Reciprocity and Vernacular Statecraft: Andean Cooperation in Post-disaster Highland Ecuador

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Resumen

Obreros cooperativos conocidos en toda la región andina como *mingas*, aunque exteriormente aparecen como la misma institución cultural, se practican de manera muy diferente y con distintos significados en diferentes contextos. Este estudio analiza cómo la cooperación minga llegó a exhibir patrones contrastantes, pero íntimamente relacionados, de prácticas y relaciones sociales, tanto en un pueblo afectado y desplazado por un desastre y un reasentamiento inducido por el desastre. Describo cómo los actores en estos diferentes grupos apelan a repertorios aparentemente comunes de significado y la cultura compartida, mientras se organizan de distintas maneras con el fin de acceder y controlar los recursos escasos. En un pueblo, la participación minga se sustenta en gran medida a través de las prácticas tradicionales de reciprocidad, mientras que en el otro se sostienen a través de nuevas estrategias institucionales. En el primero, se movilizan mingas para competir con otros pueblos de escasos recursos, mientras que en la segunda minga participantes compiten entre sí dentro del reasentamiento. [Andes, Ecuador, desastres, trabajo, mingas, reciprocidad, estado]

Abstract

Cooperative labor parties known throughout the Andes as *mingas*, although outwardly appearing to be the same cultural institution, are practiced quite differently and with varying meanings in different socioeconomic contexts. This article discusses how minga cooperation came to exhibit contrasting, yet intimately related, patterns of practice and social relationships in both a displaced, disaster-affected village and a disaster-induced resettlement. It describes actors in these groups appealing to ostensibly common repertoires of shared meaning and culture, while organizing themselves in distinct ways in order to access and control scarce resources. In one village, minga participation is

largely sustained through traditional practices of reciprocity, while in the other they are maintained through new institutional strategies. In the former, mingas are mobilized to compete with other villages for scarce resources; in the latter, minga participants compete with one another. [Andes, disaster, Ecuador, labor, mingas, reciprocity, state]

This article examines practices of Andean cooperation and reciprocity in disaster-affected communities and resettlements in the Ecuadorian highlands. Cooperative labor parties known throughout the Andes as *mingas*, although outwardly appearing to be the same cultural institution, are practiced quite differently and with varying meanings in diverse contexts. Historically, anthropological studies have emphasized minga practice as egalitarian exchange labor, or as a practice embedded in patron–client relationships underwritten by conspicuous giving in exchange for labor. Recent scholarship, however, has identified minga practice as a key tactic in village-level statecraft, where it operates as a leveling mechanism that neutralizes status differences while mobilizing labor in the service of shared interests.

Minga practice has long been a feature of Andean statecraft. Historically, mingas were mechanisms of the state subordination and regulation of rural peripheries employed by the Incas (Rostworowski and Morris 1999), Spanish colonial administrators (Stern 1988), and hacendados (Salz 1984); they extracted free labor from indigenous and peasant groups for public works and even personal profit. However, following political reforms, social movements, and the proliferation of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) that characterized Ecuador in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, minga came to be a central feature of civil society, participatory governance, and development strategies (Cameron 2010; Colloredo-Mansfeld 2009; Faas 2015).

This study focuses on minga practice in the context of disaster recovery and resettlement. Research in situations of crisis and change enables scholars to interrogate the structures of state and society as they are exposed under these conditions (Faas and Barrios 2015). Here, we find forms of human agency contesting social structures and revealing important aspects of society and culture that might otherwise be obscured. Disasters involve varying degrees of change in patterns of individual and group access to resources, institutions, and services, which can compound their vulnerability and suffering. Thus, informal relations of social support or mutual aid that accompany disaster and displacement are of paramount importance (Faas and Jones 2016). Focusing on minga practice is particularly compelling in the study of disaster recovery in the Andes; as Anthony Oliver-Smith (1977) established following disaster in the highlands of Peru, cooperation in disaster

recovery and the tensions between egalitarian ideals and class distinctions have long been important factors in the Andes. Furthermore, the question remains as to whether Andean reciprocity and cooperative labor constitute "threatened form[s] of social insurance" in contexts of scarcity (Wutich 2007).

In the context of trends of state centralization and decentralization that characterized Ecuador in the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, whether minga—a practice that constitutes a key nexus of local and extralocal power—is a vehicle for status leveling and participatory governance, or for class-based, patron–client relations that remain central in the politics of rural Ecuador, is crucial. Moreover, power dynamics tend to be overlooked in studies of social support and mutual aid in disasters and resettlement, so this study examines the extent to which minga facilitates the exercise of collective or individual power. I describe how actors appealing to purportedly common repertoires of shared meaning and culture organized themselves in distinct ways to access and control scarce resources—primarily water and outside development aid.

