

# From rural to urban autonomy? Revisiting the Mexican *Ejido* in Guadalajara, México.

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## Abstract

The Ejido is both a communal land tenure regime and the name of self-governed, mostly rural communities. Born after the struggles of the Mexican Revolution, there is no clear-cut definition of what an Ejido is, and in practice the concept was applied as a process: to give land to those who were dispossessed, granting usufruct rights to cultivate, to manage its resources, and to inhabit; implying the creation of autonomous communities. The paper excavates the figure of the ejido while addressing the contestations over public land privatizations in Mexico's second largest conurbation, Guadalajara, in order to develop alternative approaches in land tenure and rights systems that could mobilize the agencies of local communities against exclusionary urban transformations. Although the Mexican ejido is fundamentally an agrarian institution, in this work I argue that its main characteristics have the potentiality to foster social innovation by reinstalling a social function of urban, rather than rural land.

Keywords: *ejido*, *commons*, *Guadalajara*, *Mexico*

## Introduction

Since its conception originated in colonial times, through the Mexican Revolution, to the current neoliberal regime, the Mexican *Ejido* has embedded a great variety of different meanings that makes it one of the most versatile communal legal figures, and which have been given different objectives and functions throughout history.<sup>1</sup> Born after the struggles of the Mexican Revolution, there is no clear-cut definition of what an *Ejido* is, however it is mentioned as such in the constitution of 1917, and in practice the concept was applied as a process: to give land to those who were dispossessed of it, granting 'usufruct rights' to cultivate, to manage its resources, and to inhabit; implying the creation of autonomous communities. The conceptualizations putted in this study do not make use of strictly institutionalized, legal, and official use of terms; but the intention is to offer a more nuanced view of *de jure* processes by reflecting mostly on its materializations on ground. Following the original discourse, the *ejido* enables communal land tenure by peasants, but the state retains 'ownership' of the land. In many cases, however, this ambivalence encouraged practices of commoning and kinship among its on-site custodians, reinforcing community bonds, solidarity and redistribution of wealth.<sup>2</sup> This exemplary case of autonomous agrarian communities is the main basis for imagining its potentialities on the urban realm. By alluding to this example, I am not arguing for an 'anti-urban' vision on the territory, neither it is presented to imply a superiority of rural/agrarian livelihoods and its organizational capacities over contemporary urbanisms; but the aim of this paper is to point out that the formulation of autonomic urban projects and socially innovative processes could and should benefit from a diversification and translocation of such social, political, and ecological notions that the ejido performs in space. The first section addresses the figure of the ejido over history, from its origins in Europe to its hybridization in Mexico, until its neoliberal reformulation in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century in order to identify its fundamental performative elements. Subsequently the analysis focuses on the contested production of space in the city of Guadalajara, Mexico, understanding space as a social and historical practice, result of direct material production.<sup>3</sup> Assessing the agency of a neighborhood organization opposing exclusionary processes of public land privatizations. Arguing that communal land tenures and governance processes such as the ejido –or at least its fundamental principles, have the potentiality to foster social innovation by reinstalling the social function of land; one that could empower grassroots movements that challenge the widespread and variegated neo-liberalization of the Latin American city.<sup>4</sup>

