen persons carry out agricultural activities, and seven carry out tourism, crafts, or painting activities. I also interviewed three persons who work in the Municipality of Saraguro. Ten people interviewed had been part of the community government or the indigenous justice committee. It is worth mentioning that in Saraguro, I interviewed two academics who were writing their Ph.D. dissertations at that moment and professors from the Central University of Ecuador and the Andean University Simón Bolivar from the community of Chukidel. The research lines of their doctoral dissertations are interculturality and Andean philosophy.

In El Vado, I interviewed four women and fourteen men between twenty and ninety years old; half of the interviewees were in their 50s and 60s, 22% were in their 30s and 40s, 11% of people interviewed were over 70 years old, and 17% of the people were in their 20s. Of the seventeen people interviewed in El Vado, ten have university studies, eight persons carried out craft and painting activities related to cultural management, and the rest of the interviewees were long-term inhabitants of the neighbourhood. Of the total number of people interviewed, seven had been part of the neighbourhood committee. Also, I interviewed three professors from the University of Cuenca and the University of Azuay who have recently researched the history, urban planning, and anthropological dynamics of the historical centre and the neighbourhood El Vado.

The interviews were recorded, transcribed, and analysed. Apart from the forty-five interviews, however, there were almost countless spontaneous encounters. I also held seven interviews with experts, researchers mainly from Cuenca and Saraguro, who recently researched cultural heritage in El Vado and Saraguro (Annex II). The transcribed interviews were coded and analysed using the Nvivo software.

The application of in-depth interviews deepened the perceptions manifested in the participant observation. It contributed to a deeper reflection with the people on the terms and notions associated with heritage. The interviews also helped to deepen the local actors' perceptions of the TEAM-Minga researchers. The interviews provided dialogues that were not conditioned to the context of the workshops conducted by the TEAM-Minga project. Finally, the interviewed sample does not include the total number of interactions. Regarding the low participation of young people or the few women interviewed in El Vado, it is worth mentioning that during the fieldwork in Chukidel, it was possible to establish dialogues with young people outside the

Cabildo meetings. In addition, it was possible to dialogue and observe the participation and positions of women during the workshops conducted in El Vado.

Digital Ethnography

Online social networks (e.g., Facebook) have become a part of people's everyday lives, significantly changing the way people communicate, socialise, and express themselves (Dyson, 2011). They become crucial spaces in helping collectives re-establish or re-invent a sense of community and conveying collective identity and heritage values. Besides, online communities can reinforce or challenge local narratives by showing the different positions and understandings that local actors build or during the meaning-making of the environment and the relationship between them. Modern ICTs significantly impact the dissemination of institutional discourses (Ginzarly & Teller, 2021). Furthermore, online platforms 'allow the organisation of communities and their digital exchange such as memories, historic photos, and often nostalgia' (Giaccardi & Palen, 2008, p. 282), generating narratives of the places and expressing imaginaries about their identity and legacies. Hence, the data gathered from social media provides us with a particular perspective and understanding of heritage and general cultural elements enacted online from local informants' interpretations and motivations.

Digital ethnography involves exploring the information and interaction on online forums or social media. Different levels of participation or involvement in online communities will result in diverse collected data, always considering questions such as 'by whom is the site run?' and 'for whom is it run?' (Dyson, 2011), identifying the intention of how representation of identity is configured only and how they are in correspondence off-line. For example, the study sites have web pages sponsored by tourism initiatives managed by neighbourhoods, communities, and groups. The actors behind the social media or web pages display different discourses of heritage online, but they also interact and take part in the discussion offline.

Social media (e.g., Facebook) also provide interpretations of everyday encounters with the physical environment, other people, or social practices (Caliandro, 2014). Therefore, a critical context in which to observe the imaginaries of heritage and heritage imaginaries enacted by local and institutional actors is social media. People through social media provide visual and text material on how they see themselves, what they want to show of themself, what is meaningful or worthy of being shown as individual or collective, and what symbols or aesthetics identify them with a collectivity, in other words, to maintain and manage their social network through self-presentation strategies (Caliandro, 2014).

Local actors, either individual or collective, and the TEAM-Minga are constantly using social media to express and disseminate their perception of heritage, how they see themselves and others, the work done in the heritage field, and the use of heritage notions in tourism or identitarian campaigns or speeches. Local collectives also use the networks to disseminate their activities, make calls, and visualize their positions. In El Vado and Chukidel, several local actors document and express their positions on social media. In addition, I also followed the website and social networks of the World Heritage City (CPM) research group, where they publish and disseminate information and activities of the TEAM-Minga project. The leading

social network I explored during online fieldwork was Facebook because I found that people in the field sites use this social media to manage the pages of their organisations, constantly promoting and posting the activities they do. I could follow several profiles associated with local and institutional actors through Facebook, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. The period during which observation was carried out in digital media was from February 2020 to April 2023.

In Saraguro, I followed two types of Facebook profiles. On the one hand, I looked for the pages on social networks or web pages of organisations and community groups linked to cultural, tourist, or organisational issues of both the community and public institutions. On the other hand, the proximity to the actors allowed me to follow personal profiles. I mainly focused on key actors who substantially impact community discussions and young people. In the particular case of Saraguro, I have observed that sharing and posting community activities and events are essential to visualise the commune's life beyond the territorial borders and strengthen a sense of belonging.

An actual example of exploring social media in the fieldwork was Chukidel's community house reconstruction during the COVID-19 pandemic and the lockdown. The community of Chukidel carried out several *mingas*[22] to reconstruct the communal house. This experience in Chukidel was documented by several people and collectives who posted the whole process on their Facebook pages. During the communal house reconstruction, several people posted comments on Facebook celebrating and showing their pride in recovering the Minga and local construction techniques. Since it was during the lockdown, collecting ethnographic data through Facebook profiles enabled me to keep in contact and follow this experience in Chukidel (Annex III).

In addition, I followed Facebook pages in El Vado from various neighbourhood actors, such as the El Vado neighbourhood committee, *El Prohibido* Cultural Centre, and El Vado tourism Facebook pages. Also, I followed the social networks of the Municipal Direction of Culture and the National Institute of Cultural Heritage of Ecuador (Annex III).

The data gathering online was focused on observation rather than participation. The profiles followed on social networks were primarily inhabitants of the study sites, who were informed through interviews about the research online and offline.

Collection of Secondary Sources

Part of the fieldwork was the review of secondary sources. The literature review entailed first a review of the research conducted by Gabriela Garcia (2018), Natasha Cabrera (2023) and Gabriela Eljuri (2020), who had carried out their doctoral theses on heritage in Cuenca. Secondly, I reviewed the Chukidel statutes that state the community's regulations and how the community's heritage is characterised and managed. Third, an essential part of the literature review involved examining the documents produced by the TEAM-Minga research group. These documents contain descriptions, approaches, analyses of El Vado and Chukidel, and

[22] Minga is a Kichwa Andean practices that refers to the collective work based on shared objectives and their responsibility to the community

definitions of what heritage is and how it has changed throughout the project process. Although the TEAM-Minga project group presented diverse positions and understanding of heritage and the study sites, the documents produced by TEAM-Minga are a sample of those definitions that ended up being consolidated and prioritised as references of how the project addresses or was guided in theoretical and methodological terms regarding the research topic. Several of these documents are workshop reports and systematisations, memories of meetings and internal reflections of the research group, and handbooks and reports of the project's products. Part of my role within the TEAM-Minga project was to systematise the information gathered in the workshops and to write reports analysing the data from the three study cases of the project. Although I drafted several of these documents, the project coordination subsequently re-edited and approved them (Annex IV).

Data Analysis Methods

The data analysis approach is framed within Grounded Theory (GT) to enhance an interpretation from the perspective and experience of the participants' lifeworld (Bakri et al., 2022). The grounded theory approach considers the reflexivity and the modifiability of the empirical-based data and analysis instead of validity or replicability (Yin et al., 2021). This research does not intend to establish replicable or metadiscursive analyses. On the contrary, it seeks to shed light on a concrete reality in the particular experience of the TEAM-Minga project and its context.

The analysis entailed two moments. The first was building a database in Nvivo software with all the information gathered, simultaneously presenting the data gathered in the fieldwork and analysing the results obtained from Nvivo. The analysis started with the socio-historical and geographical contextualisation of the TEAM-Minga network, followed by the development of the findings.

NVivo: Open Coding and Data Organization

Initially, the interviews were transcribed, and the information was gathered through interviews, digital ethnography, field notes, and the literature review was organised in a database in NVivo software. To begin the analysis of the information collected, I first did a detailed inductive reading of all the interviews, identifying thematic groups, repetitions of concepts, associations, and ways of explaining heritage. This allowed me to determine the need to apply more interviews on specific topics. Likewise, this first reading of the information collected allowed me to create the first thematic groups that would serve as general guides to organise the information. The subjects addressed in this dissertation were developed from the ethnographic data itself. Thus, after the examination of the field data, I was able to identify the different ways people reflect on a heritage that I have grouped into three main themes: people's explanation of what heritage means as a concept (imaginaries of heritage), people's understanding of the meanings associated with heritage as features that describe social collectives (heritage imaginaries) and what they indicate as their own ways of understanding heritage or explanations that they do not explicitly link to heritage but that correspond to understandings about identity and memory elements of the community (alter-native imaginaries of heritage).

Secondly, I open-coded the information, read through all the data collected, and reorganised the information thematically within the sub-codes. The open coding looked to keep the collected field data and the comprehension and reflection on heritage in the terms and participants' daily life. Hence, the thematic groups to code in the Nvivo software emerged from the ethnographic data itself. Open coding involves 'breaking down, examining, comparing, conceptualising, and categorising data' (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 61). From the open coding process in Nvivo, the connections between a category and its sub-categories (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) were deepened to help the researcher think systematically about the data (Seyfi et al., 2019; Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

I applied the Open Coding Method with NVivo software to analyse the data gathered in fieldwork. I grouped the information into sub-thematic groups corresponding to the people's perspectives, relationships, and understandings of heritage. Of these, sub-thematic groups regrouped into three main categories: Heritage Imaginaries, Imaginaries of Heritage, and Alternative Imaginaries of Heritage. In the following table, I show how the information was organised, first establishing general thematic groups based on the research question and the theoretical framework and examining collected data. Then, through open coding, thematic subgroups were established.

General research question	How do the inhabitants of Chukidel and El Vado and the group of researchers comprehend heritage as a notion and use it to depict and interact with each other within the context of the TEAM-Minga project?			
Secondary research questions	How are heritage imaginaries appropriated, (re)signified, and contested by the actors in Chukidel, El Vado, and the TEAM-Minga project research team?	Which understandings of heritage as a concept (imaginaries of heritage) are disclosed by the actors involved in the frame of the TEAM-Minga project?	How do inhabitants of the Chukidel and El Vado and researchers depict themself and others in the heritage field and practice (heritage imaginaries) within the frame of the TEAM-Minga project?	Which are the alter-native heritage imaginaries identified within the dialogue of the TEAM-Minga project and the study sites?
General thematic groups that come from the theoretical framework and the research questions	Contextualization: Heritage as situated knowledge	Imaginaries of Heritage	Heritage Imaginaries	Alter-native Imaginaries of Heritage
Open coding: Sub-thematic groups	- Spatial and demographic composition - Characterizations of the territory - Identification of local actors and standpoints	- Heritage as an object - Tourism - Academic comprehension of heritage -TEAM-Minga comprehensions of heritage - Heritage as a denomination - Heritage as an expression of religiosity and spirituality - Heritage as an identity marker - Continuity - Heritage as part of the memory	- TEAM-Minga characterization of the study sites -TEAM-Minga self-perception -Local actors' perception of the TEAM-Minga - Traditional - Antiquity - Folkloric - Cultura popular - Authenticity - Ancestral - Mestizaje - Rural -Identification/differentiation	- Continuity/(re)production - Heritage production/creation - Heritage Changes and functionality/ uses - Minga - Integral - Alter-native Imaginaries to heritage - Resistance - Heritage as vivencia - Andes - Juxtaposed- Ch'ixi

Figure 9 Coding and data organisation

Data Analysis

The study explores people's imaginaries and meaning-making of heritage. Thus, the analysis focuses on examining the practices and discourses of heritage and people's standpoints and associations with heritage. The imaginaries display required an analysis of the broader contexts in which these occur to comprehend the meaning behind them.

Once the collected information is codified, it is necessary to start an interpretation that weaves together the results of Nvivo and the theoretical proposal of imaginaries' analytical frame for heritage. Once the information was sorted, I identified the relationships of correspondences, clashes, and contradictions between the different thematic groups. This more systematic approach to the information sought to reveal the networks within each general thematic group. For instance, the relationships identified within Heritage Imaginary's general thematic group are the following:

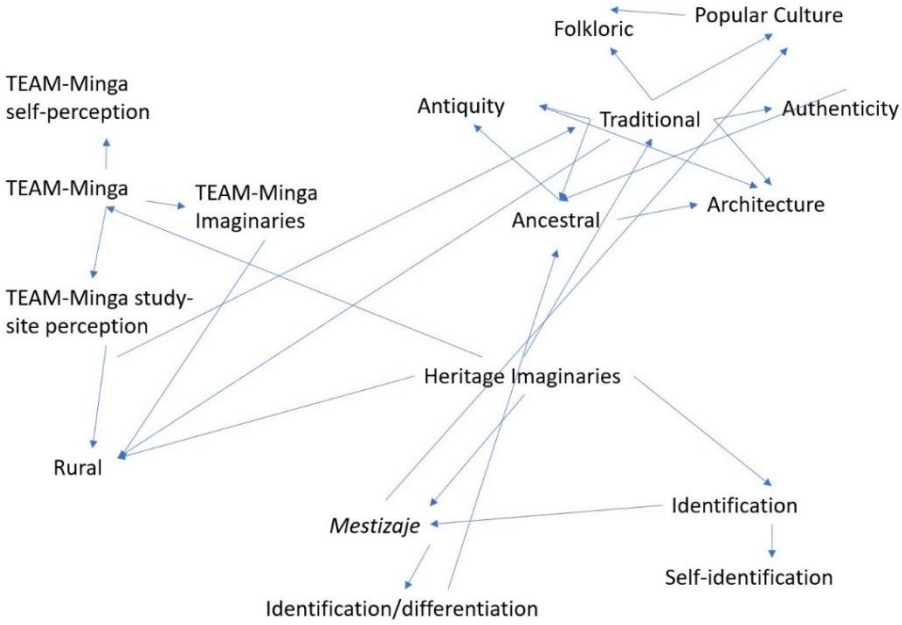

Figure 10 Relationships between Heritage Imaginaries sub-thematic groups

As mentioned above, the analysis begins by first situating the imaginaries in a socio-historical and geographical context. Contextualising implies identifying and problematising the conditions, relationships, and cultural and historical baggage where the research is conducted. Likewise, it is critical to consider the structural power relations proper of the historical context, identification, and otherness processes, and the interests and meaning-making systems that display the network's different actors. Thus, contextualisation is not a descriptive task but an analytical process that problematises the social and spatial network in which imaginaries are embedded and making evident political and social positions. In line with Grounded Theory and the analytical frame of imaginaries, problematisation implies providing a situational and embodied context (Latour, 1996) that can be disentangled through ethnographic techniques such as social mapping and historical approaches.

> In essence, the attitude of problematisation has to be a continuous affair. Along with the continual consciousness of the object and the practices that create the object, there also has to consistently be a confrontation of the implications of our reifications. In essence, we always need to ask what realities we are creating with the objects we problematize. An approach of this sort allows a society always keep in critical view its objects and practices (Akor, 2015, p. 82).

Positionality

Considering that situatedness of our knowledge claims has become one of the fundamental epistemological entrances, it is essential to develop my positionality as the basis from which I know, experience, and share the reflections of this research (Haraway, 1988). This dissertation comes from my first-hand experience of heritage imaginaries and meaning-making dynamics. I am both an outsider in the local territories of Saraguro and El Vado and an insider working in the TEAM-Minga, the setting and fieldwork for this multi-sited ethnographic research.

Before coinciding with the CPM group and the TEAM-Minga project, my main research interests were the city as a disputed space, memory within the meaning-making and socio-spatial production of space and identity, sustainable urban mobility, and social movements. The Llactalab Sustainable Cities research centre at the University of Cuenca was my first experience with academic research. I started working on research projects on the right to the city and social memory, where I learned to establish interdisciplinary dialogues, particularly with urbanism and architecture. From that moment, I fell in line with urban anthropology, which allowed me to explore the different layers, intersections, and stories that spaces and bodies build as identity and political signification processes.

Although the academic context has allowed me to navigate and expand my social interests, I must emphasize that this stems mainly from my personal and social experience. First, from my home, my parents showed a curiosity and social sensitivity that translated into a permanent questioning and reflection on myself and my environment. Second, the opportunity to study my bachelor in sociology at a public university in Ecuador. The University is a space for political formation and awareness; thus, from politics and student movements, I engaged in environmental and feminist struggles as spaces to build critical questioning. Based on this part of my background, I assume the critical approaches as a political and social option that questions the dominant orders that intersect with my Andean sense of belonging. Therefore, I keep in mind that I build and know reality from the experience of a territory where colonial dynamics persist and are situated in a subaltern position in global geopolitics. I also acknowledge that belonging to Ecuador, particularly the Andean region, opens up a possibility of resistance, creativity, and sensitivity grounded in history and the diverse expectations of people in this territory. In this context, I recognize that my interactions result from my body experience as a woman, young and *mestiza*, my urban life, and the privileges that have influenced how I know and move within the spaces I inhabit and investigate.

In the framework of the colonial history of the Andes, to develop my positionality is critical to acknowledge the researcher challenges and the borders established among the white-*mestizo*

and indigenous populations (where I am located and moving). In Ecuador, it is strategic to recognize the gaps of class, race, and power that define the realities where physical and cultural whitening has worked —and continues to work— at all levels of society (Walsh, 2010). The urban and the indigenous linked to the origin and evolution of the city are discursively shown as incompatible realities, especially from the perspective of the dominant groups, which identify from their European, mainly Spanish, colonial heritage (Valcuende del Río & Vásquez, 2016). Hence, urbanity was assigned to the white-*mestizo* population and indigeneity to the countryside. It is from this spatial, historical, social, and racial gap that Ecuadorian society and the life of the Andean people are founded.

Although cultural, territorial, and racial distinctions have been borders that delimit, segregate and subjugate populations, they are also permeable and juxtaposed realities. Hence, the mestizaje has different implications. On the one hand, the Ecuadorian State has used mestizaje as a political and social project to define a diverse society that seeks to integrate different worldviews or histories, supposing a new concealment and hierarchy (Kingman, 2002). On the other hand, the *mestizo* has become the place of political identity identification. The mestizaje is now also claimed by a part of the phenotypically white middle class that tends to distance itself from the traditional elite and for whom whiteness was, and to a large extent still is, a sign of distinction (Valcuende del Río et al., 2016). In this context, like the majority of the Ecuadorian population, I recognize myself as *mestizo*, on the one hand, embracing the diversities that make my Andean experience possible, but also as a political-identity position in affinity with popular and indigenous social movements and collectives. However, this affirmation does not erase the differences, symbolic borders, gaps, and power relations that continue to exist between the *mestizos* and the indigenous populations and that I had to face in fieldwork.

In this context, there is no doubt that my condition as a woman, young, urban, academic affiliated and mestizo -*laichita*[23] as the Saraguros called me- defined the ways I experienced fieldwork differently in Chukidel in Saraguro and El Vado. My identity as a mestiza, university-affiliated female clearly evoked class differentiations. In Saraguro, my *mestizo* whiteness, my urban origins, and my academic background were constantly questioned by various community members. As Brisbois and Polo (2017) highlight, the ways in which local actors themselves see researchers should be considered when planning and conducting fieldwork. My experience in Saraguro was undoubtedly enriching. It enables me to experience the stereotypes and gaps established bilaterally between indigenous people and the *mestizo*. Research participants often viewed me as a *laicha* and university-affiliated, setting boundaries. However, political and social options allow us to arrive at points in common, joint projects, and shared feelings about reality and the territories in which we cohabit. My proximity to the water sources' defense against mining, the consensus that the Western Academy has failed the indigenous population, and my political options, in particular for the indigenous movement in

[23] Laicho/a: In Spanish and Kichwa, this word is a frequent term for the "white people" especially the "urban white people," by the indigenous people when they speak among themselves. It almost always has a pejorative character (González, 2015; Masson, 2005). In this case, the diminutive laichita shows a relationship of proximity or affection.

the 2020 presidential elections, were points that allowed me and the people to see our common viewpoints and the possibility of learning and building sensitivities shared from the differences.

In El Vado, I established interactions differently and from another proximity and experience as a fellow citizen of Cuenca. In this case, the fieldwork with the neighbourhood allowed me to question the ideal of Cuenca and its citizens, traditions, and projections. Although my proximity to El Vado stems from my experience as a fellow *cuencana*[24], the inhabitants of El Vado clarified the distance between those who live in the neighbourhood and the rest of the city. My relationship with El Vado has always been as a transit space between the University and the historic centre. In particular, during my undergraduate studies, I experienced El Vado more strongly as a neighbourhood where different spaces for social and cultural encounters converged. There, I attended the meetings of the Yasunidos-Guapondelig environmental movement and the meetings in Lakomuna (a multidisciplinary artistic space). In addition, in 2016 I participated and supported the Jornadas Libertarias as a meeting of art, feminism, and anarchism, an independent and self-managed initiative of the student movements and Lakomuna, which on several occasions involved the occupation of public space, be it the *Plaza de la Cruz del Vado* or the Escalinatas del Otorongo, two iconic places in the neighbourhood.

Regarding my field of study, heritage was always a distant notion to me, academically and as a citizen. From my experience as a Cuencana and Ecuadorian, I have always perceived cultural heritage linked to architectural aesthetics or to the indigenous peoples' folklorisation. It was a topic that I used to hear through public administration campaigns, travel companies, and discussions on the World Heritage Site Declaration of Cuenca. Cultural heritage crossed all my experiences in my city and country without being aware. Indeed, cultural heritage has always been a resource to strengthen colonial and republican traditionalist perceptions of the city, thus idealising Cuenca as a literate city and of its citizens as educated people, latently also by reinforcing a sense of whiteness in the city (Mancero, 2017), and the folkloric use of indigenous people in the urban landscape.

I recognise in myself the ambivalent use of the notion of cultural heritage. On many occasions, I criticised the link of cultural heritage with the national State, the organising and social cleansing of the city centres, or the stereotypes designated to the colonial cities and indigenous communities. However, I also used heritage as a benchmark for Cuenca. On many occasions, I remember saying, 'You have to visit Cuenca; it is a World Heritage Site,' without being sure what it meant or what I was referring to. Obviously, in a superficial way, these types of comments allude to the historic centre's aesthetics and architectural and urban order but without questioning the meaning of cultural heritage.

The TEAM-Minga Project allowed me to reflect on cultural heritage's meanings, uses, and implications and my relationship with Saraguro and El Vado. In this way, the CPM research group and the TEAM-Minga project were new experiences in my relationship with architecture from heritage conservation. Within the CPM, I assumed the role of doctoral student and social researcher to contribute theoretically and methodologically to studying heritage and carrying out fieldwork with local actors. As a result, I developed the contextualisation, the comparative

[24] Person from Cuenca City.

analysis between the three study cases of the TEAM-Minga project, and the organisational analysis between the collective ways of organisations, the socio-organisational principles, and motivations within the frame of the local cultural matrices. From the beginning, I sought to understand how the CPM group, particularly the TEAM-Minga project, understood notions such as cultural heritage, development, good living, governance, and participation. I also inquired about the group's understanding of how they relate and develop their positionality in the fieldwork, making visible their political viewpoints regarding the interventions they seek to apply. In such a way, I have participated in the TEAM-Minga project, utilizing self-reflexivity and self-criticism to reveal the positionality that the project assumes and the collective construction of categories promoting more interdisciplinary encounters between research interests, and anthropological and architectural insights into heritage, innovative heritage governance, and Andean organisational practices.

On the other hand, I also saw the need to validate and contrast the problems and the investigative approach of TEAM-Minga in the face of the national and local reality of Ecuador, considering the moment of the social and economic crisis in the country crystallised in the social strikes in 2019 and 2021 and followed by the COVID 19. 'Self-reflexivity is intended to help us as researchers to 'articulate our own value systems, our multiple identities and locations of power and privilege, and how these understandings influence our interactions with others and our research practices' (Brydon-Miller, 2008, p. 204). 'Who is defining the project? Who and how is it advocating for change? Who is funding the work? And to what end?' (Lake & Wendland, 2018, p. 27) These questions became part of my research interest, and I turned my gaze to TEAM-Minga as a field of research. In this sense, I felt like an insider/outsider in the TEAM-Minga project. I am both a TEAM-Minga researcher, but I also research the TEAM-Minga as a constitutive element of my fieldwork. Thus, my research addresses investigation and knowledge production as a social field permeated by conflicts and tensions of its geographic, political-historical, and economic reality and a space constrained by academic and development cooperation structures.

COVID-19 and the national strikes in 2019 and 2021 made me question the relevance of this research. I bet that the answers to today's society's civilisational and environmental crisis (Lander, 2010) lie in the 'Other' ontologies, different relationships, understandings, emotionality, and empathy, where to look and create other responses. Hence, this dissertation is also influenced by my concern to rethink the socio-spatial construction of territories, identity, collectivity, and people's projections. These are traversed by the languages that govern, order, designate, and configure how we act as researchers for questionnaires, rethink themselves, and take a retrospective look at structures such as international cooperation and cultural heritage.

In this context, I join the position of authors such as Kottmeyer, who highlights that in contrast with the European experience, where 'heritage has been transformed into a depoliticised lifestyle factor, heritage in postcolonial contexts has become a battleground on the interpretation of history and its projection into the future' (Kaltmeier, 2017) From this point of view, Kaltmeier insists on the need to link the relevance of the politics of heritage with the concept of indigeneity and coloniality in Latin America (Kaltmeier, 2017).

Indigenous people's experiences contribute to acknowledging the relevance of thinking about the production and significance of heritage in a fragmented social plane where different worlds have different ways of experiencing and ordering reality. Within indigenous cultures are heritages that were usually called ‘Others’ (Fabian, 2002) and are now located under the concept of 'alterity' (Evens, 2008; Holbraad, 2009; Kapferer, 2007), without forgetting that the Western paradigm is also an ‘Other’ equally constructed. Each social actor builds or relates to their heritage through empirical and cognitive practices, assembling objects, discourses, spaces, and times from their experiences and practices, and therefore deploying new uses of heritage, new ways of conceiving it and, thus, forcing us to constantly rethink new ways of studying it (González, 2015).

From this place, my interest in exploring heritage imaginaries arises from my interest to reveal the logic and coherence under research processes, international cooperation, and local actors and how they display positions, readings, and meanings of heritage. In this way, I share the positionality of other researchers (Eljuri, 2020; Hayes, 2020; Mancero, 2010) in assuming a political and critical questioning of the heritage in Cuenca and Ecuador.

Sharing the feeling and reflection with Adriana Moreno (2022), who achieved her Ph.D. within a South Initiative project funded by the VLIR-UOS and developed by a local research centre in Bolivia, I agree that the development cooperation project where I develop my Ph.D., the TEAM-Minga project, was indeed a ‘cultural, political and scientific vivencias’ (Moreno, 2022). Finally, I must acknowledge that my positionality affects my interpretations, questioning, and lectures on cultural heritage within the context of the TEAM-Minga project, Chukidel in Saraguro, and El Vado in Cuenca. Considering my background, I found myself closer to critical studies of heritage, decolonial theories, and the ontological turn as a theoretical and political framework to a critical and systemic reflection on cultural heritage.

Ethical Concerns

This doctoral research, developed within the framework of the TEAM-Minga project, in addition to the fieldwork in El Vado and Chukidel, have allowed me to explore new contexts and themes that required a reflective commitment to understand how, why, and from where knowledge is constructed. This doctoral research involved a high degree of reflection to become aware of the ethical principles and dilemmas that guide research practices.

My being an Ecuadorian does not automatically imply that the interactions established in fieldwork are free of preconceptions, power and unequal conditions, and socioeconomic and educational gaps. Also, my being from the south is not an inherent condition for conducting a decolonised analysis and research. Still, I focused my efforts on de-centring the research through sensitive and open listening. By questioning the motivations to conduct this research, the project it is framed, and, above all, for whom and with whom to investigate, my objective was that I might somewhat de-centre how the research was conducted. To be vigilant of falling into a superficial work in the name of ‘decolonisation,’ I highlight that I am a scholar from the south being funded by the development cooperation from a European University. In this way, this research also conducted ethnography on and within development cooperation. Although I endeavoured to be careful in the research and writing not to reproduce colonial and top-down

formulations, I am aware that mistakes are part of learning and changing and that this dissertation is part of a permanent process of questioning, de-centring, and learning.

Respect is a criss-crossed ethical principle that is present throughout the duration of this research. During the fieldwork, it was essential to maintain openness and respect for the diversity of standpoints and establish communication free of judgments. Respect translates into practices of transparency and open dialogue, recognising the people of the study sites as active actors in the production of knowledge, possessing knowledge and valuable experiences to understand the topic worked on from the place of events, from their conceptions, experiences, and expectations. It is important to recognize the prejudices with which one enters the field, apply sensitive listening, and allow free expression without value judgments or inducing responses.

Regarding the interviews applied in the study sites, they respected the people's will and consent, so I subjected myself to their times, spaces, and availability, avoiding interfering with their work or domestic responsibilities. The idea of carrying around a form for people to sign before talking to anyone as proof of informed consent would create unnecessary suspicion. In my experience, people from the city or the countryside are wary of signing documents because they think that the signature can be used for other purposes or that the documents have a different scope than what's expressed verbally or recorded in writing. So, as an introduction, I always explained the research objectives and scope, making it clear that the information would be used exclusively for my dissertation and anonymised. More than once the interviewees, both in El Vado and Chukidel, expressed that similar research had been done on the topic already, that they were tired of research and other forms of projects, of not seeing concrete results, or that they did not know the results of the research, all which generated distrust. On several occasions, they asked if the interviews were linked to public institutions such as municipalities or political campaigns, which also generated suspicion when signing documents.

Another guiding principle was confidentiality, which is why, in addition to reporting on the objectives and results of the research, the participants were also informed about the use that will be given to their testimonies within a framework of privacy. For this purpose, informed consent was explicitly requested verbally prior to the interviews, as well as their authorization to record them, guaranteeing complete confidentiality of the opinions expressed to protect the identity of the people interviewed. To achieve this, it was important to establish safe spaces and accessible language to guarantee voluntary and informed participation.

Likewise, as a researcher, it was essential for me to maintain transparency and honesty. Therefore, I always openly expressed to the colleagues of the TEAM-Minga Project my intention to explore the construction of the meaning of Cultural Heritage. This was essential to generate valuable debates about the notions of heritage, how information from the field was interpreted, as well as the results of the project. In the various TEAM-Minga meetings and in the annual work reports, I honestly expressed that the doctoral research would address these debates. Within a framework of respect, different professionals from different disciplines were able to listen to each other, express diverse interests and doubts, which were a challenge, but we had to communicate and understand each other based on our differences. The transparency and honesty maintained in the research allowed us to present several results bound to the

diverse realities and, on many occasions, show tensions in the spaces where the TEAM-Minga project has worked.

Maintaining an environment of honesty with the inhabitants of the study sites was essential to avoid generating expectations that the doctoral research would not meet. This dilemma was present throughout the TEAM-Minga Project. Although the TEAM-Minga project proposes to achieve innovative management of the built cultural heritage and the generation of guidelines, in the introduction and examples of the project and the research group experience constantly used the maintenance campaigns as examples, on many occasions, we felt that could generate false expectations. Faced with this situation, it was essential to maintain an attitude of transparency regarding the information that I personally transmitted in the fieldwork regarding my role within the TEAM-Minga project and my doctoral research, the expected results and scope.

I believe that transparency was not only a personal attitude, but a demand from the community's inhabitants. In Chukidel I was constantly questioned. I believe that the systematic way of demanding transparency and questioning the reasons for the research in Chukidel is due to two reasons. First, the permanent presence of researchers in the community causes inhabitants to doubt the results and benefits of the projects. And second, a strong social organisation constituted in the *Cabildo* that, as a form of care and control over community activities, demands transparency in all projects. Part of the protocols for carrying out the research in Chukidel involved requesting permission from community authorities. In this way, both unilaterally in interviews and in council meetings, I had to explain my role within the TEAM-Minga project, my doctoral research objective, and how it would be carried out. Also, I cleared away any expectations about possible investments and I explicitly clarified that I did not have resources for intervention processes in the community. I did this on several occasions with the *Capak* of the community who change every year.

In 2021, I met the Taller Saraguro collective who allowed me to join in the construction of a community management plan for Chukidel and to participate closely in the dialogues that would be established with the council. In the first meetings with the Taller Saraguro collective, I made my presence in Chukidel as a doctoral researcher and my role within the TEAM-Minga Project clear. As a way of committing to participate in their community management plan initiative and to show gratitude for their openness, I took on the responsibility to facilitate and systematize the participatory diagnosis before formulating the community work plan. During the negotiations between the council and Taller Saraguro, the members of the council questioned my presence, so I had to explain my involvement again.

Although I repeatedly, and in different ways, made my objectives, role, and engagement in the community meetings as transparent as possible so that it was fully understood that the *Cabildo* had authorized my participation, I still felt my presence in the council meetings could be intrusive. Both in the council meetings and in the TEAM-Minga Workshops, I limited myself to participant observation and listening responsibly rather than intervening or issuing opinions. The community authorities indicated that it is challenging to trust projects and research since they feel that the information is extracted in a utilitarian way, that the results are not returned, and that there are no benefits for the communities. One way to maintain trust and respect was

to guarantee that the information from the workshops and systematisation would always be available in a shared document used primarily by the community.

Reciprocity has long been a source of ethical reflection in the Andes. Reciprocity in Chukidel was expressed as a form of care for human interactions, to preserve balance between people, and to generate commitment to the community. In Chukidel and El Vado, a welcome and reciprocity consolidate by sharing food with the community. In Chukidel, they offered me mote, bread, or cheese, and in El Vado, they offered juices, water, or sweets. I consulted with my colleagues at Taller Saraguro about the most respectful ways and the community's own protocols that I should follow to request an interview. They explained to me that interviews are like a favour that one requests which is why it is important to bring a *pinshi* or food as a token of gratitude. This practice was not foreign to me, as people from the city know that it is customary to bring a present when visiting a home. I was also told that asking for a favour, in this case an interview, is not a transactional action but a commitment, support that one must request with great respect while showing reciprocity. For this reason, when I had an appointment in Chukidel to visit people in their houses for interviews, I brought bread or tortillas as a token of gratitude. Immediately people offered me coffee, *mishki*, or an infusion to complement the meal while we sat down and talked. As mentioned before, one way to express my commitment and reciprocity with the community was with the systematisation and analysis of the participatory diagnosis, which I carried out and delivered to the *Capak* as a printed document.

Concluding remarks

This chapter explains the methodology used to study heritage imaginaries in the TEAM-Minga project experience and the Chukidel and El Vado study sites. Ethnography was used as the central methodology to explore how the inhabitants of the study sites and the researchers of the TEAM-Minga group understand and enact heritage imaginaries. Through ethnographic fieldwork, I explored how imaginaries are displayed in people's practices, discourses, and expressions. Participant observation was the centrepiece of the fieldwork. In particular, I conducted a multi-sited ethnography to explore the relationships and ways people's signify heritage. In addition to participatory observation, I conducted in-depth interviews to discuss with interlocutors how they understand cultural heritage, with which situations or other notions they associate cultural heritage, and from whom or in which situations they hear about heritage.

One of the challenges of exploring imaginaries is that each collective, agent, or institution manages a spectrum of thought, understanding, and points of view. Hence, the imaginaries' analytical lens advocates for a situated knowledge approach to avoid simplification and attributing imaginaries to the totality of a human collective. For this reason, it is essential to analyse power relations and to make evident whom and which imaginaries become hegemonic, imposing themselves over other imaginaries and ways of knowledge and, therefore, the production of official narratives, representation and practices as representative of heterogeneous groups.

My fieldwork was greatly affected by the Covid-19 pandemic, postponing and reducing fieldwork in Chukidel and El Vado. Also, the fieldwork for this research was carried out during

intense social strikes, whereby the indigenous movement played a leading role in defending nature's rights, and workers demonstrated against the rise in fuel prices. Despite the pandemic and the strikes in October 2019 and June 2022, I managed to conduct participatory observations and interviews in person in the two study sites and to integrate myself into the daily dynamics of these two sites from 2021 onwards.

Social media is part of people's daily lives and has played a central role in conveying collective identity and heritage values. I also explored social media, mainly Facebook pages, linked with the study sites' inhabitants, the TEAM-Minga project's web pages, and the research group CPM. Also, during data gathering, I examined the documents produced by the TEAM-Minga research group. These documents contain descriptions, approaches, analyses of El Vado and Chukidel, and definitions of what heritage is and how it has changed throughout the project. The documents of the TEAM-Minga project systematise discussions of both workshops at the study sites and the internal meetings of TEAM-Minga, a process of reflection and analysis of how the project was progressing and how they interacted with the people in the study sites.

The organisation of the data was structured to understand the meaning-making of heritage of the TEAM-Minga research group and the inhabitants of El Vado and Chukidel. I organised the fieldwork results in a Nvivo database. Based on a first analysis of the fieldwork, I established three general codes: Imaginaries of Heritage, Heritage Imaginaries, and Alter-native Imaginaries of Heritage. First, I organised the data in general thematic groups (codes). Following Grounded Theory (GT) and open coding, I managed the data in sub-themes, aiming to enhance an inductive interpretation from the perspective and experience of the study site participants. Also, to develop a section that analyses the context, I dedicated a general thematic group of information to the context data gathered from primary and secondary sources. In this way, the problematisation and context analysis of the study sites and the TEAM-Minga project delves into the conditions, historical structures, and standpoints from where heritage imaginaries are enacted.

Finally, this chapter explains my positionality and ethical concerns, two fundamental elements guiding my fieldwork and analysis research practice. I developed my positionality as a reflection on how my background influenced this doctoral dissertation. There is no doubt that my condition as a woman, young, urban, Cuencana, academic affiliated, and *mestizo -laichita* as the Saraguros called me- defined the ways I experienced fieldwork differently in Chukidel, in Saraguro, and El Vado. It is also essential to consider that my positionality and ethical dilemmas stemmed from my double outsider-insider condition in the TEAM-Minga project. The research has allowed me to distance myself from the realities of my daily life, like El Vado's case, and to question my identity and experience more closely regarding the gaps and tensions between the different nationalities and identities that cohabit in the Andes of Ecuador.

I am aware that how researchers conduct their investigation is directly linked to the research interests and commitments and for whom they are investigating. This defines an ethical and epistemological positionality of how researchers produce knowledge. I want to close this chapter with Professor Muyolema's reflection (personal communication, 6 September 2023, Annex II) about the Minga. Professor Muyolema claims that the notion of Minga has been reduced to a form of collective work. However, in the Andean world, the Minga implies an

awareness of mutual care. Although we commonly know the Minga as a collective action, it is a commitment and responsibility to care for and maintain harmonious interaction between people and the environment. The fieldwork and the analyses in this doctoral dissertation were possible thanks to moments of collaboration and joint reflection with colleagues in the TEAM-Minga project and with the inhabitants of the study sites. Therefore, the methodological process has sought to prioritize the care of the relationships established through respect and the transparency of this research.

Part III: Heritage Imaginaries

Introduction

In this third section, I addressed the question: How do inhabitants of the Chukidel and El Vado and researchers use heritage to depict themselves and others (heritage imaginaries) within the frame of the TEAM-Minga project? To do so, I took a closer look at how people establish different identity referents of themselves and others and how they relate to each other within the heritage field. I further disclosed the heritage imaginaries based on the data gathered in the fieldwork, analysing the trajectories and characteristics of each study site and the TEAM-Minga project.

This third part of the dissertation is organised into four chapters. First, Chapter 4 addresses the general aspects to consider, for example, the different territorial delimitations and scales of Chukidel and El Vado in relation to Municipal Governments. Furthermore, in Chapter 4, I address other shared aspects between the two study sites and the TEAM-Minga project as they sit within the Andean geographical context, and the migration and touristic dynamics are also present. Additionally, I briefly developed how social mobilisations and the COVID-19 pandemic were part of the fieldwork's socio-political context. Then, I develop in three different chapters the analysis of the heritage imaginaries displayed in each study site and the TEAM-Minga, considering their historical and territorial background and also the various actors and standpoints involved in the TEAM-Minga project as inhabitants or researchers.

4. General Aspects

The study sites share the Andean geography and climate and the existence of springs and rivers, which are characteristic not only as natural elements that fulfil border functions but also as social and symbolic spaces. In this line, Nuñez (2016) defines Andeanity as the embodied practices and knowledge that emerged in the way to inhabit the Andes, ‘and that people maintain and perpetuate in the global context without using rigid (institutionalised) structures but instead through the transmission via the senses of a worldview that has persisted despite historical and social changes’ (Núñez, 2016, p. 19).

It is worth emphasising the active role of the territory and that the spatiality allows or restricts the inhabitant's interactions, perceptions, and organisation in a community or neighbourhood. The conditions of urbanity and rurality imply different characteristics of density, porosity, connectivity, mobility, security, proximity, service offering, and diversity that generate concrete and differentiated needs for which people organise themselves. During the TEAM-Minga feedback and listening workshops in El Vado and Chukidel, people expressed different needs and motivations for organising in each context. For example, in El Vado, the inhabitants express that the most vital motivation to organise themselves is to face the levels of unsafe conditions and cultural and religious initiatives.

> The neighbourhood brigades conducted for years in El Vado were promoted due to the security that the neighbourhood needed. (Inhabitant of El Vado, student, male, approx. 27 years old, 9 October 2022)

During the diagnostics workshops, the participants stated that in Chukidel, the most relevant organisational processes are the *Mingas* for the maintenance and construction of roads, water

systems, the communal house, maintenance of the community school, and the celebration of festivities such as *Inti Raymi*. Territorial conditions and, therefore, the needs and forms of organisation of each territory also affect how people see themselves and others. Hence, heritage imaginaries are also influenced by territoriality. Just as the local inhabitants have recognised the organisation of religious festivities in El Vado or the celebration of *Inti Raymi* in Chukidel as essential milestones that characterise these places, external agents used these as representations to portray El Vado and Chukidel as traditional or ancestral places, respectively.

A significant economic and demographic condition of the study sites is the migration from rural to urban areas and internationally, which generates important flows and mobility of resources, people, and ideas. Migrations affect local perceptions of lifestyles and daily practices and, therefore, affect how people's identities and the meanings associated with their heritage have changed. Significant migration waves started at the national level in 1999 and 2000, driven by periods of economic and financial recession that initiated intense emigration to the United States and Spain (Lang, 2018). In recent decades, international migration has transformed the architectural landscape, the form in which families are configured, and how the Andean identity, whether urban or Indigenous, has adapted to international contexts and incorporated foreign trends in local life practices. There has undoubtedly been greater permeability in how people see themselves and recognise themselves in migratory contexts.

> Many people migrated, young people, who then sent money. Unfortunately, they didn't buy the empty houses or the ones that were ready to be sold after the death of their owners. They bought houses on the outskirts, where you would see villas, and big houses, so everything changed, there are now very few of the old families who continue living in El Vado (Inhabitant of El Vado, retired, female, approx. 90 years old, 15 June 2021)

The previous testimony of a neighbour of El Vado explains how, due to the migratory process, the old houses, often considered heritage, have been abandoned, affecting their deterioration and the displacement of the traditional families of the neighbourhood. The economic flows from emigration also have enlarged the socioeconomic gaps and the incidence of foreign construction models that, in the case of Chukidel, contrast with traditional rural houses made mainly of *adobe* and tile (Lang, 2018). In Saraguro, and for some in El Vado, the emigrated population continues to be linked to the territories of origin, and they participate in the traditional activities of the communities through economic contributions and *priostazgo*[25]. During my fieldwork, I observed that at carnival festivities, the *priostes,* the migrants who provide financial contributions are publicly thanked over a loudspeaker, stating the name of the *prioste* and their place of residence.

> Here in Saraguro, some people migrated since 1995 or 2000 to Spain or other parts of the world. When you get to communities, for example, in Oñacapak, there are currently many cement houses, three floors, big homes, and I think there were a few houses left there built with the traditional architecture (*adobe* or *bahareque*[26])

[25] Priostazgo or prioste are the people who host and sponsor religious and popular celebrations. The priostazgo has the objective of resource redistribution, strengthening ties of kinship, friendship, and conviviality (Sisapacari, 2008)

[26] Type of earth construction. This involves a material composed of reeds or sticks woven together and joined with a mixture of moist soil and straw.

> (Inhabitant of Chukidel, Municipal Technician, male, approx. 44, years old, 7 June 2022)
>
> For instance, migrants have greatly supported the sport group Círculo Cruz del Vado activities), they have a strong relationship, they are like the sponsors of the activities and fests. (Inhabitant of El Vado, female, approx. 54, years old, 9 March 2020).

In El Vado and Chukidel, the emigrating population remains linked to the neighbourhood or communities through family relationships and participates in organisational processes and religious celebrations as sponsors or through remittances. However, the exodus of youth leaves a great void and discontinuity in traditional practices, management or leadership positions, and the incorporation of new visions into organisational processes that adults mainly lead, as seen in the El Vado neighbourhood committee and the Chukidel *Cabildo* where especially adults participate.

Tourism also appears as a transversal aspect of the research context. In the national scope, national touristic campaigns and private travel agencies continue exalting an exotic characterisation of indigenous communities based on their ethnic and territorial conditions, promoting approaches to the indigenous heritage from a cultural authenticity valuation (Eljuri, 2016). An excellent example of this is the government tourist campaign program called "Magical Town", which promotes Saraguro as a cultural destination based on the 'ancestral' origin of the Saraguros people, promoting an idea of communities fixated on the past (Astudillo, 2022; Del Campo Tejedor, 2019).



Figure 11 Magical Towns Campaign of the Ecuadorian Ministry of Tourism (Ministerio de Turismo, 2021)

For this reason, tourism dynamics, or the mainstream comprehension of heritage, implies a politics of representation. Moreover, authorised and institutionalised heritage discourses display heritage characterisations as biopolitics devices on how people must identify themselves to fit within the heritage representation as a unifying categorisation of groups. In this way, heritage imaginaries (e.g., the characterisations assigned to the World Heritage Site declaration or the Magical Town tourism campaigns) produce cultural and identitarian performances as resources and commodities for tourism economies.

In both Chukidel and El Vado, tourism plays a relevant role in how heritage is used as a brand. In the two study sites, tourist initiatives include accommodation, food, and cultural events. In El Vado, the tourist offering is focused on exalting the urban landscape and traditional handicrafts, and in Saraguro, ethnic tourism is focused on indigenous communities. In both

cases, heritage destinations appeal to tourists, such as the World Heritage Site (WHS) in Cuenca and Saraguro as a national cultural heritage site.



Figure 12 Cuenca, a jewel of world heritage (Visit Cuenca Ecuador, 2022)



Figure 13 Saraguro's clothing is an expression of their cosmovision, National Institute of Cultural Heritage (Instituto Nacional de Patrimonio Cultural, 2023)

And so, the configuration of heritage imaginaries in Chukidel and El Vado strongly aligns with the conception of heritage as an exceptional and exotic element, affecting how foreigners and the inhabitants perceive local heritage. We will see later how the testimonies of Chukidel and El Vado inhabitants show different opinions regarding whether people agree or disagree with the representations shown by the articulation of heritage and tourism. Furthermore, local actors may read these characterisations as forms of visibility, promotion, and favourable recognition but also as stereotypical and reductionist. Moreover, tourism generates economic considerations such as gaps in accessibility and mobility between those who stay and those who leave, resulting in a utilitarian logic between demand and capitalising on local resources. Thus, this logic not only responds to tourist demand but above all, to the subsistence needs of local inhabitants, resulting in an asymmetric situation where heritage imaginaries are produced.

In none of the study sites does tourism management have a collective basis. In Chukidel and El Vado, the touristic initiatives are mainly private businesses. Although tourism in Chukidel is promoted as community-based, it has no link with local community governments (*Cabildo*) and it has become more of a label (Del Campo Tejedor, 2019; Salazar, 2012a).

> Tourism initiatives come from people within the communities who are looking for ways of supporting themselves. They are people who have prepared themselves for this, and it is about presenting people's daily experiences for tourism. And this connects with Cuenca since they are linked with the tour operators from there. (Inhabitant of Saraguro, politician, social communicator, female, approx. 30, years old, 27 July 2022)

> In other words, community-based tourism is more of a type of community marketing (Inhabitant of Chukidel, scholar male, approx. 38, years old, 28 April 2021)

An important observation from the fieldwork is that both the El Vado and Chukidel populations have developed strong reflective processes of how they see themselves. In El Vado, there is a continuous discussion about the traditional and religious understanding of heritage related to the artist and cultural sector in the neighbourhood. In the Chukidel case, the construction of

heritage imaginaries goes beyond the limits of the community. The identity referents respond to a broader scale, first as the Kichwa indigenous population and then as Saraguros. In the two study sites, critical standpoints on heritage go beyond the limits of the neighbourhood or community, referring to a broader context of a sense of belonging to the city or indigenous territory.

A critical aspect of comprehending the heritage imaginaries of the Saraguro and Cuenca is the colonial background. In this line, the ideas of 'Urbanity' and 'Indianness' are inextricably linked to the origin and evolution of the colonial city. Chukidel and El Vado are examples of how the Andean populations configured spaces designated for mestizo and indigenous populations. However, they have been presented as discursively incompatible realities, especially by elites that identify with a colonial-Spanish background of the city. Incorporating more inclusive approaches in state heritage management does not imply the re-evaluation or cessation of narratives that exalt colonial heritage and Catholic religiosity that are still present (Arroyo Belmonte, 2021). For instance, the designation of Quito (1978) and Cuenca (1999) as World Heritage Sites exalt the exceptional nature and the well-preserved colonial and republican architecture of their historic centres. Cuenca is, thus, in the local inhabitants' imaginaries the 'cultured' city; this perception is evidenced in slogans such as 'Cuenca the Athens of Ecuador'. Cuenca's architectural heritage is mainly linked to the Spanish and the French, which complements and contrasts the indigenous (Cañari and Inca) heritage (Eljuri, 2020). In this line, Mancero (2011) remarks that in Cuenca, the official narratives frame the indigenous heritage as archaeology, in contrast to the European heritage that becomes history (Mancero, 2011). For instance, in the official national state narrative, indigenous populations are a timeless image, so any change is defined in terms of "ceasing to be." Official imaginaries of indigenous people are linked to the countryside, where old and new essences are maintained (Valcuende del Río et al., 2016). The Spanish invasion marks a before and after; thus, the history of the Andean cities is fundamentally told by the elite and defined as white and male (Valcuende del Río & Vásquez, 2016).