Resettlement and Revanche: Penipe, Pusuca, and Manzano

This study investigates minga practice in two communities of mestizo, smallholder agriculturalists in Canton Penipe, a rural municipality in the central Andean cordillera in the predominantly indigenous Chimborazo Province of Ecuador on the southern rim of the active stratovolcano Mt. Tungurahua. The first, Manzano, is a community of 52 households; the second, Pusuca, is a disaster-induced resettlement of 40 households. State agencies and NGOs began constructing resettlements in 2007–2008 for those displaced by the devastating Mt. Tungurahua eruptions in 1999 and 2006. The Ministry of Urban Development and Housing (MIDUVI) constructed one resettlement consisting of 185 homes built on a landless urban grid in Canton Penipe's main town, Penipe. Alongside these, the U.S.-based, Christian Evangelical disaster relief organization Samaritan's Purse built an additional 102 homes. Roughly five kilometers to the south, the Ecuadorian NGO, Fundación Esquel, constructed forty-five homes to create a hilltop resettlement named Pusuca, for resettlers from around a dozen neighboring villages—nearly half from the village of Pungal de Puela. Unlike the urban development built by the state and Samaritan's Purse in the town of Penipe, Pusuca included just over half a hectare of land for each household as well as additional plots for communal use.

Some people soon migrated away from Penipe in search of employment, but the majority returned daily by bus or by hitching a ride to their former communities at the foot of the volcano—where regularly falling volcanic ash had degraded the soil and continued to present health and safety risks—to tend to their crops and animals. Soon after, one-time Manzano residents who resettled in Penipe

began to organize mingas in Manzano on a biweekly basis for projects including irrigation, potable water, and village road maintenance; they also worked to attract development resources and projects from the state and NGOs. In the Pusuca resettlement, a village council created by Esquel also organized weekly mingas for irrigation, potable water, and miscellaneous community projects.

These sites were selected for this study because they were both known to organize regular mingas through village councils, and because state agencies and NGOs operated initiatives in each, offering construction materials, project funding, food aid, and microprojects in relation to irrigation, potable water, greenhouses, livestock programs, and agricultural extension. The communities also differed in matters of land, hazard exposure, and ties to external institutions. The Pusuca resettlement included land for crops and animals for each resettler household, while most Manzano villagers (many still owned land in Manzano) were relocated to the Penipe resettlement with no land, productive resources, or employment opportunities. Second, while Pusuca lies well beyond Mt. Tungurahua's high-risk zone, Manzano sits in the shadow of the volcano and its people had to contend with a chronic hazard situation that placed their animals, crops, property, and health at risk. Finally, both villages were tied to state agencies and NGOs in ways that influenced local governance. As demonstrated below, the influences of state agencies and NGOs factored more heavily in minga practice than land or hazards, but these influences were channeled in specific and significant ways by local actors.

Reciprocity or Vernacular Statecraft?

Some scholars have found that minga practice is based on reciprocal exchange relations, while more recent work has found it operates as a leveling device of local governance. In addition, some have found minga practice associated with cooperative, egalitarian organization, but describe minga relationships in the post-colonial hacienda era as caste-like or "semi-feudal" (Alberti 1970). With the decline of the hacienda political economy, minga practice evolved differently throughout the Andes. Importantly, although minga has its roots in pre-Colombian practices of highland, indigenous Quechua/Quichua speakers, the practice has been drawn on—by Incas, Spanish colonial administrators, hacendados, and contemporary states and NGOs—and adopted by various indigenous, campesino, and Afro-Latin groups throughout the region. In some places, mingas emerged as a form of reciprocity based on repeated, voluntary, and dyadic agreements between ostensibly equal parties (Mayer 2002; Orlove 1977). In many cases, this took the form of patron–client relations, where individuals recruited laborers by including them in exclusive exchange relations, or

forms of conspicuous giving similar to concentric reciprocity, where labor flows to central actors who then redistribute wealth while accumulating power and prestige.

During fieldwork in 2009, mingas appeared in each village to be organized by village councils, independent of the reciprocal exchange practices and political allegiances that were part of quotidian life in both communities. Minga practice initially appeared consistent with what Rudi Colloredo-Mansfeld (2009) refers to as "vernacular statecraft," or the administrative ordering of society at the village level that enables local action and the formation of intercommunity alliances where "the state" is notably absent. I returned in 2011 to explore both how mingas were practiced as forms of reciprocity—in which laborers were recruited by leaders through reciprocal exchange—and the extent to which minga practice functioned as a form of vernacular statecraft.