## Prefiguring the Mexican ejido

### *Colonial and post-colonial configurations*

Even though the Mexican *ejido* is best known as a communal resource institution installed after the agrarian revolution of 1910; its roots come from land tenure systems implemented by the Spanish during colonial times<sup>5</sup>. The Ejidos were commoners' lands contiguous to Iberian settlements. Their origin lies in the roman *ager publicus* designated as 'property of the state', and its etymological root comes from the Latin "Exitus", meaning exit; referring to what is located in the outskirts of towns, or at its borders.<sup>6</sup> In colonial Mexico, the ejidos or *exidos* had a similar meaning; they were territorial reserves located in the peripheries of early colonial cities, belonging to the State embodied in the figure of the Spanish Crown.<sup>7</sup> These communal lands were destined as ground for future urbanization exclusively; therefore they could not be distributed or sold, and meanwhile, they serve for pasture, and for unloading and cleaning of crops.<sup>8</sup> Since the early colonization, the conception of the Mexican ejido expresses an Indian-Iberian syncretism for naming ways of socio-spatial organization, as the Aztec's *calpulli*<sup>i</sup> resembled that of the Spanish ejido in terms of land that is held communally.<sup>9</sup> In the later years, the Spanish Crown addressed the brutal exploitation of indigenous peoples caused by the *encomienda* system<sup>ii</sup>, through a policy of resettlement of native population called *reducciones*.<sup>10</sup> Granting land to the Indians by issuing royal certificates which included "an *ejido* of a mile long, where Indians may have their cattle".<sup>11</sup> As land was the only reward that the Spanish Crown could offer to conquerors (*encomenderos*) and The Church, enormous land concentrations called *latifundios*<sup>iii</sup> dominated the territory.<sup>12</sup> That said, the aforementioned *reducciones* policy and other forms of land repartition<sup>iv</sup> for Creoles and *mestizos*, at certain extent, could be seen as the first attempts to establish a social function of land in the 'new world', as these policies targeted not just the abuses of the *encomiendas* but also the monopolistic nature of *latifundios*.<sup>13</sup> Before the independence, the church was the greatest landholder of Mexico.<sup>14</sup> After the war, the newly independent country was confronted by a blend of *encomiendas* and *latifundios* known as *haciendas*<sup>v</sup>, "perpetuating a two-class society of landed and landless."<sup>15</sup> These large estates housed 'permanent' labour force composed majorly of Indians. By the half of the XIX century, Mexican liberals leaded by Benito Juárez embarked on a land reform through the disentailment of large tracts of land held by 'civil corporations' and the church.<sup>16</sup> In the liberal's view, these institutions "'selfishly" kept land unproductive and even outside the market,<sup>17</sup> and the first intention was to confiscate the property of the church so that those who worked the land were to become individual owners.<sup>18</sup> Nevertheless, property alienation extended to ejidos and Indian's commonly held lands based on "the liberal sentiment, which viewed indigenous forms of communal tenure as an impediment to progress and modernity".<sup>19</sup> During the dictatorship of Porfirio Díaz (1877–1910), further land enclosures derived in *neo-latifundist* practices advanced by private companies backed by the dictatorship,<sup>20</sup> exacerbating land accumulation by dispossessing the poorest of Mexicans.

### ***'Tierra y Libertad'. Birth of the modern ejido***

The modern *Ejido* is a form of land tenure born after the struggles of the Mexican Revolution of 1910 with the cry *Tierra y Libertad*<sup>vi</sup> and consolidated in the Mexican Constitution of 1917 under the Article 27. Such article granted a redistribution of land in the form of communal tenure, which represented a total reversal of the *latifundist* land policies implemented by Porfirio Díaz.<sup>21</sup> It was after the revolution that the meaning of ejido changed; not only it entailed a radical process of land repartition among the peasant movement and indigenous population, but also opening up the possibility for such communities to organize and function as 'juridical

<sup>i</sup> Aztec clans formed by a group of families with common ancestry who owned communal lands and internal government.

<sup>ii</sup> *Encomienda* was an early tenure practice in which natives were 'entrusted' to Spanish conquerors for their evangelization in exchange of their labour. Assies, Willem. "Land tenure and tenure regimes in Mexico: an overview." *Journal of Agrarian Change* 8, no. 1 (2008): 33-63.

<sup>iii</sup> Plural of 'latifundium' or in Spanish *latifundio*, is a large landed estate or ranch in ancient Rome or more recently in Spain or Latin America, typically worked by peasants or slaves. (Oxford dictionary of English, 2013)

<sup>iv</sup> In Spanish *tierras de repartimiento*, consisted in land plots granted in usufruct to non-indigenous families Assies, "tenure regimes", 36.