Both the El Vado neighbourhood in Cuenca and the Chukidel commune in Saraguro resulted from the socio-spatial segregation promoted during the colony. Throughout the Andes, we find colonial and republican historical centres, such as Cuenca's, as well as indigenous rural populations, clearly differentiated geographically, economically, socially, and culturally. This territorial and population configuration is accompanied by imaginaries of the inhabitants of each territory and, consequently, their heritage. The historic centres are associated with the colonial architectural heritage, while the indigenous populations with the intangible heritage of their ways of life (Eljuri, 2016; Garcés & Solo de Zaldívar, 2016). Categorising Chukidel or El Vado as solely rural or urban sites would show a partial view of these contexts. Although hegemonic stereotypes of the urban, the rural, and the indigenous are used to characterise these study sites, the complexity of El Vado and Chukidel lies in how the urban, rural, and indigenous are also more flexible ways of life and identity that intersect. Benavides (2015) points out that the construction of identity in the Andes is not simply defined in class or racial terms but rather in terms of the intertwining diverse elements that continuously defy categorisation (Benavides, 2015). Still, material conditions and racial differences are present in the Andean identities. Although the indigenous populations defy stereotypical ethnocentric characteristics, the

economic gaps and racial discrimination present in the Andes are still generate significant segregation of these populations in material, spatial and also symbolic terms (how they are depicted).

In the case of the Chukidel community, it is evident how the borders between urban and rural are fading. The proximity of Chukidel to the urban centre of Saraguro, the population growth, and remittances from migrants that are invested in new constructions, have motivated the continuous urbanisation of the community, which causes conflicts in the community between those who agree with the progressive urbanisation and those who still seek to maintain a rural lifestyle. The gap between urban and rural not only implies implementing infrastructure such as pavement, sewage, and industrial construction but also touches upon elements that are focused on supplying services, such as the economy or transportation, rather than with agriculture. The TEAM-Minga project selected these two study sites, precisely, because of their territorial conditions in terms of urbanity and rurality. However, both study sites are part of the same spectrum of analysis as dynamic fields of encounter and dispute between the indigenous world, the white-*mestizo*, the urban-rural, and the local and international. In Andean territories, urbanity, rurality, indigeneity, and mestizos are maintained in some practices as ways of life and belonging to a dispersed and diverse society. Yet, the complexity of the multiple voices and articulations between cultural matrices is also in the ethnic and race discriminations and economic gaps in the population and how people also identify from that intersection (Garcés & Solo de Zaldívar, 2016).

Furthermore, in both sites, it is essential to highlight the presence of critical standpoints, mainly from youth and artistic movements such as the *Runa Kawsay* sport and cultural group in Chukidel and the cultural managers in El Vado, that question the colonial legacy as the Catholic tradition but also highlight the diversities beyond the traditional points of view as we can see in the following quotes.

> Everyone is talking nowadays about the 200 years of independence, but from who? Besides, it's not the role of the neighbourhood committee to say that we must kneel before the cross, the responsibility of the leadership is to work towards the representation of all faiths, not to unify. The neighbourhood committee took a space that belonged to the whole neighbourhood, for example, at the bottom of the steps, in the square, and now I see a sign they've put up that says "Prayer Centre". How is it that a public space, with public funding, could be dedicated to a spiritual line, Catholicism? My spirituality is very different from theirs. When the neighbourhood committee says that El Vado is all about tradition, about the bread makers, the greasy pole, and not much else. When Cuenca is no longer the city of ponchos, where we must wear the best toquilla straw hats. Cuenca is that and much more. El Vado, to me, as I stated, is a place that has many offers from different fronts. Whoever says or believes that El Vado is only about tradition, the little greasy pole, or the mass, it's all a lie. If you walk around El Vado now you will find from the most evangelical Catholic groups, all the way to people with tremendous cultural and artistic offers, that's what El Vado is. (Inhabitant of El Vado, cultural manager, male, approx. 57 years old, 08 August 2022)

Furthermore, it is important to consider two unexpected, critical events that influenced both the TEAM-Minga project and the doctoral research. The first was the social mobilisations in Ecuador that resulted in two national strikes in 2019 and 2022. Second, the COVID-19

pandemic during 2020 and 2021 entailed lockdowns, biosecurity measures, social distancing, and the deepening of Ecuador's economic crisis.

The Social Mobilisation

It is important to mention that during the doctoral research and the execution of the TEAM-Minga project, Ecuador experienced a period of strong social mobilisations. The CONAIE (Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador), social and union organisations, and the country's professional drivers' union demanded responses from Lenin Moreno's government for the increase in fuel prices. The first strike began on Thursday, 3 October 2019, and lasted for 18 days, leaving several dead, injured, and detained. Since the demonstrations took place in the historic centres of cities such as Cuenca and Quito, heritage assets were damaged, walls were covered in graffiti, cobblestones were destroyed, and metal structures were also removed.

The second national strike occurred between June 13-30, 2022, during the government of Guillermo Lasso. The strike was initiated once again by the CONAIE and was in response to the government's policies that would increase the price of fuel and the cost of living, as well as their actions regarding the security crisis, shortages, and inoperability of the public health system. In June 2021 the indigenous organisation had delivered to the Vice Minister of Government a list of proposals, one of them being the freezing of fuel prices, but the Government proposed the targeting of subsidies instead (something that has not materialised thus far). The national strike on 13 June 2022 blocked several roads and called for several mobilisations in the cities.

An important part of the mobilisations was the deeply contrasting positions in reference to the effects and the damage done to the historic centres of the cities. Positions in defence of the architectural heritage of the historic centres accused the protesters and their leaders of being "enemies of the city" and "vandals". The mayor of the city of Cuenca, with a group of people, cleaned the streets and stained walls—promoting a 'pacifist' discourse in the face of the demonstrations, seeking peace, order, and cleanliness in the city. The image of the mayor of the city, a white mestizo, in front of the protesters led by the Indigenous and the labour unions revealed a politics of representation that was profoundly discriminatory and based on class and racial differences. The mayor portrayed the protesters, a significant part of the urban population of Cuenca, and the media as a threat to the order, patrimonial aesthetics, and status quo of the city. In these contexts, polarised and discriminatory positions were expressed, using the argument of heritage to portray the protesters, led by the indigenous movement, as undesirable in the cities, in the same line as the statements of public authorities (Perez, 2020). For instance, during the 2019 strike, former president Lenin Moreno stated in an interview with the BBC that 'Quito is, first of all, a heritage city. It has a historical centre that has to be protected, preserved, and, sadly, these ill-fated groups, these ill-fated groups have destroyed the city during these two days' (Lissardy, 2019).

During the national strikes of October 2019 and 2022, rather than focusing on the issues at hand such as what was happening in the country and the demands of social movements, there

was a surplus of discourses that referred to the city's heritage and ornate. Defending, without the benefit of inventory, the image of a white city without poor people is nothing but an imaginary vision of a postcard city, of a society that, behind its vindications, hides chauvinist discourses, xenophobia, and aporophobia[27]. The criticism towards the demonstrations as a risk to the architectural heritage reinforces the simplistic view of the city's ornaments, compared to the possibility of coming together in the public spaces belonging to everyone and exercising the right to resistance. The CONAIE's approaches reflect national concerns and the unrest of broad sectors of the population, and the strikes were demonstrations that also highlighted the right to heritage and public spaces as political scenarios to claim their demands (Bretón et al., 2023).

The Pandemic



Figure 14 Source: TEAM-Minga project. Feedback and listening workshop: Minga of knowledge taking care of the Community Heritage, 3 June 2021, in Chukidel Community.

The TEAM-Minga project began in 2019, while the doctoral research began later in December of the same year. During the first year, the research group selected the study sites and contacted local informants. The pandemic profoundly limited the fieldwork planned for 2020. The work of the TEAM-Minga research group had to adapt the theoretical and methodological debates and interviews to the use of digital media, which limited the interaction, proximity, and trust between the inhabitants of the study sites and the researchers and, therefore, limiting the participatory approaches proposed by the project. Fieldwork was undertaken in 2021 and 2022, which included workshops to gather information on organisational dynamics, heritage at risk, and governance guidelines. The context of COVID-19 limited TEAM-Minga from having a continuous presence in the study sites to generate greater trust and credibility in the establishment of participatory processes and negotiation with inhabitants. COVID-19 has also affected the availability of people to attend workshops and interviews. In these contexts, discussing cultural heritage turned into a challenge when people's concerns focused on the need for food supply, access to health, and the economic crisis because of the pandemic.

[27] Aporophobia is the rejection and strong antipathy to poor people.

5. El Vado Neighbourhood

During colonial times, the Spanish founded the city of Cuenca in 1557 (Carpio, 1976). The city's design followed the guidelines issued by the then King of Spain, Charles V: a system of parks, squares, atriums, churches, and other public spaces around the Plaza Mayor (Abdón Calderón Park). The city's historic centre has retained its original orthogonal plan for four centuries. One of the first neighbourhoods of the Spanish city was El Vado, located at the southern entrance of the colonial city limits. El Vado is situated on the edge of a ravine facing the Tomebamba River, constituting a topological border that divides the colonial city from the modern city. El Vado was one of the colonial city's main entrances. Hence, the *Cruz del Vado* was built as a territorial delimitation and a symbol of good luck for travellers.



Figure 16 Author: Manuel Serrano. El Vado uphill road in 1930. The old El Vado bridge was destroyed by the rising Tomebamba River in 1950. (Pasión Vadeña "Cruz del Vado," 2019)



Figure 15 Saraguro's clothing is an expression of their cosmovision, National Institute of Cultural Heritage (Instituto Nacional de Patrimonio Cultural, 2023)

The neighbourhood has a historical and geographic centrality. El Vado was born as a space of the suburbs that connects with the south, as a place of supplies and provisions, where the indigenous and working class used to live. From the beginning, the neighbourhood linked the indigenous population with the working class and traditional trades, such as the bakers. Although the owners of the bakery businesses or mills were from the economic elite, the workers and, in this specific case, the bakery trade were carried out by indigenous or black women. This was recorded in the minutes of the city councils where, on April 6, 1588, the word "bakers" was used to refer to the indigenous and black women who sold bread in the city square (Tómmerbakk and Herrera 2019). Over time, the neighbourhood has been configured as a transit, commercial, trade, and craft-production space. Also, El Vado constituted a space of transit and interaction with rural populations who frequently travel to the city markets (Eljuri, 2020). Today, El Vado is one of the main vehicular entrances to the Historic Centre.

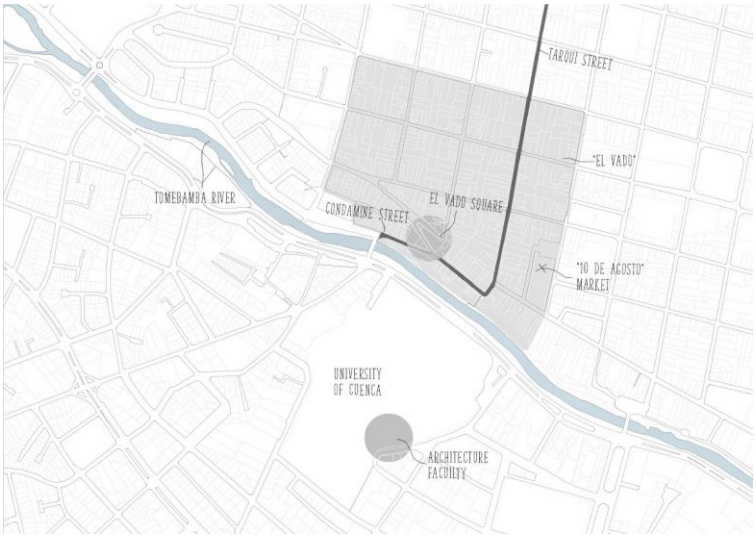

Figure 17 Map of El Vado neighbourhood, located in the city of Cuenca. Source: author

After nearly three centuries of colonial rule, most of Cuenca's historical centre architecture was built during the republican period, significantly influencing the French style. During Ecuador's independence from the Spanish crown, the French Revolution was a strategic reference, setting Paris as a symbol of aesthetic, urban, and cultural modernity. In this same period, the visit of the French Geodetic Missions in 1736 strengthened a European aesthetic and mindset in the aristocratic groups of the city that still sought to maintain colonial distinctions. Independence and the republican period show the emergence of a national state that explicitly seeks to maintain colonial structures both aesthetically and politically concerning land ownership, spatial segregation and relation to indigenous peoples.

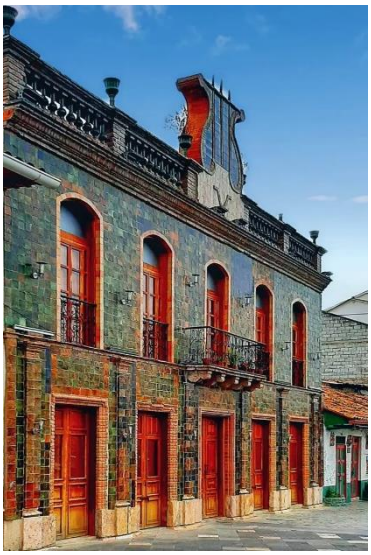

Figure 18 Casa de la Lira in La Condamine Street



Figure 19 Hotel Cruz del Vado in La Condamine Street



Figure 20 Casa Moreno in La Condamine Street

In the El Vado neighbourhood, one of the main streets is named in honour of Carlos María de La Condamine, a scientist of the First French Geodetic Mission who arrived in Cuenca in 1739 and resided in El Vado during his stay in the city. Today, this street is the main tourist attraction of the neighbourhood, where French-style houses are registered as architectural heritage of the city. The memory of an aristocratic past remains in the neighbourhood. Its inhabitants value its history and aristocratic architecture as a heritage and as a meeting place for poets and musicians who inhabited the Vado in the 19th and 20th century (Eljuri, 2020; Mancero, 2017).

However, with the existence of aristocratic architectural buildings, El Vado has historically been a popular neighbourhood. It is located in the part of the city that, during the colonial period, was designated for indigenous people, and in the Republican period, it became a space for artisans and bakers (workers class). Approximately from the 70's to the beginning of the 21st century, El Vado was stigmatised as a 'red zone' due to the house's overcrowding, high population density, and a strong perception of insecurity in the neighbourhood. Since then, the municipality has addressed the Vado problem by applying reforms and interventions in public spaces which lead to an increasingly intense gentrification process under the policies of 'security' and heritage conservation. Initially, this process was sponsored by the Municipality, but currently, there are several agents of gentrification, among which are the municipal offices and the University of Cuenca.

Although, to this day, there are positions that exalt the aristocratic or elitist references of the neighbourhood memory and as part of the heritage assets, the working classes (artisans), indigenous people and economic migrants are part of the memory, history and present of El Vado. They have configured the popular culture of the neighbourhood and made it an important part of the intangible heritages such as traditional crafts, trades, and games. However, these popular dimensions for the Vado are included in the official historical and heritage narratives as part of the colourful folklore and not with the same seriousness as implied architectural heritage.

Throughout history, the trades that have settled in El Vado are the tinsmiths, artisan fireworks makers, bakeries, shoe shops, hat repairers, watchmakers, skirt embroiderers, and traditional barbershops. All trades related to the demands of the rural inhabitants that pass through El Vado in direction of the markets. In one of the interviews, a goldsmith explained how the family business settled in El Vado precisely because it was a place of transit, connected to the markets, and because of its relationship with rurality.

> People had to pass through here to go to the markets, and Dad practically stayed here because before there were the 10 de Agosto Market and the Otorongo square, and, on the other side of the river, there were buses that came from all the rural parishes, so it was strategic. Everyone came requesting some custom work they wanted, and, on the weekend, they would pick it up before returning to their communities. (Inhabitant of El Vado, craftsman, male, approx. 56 years old, 14 October 2020).



Figure 21 At the beginning of La Condamine Street, on the right is the hat shop, and on the left is the La subida del Vado (uphill road) with high traffic, 5 September 2022.



Figure 22 At the beginning of La Condamine Street, the hat shop is on the left and in front of the University of Cuenca Heritage House Casa de los Arcos, November 8, 2022.

Currently, the economy and traffic in the neighbourhood are influenced by the proximity to the University of Cuenca, the 10 de Agosto Market, and Calle Larga, places that attract large numbers of people for studies, commerce, or leisure. Up to this day, you can find several of these artisanal trades that have been linked to the transit of people from the countryside who pass by El Vado to trade their agricultural products at the 10 de Agosto Market (García et al., 2018). Since El Vado is situated in the ravine of the Tomebamba River, an essential element is the neighbourhood's spatial configuration. In the case of El Vado, the spatial distribution of the residents, artisans, and cultural managers also affects the use of space, the sense of belonging, and the proximity they feel with iconic elements of the neighbourhood such as the *La Plaza de la Cruz del Vado* (Cruz del Vado Square). For example, the artisans and merchants who reside in La Subida del Vado (El Vado uphill road) have problems caused by pollution from the vehicular traffic that uses this street to access the historic centre from the south. They have repeatedly mentioned feeling excluded from the neighbourhood since they are situated in front of the river rather than around *La Plaza de la Cruz del Vado* or along La Condamine Street.

The second level corresponds to the front part of the neighbourhood, parallel to the Tomebamba river, and above the *La Subida del Vado*. La Condamine Street follows all the frontage of the *La Subida del Vado* and is one of the few pedestrian streets of the city. In the neighbourhood, three buildings are declared the city's architectural heritage, they house the offices of the municipality's culture department. Also, on this street, we find galleries of antiques, musical instruments, old barbershops, the cultural centre *El Prohibido*, and the Hotel Cruz del Vado. The *Plaza de la Cruz del Vado* is also located on this level, with a panoramic view of the city's south. Likewise, neighbourhood organisations such as the Vado Sports Club and neighbourhood committees are located on La Condamine Street and around *La Plaza de la Cruz del Vado*. In these last two years, the neighbourhood committee has occupied the old public restroom facilities under the *Plaza de la Cruz del Vado*, converting them into a meeting place for the committee and a small chapel for its prayer group.



Figure 23 Cruz del Vado Square, 5 September 2022



Figure 24 At the top the monument to Palo Encebado in the Cruz del Vado Square and, at the bottom, the chapel of the neighbourhood committee, 29 November 2022.

In addition to the first two levels, I identify a third or space level in the neighbourhood. It is the inner part of the neighbourhood behind the La Condamine Street. This neighbourhood section is not directly linked to La Condamine Street or the Plaza de la Cruz del Vado as iconic places. There are businesses and houses on President Córdoba Street. Although the neighbourhood's boundaries are blurred, the proximity to the *Plaza de la Cruz del Vado* or La Condamine Street is a spatial and social marker of the neighbourhood's sense of belonging.

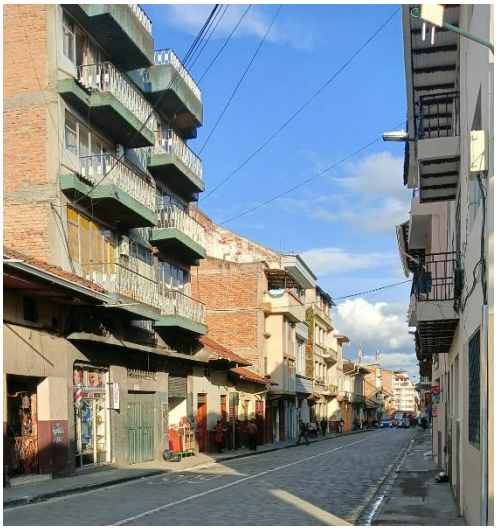

Figure 25 President Cordoba Street, October 31, 2022.

These three sectors or levels of the neighbourhood have also been configured as population groups; for instance, the people who live around the Plaza de la Cruz have an important centrality in the use of this public space. Offices of the Municipal Department of Culture and the University of Cuenca are located on La Condamine Street, where cultural services such as museums, galleries, cafes, barbershops, a millinery, and *El Prohibido* Cultural Centre are situated. The population located in the inner part occupies the most invisible position in the neighbourhood. Later, I will develop in more detail how each of these sectors has developed different standpoints regarding heritage, which, in turn, have led to conflict and separate demands over the neighbourhood's iconic spaces.

Cuenca and the World Heritage Site declaration



Figure 26 The Cuenca´s Municipality Building was built from 1923 to 1929 in the city's historic centre. In front of the Municipality is the flag of the city of Cuenca, the Ecuadorian national flag, and the UNESCO World Heritage Site flag.

Up to this point, I have shown how the territorial and historical conditions consolidate the heritage imaginaries about the configuration of a National-State, the colonial past, and an Andean territoriality. The official narratives of history establish a common ground to naturalise forms of differentiation, characterisation, and social order that are not only heritage imaginaries about people's cultural representation but also social and political imaginaries of their role and place to the elites. In this line, an important milestone in national and local history has been the declaration of World Heritage Sites of the Historical Centres of Cuenca (1999) and Quito (1979), turning these two places into a referent and signifier of heritage in people's imagination.

The Cuenca's WHS declaration became a roadmap for the management of the historic centre. Subsequently, the values recognised in the WHS declaration have become meta-narratives that display several imaginaries about the city. According to Eljuri (2020), UNESCO would seem to be a kind of "ghost" in the city's pride. The WHS turned out to be a sellable branding for tourism and a label used to defend the management of the Historic Centre when questioned (Eljuri, 2020)In the case of Cuenca, the WHS declaration of the historical centre in 1999 was the impetus for undertaking processes of public space regeneration. The post-declaration city public management focused on maximising the urban attractiveness and symbolic capital of the declaration to attract real estate capital (Navas & Torres, 2021).

The dossier developed by the Municipality, which was presented by the Ecuadorian government in 1998 to UNESCO, indicates that the exceptional universal value of Cuenca is the unique landscape that brings together historical, urban, and architectural complexities. The dossier emphasises that the urban dimension shows the coexistence of two cultures - the Indian and the Spanish. Cuenca illustrates the perfect implantation of the Renaissance's urban planning principles in the Americas. This is an outstanding example of a planned Spanish

colonial project in the Andean area that worked as an instrument to consolidate the conquest of America (UNESCO, 1999).

The WHS declaration proved to be the most important strategy for a distinction that Cuenca deployed in the second half of the 20th century (Eljuri, 2020). The WHS declaration as a city project exalts a "cuencanity" that reaffirms the colonial architecture that is typical of the aristocratic, enlightened, white-mestizo classes of the city. Also, anthropological studies in Cuenca (Eljuri, 2020; Molina et al., 2023) have shown that people tend to attribute the WHS declaration to the colonial architecture. Although the historic centre planning of Cuenca is from the colonial period mostly of the architecture was built after independence. Along with the declaration, the preservation and conservation agendas of the city's heritage have led to dismissing the heritage of popular mestizo, peasant, and indigenous sectors (Eljuri, 2020). According to Eljuri (2020), the WHS declaration has consolidated an imaginary of Cuenca linked with traditional heritage—with all the ambiguity that the idea of traditional can be. This consequently restricts the reproduction of the current identity and limits the transformation of cultures; for example, displacing street vendors, street art, and cultural projects that are critical of the catholic religiosity of the city as an element of the traditions of the city (Mújica, 2014).



Figure 27 Heritage City INPC Ecuador salutes Santa Ana de los Cuatro Ríos de Cuenca, World Heritage Site, for its 465 years of Spanish foundation (INPC Ecuador, 2022)

Several economic initiatives used the WHS declaration and the heritage label to promote tourism. In 2005, Cuenca's municipality funded the Municipal Tourism Foundation (Barrera et al., 2008). Several economic initiatives used the WHS declaration and the heritage label to promote tourism. In 2005, Cuenca's municipality funded the Municipal Tourism Foundation (Barrera et al., 2008). Later, after an intense advertising campaign, Cuenca was ranked in the top two best cities in the world for foreign retirees between 2010 and 2016 (García et al., 2017). Additionally, in 2011, according to the National Geographic, it was placed among the 50 best cities in the world (Zibell, 2012). In 2017 and 2018, it won the "Tourism Oscar" for the best destination in South America for short stays (World Travel Awards, 2018) (Cabrera, 2019). All these denominations and designations come from the public and private interest to promote

heritage tourism and seek more tourism and foreign investments. As a result of the tourism influxes generated by the mentioned campaigns and denominations, the inhabitants of Cuenca have had to deal with the high costs of living and continuous gentrification of the historic centre, including the neighbourhood of El Vado. The rising land, housing, and leisure business costs have forced residents to move to other city areas. Along these lines, Hayes (2020) emphasises that Cuenca's heritage-led gentrification reproduces historic urbanism's coloniality and marginalises public space's lower-income and informal uses.

> The lower income, popular uses of public space clash with elite nostalgia for old-style European urban tastes, which are increasingly marketed to prospective second-home owners, residential tourists and lifestyle migrants. UNESCO World Heritage status may be an important stimulus to urban economies, but they are insufficient to provide livelihoods for all residents, and often compound existing spatial injustices (Hayes, 2020, p. 3063) (see also in Kingman & Bedón, 2018).

Actors and Different Standpoints

Up to this point, I have discussed heritage imaginaries as a way to configure population portrayal from a historical perspective. Next, I analyse how local actors and researchers use heritage imaginaries to represent themselves and others in the context of the study sites. It became necessary to map the different standpoints, the heritage imaginaries at play locally. For this, it is essential to consider that local contexts are configured by different positions, relationships of agreement, tension, and reaffirmation with historically consolidated heritage imaginaries, and the various relationships woven between people and their ways of seeing themselves in relation to the heritage of those places. First, I will address the social fabric of El Vado in articulation with the historical and territorial background presented. In the same way, in the next section, I will address Chukidel.

The CPM research group has already developed several research studies mapping the actors who inhabit El Vado neighbourhood (García et al., 2018). The TEAM-Minga project conducted an updated actor-mapping where population sectors were identified and their positions regarding heritage and the tensions they hold were collected.

The first group identified were the families who lived there for several generations and claimed the neighbourhood's residential status. These families have consolidated their socio-spatial position around Plaza de la Cruz. During participant observation, I looked forward to opening a dialogue about the neighbourhood's history with people working or living in President Córdova Street. Some of them responded that the people who live in the Plaza de la Cruz in El Vado know more and that I should contact the neighbourhood committee directly or ask specific families. The following testimony is an example of how the residents of El Vado identify a consolidated group of families that own properties in the neighbourhood as historical residents, linked to the neighbourhood committee and, therefore, those 'who know the most about the neighbourhood'.

> Well, I think there are traditional families, especially there are a series of families and neighbours that throughout history have made up the families of the neighbourhood. (Inhabitant of El Vado, painter, male, approx. 63 years old, 19 July 2020).

> I am very clear, because there is the word ancestral there, it must be clarified that peasant people didn't live in El Vado. It seems like the neighbourhood was born as a part of the historic centre, because there were social classes, there were many indigenous and blacks, who, they say, in Cuenca lived from San Sebastián upwards. At the same time, from San Blas going down, to the side, there lived people who had country houses properties, the whole environment was like a rural area. But El Vado itself, it must be clarified, that it seems that it was born as a family neighbourhood. And see, I once told you something curious, poets frequented here, musicians frequented, Dr. Manuel Cuello Noris lived in the Vado neighbourhood. (Inhabitant of El Vado, female, approx. 90 years old, 15 June 2021).

These two testimonies show, first, how inhabitants linked the commercial and cultural sector of La Condamine Street, but not to the neighbourhood committee, and identified that there is a group with a social and historical legitimacy that has consolidated in the neighbourhood committee and the El Vado Sports Club. This perception of a defined nucleus of families or long-standing residents of the neighbourhood has created a gap between those who are or not part of it, even though there are currently inhabitants who have resided in the neighbourhood for decades, or who are part of the traditional families that have mostly emigrated. The second quote corresponds to a person who is part of this group of long-time residents or traditional families, who exhibits an important position of this group: the claim that the neighbourhood should be a residential and family space and emphasising that it is not a neighbourhood with indigenous or afro-Ecuadorian population, and in this way, assuming residential conditions are mainly associated to the withe-mestizo population. This immediately creates tension among businesses with different interests, such as galleries, bars, or cafes. However, traditional residents still defend the residential use of the neighbourhood to this day despite this being in a high tourist area. Likewise, this comment shows that the residential aspirations of the neighbourhood are linked to a memory of the aristocratic elite that inhabited this area in the past. Along these lines, this testimony differentiates El Vado from two other neighbourhoods in the historic centre that were born as spaces dedicated to indigenous populations while, on the contrary, there were many instances of doctors, musicians, or poets who were members of aristocratic families who resided in El Vado.

This group of El Vado constituted the Neighbourhood Committee in response to the insecurity problems in the area. This group firmly maintains its Catholic beliefs, and its main organisational motivations lie in coordinating religious festivities such as the *Fiesta de la Cruz* (Feast of the Cross), the Año Viejo (New Year celebrations), and prayer groups. Also, the families and young people who emigrated remain linked to the activities organised by the neighbourhood committee through their family connections.

> Part of the neighbourhood committee are the ladies of the neighbourhood, who are also the ones who organise the festivities here, they are the ones who also promote this type of meetings in the chapel (prayer groups). It is a commission within the neighbourhood committee. It's been the joint efforts of the neighbours that has enabled us to promote different projects, as I say, both for security and for festivities. And within the neighbourhood committee, there is also the Círculo Cruz del Vado

> Sports Club. (Inhabitant of El Vado, student, male, approx. 27 years old, 9 October 2022).

Also, along La Condamine Street, there are two types of actors. On the one hand, there are the workers of the administrative sector of the Municipal Department of Culture, which is a public institution in charge of the cultural management of the neighbourhood. The people working in the municipality offices in El Vado are a floating population that spends their working time in the neighbourhood but are not involved in the residential fabric. On the other hand, handcraft businesses and cultural managers configure El Vado Tourism Committee. They are workers and managers of art galleries, antique or traditional instrument stores, and *El Prohibido* Cultural Centre. The owners of galleries, such as *El Prohibido* Cultural Centre or the graffiti gallery, and the artisans who work there, not only have their businesses and jobs in El Vado but also live in the neighbourhood. *El Prohibido* Cultural Centre has become a local and national point of reference for the underground culture, with contemporary artistic activities that attract large audiences from outside the neighbourhood. This alternative cultural proposal produces tensions with the traditional standpoints the neighbourhood committee claims.

> Well, in El Vado, I think there is a cultural centre, El Prohibido, which is a kind of strength that the sector has, right? Although, of course, there are people who do not agree with the presence of *El Prohibido* Cultural Centre, but I believe that with it a cultural activity with greater presence and very specific to the sector began to be generated. In fact, of course, El Vado has had many cultural elements and activities, but El Prohibido, in some way, I think, is the protagonist, the main character, that has generated a presence in the city through artistic and cultural activity. To that extent, it has motivated people who are dedicated, for example, to the visual arts, the musical arts, or photography to come the neighbourhood. (Inhabitant of El Vado, painter, male, approx. 63 years old, 19 July 2020).

Cultural managers located on La Condamine Street suggest that the neighbourhood committee is an already consolidated group, and its organisation is closed, comprised of those named as the longest-standing residents. It is important to mention that the neighbourhood committee is an organisation recognised by the municipality and that it must act as a mediator before public institutions. Therefore, the observation that this falls on a certain group indicates that there are people from El Vado who are left out of this representation and management with the authorities.

> Generally, there are neighbours who already have been allocated certain functions, and who, as perhaps long-standing people of the sector, obviously, already have their own agenda and they have their organisation to achieve such goals: El Vado Neighbourhood Committee is one, the El Vado Sports Club is another. And we, for example, as people who are dedicated to artistic activity, we form a cultural touristic committee. There is also another issue that, I think, historically has not disappeared in the city, that is not just a matter of El Vado. I think that in all the city neighbourhoods, there is a kind of despotism that is not wanted. They (referring to the Neighbourhood Committee) should open the spaces to people who have never lived in El Vado but who now maintain a work activity, a cultural activity, however, it is not open, or they are not willing to do it, don't you think? I believe that is the problem of the city, it doesn't only happen in El Vado, there is an issue in many sectors regarding property owners, the board of directors or the neighbourhood committee; so, instead of bringing people closer, they create distance. (Inhabitant of El Vado, painter, male, approx. 63 years old, 19 July 2020).

It is important to note how, in this last testimony, it is mentioned that there is despotism that emerges from long-time residents consolidate that, and it is described as closed to new initiatives that are taking place in El Vado, mainly those that are linked to the cultural managers. A clear example is the *Palo Encebado* statue. The statue corresponds to a typical game mainly from rural popular festivals. The monument, as seen in the image below, consists of three mixed-rural persons (*cholos*) standing around the pole. The neighbourhood committee requested this statue to show how their identity and heritage are associated with a traditional sense of the neighbourhood, and the historical portrayal of the neighbourhood as a transit space between the rural and the urban areas. Likewise, this statue is an example of how the traditional is linked to a past or nostalgia of the rural, and the representation of the rural person is part of a folkloric aesthetic of Cuenca, in contrast with the physical absence or invisibilisation of rural and racialised people in El Vado.



Figure 28 The propaganda of the Municipalities of Cuenca that says 'enjoy Cuenca' with a picture of peasant woman (chola)[1] in the market and the monument to Pablo Encebado in the background.

A fourth group of people corresponds to the inhabitants and people who work on the streets known as Subida del Vado and Tarqui Street, where craft shops, goldsmiths, hairdressers, and traditional costume shops are located. People dedicated to artisanal trades, who, although not organised into a group, are the ones who maintain traditional trades, essential elements of El Vado heritage imaginaries. The idea of artisans being living heritage is associated with the continuity of the knowledge of the crafts in various spaces of public management, tourism, and media (Vera, 2020). Artisans have been called living heritage, and they themselves assume this role to make themselves visible.

In interviews with tinsmiths in the Subida del Vado, these artisans stated that they recognised themselves as living heritage since they maintain traditions such as the handmaking of hats and copper and tin products.

> We, the artisans, are part of heritage, for example, I speak to you as part of it, I have been part of the heritage since 1999 or something like that, I think I am in the book.

> What has heritage done for me? Nothing. We are the intangible part, and I am not speaking only on behalf of myself but also on behalf of all the artisans who are there: what has heritage done for the artisans? Nothing. But we can tell you about what the tangible part has: the buildings. If you see all that added together, with El Otorongo, El Vado, we are talking about more than a million dollars. We are going to keep only the buildings and that will be the heritage. In other words, heritage is... the lady who sells the skirts, the hats, the tinkers, the man from the guitar store, all of us who are there. And the vast majority of people who go to El Vado do not go to the small square, that's why I asked, "what is El Vado?" The vast majority go, in one way or another, to buy the hats, we the artisans. I sometimes say we are invisible people that no one notices except when you need us. The seamstress, the craftsman who fixes a pot, the tinker, or if you are a person from the countryside, you go to the person who fixes hats. So, we are part of the heritage. (Inhabitant of El Vado, painter, male, approx. 58 years old, 9 March 2019).

Institutions such as the CIDAP have promoted popular culture as a way to reevaluate everything that does not fit within formal Art and is associated with the traditional. Likewise, there is an understanding of popular culture associated with rural areas as the space where traditions have not been affected by urban changes. This perception of popular culture is linked to the traditional and the past, but it is also connected to the idea of people in the sense of class or stratification. Therefore, popular culture implies that it is accessible to the entire population, in contrast to elitist culture. Similarly, rurality has a class bias, the idea of the countryside as traditional and not aristocratic. In the Andean context, it is worth mentioning that popular culture also includes a racial bias, what is popular is what is traditional, not always indigenous, but mestizo (González, 2006). Hence, artisans, as is the case in the previous testimony, are considered cultural heritage, pointing out that their work contributes to the continuity of popular culture. Still, this quote also shows how at the same time how heritage is considered an institution when he states, "What has heritage done for me? Nothing," then proceeds to claim that the investments are focused on architectural heritage, making them feel like invisible artisans.

Furthermore, due to the artisans being situated on the upper part of El Vado, they are not directly involved in the tensions that may arise from the use of the Plaza de la Cruz del Vado or La Condamine Street. Therefore, there is also a physical distance between those who are at the top of the neighbourhood and those who are on the Subida del Vado (uphill road), the quote below explains this distance. Additionally, it has been revealed more than once that the artisans of the Subida del Vado don't feel invisible, and they are not considered either by the neighbourhood dynamics that occur in the upper part of the neighbourhood or by municipal management. Finally, the following testimony also refers to the relationship of artisans with popular culture.

> Listen, I, coming from the top part, would hardly even dare to speak because I don't live with them, I'm talking more about the visible lower part. For example, before all the people went up the hill on foot, the vast majority still wore their traditional *chola* costumes, which is now very rare, everyone wore a hat, everyone passed by. Before I had the workshop here on the corner, they stopped in front, and everyone would cross themselves looking at the cross. All that time of traditions is being lost, and that is part of our identity. Last December, there was a *gringa*[28], a green-eyed girl of about

[28] Gringa or gringo refers to foreign people mainly white English speakers.

> 20 years old, wearing a chola skirt, a traditional blouse, and espadrilles, the happiest person, happier than the *cholas* here. (Inhabitant of El Vado, craftsman, male, approx. 56 years old, 14 October 2020).

Besides, in this interview it was also mentioned that the neighbourhood committee is a group of people particularly older, and, along these lines, the interviewee who was approximately fifty years old mentioned that they could be his parents. Furthermore, the interviewee revealed the dilemma of the boundaries of the neighbourhood, exemplifying that the neighbourhood committee's discussions did not include the problems of the people on the Subida del Vado, where the smiths like him are located. Finally, the second part of the testimony makes it clear that, although the artisans of la Subida del Vado and the inhabitants around the square who are part of the neighbourhood committee do not share the same problems, the neighbourhood committee and the cultural managers pay attention to artisans and aim to include them since they are part of the imaginaries that represent El Vado.

> They had a socialisation and I remember a doctor member of the neighbourhood committee arrived with many older people who know me, and everyone said, "Whatever the doctor says we do". So, for me (laughs), it was so difficult to try to give my opinion or go against those elderly people who were contemporary with our parents. So, I couldn't give my opinion and say "no", they said that El Vado was just the small square, and when it was my turn to introduce myself, I ironically said "I don't know", because the vice president, this guy… Barrera, he said that he lives 50 meters away from the square, so I said "I am 60 meters away, I don't know if I am then part of El Vado". Then all the people were like: "No, of course, yes, you are…", I was more saying it ironically, you know? To make him uncomfortable. The neighbourhood committee hast told us that they were going to invite us for the elections, but we never got that invitation, so, yes there is their group among them, they do their things, they are untouchable, according to them, and they do what they want, and that is not right. (Inhabitant of El Vado, artisan, male, approx. 56 years old, 14 October 2020).

Several of the artisans agree with the cultural managers in promoting tourism in the neighbourhood. In this line, the artisans greatly coincide with the third group of artisans, merchants and cultural managers located on La Condamine Street who benefit from tourism to enhance their businesses. Likewise, the Municipal Department of Culture of Cuenca coincides with these two groups, both artisans and cultural managers, regarding the promotion of cultural activities. A good example is the activities, as shown in the following post by the Municipal Department of Culture, that focus on traditional crafts and the arts as part of the practices and heritage of the neighbourhood.



Figure 29 The post states: We invite you to visit the Rostros de (Faces of) El Vado exhibition, a sample that presents the arts and crafts supported by artisans and artists from El Vado. Discover the cultural wealth, traditions, and heritage of this emblematic neighbourhood (Casas Patrimoniales y Centros Culturales Municipales, 2023)

Moreover, the Municipal Department of Culture coincides with artisans and cultural managers in the promotion of cultural activities such as VadeArte: Emerging Urban Art and Design Meeting 2021, making use of the public space (e.g. La Condamine Street and Plaza de la Cruz del Vado) for recreational activities, concerts, or the installation of cafes to get the presence of people in the neighbourhood. This comes into tension with the residential use desired by the neighbourhood's first and oldest group of residents. These tensions and affinities that arise are, first, due to the different type of uses, commercial versus residential. Second, due to the age and religious differences between the groups of cultural managers and the neighbourhood committee. And, finally, due to the different perceptions of what a "good use of public space" can be. The group of artisans of the Subida del Vado does not present an explicit conflictive relationship. Still, it is worth highlighting that there is a direct demand regarding the lack of representation, care, and attention to the needs of artisans who face different problems not linked to the use of the public space, but rather the strong pollution and noise problems.



Figure 30 Tin shop on El Vado uphill road, the sign reads: We are tired of noise and environmental pollution, July 2022 (Campoverde, 2022)

A fifth group is the inhabitants and people who work in the inner part of the neighbourhood, which means that they do not face the cliff or the entrance to El Vado, and, spatially, they are not situated around iconic places. During informal conversations in these inner streets, several people expressed that they do not feel they know enough of the history or identity of the neighbourhood, suggesting that the interviews should have been applied to the inhabitants located around the *Plaza de la Cruz del Vado*, the old residents or directly to the representants of the neighbourhood committee. Some people even suggested that they do not feel like a part of El Vado.

It is important to mention that a floating immigrant population also resides in the neighbourhood. In this line, Hayes (2020) stated that rural workers who migrated to Cuenca after the 1960s, and nowadays international immigrants from border countries, 'rent historic property only sometimes in the best conditions, often sharing them with other families to divide high rents' (Hayes, 2020, p. 3066). The conversations and interviews confirm that part of the neighbourhood's population are immigrants from Venezuela, the Ecuadorian coast, and rural areas who have immigrated to the city for work and for university studies.

> Well, in fact, in El Vado, currently, there are houses or small buildings inhabited by many people from other provinces. For example, where I have my premises (painting gallery on La Condamine Street) which is between the hairdresser and El Prohibido, there were people from the Shuar ethnic group in that house, there were some, about two or three, I think, also, there are people from the coast, there are people of African descent, there is a diversity. But there is also, next to that young man's tattoo shop who also do a little urban art, there are people who live in that home from Peru, there are people from the coast, there are also migrants, Venezuelans, who cohabit in different homes in this sector. They are dedicated to subsistence activities, to be able to have a life. Without a doubt, they will think that these possible economic developments they aspire to can be generated in cities. However, these aspirations are not met, and it is very difficult for these people to integrate into society because they are families who live there temporarily for months, or there are many who will last a year or two. (Inhabitant of El Vado, painter, male, approx. 63 years old, 19 July 2020).

Tensions exist between neighbours precisely because of their different perceptions about their uses and interests over the neighbourhood public spaces and because they do not share the same problems. An example of this is the case of artisans affected by traffic and pollution, a problem not considered a priority by other actors.

> So, you know that there is a strong division, that there is the committee, the Sports Club, that are here at the cross, which is La Condamine, the higher part is the El Prohibido cultural centre. So, I mean, they are different groups because everyone wants to benefit, and we are down here. I, for example, must deal with a lot of drunks all the time. Each organises themselves on their own and draws water for their mill. So, El Prohibido people are on that block, the upper part of La Condamine, they are organised, they do their own things there, they are always doing something, and it is a way of promoting El Vado from their corner. So, any time someone interviews me, I appear in anything, I talk about "El Vado". "Where is it located?", "On the Ascend of El Vado", then it is a way to promote it too. There isn't a unity. We say that if the owner of El Prohibido says, "Hey, listen, stop this", then we'll do it, but if someone else comes to give some mass or whatever, I'll leave. Lately they did the carnival, who have they invited? No one was there; there was only the neighbourhood committee, and the authorities were there, as well as everything else because that was

> where the proclamation was launched. (Inhabitant of El Vado, artisan, male, approx. 56 years old, 14 October 2020).

The tensions between former residents and cultural managers are mainly due to their different visions of heritage and priorities between residential and commercial uses. Generational gaps also fuel these tensions, changing the perception of what and how the traditional legacies of the neighbourhood should be remembered and used for art and tourism. In El Vado residents agree that the neighbourhood organisation is spatially and socially sectorised. The most obvious conflict is between the neighbourhood committee, the most traditional group of people, and *El Prohibido* Cultural Centre. They held a long-lasting dispute since the Cultural Centre settled in the neighbourhood thirty years ago, not only about the use of public space for concerts or cultural activities, but also about the rejection of extreme art by conservative viewpoints, especially since the Catholic Church is intentionally criticised inside the centre.

> It's the adult people, people who are kind of hypocritical, who have their beliefs, and who are respectable, right? But, I mean, I can't share that, because I already see it from another perspective, as art, for example. So, he (referring to Eduardo, the owner of El Prohibido Cultural Centre), sometimes we've talked, he does his things, precisely to try to make this type of people uncomfortable (referring to the neighbourhood committee). (Inhabitant of El Vado, artisan, male, approx. 56 years old, 14 October 2020).

> Yes, but, to me, the man who owns El Prohibido shocks me a bit, he does not want to socialise with us. Why? He sometimes makes statements in the newspaper that are completely far from reality, "the El Vado festival should no longer be held", that's absurd! Now, what El Prohibido promotes a lot is drugs, I tell you clearly because I saw, years ago, he wrote, he had a column in El Mercurio, I went in once, I paid the entry, and well, I came out high, and what I saw I wrote, I was not untruthful, because I wrote what I saw, what I knew, out of principles. I did not like it. He spent a lot of time, I don't know, promoting drugs, he formed a very large group, there were about fifty young people, they had uniforms, they appeared on Friday dressed all in black, painted, young, what is it? Rockers or Emo I think they were called, with some necklaces here and there. It seemed to me that he was dressing up, what was happening? That doesn't offend anyone, everyone has freedom, but they were in an establishment where they took drugs. How is that acceptable in a central neighbourhood? Let them look for a suitable place and do as they want, this was the reason, once he had a concert, all the men of neighbourhood committee made a human fence while brandishing weapons saying, "If you come here, we will shoot you." (Inhabitant of El Vado, artisan, female, approx. 90 years old, 15 June 2021).

The tensions that are generated between *El Prohibido* and the neighbourhood committee are not specific to these two actors, they represent a permanent tension between what is traditionally linked to conservative positions and what is changing—including what is seeking transgression and breaking with those traditional values associated with Cuencanity, within the framework of its Catholic heritage (Pazán, 2022). *El Prohibido* Cultural Centre has sought out to be a space for experimental and extreme artistic production, calling for different cultural and creative proposals from the plastic arts, theatre and music, becoming a referent for young artists in Cuenca. In El Vado, *El Prohibido* became an anti-establishment symbol in contrast with the conventional and the conservative lectures of the history and identity of Cuenca and looking to recover relegated memories such as the initiative Cuenca en Cuentos Prohibidos (Cuenca in

Forbidden Tales) of the Barojo Artistic Collective in association with the *El Prohibido* Cultural Centre.

In short, the people who live in El Vado see themselves and the other cohabitants of the neighbourhood in different formats in relation to heritage. Although, on the one hand, local actors consider the iconic places, the historical background, and the popular culture as a nostalgic reflection of the rural past of the neighbourhood with the continuity of artisanal crafts as well-defined heritage imaginaries, these same things have different implications for other neighbours. On the other hand, these heritage elements can be used to portray the neighbourhood from a more conservative perspective, or they can be elements to showcase creativity and alternative cultural proposals. Also, these heritage representations inspire municipal initiatives to consolidate public space management. They motivate commercial and touristic activities, and ultimately, some people stated that they see themselves as heritage through the continuity of artisan labour. That is to say, how the different actors see themselves displaying heritage imaginaries is also a way to reclaim these symbols as part of their identity and aspirations for this place. Whether they're seeking to maintain a residential, commercial, touristic, or artistic continuity, in line or not with the historical imaginaries, El Vado continues to be depicted as a colonial and traditional neighbourhood.

6. The Chukidel Ayllullakta Commune

The Saraguro canton is located in the province of Loja in southern Ecuador. The Chukidel Ayllullakta commune in Kichwa, or Las Lagunas in Spanish, is the first legal commune of the Saraguro canton formed in 1939. The commune's proximity to the centre of Saraguro enables a dynamic exchange between the community and the urban centre. Many people from Chukidel work in public management, commerce, transportation, or the Saraguro urban centre market.



Figure 31 Photograph: The author. Entrance to the Chukidel community, 5 June 2021.

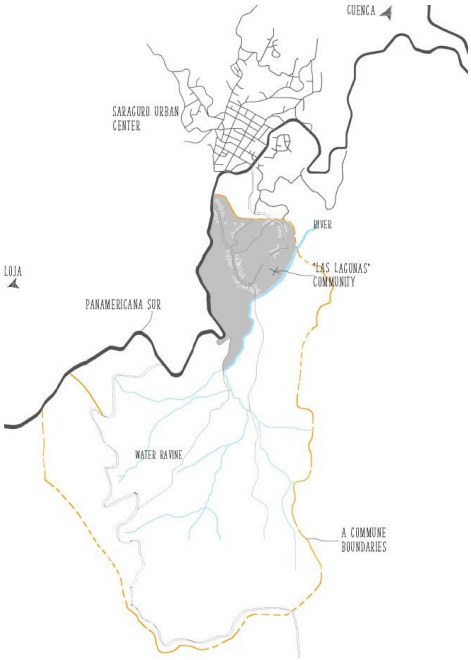

Figure 32 Chukidel Commune Map. Source: author

During the Spanish colony (1530-1809), Saraguro was one of the few indigenous populations that were not subject to the hacienda system (often referred to as the *latifundio-minifundio* complex), allowing them to manage their own territories. Still, the Saraguro people were forced to maintain the Tambo[29], an important station for the rest of the travellers passing through the southern mountains. So, 'while the colony subjected the Saraguros to a significant burden, they were left in control of their own lands' (Ogburn, 2007, p. 163). By maintaining their lands,

[29] From the Quechua *tampu*, meaning a place of lodging, stay, or rest.

Saraguros were able to preserve their traditions and cultural identity, as well as their community organisation systems.

At the end of the 20th century, the Saraguro population greatly expanded its educational and occupational horizons, diversifying economic activities in other fields such as academia, public service, and architecture (Burneo Vela, 2016)Despite the diversification of economic activities in Saraguro, agriculture continues to be one of the main sources of subsistence, which is why some inhabitants in Chukidel preserve the Chakra or Andean Orchard based on diverse production to guarantee food sovereignty on a family scale. Surpluses are sold to supplement the household income. Along with economic diversification, many of the population migrated to urban areas and other countries (e.g., Spain or the United States) in search of improving their family's economic situation.

Despite the economic transformation and migratory dynamics, when asking the inhabitants of Chukidel about the Saraguro identity outside the commune's territory and, therefore, outside the daily routine of rural and agricultural life, people stated that a rural life does not define Saraguro's identity but keeps it as a referent.



Figure 33 Photograph: The author. The Chakra between the house and the car park. The chakra, the corn, and the legume orchard. It is part of the house layout; the picture shows the kitchen wall on the left side and the parking lot on the right.