Minga Reciprocity

Norman Whitten's (1969) study of Afro-Ecuadorian villages in coastal Ecuador remains one of the richest descriptions of patron–client reciprocity in minga practice. He described how key individuals in village communities who had unique access to market resources and capital were consistently able to recruit laborers to mingas from which they alone profited by means of conspicuous giving to workers' families. Village work leadership was discussed as a rotating position for which anyone with accumulated prestige was eligible; however, leadership remained relatively constant and only a few local elites sustained the prestige that legitimized leadership. The same leaders recruited the same work parties repeatedly, and yielded significant profit in the process. However, the workers did not concede permanent loyalty to leaders, who therefore had to recruit workers anew for each project. A leader's ability to replicate the class structure was itself a measure of his prestige, which was produced through repeated practices of conspicuous giving to laborer households; loans and gifting converted leaders' economic capital into the symbolic capital of prestige.

A wealth of ethnographic evidence strikingly similar to Whitten's portrayal can be found in studies among indigenous and campesino communities in Ecuador (Ferraro 2004), Peru (Deere 1990; Mayer 2002; Mitchell 1991), and Colombia (Rappaport 1998). This suggests that class distinctions are inextricably bound up in minga practice, as wealthier families and individuals rely on poorer community members in proportion to the scarcity of labor, while laborers depend on wealthier community members for access to consumption and production resources. In surveying the flow of exchanges in minga reciprocity, a generalized pattern emerges in which material resources tend to flow downward, while labor and loyalty flow from the bottom up, despite discursive renderings of mingas as egalitarian

practices. Cultural rules frequently dictate that minga labor must be repaid in kind (Orlove 1977), but many regularly avoid this through substituting labor with food and feasting (Deere 1990; Mayer 2002), alcohol (Colloredo-Mansfeld 2009), household items (Harris 2000), or loans and payment (Gonzáles de Olarte 1994). Minga thus develops into a process of perpetual labor recruitment via repeated practices of conspicuous giving to laborer households, with redistribution qua reciprocal exchange periodically facilitating the flow of accumulated wealth and goods from elites to commoners.

Minga Statecraft

The gradual decline in the hacienda system in the mid-twentieth century was accompanied by the establishment of village councils whose decision-making and practical capacities were established by law and facilitated by minga practice in various ways. These village councils form the basis for local governance and relations between communities and outside actors. A study of 131 villages in Chimborazo identified the primary functions of village councils as organizing mingas and village assemblies, searching for external institutional support and funding, and implementing community projects (Cadena and Mayorga 1988).

In his ethnography of Kichwa civil society and indigenous mobilizations in the northern highlands of Ecuador, Colloredo-Mansfeld (2009: 17) describes mingas as standardized and regulated by list-making (attendance-taking) practices that level status differences by compelling all to participate on the same terms. Village councils achieved their objectives by simplifying and standardizing information about their populations, resources, and environment. These standardized forms enabled village councils to "administer, persuade, and at times coerce residents to move toward a common purpose" (Colloredo-Mansfeld 2009: 7). Colloredo-Mansfeld dubs this kind of locally imposed legibility "vernacular statecraft"—the primary tools of which are list making, council formation, boundary drawing, and interregional contacts. List making is a leveling mechanism that neutralizes differences in status and conflicting interests by creating "a special domain of value" (Colloredo-Mansfeld 2009: 99), known in Penipe as the *raya* (attendance credit), which all households were expected to earn through participation. Failure to earn rayas in Penipe was sanctioned by fines and exclusion from community affairs, development projects, and common resources, such as irrigation (Faas 2017). Unlike the reciprocal exchange variation on minga practice, mingas in the vernacular statecraft model are said to neutralize patron–clientelism with the leveling mechanism of rayas that holds all households equally accountable for equal contributions of labor. Moreover, as discussed below, minga practice in Pusuca was further standardized by imposing a task system that specified the expected work output of each participant.

Practices of Statecraft and Bureaucratic Power

Recent anthropological approaches to the state dissolve distinctions between state and civil society. Instead of a coherent system producing uniform actions, it is useful to consider the disaggregated, competing, and often incoherent agendas of actors and units within the state (Gupta 2012), and to interrogate sets of practices, choreographies, and discourses (Lund 2006; Taussig 1997), often at the margins of the nation state (Das and Poole 2004: 3). However, the practice of statecraft (vernacular or otherwise) is a project of modernity—rendering subjects and landscapes legible through the imposition of boundaries, the enumeration and categorization (deserving or undeserving) of bodies, and the formalization of rules for conduct (Appadurai 1996; Scott 1998). Such acts of legibilization often provide rationalistic cover for tacitly political practices and the expansion of bureaucratice state apparatuses (Ferguson 1994). These intersections of power imposed from without and expressed from within local communities can simultaneously constitute "a relationship of domination and an invitation to protest" (Walton 1992: 307). Conceiving of statecraft as a choreography of practices and discourses principally concerned with rendering subjects and landscapes legible with the veneer of legitimate authority, the present work examines the lived experiences of minga practice and the quotidian lives of disaster resettlers in highland Ecuador.