<sup>v</sup> "Hacienda is a large landed estate, an economic entity devoted to supplying local markets with grain and animal products" (Ankersen & Ruppert, 2006:85 note 98)

<sup>vi</sup> *Tierra y Libertad* (Land and Liberty) was used by the Mexican revolutionary Emiliano Zapata to represent the main objective of the Mexican revolution, which is rooted in the peasant's struggle for the right to land. The phrase originated in the early writings of the Mexican anarchist Ricardo Flores Magón.

persons', and at the same time as autonomous agrarian groups and entities susceptible to organize for business and political purposes.<sup>22</sup> During the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, land repartition to farmers and indigenous communities in the form of Ejido tenure covered around 52% of the total Mexican territory.<sup>23</sup> The non-determinacy of the Mexican Ejido made possible a myriad of reinterpretations and *de facto* practices on ground. Nevertheless, the essential idea that inspired its creation was to 'protect' the commons of the Mexican peoples by reinstalling the social function of land,<sup>24</sup> favouring the existence of self-organized communities of smallholders that benefited from the collective tenure of land and its resources.<sup>25</sup> It is also argued that this redistribution system allowed the possibility for the government to further 'stabilize' and 'control' the territory by "*deliberately maintaining the legal ambiguity of property rights*"<sup>26</sup>, in reference to the unclear interpretations of the obligations and prerogatives embedded in the meaning of 'usufruct rights'. Until today there is still a debate of whether the *ejido* was seen as national property<sup>27</sup> or in fact really belonged to its on-site custodians (*ejidatarios*).<sup>28</sup>



Fig. 1. Southern forces commanded by Emiliano Zapata. Source: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Fuerzas\\_surianas\\_a\\_las\\_ordenes\\_de\\_Emiliano\\_Zapata.jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Fuerzas_surianas_a_las_ordenes_de_Emiliano_Zapata.jpg)

### ***Neoliberal ejido?***

By the decade of 1980s the country was going through an acute economic crisis aroused from the impacts of foreign debt.<sup>29</sup> The major challenges for *ejidos* during this time derived from the withdrawal of federal subsidies on agriculture,<sup>30</sup> or in other words, the difficulties of the *ejido* came from 'external' factors, while at the internal scale its government structures remained solid thanks to practices of commoning; especially in those ejidos that have primarily an indigenous ethnicity.<sup>31</sup> However, the complexity and specificity of the Mexican territory caused neglect by the authorities culminating in structural reforms. The usufruct rights pass through inheritance, but the holdings on *ejido* land could not be sold as private property, until the radical changes in land tenure policies after 1992, which stipulated that *ejido* holding rights could be sold or privatized. This radical change in the communal land tenure was influenced by the neoliberal ideology, encouraged by various international development agencies such as the World Bank;<sup>32</sup> arguing that the decentralization and privatization of agricultural land will bring financial security so the private sector would invest more in these rural areas<sup>33</sup>. The reform pushed by president Salinas on *ejidos* was clearly influenced by the negotiations on the NAFTA

agreement,<sup>34</sup> where the main strategy to enhance economic growth was based on the principles of the ‘free market’, granting the ability to formally entitle, and privatize communal land.<sup>35</sup> This also signified the end of state responsibility on providing more land for the creation of new ejidos, a shift from land distribution to land regularization.<sup>36</sup> At the same time, it removed restrictions to rent and sell *ejido* land to non-*ejido* members so they can use the land as collateral for mortgages and credits.<sup>37</sup> For the implementation of the reform, a new government program to certificate and title *ejido* land was created: PROCEDE.<sup>38</sup> Its main course of action was measuring and mapping the “fugitive landscapes”<sup>39</sup> of *ejido*’s communal parcels and individual usufruct rights in communities that opted to take part in the program. By the end of 2006, 95% of the total *ejidos* of the country accomplished a permanent cartographic fixity, translated in the certification of communal and individual land rights.<sup>40</sup> Before this period, the internal division of parcels between peasants was only known to the *ejido* itself, and the external boundaries were loosely established. After the certification, the *Ejido* could democratically decide whether to privatize all, none, or a few portions of their land. This process was carried out through the existing internal governance system (*ejido* assembly), which was validated with the legal minimum of 50% plus one vote of its members.<sup>41</sup> The outcomes in terms of structural changes in the governance and tenure of *ejidos* are multiple and complex. It is not my intention to discuss them in detail, however, from the literature consulted, the whole of it coincides in at least one point: the expected effects of widespread privatization have not occurred.<sup>42</sup>