For instance, in Chukidel, some families still maintain a *Chakra*, which is a constitutive element for the imaginary regarding this place's identity and traditional landscape. Beyond agricultural activities, the *chakra* represents a way of materialising the Andean principles of relationality and alterity, which means that everything is interwoven and is cyclical. Regarding other identity references, during the interviews, the people expressed that the clothing, language, and hairstyle (*jimba*[30]*)* are explicit identity markers that permanently reaffirm their identity no matter where they are.

> Here, in Saraguro, it's more about the clothes. One, without land, doesn't cease to be Saraguro. (Inhabitant of Chukidel, scholar, male, approx. 43 years old, 30 July 2021).

[30] Long braided hair

> Long hair is important, if they cut it off, they will look like *laichos* (white/mixed urban person). If they cut their hair and dress with a poncho and short trousers, they look like they're wearing a costume, not like Saraguros. (Personal information in an informal conversation in February 2021 central square of Saraguro, fieldwork diary).



Figure 34 Braiding the jimba for the Three Kings Festivity (Japon, 2019)



Figure 35 In the Warachikuy ceremony, the passage from childhood to adulthood, the young persons have responsibilities and powers. The young people are dressed in Saraguro indigenous clothing. (Merchánm Jossep, n.d.)

As previously mentioned, it is also important in the context of Saraguro, and in general in relation with the indigenous populations in Ecuador, the indigenous organisational and political movement. In Ecuador, between 1960 and 1980, the indigenous and peasant movements led a solid political and organisational process. In 1990, the indigenous movement conducted a significant uprising that was considered a political milestone in the defence of indigenous people's rights (Guerrero, 2000). This milestone is relevant to the historical memory of Saraguro's social struggle as it incorporates resistance as part of its collective identity. For instance, during the meeting with the community government (Cabildo) and interviews, people mentioned that political leadership is an essential characteristic of Chukidel.

> Lagunas has always been a place of leaders, like *Taita* Luis Vacacela, they have always been present (Inhabitant of Chukidel, painter, male, approx. 63 years old, February 2020).

Furthermore, in these dialogues, people remember their participation in the '90s uprising and even more recently in the strikes of 2015, 2019, and 2022, where there was military repression against the indigenous populations that blocked the traffic in vital highways as the South Panamerican that passes through Saraguro.

> There were even deaths! Yes, we were helping from here, we left some stuff to support the people in the strikes, because they always strike when it's needed. (Inhabitant of Chukidel, farmer, male, approx. 88 years old, January 2020).

The 2015 strike arose in the face of closing bilingual intercultural schools and stopping the dispossession of lands and territories promoted by the government through land law, water law, and mining law (CONAIE, 2020). The most recent strikes in 2019 and 2022 occurred during a profound economic crisis, rising fuel prices, and food shortages. In this context, the indigenous movement, together with union organisations, demanded fair prices for agricultural products, respect for collective rights, the control of the mining industry, integral reparation for socio-environmental impacts, and the control of market prices.



Figure 36 Photo posted on Facebook by an inhabitant of Chukidel, where an older adult is shown distributing chicha (fermented corn drink) during the national strike 2022. In the background, the wood blocks vehicular traffic on the South Panamerican highway. The description states: The food shortage in supermarkets is because we "lazy" people have stopped working in the fields, and we are on the #NationalStrike to demand fair prices for our agricultural products. If that does not deserve solidarity, then let agro-industry save you (Chalán, 2022)



Figure 37 Photo posted on Facebook by an inhabitant of Chukidel. National strike in 2022. The inhabitants of Saraguro occupy the South Panamerican highway at the entrance to the community of Chukidel. The posters have slogans such as: 'Government killer and go out IMF', 'Viva el Paro' as cheering to the strike, 'Lasso Fierro Urco no se toca' referring that the inhabitants of Saraguro won't let mining activities advance in the mountain of Fierro Urco, and 'Medicina para Hospitales' requesting more medicines in hospitals.

An important part of the context in Saraguro is that there have been many international cooperation interventions, one of the first is the Andean Mission during the 60s and 70s. The Andean Mission of Ecuador was a development program sponsored by the Andean Indigenous Program of the International Labor Organisation in the late 1950s. Also, countless NGOs and institutions, such as the Spanish Agency for International Cooperation and International (AECI) sponsored community-based tourism in Saraguro. The development projects of NGOs, starting in the '70s, included approaches to "cultural rescue" or "development with identity" based on the ethnic views of indigenous populations (Del Campo Tejedor, 2019). The development projects implemented by programs such as the Andean Mission conducted projects on capacity building, education, access to medicine, improvement of road infrastructure, management of water sources, and even influence in the configuration of community councils (Martínez, 2002).

> There was also a FEEP sector of the Andean Mission. They were in the Tenta area, for example, they helped a lot. I was an educator, on radio production. Later, with the Andean Mission, wells began to be dug, water was drawn, then the town councils began to function. And then, in the years 65-67, the *Cabildo* (Central Council) was formed. There was a previous *cabildo* that brought together all the communities. Then the Ministry of Agriculture divided the communities and named it Las Lagunas. (Inhabitant of Chukidel, farmer, female, approx. 62 years old, February 2020).

The previous testimony relates how the presence of the Mission, one of the first development projects in the 60s, influenced access to education and promoted the application of road, water, and irrigation infrastructure projects in the communities. Likewise, together with the then Ministry of Agriculture, the territorial and political administration was reorganised, consequently giving them each their own council. In the case of Chukidel, prior to this reform, the territory, and the populations of Gunudel, Ilincho, and Chukidel were a single community known as Chukidel. Once they were reorganised into communities, Chukidel was officially named the Las Lagunas community.



Figure 38 Sign at the entrance to the community that says 'Saraguro ancestral beauty', at the bottom the name in Kichwa, Chukidel Ayllullakta, and in Spanish, Las Lagunas, 11 March 2021.

The constant presence of international organisations and development projects in Saraguro has influenced the inhabitants' perception and interaction with the cooperation and heritage practitioners, generating distrust and scepticism. Also, the discourses and languages used by development cooperation have influenced how people see themselves and value themselves based on the categories and notions researchers use. A relevant element in the Ecuadorian Andes context is the presence of social and political organisations. The CONAIE (Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador) is an indigenous movement of Ecuador, one of the most important in Latin America, and integrates all the indigenous identities within the Ecuadorian national territory. Among its postulates, it questions the colonial power structures still present in Ecuadorian society without seeking the destruction or elimination of the other identities that coexist in Ecuador, but rather, seeks the eradication of the inequitable and discriminatory social relations from the power patterns (Quijano, 2006). The indigenous movement aims to vindicate the indigenous identity, recouping their culture and language. In Saraguro, it is possible to observe how the indigenous movement is another factor that favours neo-indigenism culturalist agendas. These cultural agendas are based on the need for differentiation and identification, contributing to safeguarding symbolic boundaries, reinvention of cultural representations such as the *Raymis*[31], and strengthening the Andean spirituality (Del Campo Tejedor, 2019; Roitman & Oviedo, 2017). In this context, the construction of imaginaries about themselves and history is directly linked to a constant construction process of the indigenous subject, politically and socially.

> In my parents' time, for instance, when they lived in the 90s, the indigenous movement had a big political influence on the reconstruction of the indigenous identity. One of the issues is that it ended up in essentialisation, what we know as a culturalist view. For example, conceiving an identity in ahistoric terms, or the discourse regarding ancestralism that winds up reifying culture, giving the impression of the lack of transformation, as a very narrow defence of identity and culture regarding the transformations of newer generations. (Inhabitant of Chukidel, scholar, 43 years old, male, 11 November 2023)

The previous testimony conveys how the indigenous movement in the 90s influenced the formation of closed positions, which self-essentialise indigenous identity. The interviewee calls these traditionalist points of view culturalists that promote a defence of identity that does not recognise transformations. Likewise, NGOs and the tourism and inclusion campaigns of the national government have disseminated a multicultural discourse to strengthen the inclusion of indigenous and recovery of indigenous populations without necessarily contextualising their political, identity, and social conflicts and demands. The following testimony reflects precisely how multicultural discourse has impacted the local level.

> There are many aspects at a national and international level, the topic of multiculturalism did build a very identitarian discourse around the indigenous world. The indigenous movement and certain organisations have been promoting a discourse centred around what it is to be indigenous from a cultural standpoint, promoting a valorisation of the indigenous and now of the ancestral as that being the ahistorical entry. I believe that there is that aspect from the 90s and, on the other hand,

[31] The Raymis are the ceremonies of the Andean Kichwa culture to pass the agricultural cycles and solstices, linked to the fertility of the woman and the land, community management and leadership, and agricultural productivity, abundance, and distribution. Audiovisual producer

> contemporary issues about topics such as heritage and tourism. This type of discourse is closely linked to the market, and the object of consumption is made up of the ancestral, even the ritualistic, and it is a contemporary thing. My grandparents never talked about *Inti Raymi* or *Kapak Raymi*, it is rather from the nineties onwards from the front of identity reconstruction, and it is Las Lagunas where those forms of rituals are shown, where those culturalist expressions are condensed, which can fall into objectification, but they remain in certain groups, and I don't think the new generations share this. (Inhabitant of Chukidel, scholar, male, approx. 43 years old, 30 July 2021).

Furthermore, it was crucial for fieldwork in Chukidel that I participate in the community diagnosis process for the Community Management Plan. This allowed me to know the study site's context from the inhabitants' perceptions and interests. During the workshop that the community government organised, I interacted with the community authorities and representatives and participated in the discussions about the community evaluation. Most of the concerns voiced in the dialogues revolved around how changes in the living conditions had affected community life, the practice of the Saraguro identity, and the community's cohesion in general. Besides, they repeatedly expressed their concern about cultural loss and the tense relationships between the indigenous and the mestizos. Based on the testimonies of the inhabitants of Chukidel and in workshops, it is also essential to question what people understand by "cultural loss." For example, people have expressed that cultural loss is linked to lifestyle changes and economic activities. Hence, the loss of heritage reflects the changes in the ways of being previously, but there were also continuous changes in the past. Therefore, the loss implies a temporary cut, a comparative and selective process of what is in permanent change and how people constructed and signify identity elements as vehicles of identification, differentiation and belonging in which the matrix, origin or the original culture is an imaginary reference point within the continues transformation of societies. During the workshops on participatory diagnosis and the workshops held by the TEAM-Minga project, the people expressed their concern in the face of change in living conditions, such as the high traffic of automobiles in the community, the mass media, the migratory dynamics, and professionalisation that had transformed the "traditional" life of the Saraguro.

> The system is also broken.... Now, for example, with work, mobile phones, the internet, all that, there is no communication. Now the young people, the children, no longer speak, they no longer say hello, they have things in their ears and stare at their cell phones. (Inhabitant of Chukidel, farmer, female, approx. 62 years old, February 2020).

Nowadays, new economic activities outside of agriculture, the increase in the number of Saraguro people accessing higher education, and the continuous emigration flows have diversified Saraguro´s life conditions. In this way, these elements transformed the traditional understandings of Saraguro's life, overcoming the stereotypes of indigeneity and rurality. The diversification of ways of perceiving and constructing the Saraguro identity based on different life experiences has made the already existing internal tensions more evident within the community, between those who have studied and those who have not, those who have migrated and those who have stayed, the catholic versus those who follow Andean spirituality, people who are more attached to rural life and the ones who have incorporated urban practices. In this frame, the people who left the Saraguro canton, either for education or economic reasons, are

sometimes perceived as detached from the community, even being singled out as 'capitalists'; the mestizo culture has alienated them, and they have assumed a mestizo urban life rather than the commune's. It is important to note that the most conservative positions that seek to preserve the Saraguro identity and its traditions have been strongly fuelled, on the one hand, by the formation and political discourse of the indigenous movement in line with their identity claims, and, on the other hand, by the strengthening of the academic training of its inhabitants who have contributed historical and anthropological readings about the Andean culture. In his research, Del Campo Tejedor (2019) points out that the most traditionalist discourses of indigenous identity are found in a particular group of people who, through their studies and better economic position, have strengthened a traditionalist reading of indigeneity (Del Campo Tejedor, 2019). Likewise, Quizhpe (2022), calls to analyse how the "exotic intellectuals" persist among the indigenous and indigenist elites, who have mystified and mythologised the indigenous subjects. Even though they seek to strengthen or have the desire to rescue the culture, on many occasions, they have generated more differences and gaps. The following testimony addresses the tensions that can be generated from conservative positions, called culturalist, with the new generations.

> What is also particular is that Chukidel is one of the wealthiest communities in Saraguro; not all communities are the same, they have a different historical experience regarding economics and migration. Therefore, Saraguro is on a higher level within the social stratification. It is interesting to see that there are people who have had more access to education and other life experiences, at the same time, these are the same people who carry this essentialist discourse of culture, as a form of self-affirmation that has a lot to do with the discourse from the 90s about valuing the indigenous that was greatly promoted. I believe that they stayed with that, and from there at the national and international level a discourse of overvaluing the indigenous, removing its links with the economic or political sphere, leaving only the cultural. The new generations are already in a different era, hence the clashes with the new generations. (Inhabitant of Chukidel, scholar, male, approx. 43 years old, 30 July 2021).

Currently, the increase in gaps and differences is a global phenomenon that affects, mostly, the communities where unity is not based on diversity but in the collective sharing of the socioeconomic conditions, plus a clear differentiation from the foreign/mestizo/urban as an ethnic unit (Lang, 2018). As mentioned before, the lifestyles of Saraguro people have diversified, making it vital to consider the generational gap. Indeed, there is a radical variation in the perception of what a community life crisis is between generations, as the younger populations experience their indigeneity in a cosmopolitical world where the differences between urban, rural, indigenous, mestizos, local, and global are more than borders, they are a spectrum in their own identity, and socio-political experience (Rivera, 2018). As a result, the ways to understand local cultural heritage have multiplied, questioning a unique and traditional comprehension of community life and the identitarian indigenous stereotypes (Astudillo, 2022).

One of the main problems that was identified in the community diagnosis, and later in the TEAM-Minga workshops, was the "loss of culture". As the participants of the diagnosis pointed out, a reason for this is the systematic and historical imposition of modern-western thought through colonisation by the schools and the catholic church. Also, the people identify

that the current causes of the loss of culture are the homogenising effects of cultural globalisation, widespread by mass communication technologies, which have radically changed indigenous cultures, and how young people have other interests and ways to interact, including social media.

> Being Saraguro is belonging to a land, customs, sharing the experiences of those who populated this area. Also, being Saraguro is wearing the clothing, language, and values that exist here. Today, those traditions have been lost due to Western education in schools and colleges, which does not make us value who we are. For example, in schools they force us to learn other things and do not encourage learning the Kichwa language. (Inhabitant of Chukidel, farmer, male, approx. 75 years old, January 2020).

> There are two topics we have not touched on: language and clothing, which are fundamental parts of the identity of a people. In this case, the language has been very, we would say perhaps, it has had a very big decline here in the Saraguro due to influences from many years ago. First, because the Saraguro indigenous people are the only ones in this area, and we do not have nearby towns with whom we can interact. So, in that aspect, our relationship has been rather more direct with the Castilians, not the mestizos. My dad said that when they went to school, they always spoke Kichwa. That when they went to school, the teacher didn't even want to hear them speak Kichwa. She wanted to hear them speak in Spanish amongst them, and they hid to speak it together, amongst classmates, because they understood each other better that way. (Inhabitant of Chukidel, Municipal Technician, male, approx. 45 years old, 23 February 2021).

As a result, the people identify that the loss of culture is reflected in the socio-organisational dynamics of the community. It is worth mentioning that it was mostly adults who participated in the community government meetings and TEAM-Minga workshops, which may bias perceptions. On many occasions, when talking about the loss of culture, they refer to young people who do not wear their indigenous clothing daily and get their subsistence in other ways that are not directly related to agriculture. The new generations live in different times; therefore, their identity construction is subject to other conditions. That does not mean that their indigeneity is reduced, but it is experienced in a different way. However, these other ways to experience indigenity also imply loss and forgetting identity referents. Thus, the processes of change in heritage undoubtedly also imply a selection, not only about how it is remembered and continues to be reproduced heritage but about which and why those elements have endured in people's identities and experienced in different ways. Generational differences affect how the construction of heritage imaginaries is linked to the meanings in their daily lives.

> The new generations have another socialisation and other horizons, more linked to enterprises, to business, to the question of growth in individual terms. It's not black and white, but that way of thinking is present. Perhaps in contrast to previous generations, there was a more organisational sense. For example, I believe that the new generations do not necessarily identify with the language, with Kichwa, but nevertheless they continue to feel Kichwas. In terms of clothing, this has also been opened to not only not being a central part of the identity. And now the new generations are no longer agricultural, they are more inserted in the market, in the cities, I don't think they are elements that identify the Saraguros. Maybe the clothing issue, but it's not that closed either. I think what's still strong is more like the physical marks, like not cutting your hair, I think that's still going strong. (Inhabitant of Chukidel, scholar, male, approx. 43 years old, 11 November 2023).

Also, during the fieldwork, particularly in the *Cabildo* (community council) meetings, the people explicitly pointed out that the power relations are rooted in the colonial structure that was imposed by Western culture, organisation, and religion. The concept of race was one of the primary devices to subdue the indigenous peoples, displacing their cultures and wisdom. The colonial relations, anchored in cultural/racial superiority, have been perpetuated through history.

> I have mestizo colleagues at work, and they tell me "We're equal", I reply: "Lies, we're not equal, but as human beings, we're equal". I see things differently. Physiologically speaking, culturally speaking, we're not equals either. We've never been equals. I speak Kichwa. (…) We will never be equals; we are able to coordinate interculturally in the county, but that's a different thing. (Inhabitant of Chukidel, painter, male, approx. 67 years old, February 2020).

During the meeting with the *Cabildo* in Chukidel, the inhabitants of the community recalled how mestizo people stole agricultural products from the indigenous communities. One of the memories among older adults is that whenever they saw a *laicho* (mestizo) enter the communities, they warned their neighbours in Kichwa to hide their valuables from the abuses of the mestizos. They also remember how the indigenous people were displaced from the lands in the urban centre of Saraguro, which is currently inhabited mainly by mestizos.

Also, the last few decades have seen continued symbolic and segregationist violence that has perpetuated racial and ethnic discrimination. During one of the meetings with the *cabildo*, many people shared their experiences of discrimination in different aspects, such as access to health, banking, and the education system. There are not only explicit discrimination practices, such as mockery of their clothing or hairstyle, but they are even asked to remove their hat (part of their traditional attire), which is a continuous underestimation of a form of soft racism. Therefore, the tension persists between these two identities that inhabit the Saraguro territory, the *runa*[32] (indigenous) and the *mestizo*.

The relationship between indigenous communities and the mestizo population in Saraguro is an essential element, even more so considering that the Historic Center of Saraguro was declared a National Heritage Site in the 1980s. In recent years, it was declared a Magical Town. Although the Indigenous population also inhabits the central area of Saraguro, there is a perception of the urban centre as a white-mestizo space and as the commercial and economic centre of Saraguro. Despite the geographical proximity of Chiukidel to the Saraguro urban centre, as was expressed in previous testimonies, the people of Chukidel have mentioned a political, administrative, and ethnic distance between the centre of the canton, saying the abandonment and neglect of the public authorities in the face of the problems of Indigenous communities.

In the Saraguro context, the label of intangible cultural heritage is significantly present since official discourses like UNESCO frame indigenous traditions and ways of life as intangible heritage. In this line, in Saraguro, the local government and travel agencies have used the

[32] The inhabitants of Chukidel and Saraguro who identify as indigenous refer to themselves as 'runa', or 'runa-saraguro', that in Kichwa translates as person.

Ecuadorian government-denominated intangible heritage traditions of Saraguro to promote tourism based on this population's "authenticity". Tourism attracts actors such as foreigners, researchers, and NGO practitioners interested in Saraguro for its "cultural authenticity", promoting imaginaries that seek to preserve their traditions, practices, knowledge, and indigenous ways of life. There has also been an increase in the promotion of development based on the exploitation of intangible heritage (Del Mármol & Santamarina, 2019).

Part of the tourist context of Saraguro is that there is an important demand for mysticism or spirituality in tourism, a contemporary fact linked to ecotourism and having an encounter with wild nature (Owen. B, 2006), in archaeological heritage sites (Prieto & Varea, 2011), and in the consumption of ethnicity. Regarding the demand in the consumption of ethnicity, travel agencies and governments have capitalised on this demand to activate the economy. In 2015, the municipal government of Saraguro, led for the first time in 196 years by an indigenous person, decided to commit to what it considered a path of "economic and intercultural development", sponsoring a promotional video under the slogan "Saraguro: Ancestral Beauty" (Del Campo Tejedor, 2019). Currently, the municipality of Saraguro and the community of Chukidel continue to use similar slogans to promote 'community' and ethnic tourism.



Figure 41 Ñan magazine. In front, the ex-mayor of Saraguro Segundo Abel Sarango (Greenfield, 2019)



Figure 40 The photo posted by Saraurku - Saraguro Travel agency shows the characters of the Christmas rite in Saraguro. The post mentions: Discover ancestral traditions. (Saraurku - Turismo Saraguro, 2021)



Figure 39 The photo posted by Saraurku - Saraguro Travel agency shows the characters of the Christmas rite in Saraguro. The post mentions: Discover authentic characters. (Saraurku - Turismo Saraguro, 2021)

Currently, in Saraguro several families offer community-based tourist services. Many of them are higher-educated people; they have conducted bachelor's, master's, or doctoral dissertations on Quechua, bilingual intercultural education, or the indigenous worldview. They have experience in international organisations, educational centres - from primary school to university - or the municipal government (Del Campo Tejedor, 2019). The tourist guides offer purification baths, indigenous ceremonies, ancestral medicine, and Andean festivities specifically designed to respond to tourists' expectations. It is important to mention that, at least in the commune of Chukidel, community-based tourism is not linked to community management or planning of tourism, nor does it contribute to the community in a decentralised manner but is managed privately (Salazar, 2012a).

The discourses that exalt Saraguros' indigenous ancestral and authentic origin, whether for tourism, or from academia or the indigenous movement, are what Del Campo Tejedor (2019) calls 'neo-Indianness'. During the fieldwork, I observed several people in their 50s vindicate their indigeneity is value based on tradition and ancestral practices. These standpoints tend to essentialise how people depict themselves and how foreigners see Saraguro people. This age group of the population (in their 50s) experienced important historical milestones, such as the strong presence of international cooperation, the processes of professional and political training, the strengthening of the indigenous movement, and the 1990 indigenous movement uprising that implied the strengthening of indigenous identity, the search for ancestral roots, and the fight for territory and self-determination.

> The 40s or older, my mother's generation that is around 60 years old or something, and there specifically in Chukidel, well it's not all of them, there are certain families that have had the possibility to get an education, which is something that should be considered. Well, that group has an essentialist discourse, and that has to do with the time they lived through, the 90s, the impact of the indigenous movement in political terms and the reconstruction of indigenous identity. One of the aspects that ends in essentialisation, which we know as culturalism, for example, is the conception of identity in ahistorical terms, and the discourse of ancestralism that ends up vindicating culture, which gives the image that there was no transformation, as a very closed defence of identity and culture in contrast with the transformations of the new generations. (Inhabitant of Chukidel, scholar, male, approx. 43 years old, 11 November 2023).

Currently, in the face of changes in the living conditions and perspectives of young people, the perceptions of the older generation seem anchored in tradition as the main resource for differentiation and identification. In the case of Chukidel, although young people have a weak presence in the community government (*cabildo*), youth have found a way to configure new spaces and interests through artistic activities, such as music and dance groups. In this way, young people's interests, motivations, and expressions go beyond the traditional forms of organisation. The weak presence of young people in community leadership, and thus in the dialogue established between the TEAM-Minga research group and the inhabitants of Chukidel, generates a vital gap when addressing perceptions about heritage and identity. The young population in Chukidel and El Vado have developed less visible or even controversial expressions in spaces such as the *Cabildo* in Saraguro or the neighbourhood committee in El Vado.

Actors and Different Standpoints

Chukidel has a wide diversity of community organisations and standpoints regarding heritage. One of the leading organisations in Chukidel is the community government (*Cabildo*), and the community assemblies are a great space for collective decision making. The *Cabildo* integrates several sub-organisations, such as the *Runa Kawsay* culture and sports group, the women's group, the irrigation board, the CECIB *Inti Raymi* bilingual intercultural school, and the indigenous justice group, among others. Each organisation sends a delegate to the *Cabildo* meetings, and there are representatives from each of the sectors of the commune. The *Cabildo* is responsible for organising open assemblies every three months. To guarantee participation, the *Cabildo* has a secure system comprising representatives of the community sectors and organisations, including the expanded community government.

> The *Runa Kawsay* has been like a sports and cultural club for the protection of culture and sports, we loved it. (Inhabitant of Chukidel, Psychologist and educator, male, approx. 60 years old, February 2020).



Figure 43 Chukidel Community Male Football Team, 21 November 2023 (Runa Kawsay, 2023c)



Figure 42 Chukidel Community Female Football Team, 6 November 2023. (Runa Kawsay, 2023a)



Figure 44 Chukidel Community 40+ Male Football Team , part of founders of the Runa Kawsay group. November 6, 2023. (Runa Kawsay, 2023b)

Some standpoints appeal to a Saraguro's identity based on tradition and ancestrality, mainly to adults 50 or older. They even appeal to indigenous purity or direct descendants from the Incas. Other positions reject the notion of heritage as a foreign, academic, or institutional notion. On some occasions, the discourses that exalt the “traditional” qualities of the Saraguro also intend

to distance themselves from the mestizo world. Still, they end up reproducing essentialist stereotypes that are capitalised for tourist campaigns.

It is essential to consider the differences between the perceptions of adults and the young, who have other living conditions, economic activities, and educational levels. In Saraguro, people who are in their 40s or younger had more access to education, university studies, and ICTs, which diversified economic activities and increased the use of mass media and social networks. The population over 50 years old, and even more so from their 60s onwards, experienced with greater force the political context in the 80s and 90s of consolidation and mobilisation of the indigenous movement, where the strengthening of indigenous identity was promoted.

> When talking about heritage, it depends on the different perceptions, for example, regarding these culturalist positions in Las Lagunas, it is a perception quite linked to the ancestral. We should ask the kids what they see as their heritage, I am not talking about ahistorical identity, but elements that are in dispute with what is conceived as indigenous and how these things are linked to heritage. (Inhabitant of Chukidel, scholar, male, approx. 43 years old, 11 November 2023).

In contrast, currently, the increase of indigenous people in different social, economic, and political spaces, the use of social networks, and the greater exposure to foreign cultural references have led to the greater fluidity and diversity of indigenous identities in the new generations. Youth perceive their indigenous identity and identity representations as not necessarily linked to the traditional agricultural activity or the daily use of their typical clothing. Also, younger generations find that they do not necessarily have to exclude experiences and lifestyles not traditionally associated with indigenous people to strengthen their indigenous identity and differentiation from the rest. According to Bolivian sociologist Silvia Rivera, young people claim to be indigenous, but taking distance from any purism, they question the rigid statutes of indigenous behaviour specifically (Cacopardo, 2018).

> I believe that, for example, events like *Runa Rock* are experiences that show the diversity of the indigenous identity, that allows for there to be this type of more complex expressions of the indigenous. Whether they are rockers, or are in the business world, in addition the impact of the media and, above all, social media. There is a boom that has taken place in Saraguro of people who are dedicated to being YouTubers. These are other ways to express their identity as Saraguros. (Inhabitant of Chukidel, scholar, male, approx. 43 years old, 11 November 2023).



Figure 45 Runa Rock Independent music festival that takes place as part of the Inti Raymi celebration 2023 (Runa Rock, 2023b)



Figure 46 Runa Rock Independent music festival that takes place as part of the Inti Raymi celebration 2023 (Runa Rock, 2023a).

Perceptions like the previous one among young people are absent in spaces like the *Cabildo*, but they have more and more visibility in artistic initiatives and social networks.

Another angle can be found in one of the municipalities of Saraguro, which promotes tourism focused on the culture using labels like “Magical Town” (Velásquez et al., 2021). These programs have marketing effects, especially on the intangible elements of heritage (Del Campo Tejedor, 2019). It is evident how institutional imaginaries operate under specific values, qualities, and positionalities, limiting the participation of the people in the tourism economy and their involvement in the conceptual construction of what the heritage value assigned to them would imply. This generates an exotic characterisation of the native peoples (Pereiro, 2013) or what has been called “heritage with an archaeological vision” (Licuime, 2014).

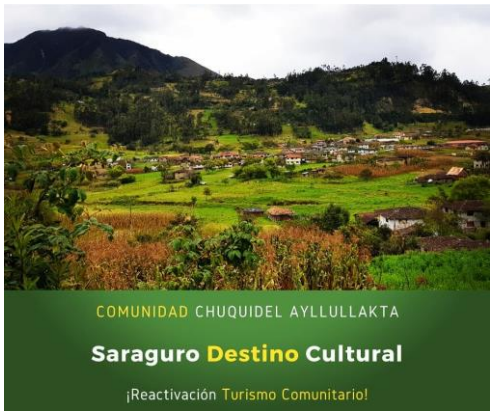

Figure 47 Advertising of the Community-based Travel agency Wawkys. The post states: Post COVID-19, Saraguro awaits you to share its cultural legacy and live unique experiences in the best cultural destination in southern Ecuador (Turismo Comunitario Wawkys, 2020)

In Ecuador, and in general in the Andean region, the resurgence of indigenous historicity grounded in the social and political movements made visible and strengthened self-awareness over the identitarian representation and, therefore, the cultural heritage of the indigenous population (Smith, 2009). In Chukidel, indigenous identification is a transversal imaginary in how heritage is represented. People display heritage imaginaries depending on the intersections of indigenous identity with gender, education, politics, migration, and age and all these aspects also play different roles in the dialogue with travel agencies, NGOs, researchers, or community organisations. The negotiation of representations also depends on the memory of the populations that have been at the margins of Western self-consciousness, excluded from social power, and folklorised and essentialised in popular perceptions (Smith, 2009). Hence, in Chukidel, several testimonies have shown that representations and how people see themselves depend on the degrees of affinity or lack thereof and how history has been configured at different scales, from personal experiences to collective and institutionalised narratives.

Far from a purism, it is essential to remember that in Chukidel, heritage imaginaries are also configured through the influence of tourist narratives and official discourses based on folkloric characterisation. People have used these authorised imaginaries to enter the tourism game or navigate relationships that may be of economic and political interest, such as with NGOs and academia. Although there are several questions and interpellations about stereotypical imaginaries deploy by indigenous people, some also assume and strengthen traditionalist discourses on their own indigenous identity in a way of self-essentialisation (Del Campo Tejedor, 2019). In this way, in Chukidel, people reconcile heritage imaginaries in their terms and conditions to respond to their needs and political identities. That is to say, there is a more active sense of self-determination and reflexivity in negotiating heritage imaginaries assigned and assumed within their personal histories and generational gaps.

7. The TEAM-Minga Project

During the fieldwork in Chukidel and El Vado, it was observed that the development of research projects, either from NGOs or academia, have influenced the spread of the *heritage* term. It is necessary to highlight that Saraguro and El Vado are territories that have a significant background in research and interventions from academia and public administration on heritage, cultural management, tourism, etc. The inhabitants of the study sites are in constant contact with heritage experts, researchers, or students. In this way, heritage practitioners disseminate institutional notions of heritage that inhabitants have internalised themselves. The inhabitants expressed that they felt used since they did not know how to use the research results, and they expressed that the citizen participation processes did not include them. Heritage imaginaries in both Chukidel and El Vado have been shaped by the active role played by academia and heritage practitioners.

The analysis of the research context of the TEAM-Minga project allowed me to understand the background, motivations, problematisation, and objectives that were raised in the project. Thus, it is also vital to identify the central categories selected by the team as a conceptual and methodological guide. These are the elements that frame how TEAM-Minga depicts the study sites and their inhabitants, elements that allow us to identify the terms in which TEAM-Minga dialogues about heritage with the local actors in both sites, in interviews, and focal groups. The fieldwork in Chukidel and El Vado reveals that heritage imaginaries necessarily unfold in the interaction between local stakeholders and the research interests of the TEAM-Minga project. In this way, the TEAM-Minga project promoted the discussion about heritage from an academic-scientific imaginary, becoming an active actor in the dissemination of the notion of heritage, along with other terms that are not often used in the daily life of inhabitants, like innovation, governance, co-creation, etc.

A first power relationship is established based on who determines the intervention project's terms, conditions, and expected results. To select the study cases, the TEAM- Minga project sought a representation of rural, urban, and transition (semi-rural) territories of the Andes. The researchers designed and conducted fieldwork to collect information that promoted discussions about heritage in the study sites in line with the objectives and interests of the project in situ. The TEAM-Minga research group is aware that their presence substantially impacts people's perceptions since they are the ones who raise the concerns in this regard; they formulate the questions and interpret the information. Hence, the TEAM-Minga project has also looked to include the concerns raised during the fieldwork by local actors.

The TEAM-Minga Project seeks to link local organisational dynamics to improve heritage management, giving local knowledge and actors prominence. However, the interaction between academia and the study sites is subject to the invisible weight that the power of scientific knowledge holds over local knowledge, which has created social gaps and frictions. Researchers often come from different economic and educational statuses than the local actors. Researchers use foreign languages and come from distant places at national and even international levels. During the interviews and informal conversations, several inhabitants of Chukidel and El Vado expressed that they do not know about heritage and that they prefer not

to grant interviews, suggesting that people with greater knowledge should be sought, such as neighbourhood or community leaders. Other research, such as the doctoral dissertation prepared by Moreno (2022), highlights that one of the main challenges in cooperation projects are structural power relations:

> Dismantling long histories of discrimination and exclusion in academia that has contributed to silencing other forms of being and knowing. Scholars have noted the inequalities born in the 'expert' model constructed in the capacity-building discourse, which helps justify, reproduce, and maintain (neo)colonial schemes. The notion and practice of capacity building are deeply rooted in the development cooperation discourse. During the UN Conference on Science and Technology for Development in 1977, donor countries considered it necessary to build research capacities in recipient countries by mobilising scientific and technological resources to assist less developed countries (Gaillard, 1994). Thus, there is a paternalistic assumption that Southern countries lack agency and need to be taught to do the "right" way of doing things by the North. (Moreno, 2022, p. 174).

The context of TEAM-Minga is also framed within structural and historical conditions of development cooperation and the models to implement projects in the global south. These power relations have been consolidated in imaginaries. For instance, local actors consider researchers to be 'experts' compared to themselves, so people distance themselves in conversations or interviews by arguing that they do not know about the topic. Also, it is essential to recognise that international cooperation models are not only an external condition but also persist in how projects are conducted. In the case of TEAM-Minga, it also incorporates the capacity-building model; as we will see, it identifies a problem linked to the lack of capabilities and loss of knowledge, and along these lines, it seeks to formulate guidelines for heritage management. It is essential to highlight that although the TEAM-Minga project is embedded in development cooperation models, it has also sought to be linked more closely to the contexts by implementing participatory workshops that allow them to learn more about the concerns of local actors. Still, the decision-making design, the resources, and the strategic concepts and problems present in the project remain with the researcher's group.

The CPM is a research group with a long experience in preventive conservation and vernacular architecture. For example, the CPM conducted a project called Preventive Conservation Pilot Plan in the houses of Susudel (2011-2012), a rural town located south of Cuenca. The inhabitants of Susudel collaborated through collective work (*minga*) in the architectural interventions that were carried out by the CPM that brought transformational learnings in the academic practice of the group (Cardoso, 2015). On the one hand, there is an urgency to include multi-actor and interdisciplinary approaches in the architectural preservation process. On the other hand, the CPM strengthened the interest in researching collaborative processes such as the *minga* for heritage management and heritage as a driver for development. However, participatory approaches and methodologies are insufficient to produce more inclusive knowledge if asymmetric power conditions have not been recognised and problematised from the beginning of the research and intervention processes (Moreno et al., 2021).

The researchers who conducted the TEAM-Minga project are a heterogeneous group of professionals consisting primarily of architects, an economist, a consulting anthropologist, an expert in participative methodologies, and a doctoral student and social researcher. It has one

local and one Belgian promoter, who correspond to the heads of the two research centres involved in the TEAM-Minga project, the CPM at the University of Cuenca, and the RLICC at the KU Leuven. In addition, the TEAM-Minga is led by a coordinator who is responsible for organising and planning the project activities and their respective products. Both the coordinator and the local advisor are professors at the University of Cuenca. The rest are hired researchers conducting fieldwork, analysing, systematising, and writing the planned results.

It is important to note that the CPM is widely recognised for its expertise in heritage research. The head and principal professor of the research group was one of the leading writers of the proposal and promoters of the submission of the Historical Centre of Cuenca to a WHS denomination (Cardoso, 2017). The CPM is in permanent dialogue with municipal authorities and seeks to establish coordination with the private sector, local governments, and civil organisations.

Since the CPM research group is part of the Faculty of Architecture, the TEAM-Minga members have a solid technical background as architects. The CPM group has recently included members from other disciplines and perspectives such as from economics, participatory methodologies, and anthropology to strengthen the social approach to heritage management. In the interdisciplinary dialogue, the team members that come from architecture have expressed that the qualitative social approach to research and the application of participatory methodologies are skills that were not part of their professional training. Throughout the TEAM-Minga project, the team of researchers were trained in participatory methodologies and the social and participatory approach was strengthened. This situation required a process of reflection to understand how to conduct fieldwork and interact with the inhabitants of each study site.

> During the process there was a change in our vision of the methodologies and how they can result in slightly more sustainable processes in the territories. (Internal capabilities assessment report, November 2022).

Since the TEAM-Minga project is framed within academic institutions such as the University of Cuenca, it is subject to the bureaucratic structure of both this institution and international cooperation. Each of these two entities demands diverse results and specific schedules that have made it difficult to reach agreements with the agendas of the inhabitants of the study sites, whose motivations and expectations do not always coincide with institutional demands. Also, we must note that the TEAM-Minga project, in addition to being an academic project sponsored by international cooperation, has a formulation that must respond to the requirements and technical language of the capacity-building discourse framework and the development objectives requested by the financing entity (VLIR-UOS). For this reason, the TEAM-Minga project incorporates the guidelines from development agendas (e.g., UNESCO) into its work.

For instance, the interests of the TEAM-Minga project are also framed within the articulation of cultural heritage and development, as indicated in the project objectives: The TEAM- Minga project aims to develop adapted governance models based on ancestral traditions to integrate cultural heritage and improve living conditions, as well as socioeconomic and cultural well-being for local communities in the South-Eastern Ecuadorian Highlands. Also, from the beginning of the project, TEAM-Minga established that:

> In line with Sustainable Development Goals 11 (Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable) and 10 (Reduce inequality within countries), the project aims to empower local communities to improve their access to sustainable cities and human settlements, as well as socioeconomic and cultural well-being, through the creation of innovative governance structures to manage traditional and heritage buildings. Besides, in line with the Paris Agreement, the project seeks to combine the best available science with traditional knowledge while also actively contributing to the need for capacity-building and locally adaptable solutions to benefit from these research actions. (Call TEAM and South Initiatives projects 2019).

Regarding links of the TEAM-Minga project with international organisations, it is essential to mention that the CPM research group works in partnership with the UNESCO chair on Preventive Conservation, Monitoring and Maintenance of Monuments and Sites (PRECOMOS). Also, the CPM research group works in partnership with the Belgian Cooperation that previously funded the project 'Latin-American axis on preventive conservation of built heritage' between Universidad de Oriente in Cuba, KU Leuven, and the University of Cuenca through the CPM research group (Call TEAM and South Initiatives projects 2019). The context of the TEAM-Minga project has a significant imprint on the guidelines of the intergovernmental agendas that have been widely discussed and promoted internationally by official discourses of heritage and international development organisations. This is visible not only in how projects such as the TEAM-Minga include sustainable development goals, gender perspective, and participative approaches in their designs but also in how they acknowledge the social dimension of heritage. However, in practice, it is a challenge to implement inclusive approaches without first unveiling and acknowledging how old colonial hierarchies are embedded in academia and the people's imaginaries, including researchers and heritage practitioners.

The TEAM-Minga Project is defined mostly as qualitative research with a social interest and a participatory methodological approach. The project's main objective is to improve the quality of life of the inhabitants of the study sites. The study object of TEAM-Minga's research is the traditional forms of organisation in the Andes. Also, the construction of innovative governance guides for built cultural heritage is proposed as an expected product.

Due to its academic nature, TEAM-Minga tends to use terms foreign to the study sites' daily language, which appears from the research title, Innovative Governance Systems for Built Cultural Heritage based on Traditional Andean Organisational Principles in Ecuador. The use of terms such as governance, innovation, and cultural heritage was challenging during fieldwork since it implied, in some locations, a distant and complex language for inhabitants. These categories refer to both the objective and the product of the project's Innovative Governance Guidelines of building cultural heritage. The research group has used terms like ancestral or traditional to characterise the study sites and local organisational dynamics as the research subject. Other researchers (Moreno et al., 2021) have shown that using technical language results in pre-conception and 'expectations created by the buzzwords of co-creation, empowerment, and participation (…). It produces fatigue in communities disappointed by the participatory processes that do not generate real participation or empowerment' (Moreno et al., 2021, p. 919).

These categories allow us to explore the imaginaries of the TEAM-Minga Project beyond the notion of heritage. Innovation, governance, the traditional and the ancestral are notions that TEAM-Minga associates with heritage in the Andes (TEAM-Minga project Glossary Annex V). For instance, the TEAM-Minga Project refers to innovation as the changes that transform reality based on measurable values. Innovation values the success of the change because it is quantifiable and replicable, and it has social participation that corresponds to a representative sample of a universe. Furthermore, the project points out that one of the qualities of innovation is that it is carried out by representative groups of all the members of society. Who would the representative groups of those people be? Should they be a group that represents a sample of the various communities that make up a society? What happens to groups that act independently and do not wish to be linked to public institutions or the private sector? The representativeness indicator is definitely ambiguous. On many occasions, significant changes have been achieved by initiatives that do not include all positions in neighbourhoods or the community. For instance, in El Vado, several initiatives operate simultaneously but not together, and all impact the use of public space and perceptions of heritage. For example, the neighbourhood committee installed a monument in tribute to the Greasy Pole (*Palo Encebado*), a traditional game, while the group of cultural managers promoted theatre and storytelling initiatives, recovering the memory of the neighbourhood and the city.

The TEAM-Minga notion of innovation corresponds to the use of the term Test-bed to refer to study sites, such as 'controlled experimental spaces testing under presumably realistic conditions to develop version models' (Engels et al., 2019, p. 1). The relationship between the notion of Test-beds and innovative governance is not new, and it seeks to represent an experimental, co-creative approach to innovation policy that aims to test in a model environment under real-world conditions. This approach pressures to demonstrate successful results and seeks social participation as a form of social validation of the proposals (Engels et al., 2019).

> The observed tension between control and openness and the divergent understandings of "success," make the question of who is involved in the design and governance in test beds into a sensitive governance issue. Co-creative, participatory approaches to innovation can grant broader democratic legitimacy than purely top-down, expert-driven forms of technology introduction, but they can also create new forms of exclusion (Engels et al., 2019, p. 9).

Regarding the notions of 'traditional' and 'ancestral,' the TEAM-Minga Project selected the study sites to represent territorial diversity. These notions suggest that the study sites are appreciated based on traditional and ancestral authenticity as qualities designated to these territories and in their way of organisation. A clarification is needed: The TEAM-Minga project is interested in the forms of organisation of the Andes, having previous experience working in *Mingas* for the execution of other rural projects in the south of Ecuador. The organisational practice of the *Minga*, original of Andean indigenous populations, is also often practiced in rural-mestizo populations.

TEAM-Minga characterises the traditional as an antonym of modernity (TEAM-Minga Glossary Annex V), an idea that contradicts the study site context, where current traditions are a colonial product. For example, during the interviews in El Vado and the workshops conducted

by TEAM-Minga, it was pointed out that the traditional elements of the neighbourhood are the festivities of the crosses, and the cross of El Vado itself, which are symbols and beliefs that were imposed during the colony. Furthermore, modernity is referred to as a recent process in history associated with the Western world and scientific-technical globalisation. It leaves the indigenous, the ancestral, and the traditional as elements of the past, supposedly pre-Hispanic, and, therefore, linked to the indigenous populations. This is more clearly expressed when it is suggested that modernity is based on scientific-technical rationality, which marks a clear difference from traditional societies that are based on beliefs. This begs the questions, which ones are the traditional societies? Did these not also have a technical rationality, or were they only based on beliefs? Are Andean construction techniques not scientific-technical knowledge?

The differentiation between the modern and the traditional creates an imaginary of the traditions in the Andes as timeless elements, when, for example, the stories of traditions (such as the *Inti Raymi*) in Saraguro or El Vado (as a space of culture), have been consolidated since the 20th century as part of the contemporary identity recovery. Along these same lines, the TEAM-Minga Project describes the ancestral as linked to the foundation of the history and traditions of a town. Another question arises: at what point is a town founded or originated? The ancestral is referred to as the tradition that was not colonised. Authors such as Rivera (2018) would wonder if in the Ch'ixi cultural matrix of the Andes, there are traditions that do not interact with coloniality, whether in agreement or not, since no person has been exempt from living colonial history in Latin America. Therefore, TEAM-Minga's description of the ancestral in the TEAM-Minga glossary is close to a purism that is difficult to find in the populations of the Andes. Indeed, the notion of ancestral for indigenous peoples appeals to their pre-Hispanic roots, but it is a modern ancestrality, grounded in indigenous people's contemporary needs and claims (Muyolema, 2001).

The examples that TEAM-Minga uses of tradition and ancestry refer to indigenous practices or understandings, such as the *Inti Raymi*, the term of *Pachacutik*, the *Pawcar Raymi*, or the *Minga*, that have been significantly transformed during history. For instance, in one of the interviews with a Chukidel leader, they talked about the emergence of *Inti Raymi* in Saraguro, assuring that this celebration was taken up again during the 90s by a group of young indigenous musicians. They reinvented the celebration of *Inti Raymi*, based on an experience lived in Ingapirca[33], in Cañar. During the fieldwork, I observed that the *Raymis* include symbols associated with the Catholic Church, like crosses, the ciborium, and the holy spirit that are represented in a white dove, symbols that are embroidered on the traditional clothing of the festivities, which is traditional in predominantly Catholic Andean populations. Certainly, there has been a recovery of pre-Hispanic symbols such as the *Wiphala* and the *Chakana*, but as part of a continuous process of identity construction of indigenous peoples. Regarding the *Minga*, we can say that it is currently a traditional practice of the Andes, which has also incorporated elements such as the use of fines and attendance control.

[33] The archaeological site Ingapirca is the largest and most intact collection of Cañari-Incan ruins in Ecuador

Another constant notion present in the discussion of the TEAM-Minga project is ‘value’. The notion of value is used to refer to how people appreciate their heritage and social values and/or principles. Hence, the notion of value is present in imaginaries, such as the importance of valuing heritage as a way of self-appreciation, to measure how “aware”’ people are of their heritage and how they manage their heritage as a resource for development. In the dialogues between the members of the TEAM-Minga project and the way the TEAM-Minga researchers argue the problem of heritage at risk, it appears recurrently linked to the idea that the local population is not aware of the value of their heritage or does not value their heritage enough. In this way, the heritage within the language of value or valuing heritage is related to a sense of commodity exchange. It upholds an economic or utilitarian comprehension. It is reflected in approaches like heritage as a development resource directly linked to economic revitalisation. It should be noted that notions such as heritage as a resource for development continue to fall into the ambiguity of what ‘development’ means for the actors of the study sites. The lack of clarity of these notions within the project lends itself to assuming the most mainstream imaginaries of development and value, part of the common understanding of people both inside and outside the project, where it is more popularly associated with economic and exchange logic (Silberman, 2011). In contrast, imaginaries as an analytical lens focuses on heritage meaning-making and how it is meaningful based on the identification, agency, and a sense of belonging.

Furthermore, TEAM-Minga addresses social organisation principles as values. For instance, the TEAM-Minga project seeks to understand how to maintain and replicate *Minga* as an organisational benchmark. However, the comprehension of values also has different understandings. The TEAM-Minga project aims to understand each territory's social values as organisational principles. This understanding of values lies in their abstract quality as part of the collective consciousness. This entry of values contrasts with the comprehensions in Saraguro. In this study site, the organisation's relevance is not in its values but in its practical continuity that allows the meetings and social cohesion. Therefore, although the TEAM-Minga project refers to *Ayni* (reciprocity), solidarity, and respect as the values that sustain the *Minga*, in Chukidel, local actors refer to experiences (practices), actions, and collective meetings. In other words, in Chukidel, the comprehension of reciprocity, solidarity, and respect rather than abstraction are practices (to do, to feel, to be) that allow the community's sustainability. Here, it is visible how, in Western thought, there is an explicit division between the subjective and objective and how, in the Andean experience, this division is more diluted. This does not mean that from the Andean ontologies, there is less abstraction; instead, that abstraction comes from the practical experiences, in contrast with the research project where there are differentiated moments of abstraction and practice and that generally, as the project did begin defining the most abstract conceptual dimension rather than the empirical. This was explicitly mentioned during one of the workshops when an inhabitant of Chukidel said that they learned from practices such as *mingas* and *pinji* and stated that ‘we do not learn from paper; rather, we learn from the experiences and living those principles in the practices’.

Although the definitions in the TEAM-Minga documents have resulted from conceptual discussions among team members, it is difficult to systematise all standpoints on the project's guiding terms. It has been mentioned in several conversations and meetings that the approach

of the CPM research group, particularly the TEAM-Minga project, follows preventive conservation as a primarily social entrance on the use and future of heritage assets, overcoming conservative views of traditional heritage preservation and acknowledging that heritage should be addressed in the face of the constantly changing conditions and social demands. Within the research team, constructive debates are also conducted about the visions and meanings of the notions used by the TEAM-Minga project. Due to the project's objective of research that is mainly social and has a flexible approach to the idea of heritage, it allows to the unveiling of the official imaginaries that persist even within the search for more inclusive entrances and practices within heritage practitioners. The following quote from one of the TEAM-Minga members shows a self-reflexive and internal process of debate where different notions of heritage clash, for instance, between the aim to enhance heritage approaches as an everchanging social construct and traditional heritage notions that persist within academia.