State agencies and NGOs also impose their values, expert knowledge, and esoteric organizational practices upon local institutions and practices in disaster contexts (Faas and Barrios 2015). Humanitarian organizations are frequently complicit in refashioning disaster-affected places and peoples as extensions of global networks of gifting and reciprocity, which can reproduce unequal distributions of power, risk, and vulnerability, and reify the subaltern positions of aid recipients (Gamburd 2013). In Ecuador, the state has decentralized its budget and governance strategies over several decades. These strategies are nominally participatory (mostly public review), and intended to expand public works to reach rural regions throughout the country (Cameron 2010). However, despite dedicating a portion of state oil revenues to rural development since the 1970s, the state has been unable to keep pace with its infrastructure development goals with its limited budget. In Chimborazo, the Provincial Council committed part of its annual participatory development funds to purchasing raw materials and funding limited professional oversight for infrastructure projects. This entailed a contractual commitment from village beneficiaries that they would perform the project labor by organizing mingas. The state then imposed conditions for the structures and procedures of minga practice in exchange for project inclusion. NGOs have played a significant role in facilitating state participatory projects, directly funding community-based micro-projects, and tending to prefer to work with large indigenous populations and villages that demonstrate community organization (Bretón

and Garcia 2003; Cameron 2010). This study therefore paid special attention to the roles of the state and NGOs in shaping minga practice and the extent to which the practice is coopted or transformed in the image of external sponsors' ideas about Andean culture.

Methodology

In 2009 and 2011, I lived in Penipe at the edge of the resettlement area and participated in dozens of mingas and village council meetings in both Pusuca and Manzano. I joined in people's daily lives, assisted with farm work and errands, and accompanied village leaders as they organized mingas and projects. Using interviews and observations, I documented how decisions were made, and by whom, regarding minga practice and participation, sanctions for nonparticipation, and project and resource inclusion; and the frequent exchanges of prepared meals, crop shares, cash loans, tool loans, *randimpa* (dyadic labor reciprocity), and *peon* (labor exchanged for three meals and around $10/day). I conducted oral history interviews with villagers and collected village archival histories from municipal records.

Statecraft and Modernity in Manzano and Pusuca

Three key village council strategies—organizing mingas, brokering outside support, and implementing projects—have proven equally instrumental in domination and democratization; exclusion and inclusion; peasant and indigenous political movements; and processes of political centralization and decentralization. The latter constitute twin elements of an Andean modernity that work to render legible the rural peripheries. The 1937 *Ley de Organización y Régimen de Comunas* granted members of indigenous communities with at least fifty households rights to plots of land they had worked for more than ten years—as long as they formally incorporated into villages (*comunas*). Village councils (*cabildos*) were established as local governing bodies but also as village representatives to the state. Although many peasant and indigenous groups incorporated as villages in the 1930s and 1940s, many chose not to, as the legislation was perceived as an extension of state power over rural peasant and indigenous populations (Becker 1999: 535).

Penipe—then a parish of Canton Guano—incorporated its first two villages in 1938, followed by another ten between 1946 and 1960; it began to serve as a satellite market for a growing number of smallholders in the region. The military juntas that ruled Ecuador during the 1960s and 1970s introduced successive reform programs to hasten the demise of the hacienda system and modernize the Ecuadorian

economy (Ayala Mora 1999; Becker 1999; Bretón 2008). While addressing disparities in land distribution, these reforms also fostered renewed interest in village incorporation throughout Ecuador—including Manzano in 1973—which continued through the 1990s. Penipe incorporated as the seventh canton of Chimborazo Province in 1984, becoming one of the smallest municipalities in the country. The central town, Penipe, formed the administrative center for the canton's six rural parishes. Such rural municipal governments have historically focused on small public works that have largely excluded the rural periphery of each canton; the proliferation of these rural municipalities has been associated with weak institutions dominated by elites and clientelist politics (Cameron 2010).

Beginning in the mid-1980s, indigenous organizations increasingly gained power. These movements facilitated the rise of populist politicians and charismatic indigenous leaders, including in Chimborazo Province, which resulted in an acceleration of decentralization programs and participatory governance reforms (Cameron 2010; Martínez 2003), a proliferation of NGOs (Bretón 2001), and the emergence of mingas as instruments of local development. Since the 1990s, rural municipalities such as Penipe have worked to create local development plans with NGOs and establish participatory plans with councils at village, parish, municipal, and provincial levels (Bretón 2001; Cameron 2010; Martínez 2003). These programs relied heavily on minga work parties to expand limited budgetary capacities for the completion of infrastructure projects in Penipe and throughout Chimborazo.