## Deconstructing the ejido

The figure of the contemporary *ejido* has very diverse definitions in the literature, ranging from “corporate private property” (Siembieda, 1996) to “community-based land tenure” (Barnes, 2009). In terms of its performativity, however, *ejidos* are neither public nor private, but ‘social’ property.<sup>43</sup> The modern *ejidos* are composed primarily of different tenure regimes: urbanized plots (*solares*), farming plots (*parcelas*), and communal land with its natural resources.<sup>44</sup> Although the agrarian law proposed more complex elements as part of its internal composition, such as plots destined for the development of women exclusively; for urban services such as schools, and plots allocated for the development of the young population.<sup>45</sup> Such dispositions denote a will to shape egalitarian communities in which people themselves could address the economical, social and environmental issues autonomously. This variegated composition of the *ejido* is also reflected in terms of membership. *Ejidatarios* are the official members, which “*could pass their titles and rights to a single descendant or the spouse*”.<sup>46</sup> The *posesionarios* correspond to a new legal figure of membership that emerges from 1992; they are recognized as ‘proprietaries’ by the agricultural authorities with possession of *parcelas*, but without rights to the common land like *ejidatarios*. The *avecindados* are neighbors who reside in the urban areas of the *ejido*, and have a right of property over the *solares* only. Despite these formal definitions, in practice, the *ejido* goes beyond the binary ‘land question’ –of whether customary tenures should be treated as either communal or private property– because “*its evolution over the past 100 years, demonstrates that individual and communal tenure can co-exist within communities that are titled in the name of the community leaders*”.<sup>47</sup>

In terms of governance, the General Assembly (*asamblea*), composed of all *ejidatarios*, acts as the supreme internal authority responsible of governing the *ejido*. All matters are decided by majority vote. Even if this is a hierarchical formal system, *ejidos* have the freedom to design their own internal rules and laws,<sup>48</sup> to the point that even the most basic decisions are subject to immediate accountability thanks to the scale of the community, to the personal ties created by the tenancy in common, and because of the shared values and cultural attitudes of its members.<sup>49</sup> Such autonomy in the internal decision-making reinforces the management of common pool resources<sup>50</sup> (especially within the creation of community enterprises such as forestry administered at *ejido* level) thanks to an equitable sharing of the profits and an effective administration through the *ejido* assembly.<sup>51</sup> In many cases, this consolidated social fabric of the *ejido* enables strong communal governance structures, incorporating frequent assemblies that function as ‘informal’ institutions which define clear rules, -an ideal scenario for sustainable development according to Ostrom-<sup>52</sup> and assimilating internal conflicts with self-defined enforcement mechanisms.<sup>53</sup> This is illustrated with one example of the ‘*Noh Bec*’ *ejido* in the southern state of Quintana Roo, where “*an ex-leader that stole funds is now having his timber income withheld in order to repay the money he stole. Therefore, while internal conflict does exist, fines for rule-breaking maintain community cohesion and allow the forestry program to continue.*”<sup>54</sup>