> Heritage includes the concept of innovation with the idea of not freezing realities, with awareness of their change. Innovation regarding our recognised foundations about developed cultures, learning from the past to be relevant and creative in the present and to define the future. That is the deep meaning of heritage. (TEAM-Minga member, 30 October 2023)

An additional element for the analysis of the TEAM-Minga Project is the definition of the problem of "heritage at risk", establishing that:

> There is a loss of knowledge on self-design process and collective management of traditional architecture: The majority of the residential properties are constructed according to a self-design process and traditional construction techniques, including *adobe* production, based on local climate conditions and available soil and quarries. The gradual modernisation, migration, and an aging population caused 3 direct effects: (1) gradual introduction of industrial alternatives for restoring traditional building materials led to incompatible interventions which are not sustainable and the decline of the custom of the collective work within a local community, (2) traditional architecture became associated with poverty conditions, causing local communities to no longer value their heritage, (3) Knowledge and expertise on sustainable maintenance and preservation of traditional vernacular architecture in line with Andean traditions disappeared. Consequently, there is low upkeep of cultural heritage and traditional architecture in the South-Eastern Highlands of Ecuador. These conditions imply a lack of sustainable living conditions, a lack of inclusive societies and a reduced quality of life on social, cultural and environmental levels (source project proposal to VLIR-UOS, 2019)

This problem is a concern mainly regarding built cultural heritage, assuming that (1) the majority of homes are still built with traditional techniques, (2) the loss of traditional construction models is linked to the decline of the custom of the collective work within a local community, and (3) there is an association between the traditional architecture and perception of poverty causing that local communities to no longer value their heritage (source project proposal to VLIR-UOS, Annex IV). All these approaches are translated into technical imaginaries that argue and justify the intervention. In the design of research projects, the definition of the problem is the most important element to justify its execution and to obtain funding; however, it is not always validated by the inhabitants of the study sites. Heritage at risk is also an imaginary link to AHD and academia.

The TEAM-Minga concludes that, due to the mentioned conditions, there is low upkeep of cultural heritage and traditional architecture in the South-Eastern Highlands of Ecuador. The problem posed by the TEAM-Minga project does not include or consider that a historical and institutional power structure has managed heritage in a differentiated way between the countryside, the city, and the indigenous populations. Therefore, the problem of heritage at risk is not only a consequence of contemporary changes but also how heritage has been historically managed and addressed concerning each population and its interests.

In this logic, it is essential to reflect on the reasons that led to this project as a way to define positionality. The following questions seek to enrich the epistemic, conceptual, and methodological reflection of the TEAM-Minga project: Is heritage at risk as an interest or concern among the actors of the study sites? Is there heritage at risk, or is there a process of heritage transformation? What conditions prevent the continuity of traditional building techniques and architecture in the Andes? Is there a direct relationship between the change in traditional construction models and the decline of the custom of collective work? Are these changes in collective work also because both construction techniques and organisational needs have changed? Are there other conditions that could weaken the collaborative work models of the Andean populations? How has the idea of poverty associated with traditional architecture influenced the low appreciation of local heritage? Under what conditions is poverty associated with traditional architecture?

Within the TEAM-Minga project context it is important to highlight the notion of "loss and preservation", terms associated with AHD that propose a vision of heritage as elements that must be immutable—likewise, the valuation of heritage associated with the authenticity of what is traditional and ancestral. Hence, preservation or the idea of cultural loss shows how heritage is understood based on an imaginary of "immutable originality". The notions of preservation or conservation in heritage meaning-making and heritage imaginaries are associated with temporal logic and cultural valuations. The persistence of official imaginaries of heritage and the goal of overcoming them manifest as a contradictory part of the research's reflexivity. The use of terms such as conservation or preservation are associated with official imaginaries of strict maintenance of the "original" or "authentic" state of what is denominated as heritage in the same way local actor assumes these official imaginaries, for instance, these notions in the same conservative sense have been manifested by Saraguro elder´s standpoints or the neighbourhood committee in El Vado. Even more so when those terms are used within the frame of loss as the main problem of heritage and not directly related to constant change where preserving and conservation are questioned in the face of the mutable nature of social production. Meanwhile, the results of the TEAM-Minga project strengthened a participatory and even transformative approach to heritage, as expressed in the following quote.

> The CPM even proposes to transform heritage, to develop it, to insert contemporary components, allowing an intelligent coexistence between elements from the past with present forms and needs. This must be done according to the reading of one's own heritage values, with historical and social relevance, and, fundamentally, sharing horizontal decision-making spaces. (TEAM-Minga member, 30 October 2023)

Inhabitants recognise the CPM research group as a reference for heritage researchers. There have been previous CPM projects in the Vado neighbourhood such as the Orchards of Good Life for the recovery of the internal gardens and Gabriela García's doctoral dissertation titled 'The Activation Process of cultural heritage as a Driver for Development' (García et al., 2018). This constant presence of the CPM group in El Vado has consolidated the relationships between the research group and certain neighbourhood residents who participated in the previous projects. The inhabitants recognise the members of the CPM as researchers whose objective is the conservation of heritage but without the possibility of influencing public policies to achieve results. This has caused some erosion in the quality of participation. There are also inhabitants who have benefited from the interventions in their homes who have a more positive perception of the CPM, who has a similar focus as TEAM-Minga's on heritage.

Regarding Chukidel, the TEAM-Minga Project is the first CPM initiative in that community. Since 2019, the TEAM-Minga project has been present in Chukidel through workshops and field visits. However, it was not until 2021 that TEAM-Minga consolidated a closer relationship with the community through ethnographic work conducted in the locality by this doctoral research. The presence of the TEAM-Minga project has brought up factors that have triggered discussions about heritage in Chukidel, within the framework of heritage management and the positioning of the notions of heritage, development, and governance that were explicitly questioned by the community. During the TEAM-Minga project, the accessibility to the Chukidel was negotiated with each of the community leaders of the *Cabildo* who approved the execution of the workshops. Unfortunately, many community inhabitants were unavailable during the interviews or seemed unsure, tired, or sceptical.

The TEAM-Minga project has positioned the discussions on heritage in the two study sites. In this way, it is an achievement that heritage appears to concern the inhabitants and that they are motivated to discuss and manage the local heritage. In short, TEAM-Minga has become a driver for the discussion of heritage and its management in the study sites. As part of the results of the self-evaluation of the TEAM-Minga research group, it was concluded that one of the main results has been the change in the relationship with heritage, and the understanding of its meanings (Evaluation report of capacities built or strengthened through TEAM-Minga, 2022).

> Cultural heritage is a disputed field and, therefore, there is a diversity of ways to relate to, do and signify heritage, which depend on context, and it has developed a greater sensitivity when it comes to addressing and incorporating different forms of cultural heritage. (Evaluation report of capacities built or strengthened through TEAM-Minga, 2022, p. 17).

These internal reflections of the researchers and project members still present substantial challenges to materialise in research practices or projects. It is first necessary to identify the official imaginaries that persist in researching and thinking about heritage to overcome the power structures and models behind development cooperation in which they are embedded.

Concluding Remarks

This part presents how heritage imaginaries arise from the specific experience of each place and group of people, how people and places are portrayed and how people, through practices, represent and manifest the way they see themselves in dialogue with others. Here, I identify heritage imaginaries related to the situations and roles of the actors in the study sites and the disputes, negotiations, and tensions that arise from the multiplicities of people's positionalities. Furthermore, this part of the dissertation develops the approach of heritage as situated knowledge. It begins by settling the territorial conditions of the study sites' economic, social, and historical configurations. I also included the analysis of general aspects presented in both study sites, such as migration and tourism. Also, I briefly explain the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic and the social mobilisations that occurred during the PhD research.

Subsequently, I went over the critical aspects of the two study sites and the TEAM-Minga project. First, I briefly present how Chukidel and El Vado are configured historically and spatially, where they are located, and the aesthetic, natural, and architectural referents that configure the landscape of the study sites. Second, I unravel how official heritage imaginaries are strengthened by UNESCO WHS declaration, tourism campaigns, and national heritage designations that portray the historical centre of Cuenca and Saraguro based on their colonial past or indigenous culture, respectively. Thus, official heritage discourse displays polarised characterisations of Andean identities, between the indigenous and the historical-colonial centres when, in reality, these coexist, intersect, and constitute identity constructions that inhabit the diverse spectrums of being urban, rural, indigenous, and mestizo (Benavides, 2015). Third, I identify the diverse standpoints of the actors of each study, situating the gaps between the different points of view, demands, and expectations that each actor has of the place they inhabit and manifest through their perceptions of heritage and the relation between them.

Also, it is essential to highlight that the TEAM-Minga is the frame of the doctoral research and is, as I addressed, a part of the context and active actor in producing imaginaries by interacting with the study sites. I also analysed the leading theoretical concepts of the TEAM-Minga Project, which allowed us to explore the imaginaries that were displayed and went beyond the notion of heritage. Innovation, governance, the traditional, and the ancestral are notions TEAM-Minga associates with heritage in the Andes. Including the research group enables the disentangling of development cooperation's structural and historical conditions and the models for implementing projects in the Global South.

Besides, I developed the historical and institutional aspects that shape imaginaries and considered the changing and different situations that people navigate in their daily lives using strategically other notions of heritage to adapt to the interaction in the frame of tourism, identity, municipal management, etc. In the context of the study sites and the relationships that development cooperation has established, notions such as heritage are related to enduring colonial representations and the indigenous populations' self-determination and sovereignty struggle (Smith et al., 2024).

People display heritage imaginaries in articulation with self-awareness about historical narratives and social memories that allow cohesion and identification processes. The two study sites have disputes and negotiations about representation and how heritage is interpreted. In the case of Chukidel, the testimonies reveal an indigenous consciousness that is transversal to the heritage imaginaries and that becomes visible in the tensions between what is assigned and what is assumed. Therefore, in Chukidel, identitarian representations involve political positions and social agency of how they see themselves, disputing imaginaries that have constrained the role and participation of indigenous people. On the other hand, in El Vado, the linearity of the colonial founding history of the neighbourhood seems to mitigate representation conflicts. It would seem that the discussion on self-determination is less conflictive. Still, it is precisely in silences and absences that imaginaries become visible, in what people take for granted and do not address. For instance, in how the conservative individuals of the neighbourhood see themselves, not having a dialogue with the indigenous people, displaying imaginaries of rurality that are racialised and kept only as part of the folkloric memory of the area. Also, the TEAM-Minga project does not address discussions on conflicting identities in El Vado. In contrast, in Chukidel, identity inevitably implies a tension between the indigenous and the *mestizo* and, therefore, in the relationship with the researchers as representatives of the mestizo.

In El Vado, the racial or ethnic background of people is not a concern that researchers explicitly include in their analysis. The fieldwork has shown that in El Vado, self-perception as neighbourhood residents occupies a less central place in their self-perception in general. However, the affinity with the Catholic Church is more significant in its self-perception, therefore the sensitivity and tension between the positions that show distance or affinity from religious practice. In Chukidel, "heritage" affects an aspect of their life (their self-perception as indigenous people) that occupies a more decisive place in their lives. It is not in vain that "cultural loss" is the main problem detected by the participants in the workshops in both Vado and Chukidel since it is directly linked to their self-perception within their localities and their sense of belonging.

A significant consideration of the fieldwork in Chukidel is that, unlike the Vado, heritage imaginaries imply a higher level of negotiation. In other words, although in the two study sites there are historical and structural conditions that have become stereotypical representations, in Chukidel, local actors have expressed how they see themselves, and how they are seen, establishing relationships of distinction, agency, and positioning in the face of the colonial background and the role played by indigenous in the past and the present. Likewise, it is not explicitly present in the discussions of the TEAM-Minga how the representations of heritage today are articulated with animated indigenous modernity, and in El Vado with anti-establishment positions, against the conventional and the conservative, that claim to recover relegated memories such as the initiative *Cuenca en Cuentos Prohibidos* (Cuenca in Forbidden Tales) of the Barojo Artistic Collective in association with the *El Prohibido* Cultural Centre.

In the following chapter, I dissect the understanding of heritage as a concept (imaginaries of heritage) disclosed by the actors involved in the frame of the TEAM-Minga project. I further develop the concept of imaginaries of heritage by critically analysing how participants understand heritage. By identifying various interpretations and perceptions associated with

heritage, we gain a deeper understanding of the diverse meanings and qualities of what heritage is or should be.

Part IV: Heritage Meaning Making

8. Imaginaries of Heritage: Official Notions in Local Comprehensions

The previous section settled the ground to delve into the changing dynamics that produce and spread imaginaries of heritage by analysing the context and the different standpoints in the study sites. In this chapter, I mainly explore the meanings people take for granted and how people explain what heritage is. This chapter focuses on the understandings of heritage as a concept (imaginaries of heritage) disclosed by the actors involved in the frame of the TEAM-Minga project. To do so, I identify the categorical distinctions made by official heritage imaginaries and address imaginaries of heritage(s) as a relational meaning-making process.

As was mentioned in the theoretical framework and later in the introduction, the origin and modern uses of heritage notion mainly based on the configuration of nation-states, maintaining control and avoiding possible conflict between European nations and the consolidation of UNESCO as the official organisation for topics such as heritage, education and culture-. Also, the scope of its channels of communication and local advocacy have strongly impacted the most popular knowledge of heritage and its common understanding, usually related to the modern nation-state, the official heritage discourses, and the uses of cultural heritage. International heritage declarations have also become a vehicle for international organisations such as UNESCO and ICOMOS to disseminate not only the notion of cultural heritage but also languages and models of heritage management.

Institutions that work in the field of cultural heritage have official channels to disseminate authorised discourses of heritage. The institutions in the field of heritage constantly replicate information among themselves. For example, the Ministry of Tourism replicates the National Institute of Cultural Heritage (INPC) campaigns, or the Ministry of Tourism and INPC replicate UNESCO's declarations, which are reaffirmed and have a superior reach by using the media of various institutions. Hence, the population knows and becomes familiar with the term of heritage through public and private campaigns (whether through social media, publications, meetings, press, etc.) deployed by institutions such as the Ministry of Tourism, the INPC, their respective local agencies, and the work of technicians in culture departments of each municipality or travel agencies.

The broad scope of the authorised discourses of heritage and the institutional authority through which they are disseminated influence how people get to know its notion and its mainstream meanings and values. As a result, people associate the value and meaning of heritage with popular ideas such as historical value, antiquity, the exceptional elements of the place and the population, and identity markers that are notions and images that are constantly present in official imaginaries of heritage. Besides, imaginaries of heritage are not isolated comprehensions or features. People create meaning through a fabric of concepts and understandings, where one imaginary enables the existence of or gives meaning to another. In this chapter, I will address the articulation between imaginaries of heritage that come from people's experiences and official discourses.

The following chapter is organised into three main themes. First, I address the understandings assumed to be part of the common sense or unquestionable features when people explain what heritage is. People take for granted these imaginaries since they have heard, seen, or gotten to know heritage through official channels, which have authority and legitimacy based on their institutional or media power. Second, the understandings of heritage based on people's experience within tourism since it is one of the main fields where heritage is disseminated and used. People in Chukidel and El Vado constantly explained the meaning of heritage through what they understood as identity and a sense of belonging. The third point addresses the imaginary of heritage as an identity referent.

First Impressions: Official Imaginaries in Heritage Meaning-Making

Heritage as a Distant and Designated Notion

> We know that our elders do not know what heritage is. That's a new word for us (Inhabitant of Chukidel, Painter, male, approx. 67 years old, February 2020).

As mentioned in the theoretical framework and confirmed by the fieldwork, language plays a critical role in the heritage debate since heritage is not a term present in everyday language. During the fieldwork, particularly during interviews and informal conversations with the inhabitants of El Vado and Chukidel, several people expressed that they do not know what heritage is, stating 'it is not something that is often talked about here,' or directly pointing out that they are unaware of the subject. The term cultural heritage did not often appear as part of the everyday language or as a clearly identified topic of interest in the spaces of collective discussions such as the *Cabildo* in Chukidel. One of the challenges of exploring the notion of cultural heritage is, precisely, that it is not a part of everyday languages. As a result, people develop a distant perception of cultural heritage, seeing the term as an uncommon concept.

The people of both in El Vado and Chukidel develop an understandings of heritage based on concrete situations, they hear the term heritage used mostly by institutions or heritage practitioners. In the two study sites, heritage is widely disseminated through institutional designation of national or international heritage (e.g., WHS). Besides, travel agents and academics also use the notion of heritage. In this way, people associate heritage with the realms of public and private campaigns, awards, tourism, or academia.

The following are examples of how heritage notions are disseminated by public institutions in social media:

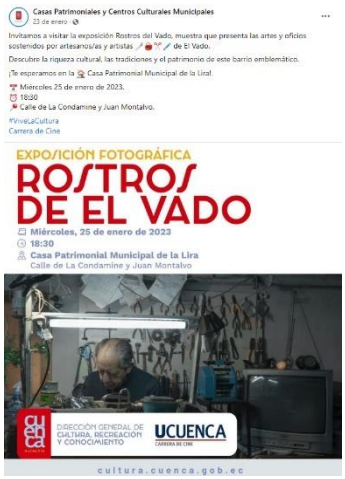

Figure 49 Post states: Discover the cultural wealth, traditions and heritage of this emblematic neighbourhood (Cuenca's Culture Directorate, 2023)



Figure 48 World Cultural Heritage Day. The artifacts, our people, our Inca richness, our customs, and our traditions have made Saraguro a reference of culture and heritage (Visit Saraguro, 2021)

Understanding heritage also depends on people's perception and relationship with the private or public institutions, business agencies, or organisations that promote the term heritage. For example, of the two previous publications, the first corresponds to the Department of Culture of the Municipality of Cuenca, while the second belongs to a travel agency in Saraguro. Both publications describe heritage using terms such as cultural wealth, traditions, emblematic, customs, cultural destination, tourism, magical town, etc. People have been constantly exposed to publications of this type in which heritage, first, already appears associated with certain qualifiers and, second, configures a notion that is designated by technical, expert, or institutional languages.

The TEAM-Minga project also used the heritage term from a technical-institutional approach to characterise the study sites. For example, in the following quote, TEAM-Minga describes the situation of cultural heritage in Chukidel based on the INPC information and follows the division of tangible/intangible:

> Continuing with the bipartite scheme of institutional comprehension of heritage, according to the INPC in Saraguro there are 99 inventoried buildings, and 46 buildings are of heritage interest, but geographically none of them are located within Chukidel because the INPC has not been able to expand its registry and inventory towards rural areas of the parish. But the importance of vernacular architecture in communities is recognised as being of heritage interest (TEAM-Minga Characterisation Report of Chukidel Saraguro. 27 May 2020)

The TEAM-Minga project used heritage as one of the strategic concepts in designing the interviews and workshops. Some examples of the questions used are: 'What are the types of heritage that are identified in the community? What threatens heritage? Take for granted the understanding of heritage and focus on the heritage object. The continuous presence of researchers in both El Vado and Chukidel and the interview application established a relationship in which the meaning of the heritage is constructed under the terms and conditions researchers/technicians determine.

The following testimony exemplifies how an inhabitant of Chukidel explains his understanding of cultural heritage associated with touristic and government activities. Furthermore, the perceived abandonment by public institutions after the designations expresses the government's distance from the inhabitants.

> Saraguro was declared a "Magical Town" *(Pueblo Mágico)* by the Ministry of Tourism. At the same time, what I see from the state, in this case, is to declare, say *'*Wow*'*, then abandon it and say, 'You guys go ahead and see what you can do with it'. (Inhabitant of Chukidel, Tourism local government specialist, male, approx. 44 years old, 7 May 2021).

The examples show how the notion of heritage in localities results from an official designation or is associated with external people, such as state officials, researchers, or tourists, in publications, reports, or campaigns. Therefore, people in the study sites understand heritage term as a distant notion from the everyday language. This is expressed in phrases like: 'they have told us that we are heritage'. Thus, the heritage notion in people's experience is mediated by a third party, whether state, academic, or touristic. In this way, heritage is part of a slogan that is designating from an external view. The people consulted in the study sites have the idea that heritage is 'what people (tourists) come to see at a tourist site'. When asked about what she thought was part of Chukidel's heritage, an interviewee answered:

> As heritage, for example, some touristic places such as the Inca bath, the Ushno, which has been a touristic and ancestral place of our forefathers, also the Pulla Lake. They are very important places that attract the attention of many tourists (Inhabitant of Chukidel, retired educator, and Ex-Capak, female, approx. 63 years old, 6 May 2021).

Social media and the Internet have expanded the scope and presence of public and private institutions, official heritage discourses, and travel agencies. Social media plays an important role in how people interact with official heritage discourses, assuming and disseminating these terms on a local scale. An example of this is publications like the following, which was posted on Facebook by the INPC and replicated by the Municipality of Saraguro and in the personal profiles of inhabitants of Chukidel:

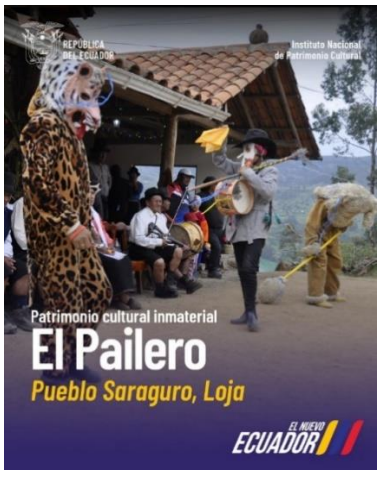

Figure 50 Inmaterial Cultural Heritage, El Pailero, Saraguro Loja (Instituto Nacional de Patrimonio Cultural, 2024)

In this publication, the INPC names the *Pailero*, a character from the Saraguro Christmas dances, as intangible cultural heritage. The inhabitants of Saraguro commented in the previous Facebook post with statements like 'finally the National Institute of Cultural Heritage remembered to disseminate the cultural elements of the people as the *Pailero* in Saraguro' (Inhabitant of Chukidel, 2024), taking this promotion as a positive recognition. In this instance, the notion of heritage that emerges from the publication presents is that it is equal to tradition, dance, ritual, and festivity, the exceptional elements of Saraguro culture, and is of particular interest to tourists. The fact that the INPC is a state institution that promotes this publication demonstrates the logic of seeing the public institution as the authority that designates or recognises what heritage is. In this case, the *Pailero* is recognised as a folkloric element rather than delving on the symbolism and meaning of the *Pailero* within the performance of the Christmas festivities[34].

The previous examples show the comprehension of heritage in study sites is also shaped by official and institutional notions, while a distance is reproduced between the entity that has the legitimacy and the power to designate what heritage is and the receiving people or objects. In this way, the fieldwork testimonies shed light on how meaning-making of heritage takes place in asymmetrical power relationships between the official heritage institutions and the local actors -whether they display institutional and regulatory power given by the State, the economic power of travel companies, or the power of knowledge held by academia. The imaginary of heritage as a distant or designated term manifests the asymmetrical power relation in which people get to know, interact, and understand heritage. These imaginaries are consolidated in the people's experience where heritage term is foreign to everyday language, assuming heritage to be part of technical language, and in permanent interaction with a designation, the interests/motivations, and demands imposed by the heritage practitioners of public/private institutions and businesses.

Heritage as an Object-Oriented Experience

Participant observation during the activities implemented by TEAM-Minga in the study sites allowed me to notice that the questions posed by TEAM-Minga have implicit connotations that are interpreted and assumed by local actors. The design and application of questions about what is, and which elements constitute heritage also affect the responses of the inhabitants of the study sites. Heritage as an imaginary is constructed in a dialogical way in the interaction between different interlocutors. Hence, understandings of heritage are shaped by the influence of the questions, methodologies and dialogues posed by the TEAM-Minga project. People in the study sites explain heritage as something, a thing that they can easily point at. This idea of heritage as a tangible/intangible object is revealed in the exercise of listing heritage as an answer to what heritage means, whether it arises from the responses of informants or from the

[34] The *Pailero* is a character dressed as a *mestizo*. His face is covered by a cloth mask with a long nose, and he wears a large straw hat and a small bass drum. The *pailero's* role is to make the lion dance, representing how the *mestizo* people control nature and endanger the lives of the animals (Chalán Guamán, 1994)

questions of researchers. Listing or, more institutionally, inventorying, is a process of naming and singling out heritage.

A frequently underlying imaginary is that heritage is an object-oriented experience (Taylor & Landorf, 2015). This objectification results in interpretations that allow heritage to be managed as an external, concrete, singularised and classifiable element. The current origin of the heritage notion -as it was stated in the theoretical frame, which emerged as a monumental and iconic element, responded to strengthen a national narrative in the European post-war context (Craith & Kockel, 2015). As mentioned in the theoretical framework, the division between materiality/body/physics and ideas/metaphysics/spirit and other dichotomies are ways of organising the world and understanding heritage within Western thought (Falser, 2015). In this way, the authorised understanding of heritage emerges as an object-oriented experience to preserve and reconstruct identitarian symbols lost in the wars. The notion of national heritage is linked to objectifying the identity elements that shape a national history. This understanding translates into inventory practices and is a way of understanding and using heritage through control and management. For instance, the object-oriented experience of heritage is visible in the recurring ways of asking and answering about heritage based on what is classified as a heritage object, instead on what it means.



Figure 51 In the study sites, the TEAM-Minga project validated a list of identified heritage with people, which implied ordering them according to their threat and identifying their risks. TEAM-Minga Feedback and listening workshop in El Vado, 21 and 22 May 2021.

The analysis requires revealing the imaginaries as interwoven with other understandings. Based on the fieldwork results, I identified that the official discourses of heritage are primarily founded on these two imaginaries of heritage as a distant and designated notion and as an object-oriented experience. These imaginaries are also a substantial source of the power relations between people and how they participate in the heritage field. For instance, imagining heritage as an object consolidates when it is thought of as something foreign that can be designated, classified, regulated, possessed, inherited, or preserved. Next, I present different understandings of heritage that arise from the distinct and designated relation with heritage, the object-oriented experience of heritage showing how authorised discourses are present in people's imagination.

Classification and Normativity

The AHD present in national narratives, and in the state management of heritage entail undialectical oppositions from Western cultural ideology (Pfeifer, 2009). The heritage meaning-making within dichotomous relationships implies that heritage designations operate as a classifying device between what should and should not be valued as heritage. The arrangement of order and classification based on opposites results in a comprehension of the heritage object by exclusive and non-integrated valuations, such as the material/immaterial. In this fashion, UNESCO declarations and management guidelines differentiate tangible from intangible cultural heritage, which has been assumed in researchers and people's imaginaries of heritage. In this way people tend to classify or separate material and immaterial elements, in an order that prioritises the materiality of the heritage. A clear example of this happened during the fieldwork, when asking about heritage, a standard response from people was to list the heritage elements under a clear division between the material and the immaterial. The TEAM-Minga project, partly because it emerged from architecture schools, initially proposed research focused on the built cultural heritage.

The classification task has the function of managing the uses, relationships, the conservation, and the administration of cultural heritage. Therefore, heritage as a classifying device is part of the regulatory and normative framework that guarantees the application of the management guidelines established by the state and local governments. As a function, the normative is deployed at the different levels of government, through which people learn about heritage. Heritage as a normative is implemented through top-down governance models, often practised by public administration where, 'heritage governance is synergistically constituted through international politics, national legislation, local rules and market demands' (Coombe & Weiss, 2015, p. 45). For instance, the imaginary of heritage to classify and normativity is manifested in how people also associate heritage with local public policy discussions, for instance, around the uses of public spaces in historic areas or the regulations and restrictions to change houses or buildings designated as heritage.

Heritage as Public Policy

People's heritage imaginary as a normative or a term present in public policies is linked to tangible heritage, the built spaces, the old houses, which, once registered as heritage structures, are regulated by ordinances and public policies that seek to preserve material and architectural assets to avoid changes and their destruction. This way of understanding became evident during the development of the TEAM-Minga project, when the people at the study sites identified the public administration as the manager and promoter of cultural heritage.

> What happens is that they (the owners) will sell the house because they can't fix it up due to it being heritage and all that, so they can't fix it to their liking (...). They must fix it according to what the colonial house was like, what it is, they have to let the exteriors remain as they are (Inhabitant of El Vado, automobile mechanic, male, approx. 55 years old, 9 August 2022)

This testimony joins two comprehensions: first, seeing heritage as the ancient architecture typical of the colonial era, and second, as a normative resource for conservation. Also, in several dialogues with inhabitants of Cuenca and Saraguro, they expressed the fear of having their assets declared as heritage by the municipality, since submitting to the regulations that control the construction, modification, and maintenance of their properties might be financially unsustainable.

> Cultural heritage is like that house over there. You can't knock it down or do anything to it. It's very expensive to maintain those houses (Inhabitant of El Vado, auto-mechanic, male, approx. 55 years old, 8 August 2022)

The imaginary of heritage as a norm has been identified in other anthropological research (Eljuri, 2020; Molina et al., 2023) where similar testimonies have been documented, such as 'when a house is declared as heritage, you can no longer refurbish it' (Molina et al., 2023, p. 9). The imaginary of normativity also is a practice strongly present in the sense of "urbanity" that excluded peasant and indigenous people from the use of public space, which were stereotypically associated with "disorder" and "insecurity" (Garcés & Solo de Zaldívar, 2016; Kingman & Goetschel, 2005; Mancero, 2010). After the declaration of WHS, there were enhanced norms to control heritage areas, particularly public spaces restricting spontaneous and informal activities such as street vendors or artists (Eljuri, 2020; Hayes, 2020).

Within the TEAM-Minga, this imaginary of heritage related to classification and normativity is present in arguments such as the lack of an inventory of heritage assets in territories like Saraguro, which could imply a risk to cultural heritage.

> No building in Las Lagunas has been inventoried; therefore, no official record of built cultural heritage exists. This situation encourages the risk of modification or destruction of buildings, without permission or knowledge about the conservation and maintenance of heritage (Report on the Problematisation and Justification of the TEAM-Minga project, 12 November 2019)

Furthermore, one of the objectives of the TEAM-Minga project is to seek the consolidation of public policies for the management and preventive conservation of cultural heritage, which reinforces the notion of heritage imaginaries as regulation. The people from the study sites interacted with TEAM-Minga looking to establish guidelines for the management of heritage assets. As a result, the TEAM-Minga workshops focus the discussions on possible regulatory frameworks at the community level, as well as on actions or management plans or public policies for cultural heritage. These discussions continued addressing the configuration of ways to regulate and manage what is labelled as cultural heritage, rather than its meanings and transformations.

In Cuenca, a robust municipal presence oversees the management of historical areas such as El Vado. Consequently, the neighbourhood residents have internalised the understanding of heritage that this institution conveys, one that pays particular interest to the architectural heritage. As has been shown, heritage is understood by neighbours as a public policy that regulates the use and transformation of old buildings (Molina et al., 2023).

In Saraguro, the heritage imaginaries fall mainly on immaterial elements of culture. Therefore, they are expressed not only in the use and arrangement of space but also in the way of regulating, listing, and identifying these singularities of the immaterial, even though these only make sense in the context of where they are practiced. In this line, Professor Muyolema, taking the *Inti Raymi* celebration as an example, points out that heritage, as a normative implies a way of regulating the dynamic expressions of populations:

> What happens with the *Raymis*, and heritage is that there is a kind of institutionalisation of the festival, in the forms, the contents, and the participation of the people in the festival. This idea of heritagisation implies a domestication of multiformity and heterogeneity that the carnivalesque means. Heritagisation is based on an intelligible description of the festival by the institutions, that description becomes a model and everything that is not in that description is left out, such as the ability to surprise, the new. (Muyolema, personal communication, 6 September 2023).

Heritage as a Western Notion

> The heritage thing, it would be a coined term (...) it is a foreign term. Perhaps for our communities there has never been such a thing as heritage. Simply, what is there, is there. But heritage, in principle, is classified as tangible and intangible, natural, architectural heritage, that kind of thing. So, I think that the heritage issue was never in our language, because if you want to translate it into Kichwa, it does not exist. But our experiences, our ways of life and everything we have, especially what we are, does exist as intangible heritage. In Kichwa there is no term to say these things as heritage. It is a Western ideology because ours would be the *sumak kawsay* or just *kawsay* which is life, where everything is based, then the confluence between time and space, which in this case would be our heritage (Inhabitant of Chukidel, Municipal Technician, male, approx. 60 years old, 23 February 2021)

It is important to point out here that in territories like Saraguro, the indigenous identity is another layer that affects heritage meaning-making. For instance, some standpoints see heritage as detached from everyday language and as a foreign term, distant and unsuitable to explain their culture. During the interviews, besides asking about the meaning of heritage, I wondered if there is a possible translation into Kichwa, to which people gave answers like the one above. In Chukidel, the imaginary of heritage as a foreign term is also configured as a way in which local inhabitants distinguish themselves from technicians, tourists, and researchers (*laichos*), associating terms such as heritage with the presence of these people.

It is important to mention that in Saraguro the term immaterial or intangible heritage is present in campaigns that promote the town as a cultural destination, particularly in tourist circuits that exalt the customs and traditions of the Saraguros as touristic attractions. This has also influenced how inhabitants of Saraguro assume their ways of life and practices as their main heritage. In both Saraguro and El Vado, the notion of heritage is associated with the touristic attractions that can be physical: architectural, as it is in the case of El Vado, or the landscape in Saraguro; but also cultural, like their traditions and practices. In Saraguro, although part of the population speaks Kichwa, Spanish is the main language. Hence, the idea of heritage as a foreign notion is not necessarily because of the linguistic difference, but in that distinction

between what belongs to one and what is foreign, between what is indigenous and what is Western.

> Isn't the cultural rescue heritage? (…) Here people don't know the word heritage as such, people don't know the concept. Before it was fashionable to hear about cultural rescue. Wouldn't that be a way of talking about heritage? ...That, in part, has been maintained, for example, by the council who has legislation regarding buildings. There is something I don't understand. I remembered the cultural rescue now, when I left here at 17 years old, we heard a lot about cultural rescue. My dad even forbade me from wearing trousers, because we had to maintain our culture, we couldn't wear trousers, there were many things that we couldn't take from the west. At that time there was the explosion of the indigenous movement, we realised that we were losing our culture. In the nineties, bilingual education was born and, suddenly, a lot of work was done to rescue our culture... We fought so that children would no longer wear uniforms but instead wear our costumes. (Inhabitant of Chukidel, agriculturist male, approx. 70 years old, January 2020)

Testimonies like the previous one reveal how heritage imaginaries are configured from a historical and political trajectory. During the nineties, state projects and the indigenous movement sought out to strengthen their identity, generating a distinction between indigenous and *mestizos*, which not only reinforced the differences but also denied an already existing mixture. This becomes evident, for example, when the interviewee states, 'My dad even forbade me from wearing trousers, because we had to maintain our culture, we couldn't wear trousers, there were many things that we couldn't take from the west'.

It is important to consider the colonial spatial imaginary and its long-lasting legacy over the relationship between urban and rural spaces and people (Ravindran, 2019). It could be said that heritage, as a foreign notion, is linked to critical positions on colonial history that evoke a memory of oppression and displacement of indigenous populations and, therefore, linked to the colonial urban heritage of the historic city centres, such as Cuenca, and the urban centre of Saraguro, which is mainly inhabited by white-*mestizo* population:

> The people from the town centre or from the city consider that historic centre to be heritage, but it doesn't mean anything to us, that is the symbol of domination, practically the symbol of colonialism, from when colonisation began. Sometimes, when we talk to other people from here, we say: How are we going to celebrate, to defend, a heritage that does not belong to us, when it's an imposition, an invasion of our culture? Well, then, I'm respectful to the opinion of the *mestizo*s who say "Well, that's the cultural heritage", they give it meaning, they care for it, they maintain it. I don't know though; I haven't talked in depth about how the *mestizo*s feel about their heritage. Of course, I wonder, because they're always saying "Yes, this is a heritage house, this is a heritage site", but it is a building where there, certainly, is a pre-existing heritage too, since the Spanish built over the foundations of the Inca heritage. They built their church precisely in the most sacred places of the Incas' spirituality and dominated that way. So, while talking to some friends about Quito, they would say, for example: "Wow, that's incredible!". [I replied] "This is heritage?". [They continued] "What a beautiful church! That is so beautiful!". I say: "Ah, so you're still praising the Spanish then? Wow, what a great thing the Spanish brought!". To me that isn't the sentiment. To me it is about the memory of an invasion, of a rape, of the abuse that took place against the indigenous cultures. (Inhabitant of El Vado, psychologist and educator, male, approx. 60 years old, February 2020).

The imaginary of heritage as a notion from *mestizo*s or foreign people is linked to how people identify, represent, and, therefore, how they distinguish themselves. In the fieldwork in Saraguro, I observed that the imaginaries of heritage from a strong political-identity standpoint, as the previous testimony, come especially from people 50 years of age or older. The age difference shows that in older people, the distinction between indigenous and *mestizo* is more present than in young people. Other standpoints, mainly from the young, address the distance between Western origins and concepts such as heritage differently. Young people constructed their identity constantly entering and exiting stereotypes designated to their indigenous identity, and they do not necessarily approach heritage from an antagonistic notion between the Western and the indigenous. This is how the distinction does not imply a polarised process but rather a spectrum of realities and ways of identifying between the indigenous and the *mestizo* as the next examples show.

> I have no problem with heritage as a foreign word, and that also comes from a political position. Right here many fundamentalist positions say that it is a foreign word to understand what ours is. In the end, the word plurinationality is not our word either, and now we assume it and claim it as ours to the state, and that word is not even born from our people or from Latin America, but from communist Russia. (Inhabitant of Ilincho commune in Saraguro, politician and social communicator, female, approx. 30 years old, 29 July 2021)

> In the 70s and 90s, anthropology came in as a wave of valorisation of the indigenous, it was also promoted within the indigenous movements and in the 90s it gained strength at the international level, with all that discourse of development with identity. That affects our identity with these very essentialist discourses, that we have to think of ourselves as all the same, that we are homogenous among Saraguros. They are essentialist positions, there are people who say that if you go to mass you are already a coloniser, that if you wear long trousers you are no longer Saraguro. So, we fall into the same issue: who defines what it means to be Saraguro. (Inhabitant of Chukidel, academic, male, approx. 45 years old, 30 July 2022)

Here, what is interesting is knowing what is essential or not for self-identification. Thus, people configure heritage and identity based on the constant selection of isolated elements, which gives them a defining value. Therefore, the youth of Chukidel chose those identitarian elements that allowed them to identify themselves as Saraguros when they left others aside. A clear example of this is in the clothing and how it has changed; Saguro women's clothing maintained embroideries, but the type of the skirt has changed to adapt to a more stylish aesthetic than the grandmothers, who were broader and bulkier.

The new generations engage in self-criticism when it comes to dogmatic positions. In the fieldwork, testimonies made evident the claim that the problem is not in the term heritage but in its meaning, above all, from the experiences of more recent generations who find restrictive positions that enclose the Saraguro identity solely as from their traditional ethnic charaterisations. As mentioned in the previous quote, it is fundamental to go beyond how identity is portrayed as a homogeneous experience, even more so for ethnically stereotyped populations like the indigenous peoples. The previous testimony critiques the closed and conservative standpoints built under cultural rescue programs' influence with an essentialist approach. The testimony notes that campaigns or programs with cultural identity or cultural rescue approach promoted a type of indigenous self-recognition based on homogenising

experiences; the informant complains, ‘we have to think of ourselves as all the same, that we are homogenous among Saraguros’.

> The conflicts that could arise would come from some people who are close-minded to new things. The new generations, whether they agree with the culturalist discourse or not, are going to do (bring changes). That’s why we must start discussing what being indigenous is and means. (Inhabitant of Chukidel, scholar, male approx. 43 years old, 10 November 2023)

The theorical framework presented the imaginary’s analytical lens, highlighting the intersection between history-identity-otherness to unfold people's social positionalities. National historical narrative is materialised in the colonial and indigenous heritages, and in this way, the place of each person is settled in relation to their identity and in the face of dominant narratives (Kaltmeier & Rufer, 2017). The intersection of identity-otherness (Quijano, 2000), as it has been shown, continues to reproduce the foundations of coloniality. For example, I want to point out that even positions that criticise heritage as a foreign and Western imaginary are not exempt from reproducing official imaginaries like the conception of heritage as a normative element. Even the most critical positions end up reproducing conservative ideas to understand the identity elements, which reproduces classification dynamics with a discriminatory logic between what they consider as their own and what as foreign, regulating and ordering what does or does not identify them as indigenous. Hence, otherness is constructed as distant and antagonistic, not recognising both poles as equals within diversity. Consequently, there are imaginaries that refer to ontologies, to ways of ordering the world, in this case, an order that seeks a dichotomous distinction between self-foreign, material-immaterial, normative, and object-oriented.

Heritage as Narratives of the Past and the Ancestors’ Legacy

> Heritage is very good because it values the old. I also value the old. What happened is that my predecessors, that is, my great uncle, worked here, and my dad had decided to stay in the neighbourhood. El Vado was the entrance to the city (...), so it was strategic, people from rural parishes came, they ordered the artisans some products, and when they had to return to their community, they passed by El Vado to collect their products from the artisans (Inhabitant of El Vado, goldsmith craftsman, male, approx. 56 years old, 14 October 2020)

Another way people understand heritage is in the extent to which it evokes nostalgia and historical narratives. The testimony corresponds to an artisan resident of El Vado who recounts the experience of his ancestors and the historical-economic evolution of the neighbourhood, appealing to memory, remembering what the neighbourhood was like before and what it is like today. His understanding of heritage is embedded in his own personal story, as he continues not only to live in the same place but also to work in the same profession as his family.

Understanding heritage linked to the past implies a collective memory construction, as shown in the longing and nostalgia for stories of past times. As a result, the past bears a very heavy influence in their sense of belonging and identity. Although the different comprehension of heritage as elements that awaken or create memories can fall into romanticism, they are examples of how the meaning of heritage is an exercise that consists of creating historical

narratives to enhance contemporary identities. During the fieldwork, people expressed that heritage is linked to something to remember or that precedes their existence and, therefore, heritage is understood and valued as belonging to the past.

In Saraguro, where the idea of heritage is mainly associated with the practices and customs of its people, testimonies such as the following romanticise an imagined past and create a memory as a source of the authenticity of their roots.

> The life of a man, literally, but the life of an ancient man, so to speak. Of the honest man, the one who is on the field, on the soil. This is the life of a man, of the *Runa Kawsay* (Inhabitant of Chukidel, Painter, male, approx. 67 years old, February 2020)



Figure 52 The grandparents' story seems to never end (Music Group Mawkas, 2023)

This resident of Chukidel explains what he understands by heritage, referring to the life of the ancient man. This interpretation may seem essentialist since it evokes life in the past, which is the source of several stereotypes. In the *Cabildo* meeting and during the participative diagnosis in Chukidel, some conservative standpoints tend to romanticise the past as the benchmark to preserve traditions and authenticity. In this dialogue, people also pointed out that traditions are threatened today by globalisation, the change in living conditions, and the diversification of economic activities in indigenous populations. As it was mentioned in the theorical framework, heritage is understood as a way of seeking historical authenticity (Milošević, 2018), and as a helpful device to evoke an increasingly fragile memory. In contrast, new generations question those romanticised characterisations of Saguaro identity and heritage based on the 'old ways of life'. In this way, the statement of 'the honest man who is in the field', associating Saraguro's identity with agriculture, does not allow new generations to recognise themselves in this description.

As developed in the previous chapters, the official notion of cultural heritage is linked to the construction of national historical narratives promoting an intrinsic imaginary of heritage understood and valued in its relationship with history and the past (Hernández, 2006). This understanding displays several imaginaries associated with heritage as a container or expression of memory, the old, the ancestors, the original, the pure, tradition, the grandparents, of how things used to be... those elements that inhabit the past, to the extent that it is remembered and in dialogue with the present. Let's look at examples of testimonials that associate these labels:

> The traditions are maintained from the ancestors, grandparents, great-grandparents who lived here, that is what makes the neighbourhood identity (Inhabitant of El Vado, Painter, plastic artist, cultural manager, male, approx. 60 years old, 9 August 2022)

> I understand (heritage) everything overall, the cultural values, the territory, clothing, food, a whole set created and built by those who come to be like an inheritance from the ancestors. Preserve that, something of ours, there are places and people who are vigilant of that cultural package.] (Inhabitant of Chukidel, Agriculture, female, approx. 67 years old, January 2020)

> Also, part of the heritage are our *taitas* [35](fathers) and *mamas* (mothers) who are linked to wisdom. Knowledge is one thing, but wisdom is knowing and practicing, and that is in the *taitas*, in their years of experience. (Meeting with Taller Saraguro collective in Chukidel, 19 February 2021).

In El Vado and Chukidel heritage is strongly linked to the understanding of the past, its valuation, and the present legacies of ancestors. In Chukidel imagining heritage in its relationship with the past becomes important as a connection to another time and, above all, to the grandparents as a link to the community and its identity. In Chukidel, the *jimba* (combing of the long hair into a single braid) represents that connection to family and ancestors. Beyond being an identity marker, it is a symbolic practice, because by braiding the hair, family relationships are braided as well. The braid symbolises the sense of belonging, identification, and connection to the grandparents. The following testimony relates the experience of a young man who cut his braid and then realised that the *jimba* represents his close relationship with the family and how it is a way to demonstrate his belonging to the Saraguro people.



Figure 53 Saraguro youngsters with long braids, projecting to the world how proud they are of their roots as part of the Ñamarín-Saraguro community festivities (Inhabitant of Saraguro, 2021)

> I later understood the value that hair had for my mother and my grandparents. I also understood why it was important for my grandmother and the earth because through the hair we know that someone is Saraguro (Inhabitant of Saraguro, audiovisual producer, male, approx. 30 years old, 19 March 2021)

[35] Taitas and mamas refer to parents, but they are also terms used to refer to older and wise people

In Chukidel, older people are a referent of knowledge and respect. They condense the memories and the legacy that young generations must learn to give them continuity. Imagining heritage through the past and in relation to grandparents, in a certain way, displaces the relevance and need of the new generations to transform heritage, the understanding of the traditional, and the capacity to question heritage as an adult-centric concern. I see the possibility of imagining heritage from young people and children also as a source to rethink and transform readings and relationships with the past. In both El Vado and Chukidel, younger voices consider heritage as traditions anchored to the past, which often produces distance between them and those who seek to preserve heritage in a traditional way.

> The heritage theme is like this conjunction of values, of ownership of a valuation, of a tool to maintain history, memory. I, as a cultural manager, as an artist, as a resident of El Vado, also believe that this works against us when we want to reactivate new forms of heritage. There is also the issue of living heritage in a city that has been declared World Cultural Heritage. Sometimes heritage plays against many aspects of contemporaneity, of today, to develop neighbourhoods, right? Because sometimes the notion of heritage justifies freezing spaces and that freezing, beyond creating well-being, creates conflicts. (Inhabitant of El Vado, plastic artist, male, approx. 35 years old, 25 February 2021)

In both Chukidel and El Vado, testimonies like the previous one are an expression of how the comprehension of heritage is linked not only to the past but to the ways of living identity. It also manifests itself as non-traditional interpretations of the identity elements, which can generate tensions. The relationship between heritage and the past is based, as I had mentioned previously, on understanding heritage as the responsibility of giving continuity to a sense of kinship through the conservation of legacies. This relationship can result in static comprehensions of heritage, in response the previous testimony states: 'sometimes the notion of heritage justifies freezing spaces and that freezing, beyond creating well-being, creates conflict'. In this line, collectives like the cultural managers of El Vado, through their artistic production, disrupt the traditional chains of kinship, such as the traditional families of the neighbourhood, and relate to heritage as a creative resource and not as a legacy to be preserved.

In El Vado, while the residents that belong to the neighbourhood committee defend the heritage condition in its essence, the collective of artists and gallery owners propose new non-conventional readings and representations of heritage, while still recognising the historical-cultural background of El Vado. It is worth emphasising here that although there are different positions among the inhabitants of El Vado, there seems to be a relative consensus on elements considered heritage, they all agree that La Cruz del Vado the architecture of La Condamine Street, the traditional crafts and the memories of the old bakeries are all heritage elements. The tension between the different positions appears in the meaning and relationship that people stablish with them. This brings conflicts between different perspectives despite both actors agreeing on the value of the past and traditions. An example of this paradox between the agreement of heritage elements and the conflict over their meaning is the Catholic tradition of *El Pase del Niño Viajero*[36] (Procession of the traveling baby Jesus), in which the El Vado

[36] *El Pase del Niño Viajero* (The Catholic Procession of the traveling baby Jesus) is a religious procession that takes place every December 24 in the city of Cuenca, Ecuador, for the birth of Christ. The name of the Traveling baby Jesus is based on a sculpture of baby Jesus created in 1823 that the Vicar of the Archdiocese of Cuenca took

neighbourhood committee actively participates. Meanwhile, *El Prohibido* Cultural Centre promotes an artistic gathering called the *"Pasada del Divino Diablito"* (Divine Little Devil Parade)[37] .



Figure 55 Pase del Niño Viajero (Apullacta Expeditions, consulted 15, February 2024)



Figure 54 November 1st, 2nd & 3rd. The Devil Baby Parade summons you: Monsters, (...) Devils, Gnomes (...) Deceased (...) Catrinas, Artists, (...) Skelletons, etc... We will open the gates of the underworld, the festival of resistance! (Prohibido Centro Cultural, 2019)

La Pasada del Divino Diablito is a reinterpretation of *El Pase del Niño Viajero*; although it results in a transgression of Catholic traditions, in terms of the cultural managers that promote this event, it has the intention to be a space for expressions that are outside of the traditionalist gaze of the Cuencan identity. Also, the *La Pasada del Divino Diablito* aims to maintain the popular meaning of this event -just as it is with *El Pase del Niño Viajero*- with the inclusion of rural and indigenous references for the celebration and to enhance a social organisation around a collective initiative. The *La Pasada del Divino Diablito* shows how people of different positions agree on how traditional practices such as *El Pase del Niño Viajero* has significant elements of the local identity. However, it shows how the dispute is situated in how this element is (re)signified to represent different population sectors. The most conservative positions, like the neighbourhood committees that are oriented to protect the encapsulated heritage because of its fragility, point to these new representations as being dissonant with what should be valued or labelled as heritage. Instead of understanding them as part of the complexity of heritage itself (Smith, 2011).

Below, an artisan from the neighbourhood explains this friction between the positions of the neighbourhood committee and the group of cultural managers in El Vado:

> Our fellow cultural manager from El Prohibido Cultural Centre has his extreme art, so the elderly ladies of the Neighbourhood Committee, let's start there, how old are

to different holy places, and which received the blessing of Pope John XXIII. In 1961, Monsignor Miguel Cordero Crespo commissioned Rosa Palomeque de Pulla (a resident of El Vado) to organise the parade.

[37] *Pasada del Divino Diablito* (Divine Little Devil Parade) is part of the Extreme Arts Festival promoted by the El Prohibido Cultural Centre. It is an activity related to underground art that calls for people's non-traditional creativity. It is a parade in the context of All Souls' Day, the 2nd of November, which articulates underground and extreme art proposals, as well as popular and indigenous expressions such as the Diablada de Pillaro (denominated national cultural heritage) and the *Huma* Devils, mythical characters typical of the Andean culture.