From the late 1990s, the federal government attempted to resolve persistent issues with weak, corrupt municipal governments by accelerating programs to facilitate modernization and administrative decentralization (Cameron 2010). One landmark development was the creation of rural parish councils in the 1998 constitution and in the 2000 *Ley Organica de Juntas Parroquiales* (Martínez 2003: 162). These pieces of legislation were established to increase decision-making power in rural parishes, while facilitating the coordination of funding, projects, and administration between village councils. Around the same time as the resettlements were constructed, President Rafael Correa's administration also countered the decades-old process of decentralization with new ministries and reforms of local governing institutions to exert more centralized control over foundations, NGOs, and civil society. This process of recentralization expanded executive power while provincial-level and local governing bodies continued to promote decentralization.

The stated goals of decentralization initiatives were to facilitate participatory rural development while reining in corruption and clientelism (Cameron 2010; Martínez 2003). However, critics observed that socioeconomic power relations remained unequal and dominated by persistent problems associated with clientelism, populism, corruption, instability, and economic crises (Cameron 2010: 4). Moreover, municipal governments such as Penipe, much like parish councils, are

scarcely more than administrative centers for rural regions with little in the way of urban economies. They have insufficient funding for their administrative activities and consequently rely heavily on federal allocations. In Penipe, accusations of favoritism and clientelism in government were common, with municipal, parish, and village leaders commonly accused of steering funds and other resources to their client bases, while excluding others. Yet clientelism is itself hotly contested in Ecuador; Carlos de la Torre and Steve Striffler (2008) find that while some decry the practice as reproducing racial and class hierarchies, others support a subaltern clientelism that could promote the interests of the poor through brokerage networks.

Exchange Practices and Minga Participation

The more reciprocal exchange relations a household had with other households in Manzano, the more likely it was to participate in mingas. This was not the case in Pusuca, where list-making had a greater leveling effect in minga practice. The following examination of exchange practices, gossip, and list-making in each site indicates that while leaders in Manzano employed some of the devices associated with the specter of statecraft, minga practice was largely organized through reciprocal exchange relations. In Pusuca, by contrast, minga practice entailed greater leveling and legibility, which are associated with vernacular statecraft.

Minga Practice in Manzano

What I found in Manzano was more consistent with the model of minga as based on people's reciprocal exchange relations. Manzano's minga organizing was built on personal relationships rather than any uniform policy, in terms of how participants were recruited (or excluded) and in the ways leaders reciprocated. In Manzano, kin and households that had been neighbors for generations engaged in all forms of reciprocity, including frequent generalized reciprocal exchanges that bound together individuals and households. Council leaders organized mingas and noted attendance at each. According to villagers, the practice of list-making was revived when the village began organizing after resettlement to rebuild in the volcanic zone, but also because local leaders witnessed state and NGO enthusiasm for achieving project goals through mingas and saw this as an opportunity to attract outside resources for disaster recovery. When I observed minga practice in Manzano, all village mingas were organized by one man, Bernardo,[1] who was council president for twelve years. Bernardo was in his late thirties—relatively young for a village president. His atypical height—well over six feet—and frequent soliloquies about the solidarity of Manzano and their struggles to recover and

reclaim their livelihoods made him an imposing and galvanizing force in the community and beyond. Among the largest landowners in Manzano, Bernardo also had unique ties to municipal and provincial government and local NGOs, meaning that he could broker outside resources for the village.

Although list-making was a central part of minga practice, and participation was a frequently stated condition of inclusion in projects and resources such as irrigation, inclusion did not correspond highly with minga participation. Instead, those most commonly included were most tightly bound to the core group through reciprocal exchange relations. Those who rarely attended mingas, but regularly supported council leaders and engaged in reciprocity with other members of the core group, would often be included in exclusive projects or meetings with outside organizations. As village leaders struggled to mobilize their villages for recovery, the few who expressed dissent from their plans were subjected to a sort of malign neglect, not informed of local initiatives, and excluded from mingas, projects, and exchange relations. The remaining villagers were vocally enthusiastic about their unity and solidarity, rarely gossiping about others' politics or participation: they often trumpeted their solidarity in contrast with neighboring villages, with which they saw themselves in competition for outside resources.