Even if urbanization and the city are seen as an opposite realm of and an external threat to the ejido system,<sup>55</sup> its capacity in assembling conflicting notions of public and private, individual and communal, informs the possibility of ‘translocating’ some of its ‘fundamental elements’ into urban rather than agrarian questions. This hypothesis responds to the urgency of formulating alternative land tenure regimes and strategies to counterbalance the increasing ‘enclosure’ of the city, that is, the rising privatization and commodification of space shaping unequal and exclusionary urbanisms in Mexico and Latin America.<sup>56</sup> The next section develops a first approach to this proposition by addressing the contestations over urbanization processes in Mexico’s second largest city, the Guadalajara Metropolitan Area (GMA), arguing that, although the fundamental identity of the ejido encompasses the notion of “a livelihood strategy that is agrarian or forest-based”,<sup>57</sup> the remaining performative elements of the ejido have the potentiality to foster social innovation – by reinstalling a social function of urban, rather than agrarian land. Coinciding with the skillful analysis of Barnes,<sup>58</sup> such fundamental elements that are considered in this work are: (1) a communal and participatory form of governance, (2) an equitable distribution of resources (3) a materialization of autonomic livelihoods harnessing the use values of land.

### Contesting urban enclosures in Huentitán.

Over the last years, the rise of entrepreneurial forms of governance in the context of Mexico’s second largest city, Guadalajara, have derived in urban processes that resemble that of the *latifundistas*, only this time, an informal institutional assemblage of public and private actors advances such spatial transformations.<sup>59</sup> This is the case in *Huentitán* district, located at the northeast edge of Guadalajara, where the city meets the natural landscape of the *Oblatos* Canyon [Fig. 2]. Here, recent ‘re-densification’ plans pushed by national and local authorities materialize in the form of strategic urban projects, new commercial complexes, and new vertical housing. These market-driven transformations steered by public-private partnerships, draw upon ‘urban enclosure’ as its modus operandi, “*appropriating and thus dispossessing and excluding local people from what they see and treat as their common property*”<sup>60</sup>. Such is the case of the few public parks and state-owned land reserves located in the vicinities. These actions, however, encounter direct opposition from various local organizations banded under the *Frente Unido por Huentitán (FUH)*, or Huentitán’s United Front; composed of neighbours who have been systematically excluded from the decision-making over their city and environment, and who defend such spaces from privatization by reclaiming them via community led-activities, as well as through formal channels.

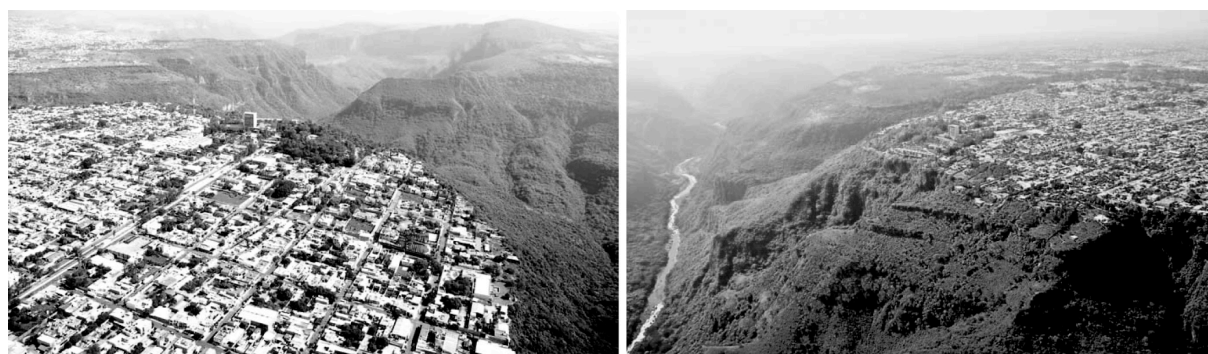


Fig.2. Oblatos Canyon

Regarding the privatization of public spaces, the first case is the *Iconia* project, which foresees the construction of 18 towers with 1,872 new luxury apartments, a shopping mall, hotel and corporate offices. Despite the huge lack of ‘green’ spaces in the metropolitan area<sup>61</sup>, *Iconia* is projected in 13.6 hectares of state-owned land catalogued as a ‘public green area’ in the urban legislation. In line with the logic and discipline of capitalist development and market-led urban growth,<sup>62</sup> this public land was ‘donated’ to a Spanish private developer in exchange of a payment in kind of public works. However, its constructions has not started yet, as the private company was victim of the financial crisis of 2008. Nonetheless, land speculation and institutional incompetence in order to recover the land has caused that until today, the site continues to be fenced and abandoned. Just beside the aforementioned site lies the abandoned pedagogic Centre of Technology ‘*Planetario*’ and the partially inaccessible *Parque Natural Huentitán* (Huentitán Natural Park). Both are subject to imminent privatization for