> they? So, it's kind of *curuchupa*[38], so there's a clash, right? For example, there are many homophobic and sexist people here who see LGTBI people as something from another planet; so, if we see their age, the vast majority here are elderly. If there is one or two young men (in the Committee), it is because they have already put things in their heads. I have been there (El Prohibido Cultural Centre) many times, I have taken my children, and nothing happens, it is extreme art. (Inhabitant of El Vado, goldsmith craftsman, male, approx. 56 years old, 14 October 2020)

As in El Vado, in Chukidel, the younger generations, particularly those linked to art, have changed the representations and meaning of traditions. For instance, in Saraguro, several music bands have recovered traditional rhythms, such as *Chashpiska*, and adjusted it to the tastes of young people.

> Before, older people had needs and objectives in common, which are no longer the same among young people. For example, the land issue was a collective need, or to stop discrimination and racism. On the other hand, now we are a generation that, if I want to be a musician and fuse our music with other rhythms, then give me the opportunity, I don't have keep being the stereotypical way of indigenous (Inhabitant of Chukidel, audiovisual producer, male, approx. 30 years old, 19 March 2021).

> I see that in the dance group now there are new releases of some renewed *chashpiskas* and it is becoming more attractive to the kids, we dance to some of the old ones. If you give them (dancers) some *sanjuanitos* they dance to death, but if you give them *chashpiskas* I don't see them get excited.] (Inhabitant of Chukidel, architect, Community-based tourism agent, Andean folklore dance group, female, approx. 30 years old, 11 March 2021)

The previous testimonies evidence how the ancestors' legacy and creations are fundamental to who people are today; acknowledging what has been inherited builds an imaginary continuity but also ruptures. Therefore, the conflicts arising from the different interpretations of the traditions and heritage in Chukidel highlight creative processes in which heritage is reconfigured for the future, as the continuity and rupture are intrinsically part of the same meaning-making process of heritage. Therefore, as stated in the theorical frame, history, and social memory enable people to position themselves in the face of dominant narratives (Kaltmeier & Rufer, 2017). Hence, people's tales of the past and their relationship with their ancestors are a source of knowledge about the values and meanings that allowed in the experience of indigenous populations to resist precariousness, poverty, discrimination, and government neglect. In this way, new generations living in different conditions have preset their predecessor's struggles.

Memory implies a relationship with heritage as an evocation from the past (De Brigard, 2017). The association of heritage with memory and nostalgia was present during the TEAM-Minga workshops when the people were asked 'what the neighbourhood or community was like before,' without specifying before who or what. In this way, people relate their responses to nostalgic pasts present in their explanation of the memory of El Vado and Chukidel, whether personal stories or tales and descriptions their ancestors and elders have told them. The imaginary of heritage as something appears to oppose contemporary changes, with modernity

[38] *Curuchupa* is a term to refer to a person, attached to the conservative Catholic tradition in the face of changes or innovations (Diccionario de americanismos, 2010)

being a risk for heritage. In this line, the TEAM-Minga Project also focuses on the dangers of heritage in the face of modern changes. Here, I consider that besides the academic concern for

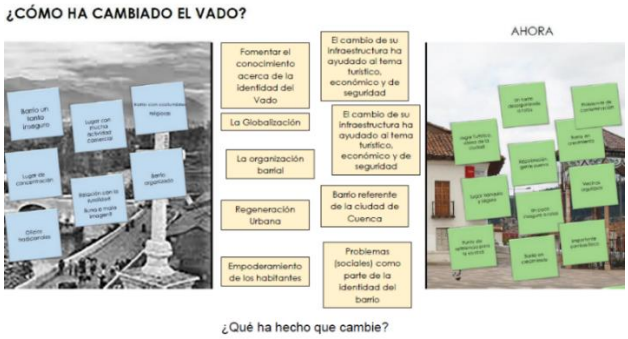

Figure 57 Systematisation of the TEAM-Minga Feedback and Listening workshop in El Vado, 21 May 2021



Figure 56 TEAM-Minga Feedback and listening workshop in El Vado, 21 May 2021

the contemporary risks of heritage, I see it as essential to explore the risks, weaknesses, and threats to the heritage that come and dwell in a deeply rooted way in the past of the populations and the notion of heritage.

In the study site's daily life, changes can be interpreted as a risk to heritage and a form of creation, depending on the positionality and imaginaries of heritage, either refining official discourses or questioning them. Addressing change as a creativity source enables us to rethink heritage-as-praxis, in which individuals define and shape their heritage through their personal experience (Brandellero et al., 2014). In this way, there are points of view in El Vado and Chukidel that propose imagining heritage as a practice of memory-building, of recovering the past without staying in it. This imaginary of heritage-as-a-praxis, which I will develop in the following chapter, is an alter-native heritage meaning-making prosses embracing transformation, making the past and the ancestors a source to reinterpret and (re)create heritage from contemporary experiences.

I want to highlight that age gaps are a significant key to understanding and experiencing heritage meaning and production, which is how history is configured through intergenerational experiences. In the fieldwork it has been identified, on one hand, how heritage, imagined in its relationship with the past, can display understandings of heritage as a container of memory and with a conservationist approach. On the other hand, other standpoints understand heritage as a source of knowledge for the continuous creation of identitarian references, which is a way to imagine heritage-as-praxis (Brandellero et al., 2014).

Possession, Legacy, and Inheritance

> The first thing that comes to mind regarding heritage is this idea of having, of possession (Inhabitant of Chukidel, academic, male, approx. 45 years old, 30 July 2022)

The imaginary of heritage as a possession or property is associated with someone's belongings due to their homeland, forefathers or ancestors. For instance, AHD is strongly connected with the national narratives that have materialised in 'regimes of protection of patrimony (understood as state property)'(Coombe & Weiss, 2015, p. 43), linked, in particular, to technical or institutional language. This understanding is based on ownership or tenure, whether individual or institutional. Tenure or ownership also implies a line of succession of assets within the same human group. Hence, heritage acquires meaning to the extent of the continuity of these relationships of ownership, legacy, and inheritance. The succession of heritage as a position demands its preservation to maintain the continuity of that legacy within kinship networks. This imaginary concept articulates the relationship between tenure/property, legacy, and inheritance, based on the responsibility to preserve what is inherited.

> Heritage is something that must be preserved, it is like an inheritance, something that our ancestors passed down to us. The neighbourhood is a heritage that has been around for a long time, so, for me, that is what it is, something that must be cared for and preserved. (Inhabitant of El Vado, visual artist and graffiti gallery owner, male, approx. 30 years old, 29 November 2022)

In terms of Salemink (2021) 'the idea that culture can be an object and a commodity, and hence claimed, appropriated, owned and dispossessed resonates with the notion of 'cultural'' (p. 434). As it was developed in the theoretical framework, the understanding of heritage as property of the state is configured from references such as museums and archaeological complexes where cultural heritage is safeguarded for conservation and preservation. In the case of Chukidel, the experiences of Inca and Cañari archaeological complexes, such as Ingapirca in Cañar or Pumapungo in Cuenca, which state institutions manage, have been a reference where cultural heritage is framed and managed under a museum.

> If we talk about heritage, it has a connotation of ownership, that this heritage is important. If you want to visit a site like Ingapirca, for example, you couldn't go to a property that has owners. So, we cannot conceive here, our sacred site, our soil, in that way. What if a gringo comes and buys it, we wouldn't be able to enter. So, that's why I say, it's our wealth, which we can call culture, or cultural spaces. In Saraguro we would not like to talk about them as heritage because we are still using the sites, we are using the roads, we are using the festivals. (Inhabitant of Chukidel, painter, male, approx. 67 years old, February 2020)

The previous testimony raises the idea that cultural heritage involves an appropriation by the state over heritage spaces or elements. Since they are state or private property, people are unable to access these spaces and use them spontaneously. This is a static understanding of heritage, as it cannot be transformed or used freely. Heritage as property and the idea of the museum as a form of conservation are under a normative logic. The previous testimony is an interpretation in which calling heritage entails an appropriation of elements of heritage by placing them in regulated spaces such as museums, under regulatory frameworks that restrict

the way in which they are used: 'In Saraguro we would not want to take it too much to the heritage sphere because we are still using the sites (referring to sacred sites like Ushno), we are using the roads, we are using the festivals'. When referring to elements such as festivities, pedestrian paths and sacred sites that are part of the community's daily life, they would lose the possibility to use them they currently have by being called heritage.

Conservation and Endangerment

> I think it (heritage) could be the construction of houses, it could be the clothing, it could be the language and so on. In fact, we have almost lost everything. (Participative evaluation meeting with the Saraguro Workshop Collective and the *Cabildo* at Chukidel, 25 February 2021)

The imaginary of heritage as a legacy is linked to the idea of conservation, a product of the fear of loss and the risk in which heritage is found. The State, academia, and heritage practitioners have strengthened this imaginary of heritage as an asset or legacy that we possess and that must be cared for. In this subject, Holtorf (2018) stated that:

> The 'heritage at risk' framework misunderstands – that saving heritage is nothing but a specific manifestation of change (…) Cultural heritage should not be seen as a token of the past, now threatened, but as a way of facilitating changes that improve peoples' lives under new circumstances and thus enhance cultural sustainability (Holtorf, 2018, p. 647)

In both study sites, the transformations of the heritage imaginaries can be interpreted as the loss of traditions, faced with the inevitability of change. In terms of De Silvey and Harrison (2020) the traditional notion of heritage 'relies, to a large extent, on notions of endangerment and consequential attempts to arrest or reverse processes of loss and change (…) it could be argued that the perception of risk and endangerment is a fundamental element in the production of heritage value' (DeSilvey & Harrison, 2020, p. 1).

During the fieldwork, concerns about the loss of heritage could constantly be confirmed. This is evident in the objectives of the TEAM-Minga project, which seeks to identify the possible risks and assets at risk in each locality. The TEAM-Minga has stated that an example of heritage at risk would be the traditional construction techniques of the localities. The main identified risk to heritage - referring to construction techniques on land - is 'the economic development of different sectors that drives material changes, extensions and remodelling of some homes considered heritage, which directly affect the construction system, materiality and, consequently, to the landscape of the case studies' (TEAM-Minga, Heritage diagnosis report in Chukidel and El Vado, 2020). The topic of risk was always present in the interviews, the work roundtables, and workshops conducted by TEAM-Minga at the study sites. The following quotations show how the notion of risk or loss is present in Chukidel.

> What really affects me is the loss of the buildings, the buildings used to be made of *bahareque*, not anymore. Maybe because there isn't any more material, for example, also the case of the loss of our language, at this point it is difficult for me to learn, and also the clothing. Those three things, for me, are the most critical (Participative evaluation meeting with the Saraguro Workshop Collective and the *Cabildo* at Chukidel, 25 February 2021)

> It's like identity is in process of extinction (Inhabitant of Chukidel, agriculture, male, approx. 75 years old, January 2020)

> The loss of identity, with all the migration, and the modern things that occur in social networks; and now children, young people, adults, everyone is on their phones (Inhabitant of Chukidel, agriculture, female, approx. 67 years old, January 2020)

In fact, people on study sites associate heritage with elements from the past or legacies. Hence, the concern that they are affected by current changes is always present. However, in the fieldwork, it was observed that in the interactions during TEAM-Minga workshops, the readings of local actors about changes in heritage are perceived even more as risks and threats. The negative perception of loss and transformation, mainly from a traditionalist intention of conservation, appears increasingly unsustainable since it does not deal with the inevitability of changes (DeSilvey & Harrison, 2020).

> In other words, it is much easier, although of course, currently migration has affected greatly, and there have been many allowances to build a house because we need wood, straw, we need to make the mud and many *mingas*. If we still valued these *mingas*, because they're a very special act to carry out, for example, for the mud. This procedure needs a lot of commitment, but it's very nice if we want to maintain our heritage through them for the constructions of our houses, because previously it was done that way. Inhabitant of Chukidel, retired educator, and Excapak, female, approx. 63 years old, 6 May 2021)

The testimonies in El Vado and Chukidel people express concerns about factors such as migration, ICT[39]s, the influence of globalisation, and new clothing and construction trends perceived as threats to heritage. The previous testimony referred to the new economic conditions and technological capabilities for construction by mentioning that 'it is much easier, although of course, currently migration has affected greatly, and there have been many allowances to build a house'. The TEAM-Minga Project and the inhabitants of the Chukidel community have indicated that the *bahareque* construction system and the *Minga* are heritage. However, it is also recognised that the conditions of the material, economic, and social organisations are not the same as when these construction practices were in place.

In the fieldwork, I observed, and people expressed that the *mingas* demand a strong community organisation. *Mingas* can be exhausting for the inhabitants since, in many cases, they are not compatible with the current daily work schedules. Likewise, it is noted that there is no longer any wood or other resources available for the organisation and participation in the *mingas*. That is to say, the imaginary of risk frames this situation as a loss of the construction systems and the landscape of mud houses in Chukidel. Thus, heritage valuation falls, above all, on an aesthetic and symbolic valuation linked to a nostalgic past, despite local actors accepting that the usefulness and conditions of continuing these construction practices have changed.

The constant changes in the environment and the construction of identity in new generations cause the elements identified as heritage to lose their functionality. During the TEAM-Minga Feedback and Listening Workshop in Chukidel (3 June 2021), people also identified the technique of spinning and the traditional clothing of Saraguro as heritage. At the same time, in

[39] Information and Communication Technology

the workshops and interviews, people indicated that these forms of heritage have changed since the people of Chukidel currently prefer to buy yarn instead of continuing with the practice of spinning for their textile production, and the use of traditional clothing has become more flexible. Indigenous people in general do not always wear their traditional clothing for various reasons, whether economic, comfort, or the availability of other forms of clothing.

> Heritage belongs to our forefathers, the dresses, for example, have changed completely. You see, my sister already wears trousers. Young people now don't spin yarn anymore, don't wear the *anaco*[40], don't wear the hats, we don't speak Kichwa anymore… Only trousers now… We're losing it all, the land, the ways of dressing too. Everybody, even women, wear trousers now. Before, since we didn't have trousers, *anacos* were made from thread, we weaved them, and the *bayetas*[41]. (Inhabitant of Chukidel, Agriculture, female, approx. 65 years old, February 2020)

An example of how elements that have been identified in El Vado as traditional and, therefore, heritage, but that have been losing usefulness in more current contexts is the craft of tin smithing. Although in both El Vado and Chukidel there are elements that evoke nostalgia for previous times, these have different practical values in the present.

> We make utilitarian things, for example, me and my dad used to make pitchers. I now make buckets, feeders, pans, those types of things that are useful in the countryside. Where are the more religious people? In the rural parts, so, I still make many things for the religious people. I make crowns, halos, crosses. But when plastic arrived, we are talking about 40 years ago, artisans almost disappeared, in this case, the tinsmiths because no one used them anymore. First, plastic was cheaper, and then, it was super useful, lighter, etc. So, we almost disappeared. There are people who appreciate our work as artisan, they see it as something folkloric rather than useful, so there is a lot to rescue, there is a lot to do, unfortunately many things that are part of our identity are being lost and no one is doing anything to rescue them, except for you as a university who have proposed an attempt to do research, trying to even leave it in writing. But once this workshop is over, and then what happens? Nothing. (Inhabitant of El Vado, goldsmith craftsman, male, approx. 56 years old, 14 October 2020)

The testimony of an artisan from El Vado makes evident how the plastic products imply a risk to the consumption of artisanal products. Although heritage is perceived as elements to be conserved, the practical and symbolic usefulness of heritage assets today must be questioned, and how it would be appropriate to transform them to fit current and future needs. I am not referring only to the material elements, but to the practices and beliefs that have been labelled as heritage. Cases like the religious practices of El Vado and Chukidel or the *Raymi* festivities make visible the need to transform heritage in the face of today's demands, and in this way, overcome conservative readings that seek to limit changes, which people perceive as threats or loss of heritage. Finally, the testimony of the artisan from El Vado ends by pointing out that his production is, above all, perceived as folkloric or nostalgic and that the interest in recovering and preserving these artisanal elements comes from academia when he points out that 'no one is doing anything to rescue them, except for you as a university who have proposed an attempt to do research.'

[40] Rectangular fabric that the indigenous women of the Andes wrap around their waists as a skirt.
[41] Rectangular woolen cloth is worn by women on their shoulders.

The imaginary of heritage at risk raised by the TEAM project and the reflections on heritage risk revolve around objects identified as heritage, as shown by the following results that emerged from the project's information collection techniques.

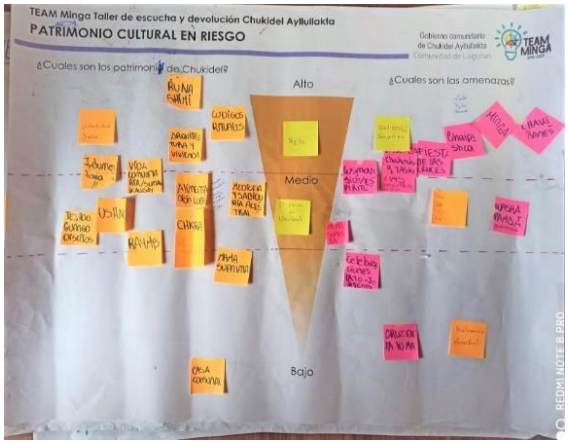

Figure 59 TEAM-Minga Feedback and Listening Workshop: Knowledge Minga Taking Care of Community Heritage in Chukidel, 5 June 2021

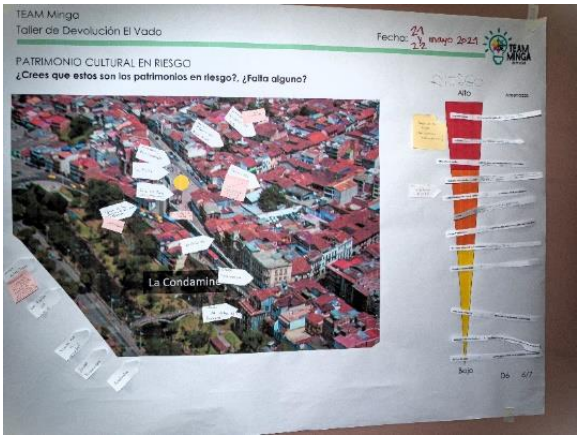

Figure 58 TEAM-Minga Feedback and listening workshop in El Vado, 21 May 2021

The testimonies about risk are also an example of how heritage is imagined as an object-oriented experience. An important find from the fieldwork is that it was possible to identify that a perception of the risk of heritage as part of the culture is linked to the living conditions of the inhabitants, beyond the understanding of heritage as an object. Besides, in the systematisation of the feedback and listening workshop carried out by the TEAM-Minga in El Vado, it was recognised that part of the factors that affect the inhabitants of the El Vado neighbourhood and, consequently, the heritage is the vehicular pollution in the Subida del Vado. The levels of air pollution in this sector of the city are above the permitted parameters, which strongly impacts the health of the artisans located along this uphill road, in addition to the deterioration of the real estate and the handcrafts. Likewise, a threat in El Vado is the continuous process of gentrification that has displaced the neighbourhood's residents. In this framework, artisans have stated that they, as living heritage, are at risk by not being considered for the initiatives of public institutions.

> Human heritage does not have any government support, there is no training, no medical care, it has no funding and, in fact, this notion of wanting to look after it to a point of having complete control, which creates shock because it’s not possible for artisans to survive and support themselves from their creativity (Gestor Cultural documented in the TEAM-Minga Feedback and listening workshop report in El Vado, 21 May 2021)

In Chukidel, during the participatory diagnosis workshop, the members of the council pointed out how globalisation, consumer culture, folklorisation, the loss of meeting and socialisation spaces, as well as not learning about topics such as ancestral medicine, local cuisine, and construction practices could be considered a risk for the life of the community. It was also said that a risk for heritage is the low participation of young people in organisational meetings where they discuss, make decisions, and analyse the problems of the community. In the meetings with

the council, the need to strengthen intergenerational relationships was highlighted, embracing that the youth can bring change, but they are also the one who will maintain and reproduce heritage.

> Lack of intergenerational communication and transmission of knowledge and, therefore, the loss of knowledge, codes, and protocols of the ways of relating to community life, especially for young people. This affects the lack of appreciation of the Saraguro identity, and above all there is talk of the loss of commitment and the weakening of leadership. (TEAM-Minga Intermediate Result II Integrate Report, 7 October 2021)

Although the academic approach highlights an understanding of heritage as an element external to people, in both sites, there is a perception that people are more important, even more than heritage. Vado's testimonies that indicate the threats to people's ways of life and life itself as a risk for heritage are a way of understanding heritage as the people who produce and give meaning to the manifestations of identities.

> Heritage is the people and that has been said a lot here, and heritage people are full of wisdom and knowledge, hence the need to link the care of architectural and material heritage with the care of human value. (Inhabitant of Chukidel, community-based tourism agent and artisan, female, approx. 56 years old, 11 February 2021)

> You see, the identity and heritage of the neighbourhood is the square. The neighbourhood committee is not just the square, it is not just the cross, we are all the residents who live within the El Vado area. (Inhabitant of El Vado, member of the neighbourhood committee, male, approx. 60 years old, 10 September 2022)

The imaginary of conservation and risk as part of the heritage, in addition to coming from academic discourses, also emerges to face uncertainty about the constant changes. The tensions between positions that see change as an opportunity or as a loss serve as pathways to understand how groups have transformed over time.

> Academics have pushed this reflection on heritage quite a bit, like your project is doing. But I haven't seen that motivation before. It has a lot to do with the social changes that are taking place in Saraguro on the issues of identity, the loss of language, how migration affects the changes in the forms of construction, the use of other materials, or house design. I believe that this is a moment of transition where people look for things to hold on to that strengthen our identity. For example, Lagunas is no longer totally rural, there are already quite a few urban dynamics that generate a lot of uncertainty, which is why people need to hold onto something to strengthen ourselves. (Inhabitant of Chukidel, academic, male, approx. 45 years old, 27 November 2023)

The previous testimony of a resident of Chukidel precisely expresses the conditions in which the perception of heritage at risk and the need for its conservation arise. First, he points out academics' role in promoting community discussion about heritage. Second, he refers precisely to the economic changes and the migration that produce a response from people seeking to reinforce their identity references.

The participants in the workshops in Chukidel and El Vado were mainly people over 40 years of age, so there could be a bias due to the age gap.

> As I have been saying, priorities have changed, for young people it is important to travel and study, so the issue of *mingas* has declined. Perhaps that is because no space has been given for new proposals, so the management methodology must vary. (Inhabitant of Chukidel, audiovisual producer, male, approx. 30 years old, 19 March 2021)

Indeed, the new generations have other priorities, such as education, which forces them to leave the community. This testimony indicates that community management spaces are not open to new proposals from young people, emphasising that expanding the current forms of management is necessary to allow for flexibility. A relevant experience of this ethnographic process occurred when accompanying and observing the Taller Saraguro Collective, made up of students and professionals of architecture and planning experts. They negotiated with the *Cabildo* to be included and participate in the diagnosis and design of the Community Plan, but some members of the council questioned the intentions and the way of approaching the community authorities by the young people of the Collective, arguing that they do not seek to preserve the traditions and that their true motivations are academic rather than community based. These questions show the lack of accessibility for the participation of new people despite their knowledge. The need for intergenerational dialogue on issues of identity and heritage is evident.

> The new generation, those now in their 30s, I think are the ones who generate this transition and who claim to be aware of a collective identity, but they also become aware of the importance of a personal identity. My mother had her own, but people are just becoming aware that there is more, with globalisation, for personal identity. I decide who to be, I make my own decisions, I don't have to wait for the community, I don't have to wait from my grandparents because I am capable, and I have the right to make decisions for myself. (Inhabitant of Chukidel, audiovisual producer, male, approx. 30 years old, 19 March 2021)

Tradition and Popular Culture

> The idea of tradition brings us to the past, but also to a living present (Arévalo, 2004, p. 926).

Tradition can be understood as the set of practices and knowledge that each generation passes onto the next. This meaning has undergone various transformations. If tradition is the collective inheritance, it is also due to its renewal in the present (Arévalo, 2004). Tradition is a recurring term within the understanding of heritage, related with the idea that heritage as tradition is something deliberately kept unchanged (Hobsbawm, 1992). In El Vado, Chukidel, and within the TEAM-Minga project, people mostly take for granted tradition as a source of heritage elements and typical identity markers inherited from the past. For instance, the TEAM-Minga project focused on searching for traditional Andean organisational principles in the case studies. Likewise, the people from the study sites explained that one way to explain heritage is by referring to the traditional spirit of the place or the elements that characterise it.

> Since I can remember, and also my mum who was born around the corner from here, on Presidente Córdova street, as well as my husband's family, we've all been born and continued to live here. The older residents have told us about the traditions, what used to be here, and having that feeling about El Vado is something deep because we

> all know each other. (Inhabitant of El Vado, member of the neighbourhood committee, female, approx. 70 years old, 5 September 2022)

> From my point of view, there is a type of traditional cultural collective, one could say, because the neighbourhood is so traditional it has only focused on that. (Inhabitant of El Vado, visual artist and graffiti gallery owner, male, approx. 30 years old, 29 November 2022)

The imaginaries of tradition and of popular culture seem to be two almost synonymous terms that equally refer to the legacies and collective memory that are part of the identity of a group, those elements that allow them to identify themselves. For example, in Chukidel they have their traditional clothing and celebrate festivities like Christmas, and in El Vado, they have the *Fiesta de la Cruz* (The celebration of the Cross) and the handcrafts. Popular culture is associated with rural areas, where traditions have not been as affected by changes, contrary to what tends to happen in urban areas. This perception is linked to the idea of the culture of the working-class, the masses, in the sense of class or stratification. Therefore, popular culture implies that it is accessible to the entire population as opposed to elitist culture (González, 2006). In the TEAM-Minga project activities in both study sites, one of the cardinal expressions associated with the traditional or popular aspects is the religious and spiritual celebrations, which are identified as heritage.

The notions of traditional or typical are present in the descriptions of Vado and Chukidel, whether from the travel agencies or the municipalities, and the same descriptions of the TEAM-Minga project and how it sees itself. The traditional and the typical refer to a sense of what is authentic and what is unique, turning into a brand of how a place or a human group is presented. For instance, in Chukidel, as we have seen in previous examples, it refers to the music or typical clothing of the Saraguro people. In El Vado, it talks about traditions or traditional crafts. The imaginary of the typical or the traditional is strongly linked to producing otherness as a source of what has not been permeated by modernity, and enforcing how otherness should be seen and experienced (Forero & Hong, 2012).

Religiosity and Spirituality

People in both Chukidel and El Vado identify that popular culture and tradition elements are strongly linked to spirituality, religion, and celebration. Essential examples of the study sites in El Vado are *La Fiesta de la Cruz* and *El Pase del Niño Viajero*, while in Chukidel we find celebrations of Catholic origin, like Christmas, as well as of Andean origin like the *Raymis* or the *Mama Supalata*. All these elements compose a legacy that has transcended and has been reinvented by each generation.

> We have always tried to maintain everything that is traditional. For the last twenty or thirty years that we have been a neighbourhood committee, we have tried to rescue and maintain the traditions that were had here. The intangible matters such as *El Pase del Niño Viajero*, the Midnight Mass, the twenty-fourth and the twenty-fifth, we also do the *novena*[42], the Festival of the Cross, which has always been a three-day

[42] The novena is the meeting to pray the nine days before Christmas.

> celebration. (Inhabitant of El Vado, member of the neighbourhood committee, female, approx. 70 years old, 5 September 2022)

Religiosity and spirituality are part of the cultural matrices that make sense of the world and display a social order. Andean spirituality conceives time in a cyclical manner, the *Raymis* represent these continuous cycles linked to agricultural calendars, aspects of life, formation, and social organisation. Besides, the testimonies in Chukidel mention that part of what is understood as heritage is linked to Andean spirituality, where nature plays an active role as an agent with whom people dialogue and connect to the cosmos.

> The *Raymis* are related to the cosmos. They are a cultural heritage and many other things for us, they carry a history. Other examples of heritage are our sacred places, the waterfalls, the ceremonial sites where rituals are celebrated, and the caves which have a legend, the Ginsicata caves, which they call the Bath of the Inca. Those are the issues for us regarding cultural heritage. What more could we say...? (Inhabitant of Chukidel, psychologist and educator, male, approx. 60 years old, February 2020)

The importance of sacred places as part of spirituality and religiosity makes people identify these as heritage elements. For instance, the inhabitants of El Vado all agree that the cross is an identitarian reference and thereby a heritage. For example, in Chukidel, people also mentioned that the *Ushno* is a heritage. Both the *Ushno* and La Cruz del Vado are places that symbolise spaces of religious or spiritual rituals.



Figure 60 The celebration of the Cross in El Vado (Fundación Municipal Turismo para Cuenca, 2023)

> Important ceremonies such as the *Inti Raymi*, weddings and baptisms are currently held here (referring to *Ushno*). Young people call it the stone of love, since a few weddings have been celebrated here in recent years. (Inhabitant of Chukidel, architect, maestro, female, approx. 40 years old, January 2020)



Figure 61 The colourful weddings that recover the ancestral traditions in Ushno, Chukidel (Zibell, 2015).

This couple was the first to officially have their wedding at the *Ushno* of Chukidel. It is unofficially known that other couples did so as well, but there are no records of it. In 2016, I participated in a *Warachicuy* (baptism) ceremony for a 7-year-old child. They asked me to be Yawri's godmother. In disbelief I accepted because for me it was the first time, I was going to participate in an event like this. Before I had witnessed very intimate medical ceremonies, only amongst my family, now it was something public. The experience was rewarding, a very participatory ceremony, where, unlike the church, the family and companions actively participated in the moment. Everyone offers their best wishes, their advice and shares the happiness over the new stage the child has entered. At that moment, I learned that there are several stages for a person's growth, which is why years 3-7-14 and 21 are celebrated very energetically. Above all, the person is accompanied to take the next step. Everyone would always start by saying "may God bless you and may the Pachamama be with you" (Inhabitant of Chukidel, architect, educator, female, approx. 40 years old, January 2020).



Figure 63 Warachikuy (Parra, 2016).



Figure 62 In May every neighbourhood and community of Azuay, the priostes (religious sponsors) and devotees of each of the crosses hold the Fiesta de las Cruces. This celebration contains religious, cultural, social, and symbolic elements. (INPC Ecuador, 2017)

> The ladies of the neighbourhood (committee) organise the parties and promote this type of gatherings. Over the years they have been in charge of organising the festival of the cross. I think that is what keeps us together the most in the neighbourhood and, furthermore, it is what our ancestors have taught us. On a personal level, my grandfather is the one who has instilled that a lot in the family because for a long time he took charge of the festivities and always brought us along to help him organise the masses, the neighbourhood, and also to decorate the cross during the festivities. Inhabitant of El Vado, member of the neighbourhood committee and undergraduate student, male, approx. 27 years old, 10 September 2022)

The previous testimony explains how religious festivities are promoted by the older women of the neighbourhood committee who have greater religious devotion. The topic of Andean festivities in Saraguro has been well studied; it has shown how the social organisation, the distribution of work, and the resources for the Andean festivities and the celebrations related to spirituality combine different dimensions of collective life. The religious and spiritual practices that are part of popular culture in the Andes are spaces that allow organisation and gathering beyond religious identification. In both Chukidel and El Vado, religious festivities switch on social fabric, cohesion around the organisation, and encounters needed for spiritual and religious celebrations. The gathering around spirituality and religions created important memories, part of what people understand as heritage and their experience inhabiting El Vado or Chukidel.

Heritage as Tourism and Subsistence Resource

Imaginaries are highly mobile and constantly traveling (Salazar, 2012b; Strauss, 2006); in particular, tourist dynamics promote mobility and the creation of heritage imaginaries. The encounters and negotiations that take place within the tourism field are shaped by power dynamics, such as the economic, racial, gender, and human mobility gaps. Therefore, heritage is built and displayed in response to the demands of tourists and local needs (Salazar, 2012a). The heritage meaning-making in places like El Vado and Chukidel is deeply linked to the presence of touristic interests. Also, as mentioned in the introduction, tourism is an economic dynamic that articulates official heritage and imaginaries. In this way, heritage is understood in terms of how it contributes to an economy of cultural and leisure services typical of tourism (Prieto & Varea, 2011).

The fieldwork confirmed that tourism strongly influences how people know and understand heritage. The persons in the study sites expressed that heritage is a term that is part of the tourism lexicon; as has been shown in previous testimonies, heritage seems to be linked to objects of tourist interest. In both sites, heritage appears as an essential slogan to promote tourism, mainly through the campaigns of the Ministry of Tourism, the INPC, and tourist agencies. Here, the imaginaries of traditional and popular culture are a way to promote and deploy local communities, exalting their attractiveness based on an otherness that is traditional, turning festivities, spirituality, and religiosity into a colourful and marketable postcard. In this way, the meaning of cultural heritage in people's experiences is associated with the economic activities or forms of subsistence generated by the tourist demand. The following testimonies of people from Vado and Chukidel show how heritage is seen as a resource for tourism.

> Heritage, as such, would give us a certain level of presence, as people, right? So, it would promote tourism in some way, and of course people want to admire the old. (Chukidel inhabitant, retired anthropologist, male, approx. 67 years old, 31 July 2022)

> *Mingas* are heritage, like the *minga* for the Community House. Not just the house, but the experience (*vivencia*) itself. Well, I always think about it from the point of view of tourism, so that people come over and for our subsistence. (Inhabitant of Chukidel, agriculture, community-based tourism agent, female, approx. 56 years old, 6 March 2021)

> We want tourism because of the tremendous potential: imagine the part up here full of bars and restaurants. In a meeting, we discussed enhancing the artisan workshops that are in El Vado, such as the ladies that sell *polleras*[43], the guitars artisans, the hats, and the tin shop. That is, to put in this entire sector something for tourists to come and sit there: a bar, a restaurant, a cafe. (Inhabitant of El Vado, goldsmith craftsman, male, approx. 56 years old, 14 October 2020)

> Well, cultural heritage is the best thing for us. I take photos of the foreigners who come many times, and I applaud them and let them keep coming because that is a way to show our traditions, our things. (Inhabitant of El Vado, retired, female, approx. 68 years old, 5 August 2022).

The previous quotes show how the inhabitants of Chukidel and El Vado associate heritage with the possibility of income through selling services and crafts to tourists, an activity considered beneficial for the local economy. One of the previous quotations shows how the perception of heritage in El Vado is based on its economic and touristic benefits, mainly for the artisans and business owners. While agreeing that heritage is important as a tourist attraction, the resident neighbours seek more selective tourism that does not disrupt the residential environment that the neighbours' committee promotes and, above all, tourism that improves the neighbourhood's security. This last idea is always associated with phenotypical stereotypes of who is considered good tourists, foreigners or insecurity (Molina et al., 2023).

> The restoration of heritage houses such as the Casa de la Lira and the Márquez house has also helped the neighbourhood to be a more peaceful area (...) for years we have been looking to minimise the presence of certain persons that, although there is no way to eliminate them, to reduce the presence of negative aspects within the neighbourhood. (Inhabitant of El Vado, member of the neighbourhood committee, male, approx. 54 years old, 10 September 2022)

Private and public agencies and academia promote this notion of heritage as a commercial resource. In Chukidel, community-based tourism has been vigorously promoted to tourist agencies and residents who see this as an opportunity to improve their incomes. As other researchers have shown (Criollo et al., 2009; Del Campo Tejedor, 2019; Hill, 2018; Mújica, 2014) community-based tourism initiatives have been an essential result of development cooperation programs focused on training local people in what community-based tourism consists of. The label of community-based tourism does not imply that it is linked to community management or economy, but the fact that it is conducted as a family initiative within the indigenous communities of Saraguro (Del Campo Tejedor, 2019). The following

[43] Skirt made of thick, wide, loose and gathered fabric, worn by peasant women in the Andes.

testimonies are a clear example of how Chukidel's way of imagining heritage is based on a tourist projection within community-based tourism projects.

> Well, during that time when we were in a community-based tourism network, we had workshops about heritage where we tried to understand what it was about. We understand that our ways of life, the ***vivencias***, are heritage, life, the *minga* that is heritage to me. We haven't just declared something as heritage, we have also declared the energy within those spaces and the community as heritage. (Inhabitant of Chukidel, agriculture, Community-based tourism agent, female, approx. 56 years old, 6 March 2021)

> Some examples of heritage are the touristic sites of the Baths of the Inca, what we call the *Ushno*, that have also been a tourist and ancestral destination of our forefathers, also the Pulla Lake (…), I don't know, but I have been told that they're very important places that get a lot of tourists' attention. (Inhabitant of Chukidel, retired educator, and ex-capak, female, approx. 63 years old, 6 May 2021)

The growing demand for ethnic tourism, which actively seeks an ethnically exotic and authentic form, has also influenced traditional understandings of the Saraguro identity in both locals and foreigners (Ahumada, 2017). In this way, the first quote, which is from a person who is part of the community-based tourism networks, shows they understand their ways of life as heritage is a profitable resource within touristic dynamics. The two testimonies also express that the elements and places identified as heritage coincide with being tourist attractions and also sacred and ceremonial places: 'Heritage are the touristic sites of the Baths of the Inca, what we call the Ushno, that have also been a tourist and ancestral destination of our forefathers, also the Pulla Lake'. In this way, in Saraguro, tourism practitioners and local promoters create a scene where heritage appears as a label that strengthens the authenticity and veracity of traditional expressions in the Saraguro communities.

> Heritage will always be aligned with tourism, I believe. We will always think about heritage as something that people will come to see then say, 'Look how the Saraguro man was 100 years ago' (Inhabitant of Chukidel, painter, male, approx. 67 years old, February 2020)

> Yes, for example, all this about the magical towns is due to the projects that induce things that are not real or that are artificial. People come here and then they put together your ceremony, but balancing on a line between what is spontaneous and what they do to sell. This distorts the ceremonies, and we must see how far you can do this type of tourism without distorting the culture. (Inhabitant of Chukidel, academic, male, approx. 45 years old, 27 November 2023)

Indigenous populations' participation in cultural heritage debate and tourism was initially established under a subordinate or conditioned inclusion that implies a racialised dimension (Ahumada, 2017; Mújica, 2014). Under these conditions, as the previous testimonies express, there is a theatralisation of the ancestral or authentic, which is sustained over time by programs such as the Indigenous Cultural Mission to the United States in 1949 (Prieto & Varea, 2011) and nowadays with national programs such as the Magical Towns designation.

Tourism always implies opportunity and risk. Although it can attract resources, it can also negatively affect the inhabitants, how they see themselves, how they continue reproducing tradition, and their identity within the tension between the authenticity demanded by tourists

and the need to adapt, change, and re-interpret heritage. In Ecuador's continued economic instability, heritage and tourism are shown as ways to attract income for local inhabitants and as financial activity that is easily compatible with other economies such as agriculture, crafts, transportation, etc.

Heritage meaning-making within tourist dynamics, as shown by the testimonies, on the one hand, implies how the understandings of heritage are crossed by economic interest and the roles that configure tourist demand, whether the place labelled as heritage becomes an object capitalizable for tourism, or how locals use labels like heritage, community-based tourism, and colonial to capture tourist flows (Hayes, 2020). On the other hand, regarding the experiences of El Vado and Chukidel, it is essential to note that although the comprehensions of heritage within tourism are similar in terms of economic interests, the representations that unfold of 'tourism imaginaries often shrewdly exaggerate the power of difference while neglecting and obfuscating the power of commonality' (Salazar, 2012b, p. 878) thus, it seems that El Vado's heritage in tourist narratives is characterised by the French and Republican architectural landscape and the colonial origin of the neighbourhood, distancing it from the representations of Saraguro as an indigenous rural community. In this line, researchers such as Kingman & Goetschel (2005) have clearly warned that even as touristification and heritagisation claim vindication for indigenous populations, they often end up reproducing racialised and colonial stereotypes of the rural indigenous versus the urban mestizo, as well as the ancestral indigenous versus the modern mestizo.

Heritage as an Expression of Identity

> All of those creations that are characteristic of a group of people must be heritage. (Inhabitant of Chukidel, politician and social communicator, female, approx. 30 years old, 29 July 2021)

The dialogues established with persons in Chukidel and El Vado showed that understanding heritage is directly linked to the notion of identity, sometimes both words are even used as synonyms. During the fieldwork, the people in the study sites expressed that identity is a shared feeling that allows them to develop a sense of belonging and see themselves as part of a group. Identity satisfies an emotional and cognitive need to build their place in the world and within the social fabric. Identity is built from a personal and collective life history and is based on references that allow people to recognise themselves within a community. The authorised heritage discourse tends to select identity markers, listing and designating them as objects of heritage interest. In this way, heritage is part of how a collective is framed, presenting parameters and characteristic elements that give a homogenised identity to a group. Therefore, cultural heritage can include and exclude, simultaneously destroying and strengthening new identities outside the status quo (Smith, 2011). However, identity is also a construct that arises from people's agency as a reflexive practice of recognising oneself within a group history and, at the same time, defining personal self-determination. The inhabitants of Chukidel consider that identity must be expressed explicitly in its different manifestations: manners, customs, clothing, language, etc., and, above all, as a way of life.

> Maybe not from the side of heritage, but we have discussed it more from the side of identity. Somehow, the idea of heritage is understood as a matter of the past, that is historical, that is just there. I believe that heritage is understood as something that was part of identity at some point and that we now must take care of it, so it doesn't disappear. (Inhabitant of Chukidel, anthropologist, male, approx. 67 years old, 31 July 2021)

> Being Saraguro is the heritage. The identity, the traditions, the customs, the protocols (…) I think that is heritage (Inhabitant of Chukidel, architect, maestro, female, approx. 40 years old, 17 February 2021)

In El Vado and Chukidel, people perceive heritage as a very abstract and uncommon term. To better understand this term, people in the study sites associate heritage directly with the broader sense of identity and not necessarily as the most important identity marker. In this way, people´s heritage meaning-making is an expression of what they understand to be their identity or what they identify with. For instance, as mentioned in the previous statements, heritage is recognised as a part of the identity that has been inherited and must be preserved, and in the second quote, heritage is identified as the expressions of identity in clothing, customs, and identity itself is identified as a heritage.

People in El Vado agree that the neighbourhood's identity comes mainly from its origin as one of the colonial city's first neighbours and, to this day, its relationship with rurality. Currently, the identity of El Vado is used by contemporary artists and cultural managers as a referent. Despite the distant standpoints between the neighbourhood committee and the cultural managers, they agreed to identify the same elements as heritage. The conflict resides in the meaning that is attributed to each component and, therefore, in the different ways of identifying and interpreting this heritage as an identity expression of the neighbourhood. Thus, the imaginary of heritage as part of identity involves disputes over heritage objects' meanings. For example, the uses of heritage places such as the Plaza de la Cruz del Vado, whether it is a space where *La Fiesta de la Cruz, La Pasada del Divino Diablito, Inti Raym*i or the music festivals are celebrated, they all use this space as an iconic heritage site of the city to redefine and functionalise it with religious, artistic, indigenous, and touristic reasons respectively.

Concluding Remarks

In this chapter, I focus on answering the question: Which understandings of the concept of heritage (imaginaries of heritage) are disclosed by the actors involved in the TEAM-Minga project? To do so, I analyse the field data using imaginaries as an analytical lens to unfold binary distinctions, the creation of otherness, and how people use heritage, taking for granted mainstream ideas and to imagine themselves and others through heritage. Here, I seek to shed light on the understandings and notions that each actor uses to talk about heritage in the context of the TEAM-Minga Project. This chapter addressed, above all, the official understandings of heritage that are configured from how people know the term through the dissemination of authorised discourses and how these are reproduced and assumed in people's imaginaries.

Imaginaries of cultural heritage also involve making sense of the world, the relationships with the past, and the ways of identifying oneself in line with Western and national narratives. Furthermore, the official discourses of heritage, primarily grounded in Western thought, imply

an understanding of heritage based on historical linearity and in the continuous production of otherness as antagonistic to the figure of moral, cultural, knowledge, temporal, or civilisational authority (Smith et al., 2024). Hence, as shown in the testimonies, self-identification is subject to fitting in with the traditional references of each group. The authority and power of these heritage concept are deeply rooted in common sense and its association with authority figures such as the State and international organisations. The institutionalised and constituted condition of official imaginaries allows the continuity of a given social order by shaping the roles, references, identities, and memories with which we imagine ourselves, others, and the environment. Therefore, change and flexibility are perceived as risks for historical legacies and risks for a heritage that is shown as a consolidated object or element that, when changing, threatens, above all, that social disposition and its identities.

While this chapter shows different strands of "official" heritage interpretations, heritage meaning-making implies that these understandings are interconnected. These are not isolated meanings; instead, they all comprise part of the same authorised discourse of heritage and its historical origin in the West. This official heritage imaginary have been instrumentalised and operates through various meanings, allowing it to be articulated with different dimensions of collective life.

In this chapter, I identify two fundamental understandings that underlie the rest of the imaginaries. The first is heritage as a distant and designated notion, which establishes a practical knowledge of heritage based on people's experience in the study sites that arises from a concrete power relationship between those who designate and those who assume the notion of heritage. For instance, power actors (institutions, organisations, businesses, media) have an infrastructure of official channels through which people know and become familiar with the idea of heritage. They have the power to designate and say what heritage is as a notion and as an object resulting in tension, interpellation, negotiation, and rejection.

The second essential understanding is heritage as an object-oriented experience that reifies heritage, thus allowing a relationship with heritage fixed to its material existence and 'alien' to the human body and experience. People in the study sites explained heritage as an object that must be managed as an external, concrete, singularised, and classifiable element, as they have been seen or heard from public authorities and administrators in charge of heritage goods. For instance, this results in imaginaries of heritage as a classification and normativity, best exemplified in public policies. Also, heritage as an object-oriented experience is articulated with a linear reading of history, relegating the meaning and valuation of heritage to the extent of its condition of antiquity about the past and the ancestor's legacy, which ends up materialising relationships of possession, legacy, and inheritance of heritage objects. These inheritances must be regulated to guarantee the continuity of heritage conservation as a static object, either tangible or intangible, representing the almost petrified roots of the cultures, reconnecting with the imaginaries of heritages as a normativity.

The imaginary of tradition feeds heritage as the instituted past, what is inherited, and what must be preserved; without tradition, identity would fade. An example of this imaginary of tradition is religion. Religion as a traditional dimension is not questioned and reproduces a series of practices and principles consolidated as a heritage of each population's experiences. So, people,

in their experience, understand heritage as an object from the past and are therefore vulnerable to change, developing imaginaries of the conservation and endangerment of heritage. The comprehension of heritage conservation within the Western meaning-making system based on opposites and dichotomies characterises change and difference as threats to what is instituted and places heritage as an object that demands protection from coming changes to maintain the instituted tradition. Furthermore, changes represent a threat to the order where the elites benefit from official heritage imaginaries, defining specific roles of who can participate and how they may do so in the heritage field and the political and ideological construction of its meanings, as is in tourism dynamics.

It should be noted that, despite their different standpoints, in Chukidel and El Vado the general or common sense that settles heritage understandings is not critical of the hegemonic view of heritage (Molina et al., 2023). Along these lines, people assume official imaginaries of heritage as an economic resource or as part of multicultural discourses that, although they make visible historically excluded populations such as indigenous people, they do so under a scheme run by stereotypes. The fieldwork shows that heritage meaning-making implies all the interactions at play in the study sites. On the one hand, people articulated the meaning of heritage with their experiences within tourism, security, identity, normativity, and their own projections of what they identify and what they mean as heritage. On the other hand, the meaning of heritage is permanently negotiated within the tensions that arise from the different readings and claims over the history and traditions of the same locality as heritage.

For instance, in both Chukidel and El Vado, people tend to agree on the heritage elements. In the case of Vado, they are more linked to the imaginaries that the WHS designation has deployed, the architecture and location of the neighbourhood, the crafts, and the religious traditions. In Chukidel, people, above all, have pointed out the practices, traditional or distinctive clothing, and customs as objects of heritage. However, the meaning-making of heritage does not lie solely in identity iconic elements. Heritage understandings precisely depend on the meanings each actor associates with those elements, the role heritage plays in its personal and collective history, and what feeling heritage objects evoke and represent to people. Here, the disputes and conflicts about the meaning of heritage become evident, as well as how people interpret them from their differences. For example, in how the indigenous populations of Chukidel interpret colonial architecture as conquerors' heritage or how cultural managers in El Vado use Catholic traditions as a source of creativity. In this context, the TEAM-Minga project also becomes a channel for disseminating heritage imaginaries from academia. The interaction between the researchers and the people at the study sites already supposes a context mediated by academic motivations. This is evident in how the researchers and local actors dialogue about heritage based on its classification and normative function. Furthermore, the researchers in the fieldwork and information collection prioritised addressing heritage as objects and elements on which the label of heritage falls rather than addressing the conflicts between the various meanings that heritage may represent.

Finally, this chapter also brings attention to the fact that, despite understanding heritage as an object-oriented experience, heritage meaning-making is an inherently complex experience that

goes beyond the comprehension of heritage as external objects from people's corporal and emotional experiences. As an example, the inhabitants of El Vado agreed that La Plaza de la Cruz or La Condamine Street are heritage referents. Still, the dispute over these heritage objects lies in how people use and interact with them. The field data shows that in El Vado the meanings of heritage are being disputed in ideological and religious terms for the interpretation of the neighbourhood's Catholic tradition, and tensions arise around the use of the space as a form of scenario that demands new ways of identifying with a and without the traditional. In the case of Chukidel, people pointed out that many of the elements they identify as heritage are, first their practices and ways of life and, second, the aesthetics and personal presentation that are materialised in the clothing and hairstyle. In this case, the meanings of heritage are experienced directly on people's bodies. The imaginaries of heritage connected to identity have different forms of agency linked to how people live and embody the imaginaries. In the case of Chukidel, imaginaries of heritage are directly connected to identity as a way of belonging to the group and to their political and social experiences due to their concrete historical demands.

The objective of this chapter was to show how scrutinising official imaginaries of heritage enhances a situated and problematised understanding of the web of meanings that consolidate imaginaries of heritage from different dimensions of social life. Furthermore, this analysis allows us to, in the first place, question how we (as researchers) use and establish long-standing asymmetric relations based on given imaginaries and, lastly, strengthen reflexivity to establish a dialogue and make visible other imaginaries that go beyond hegemonic meaning systems. In the following chapter, I explore the alter-native imaginaries of heritage that the researchers of the TEAM-Minga project and the people in the study sites have deployed. Alter-native imaginaries are understandings that enable addressing heritage outside of authorised discourses. People's alter-native imaginaries, in contrast with official imaginaries, address the complexity of the conflicts and contradictions of heritage meanings that the diverse actors of Chukidel, El Vado, and the TEAM-Minga project display. Likewise, alter-native imaginaries are ways of understanding heritage from other cultural matrices, meaning-making heritage as interwoven, and creative practices of identity and belonging.