Bernardo engaged in perpetual recruitment exercises, routinely making rounds in Manzano and the Penipe resettlement in his white pickup truck to invite participants. His invitations were almost always accompanied by the promise of tangible benefits, such as new services or microdevelopment project inclusion. One day, Bernardo invited me to a minga he was organizing. We drove around the Penipe resettlement while he recruited Manzano participants, explaining that he was organizing the minga to perform maintenance and weeding around the potable water system. He had just come from meeting with the Parish Council (*Junta Parroquial*) and the municipal government where he learned that Manzano could recover more than US$15,000, which he claimed was owed to them, to repair and expand the potable water system, but they would have to demonstrate a united front and organize mingas. I pointed out that he was driving past Manzano homes in the resettlement and asked why he did not inform them. He responded that some people were simply too difficult and uncooperative and, when I mentioned one woman in particular, he complained that she and her sisters never supported his initiatives and were a constant source of dissention. Over time, I noticed that Bernardo recruited roughly the same thirty households for each minga and meeting, while regularly ignoring several others.

Weeks later, Bernardo was organizing a community workshop in Manzano on disaster response and recovery. Given local reluctance to label the area a disaster or risk zone,[2] I asked him why they were doing this. He said that representatives from the recently developed Secretariat of Peoples, Social Movements, and Citizen Participation (*Secretaria de Los Pueblos, Movimientos Sociales y Participacion*

Ciudadana) were organizing this workshop to "bring projects" to the area. He wanted to have as many people as possible to make an impression on the representatives from the Secretariat. He encouraged me to attend more to fill the room than for my research purposes, and he recruited friends from neighboring villages, while ignoring the same Manzano households as before. The week before the workshop was scheduled, Manuel Orozco, a Manzano villager in his early thirties, was sitting outside the village meeting house, listening as Bernardo and I spoke about mingas. Manuel averred that he would like to work on community mingas, but no one ever let him know when they were. Bernardo did not acknowledge his comments. My data on local reciprocal exchanges indicate that Manuel was one of the least connected to others in Manzano through exchange relations.

At each minga, either Bernardo or the village council secretary made a list of attendees. Noting this, I expected Bernardo to have organized records. Instead, when I asked him for them, he dug around in his house and under his bed and produced more than a dozen half-completed notebooks with minga lists, many of which were undated. When I visited the secretary to collect her lists, I found that hers were in the same state. The lists were seemingly instruments of the moment more than historical records; that is, list-making was a tool to emphasize to participants that their presence or absence would be noted, but they did not become systematized archives. Record keeping was instead an operation of memory; occasional participants were unlikely to receive the same social recognition or reinforcement as others.

A common task in mingas was the clearing of ash, soil, overgrowth, and other debris from irrigation canals, potable water systems, and roads. Village leaders often broke off from the groups and walked ahead with machetes, supposedly to clear larger overgrowth. Leaders also periodically made a show of gifts to people in the village, which could take multiple forms, but usually entailed either food or alcohol. In Manzano, Bernardo was occasionally absent for all or part of a minga, but later arrived with sweet breads and soft drinks for the laborers. He also regularly paid some of the women to purchase snacks and soft drinks for village meetings. In the weeks leading up to the fiesta of Saint Michael, Bernardo intoned that his household would bear the special responsibility of feeding the large band that would play for the village, each time emphasizing that he was not wealthy, but would carry this expense to benefit the group. It was also common for village leaders to bring bottles of *puro* (home-distilled cane alcohol) to mingas. On other occasions, Bernardo purchased cases of 22-ounce beer bottles to gift to workers and meeting attendees. Often, after the first case was consumed, one or more of the lower ranking village leaders would send out for another case at their own expense. During village fiestas, Bernardo or another council member often purchased a case or more of beer for villagers.

Leaders contributed scant labor, but worked hard in their leadership roles to represent and advocate for the community. They also made conspicuous gifts to other minga workers, among whom gossip about participation was trained outward to other communities, not to others within Manzano. When I took photographs at one Manzano minga, several women told me I should take pictures of minga labor in other villages, where they "just sit around not working." At several parish-wide meetings, Manzano resident Frederico Castro complained loudly that too many people from neighboring villages only worked for themselves: it was only Manzano that worked for everyone. Such refrains were common among villagers.

Minga Practice in Pusuca

In Pusuca, mingas were organized by the elected village council whose bylaws were drafted in collaboration with the Esquel Foundation. Mingas were announced at monthly village council and weekly committee meetings, and attendance was mandatory. Attendance was meticulously recorded by council or committee secretaries and archived in spreadsheets on a community computer donated by Esquel. In addition to rayas, Pusuca practiced a *tarea* (task) system for minga duties. Tareas—such as hauling a certain quantity of materials to a designated location or digging a ditch of one meter width, one meter depth, and ten meter length— were uniformly assigned to every household for each minga, and rayas were only awarded when tareas were complete. The sanction for nonparticipation was elimination from the projects. There were opportunities for those in arrears to make up rayas by bringing additional laborers (family, friends, or paid laborers) to complete multiple tasks, paying fines, or by completing additional tasks on nonminga days.