the construction of new fairgrounds with a metropolitan-scale music forum called *Fiestas de Octubre*. In this case, one of the tactics used by the FUH is direct action on site. The FUH has been regularly organizing sportive and cultural events, literally occupying the fenced park [Fig.4], and at the same time organizing reforestation and rehabilitation actions in order to draw attention of both, authorities and citizens. Lastly, government authorities together with a private association unilaterally alienated more than half of *Mirador Independencia* Park for the construction of a private contemporary art museum called *Barranca Museo de Arte Contemporáneo*. This resulted in the deforestation of more than 3 hectares, the destruction of sport fields, and a literal enclosure of the park that serves more than 10,000 people in the area.

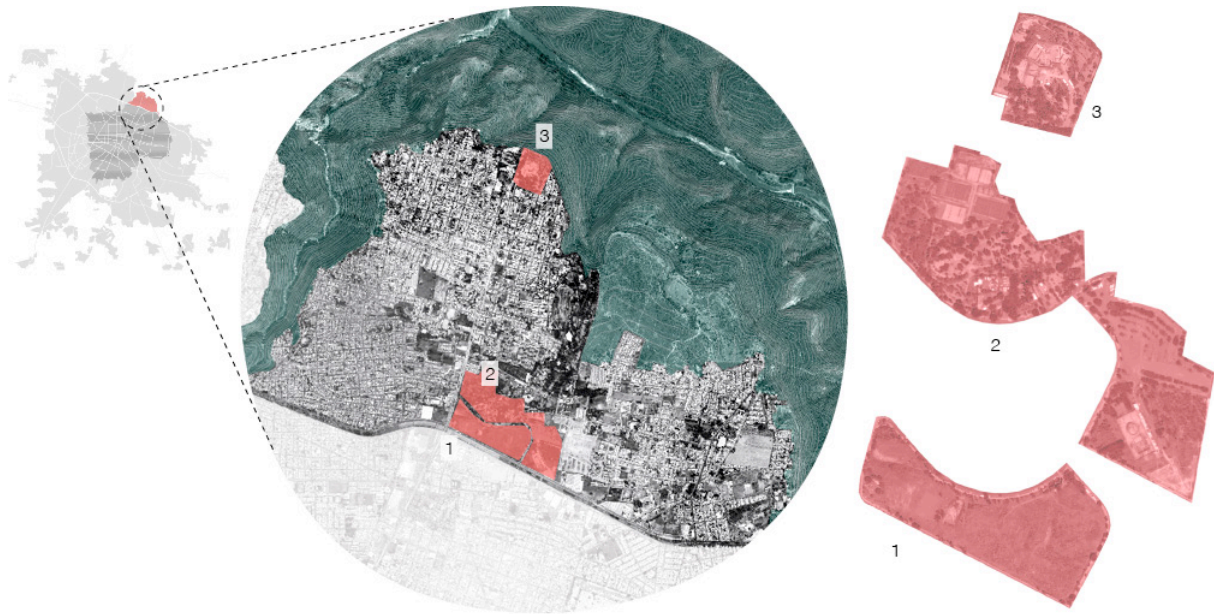


Fig. 3. Contested spaces in Huentitán. 1-Iconia project. 2-Parque Natural Huentitán. 3-Mirador Park



Fig.4. Community race organized by the FUH in the contested future fairgrounds. Source: FUH Facebook page.