9. Alter-native Heritage Imaginaries

This chapter includes part of the analyses published in the article: Imaginaries of heritage: An ethnographic approach to the cultural heritage of Saraguro (Ecuador) (Astudillo, 2022). Based on ethnographic fieldwork conducted in Chukidel, Saraguro, the article reflects on the *vivencias* (life experiences) and resistance as notions and practices deployed within the identification process of Saraguro indigenous inhabitants.

The previous chapters have demonstrated that official heritage imaginaries and their uses by public administrators, NGOs, and tourism trends have been more visible and positioned than popular and local understandings. This disparity has created significant gaps in the understanding of heritage, particularly in terms of who, how, and from where decisions are made about what heritage means, its benefits, and its management. This contrast underscores the need to consider diverse experiences and standpoints that question the dominance of Western-originated notions of heritage and explore how creative and non-traditional identification processes can subvert heritage by embracing the changes that come with other historical readings and non-categorical representations.

In the following chapter, I delve into the alter-native imaginaries. The alter-native, as its etymological meaning indicates, refers to Other origins. In contrast to the Western origin of heritage notion, I am referring to the alter-native imaginaries of heritage grounded in the Andean experiences and cultural matrices. By challenging the dominant discourses of heritage, these imaginaries open up new possibilities for understanding and reinterpreting heritage. Similarly, I examine the alter-native in the general sense of the Other, what is outside the conventional, and what is not affiliated to or does not fit within the authorized heritage discourses.

Castoriadis (1994) addresses otherness and creativity in the concept of Radical Imaginaries. These imaginaries are on the border of what is authorized, interpellating the given order and power relations. In line with radical imaginaries, alter-native heritage imaginaries are generated from people's social agency. It means that people's positioning in the face of dominant trends and within asymmetrical power relations is directly linked to self-representation and identification processes, following the contributions of Gaonkar (2002) and Castoriadis (1994). This chapter seeks to delve into fieldwork examples that evidence imaginaries' transformative and creative capacity contesting what has been officially instituted, which encourages the configuration of new meanings and practices of heritage.

This chapter addresses three sections based on the information collected in situ. First, I addressed the alter-native imaginaries that arise from the changing dynamics of collectives and people's lives. In other words, the continuous transformations of meanings and practices are a product of social, political, and cultural processes. In this line, the *Other* refers to the people's identifications, understandings, and mindsets that interact with tradition as a source of creativity and transgression, changing imaginaries that were taken for granted. Second, I analyse the alter-native imaginaries arising from the Andean Ontology. In the fieldwork in Chukidel, the indigenous identification and the intersection with Andean ontologies are manifested explicitly in what people understand about heritage in relation to daily practices

such as *La Chakra* and *La Minga* as *vivencias*. The third section reflects on the TEAM-Minga project research process and the learnings, changes, and new ways of understanding heritage that were incorporated based on the researchers' interactions and experiences in the study sites.

Creativity and Transformations in Cultural Heritage Continuity

Within the identification process, people are constantly not only reproducing the meanings of heritage but also creating new meanings and representations that correspond to the contexts and demands of the circumstances. Change, mutability, and creation are part of the social production of heritage and its dynamic continuity. The changes and creation of heritage imaginaries are the result, on many occasions, of the disruption of what is established or the tension between asymmetrical power relations between different generations, genders, socioeconomic or ethnic groups. Thus, the concept of heritage, but moreover, the ways to experience heritage, are social constructs that move between social frames and build in-between spaces to develop new representations, self-determination, and belonging strategies that are not necessarily harmonious (Hall, 2001; Silva, 2010).

In the fieldwork in Chukidel and El Vado, people shared experiences and explained heritage imaginaries that emerge from creation processes as part of a reflexive continuity of traditions and their social positionalities. In addition, self-representations are reinterpreted in the face of new ways of identification. Following, I analyse two examples to explain this: the celebration of *Inti Raymi* in Chukidel and *La Pasada del Divino Diablito* (Divine Little Devil Parade) of the *El Prohibido* Cultural Centre in El Vado.

1. Inti Raymi in Chukidel, Saraguro: Creation of ancestral traditions and the incorporation of new forms of identification

The Raymis are the four annual celebrations within the Andean agricultural and ritual calendar records during the equinoxes and solstices. They are dedicated mainly to Mother Earth, women as a fertility symbol, the Moon, and the Sun. These ritual celebrations marked the agricultural cycles. The Inti Raymi celebrates the solstice on June 21[44]. In the Andean culture, the *Inti Raymi* honour the Sun as a creator of life for the harvests and ripe fruits (Pacari, 2021); regarding agricultural cycles, it corresponds to the harvest of beans, quinoa, and broad beans planted next to corn. Historians and chroniclers (Vega & Guzmán, 2005) have recorded Raymis as a practice of the Incas' Andean culture, and it spread during the Inca Empire before the Spanish Conquest. Although historically, local populations of Ecuador resisted the Inca occupation, such as the Cañaris and the Paltas establishing an enmity that facilitated the Spanish conquest and the Saraguros as a population forced into relocation as part of the Incas´occupation strategies, local populations currently assume the Inti Raimy as an Andean practice inherited from a conquest process. During the Spanish colonial period until the end of the 1980s, indigenous celebrated the Inti Raymi anonymously. Also, this celebration was invisibilised or replaced by Catholic celebrations. During the decades of the eighties and nineties in Latin America, the indigenous movements placed identity as a cross-sectional concern in their struggles and demands in the face of globalisation that would cause

[44] Winter solstices in the southern hemisphere

sociocultural homogeneity; as an identitarian strategy, they strongly promoted the recovery of the *Inti Raymi* (Tuaza, 2017). Several Andean populations currently celebrate their versions of the Inti Raymi, sharing the cultural roots of the Incas' legacy despite historically being enemies. In the Saraguro Canton, the *Inti Raymi* is organised and led by the Chukidel community; it takes place from June 1 to 21; it develops as a cultural fest with various cultural and sports activities such as purification baths, the music and dance festival, the Intercommunity Football Cup of the *Inti Raymi*, etc. On the morning of June 21, community leaders perform the *Purina Pacha* ritual, gathering around the *Chakana* symbol in the community square and heading to the urban centre of Saraguro with music and dances. The rest of the people from different communities accompany the authorities led by the *Capak* (community council president) of Chukidel. Once in the urban centre, they take over the central square and make a speech, then they walk through the streets of the urban centre and return to Chukidel for the ceremony of transferring the baton of command, which symbolises the transfer of leadership of the next *Raymi* to a new *Capak.* At lunch, the *Pinzhi Mikuna* ritual is performed, which is how the contributions of each community are shared. In the afternoon, the final of the football championship takes place, and at night, there is music and dancing. Finally, at 12:00 a.m., the *Inti Raymi* celebration closes when the community authorities and anyone who wants to join them go to the river to perform the purification bath.

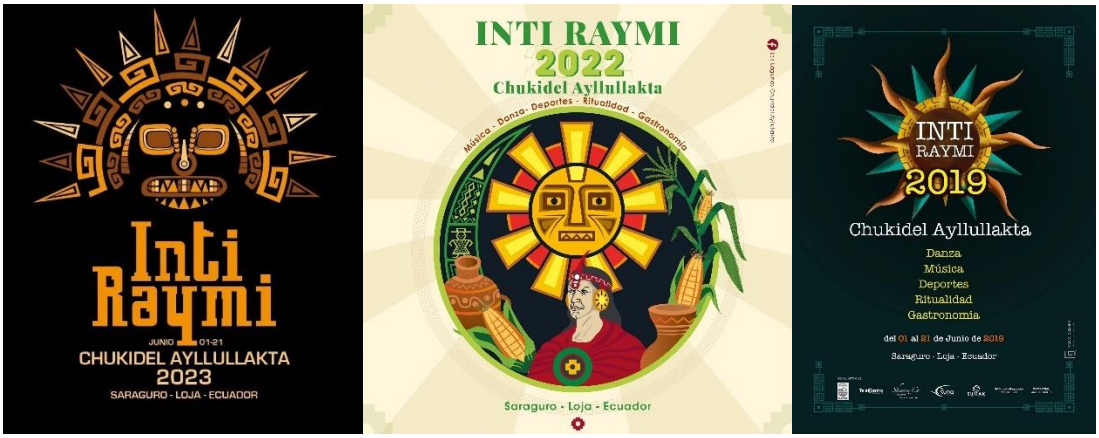

Figure 64 Promotional posters of the Inti Raymi celebration in Chukidel, Saraguro (Las Lagunas Chukidel Ayllullakta, 2019, 2022, 2023)

Currently, the *Inti Raymi* celebration is considered a heritage of the community and the canton. The testimonies and dialogues in the fieldwork show how people feel about the *Inti Raymi* and the *Raymis* in general as part of Saraguro's heritage elements. Within the community there are several points of view on the *Inti Raymi*: some people, particularly the adults who formed the Runa Kawsay group, claim it as an ancestral ritual. The younger generations interact more actively with the other activities of the *Inti Raymi*, such as the soccer championship and the musical and dance fest. There are even positions that have indicated that the *Inti Raymi* is a created tradition, a specific cultural production that emerged as an initiative of a local collective, and that little by little was being accepted by the rest of the community's actors considering the benefits and cohesion that it implies. It has also become a tourist event highly promoted by the Ministry of Tourism and local private tourism agencies.



Figure 65 Ritual del Inti Raymi y traspaso de mando Chukidel (Fabian, 2022)

Despite the different positions, the *Inti Raymi* is a practice that displays alter-native imaginaries of heritage because, during its celebration, ancestral traditions of the indigenous people transcend, are created and are creatively transformed and adapted. This recovery of traditions also corresponds to a process of political and cultural vindication of the Andean peoples. As mentioned previously, alter-native heritage imaginaries are generated by people's social agency when they are positioned in the face of dominant relationships. The story of *Inti Raymi's* recovery in Chukidel begins in the 1980s. In those years, the *Runa Kawsay* youth, cultural, and sports group from Chukidel questioned the authority of the community's priest, and its members proposed new ways to strengthen their Saraguro indigenous identity. From this motivation, *Inti Raymi* was established in Chukidel.

> Before, in the 60s or 70s, the organisation of catechists and the Legion of Mary were strong, they held meetings to pray and all that, then, the youth organised themselves into the Runa Kawsay group. There we began the first revolution in the community, against Catholicism, because Catholicism imposed a spirituality that is foreign to our spirituality. The Runa Kawsay collective's young people painted a mural in the community house. For this reason, the community priest got angry, he said how is it possible that they paint him as the Church dominating the indigenous people, he said that he no longer wanted to come to celebrate mass here and there was a confrontation between the group of people from the catechism who defended the priest, and the young people. At first the elders did not accept the Inti Raymi, we began to recover that Andean spirituality in 86, with the celebration of the Inti Raymi, and later it was accepted and done for all the community. Then, little by little, the celebration of the Raymis gained ground and the elders began to join. (Inhabitant of Chukidel, psychologist and educator, male, approx. 60 years old, February 2020)

In the 80s and 90s in Ecuador, the indigenous movement promoted a critical debate on the official narrative of national history and the role of indigenous people, as well as the fight for self-determination and re-encountering with their indigeneity. The identification process is expressed as resistance to the colony and westernisation. In this context, at the national level, indigenous populations in Otavalo and Cañar began to celebrate the *Inti Raymi* (Pacari, 2021); both populations tenacious resisted the Inca conquest and now claim (invent) their Inca past. The previous testimony stated that young people from Chukidel travelled to Otavalo and Cañar to participate in the celebration, which motivated them to replicate the *Inti Raymi* in their Saraguro communities. The proposal initially caused strong tensions between the conservative

groups of adults, the catechists, and the group of young people and their purpose of recovering their repressed and forgotten celebrations, strengthening their roots, and as a form of identity resistance (Del Campo Tejedor, 2019).

The previous testimony is an example of how people who are now around 60 years old and who were members of the *Runa Kawsay* collective promoted the recovery of the *Inti Raymi*, which today constitutes an unquestionable icon of Saraguro heritage here, the line between heritage and cultural production becomes blurred. This experience demonstrates how searching for other forms of identification, creativity, and interpellation are solid motivations for building and meaning-making the alter-native imaginaries. In the following quote, an inhabitant of Chukidel highlights that it is essential to remember the current origin of *Inti Raymi* in Saraguro from the motivation of young people to question Catholic doctrine and recover indigenous culture. In this way, he points out that embracing that memory of interpellation allows them to feel the *Inti Raymi* as something of their own that arose from the community's internal questioning.

> I think that, first, one must feel the festival as something that is one's own. I must have in my thoughts that an Inti Raymi was created, by a group of young people who, in this case, rejected the doctrine and moved towards the indigenous cultural aspect. So, first, I would have to accept this for me to feel like it is truly our festivity. (Inhabitant of Chukidel, retired educator, and Excapak, female, approx. 63 years old, 6 May 2021)

The recovery or (re)creation of the *Inti Raymi* as a symbol of Saraguro identity is part of a cultural process that dialogues with the memory and critical readings of the past. Hence, the *Inti Raymi* is a reconstruction of the ancestral that does not necessarily have historical precision as we have seen within the history of resistance against the Inca empire. In the creation process, people erect the *Inti Raym*i, integrating various symbols available in their daily experiences and histories, including symbols of the Catholic Church. This process results in syncretisms within the *Inti Raymi* ritualities and symbols intersecting the colonial past and a contemporary motivation to strengthen an indigenous identification. The *Inti Raymi* has also been appropriated at the institutional level. For instance, universities and governmental institutions, such as museums, reproduce *Inti Raymi* ceremonies and festivities. In some way, the *Inti Raymi* has also become an official imaginary when it follows a folkloric model and does not allow the incorporation of new expressions.

The following testimony mentions that the '*raymis* were a product of creation, not inheritance'. This shows how the people are aware of this creation process and the changes it implies, from celebrating only Catholic festivities to appropriation and reinventing indigenous celebrations. As it is part of the recent memory, it is a current legacy, so it has not been inherited from the grandparents or immediate ancestors. The *Inti Raymi* could be understood as a heritage in continuous consolidation, although through it, people seek to establish a sense of belonging to the Andean culture; it is also remembered as a practical experience of creating traditions.

> The raymis were a product of creation, not of inheritance. The generation that is now in its 50s or 60s, that was the generation that revived the Inti Raymi. Before that there were only holy festivals. (Inhabitant of Chukidel, politician and social communicator, female, approx. 30 years old, 29 July 2021)

According to those interviewed, the *Inti Raymi* experience and its meaning respond to the need to strengthen their sense of belonging and their culture. Also, people in Chukidel creatively incorporate other motivations and forms of self-representation within *the Inti Raymi* celebration, enabling diverse generations and interests to identify with this tradition. Hence, the continuity of *Inti Raymi* depends on its continuous creative transformations. An example is that part of the *Inti Raymi* activities are the Intercommunity Soccer Cup and the *Runa* Rock music festival.



Figure 66 Runa Rock (Runa Rock, 2023c)

> The *Inti Raymi* is also an invented tradition, and it has a story of how it came to be here. But, if you ask people about it, many will respond with the ancestral speech. I believe that, for example, Runa Rock is one of the experiences that show the diversity of indigenous identities, which allows these more modern expressions of the indigenous. Young indigenous people also identify with being rockers, or involved in the business world, besides there is a significant impact of the media, especially social media, and the boom of YouTubers in Saraguro. They are different ways of expressing their identities while still being Saraguro. (Inhabitant of Chukidel, academic, male, approx. 45 years old, 30 July 2022)

The *Inti Raymi* is a created tradition that also, as we have seen, omits and reconfigures history, such as exalting the Inca legacies without necessarily acknowledging the process of conquest that they entailed. Another example of the continuous creative transformations of legacies is the Chukidel myths, which are a way to explain the relationship with nature and continue reproducing Andean's worldview. During a workshop in Chukidel, people explained that the myths as a traditional practice about sacred places such as the lake, the mountains, or the *Ushno* have been lost due to the lack of spaces for intergenerational dialogue and the death of *Taitas* and *Mamas* of the community. In this sense, the following testimony mentions the need to create myths, which could be an example of creating heritage and legacies, and how the creation and transformations of traditions are necessary to signify experiences coherently (e.g., myths and celebrations) as current identity referents; this shows that heritage is not necessarily sustained by a historical precession but by its present meanings and uses.

> Faced with the loss of memory, and many of the people who cared for that memory have already passed away, the new generations have the mission of creating myths, because at some point they were also created, it's about being able to redefine these spaces, and that also gives roots to the community. If the people who were working on this do not give it more meaning, perhaps the next generations will be left without sacred places, without myths, without the legend of *cuichi*, and surely there are taitas and mamas who know, but there is no transmission. Because those myths were built in a place and at a time that made sense and now it is surely difficult to find the meaning, but it is up to us to create art and myths, it is a community task, and to find in them that sense of being, of what we're thinking. (Inhabitant of Chukidel, politician and social communicator, female, approx. 30 years old, 29 July 2021)

2. *El Prohibido Cultural Centre's La Pasada del Divino Diablito: Beyond tradition and transgression, reflexive creations of heritage*

El Prohibido Cultural Centre's *La Pasada del Divino Diablito* is a second example that shows how social agency and transformations are articulated as part of the continuity of traditions in El Vado. Like the *Runa Kawsay* youth group in Chukidel, the establishment of *El Prohibido* Cultural Centre in El Vado implied tension and confrontation with the most conservative groups in the neighbourhood. The El Vado neighbourhood committee and the group of Chukidel catechists are mainly older people with a religious identity and conservative positions on cultural heritage. The identity references of El Vado, which have been identified as heritage by the different inhabitants of the place during the fieldwork, such as the *Cruz del Vado* and the handcraft stores, are interpreted in different ways. The positions of cultural managers who have settled in the neighbourhood do not always agree with those of the neighbourhood committee. Instead of understanding it as an oppositional dilemma, the conservative positions of the neighbourhood committee and the AHD have depicted the neighbourhood's heritage as associated with the traditional (both aesthetic and moral conservative) and critical positions of the cultural managers of El Vado as transgressive views. I argue that initiatives such as *La Pasada del Divino Diablito*, beyond a linear dilemma of tradition vs. transgression, are expressions that simultaneously preserve tradition and express transgression. By interpreting them as reflective creations, we can see that they are new ways of representing, experiencing, and comprehending heritage imaginaries that use tradition as a creative resource in a constant meaning-making process.

During the XX century, El Vado was a space where the city's most vulnerable and stigmatised populations were segregated spatially locating there to rural-urban migration, with a strong peasant and indigenous presence due to the proximity to the food market. El Vado was a stigmatised neighbourhood in the city's historic centre, especially during the last two decades of the last century; the population increase promoted overcrowding, so houses and buildings were inhabited by multiple low-income families and then lost commercial value. All of this caused a negative perception of the sector due to the high level of physical deterioration of its buildings, which strengthened the stereotypes of it being a red zone and a highly dangerous place.

After Cuenca´s historic centre was declared a World Heritage Site, the city's urban planning reoriented its line of intervention in the neighbourhood into recovering the facades of the old houses and implementing a new design for the *Plaza de la Cruz* in El Vado. Besides, its proximity to the University of Cuenca is a very attractive factor for implementing economic and cultural initiatives as it is a highly transited route for students. The iconic constructions of Republican and French styles that are part of the architectural façade of El Vado helped the preservation interest of local government institutions and academia. Hence, the location of cultural proposals in the neighbourhood is not random; it corresponds to the neighbourhood's centrality because it was a stereotypical marginal space. Currently, more entrepreneurial cultural proposals have been placed there as part of a long-standing gentrification process since its regeneration.

Starting in 2010, Cuenca municipality promoted a series of interventions for rehabilitating the *Plaza del Vado* framed within the Plan for the Recovery and Improvement of Public Spaces in the Historic Centre of Cuenca (Eljuri, 2020). The inhabitants of El Vado still remember when their neighbourhood was a stigmatised area, and they consider the regeneration as an achievement of their organisation against crime and public alcohol consumption. Likewise, the following quotation shows how regard for the neighbourhood has changed, stating that before, being from El Vado was associated with pejorative and racialised terms such as '*cholo'* or *'longo'.* This testimony confirms how gentrification has implied a process of displacement and social cleansing sustained in the negative perception of rural and indigenous people in the neighbourhood.

> Well, it is something that surprises me, because that is having love for what's ours (...). I have seen people here who wear the neighbourhood jacket with all the pleasure in the world (...). Before, there was that old paradigm that the neighbourhood was one thing (...). They called you a *cholo,* a *longo,* whatever and you felt inferior. (Inhabitant of El Vado, member of the neighbourhood committee, male, approx. 45 years old, 12 July 2020)

This testimony belongs to a member of the neighbourhood committee who highlights the change in the neighbourhood as an achievement, a form of 'love' for El Vado, which allowed the residents to overcome the stigmas and make the neighbours feel proud today. Therefore, it can be deduced that the stigmatisation of the neighbourhood as a red zone puts otherness in a role of inferiority through discrediting attributes (Sempértegui, 2022).

In this context, taking into account the importance of the centrality of the neighbourhood the search to overcome marginal stereotypes by highlighting the traditional value of the neighbourhood*, El Prohibido* Cultural Centre was founded in 1996 on the emblematic De la Condamine street in El Vado. It is a cultural centre and an extreme art gallery, the owner's objective was to support and make visible the artistic production that the conventional and traditional art galleries of the city have marginalised. I will focus on *El Prohibido* Cultural Centre but El Vado has other cultural initiatives, such as graffiti, street art, paintings, antique galleries, and tattoo studios, among others, that have placed the neighbourhood as a referent for alternative artistic production.

> *El Prohibido*, which is a kind of strength for the sector, right? Although, of course, there are people who do not agree with the presence of *El Prohibido* Cultural Centre, but I believe that through *El Prohibido* the presence of the cultural activity began to grow. There is a presence of people who are dedicated, for example, to the visual arts, others to the musical arts, there is also a small studio of young designers who tattoo. (Inhabitant of El Vado, painter and painting gallery owner, male, approx. 63 years old, 9 March 2020)

Along these lines, *the Other* is a reading that subverts perception and is a source of creativity or transgression that generates change in heritage, as it is continually recreated and rethought. The following testimony tells us how, in El Vado, traditional heritage referents and artisanal trades are present, in addition to referents of 'dissident' artistic production, which are also understood as heritage by the groups that align themselves with these new cultural artistic initiatives.

> Sometimes in El Vado when one talks about heritage one talks about the trades, the artisanal, the historical, the blacksmiths and the people who are around the construction of the *chola* costumes. But there is also a whole emerging and dissident scene that was established there, which was a product of the fact that this neighbourhood was abandoned for many years because it was a red zone and with low-cost rents, which made many of the young emerging artists and collectives settle there due to how low the rents were, sociologically that created a current art scene. Those, for me, are like the forms of heritage present in the neighbourhood. (Inhabitant of El Vado, plastic artist, male, approx. 35 years old, 25 February 2021)

According to the testimonies of the artists linked to *El Prohibido* Cultural Centre, the motivation of this space is: 'what we are doing in some spaces, resistance and subversion, that is the capacity, that is the only space you have to transform' (Inhabitant of El Vado, painter, plastic artist, cultural manager, male, approx. 60 years old, 9 August 2022). In this way, *El Prohibido* Cultural Centre has become an identity referent of the neighbourhood, which can be understood as a heritage from below that comes from 'expressions of resistance to dominant discourses' (Robertson, 2016, p. 156)

For cultural managers, the neighbourhood's heritage lies in the diversity of expressions that exist there, which constitutes an opportunity for debate about the meanings of heritage elements that range from the conventional to the dissident or transgressive. The following testimony states that precisely one of the imaginaries in the neighbourhood is the understanding that the different positions coexisting in the same space allows the neighbourhood to be a place of creativity.

> El Vado has different fronts and that is what, for me, makes it rich and there is no monopoly of thought here. El Vado has always been a place of heritage proposals, heritage creations and heritage conservation. El Vado has had everything, for example, in El Vado practically *La Pasada del Niño Viajero* was born and, in El Vado, precisely, *El Prohibido* is promoting *La Pasada del Divino Diablito*, quite the opposite, in quotes, and that is what which is needed like Yang and Ying. So, imagine those heritage creations, and why is that created? Because people, the new generations, the new times we are living in need to express themselves, they cannot be living on a dead corpse. There cannot be one person or a single group dictating what is heritage and what is not heritage. For example, that groups who dictate what heritage does know about the *dark* movements, the cybernetic movement, and the

large amount of heritage that is accumulating there. (Inhabitant of El Vado, painter, plastic artist, cultural manager, male, approx. 60 years old, 9 August 2022)



Figure 67 Pasada Mayor del Divino Diablito (Divino Diablito, 2021)



Figure 68 XIX Extrema Arts Festival 2019 (Ben Laden, 2019)

The *Pasada del Divino Diablito* is one of the main activities the *El Prohibido* Cultural Centre promoted since 2018. The event takes place from November 1 to 3. It brings together a series of activities, as shown in the promotional photograph, within the framework of the celebration of the Day of the Dead to address funerary art and taboo topics. The *Prohibido* Cultural Centre's proposal to imagine heritage in an alter-native way shows an articulation between creation, transgression, and continuity of heritage.

A fundamental difference between the *Inti Raymi* of Saraguro and the *La Pasada del Divino Diablito* in El Vado responds to the origin of these processes. In the case of the Inti Raymi, there is a background of a process of ethnic, political and cultural vindication of the indigenous peoples against the National State and the weight of the hegemonic culture. In the case of El Vado, the *Pasada del Divino Diablito* emerges as an artistic and countercultural proposal that directly challenges the dominant processes of patrimonialization in the city. In Saraguro, the *Inti Raymi* does not question the officially recognised heritage but the cultural hegemony; in El Vado, there is a counter-hegemonic process that directly questions the notion of heritage; it is a process of transgression of heritage and tradition, which is not equally visible in the case of the *Raymis* in Saraguro (*El Divino Diablito*, as a contesting process to the Pase del Niño Viajero, National Cultural Heritage). The *Inti Raymi* does not challenge or question the dominant symbols, in this case, Catholicism, as the *Pasada del Divino Diablito* does. The *Pasada del Divido Diablito* has a contesting and transgressive character, and the *Inty Raymi* has a vindicating intention.

However, I find a similarity between the creation of *Inti Raymi* in Chukidel and *La Pasada del Divido Diablito* in El Vado. Both are initiatives by groups of young artists who challenge conservative positions, seeking new ways to reaffirm their identity. The *Inti Raymi* is motivated by a desire to reunite with indigenous antecedents; it is a tradition that is (re)created from imagining and reinterpreting a past. In the case of El Vado, *El Prohibido* Cultural Centre dialogues with conventional Catholic traditions and symbols, such as the cross, the Day of the Dead, and *El Pase del Niño Viajero*, to reinterpret and transform them into *El Pase del Divino Diablito*. Both proposals are considered to transgress tradition in their corresponding temporality, but both constitute a reinterpretation of the traditional and allow the continuity of these cultural legacies. Both are processes of reflective creation that display new ways of self-identification and imagine heritage intersecting tradition, other identities, cultural matrices, and contemporary experiences of living heritage and identity. Although they are not comparative, they show how the creation and continuity of heritage meaning-making occurs through identity transformation. There are various ways and strategies to build and reproduce heritage and identity references that, over time, present changes and mixtures and are re-created.

Over time, the Inti Raymi ended up being accepted by the rest of the community and managed by the community authorities as an event, not only for themselves but for the canton. *La Pasada del Divino Diablito* is more recent and continues to generate dispute over the use of religious symbolism and the meaning of its components; however, more neighbourhood and city sectors have joined this activity.

> Heritage is built day by day (...). In some way, knowledge is very dynamic, and that knowledge accumulates over time, as it accumulates over time, obviously, heritage incorporates and adds new scenarios (...), because contemporaneity is giving us new elements to see, reinterpret and reinsert new visions into it. Heritage is innovating while keeping its roots to the matrix, because the matrix root will never disappear, right? (Inhabitant of El Vado, painter and painting gallery owner, male, approx. 63 years old, 9 March 2020)

These alter-native imaginaries arise in everyday practices and interactions where creativity questions and challenges the status quo. In this way, the constituent character of imaginaries manifests not as static understandings or manifestations but as an evolving meaning-making process that intersects what is being created with the cultural matrices, in both cases, it first involves positionality against the official local imaginaries and a process of creating traditions where there is a selection of the identitarian elements and their reinterpretation. But it is also necessary to highlight that even though these experiences emerged from a disruptive motivation, they are not exempt from also incorporating official imaginaries such as the utilitarian sense of folklore, tourism, and the participation of government institutions that co-opt these experiences, displacing political positionality foundation and grassroots organisation. Still, both the *Inti Raymi* in Chukidel and the *Pasada del Divino Diablito* continue to be initiatives managed by local actors and spaces for discussion on cultural production, auto-critical assessment of the collectives, and positionality in the face of authorised narratives of the past, the history, and the identity of Saraguro and Cuenca.

Imaginaries of Heritage from Alter-native Andean Ontologies

This section seeks to analyse the alter-native imaginaries of heritage as a knowledge situated in the diverse Andean cultural experiences and cultural matrix. The history, the meaning systems, and the current experiences of the Andes configure a social agency from which the inhabitants become aware of themselves and the rest of the world. The reflections that I seek to develop are in line with Harrison's (2013, 2015, 2018) contributions on the ontological turn in heritage studies to shed light on how different imaginaries and ways to imagine heritage 'enact different realities and, hence, work to assemble different futures have demolished the idea of heritage as singular and unanimous' (Harrison, 2015, p. 24). In this sense, the ontological turn also implies a change in the locus of enunciation, the positionality from where people reflect on heritage from the knowledge and a body that has historically been subjugated and segregated.

> We don't need to be told that we have heritage to appreciate who we are. We appreciate our identity, customs, and identity symbols for being part of our full existence of Runa Kawsay, of the life of the Saraguro, not as an exceptional category of our lives, in other words, as a heritage. (Inhabitant of Chukidel, municipal technician, male, approx. 60 years old, 23 February 2021)

The above quote clearly expresses the difference between the official imaginaries of heritage as something assigned; and an alter-native imaginary as taking a positionality on how to appreciate and understand their identity as an integral part of their life. The interviewee identifies heritage as a designated notion and notes that researchers assume that using the term heritage is a way of appreciating local culture. The interviewee says Saraguros do not need an external agent to tell them that they have a heritage to appreciate their indigenous identity. This testimony expresses a position on the notion of heritage but also the relationships established between researchers and local actors, being a way to deal with the asymmetric relationships established with academics or government officials answering that 'We don't need to be told (how to do or to be)' about heritage or any other issue. Likewise, although the testimony emphasises the capacity for self-determination, following this idea that we do not need to be told who we are and what we have to value ourselves, it still presents a dialogic dynamic in which the external gaze can also change, reaffirms or recognises that claims. Hence, identity revindication does not lie only in how people look at themselves and strengthen their heritage but also in the dialogue and struggle with external views based on asymmetrical relationships that discriminated against indigenous; here, the previous testimony is an action that seeks to reaffirm their auto-determination in the recognition and reaction of the other. This position confirms that official imaginaries are perceived as an imposed understanding of people's ability to appreciate their identity referents, collective memories, and heritage for themselves. People's standpoints towards the notion redefine what we researchers call heritage and demonstrate the importance of changing the focus from value/valuing/appreciating heritage to heritage meaning-making.

It is crucial to contrast testimonies like the previous one with the imaginaries of the TEAM-Minga project to show how dialogues about heritage and meaning-making develop. The TEAM-Minga researchers have deployed imaginaries stating that people sometimes do not

appreciate their heritage because it is precisely part of their daily lives or that one cause of the heritage risks is the population's lack of appreciation. In contrast, the previous testimony points out the opposite by indicating the appreciation of identity and, therefore, heritage for being part of everyday life. However, several people in Chukidel and also in the workshops expressed that the problem of the loss of culture is a significant concern, not necessarily because it is not appreciated but because of the change in economic activities, education and lifestyles. Here, it becomes strategic that researchers recognise diverse ways of understanding, valuing, and signifying the term cultural heritage within the interaction and concrete needs and concerns of the people.

Furthermore, the TEAM-Minga project was challenged to be creative, listen, and answer local actors who are troubled by the imposition of external notions that are distant from their experiences and identification processes. Local actors directly question the imaginaries that base the research on such factors as heritage at risk, lack of capacities and self-valuing, and the research relevance and methodological approaches. As mentioned above, 'We don't need to be told that we have a heritage to appreciate who we are.' The search for respect and recognition is, at the same time, an internal and external struggle for the community: to be respected by others and respect themselves to retain their sense of belonging and identification despite the changes in the contexts. These critics allow us to build genuinely open listening, dialogues, and knowledge production that deepen in other ontologies as critical sources to question and change heritage meaning, production, and management.

From the beginning of the fieldwork in Chukidel, people repeatedly expressed that they understand heritage as part of their identity and, therefore, as a *vivencia* (life experience), that is, as part of their vital events, their ways of living and being. To explain *vivencias* as an alternative way of imagining heritage, I have developed two examples of Andean *vivencias*: the *Chakra* and the *Minga*. People in Chukidel have used *Chakra* and *Minga* as examples to explain how they understand heritage, which is directly linked to their identification as indigenous Kichwa Saraguros and the Andean cultural matrix.

Heritage as a Vivencia: A trilogy of doing, feeling and being

During the fieldwork in Chukidel, the inhabitants expressed that other imaginaries, such as *vivencia* are not necessarily linked with heritage. Still, they operate as an identitarian and collective referent to build history and memory, grounded in each territory's meaning-making systems and worlding practices. The *vivencia* (the life experience) refers to the way to do (practices), feel (interiorize and interrelate), and be (identification) in the everyday experience of the Runa-Saraguro[45] community life. Also, during workshops and interviews, people expressed that heritage within the Andean ontological framework cannot be understood as something outside practical daily life. Here, the notion of *viviencias* (life experiences) explains the unity between practices and subjectivity as a way of thinking in permanent development. It means that knowledge production, thinking, and reflexivity are performed in practice; they are not only concepts or part of people's contemplation but concrete actions, as would be the

[45] Runa-Saraguro in Kichwa means the Saraguro human being

Chakra and the *Minga*. In terms of Rivera (2020), it is 'the commitment to a non-objectifiable cosmos in constant processes of re-creation, a cosmos that nevertheless constitutes a site for human dwelling (…). Moreover, cosmic integration as a response to a crisis is not the fixation of a modality of being, but (…) an existential transformative growth' (p. 82)

> Heritage would be the Runa-Kawsay, the complete package. The *Runa-Kawsay* is life, the experience of the runa, of the human being. (Inhabitant of Saraguro, retired, approx 70 years old, January 2020)

In Kichua, Kawsay means life and culture; therefore, when people point out that the heritage would be the Runa-Kawsay, they do not distinguish between life and cultural constructs, habits, practices, aesthetics, etc. The following are testimonies to how people have expressed this understanding of life and culture as intertwined notions.

> Heritage is that we are a living culture, the fact that we continue with our practices such as making *quesillo*, making *mishki*, and drinking *chicha*. In short, our heritage is our culture. So, in Saraguro one thing is not more important than another, but rather, everything is integral.] (Inhabitant of Chukidel, architect, approx. 37 years old, female, 19 February 2021, during the meeting with the collective Taller Saraguro)

> To me, it's more like places like Lagunas, our energy spaces to heal, to be able to understand life itself, to feel and express. (…) heritage would be life experiences as a whole. (Inhabitant of Chukidel, agriculture, community tourism, female, approx. 56 years old, 6 March 2021)

Although the testimonies state that heritage is the complete package or that understanding heritage as the integral experience of Saraguro's life does not imply that it is free from a selective memory among those things that deserve to be recognised and maintained and others that change or should be overcome, such as the machismo in Andean cultures. That is to say, it should not be misinterpreted that the understanding of heritage as the integral experience of Saraguro implies all the traditional elements or all the inherited principles and values should be maintained, but integral refers to how everything in life and, therefore, the heritage is articulated, and changes are part of how those connections are dynamic.

I noted in the fieldwork that people developed the idea of heritage as a *vivencia* in informal conversations or *Cabildo* (community council) meetings; that is, in more intimate spaces of community encounter, interactions less mediated by the researchers' intervention. The notion of Immaterial Heritage has a strong presence in Saraguro, and it is linked to the institutional language of the AHD through the dynamics of tourism and public institutions (e.g., the municipality, INPC, Ministry of Tourism). Meanwhile, the notion of *Vivencia* is a way to explain the significance and meaning of heritage as something that is grounded in the vital experience of the communities and their inhabitants, linked to their social memory and the continuity and transformation of traditional practices.

From the first TEAM-Minga Project workshop in Chukidel, people stated, 'We are living heritage*'* due to their way of life and their identification. Heritage is linked to the construction of the identity of a subject, in this case, the Runa-Saraguro. Heritage is also linked to their daily experiences, cultural practices, and ways of life in their communities. This practical dimension of imagining heritage is expressed in the idea that practices and ways of life as an expression

of their identity are inherently performative, shaping spaces and bodies, what people refer to as 'what is seen', such as their clothing, hairstyle, and practices like the *Chakr*a, the *Raymis*, or the *Minga*. In the experience in Chukidel, alter-native imaginaries are thus configured based on a trilogy: they practice and perform; therefore, they feel, and finally, they are Runa-Saraguros (doing, feeling, being). This shows that the processes of identity creation are those that are at the heart of the selection of isolated elements of culture as "heritage" when the people, as an agentive practice, claim something as their own and part of their identity reaffirmation that defines what can be valued as heritage.

> Being Saraguro means to see a land, customs, to share the life experiences *(vivencias)* of those who populated this zone. It means wearing traditional clothing, using the language and other values that exist here. It's the day to day. (Inhabitant of Chukidel, ex *Capak* 2019 and doctor in medicine, male, approx. 56 years old, 15 March 2021)

> Heritage is the way of life, how we visualise what we are, what is seen. (Inhabitant of Chukidel, communitarian tourism and artisan, female, approx. 56 years old, 11 February 2021)

In Chukidel, heritage meaning-making lies in the ways of life and knowledge rather than material goods, distinctive qualities, or extraordinary characteristics. Heritage does not necessarily imply the exceptional but rather the everyday. Therefore, heritage management does not lie in its preservation but in its practical experience of identification and signifying those referents in the current context to the extent that it can give continuity to the Andean principles of correspondence, complementarity, and reciprocity[46].

> Here, above all, heritage is conceived as something living and not as something that must be preserved. (Inhabitant of Saraguro, social communicator and politician, approx. 30 years old, 29 July 2022)

People in Chukidel explain that the bases that give order and sense to the world are relationships, sustainability, and continuity of life grounded in the *vivencias* (doing, feeling, being). The *Chakra* and the *Minga* are two fundamental *vivencias* of the Andean culture. The first represents the foundations of relational correspondence and complementarity; it means that everything is interconnected and that the interaction and meaning operate under the principles of dual complementarity and alterity in cyclical processes of growth and change. The *Minga*, for its part, represents the importance of encounter, reciprocity, mutual care, and meaning-making in practice. These principles manifested in concrete practices are not exclusive to indigenous populations; they are also part of the Andean experience in Latin America, which is why they are present as a component of Andean ontology in cities and the mestizo culture.

[46] The correspondence principle refers to the harmonic correlation between everything that exists in the macro and microcosmos. The principle of complementarity considers that the autonomous and separate individual is incomplete. The individual is only complete and integral when its opposite complements it. Reciprocity is giving back and occurs on multiple levels. A cosmic harmony exists with the reciprocity of actions, manifested in interpersonal relations, and with nature (Moreno et al., 2021, p. 922).

1. *The Chakra: Relationality and Alterity*



Figure 69 The Chakra, March 1st, 2021, Chukidel Saraguro

The *Chakra* is the Andean orchard, located next to the house as part of the home economy. It has crops mainly of corn, legumes that grow tangled to the cornstalks, butternut squash, medicinal plants, and plants that keep pests away, such as chilli and rue. The care of the *Chakra* is planned according to the cycles of solstices and equinoxes. *Killa* (moon in feminine) or *Kulla Raymi* is the first celebration of the Andean ritual or agricultural year. It is commemorated on September 21, the vernal equinox in the southern hemisphere. It is considered the festival of sowing. During this period, the earth is prepared to receive corn seeds, celebrating fertility and femininity as givers of life. Then, the *Kapak Raymi* celebration on December 21, the summer solstice, is dedicated to the continuation of life and the transfer of leadership between community authorities. The agricultural cycle corresponds to the weeding season. Starting March 21, during the fall equinox, *Pawkar Raymi*, or the festival of the earth's flowering, takes place, and tender fruit is harvested. Finally, the Sun or *Inti Raymi* festival is celebrated on June 21, coinciding with the winter solstice. The celebration of *Inti Raymi* marks the end of the agricultural cycle and the announcement of what is coming. It is in gratitude to Pachamama (Mother Earth) for the harvest of ripe products, which marks the rest of the soil (Abarca, 2014; Pacari, 2021, 2023; Tuaza, 2017). In the *Inti Raymi* celebration, the sun represents the male figure in complementarity and duality with the *Killa Raymi*. Each cycle corresponds to a specific agricultural activity in the *Chakra*. During a meeting in 2021, members of Chukidel *Cabildo* and the *Taller Saraguro* Collective stated that the Saraguro culture and heritage are like the *Chakra*, where everything is woven, interdependent, and alive. There is a logic of relationality and interdependence (Estermann, 2013).

> So, heritage in Saraguro doesn't mean that one thing matters more than another; rather, it's all integral. For example, the chakra is connected to the house, the most important thing is the articulation of all spaces, activities, dialogues, and the remembrance, it is about our entire culture. Therefore, our temple is the entire territory and all the practices. Also, part of the heritage are our taitas and mamas who are linked to wisdom. Knowledge is one thing, but wisdom is knowing and practising and that is in the taitas, in their years of experience. (Participative evaluation meeting with Taller Saraguro and the Town Council at Chukidel, 25 February 2021)

The C*hakra*, the *Raymis*, the *jimba*, and the *Minga* are *vivencias* that are aligned with the *Pacha* concept –a Kichwa word composed of pa- [“two”; duality] and -cha [“energy”]– understood as the entirety of what exists in an interrelated way, the universe ordered through a complex network of relationships, both in a spatial and temporal perspective; relationality is its primary constituent characteristic (Estermann, 2013). In this sense, heritage as an *vivencia* is cyclical; it is conceived as an increasing spiral continuity. The relationship with ancestors, memory, and the future are elements that are articulated in cyclical temporalities, such as the agricultural cycles of the *chakra* and the celebrations of the *Raymis*.

> Our life revolves around the *Pachas* time (spiral spacetime), it is a cosmological life experience, we belong to the land that is worked in relation to the moon, the sun, the man, and the woman in the *Pacha* cycles. (Inhabitant of Chukidel, community tourism, municipal technician and ex *Capak*, male, approx. 60 years old, in the TEAM-Minga Feedback and Listening Workshop: Knowledge Minga Taking Care of Community Heritage in Chukidel, 5 June 2021)



Figure 71 Social cartography part of the planning and design of the Community Museum by Chukidel Cabildo in 2023



Figure 70 History and events roundtable in Chukidel Ayllullakta in the TEAM-Minga Feedback and Listening Workshop: Knowledge Minga Taking Care of Community Heritage in Chukidel, 5 June 2021

The first image corresponds to a social cartography conducted at the Chukidel Community Council meeting to plan a community museum in 2023. The second image is the coil (spiral) of time, developed in the TEAM-Minga Listening and Information Feedback Workshop in 2021. The workshop participants decided to reconstruct the community's historical milestones in a cyclical scheme, not linear. In both cases, people place life at the centre, connected to the past, present and future in cyclical temporalities. Heritage as a *vivencia*, framed within the concept of the *Pachas*, does not mean the conservation of the legacies of the past in a static way. Rather, heritage would be an interwoven and simultaneous reading of the past, represented in symbolic elements such as the practical experiences of the present, which are at the centre of the two graphs as the continuity of life.

> *Pacha* is time, in that space at the same time. So that's where *Pachakutik* comes from, which means the return of time. The elders used to say that the world is round, one day you will have to go through the same things, so, that is *Pachakutik*, the world

> goes around. (Inhabitant of Chukidel, municipal technician, male, approx. 60 years old, 23 February 2021)

Since the imaginaries of heritage are entangled with the concept of time, considering the principle of alterity and cyclicity is crucial. Both principles are present in the Andean time (*Pacha*) concept, developing another type of historicity and memory on which the imaginaries of heritage are based. During fieldwork, I observed this time comprehension in how people conceive the construction of houses. During an informal conversation, an inhabitant of Chukidel explained that family houses, especially the grandparents' houses mud-based built, follow the family's life cycles. Initially, the house is part of the beginning of a new family unit; over time, the children form their own families. The grandparents' house is the extended family meeting space. Once the grandparents pass away, that space and materiality close a cycle, and just as in the *Chakra*, there is a time that the soil rests; the house returns to the earth to make way for the future. Official imaginaries present heritages as a homogeneous representation of the past, a temporal linearity that takes history for granted. From the conservation approach, the mud-based houses as vernacular heritage would be lost or at risk. For some people in Saraguro, heritage as a vivencia is continually re-meaning, understanding that time is a spiral that constantly weaves the views of the past and expectations. What could seem like the loss of a house could also be understood as the closure of a cycle that gives way to other family spaces.

In the *Chakra,* the crops are arranged according to correspondence, alterity, and reciprocity principles. These fundamental notions of the Andean ontology offer a way to explain the world, human relationships with nature and the cosmos, and their harmony (Astudillo, 2022). In former quotes, people stated, 'Heritage is everything' or 'it (heritage) is Kawsay (life),' which indicates that heritage is understood holistically without dissecting or establishing categories that dismantle the complementary and dual relationality of Andean thought. The following testimony is an example of this way of imagining heritage.

> Heritage, it would be something like the *Sumak Kawsay* or simply the *Kawsay*, which is life, where all that is based. So, the congruence between time and space, which in this case would be our heritage. (Inhabitant of Chukidel, municipal technician, male, approx. 60 years old, 23 February 2021).

Although not all Runa-Saraguros practice Andean spirituality, the principles of complementary relationality and ecosystemic care are part of how the orchard is designed, organised, and maintained within the practice of the *Chakra*. In the TEAM-Minga workshops, participants pointed out that the C*hakra* is a type of heritage because it is an identifying element of the landscape, a way to guarantee food sovereignty, and its connection with natural medicine. Also, as the inhabitants of Chukidel have exemplified, the *Chakra* is a *vivencia* and a way to imagine how identification and heritage are experiences grounded in a fabric of relations with the territory, temporality, and the mutability of life. The *Chakra* as an alter-native imaginary implies recognising those diverse elements that weave heritage, such as points of view, actors, and experiences, also acknowledging the heterogeneity between Saraguro persons and the differences and gaps within communities. For this reason, the interweaving symbolised in the encounter in family or community becomes the space to share and work collectively despite

the differences. In reunions, the people of Chukidel express their gratitude for being together and aspire to remain united (Astudillo, 2022).

Heritage, as the *Chakra*, is an integral and holistic entirety that needs the alter, the other, and the different inhabiting individual and collective identities from within and outside the community. The *Chakras* are all interwoven agricultural products, and as a result, the *Chakra* is a fabric composed of the differences that each agricultural product provides. Official imaginaries of heritage usually understand identities by constructing otherness and differentiation under oppositional relations between what is and is not Western. The people's explanation of *Chakra* as a *vivencia* understand heritage as a fabric beyond the dichotomy of self-identity vs. otherness; the Andean principle of alterity points to comprehending identification from multiple positions, integrating different cultural matrices as complementary or contradictory identity and heritage elements (Vasantkumar, 2022).

In people's experience, alterity doesn't suppose cultural relativity but rather a knowledge production and ways of self-representation that imply an identification process that intersects and incorporates the differences. In this way, heritage meaning would also weave between elements of different cultural matrices, between the Western with colonial or Catholic legacies and modern processes of indigenous identification. The intertwining of these cultural legacies does not imply that the relations of power and subjugation are overcome; on the contrary, it means recognising the conflict and how coloniality is still present, for instance, within the AHD, to devalue the Other and maintaining a social order where Western knowledge and ways of thinking prevail. An alter-native imaginaries of heritage from alterity implies identification as contradictory and creative processes present in the stories, the people´s practices, and the memories that give meaning to those forms of heritage, away from purisms (Rivera, 2005), for example, the use of catholic symbols in the Inti Raymi.

The principles of correspondence and alterity are present in diverse manifestations besides the c*hakra*; they are also present in the *jimba*, the long hair braid worn by the Saraguro people. The braid is an identity marker, understood as the expression of that correspondence with their people, the individuals, and the ancestors. The act of braiding the hair (*jimbar*) is very symbolic since it represents the filial relationships between parents, their offspring, and the grandparents. In this fashion, the *jimba* is an element of identification that also signifies the ways of caring for parents, children, or significant others.



Figure 72 The braided jimba, characteristic of the Saraguro people, always making a strong presence in special events (Sarango, 2021)

Current examples of how the concepts of *jimba* and braiding are used in Saraguro can be found in initiatives such as fusion gastronomy or music, initiatives especially where young people seek to weave and create their own forms of modernity (Cacopardo, 2018) and ancestry. Hence, relational practice is only possible through encounters with differences (Estermann, 2013). Consequently, heritage as a *vivencia* is woven by the diverse personal and collective experiences and standpoints between heterogeneous actors who configure the community as a fabric.

2. The Minga: Mutual Care and the Construction of Thought in Practices

> Heritage can also be understood and felt from daily experiences (*vivencias)* in activities such as the *minga*. (Inhabitant of Chukidel, agriculture, community tourism, female, approx. 56 years old, 6 March 2021)

> The *minga* is part of the intangible heritage, we would say, of the communities, but also, beyond the organisational structure, for me, in fact, it is a part of the identity of the peoples, especially the indigenous groups. (Inhabitant of Chukidel, municipal technician, male, approx. 60 years old, 23 February 2021)

The interviewees acknowledge the *Minga* as heritage and as part of the identity of indigenous peoples because it is understood as an experience of organisation and community life. The *Minga* puts into practice cultural values such as reciprocity and mutual care, which are important principles of community life. The *Minga* is the organisation and contribution of people with their labour and resources to achieve a collective benefit. Examples of this collective benefit are the construction and maintenance of roads, the community's water system, the construction of houses, and the agricultural work of the community's families. The people who collaborate in the *Minga* practice the reciprocity principle, strengthening the sense of community and commitment as a network of support and sustainability. Therefore, the *Minga* implies a long-term commitment to being reciprocal as a way of caring for the support network that makes collective and individual life possible. The *Minga* is based on the knowledge and experience of indigenous peoples; however, it is an imaginary of the general Andean experience and is present in rural, urban and mestizo populations (Altamirano & Bueno, 2011). In the following quote, it is evident that Minga implies a commitment and a form of contribution to the community's own needs; therefore, the motivation lies in the fact that they are shared objectives.