Leadership power was less concentrated in Pusuca than in Manzano. In 2011, positions on the village council and several village committees (irrigation, potable water, credit union) were held by people who were formerly both economically and politically marginal. Women and individuals from land-poor households were more represented on the Pusuca village council and committees than in those same organizations in area villages. The new president, Angel Turushina, was a young man who came from a relatively poor family that formerly lived on a hacienda. His influence was aided by the many kin he had in the resettlement, but he was generally perceived as an intelligent and just leader whose youth and new ideas were an ideal break from the previously entrenched political power of wealthy landowners.

Unlike village councils in the rural parishes, where women only occasionally had leadership roles, women were well represented on the village council and on other committees in the village and played active roles in decision-making. Moreover, many of the women who increasingly assumed leadership roles were from economically marginal households. Judith Guamushi was a mother of two

young girls whose soft-spoken husband was often away working their fields or doing his part-time job as a driver. As the secretary of the Irrigation Committee, Judith often demonstrated more leadership and exerted more power than its male president, yet she and her extended family were among the poorest, with little land or livestock, and for generations they had been cheap peon labor for their better-off neighbors. By contrast, in 2011, it was often Judith—stocky, indefatigable, and outspoken—who dictated work responsibilities on mingas, tracking rayas, and calling out people she perceived as shirking responsibilities. She was also one of the most vocal contributors at village meetings.

Despite strong leadership by presidents or some committee heads, the process of decision-making in Pusuca appeared generally participatory, with little power vested in the elected leadership. This was partially because all decisions were voted on and also because, ever since Pusuca's founding in 2008, the meetings were monitored and moderated by an ever-present representative from the Esquel Foundation, Martha Santiago. In contrast to the bombast of many village leaders, Martha was petite and unassuming, but spoke with authority and guided discussions with a focus on the practicalities of often hotly contested issues. Village council meetings began at 7 p.m. on the first Saturday of every month and often ran as late as midnight, as each item on the meeting's typically modest agenda was met with impassioned debate. Unlike Manzano, where debate and gossip focused on the comparative legitimacy and eligibility of villages around them, debate and gossip in Pusuca focused almost exclusively on the relative legitimacy and eligibility of the resettlers *within* the community. Agenda items often involved reporting on irrigation canal progress, potable water, minga schedules and opportunities for those in arrears, status updates on basic village services, and invitations to participate in micro-development projects, such as agricultural extension training and farm-to-table programs. Yet, each agenda item, no matter its significance, was met with debate about who was deserving of project inclusion, who was behind or current with dues and responsibilities, and how people should be sanctioned. When these items almost inevitably reached their boiling point, or when village leaders brokered arguably pyrrhic resolutions—as when they once voted to evict a man from the village for missing too many mingas because they doubted the veracity of a doctor's note—the Esquel representative eventually stepped in and brokered a peace that was always accepted, if not always welcomed.

Because Esquel had the final say over who could access key resources such as irrigation and projects, villagers kept watchful eyes on each other, and gossip or outright protest about who had participated or completed their duties (or not) was a constant feature of mingas, village meetings, and daily conversations. While community members fortified the list-making practice by means of their wary, communal panopticon, the entire endeavor was mediated by the Esquel Foundation. Under Esquel's guidance, with the endorsement of the village council,

project and resource access was determined by minga participation or payment of fines.

Statecraft, Bureaucratic Power, and Disaster Recovery

What explains the contrasts in minga practice and governance in Manzano and Pusuca? One key factor appears to be the intersection of local patron–clientelism with the dual trends of decentralization and recentralization in Ecuador. A second key factor is the paternalistic intervention of the Esquel Foundation in the Pusuca resettlement. Finally, the intersection of these factors with some of the particular types of local agency afforded in post-disaster contexts helps shed light on the changes in and diversity of minga practice.

As a result of the dual trends in decentralization and recentralization, local development in Canton Penipe increasingly involved pursuing three funding strategies, often in concert with one another: appeals to ministries of the federal government to fund local projects (e.g., education, infrastructure, health campaigns); courting support from the Provincial Council of Chimborazo for potable water, irrigation, roads, and environmental projects—carried out under the banner of the *minga por la vida* (minga for life) program that tied project funding to volunteer citizen labor participation; and soliciting funding from NGOs and foundations for economic development projects. The relative autonomy of the village councils allowed a great deal of creativity in pursuing these multiple channels, but it also enabled a presidio of local patron–clientelism by obscuring the class differences that inhered in local minga practice. Outside agencies were attracted by the image of well-organized villages, but perceived little beyond the superficial performance of minga organization. Local leaders were therefore able to buttress their own power by brokering outside resources through minga organization, thereby reproducing the relational basis of the clientelist political system.