In the totality of cases, the active role of the FUH has been crucial. Huentitán is known as a popular *barrio*, and certainly, the majority of its population belongs to the working class. Nevertheless, different social strata coexist

in a relatively small area, and this spatial characteristic is also visible in the United Front of Huentitán; as the association incorporates members representing most of Huentitán neighbourhoods that have different socio-spatial conditions. Nevertheless, spatial issues like the lack of urban services, schools, and healthcare facilities, coupled with the imminent privatization of public spaces have proved to transcend class differences and conform a counter-hegemonic movement through the inclusion of their differences. By conforming this kaleidoscopic neighborhoods' coalition, their goals expanded. Now they address other urban issues underlying in their community, such as the lack of urban amenities paradoxically coupled with the existence of large urban voids, inefficient public transportation, and the environmental degradation of not just the canyon surroundings but the whole metropolitan area. Urban social movements dealing with urbanization-related issues in Guadalajara and Mexico have traditionally been formed around land and housing access struggles, and their capacity to exert change was defined by political partisanship and clientelistic habitudes.<sup>63</sup> However, it can be argued that contemporary urban movements in Guadalajara such as the FUH have shifted their claims from 'the right to dwell' –focused on the urgency of satisfying material needs such as housing or land–<sup>64</sup> towards 'the right to the city',<sup>65</sup> consequently adopting different approaches and strategies for action. Mobilizing not just for the accomplishment of individual or household rights, but also for goals that imply a re-articulation of social and cultural dynamics shaping the production of lived space as a whole.<sup>66</sup> Moreover, what distinguishes the United Front of Huentitán from other collective actors opposing redensification in Guadalajara, is its capacity for organizing resistance not just on a local and tactical level, but utilizing both, formal and informal channels. While some members are engaged in activities of reforestation, public space regeneration and other community-led actions, at the same time, their battle is being fought through legal means. Members of the FUH won a legal appeal towards the new urban plans that regulate *Huentitán* district. This signified the suspension of every new urban development project, including the multitude of planned enclosures described before. Though this is a temporal measure to gain some respite and formulate counterproposals, it also serves symbolic goals.<sup>67</sup> As one of the members of FUH states: "We need to make known our struggle and the victory we obtained: the writ of *amparo*<sup>vii</sup>. It is an unprecedented event; nobody had ever defeated the government in this regard (urban planning). They even sent a legal adviser from the federation to counter our *amparo*."

## Imagining the new urban ejidos

The FUH has resorted to formal channels to defend the common spaces from state-led enclosures; however, the legal contestation advanced on the basis of the binary public/private is still not enough to stop urban dispossession, because as we have seen, common urban assets such as leisure and sportive spaces – necessary for social reproduction – and which have pressures of privatization are located within *public* land. In this setting, the figure of state as the embodiment and guardian of the commons fuses with private interests in the form of Public-Private Partnerships; the line that divides private versus public interest is constantly blurred and renegotiated not on the interest of expanding the access to the city as a common good, but for facilitating urban enclosure, value extraction, and unequal capital accumulation. The city under this lens is conceived as a product, something that needs to be sold rather than shared, consumed rather than lived, and urban spaces in this configuration are seen not as a constellation of use values, but as a common pool for the powerful political and private elites.<sup>68</sup> In light of this myriad of enclosures, dispossession and unequal accumulation of the urban resources in Huentitán, and the subverted role of the state towards the management of common spatial urban resources, it is pertinent to explore the possibility of equally versatile strategies that consider 'use values' as the foundation on which urban space is structured and produced.<sup>69</sup> Looking at the crucial mediating role that land tenure plays in the relationships between society and its environment,<sup>70</sup> both in its conception and materialization, the figure of the agrarian ejido is an exemplary case of landed commons and social innovation – the latter understood as a set of social processes able to overcome deprivation, exclusion and alienation through practices that foster inclusion, wellbeing, and empowerment,<sup>71</sup> which could have the capacity to reinstall a much needed social function of land; overcoming the enclosures inherent to forms of governance that set their priorities in economic goals over properly social and redistributive strategies.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>vii</sup> The Mexican *Amparo* is a legal protection recourse invoked when individuals or a set of persons believe their constitutional rights have been violated.