> That’s the idea, since we are from here all of us are going to help, all of us must do it and it has to be well done because it’s for us. (Inhabitant of Chukidel, ex *Capak* and retired educator, male, approx. 80 years old, 15 March 2021).

During the workshops in Chukidel, people expressed that culture, identity, and, therefore, heritage become meaningful in practical experience. The *minga* is a praxis that is felt and experienced with co-responsibility due to the sense of collective cooperation. Thus, one can understand why, for the people of Chukidel, the notion of cultural heritage seems abstract,

foreign, or very technical. For inhabitants of Chukidel, the meaning of things are built in practical experiences like the *Minga*, which involve doing (the practice of collective work and cooperation), feeling (co-responsibility, commitment, reciprocity), and being (identification in the encounter and in the practices). Under this consideration, the design of the TEAM-Minga workshops was a bit forced because they responded to mainly theoretical-academic processes. For this reason, one of the important methodological changes that the TEAM-Minga project made was to get involved with constructive initiatives in Chukidel, such as the construction of the communal square.

> We do not need to create more spaces (workshops), we are not going to learn from paper if we have not lived and grown doing what we did when we built the community house, when we do the cleaning *minga*, when we distribute the *pinji,* there (in the practices) we learn, that is our school. (Inhabitant of Chukidel, community tourism, municipal technician, male, approx. 60 years old, January 2020).

From this testimony, the *minga* as an alter-native imaginary understands heritage as a practice sustained in the commitment and the identification with a collective that allows encounters, spaces for transmitting knowledge, and collective construction of solutions. The *minga* is an experience and heritage that arises from the Andean ontology of thinking/doing. The *Minga* is meaningful because of people's involvement and commitment to the collective construction or work, which encourages the appropriation of the results. This experience also establishes a sense of co-responsibility for its care and sustainability.

For instance, the *Minga* for the reconstruction of the community house was developed during the COVID-19 pandemic in July 2020. The initiative allowed the reactivation of gatherings with the inhabitants of Chukidel who had returned to the community to quarantine. This collective task allowed the *minga* to be resumed from the recognition and appreciation of the collective work of the grandparents for building and maintaining the community house, and as a way of weaving intergenerational relationships through the participation of young people and children. They were able to learn traditional ways of building, the distribution of labour and the importance of collaboration in community life.

For example, the Chukidel communal house was built in *minga* in 1987. The memory of the collective work strengthened a feeling of ownership and responsibility for its maintenance, a task that benefits everyone by giving them a space for their meetings, organisation, and community government. This experience lives in the memory of the people of Chukidel, a memory that allows the continuity of that organisation. It can be argued that heritage does not constitute the house itself but the work of the *Minga* that allowed them to get together and share a co-responsibility and, as a result, heritage meaning goes beyond the material existence of the house but in the *Minga vivencia* and memory.



Figure 73 Wasi llutana (house mud-plastering) (Taller Saraguro, 2020)

> The most beautiful feeling was knowing what could be done in the same way as before, using the local materials, because our grandparents had made that communal house that way. For me, for example, it was about being able to do the same, taking back the *minga*, the materials from the place, that was the most valuable thing. I took my son to the *minga* so I could tell him, 'Look what the mud is like, how all that was done, there are protocols for making the mud, the straw, everything in itself, for making the traditional house'. (Inhabitant of Chukidel, agriculture, current *Capak* 2023, male, approx. 45 years old, 23 February 2021)



Figure 74 Community minga for the 'wasi llutana') in a community of the Saraguro people (Turismo Comunitario Wawkys, 2022).

The *Minga* for the reconstruction of the community house generated various debates about the forms of construction, the use of new materials, and how to organise the work. The people who participated in the *Minga* reflected on the need to recover traditional protocols and construction rituals, but, above all, on the self-management processes to collect materials and financial resources necessary to fund the reconstruction. The experience generated a feeling of nostalgia as they remembered the great *mingas* of the past and thought about the opportunity to resume similar processes.

> Now, it seems to me that we can take advantage of those potentialities that the communities have, because in the communities that is also *minga*, *minga* of knowledge, *minga* of knowledge depending on the profession, in this case that the inhabitants have, young people who are recent graduates and all kinds of careers. Then we can create this, maybe a little bit, working from that side (professional) as well. (Inhabitant of Chukidel, municipal technician, male, approx. 60 years old, 23 February 2021)

Based on the testimonies, the reconstruction of the communal house was a deliberative process about the practices of the grandparents and the validity of the forms of construction based on the knowledge of the past, as well as of the new building techniques of new generations, as the previous quote mentioned that several young professionals could contribute to the *Minga* from their expertise in other construction techniques. The following is the testimony of one of the inhabitants of Chukidel who actively participated in the design and management of the *Minga* Communal House reconstruction and was the *Capak* (president of the community council) in 2024. He recounts the participation of professional architects in the dialogue about the use of new materials and how the young architects of Saraguro discussed the term heritage during the reconstruction of the communal house.

> Well, the topic of heritage was discussed with the Council, we touched on it because there was a community house that we wanted to rebuild. So, there were many clashes because there were people who wanted to use bricks and cement. (…) When we wanted to do this work, many people did not understand heritage, so we explained that we had to maintain what was ours, that our grandparents had built the community house next door. By explaining all that we understood a little about heritage, there was a lot of discussion, and it was achieved. We had the support of architects from the Taller Saraguro collective, and they also explained a lot about heritage, they helped us by making the plans and the entire process to develop this. (Inhabitant of Chukidel, agriculture, current *Capak* 2023, male, approx. 45 years old, 23 February 2021)

This quote states that people were not familiar with the notion of heritage; rather, the local architects brought the issue to the table. The practice of shared work in the *minga* allowed dialogue and negotiation of knowledge to take place for the reconstruction of the communal house. A critical discussion was precisely about how the academic notion of heritage introduces the concern over 'maintaining what is ours' that responds to an interest in preserving or conserving official imaginaries. This discussion was about what is understood as one's own and what is understood as someone else's, what should be the most convenient materials for the sustainability of the building, and what aesthetics are relevant for its continuity. The discussion included the dynamics of the evolution of a heritage asset in the current reality, where materials are more resistant and cheaper than traditional ones. However, aesthetics, design, and shapes are components that allow people to capture elements of the identity of traditional constructions.



Figure 75 Live transmisión from 9H00. Great community minga for the Wasi Llutana (collective participation in mud-plastering) of the Las Lagunas community house tomorrow (Somos Saraguro, 2020)

The *minga* of reconstructing the communal house has become a milestone due to the feeling of longing it provoked around the collective practices of the Chukidel community. People documented the process on their social media, posting comments of pride about being *mingueros*[47].

> Remembering the *minga* for the mud-plastering of the new house of Chukidel Ayllullakta, see and feel the grandparent's energy (Quizhpe, 2024)

Currently, the *mingas* have changed due to new lifestyles. Therefore, it is crucial to understand heritage considering the change in indigenous people's experiences, whose lives are also permeated by modernity and the use of new technologies. Today *mingas* are rarer due to the tremendous effort required to organise them, and *mingas* have included a system of fines or penalties to guarantee attendance and participation within the communities. The new living conditions make organising *mingas* to build private houses or sow large areas difficult. Work dynamics with rigid schedules prevent many community members from having the time to participate. In addition, not all the inhabitants of Chukidel are dedicated to agriculture or cattle grazing, and they no longer need to request collaboration from others on their plots.

The *Minga* and the *Chakra* are imaginaries that promote practices and generate knowledge under relationships that involve correspondence, reciprocity, and integrality. The experiences of the *Minga*, the *Chakra*, and the *Inti Raymi* are practical experiences that demand people´s commitment and active participation. They depend on a group of persons who are the driving force for executing these actions, be it the *mingueros* or the family working in the orchard. The encounter and sharing in these *vivencias* enhance belonging to that community and identification within a diverse group that adapts to current conditions. With this, I want to avoid an essentialist reading of the idea of 'community' as a homogeneous and archaic understanding of indigenous populations. The examples of the *minga* and the *chakra* as *vivencias* refer, above all, to the life experiences of a group, as is the case of the Saraguro in Chukidel, but also of the Saraguro individuals who have migrated and live in other cities or countries where they build forms of reciprocity, support networks of mutual care, and spaces to continue reproducing their experiences and knowledge in diverse contexts.

Heritage as Resistance and (Re)existence

> Currently, addressing identity also implies paradoxically articulating the process of globalisation and the claim of subaltern identities (Friedman, 2001). The gaps in living conditions, political participation, or identitarian recognition make memories express and claim society's past differently. Therefore, memory is highly politicised, questioning referents of cultural heritage (McDowell, 2008). The imaginary of heritage as *vivencias*, as previously mentioned in the examples of the *Inti Raymi* and the *Pasada del Divino Diablito,* are also a process of reflective creation; it means the possibility of reinventing themselves and heritage within and in-between identities, assuming or questioning the social order. Following, I reflect on how the continuity of a Saraguro culture can be argued as resistance and how

[47] Person who participates in a *minga*

transformations and new ways of representation are ways of (re)existence (Amador-Baquiro & Muñoz-González, 2022).

> The beginning, for me, is identity. Once we identify who we are, why we are here, the way we are or were, then we can start to value, for example, our language. (Inhabitant of Chukidel, agriculture, female, approx. 67 years old, January 2020)

The quote above clearly shows agency as part of an awareness of their process of self-determination, in which people identify their place in the world. During the interviews and workshops in Chukidel, people identified that as an essential element for their identification and, therefore, for understanding heritage as a *vivencia* of resistance and (re)existence. In particular, when people in Chukidel refer to resistance, they refer to the survival of their ways of being, doing, and thinking, that is, of understanding the world and creating meaning. This resistance implies their persistent identification as Saraguros despite the constant changes in the frame of globalisation and in the face of a colonial history that has systematically subjugated indigenous populations. The notion of resistance as a form of continuity of indigenous population life in Ecuador consolidated into a political position in the 1990s during the strengthening of the indigenous movements in response to the commemoration of 500 years of colonisation (Bárcenas, 2019; Guerrero, 2000; Muyolema, 2001; Quijano, 1992, 2006).

At the national level, the indigenous uprising in 1990 was a historic moment (Simbaña, 2020). It denounced the precarious life conditions of the indigenous and peasant communities: poverty, ethnic and cultural discrimination, and the segregation of the peasant population. These conditions were inherited from the colony and had not changed for indigenous peoples. The following testimony explains resistance as part of identification process.

> In first place, the idea of resistance started with going out and shouting (…). But later, we began to analyse and realise that all the elements, all the activities that were developed in a community are part of the resistance. (…) We have said that we were going to recover, in some way, the forms of building as an element of resistance. The women have said 'Let's go with our *huango*[48], spinning, spinning, as a form of resistance'. In other words, resistance is also a way of demonstrating life (…) that they have not eliminated us. Colonisation tried to eliminate us, the church took that approach of eradication to impose a single form of faith, a single form of belief. The school system is also in that line of eliminating, of unifying the culture at the national level, even with the imposition of language. Of course, we have resisted thanks to what our elders did. I give my example: (…) I learned Quichua with my grandparents, at school they didn't allow me to speak it, the school only taught in Spanish, so we had to learn to read and write in Spanish. Back then parents sent their children to school so that they would not turn out like me, exploited, mistreated, so that they would learn to defend themselves somehow. But, after looking at this issue from the side of resistance, school should help with this issue with the implementation of Quichua in the classrooms. (Inhabitant of Chukidel, Anthropologist, male, approx. 67 years old, 31 July 2021).

The imaginary of resistance is present when the interviewee says, 'We (…) realise that all the elements, all the activities that were developed in a community are part of the resistance (…). Resistance is also a way of demonstrating life (…) that they have not eliminated us'. The resistance imaginary is also a constituent process that challenges the established normativity,

[48] Ball of sheep's wool to be spun

reinvents itself, and changes according to the various ways of living that identity. An example of this deliberate action where agency, self-determination and resistance are articulated is the defence of the Kichwa name of the Chukidel community over the Castilian name of *Las Lagunas*. Through this action, people recover their identification with the Saraguro culture, although the community's official name differs. The self-identification, agency, and resistance processes involve navigating and intersecting different ontologies and motivations (alterity). Opting for the Kichwa name implies a process of self-determination and positionality. However, as I have already mentioned, it is also part of a commercial and tourism strategy that provides them with economic income.

Furthermore, the previous testimony clearly shows how the resistance as *vivencia* and alternative imaginary occurred in a practical way. Both the creation of heritage and resistance as *vivencias* began in the practice as the testimony states, 'the idea of resistance started with going out and shouting' (the action). Tomás Villasante (personal communication, 15 April 2024, Annex II) argues that constructing new identity references and resistance based on *vivencias* and practical experiences is not exclusive to the Andes. He highlights that in other cultures and contexts, organised collectives, through concrete actions, manage resistance and co-create new (re)existences and new forms of identification, representation, and comprehension of heritage.

An essential event for the reflection on resistance and heritage in Saraguro, and at the national level for the Andean indigenous peoples of Ecuador, was the national strike of June 2022. This social mobilisation paralysed the country for several days, including the planned academic visit of TEAM-Minga to the community of Chukidel, specifically to conduct participant observation during the Inti Raimy. Although the celebration of *Inti Raymi* is one of the main festivities of the Kichwas people, the decision to suspend the celebration during June 2022 was a political action in support of the national call for the indigenous and worker movement. A brief historical parenthesis is necessary here. The celebration of the *Inti Raymi* in the context of social mobilisation was also part of the first Indigenous uprising of 1990, where the celebration of the Raymis was also a political use of this heritage to vindicate the Indigenous identity and claim its political place in the country's history. In this way, it becomes evident that the identity and heritage (mainly indigenous) are crisscrossed by the political agency of the people and their commitment to a stand against oppression as part of the political/cultural representation and imaginaries.

In June 2022, in Chukidel, as in many other indigenous communities in Ecuador, community authorities postponed the celebration of *Inti Raymi* to redirect all efforts to support the national strike. In this case, the Chukidel community focused on occupying the Panamerican Highway, cutting off vehicular traffic between Loja and Cuenca. During the days that the inhabitants of Chukidel and from other indigenous communities occupied the highway, this action of resistance also entailed the defence of autonomy, of nature, and political and economic rights, not only of the Indigenous population but of the people in general, who have been most strongly affected by the economic crisis and who would be most affected by the rise in fuel prices. As mentioned above, the *Inti Raymi* in Chukidel arose from a motivation of vindication. During the strike, it was precisely that same motivation that allowed the resistance and the experience of the *Inti Raymi* within the strike as articulate elements. The Chukidel authorities developed

organisational activities such as food distribution, purification baths, Ayllus council sessions, celebrations, and music as essential elements of the resistance, as well as of *Inty Raymi*.

In terms of the historian and scholar Floresmilo Simbaña (2023), *Inti Raymi* is a space where everything comes together, is shared, and is re-created. For Andean indigenous movements and communities, such an act of resistance and social construction is only possible in the community, in the *Mingas, Raymis* and especially in mobilisations and strikes. But as with any cultural political proposal, over time, they become objectified, and they tend to exhaust their content, as in the current situation of the Inti Raymi. That is why Simbaña (2023) states the need to rethink *Inti Raymi* as a heritage coopted by the official narratives of the State and pointed out that the communes are the place from which a new revitalization of the cultural representations as *Inti Raymi* should emerge.

During fieldwork, the inhabitants of Chukidel express that resistance is a sociopolitical experience and practice in response to the policies of governments that neglect the collective rights of indigenous as well as other groups (e.g., peasants, workers, women). For example, in Saraguro, indigenous people and community councils are organised against the mining companies to defend the water sources in Fierro Urco Mountain. The organisation for the defense of water sources and against mining in Fierro Urco Mountain represents a concrete experience of resistance, showing how meaningful and the meaning-making of the Saraguro people's relationship with nature and the defense of their territory to protect their sovereignty. Defending Fierro Urco has involved collective actions, community *Mingas*, strikes, and constant meetings to strengthen the local organisation and auto-management to sustain the struggle and safeguarding of Fierro Urco Mountain.

> The mining companies want the gold, the silver and the bronze from our territory, while we want our sacred mountain left intact so we can live. (*Capak* of Chukidel, June 3, 2022) (Mantuano, 2022)

Saraguro's people's organisation for the anti-mining struggle in the Fierro Urco Mountain is related to the imaginary of heritage as resistance in many ways. The defense of Fierro Urco implies the defense of life as the central heritage expressed by the people of Saraguro. For instance, in Chukidel, heritage is understood as the *Kawsay* (life), and life is placed at the centre of community planning, history, and territory, as shown in figures 70 and 71. The experience of resistance in Fierro Urco reflects the principles of relational correspondence and mutual care. The relationship with the mountain implies a commitment of mutual care (reciprocity), where the mountain is considered a living agent. Hence, the defense of the territory presupposes an Ontological Turn that overcomes an anthropocentric position (Harrison, 2015). The experience of defending Fierro Urco Mountain from mining shows how the imaginary of resistance bonds heritage meaning-making to historical and collective claims such as the right to territory, autonomy, economic justice, self-determination, and the rights of nature. It is from this type of experience that authors such as Harrison (2015) raise the need for an Ontological Turn in heritage, stating that: ‘embracing the dissolution of the separation of natural and cultural heritage enables to reorient and reconceptualize Heritage’ (Harrison, 2015, p. 24). Furthermore, alter-native imaginaries from the positionality, such as the Saraguros show how heritage can have a radical and transformative potential (Harrison, 2013, 2015, 2018) which

comes from the experience of resistance against oppression in the colonial contexts that have excludes indigenous populations.

The experience of Fierro Urco and also the testimonies on how they understand resistance showed that the transformative potential comes not only from the Other ontologies itself but from the resistance to oppression and the positions that confront the asymmetric relationships in which they live. Thus, the emancipatory value of alter-native imaginaries lies in the confrontation with discrimination, racism and ethnic oppression that, as we have seen, is latently expressed in the official heritage imaginaries. Here, the self-assessment is necessary to confront the power relations that have designated diversities a segregated place, but that does not exempt indigenous people (or anyone) from changing the oppressive ways of their own culture. Therefore, alter-native imaginaries are reflective and creative experiences that also incorporate an internal critique about what and how any collective selects and values as heritage or unlearns and forgets legacies. The *vivencias* and examples such as the defense of Fierro Urco, show that indigenous are not better because their culture is closer to nature or because their collective or community values, but rather their strength is precise because they live resisting oppression that has discriminated against them and segregated them historically and that has repercussions not only on their identity but on the territory and life. Although their experience as an indigenous population allows them to be more sensitive and reflexive about forms of ethnic and racial oppression and discrimination, it does not mean that these populations are exempt from other power relations that affect their identity imaginaries, such as the machismo or adult-centrism, and therefore how these forms of power cross the understanding and the way heritage is experienced and produced.

The transformative potential of the heritage as *viviencia*, from the experience of Saraguro indigenous people in Chukidel, does not come only from the indigenous ontology itself (that would fall into essentialist compression of those cultures) but rather, it comes from resistance to oppression. It is in this (re)existence and resistance that relational, reciprocal, cyclical (as the constant change) and mutual care (Minga) principles become practices of emancipation and struggle against discrimination, racism and ethnic oppression. This appreciation of heritage as a *vivencia* implies recognising that not all elements of a culture are of heritage and conservation interest but rather the need for a reflective and self-critical dwelling to overcome power relations within the communities themselves. Hence, the (re)existence and the *vivencia* as alter-native heritage imaginaries imply an exercise of selection and transformation necessary for the continuity of identities overcoming stereotypes and roles that can limit relationships of care and equity. Indigenous peoples are not better "in themselves," because their culture is closer to nature or because their values or social relationships have learned more and better kindness than Westerners, but because they live fighting against a despicable form of oppression, it means their learnings come from the political and social place within history.

The TEAM-Minga project's investigation did not include Fierro Urco's experience listing the heritage in Chukidel or as organisational experience of heritage care in Saraguro. This shows how the limitations of academic approaches to understanding the local context in different layers and, in this way, alter-native imaginaries and experiences of heritage end up escaping the categorical and delimited logic of the research process. One of the challenges is that the people of Chukidel do not use the term heritage explicitly in organisational processes such as Fierro Urco's defense. Despite the lack of heritage term use, people's experiences in anti-mining resistance also display people's identification, identitarian references and knowledge construction.

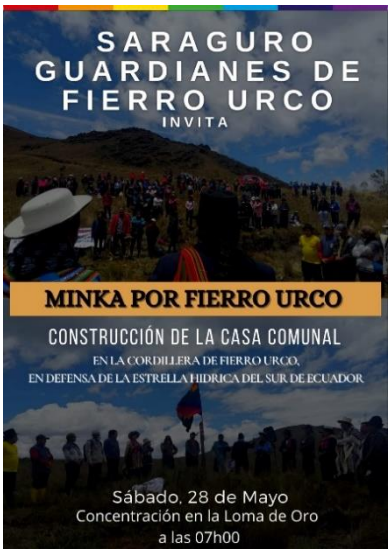

*Figure 76 Fierro Urco cannot be touched. We will defend the sacred mountain because **it's part of our spiritual heritage*** (Chalan, 2022).

The (re)existence is how the persistence of traditions comes with transformations and creative changes. It is visible in the new ways the younger generations understand and represent identity, which happened at some point with the *Inti Raymi* in the 1990s. This was the recovery of a cultural tradition that allowed the (re)existence of a relevant identity element of indigenous peoples and enhanced a feeling and imaginary of ancestrality within a new social and political context. The following testimony reflects how the imaginary of ancestrality shouldn´t fall into essentialisation; instead, she argues that the recovery and persistence of Saraguro traditions should be considered within the changes of their own identification process.

> Regarding 'ancestralities', we are proud to be a community of indigenous people of Saraguro nationality, a characteristic that we always highlight and that insists on the historicity and "ancestrality" from which we come. This ancestry should not tend to essentialise the wealth of our native peoples, folklorising them without respecting our culture and changing wisdom, linked to the ethnic identity to which we belong. Although a history unites us, there is also a different and diverse present that includes the memories of the grandparents, the demands of the resurgent, the projections of the visionaries. (TOArquitectura, 2023)

The transformation and (re)creation of heritage implies interwoven new and different historical and cultural milestones and references. The (re)existence as changes (syncretisms, mixing)

within the persistence of identities and heritage is related to the principle of alterity (the other). Resistance in (re)existence refers to how, especially the youngest, imagine alter-native ways of living their identity and propose aesthetic-political alter-natives in discourses based on self-representation. Alter-native imaginaries such as resistance in re-existence contribute to reflecting on unauthorised positions, generating self-recognition strategies, and managing to delve deeper into the frameworks of their social memories (Amador-Baquiro & Muñoz-González, 2022). The following quotes and testimonials exemplify how (re)existence is in continuous development and the traditional way of depicting social places designated to indigenous people is questioned.



Figure 77 LOOK OUT WAMBRAKUNA KICHWA (young kichwa people) ((Chalan, 2023)

> When will we stop denying ourselves the right to our own modernity? The point is not 'the ancestral' but how we dispute modernity. (Cartuche, 2023)

> Multiculturalism told us that "indigenous" people fight to remain indigenous. The truth, although it may seem contradictory, is that we do it to stop being that, the historic product of the colony (and multiculturalism). The desire is rather to return to being human beings and peoples with history, capable, and with the right to build a project for a society different from that exercised by capital-colonialism. (Cartuche, 2022)

There are different opinions within the indigenous world about the purpose of their struggle; the previous testimony is an example of sensitivity that shows generational change. Thus, exploring alter-native imaginaries in a local context reveals how various practices coexist in the same local context, as the field data have shown several times. Moreover, alter-native imaginaries such as the alterity principle of the Andean cultures demand us to focus on the interaction, coexistence and movement between different meaning systems and representations rather than on the 'production of otherness that multiculturalism incites' (Bell, 2017, p. 20). Young people in the Andes have built their identity by mixing cultural references and stereotypes surrounding them, envisioning new categories of what is involved in being 'modern' (Goodale, 2006) and forms of identification to continue their Saraguro roots.

Rivera (2018) develops the Aymara notion of Ch'ixi, where various elements coexist, sometimes opposite, sometimes not, to better explain the existence of the multiple in the Andean territory. For example, the Aymara and Kichwas were polytheistic, but the Spanish conquest imposed the monotheistic Christian religion. Currently, both manifestations can be

found in places like Saraguro, where many profess Catholicism and, at the same time, celebrate the *Inti Raymi* ceremonies, the *Mamasupalata*, or the *Marcantaita* festivities. Christian and non-Christian elements are present in the Andean culture without merging. Rivera (2018) states this is a *Ch'ixi* episteme, a framework of thought articulated between multiple undiluted cultural matrices. This author affirms that *Ch'ixi* is also manifested in the composition of people in racial, linguistic, and cultural terms. *Ch'ixis* people are subjects with (non-fused) traits, both indigenous and Western (Rivera, 2018). Hence, the colonial past crosses heritage imaginaries in Latin America and a *Ch'ixi* cultural matrix (the existence of the multiple). This condition of multiple voices, multiple experiences, and multiple stories with the same colonial past is fundamental to understanding the context in which people (re)exist and create the meaning of cultural heritage. As the following quote suggests, the existence of the multiple voices in (re)existences implies recognising the contradictions and dissonances that are also part of the identification and heritage meaning-making.

> There is no way to deny that there is a Catholic, colonial and mestizo heritage among us. So, identifying us with some sense of ethnic purity, as if we had never assumed cultural patterns from the colony, is not right. Our very clothes have colonial heritage, the very fact that we are now speaking Spanish is part of that. In the end, for example, Catholicism ended up being an important part of our identity, for our people (Inhabitant of Chukidel, male, scholar, 43 years old, 30 July 2022)

TEAM-Minga Learnings and Changes on Heritage Imaginaries

An essential part of the fieldwork as a researcher of the TEAM-Minga project was participating in spaces of analysis and theoretical and methodological reflection on the project. During the coordination meetings and informal conversations, we were able to discuss the researcher´s understanding of heritage, as well as how they perceive the relationships with local actors, which allowed me to learn about their concerns, motivations, and, above all, how they defined the heritage imaginaries for the project. In the next section, I reflect on how the TEAM-Minga imaginaries of heritage were challenged and changed through fieldwork. To do this, I take as a source of information the TEAM-Minga internal evaluation that I had designed and applied at the end of 2022 as part of the project closure.

The opportunity to be part of the auto-evaluation of the research group was strategic to identify how researchers' approach, listen, include, or prioritize official or alter-native imaginaries. During the evaluation, it was possible to address how researchers rethink imaginaries in the face of fieldwork and interaction with other local actors' experiences and interpellations. During the assessment, the researchers who conducted the fieldwork were asked how their understanding of cultural heritage has changed. They stated that although the sense of cultural heritage was initially associated with theoretical knowledge, their experience in the field clearly motivated them to understand cultural heritage as a situated knowledge and practical experience. The following quotes show how TEAM-Minga researchers refer to changes in the notion and research of cultural heritage:

> At least in El Vado where our work was concentrated, it was thought in the first instance that we were going to validate the information regarding heritage; However,

> we have realised that one process is not the same as another. (Internal evaluation report of the TEAM-Minga research team, December 22, 2022)

> It is necessary to approach heritage as a relationship, a social construct and a process of negotiation and conflict where historical (national) and identity narratives are disputed. In this way, we can reveal the power relations that inhabit the languages, uses, agendas and narratives of heritage, and also be able to redefine heritage according to the understandings and cultural matrices of each territory. (Internal evaluation report of the TEAM-Minga research team, December 22, 2022)

These quotes are a product of the TEAM-Minga project team's collective reflection, in which the researchers expressed that one of the project's main results was the change in the relationship with heritage and the understanding of its different meanings. They point out that cultural heritage is a disputed field and, therefore, there is a diversity of ways of relating with one another, doing it, and signifying it, depending on the context. Part of the evaluation was the application of a questionnaire that requested the researchers to indicate what they considered to be the main aspects of the study of heritage. The researchers' responses prioritised sociocultural aspects as an important element to understand heritage meanings, which is linked to the identification, to the historical and daily dynamics of each context. The researchers also expressed that it is essential to incorporate the analysis of the forms of organisation and economy as relevant aspects to contextualise all instances of heritage within local realities with specific demands.

Furthermore, TEAM-Minga researchers recognise that it is strategic to have a methodological design that allows local actors to be heard and included in the research. The TEAM-Minga self-assessment concluded that it is essential to avoid the imposition of the academic thinking matrix and to strengthen empathy and listening safe spaces as is brought to light in the following statements.

> Not imposing our view. Empathising with the world in every territory. (Internal evaluation report of the TEAM-Minga research team, December 22, 2022)

> Hidden dialogues can often be influenced by “official dialogues”; however, it is important to provide spaces (which do not necessarily have to be workshops) to include these perceptions in the analyses as part of the self-reflection. (Internal evaluation report of the TEAM-Minga research team, December 22, 2022)

These quotes show how researchers keep in mind the need to listen to and include the different positions that can be found in the fieldwork, many of which could be conflicting. The interaction of researchers with local actors left essential lessons on how accessibility and the construction of knowledge depend on the relationships of trust, affinity, and the assumed power roles. In the dialogues between researchers and local actors, I observed that before seeking a practice of listening to local actors, it is the researchers who end up being listened to. The relationships established in the study sites did not enable a reflective process that seeks dialogue between academic and non-academic imaginaries, which do not fit into the theoretical-conceptual categories and objectives of the project. For example, prior to the dialogue with local actors, the researchers expressed concern about how to ‘help the community understand, assume, and prioritise the need to protect cultural heritage (…)’ (Internal evaluation report of the TEAM-Minga research team, December 22, 2022). This is an

a priori position that is expressed in how the workshops were conducted with local actors, which always consisted of an introductory moment where the researchers explained the questions and concepts to be discussed. Besides being a member of the TEAM-Minga project, I could observe that the research group designed and implemented workshops with the local inhabitants around the notion of innovative governance for heritage. Terms such as governance, heritage and innovation are not part of the daily life language; they are ambiguous in their purpose and orientation in people's everyday language. In this way, the research group assumed the role of explaining these notions to the locals. As a result, the inhabitants of the study sites perceived and interacted with the research group as if the researchers were the experts on the subject.

During fieldwork in El Vado, I observed how, for example, the researchers established closer affinity relationships with the neighbourhood committee, leaving out other neighbourhood actors. In Chukidel, the relationship between researchers and local actors also involved conditioned participation. On the one hand, the involvement of local actors in the research was limited to a special consultative role. On the other hand, there is a distrust from the inhabitants of Chukidel towards researchers who challenge the researcher's accessibility in community debate spaces. In both Chukidel and El Vado, the researchers are perceived as external and institutional actors. The interaction and the responses are consistent with that perception. Here, it is strategic that the researcher conducts a prior reflective and critical analysis of their position to problematise their own heritage imaginaries. This can be accomplished by raising questions such as how local actors will participate and take part in the project´s decision-making and knowledge production, how local actors will also benefit from the project results and how the gaps and differences (racial, gender, class, education, mobility) between researchers and local actors will affect and addressed during the research. At this point, it is important to highlight the openness of the TEAM-Minga researchers to recognise that cultural heritage is a social construct that can only be understood within the framework of situated knowledge in the terms, contexts and motivations of local actors. However, it must also be taken into account that, when investigating the main challenges of fieldwork, the researchers' concerns still respond to the concern on how they can influence local actors, as they have expressed:

> Knowing how to explain and apply the proposed methodologies correctly, getting the attention of the members of the community (Internal evaluation report of the TEAM-Minga research team, December 22, 2022)
>
> Maintaining dialogue with everyone in all the study areas. Maintaining expectations to give fluidity to the process. (Internal evaluation report of the TEAM-Minga research team, December 22, 2022)
>
> The mediation of a pre-established schedule. (Internal evaluation report of the TEAM-Minga research team, December 22, 2022)
>
> The most significant challenge was to change the technocratic approach with which I have been most involved and understand the impacts that methodically approached participatory processes can have. (Internal evaluation report of the TEAM-Minga research team, December 22, 2022)

These examples show how researchers' heritage imaginaries do not align with the expectations of the local actors. It highlighted the importance of developing a more sensitive approach to

the dynamics of the territories, one that overcomes methodological concerns and allows us to analyse how different understandings of cultural heritage are produced and what heritage means to the local actors. The main concerns expressed by the researchers revolved around ensuring compliance with the project's schedule rather than knowing how to improve dialogues and how to listen to local actors in each study site.

The theoretical framework of this dissertation suggests that imaginaries as an analytical lens question the taken-for-granted understandings of heritage and, above all, the set of imaginaries that researchers assume and disseminate. It can be argued that researchers' sensibility to listen to alter-native imaginaries can question the project's arguments and bases. Here, uncertainty can be embraced as an opportunity to take advantage of serendipity and knowledge grounded in experiences. Part of the TEAM-Minga self-assessment was to share the reflective learning, as well as new questions, interests or concerns that arose from their experience as members of the project. The researchers expressed the following:

> How can we help the community understand, assume, and prioritise the need to protect cultural heritage, from the point of view that it is a way to ensure that memory is not lost? (Internal evaluation report of the TEAM-Minga research team, December 22, 2022)

> How can the process become sustainable after the closure of the TEAM-Minga project? How can sustainability be given to the articulated action exercise that TEAM Minga activated? (Internal evaluation report of the TEAM-Minga research team, December 22, 2022)

> What are the collective motivations that allow a community to work on Cultural Heritage? Is it possible to use community organisation systems to conserve the Built Cultural Heritage? (Internal evaluation report of the TEAM-Minga research team, December 22, 2022)

> Exposing people to how they used to organise themselves to preserve certain types of heritage in their territories, and link this with the research. (Internal evaluation report of the TEAM-Minga research team, December 22, 2022)

The previous answers show how it is still necessary to strengthen creativity and the practical processes that come from imaginaries, such as *vivencia*, within academic analysis. These testimonies show how the interests and questions persist within the borders of the initial research questions, indicating that it still is a challenge to unfold the official imaginaries that researchers continue to reproduce. For example, the last two quotes correspond to concerns the researchers have expressed after their experience in the project, which continue to be in line with the initial project objectives. Researchers express more concern with motivating the community to commit to working on cultural heritage and conserving private building heritage, looking for ways to link this to community organisation systems without deepening the ways to build knowledge and meaning of heritage. One of the limitations of models created by projects such as TEAM-Minga is the pre-establishment of objectives that are not validated in-situ, and, in that way, there doesn't seem to be any existing interest outside of the categories set out by the project.

However, it should be noted that the evaluation also highlighted that researchers had developed an interest in the processes of heritage meaning-making and how asymmetric relationships in

listening processes affect the construction of the knowledge and the analysis of the research. That is, the researchers confirmed that the experience allowed them to reflect and become aware of the impact that their presence and discourse have in the field.

> We have learned to be self-critical and self-reflect on our role in society as academia. To a certain extent we have learned to listen to and confront the so-called methodological overflows that can often be seen from outside the objectives or field of action of the project. We have learned that no matter how good the intentions, objectives and results of a research project are, communities, parishes and/or neighbourhoods have their own objectives, and we have to learn to deal with that, to find a balance that allows the people who are involved to visualise these contributions in the same way that we, from academia, can make circumstantially. (Internal evaluation report of the TEAM-Minga research team, December 22, 2022)

> We must learn to include other languages, include interpellations, and the possibility to have learning processes that respond to each community's terms. It is a big challenge having to deal with the time limitations, schedules and formats for research and interventions from academia and the projects themselves. (Internal evaluation report of the TEAM-Minga research team, December 22, 2022)

> It is a challenge to develop greater proximity and empathy with the suffering that is manifested in the local fabrics that generates gaps, to understand that many of the interpellations also come from the search for their own autonomies, languages, and critiques. (Internal evaluation report of the TEAM-Minga research team, December 22, 2022)

> Prioritising fieldwork, being open to understanding local agendas, their dynamics, and priorities, as well as their fears and critiques. (Internal evaluation report of the TEAM-Minga research team, December 22, 2022)

The strategic learning that the TEAM-Minga team of researchers obtained generated new sensitivities that will allow the transformation of human relationships inside and outside of research work. At the end of the project, the researchers have expressed that it is important to include these alter-native imaginaries as part of other ways of seeing and making sense of heritage. In this sense, it could be said that there is a broader possibility for adaptation of research techniques in human contexts, attempting to guarantee an open and sensitive listening that allows understanding of the different positions, objectives, asymmetric relations and agendas to prioritise local needs while respecting the expectations and historical struggles that reside in different local identities.

One critical lesson learned from the TEAM-Minga project research is that heritage meaning-making is relational and processual. This means that the imaginaries of heritage, either the researchers' or the local actors' own, depending on historical and everyday relationships and are also part of continuous creation. Therefore, the challenges that faced the TEAM-Minga project in the study sites point to embracing change that comes from the *vivencia* (life experience) of heritage and questioning the 'heritage at risk' framework of preservation (Holtorf, 2018). It means that 'saving heritage is nothing but a specific manifestation of change' (Holtorf, 2018, p. 647). In the TEAM-Minga research, the dialogue between architect, social, and anthropological approaches have proven to be a necessary articulation to address change and alter-native imaginaries that shed light on how heritage makes meaning from multiple standpoints and identifications that dispute and claim heritage transformation. In this fashion,

Holtorf (2018) highlights that 'cultural heritage should not be seen as a token of the past, now threatened, but as a way of facilitating changes that improve peoples' lives under new circumstances (…) and how can people's own cultural resilience and risk preparedness be enhanced by learning to appreciate and embrace the changes that have become manifest in the transformation of cultural heritage over time'(Holtorf, 2018, p. 648).

The lessons learned from the TEAM-Minga project are also crucial regarding a permanent tendency and imposition within the academy to show novelty, distinguish, and be authentic. In this line, the risk of novelty tendency and use of what can be considered alternative entry the meaning of methodologies, notions and theories such as the participatory action research (PAR) and the notion of innovation. Although PAR has historically been an epistemic and political commitment from South American scholars to transform the way of doing research and its social responsibility (Fals Borda), nowadays, it appears in the academic literature and development for cooperation NGOs as a novel approach. Hence, in research projects such as the TEAM-MINGA, we must ask ourselves to what extent the use of this novel or the 'alternative' concepts changes the relationships, the way of doing research and the locus of enunciation from which knowledge is produced. I believe that integrating TEAM-Minga as part of the analysis allows us to ask ourselves how and to what extent, in our research projects, the notions from decolonial theories, terms in Kichwa, and the use of research models such as PAR beyond the theoretical contributions have practical implications in the research.

Concluding Remarks

This chapter reflects on the practical experiences identified in the fieldwork that unveil alter-native heritage imaginaries. I show how alter-native imaginaries manifest themselves in practical experiences and experiences that involve reflective and relational creation processes. Unlike official imaginaries, alter-native imaginaries are not assumed notions, but knowledge situated in people's experiences and identification beyond closed identity classification (Hall, 2001). In Chukidel and El Vado, as well as in the TEAM-Minga project, encounters, and dialogue between multiple voices are a source of creativity. The coexistence of multiple voices and claims results in transformations based on diverse actors' alterity, contradiction, and conflict (dissonances). This chapter analyses how people make heritage meaningful through practices, experiences and cultural initiatives such as the *Inti Raymi*, el *Prohibido* Cultural Centre, the *Minga*, the *Chakra*, the myths, the *jimb*a, and the defense of the water source in Fierro Urco Mountain. These experiences allow local actors to explain different dimensions of alter-native imaginaries, such as transformation as part of the continuity of heritage and the meanings of heritage from other ontologies, such as the Andean one. This chapter shows how heritage meaning-making is closely related to identity, which is why we can see how, in Chukidel, the discussion on heritage imaginaries and imaginaries of heritage is more reflective and negotiated since it affects a sensitive and profound aspect of personal identity of their lives. Unlike in El Vado, heritage does not affect their perception as Vadeños on an individual level but instead in the meaning of heritage objects as referential symbols of the neighbourhood.

Besides, I analyse how *vivencias* are alter-native imaginaries within the framework of the Andean ontologies. Chukidel's testimonies indicated that knowledge and meaning production result from practices that articulate doing/feeling/being. From the testimonies of the inhabitants

of Chukidel, I addressed two examples that people use to explain their understanding of heritage. The *Chakra* describes how heritage is understood from the principles of relationality and alterity. Through the *Chakra*, people explain that heritage is an integral part of their daily lives, where different elements are intertwined through relationships of duality, alterity, and correspondence. The *Minga vivencia* allows us to understand heritage based on the principles of reciprocity, mutual care, and knowledge based on collective practices. Also, as part of the alter-native imaginaries from Andean Ontologies, people in Chukidel pointed out that the *vivencias* are a way of resistance and (re)existence. Resistance and (re)existence, involving creative, reflective, and transformation processes of heritage and identification, imply a political agency that questions the social, cultural, economic, and political place assigned to indigenous people within the historical narratives. Resistance as alter-native imaginaries of heritage is linked to the understanding that the persistence of indigenous life and traditions is a way of confronting colonialism, as testimonies show: 'Resistance is also a way of demonstrating life (…) that they have not eliminated us'. The (re)existence imaginary as people has explained are the practices and *vivencias* that manifest how heritage has been transformed and changed, breaking classifications and essentialising descriptions of a collective and, as several authors (Cartuche, 2023; Goodale, 2006; Rivera, 2005, 2018) have indicated, in the case of indigenous peoples, reclaiming modernity and new forms of collective assertion.

This chapter also addresses how the researchers of the TEAM-Minga project dialogued with alter-native imaginaries during fieldwork. I analyse the changes, challenges, and lessons learned from the encounter between the researchers' imaginaries and the alter-native imaginaries of the local actors. In this section, I analyse how the TEAM-Minga researchers question the perspectives of heritage preservation, heritage at risk, or heritage as a resource for development after their experience in the study sites. The observations and challenges of the TEAM-Minga project focus on how to construct new sensitivities and practices that allow learning and incorporating alter-native imaginaries or creating other meanings for heritage, primarily from the transformation of human relationships inside and outside of research work and the heritage field.

The main challenges TEAM-Minga faced recognised that the projects' formats replicate technical languages and official imaginaries of models, concepts, and even objectives, motivations, and expectations that are not validated in situ. Likewise, the results of the researchers' self-evaluation indicate that it is a challenge to expose official imaginaries and asymmetrical relations in which the meaning and management of heritage are constructed. The challenge of incorporating alter-native imaginaries does not lie in recognising the official imaginaries but in changing the practices of listening, investigation, and interaction. In this way, the project's methodological approaches can generate gaps between understanding heritage as a construction or people understanding heritage as an alien notion with little credibility in the possible participation and decision-making for heritage management. For this reason, part of the core assessment reflection within the TEAM-Minga project was to be aware of the relationships, differences, and imaginaries that shape the spaces of dialogue that allow listening and expressing some imaginaries over others.

Finally, avoiding misunderstanding alter-native imaginaries with relativism seems critical. As indicated in previous chapters, AHD operates under multicultural and relativist approaches that enact a conditioned inclusion of diversity. In this line, I consider enlightening the contribution of Haraway (1988):

> Positioning is as hostile to various forms of relativism as to the most explicitly totalizing versions of claims to scientific authority. (…) The alternative to relativism is partial, locatable, critical knowledges sustaining the possibility of webs of connections called solidarity in politics and shared conversations in epistemology. Relativism is a way of being nowhere while claiming to be everywhere equally. The "equality" of positioning is a denial of responsibility and critical inquiry. Relativism is the perfect mirror twin of totalisation in the ideologies of objectivity; both deny the stakes in location, embodiment, and partial perspective; both make it impossible to see well. Relativism and totalisation are both "god tricks" promising vision from everywhere and nowhere equally and fully, common myths in rhetorics surrounding Science. But it is precisely in the politics and epistemology of partial perspectives that the possibility of sustained, rational, objective inquiry rests. (Haraway, 1988, p. 584)

In line with Haraway (1988,) in face of official heritage imaginaries, which rarely include non-Western sociocultural processes (Forero & Hong, 2012), operate by co-opting or absorbing alter-native imaginaries, it is strategical to enhance situated analysis that enable imaginaries. In this way, the alterity, political agency, and transformation inherent to the practices and experiences of alter-native imaginaries are diminished by relativistic readings that reduce them to different ways of seeing or subjectivities when they correspond to different forms of action and transformation. Relativistic readings run the risk of framing alter-native imaginaries as labels that do not imply structural change, navigating diversity from positions of tolerance and political correctness, and avoiding conflicts before facing tensions and negotiation processes.

In the face of the risk of relativism, Rivera's (2018) contribution to the *Ch'ixi* notion and the principles of alterity highlights the existence of multiple identities not as diverse subjective perspectives but as different conditions and practices. 'The *Ch'ixi* subjectivity takes place not within the culturally homogeneous territory ascribed to a nation-state, but through the lived experience of alterity through encounters' (Salgado, 2023, p. 85). The lens of imaginaries allows researchers to question their own thinking frameworks and the terms and conditions of research. The alter-native imaginaries reviewed in this chapter show that analysis and research must approach heritage as a field in dispute, where dialogues address the conflict, the uncomfortable, and the transgressive. This allows us to be permeated by the positions and tensions that arise from the negotiation and creativity of individual and collective experiences and claims. It is strategic to understand that within the populations are selection processes, oblivion and valorisation of some elements over others to avoid falling into relativism and essentializing in the imaginaries analysis. This means that the analysis of imaginaries calls for identifying asymmetric relationships within alter-native and official imaginaries. Hence, the creativity of alter-native imaginaries also lies in selecting which references, identity elements, values, and practices should be maintained, changed, unlearned or challenged in the face of the power relations and forms of oppression endured in history but also in daily practices and research processes. For example, the Centro Cultural *El Prohibido* maintains some elements of the stories of El Vado but criticises the centrality and power of a specific group of neighbours,

or as the Runa Rock as part of the Inti Raymi promotes forms of integration for young people facing the understanding of culture and heritage as concern that mainly adults know about.

10. Conclusion

This concluding chapter outlines the research findings, briefly recapitulates conclusions, and explains the relationships between the previous chapters. I conclude by discussing the study's limitations and suggesting future research pathways.

Recapitulation

This dissertation is multi-sited ethnographic research in the south-eastern Ecuadorian highlands within the project Innovative Governance Systems for Built Cultural Heritage, based on traditional Andean organisational principles in Ecuador (TEAM-Minga) and the study sites of El Vado in Cuenca and Chukidel in Saraguro. This dissertation highlights that it is crucial to heritage management, heritage practitioners, and heritage research and intervention projects to delve into how people signify, identify with, and claim cultural heritage in different ways. To better understand heritage as a social production embedded in local cultural matrices and historical backgrounds- in particular in post-colonial contexts- and, thus, to enhance approaches to understanding heritage in the meaning systems of local actors (either inhabitants or researchers), this dissertation asks **how the inhabitants of Chukidel, El Vado and the TEAM-Minga researchers comprehend heritage as a notion and use it to depict and interact with each other within the context of the TEAM-Minga project**. I address these questions by building upon Critical Heritage Studies (Ang, 2019; Gentry & Smith, 2019; Harrison, 2013; Smith et al., 2024), the Ontological Turn (DeSilvey & Harrison, 2020; Harrison & Hughes, 2010), and by developing imaginaries as an analytical lens for heritage studies (Astudillo, 2022; Astudillo & Salazar, 2023; Salazar, 2021).

This dissertation argues the need to address heritage imaginaries as situated knowledge, contextualising, problematising, and tracking meaning systems and the asymmetric power relations in which heritage is produced, signified, and designated. For this, both the theoretical framework and the introductory chapter focus on how development cooperation, colonial background, and Andean culture are different layers that intersect in this research and provide a situated reflection on heritage from the concrete experience of the TEAM-Minga project, which is one among the many development cooperation and heritage research projects.

Part I of the dissertation includes the doctoral research background within the framework of the TEAM-Minga project and Chapter 1: introduction. After explaining the research interest and the questions that guide this dissertation, Chapter 1 situates heritage in the global and Andean regional scope. Here, I contrast how the research interests of the TEAM-Minga project are influenced by international and institutional structures of Authorized Heritage Discourse (AHD) and development cooperation that have instrumentalised notions of heritage for specific purposes, either in the consolidation of Nation-Sates or within economic dynamics such as tourism. People hold preconceptions about heritage and development and associate them with hegemonic uses, intentions, and agents, like the ones from UNESCO. Heritage and development are notions and practices within cultural, political, and economic systems that

depict people and places through official imaginaries. In this line, the introduction presents how governments have assumed the Authorised Heritage Discourses running the risk of reproducing colonial or biased characterisations of populations and places. Later on, in the chapters about Heritage Imaginaries and Imaginaries of Heritage, I showed how these colonial and stereotypical portrayals of Saraguro and Cuenca still exist in people's heritage imaginaries. The analysis developed in the introduction showed how heritage and development notions are shaped by power structures between actors, not only in terms of North and South but between technician-researchers and community members, thus generating distance between those who play different roles.

Part II of the dissertation includes Chapter 2 on the theoretical framework and Chapter 3 on the methodological framework. One of the main results of the dissertation is to propose imaginaries as an analytical lens for heritage, enhancing critical analysis of heritage within the complex and relational fabrics of meaning/practices/actors. The theoretical framework examined from a historical perspective the dominant notions of heritage, their origins, and politics. I compare them with the empirical data analysis in Chapter 8 on official imaginaries of heritage. Besides, in the theoretical framework, I clarify that for this dissertation's purposes, the imaginaries are understood as unspoken interpretation schemas constantly embodied in social life, practices, and institutions, determining personal identities and the collective social reality; hence the imaginaries notion enables us to comprehend heritage within cultural meaning systems, stressing how people signify, understand, experience, and create heritage. I distinguish that within the heritage field, we encounter **heritage imaginaries,** which represent how people and places are portrayed and how people, through practices, represent and manifest the way they see themselves in dialogue with others. **Imaginaries of heritage** which is at a much more abstract/conceptual level (it is a meta-reflection on what the notion of heritage means).

The core of the theorical frame is the proposal of imaginaries as an analytical lens for heritage studies. Thus, I developed three strategic analytical lines to unravel heritage as imaginaries. The first is the analysis of imaginaries to reveal the dichotomous and hegemonic logics present in the official understandings of heritage that arose from Western thought. This analytical line focuses on the purposes and meaning systems behind the notion of heritage. Here, it is essential to identify how heritage is embedded within different encounters and the coexistence of meaning systems and how identification processes, otherness, historical narratives, and memory are the source that produces and signify heritage imaginaries. Furthermore, as part of this analysis, it is critical to situate heritage imaginaries in relation to the positionalities of people who display heritage notions that align with their interests and purposes.

The second strategic analytical line is to approach imaginaries as situated knowledge. Therefore, the dissertation begins by analysing the actors involved in the TEAM-Minga project, how they relate to each other and their backgrounds. Likewise, the dissertation addressed imaginaries as situated knowledge unravelling how, historically, relationships between different positions about heritage and their power of decision, inference, interest, and claims are configured today. I analysed heritage imaginaries as situated knowledge in a transversal way within the dissertation. Hence, I address the AHD historical configuration's

institutional and international scope in the different chapters and how critical reaction has consolidated a predominant position. Furthermore, at a local level, I articulate how global and institutional discussions have been assumed in the study sites' daily experiences and the TEAM-Minga project's research practice. Furthermore, imaginaries as an analytical lens have the potential to situate heritage in other territories, bodies, and ontologies, challenging Western thinking. It is essential to highlight that situating heritage, like any other notion, in different cultural contexts and matrices does not seek ways to translate or relativise the meanings. In any case, situating heritage in other ontologies implies questioning the validity of the notions within other meaning systems, people's positionality and the possibility of meaning-making embedded in other relationships with the past, materiality, and identity.

The third strategic line in heritage imaginary's analysis is to explore alter-native heritage imaginaries, which are imaginaries that come from different standpoints and experiences, in contrast with conventional and taken-for-granted notions of heritage. The alter-native imaginaries show us that both the heritage imaginaries and the imaginaries of heritage are entangled understandings based on the creativity, reflection and changing process of identity. The alter-native imaginaries of heritage are connected to experiences that question the relevance and the long-standing asymmetric and colonial relationship and epistemic extractivist present in research and intervention from authorised heritage discourses. Hence, through an imaginary's analytical lens, I aim to situate heritage in self-determination processes that struggle with traditional and the official discourse of heritage and coexist and create representations from the difference. Thus, in the study sites, it was visible how people in their practices and experiences display alter-native imaginaries questioning homogeneous and categorising heritage views. This analysis is developed in part IV of the dissertation. Likewise, the analysis of the *vivencias* in Chukidel, which I have identified as alter-native imaginary, shows the need to delve into the difference between cultural productions and cultural heritage, the reflection of heritage beyond the use of the notion, and the strengthening of the political dimension of heritage, its meaning, and its uses. These questions are closely linked to the contributions of the Ontological turn, the decolonial entry, and the critical proposals of authors from the south who analyse mestizo identity and contradiction as the strength and complexity of post-colonial territories in Latin America, such as the notion of the *Ch´ixi* and new mestizo identities from borderlands (Anzaldúa, 1987).

In Chapter 3, on the methodological framework chapter, I explain in detail that multi-sited ethnography is the primary research method used. I explained in detail how I engaged in participant observation in Chukidel, El Vado, and as a researcher for the TEAM-Minga project. I conducted in-depth interviews to discuss with interlocutors how they understand cultural heritage or other notions they associate with it and from whom or in which situations they hear about it. I also explained how my research was greatly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, which postponed and reduced fieldwork in Chukidel and El Vado and the national social strikes in 2019 and 2022.

I complemented the data with digital ethnography in social media, focus groups, and informal conversations and examined the documents produced by the TEAM-Minga research group. The TEAM-Minga reports systematise discussions of both workshops at the study sites and the

internal meetings of TEAM-Minga, which contain the reflections and analysis of how the TEAM-Minga project was progressing and how the researchers interacted with the people in the study sites. Also, in the methodological framework chapter, I explained the data analysis using Nvivo software. The organisation and analysis of the data gathered in fieldwork are mainly based on open coding, with the aim of enhancing the reflection from the perspective and experience of the study site participants. Furthermore, the analysis of the information intersects with the imaginaries, an analytical lens proposed in the theoretical frame. Finally, this chapter also develops my positionality and ethical concerns, two fundamental elements guiding my fieldwork and analysis research practice.

Part III of the dissertation focuses on answering the concern on Heritage Imaginaries of the general research question by answering how inhabitants of the Chukidel and El Vado and researchers depict themself and others in the heritage field and practice (heritage imaginaries) within the frame of the TEAM-Minga project. To do so, I delve into how people use heritage to depict the identification referents of themselves and others and the relationships and positionalities of the actors within and between heritage discourses. The third part of the dissertation is divided into four chapters. Chapter 4 analyses the general characteristics of the study sites as they are located in the Andean region and economic and demographic dynamics and how local populations have changed. For example, the consequences of migration, the influence of remittances on lifestyles and construction models different from local ones (Klaufus, 2016), and how migrants continue to be linked and participate in local traditions or reproduce them in other territories. Migration implies population and economic change, greater flexibility, and the transformation of traditions. Another aspect of the Andean context is tourism, which generates an economic dynamic in both study sites and is present in the cooperation discourses as an opportunity to strengthen local economies. For instance, the fieldwork showed the idea of heritage as a resource for economic development, end up instrumentalising heritage and emptying it of its symbolic and social meaning in relation to the self-determination of people. Furthermore, tourism enhances ways to portray communities based on their ethnic and territorial conditions, displaying folkloric or essentialising imaginaries of people (Eljuri, 2016).

Finally, another general aspect in the context of the TEAM-Minga research and the study sites is the influence of colonialisation on the territorial, demographic, and cultural configuration of the populations of the study sites. The El Vado neighbourhood in Cuenca and the Chukidel commune in Saraguro resulted from the socio-spatial segregation promoted during the colony. Nowadays, places such as the historical centre of Cuenca and Saraguro continue to be depicted based on the colonial past or indigenous culture visible in UNESCO heritage declaration, touristic campaigns, and national heritage designations. The imaginaries deployed by heritage have institutionalised colonial historical narratives or ancient characterisations based on polarised characterisations comprehensions of the Andean inhabitants between the indigenous and the historical-colonial centres, when in reality, these coexist, intersect, and constitute identity constructions that inhabit the diverse spectrums of being urban, rural, indigenous, mestizo, gender and class that continuously defy categorisation (Benavides, 2015). Although the indigenous populations defy stereotypical ethnocentric characteristics, the economic gaps

and racial discrimination present in the Andes are still generate significant segregation of these populations in material, spatial and also symbolic terms (how they are depicted).

To delve deeper into the local context, chapters 5, 6 and 7 address each study site and the TEAM-Minga project. To do so, each chapter identifies the heritage imaginaries from diverse standpoints, demands, and expectations identified in the fieldwork. In the analysis of the study sites, I unravelled the relationships between the actors of each place and how each one deals with the meaning of heritage and its identification with official heritage imaginaries or deploying new representations of heritage. Both in Chukidel and in El Vado, there is a spectrum between more conservative or critical positions regarding the heritage and identity of each place, and this also has to do with the intergenerational gap and the expectations that each group has of the neighbourhood or the community in the future.

Furthermore, I added the TEAM-Minga project as part of the context and actively produced imaginaries on the interaction in the study sites. I examined the research group that conducted the TEAM-Minga background and the project motivations and arguments. To delve into the imaginaries of heritage and heritage imaginaries displayed by the TEAM-Minga Project, I analyse the leading theoretical concepts of the project, such as innovation, governance, tradition, and the ancestral and methodological approaches to disentangle structural and historical conditions and formats of the development cooperation projects in the global south and how academic and authorised imaginaries are operationalised within the research practice. Here, I show how development cooperation and heritage are related to enduring colonial representations (Smith et al., 2024).

The heritage imaginaries depict people and communities in the study sites and within the TEAM-Minga project, naturalising representations in coherence with the social order that preceded the present. In this sense, it can be concluded that heritage is a biopolitical device (Díaz, 2019) that predisposes the ways of managing and administering materialities, places, and discourses about the past and identity, and as a constitutive element of life in politics, as it legitimises, stabilises, and discursively creates certain practices, agencies, and subjectivities. The colonial background and global legal heritage focuses have established structures of domination and legitimisation that positioned people differently about power and vulnerability. Therefore, it is strategic to consider that people are differentially exposed to how the difference is depicted, for instance, in how the heritage of local populations is characterised, the systems of thought and meaning that predominate, and become historically and structurally to endure forms of domination. For instance, the most visible and powerful postures (AHD) have represented the heritage of non-Western populations from relativist readings that depoliticise the subjects' agency and seek a conditioned inclusion of this diversity within authorised discourses of heritage (Kaltmeier & Raussert, 2020; Kaltmeier & Rufer, 2017; Silva, 2010).

The analysis demonstrates that heritage imaginaries are produced and bonded to self-awareness about historical narratives and social memories, which allows cohesion and identification processes. People in the two study sites expressed disputes and negotiations about representation and how heritage is interpreted. In the case of Chukidel, the testimonies reveal an indigenous consciousness that is transversal to the heritage imaginaries and becomes

visible in the tensions between what is assigned and what is assumed. Therefore, in Chukidel, identification and self-determinations involve political positions and social agency of how they see themselves, disputing imaginaries that have constrained the role and participation of indigenous people. In El Vado, on the other hand, the linearity of the colonial history of the neighbourhood seems to mitigate representation conflicts. It would seem that the discussion on self-determination is less conflictive. Still, in silences and absences, imaginaries become visible, which people take for granted and do not address.

For instance, how the conservative positions of the El Vado neighbourhood committee deploy narratives of themselves without explicitly mentioning indigenous and displaying imaginaries of rurality and racialised only as part of the folkloric memory of the neighbourhood. Also, the TEAM-Minga project does not address discussions on conflicting identification in El Vado. In contrast, in Chukidel, identification and heritage inevitably imply a tension between the indigenous and the mestizo and, therefore, in the relationship with the researchers as representatives of the mestizo. On the contrary, in El Vado, the racial or ethnic background of people has not been an explicit concern to deal with within the TEAM-Minga project, evidenced by the heritage imaginaries in the neighbourhood that take for granted a white mestizo ethnic/racial condition.

A significant consideration of the fieldwork in Chukidel is that, unlike the Vado, heritage imaginaries imply a higher level of negotiation. In order words, although in the two study sites, there are historical and structural conditions that have become stereotypical representations, in Chukidel, local actors have expressed how they see themselves and how they are seen, which implies establishing relationships of distinction, agency, and positioning in the face of the colonial background and the role played by indigenous people in the past and the present. It is not explicitly present in the discussions of the TEAM-Minga how the representations of heritage today are articulated with animated indigenous modernity and in El Vado with contested positions of the conventional and the conservative that claim to recover relegated memories. In this way, the researchers, when addressing and focusing on one information over another, show their positioning in relation to the interests they prioritize, leaving out, for example, how heritage is also part of creative processes and cultural productions that dialogue and demand other representations of what traditional, identity and what heritage is.

People in Chukidel and El Vado have expressed heritage imaginaries beyond the limits of the neighbourhood or community, referring to a broader context of a sense of belonging to the city or indigenous territory. They see themselves according to their expectations not only about heritage but, above all, about their lifestyles. For example, in El Vado, the positionality taken by those who aspire to a more residential neighbourhood, those who seek commerce and are urban or contemporary artists is very evident about what and how they identify, use and exalt on the neighbourhood heritage. That is, they see themselves according to their needs and aspirations; from that, they use and value those elements that people believe identify them the most. For some, the most representative of the neighbourhood will be the religious festival and the Cruz del Vado; for others, heritage is the various cultural initiatives that have become artistic references of the city. Besides, the external view and practical conditions also play an essential role. El Vado is identified by inhabitants and foreigners based on its function as an entrance to the historic centre, a place of transit and urban and historical centrality.

Furthermore, the TEAM-Minga project frames the study sites based on its intention to work on vernacular architecture and traditional or ancestral forms of organisation, already imaginaries that precede and condition the way of seeing and interacting with local actors. Regarding the notions of "traditional" and "ancestral", the TEAM-Minga Project selected the study sites to represent territorial diversity. These notions suggest that the study sites are valued from traditional and ancestral authenticity as qualities designated to these territories and their organisation. It is naive to expect that the researchers see themselves stripped of their own imaginaries within the research and in any interaction. Hence, this research highlights that imaginaries as situated knowledge are tools for questioning our own frameworks of thought and considering meaning-making within a dialogue with other experiences and positionalities in the face of power and asymmetries. Hence, my observation of the use of notions such as ancestral and traditional in the TEAM-Minga project is in the need to validate, contrast and situate these notions in how populations have been framed, what position and role they have been designated using those notions and how in our research practice we reproduce or not reproduce those asymmetric power relation as the ground of knowledge production.

Another constant imaginary present in the discussion of the TEAM-Minga project and in the heritage field is 'value'. The TEAM-Minga project researchers refer to value as how people appreciate their heritage, social values and principles. Hence, the notion of value is present in imaginaries, such as the importance of valuing heritage as a way of self-appreciation to measure how "aware" people are of their heritage and how they manage their heritage as a resource for development. Also, TEAM-Minga has constantly discussed heritage as 'shared values (principles)'. In contrast, in the fieldwork, heritage's diversity and differences lie mainly in its principles and values. Therefore, in Chukidel and El Vado, the difference is in people's values regarding their lifestyle styles, religious and spiritual beliefs, and even organisational motivations as the ground from where they claim, signify, or challenge the identity referents being or not recognised as heritage. In the fieldwork for both the doctoral research and the TEAM-Minga project, it was identified that people strongly share and organised around concrete needs rather than values, for example, around issues of subsistence, security, and defence of territory being concerns that may be closely linked to heritage such as an economic driver, and the consideration of nature and territory as a heritage of the people. Thus, the imaginary of value as a way of appreciating heritage or shared social principles should be contrasted in people's daily lives where they interact with a heritage based on its meaning and how it links to their expectations, claims and necessities.

In part IV of the dissertation entitled Heritage Meaning-Making, I developed an analysis of the understanding of heritage (imaginaries of heritage) disclosed by the actors involved in the frame of the TEAM-Minga project. I analysed how people signify heritage by identifying the understandings associated with the notion of heritage and the standpoints that display diverse notions and qualities of what heritage is or should be. **Chapter 8 answered the concern about Imaginaries of heritage stated in the general research question.** It analysed the official understandings of heritage configured from how people know the term by disseminating authorised discourses and how these are reproduced and assumed in people's imaginaries. For analytical purposes, this chapter presents several separate heritage comprehensions to demonstrate how the official heritage imaginaries branch into various understandings that are part of the same meaning system. These imaginaries of cultural heritage also involve making sense of the world, the relationships with the past, and the ways of

identifying oneself in line with Western and national narratives. The authority and power of these heritage comprehensions are deeply rooted in common sense and their association with authority figures such as the Nation-state and international organisations. Thus, the changes in heritage as perceived as risks that threaten social disposition and its identities.

I identify two fundamental understandings that underlie official imaginaries of heritage. The first is heritage as a distant technical concept and object from people's life and designated notion, which establishes a practical knowledge of heritage based on the people's experience in the study sites that arise from a concrete power relationship between those who designate and those who assume the notion of heritage. The second essential understanding is heritage as an object-oriented experience, thus allowing a relationship with heritage fixed to its material existence and 'alien' to the human body and experience. The analysis of these two substantial understandings of heritage aligns with what was proposed in the theoretical frame about the need to rethink heritage beyond binary distinctions. In this way, this chapter demonstrates how imaginaries of heritage reproduce binaries as opposites embedded in Western thought, creating very sharp boundaries between what is the Self and the Other and the division between materiality/body/physics and ideas/metaphysics/spirit.

For instance, people in the study sites explained heritage as an object that has to be managed as an external, concrete, singularised, and classifiable element, as they have been seen or heard from public authorities and administrators in charge of heritage goods. For instance, this results in imaginaries of heritage as a classification and normativity, best exemplified in public policies. Also, heritage as an object-oriented experience is articulated with a linear reading of history, relegating the meaning and valuation of heritage to the extent of its condition of antiquity about the past and the ancestor's legacy, which ends up materialising relationships of possession, legacy, and inheritance of heritage objects. These inheritances must be regulated to guarantee the continuity of heritage conservation as a static object, either tangible or intangible, representing the almost petrified roots of the cultures, thus reconnecting with the imaginaries of heritages as a normativity. Thus, people maintain that heritage is an object from the past vulnerable to change, developing imaginaries of the conservation and endangerment of heritage. Furthermore, changes threaten the order in which the elites benefit from official heritage imaginaries, which have been an important instrument in shaping the roles and benefits of cultural heritage.

The fieldwork shows that heritage meaning-making implies all the interactions at play in the study sites. On the one hand, people articulated the meaning of heritage with their experiences within tourism, security, identity, normativity, and their projections of what they identify and what they mean as heritage. On the other hand, the meaning of heritage is permanently negotiated within the tensions that arise from the different readings and claims over the history and traditions of the same locality, as well as the question of what heritage objects are and what heritage means. Furthermore, the researchers' work focused on heritage as objects and elements on which the label of heritage falls rather than addressing the conflicts between the various meanings that heritage may represent. The fieldwork of the TEAM-Minga project shows how approaching the object of heritage without questioning the meaning of heritage implies being

guided by the assumptions and elements taken for granted that are imaginaries that have been naturalised but are not free of intentions and, therefore, that have been designed from processes of instrumentalisation of positions of power such as the academy, the state or the tourism agencies. Finally, **Chapter 8** also brings attention to the fact that, despite understanding inheritance as an object-oriented experience, inheritance meaning-making is an inherently complex experience beyond understanding inheritance as external objects from people and emotional experiences.

The importance of delving into heritage understanding lies not only in constructing and negotiating the terms in which heritage is discussed but moreover in the shared objectives in the heritage field. In order to take care of heritage, it is first necessary to understand what people understand by heritage, its meaning and its practical value in daily life, whether due to its economic usefulness, social cohesion, memory or sense of belonging. Therefore, building a sustainable engagement where people care about heritage must be based on how they understand heritage through the relationships they establish with the channels that disseminate official notions of heritage and their experiences with heritage in different situations.

Chapter 9 focused on answering the general research question's concern of alter-native heritage imaginaries. The question that guides this chapter is: What are the alter-native heritage imaginaries identified within the dialogue of the TEAM-Minga project and the study sites? This chapter highlights the importance of recognising the multiple voices that claim different readings of history, identity, and worlding practices, as well as a broad spectrum of expressions, understandings, and representations. Therefore, people create and display alternative-native imaginaries to navigate the differences and the overlapping meaning systems.

The authorised heritage discourse is a metanarrative and also an institution that mobilises various sectors and influences the common sense that people have about heritage in answer, situated knowledge are a way to unravel and find another comprehension within a larger vision is to be somewhere in particular within the network and within the net of imaginaries settle by official discusses (Haraway, 1988). Hence, based on practical experiences and positionalities identified in the study sites, I show how alter-native imaginaries consist of agentive practices and reflective and relational creation processes. In the fieldwork, the alter-native heritage imaginaries identify as practices, and cultural initiatives are the *Inti Raymi, the Prohibido* Cultural Centre, the *Minga*, the *Chakra,* the myths, the *jimba*, and the defense of the water source in Fierro Urco Mountain, these experiences reveal how people express alter-native imaginaries that embodied alterity, and the creation and continuous transformation of heritage, and where the distance between what is a cultural production and heritage seems blurred.

To reflect on heritage meaning-making in Andean ontologies, I do so based on the Chukidel people's understanding of heritage as a *vivencia*. The people's explanation of heritage as *vivencia* shows the meaning-making of heritage based on the doing/feeling/being logic, where heritage acquires meaning in the collective's practical actions and *vivencias*. Likewise, the people in Chukidel argue that heritage is an integral part of their daily lives, where every human and non-human agent is interconnected in dual and corresponding relationships such as the Chakra experience. That is to say; it should not be misinterpreted that the understanding of

heritage as the integral experience of Saraguro implies all the traditional elements or all the inherited principles and values should be maintained. Still, integral refers to how everything in life and the heritage is articulated. Changes are part of how those connections are dynamic and maintain the selectivity of what is remembered, produced and forgotten as part of the self-critical and reflective identification of oneself. It means alter-native imaginaries come from the experiences of people who not only look for what to maintain or create but also what to forget or overcome within their own legacies. Furthermore, I believe that the alter-native imaginaries linked with resistance and re-existence can be more explicit and relevant in populations like Chukidel than in El Vado. This has to do with how the Saraguros understand heritage through their identity. Therefore, their identification and differentiation from the rest is based on the sense of belonging to Saraguro as a place and, above all, as a culture. In contrast, in El Vado, people mainly reflect on heritage meaning not necessarily related to their personal or collective identity as Vadeños but in the elements that identify the neighbourhood as a place.

It is essential to understand that rethinking heritage from Andean Ontologies implies rethinking how Andean population identify nowadays beyond essentialist and ethnocentric stereotypes. For instance, in Chukidel, heritage as a *vivencias* is linked to resistance and (re)existence as alter-native imaginaries essential in the face of multicultural and relativist positions that have depoliticised and instrumentalised the heritage of these populations. The *vivencias* addressed in this dissertation showed how people reclaim tradition and modernity as interwoven, creating representations and understandings of heritage with greater involvement and agency over cultural heritage's use, meaning, and potential outside official institutionality.

The main lesson learned from fieldwork in the TEAM-Minga project focuses on how to construct new sensitivities and practices that allow first to develop positionalities that will enable the production of a situated knowledge incorporating alter-native imaginaries or creating other meanings for heritage, primarily from the transformation of human relationships inside and outside of research work and the heritage field. Likewise, the results of the researchers' self-evaluation indicate that it is a challenge to expose official imaginaries and asymmetry relations in which the meaning and management of heritage are constructed. For this reason, part of the core assessment reflection within the TEAM-Minga project has been to be aware of the relationships, differences, and imaginaries that shape the spaces of dialogue that allow listening and expressing some imaginaries over others.

Concluding reflections

One relevant consideration that this work contributes is that, in the face of the growing heritagisation of populations' identity elements, it is essential to establish dialogues that recognise and articulate the different understandings of heritage, ways of valuing and heritage management. The different heritage imaginaries are embedded in the context and life experiences of the actors in each territory. Hence, the general research question is answered in dialogues with people, interviews, or workshops where heritage makes sense based on each interlocutor's motivations and cultural matrices and what and how people show themselves and are seen. Each actor in the TEAM-Minga was contributed to the project from their conception of heritage, generating a complex dynamic to seek agreements on what we understand and

expect from the people involved. There was no initial agreement on the meaning of heritage or how each locality was framed, considering they are heterogeneous spaces with their own internal tensions and disputes; there was then much less agreement on managing heritage.

Although the imaginaries identified throughout this work result from historical processes, they are explicitly manifested in the interactions and dialogues that occur in the context of the TEAM-Minga project and the doctoral research. Heritage meaning-making is marked by its social function, which allows actors to situate themselves in history and in relation to others, develop a sense of belonging and identification, and claim the spaces and symbols of the place they inhabit as their own. Therefore, heritage imaginaries are linked to the processes of identification and representation. For instance, the fieldwork has shown that people display heritage imaginaries and imaginaries of heritage based on different purposes and situations, whether political, economic, or touristic; these always maintain a self-referential sense; that is, they integrate the idea of how people see themselves and whether they seen feel represented or not by what is called heritage.

How people understand heritage and use it to depict and interact with each other shows a strong incidence of AHD, which is visible in the binary foundations from which one looks at the other and understands the other. Therefore, it is also based on that process of differentiation from opposites and others from positions of power. I consider it strategic that chapters 3 and 8 of this dissertation dissect taken-for-granted comprehensions of heritage, how they operate in different dimensions of life, and the interactions of people creating otherness and a difference. In this line, distinguishing oneself underlies authentic, ancestral, traditional, and even heritage labels. The production of otherness is clearly identified in the various examples shown in part III of the dissertation on how the populations of the study sites have been portrayed and also respond to the continuity of social order. Power actors such as academia, tourism, NGOs, or National States disseminate heritage imaginaries that frame indigenous populations, designating them a particular role linked to folklore where their political dimension is restricted or displaced. In El Vado, the understanding of heritage is seen more explicitly linked to the social order in the regulations (public policies and city hall normative) on the use and occupation of public spaces in historical areas, and therefore, heritage continues to be a tool that allows regulation through who and how to use heritage space. Therefore, the analysis of heritage imaginaries as situated knowledge responds to not only the historical-cultural context but also the positionalities and vulnerabilities in the face of authorised social order and the elite's way of depicting peoples and places and what is or is not allowed to do.

Throughout the dissertation, it is shown that heritage meaning-making is a dialogical and relational process; unlike official heritage imaginaries, the identification of alter-native imaginaries allows us to know and rethink heritage from alterity rather than generating polarisations between identities due to dichotomous and exclusive characterisations. The ethnography showed how identifications are configured based on the coexistence of differences, dissonances and contradictions in the study site's context. For example, in El Vado, the different experiences and standpoints of people showed how the conventional coexists with transgressive cultural production; both configure the identity of the neighbourhood and are references of equal importance as it is in *Pasada del Divino Diablito* by the cultural managers

of El Vado. Also, in Chukidel, young people, through projects such as *Runa Rock* and *Inti Raymi*, create identity referents and transform them from their lecture and representation of tradition.

This dissertation gradually revealed the different layers on which heritage imaginaries are built, precisely through the multiple interactions between diverse actors, whether heritage practitioners, indigenous, academics, and people in the countryside or the city, and their different positions, not only about the notion of heritage but also how identity references are claimed and signify among local actors, challenging official discourses both nationally, internationally and within the study sites themselves. Hence, the general research question finds an answer in people's stories about how they know or understand heritage, their specific experiences from interactions with other agents, and collective memories from where they explain how they see the heritage notion in interaction with researchers or in tourism promotion. Likewise, people understand the idea of heritage and use heritage to depict the populations and themselves in the debate between local actors, as happens in El Vado between the neighbourhood committee, cultural managers and artisans, as well as in the meeting with tourists, academics, or public administration officials and the roles they play in the study sites.

Here, it is essential to highlight that although there is a hegemonic construction of heritage, local actors are not passive recipients of top-down discursive constructions. Instead, they find diverse and creative ways to re-appropriate Authorised Heritage Discourses. This dissertation has shown how people re-appropriate, promote, or challenge imaginaries of heritage and heritage imaginaries and how they display alter-native imaginaries of heritage beyond the dichotomic dilemmas that AHD unfolds.

It is also essential in the heritage field to pay attention to how research projects, in this case, TEAM-Minga and some local actors, depict the threats to heritage. In this line, modernisation, globalisation, new ways of life (particularly of the new generations) and the side effects of ITC are presented as risks for heritage enhancing a heritage-conservative vision where the ‘modern’ or contemporary is a threat to cultural heritage. The risk of considering heritage loss as the main problem is that it oversees urgent and vital issues that threaten people's lives in material terms and, therefore, their heritage.

As pointed out in the last chapter of this dissertation, life and *vivencias* as the core of heritage show that the central problems are, for example, access to housing, environmental crises, defence of the territory, food sovereignty, and self-determination. Hence, I conclude that the threat of heritage, rather than modernity as a synonym for change, transformation and loss of assets, practices and aesthetics, is precisely the immutability of socio-economic gaps, violence, forms of discrimination and exploitation. In this line, the experiences of alter-native imaginaries of heritage, such as in the case of Chukidel, maintain a memory that enables us to be aware of and overcome relations of oppression. In this sense, I think heritage gains even more strength and significance in what should be transformed and overcome for the future instead of what must be preserved.

Limitations and challenges of the research

The limitations and potential of using imaginaries as an analytical lens in heritage studies depend on the research objectives and the researcher's positionality. Imaginaries as social constructions are not fixed to certainties or unique truths regarding the notions, representations, or meaning-making of heritage, which could become ambiguous categories if they are not situated in a historical and contextualised analysis. Still, the flexibility of imaginaries enables challenging pre-established notions and comprehensions of heritage. Furthermore, it should also be noted that this analytical lens dismantles certainties. Thus, serendipity can be an opportunity to learn from the unplanned.

One of the challenges in the study of heritage as imaginaries is how we articulate different types of knowledge, meaning systems, and cultural matrices. One of the risks of imaginaries research, especially when seeking to implement a participatory approach, is falling into practices that romanticize the dialogue and neglect the tensions of power and knowledge production arising from different ontologies and perspectives (Moreno et al., 2021).

There were several limitations and challenges during the doctoral research process. The first challenge was undoubtedly joining a pre-established project. My first effort was certainly to understand the objectives, results, purposes, designs, and intentions of the TEAM-Minga Project and how they sought to work in the study sites. In this way, it was a challenge to generate an interdisciplinary dialogue between an already consolidated team and agenda composed of architectural technicians and my professional background from the social sciences, such as sociology and anthropology. I constantly felt that my concern to clearly understand the project's objectives and research interests was perceived as criticism and uncomfortable doubts, contrary to my effort to understand how my participation could contribute to the research objectives. Likewise, the project's fieldwork did not consider an anthropology student in its design. The fieldwork designed by the project consisted of workshops and interaction with key informants in each study site. The long stays at the study sites as part of the doctoral ethnographic fieldwork were not planned in the operational management of the project. In this framework, I considered it pertinent to include the analysis of the project researchers' imaginaries as a way to better understand the reasoning and comprehension of the TEAM-Minga as agents with an impact on the study sites imaginaries.

Another limitation was the difficulty of reconciling the tasks assigned to me as part of the research team and the activities of my doctoral research. The load of project responsibilities implied full-time dedication, which did not allow me to focus on the doctoral research process consistently. The effort to fulfil the project goals and the difficulty of conducting fieldwork was intensified by the Covid-19 pandemic. As a result, my fieldwork was postponed for a year. I began in-person ethnography only in February 2021, which caused my doctoral research to have an even bigger temporal gap with the project agenda. Travel restrictions, mobility, and interaction considerably reduced the time scheduled to carry out in situ ethnography.

Another significant limitation was the national strikes led by the indigenous movement at the national level, which were included as part of the research context. These were social and

political upheaval moments and the country's economic crisis. The first strike began on Thursday, October 3, 2019, and lasted for 18 days, leaving several dead, injured, and detained. The second national strike occurred between June 13-30, 2022, during the government of Guillermo Lasso; this particular national strike interfered with the advisors of this doctoral research from visiting the study sites as planned. Although COVID-19 and the national strikes created substantial limitations in mobility and interaction, they also generated an exceptional situation for studying heritage imaginaries. In those particular instances of crisis, priorities, urgencies, tensions, stereotypes, and polarisations became more visible. In these contexts, I consider it essential to ask ourselves about the relevance of research on heritage and how it contributes to practical solutions at a time of greatest need and social, economic, and environmental insecurity.

Regarding the in-person fieldwork, I must recognise that the difference in the ethnography applied in Chukidel and El Vado may be a limitation since a more inversive ethnography was conducted in Chukidel, which is reflected throughout the dissertation. In Chukidel, the coexistence and the articulation with local organisations allowed me to live more closely with the people and experience the community dynamics. Even though El Vado is a closer and well-known space by myself, engaging in a local organisation was more difficult because the people were less articulated and the neighbourhood presented strong tensions and disputes. I think that in the dissertation, the difference between the fieldwork and how immersive it was in Chukidel is visible, and how, in the city, people are more distant. Regarding fieldwork, I consider that an important aspect of strengthening in future research and that has been left pending in this dissertation is the importance of including a more intergenerational and gender approach and how this affects heritage meaning-making, the role played by young people and women in how they identify themselves and claim identity referents in each study sites.

The PhD as part of a VLIR-UOS project has undoubtedly been a valuable professional opportunity for me. Likewise, the format of annual stays and the constant mobility between Belgium and Ecuador do not take into account the difficulties and investment of time, the physical and emotional wear and tear due to the visa paperwork, and the installation processes; in many cases, it meant a discontinuity in the relationships established both within the TEAM-Minga project and in the study sites. I consider that this affected the ethnography since it is based on achieving an assertive insertion in the community, relationships of trust and establishing an open and transparent dialogue with local actors. In El Vado, the information collection was somewhat irregular and discontinuous. I conducted fieldwork every time I returned to Cuenca, which affected the proximity of the neighbourhood residents.

I also have to acknowledge that a limitation is the possibility that I reproduced essentializing approaches and readings in my practice, although I sought to distance myself from biased positions. Also, the imaginaries are constructed in the interaction, so I must recognize that my presence and positionality were present factors in the dialogues with people. My political positions and proximity to social movements allowed me, both in El Vado and Chukidel, to establish relationships based on those political-social affinities.

Finally, one of this dissertation's main challenges has been conducting research in a foreign language, not only as an academic challenge in writing the text but also as in the experiences and construction of thought it develops and expresses with other sensitivities in my native language. The challenge of translating that into English has undoubtedly been a limitation. However, it has also been a challenge that has allowed me to adapt to other academic and international spaces where heritage is discussed. Despite this, I believe the centrality of English in academic production often leaves out people, terms and positions that do not have the privilege of having access to English as a communication tool.

Limitations and challenges of the TEAM-Minga project

Along these lines, one limitation of the TEAM-Minag Project research is the weak reflexivity on the political dimensions of heritage, asymmetric power, and representation conflicts. The doctoral dissertation shows the importance of such reflections and questions about race and ethnicity or generation gaps in contexts where the ethnic issue is taken for granted, causing blindness around race and ethnicity inequalities (Andreassen & Myong, 2017). The fieldwork within the TEAM-Minga project leaves essential lessons that strengthen the interdisciplinary, reflective, and participatory research process. As the project's researchers identified, the challenges focus on changing human relations and sensitivity within the research groups and how researchers could be catalysts of the questions that arise from the local initiatives themselves and facilitators in the systematisation and analysis of information rather than agents that prompt models of development or heritage management. Here, the limitations are in the research formats and, in particular, in the cooperation projects based on quantifiable results and pre-established products, and therefore, local participation is reduced to pre-established agendas. In response to this limitation, engaging in local initiatives is an essential learning from fieldwork. The fieldwork identified concrete experiences where people were already working on identitarian referents without using technical or academic language. Developing project proposals with study site people and articulating their initiatives would be strategic. To do this, it is necessary to change the role of researchers so that they can have the flexibility and sensitivity to know how to understand the terms in which people work and strengthen an ethic and practice of accountability over the activities, results and benefit of the projects towards the people in study sites.

Regarding the care and management of heritage, a significant challenge is to recover legitimacy and credibility in participatory processes, particularly those linked to cultural heritage management. During the fieldwork for the doctoral research and the TEAM-Minga project, an important challenge was to deal with the lack of trust, tiredness and weakened credibility of local actors' participatory spaces and processes. People have mentioned that these feelings come from the constant presence of researchers and government officials in the study sites promoting participative spaces. However, these spaces are not, in fact, decision-making spaces but mainly consultative, and people have also expressed that researchers extract knowledge and do not share the results of the studies. This is a well-known problem even more in places like El Vado and Saraguro, where there is a significant transit of local or international researchers. In Chukidel, their experience with the government program Municipal

Participatory Budget as a space for collective decision-making of municipal funds left negative perceptions due to the lack of transparency, which has led to weakening the credibility in citizen participation in governmental spaces. Therefore, during the TEAM-Minga project and the doctoral fieldwork, building trusting relationships with local actors also implied dialogue about how local actors felt about their previous experiences in participatory spaces. I believe that the TEAM-Minga project and the doctoral research sought to be transparent about the objectives and results of the study, as well as to socialize the research results with local actors. Besides, the focus on stakeholder´s heritage imaginaries call to participatory research and process, engaging with people demands and mainly based on decision-making rather than conditioned inclusion.

The TEAM-Minga researchers expressed that the level of participation of the inhabitants of the study sites in the TEAM-Minga project has, above all, remained along the lines of community involvement and consultation (Internal Capability Building Evaluation Report, TEAM-Minga Project, 2022, p. 20). This means that the participation of the people from Chukidel and El Vado has mainly implied dialogue and constant interaction between the researchers and the individuals from the study sites. The involvement of people from the study sites did not mean their direct participation in the project's decision-making regarding the methodologies, objectives, and results previously defined. The people in the study sites who participated in the TEAM-Minga project's workshop knew their level of involvement, incidence, and even their role in the framework of academic research. It is from this awareness that, on many occasions, the people from the study sites questioned the benefits that the project could bring. Therefore, it is critical not to overlook practices that, in the fields of development and cultural heritage, encourage assistance dynamics by maintaining inequitable relations on the production of knowledge (Ziai, 2016). A relevant outcome of the fieldwork is that rebuilding relationships of trust also implies guaranteeing that the research projects conduct a design and negotiation with local actors from the beginning, the construction of collective and safe decision-making spaces and to whom and who assess and conducts the accountability of the results and benefits of the projects.

Avenues for further research

This research is a first step towards enhancing the potential of imaginaries analysis in heritage studies. It also highlights the potential of Other ontologies and practical experiences in how heritage is signify, cared, and managed. In fact, the research on heritage imaginaries in the context of the TEAM-Minga project, El Vado and Chukidel raises further research lines such as: Dive into how heritage is a disputed field and how people's different claims about heritage are also ways to value and make heritage meaningful. In the fieldwork, I observed that the heritage over which there is the most dispute is the ones that are most rooted and present in the identity and memory of the people.

Likewise, this research, in particular from alter-native imaginaries, shows the creativity and continuous transformation of heritage, questioning conservation perspectives and establishing the need to delve deeper into embracing change and creative new ways of assessment in

heritage studies and management. I believe that it is important to continue researching heritage from the multiple identifications and positionalities, from what Rivera (2018) calls Ch´ixi. There remains much to investigate about heritage from experiences that challenge conventional classifications and that highlight the meaning of heritage from borderland territories, identities, and ontologies (Anzaldúa, 1987). The lines of research opened by the imaginaries in the heritage field also allow us to question how the care and management of heritage are closely linked with ontologies and history and, therefore, with people's positionality in relation to power and hegemonic narratives. For instance, *vivencias* as alter-native imaginaries have shown that the care and continuity of heritage imply a concern and problem about how people's individual and collective lives are cared and sustained. Finally, this research suggests deepening how local actors can hold other imaginaries that are not necessarily linked with the notion of heritage, which operates as an identity and collective reference, and also build history and memory grounded in each territory's meaning-making systems and worlding practices. Therefore, the imaginaries are also a framework for analysing the validity of the notion of heritage and what could be alternatives to heritage not only as a concept but also in terms of how it relates to cultural production and identity legacies.

The strengths of anthropological research in the heritage field lie in the ethnographic fieldwork and the possibility of doing situated research with greater involvement of local actors. As we have seen throughout this dissertation, the anthropology of imaginaries in the heritage field demystifies the homogeneity of heritage communities. There are diverse actors and points of view in the field, both at the study sites and in the research group. The anthropological research also enhances the analysis of multiple rationalities and voices, delving into the interaction and correspondence of various imaginaries of heritage and heritage imaginaries. Furthermore, the anthropology of imaginaries in the heritage field enables us to problematise the disputes, negotiations, and tensions arising from the multiplicities of people's positionalities, making visible asymmetry relations, historical structures, and social orders present in the heritage meaning and representation.

Besides, I believe that anthropological research on imaginaries can significantly contribute to enhancing practical knowledge and care of heritage in terms of the inhabitants and, in this way, improving the design, implementation, and knowledge production of cooperation projects in coherence with the claims, motivation, and knowledge frames of local contexts. Furthermore, I argue that the strengths of anthropological research in the heritage field are flexibility and positionality, which build bridges between practical and academic knowledge. In this line, anthropology contributes to rethinking the role and impact of researchers in the heritage field in general. Finally, the anthropological research based on situated knowledge and reflexivity enables researchers to embrace the serendipity that comes from validating the project research objectives and concepts in the field and the active participation of local actors in the design, analysis, and knowledge production, being opportunities to learn from unexpected outcomes.

This research contributes to anthropological scholars shedding light on the imaginary's analytical lens, and it contributes to anthropological scholars that continue exploring the different layers and implications of identity and how, from various experiences, anthropology research could document and analyse other possibilities and paths within the social, economy

and environment crisis. In line with authors like Harrison (2015), I believe that unravelling official imaginaries opens questions of what and how heritage or rather identity can have a radical and transformative power and create strategic relationships in the face of a global context of growing polarisations and radicalisation of conservative's standpoints being increasingly challenging to listen and establish dialogues among different. This research provides a practical example where exploring the imaginaries is about listening to the meanings, differences, and positionalities of the Other in their terms and languages; here, the role of anthropology is substantial in reaching solutions that get out of unidirectional conflicts.

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Annexes

Annex I: Workshops conducted by the TEAM-Minga in the study sites

TEAM-Minga Project workshops					
Title	**Date**	**Place**	**Male**	**Female**	**Total**
Presentación	28/6/2019	Chukidel-Saraguro	3	4	7
Taller para el sociograma con los miembros del cabildo de Chukidel	03/02/2020	Chukidel-Saraguro	no registration sheets		
Taller de devolución y escucha: Minga de conocimientos cuidando el Patrimonio Comunitario	3/6/2021	Chukidel-Saraguro	30	44	74
	5/6/2021	Chukidel-Saraguro	8	19	27
Taller de Co-creación	28/7/2021	Chukidel-Saraguro	8	8	16
Taller de Co-creación Directrices	21/12/2021	Cuenca	7	4	11
Taller de Validación y Codiseño de Espacio Comunitario	10/4/2022	Chukidel-Saraguro	6	7	13
Sociograma	3/3/2020 - 9/3/2020	El Vado	3	2	5
Taller de devolución y escucha	21/5/2021	El Vado	4	4	8
	22/5/2021	El Vado	2	2	4
Taller de Co-creación	1/7/2021	El Vado	11	11	22
Taller de Planificación Participativa	1/10/2021	El Vado	8	3	11
Taller de Co-creación de Directrices	1/12/2022	El Vado	5	2	7
Taller de Validación	24/10/2022	El Vado	5	1	6
Taller de Co-creación	30/3/2022	El Vado	10	3	13
Taller de Co-diseño Conjunto Patrimonial El Vado	6/4/2022	El Vado	3	2	5
Taller de Aproximación	24/10/2022	El Vado	7	11	18
Taller Co-creación y Planificación Participativa	11/11/2022	El Vado	11	7	18
Taller Co-creación y Planificación Participativa 2	21/11/2022	El Vado	9	5	14

Taller de Presentación de proyectos	28/11/2022	El Vado	8	8	16
Taller de Planificación Participativa	6/12/2022	El Vado	5	4	9
Taller de Planificación Participativa Agenda Cultural	30/1/2023	El Vado	4	2	6

I highlighted in blue the workshops in which I participated or organised.

Annex II: Expert interviews

	Expert interviews					
No.	**Interviewee**	**Position**	**Institution**	**Research line**	**Place**	**Date**
1	Gabriela Eljuri, PhD.	Professor/ researcher	University of Azuay, Ecuador.	Cultural heritage as a scenario of practices, discourses and disputes: The squares of the Historic Centre of Cuenca.	Cuenca-Ecuador	2019
2	Lucia Fernandez, MA.	Professor/ researcher	University of Cuenca, Ecuador.	Community-based tourism in Saraguro	Cuenca-Ecuador	2019
3	Fausto Quizhpe, PhD.	Assistant Professor/ researcher	Andean University Simón Bolivar, Ecuador.	Philosophy, ethics and indigenous justice	Saraguro-Ecuador	28/4/2021
4	Inti Cartuche Vacacela, PhD.	Professor/ researcher	Central University of Ecuador	Plurinationality in dispute: Community-popular struggles in Ecuador (1970 - 2019)	Saraguro-Ecuador	30/7/2022
5	Natasha Cabrera, PhD.	Professor/ researcher	University of Cuenca, Ecuador.	Urban reconfiguration, tourism, and displacement in the Historic Centre of Cuenca-Ecuador	Cuenca-Ecuador	22/11/2022
6	Armando Muyolema, PhD.	Professor/ researcher	University of Wisconsin-Madison, EEUU	Colonialism and Representation: Towards a Re-reading of Latin Americanism, Indigenism and Class-Ethnic Discourses in the 20th Century Andes.	Online	06/09/2023
7	Tomás Rodríguez-Villasante PhD.	Emeritus Professor	Complutense University of Madrid	Participatory Methodology Sociology of social	Online	15/04/2024

				movements, urban and rural		

Annex III: Websites followed for the digital ethnography

In addition to personal Facebook pages, I followed Facebook pages of organizations and web pages managed by inhabitants of Chukidel:

1. Las Lagunas Chukidel y Comuna Las Lagunas three profiles managed by ex-*Capak*s and the current Cabildo:
    a. https://www.facebook.com/laslagunas.chukidel.9
    b. https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100067515936327
    c. https://www.facebook.com/pages/Comuna-LAS-Lagunas-Chukidel/151350562197629
2. Runa Causai Facebook page of the cultural and sports group of Chukidel.
    a. https://www.facebook.com/RunaCausai
3. Runa Rock The independent music festival's Facebook page is part of the Inti Raymi celebration in Chukidel.
    a. https://www.facebook.com/RunaRockFestival/
4. Turismo Comunitario Wawkys Facebook profile managed by an inhabitant (or resident) of Chukidel who offers tourism within the community.
    a. https://www.facebook.com/WawkysTurismoComunitario/
5. Taller Saraguro Facebook page
    a. https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100057102143910
6. Cecib Inti Raymi Facebook page of the bilingual intercultural educational centre of Chukidel.
    a. https://www.facebook.com/ceiibintiraymi.intiraymi
7. Saraguro City Hall website
    a. https://saraguro.gob.ec/

The social networks that I followed linked to El Vado were:

1. *Pasión Vadeña 'Cruz del Vado'* page managed by a family in the neighbourhood.
    a. https://www.facebook.com/pasionvadena
2. *El Vado Reliquia Turística y Cultural* Facebook page and website for disseminating tourism managed by the cultural sector of the neighbourhood.
    a. https://www.facebook.com/barrioelvado
3. *El Vado un lugar turístico* Facebook page for tourist dissemination managed by the Cruz del Vado sports club.
    a. https://www.facebook.com/elvadoesunlugarturistico
4. Web and Facebook page of the Prohibido Cultural Centre.
    a. https://www.facebook.com/ProhibidoCentroCultural
    b. https://prohibidocc.wordpress.com/?fbclid=IwAR3znxTqG69NjSa3M1GrSXwczEoeuOJhsqn_kzVmyBI00EBoiKaEsu4Zdhc
5. Website of the National Institute of Cultural Heritage.
    a. https://www.patrimoniocultural.gob.ec/
    b. https://www.facebook.com/INPCECUADOR
6. Web page of the Municipal Culture Department of Cuenca.
    a. https://www.facebook.com/CulturaCUE
    b. https://www.facebook.com/CasasCentrosMunicipales
7. Facebook group *Cuenca, Memoria y Testimonio.*
    a. https://www.facebook.com/groups/595462021263290/?hoisted_section_header_type=recently_seen&multi_permalinks=1515419025934247

Annex IV: TEAM-Minga documents

The TEAM-Minga project literature reviewed is the following:

Documents
TEAM-Minga project proposal for the TEAM Funds VLIR UOS (2019)
Methodological Guide of the Project (2020)
Systematization and report of Cochapata and Chukidel 2019 characterization workshop by Ana Astudillo (2019)
TEAM-Minga Glossary of the Project (2020)
Conceptual framework report of the Project (2020)
TEAM-Minga Theoretical Framework: Complexity, Rhizomes and Anthropology by Ana Astudillo (2020)
Organizational systems database (2020) by Silvia Auquilla
Theorical Framework by Luis Herrera (2021)
State Art on Governance report by Jorge Amaya (2020)
Quantitative-qualitative approximation Territory Governance report by Jorge Amaya (2022)
Governance Principles report by Jorge Amaya (2021)
Report of methodological propose for the feasibility analysis by María Siguenza (2022)
State Art on Innovation report by María Siguenza (2021)
Participatory Methodology design for the project (2020)
Unifying report on the ancestral organization systems characterization in the case studies of the TEAM-Minga project by Ana Astudillo (2022)
Heritage diagnosis report in Chukidel and El Vado by Silvia Auquilla and Victor Caldas (2020)
Contextualization report of Chukidel and El Vado by Ana Astudillo (2021)
Chukidel and El Vado Interview Analysis Report by Ana Astudillo (2022)
Systematization of the sociogram of Chukidel and El Vado by Victor Caldas (2021)
Systematization of the return and listening workshop of Chukidel and El Vado (2021)
Systematization of the Chukidel y El Vado co-creation workshop by Victor Caldas (2021)

Chukidel and El Vado Prioritization Workshop Report (2022)
Report of the validation and co-design workshop in Chukidel and El Vado by Victor Caldas (2022)
Systematization of the workshop on contrasting the Chukidel and El Vado Guidelines by Victor Caldas (2022)
Feasibility report Chukidel and El Vado (2022)
Report on the evaluation of capacities and learning of the TEAM-Minga research group by Ana Astudillo (2022)

Annex V: TEAM-Minga project glossary

Below are TEAM-Minga Project glossary concepts:

- Innovation: Set of activities -process- or the result of these -product-, new or improved, that provides solutions to the specific problems of a territory through the development of ideas that differ from previous processes or products, and that are introduced to society to generate a measurable value that transforms reality.
- This project states that innovation refers to the governance process -co-government decisions between the state and society- on the management and handling of heritage in a territory. To be considered innovative processes, they must comply with the following principles:
    - Differ substantially from the governance processes previously applied in the territory. That is, creating a difference between before and after the implementation of an innovative process.
    - Be accepted and implemented by a group of representative inhabitants in society, that is, its impact. To recognize this aspect, it must be calculated based on the scale at which the innovation is inserted (international, national, provincial, cantonal, and parish).
    - Generate measurable values that transform reality. This aspect is fundamental since, for example, for an innovation to be inserted into society and replicated, it is necessary to verify that new resources are reached through innovation, or existing ones are optimised (generation of added value).

- Governance: Process by which decision-making in a territory is built in a shared manner in its different phases (design, implementation, control and evaluation) between various actors (governments, private sector, civil society), who, recognizing their autonomy and interdependence in various areas (economic, social, cultural, environmental) and scales (international, national, provincial, cantonal and parish, community), decide to establish joint action agreements that generate improvements in the common good and in the territorial trust.
- Traditional: It is that which transcends and survives during sustained historical processes by bringing together beliefs, customs, and knowledge developed by diverse peoples during long periods of time. An example of a tradition is the *Inti Raymi* ritual, the Minga as collective work, or *adobe* construction in certain urban and rural sectors.
- Ancestral: It consists of the founding process of the history and tradition of a people; it is a mythical remembrance of the origins. A tradition that was not colonised by populations and civilizations outside that process. In the worlds of indigenous peoples, ancestral is original tradition, not colonised by the West or by the religious impositions of Christianity. Nowadays, the concept of ancestral is widely used by peoples who claim their origin as different from Western domination, to look at what has survived since what they symbolically call the time of the grandfathers and grandmothers. The word Pachacutik is a clear example; is a circular return of the origins to inaugurate a

new historical era. Also, the celebration of Pawcar Raymi on March 21 as the beginning of the year for the Kichwa people.

Appendix: PhDs in Social Sciences and in Social and Cultural Anthropology

http://soc.kuleuven.be/fsw/doctoralprogramme/ourdoctors

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