### ***A communal and participatory form of governance***

The challenge lies in instituting an equivalent of such process in the urban realm; however, the case of Huentitán and the FUH sheds light on how the fundamental elements of the ejido can be translated in alternative land tenures and governance systems in contested areas of the city that have the presence of a strong social fabric with organizational capacity. The internal structures of the FUH already embrace some of the fundamental elements of the ejido. Frequent assemblies such as those in the ejidos take place, where votes, rules, and strategies of action are horizontally discussed as a direct way of addressing environment-society relations.<sup>73</sup> More than arguing that this would be a ‘better’ or ‘good’ way of managing the city (imagined as a commons), this possibility is suggested to effectively engage in inclusive, properly political transformations and processes shaping the immediate (built) environment, moving away from econo-centric models of development; from political economy towards a political ecology. This could be possible without a deterministic, formal and rigid set of regulations, as the values projected on the space are those of its custodians, and formulation of rules and rights could be democratically decided through the equivalent of the ejido assembly.

### ***A materialization of autonomic livelihoods harnessing the use values of land***

There is the need to formalize bottom-up customary practices and community processes (livelihoods) in order to counteract the informal top-down institutional configurations that increasingly dispossess urban land and mobilizes the commons on the interests of a public/private elite. It is here where the principles of the ejido could make a difference. The formal recognition of title holders and ejidos as moral entities with rights of management and usufruct of land autonomously means that only those who care for and use the land are entitled to extract a value from it. Even if “ejido land rights can be extinguished by government asserting its power of eminent domain”,<sup>74</sup> like in cases of expropriation of land on the basis of ‘public good’, ejidos have the advantage of organizing more enduring contestations against enclosure thanks to their juridical status that recognizes their autonomy. But most importantly, because they have greater power to ‘delay’ and overcome, as “each delay creates new costs and new risks and uncertainties, not only hitting the financing of schemes but also radically altering the context in which enclosure is being pursued, downgrading its expected profitability and making it seem far less desirable to its protagonists and backers.”<sup>75</sup>

### ***An equitable distribution of resources***

So what if Huentitán district becomes and gets managed as an ejido? Ejidos and their rural evolution in the last 100 years have demonstrated that individual and communal land tenure can coexist,<sup>76</sup> that conflict is assimilated not through de-politicization, but by making use of properly political mechanisms that end up enhancing a more efficient and egalitarian access to economical, social and environmental assets. This shift could serve for building a reconceptualization of the city as a common pool resource in which access to the urban and the public realm is equally distributed not only through private property, but by encompassing an inclusive amalgamation of cooperation, interdependence and coproduction, thus harnessing the social function of not just the land but the city as a whole. The emphasis of action and its strength lies in its inherent ‘territoriality’. It would be not just another institution that grants a certain set of *de jure* abstract rights (democracy, freedom, etc.) but it gives the possibility to its on-site custodians to *de facto* participate in the management and transformation of a well-defined piece of the territory. In the urban realm, this would mean a direct access to exercise the right to the city<sup>77</sup>. This entails spatial appropriation and fostering a sense of belonging, as the territory in this way is conceived as an extension of the community’s identity, where the needs and desires of its members are materialized in space. This is something achieved by the new *ejidatarios* themselves, whom are the ones that will be directly related and entitled to their new ejido.

These are the very first calibrations aiming at imagining the urban as “a shared ‘resource-pool’ to which everyone has equal access and right.”<sup>78</sup> However, designing the city as a constellation of new urban ejidos might fall into the defensive, parochial and ultimately exclusive. The challenge then relies not just in the instauration of singularities such as the new urban ejidos, but also in the *interfaces* between them and other modes of socio-



spatial organization. Imagining the city as an articulation of differences “could be the definition of the Greek concept of *polis*: the place where encounters among singularities are organized politically.” Space does not allow me to elaborate on this crucial point, however, rural or urban, the coming together of these differences will require “discovering how to transform conflictive encounters, as much as possible into joyful and productive ones.”<sup>79</sup>

## Endnotes

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