In contrast, while minga organization and project benefit inclusion were likewise entangled in Pusuca, here it unfolded quite differently. As in Manzano, mingas and meetings were organized and enforced via raya attendance credits and were also held to attract outside agency support. Under the influence of the Esquel Foundation, minga participation was routinized, based on clear and relatively strict institutional parameters, and enforced through specific sanctions, including fines and exclusion from common resources, such as irrigation. List-making was meticulous and there were no favors. Both the Pusuca Council and Esquel focused on community organization to attract funding and project support from outside donors, and minga labor underwrote the irrigation canal project funded by the World Bank and the Provincial Council of Chimborazo. Esquel played a central role in attracting outside agencies to the community and they successfully brought

in funding from dozens of NGOs to support micro projects in Pusuca, ranging from park construction, to greenhouses, potable water, and computer facilities.

Another key difference between these sites was the imposition of the tarea system, previously employed to regulate labor parties on area haciendas. No one seemed to recall who proposed it (it was first applied in early 2011, before I returned to the field). Several villagers noted that it was not imposed by Esquel and that it came from the community, but no one could tell me whose suggestion it was. Santos Romero, an able-bodied single man in his late thirties, said he might have suggested it, but he could not recall. He said he had been dismayed that labor was measured by time and not effort, meaning that some people did the bulk of the work. However, minutes for village council meetings in late 2010 and early 2011 suggest that Esquel representatives raised the need to standardize the minga output of each household in order to coordinate work on the irrigation canal. It was in the context of heated conversations on this topic that the village assembly developed the tarea rule.

There was another level of discipline and local governance that was significant in Pusuca—the granting of house and property deeds to resettlers. Esquel began granting deeds in mid-2010 to beneficiaries who had regularly met their obligations to the community—mandatory attendance at monthly village meetings and weekly mingas, and payment of monthly dues. Village council president Angel Turushina told me that most people had deeds to their houses and property by mid-2011. He said that although fulltime occupation was not a condition of receiving deeds, minga and council participation was, and several households were still on a trial period until they had completed their obligations. When discussing with Martha Santiago the degree of decision-making autonomy Esquel allowed the village council, I mentioned that I had witnessed her predecessor intervene in 2009 when the village assembly voted to evict an elderly resettler. When she mentioned they would not allow evictions, she said that Esquel itself could no longer rightfully evict people. I asked her how this could be so, since it was withholding deeds:

> You see, it's like a trick that I pulled. I still have the deeds of those who barely occupy their homes. I told them I will give them the deeds when they complete their obligations to the community and when they occupy the houses. But ... legally, they already have their deeds, just not the paper. They could go to the Registry [of Property] any day to request their deeds and they would give them to them.

Thus, by implementing the tarea system, Esquel helped foster the development of minga practice as a leveling device. This was facilitated by two factors: Esquel withheld key resources—most notably, property deeds—from resettlers in order to enforce minga and community participation and adherence to community standards; and this manipulation was abetted by the resettlers themselves—and

often the poorest among them—who, anxious about the precarity of their own access to resources, eagerly policed their neighbors. They kept meticulous accounting of participation and were relentless in using gossip as a first order sanction for nonconformity. This type of statecraft was decidedly parlous—dependent on the sly paternalism of Esquel, which momentarily neutralized class politics, while in some ways standing in as the conspicuous giver/withholder character that hitherto had been played by local patrons.

Conclusions

Both communities were striving towards a sort of unity based on the leveling mechanism of list-making, although as I encountered them, this was decidedly precarious in different but related ways. In Manzano, cooperation was organized through reciprocal exchange ties within the core group and the conspicuous giving of access to resources by the council president. Although they employed lists, their utility was ephemeral. They were not referenced or drawn upon for historical patterns and had little or no leveling effect on relational differences. Much like Arjun Appadurai's (1996) discussion of number in the colonial imagination, list-making in Manzano let people know they were being watched and evaluated and that those who kept the lists held the power. In contrast to the scattered notebooks of Manzano, the council and committees in Pusuca kept rigorous attendance records on spreadsheets, which community leaders and Esquel referred to in order to determine eligibility for project and resource inclusion—which was much more dependent upon relationships in Manzano.

For all their differences, there was a commonality in minga practice across the two villages: both revealed processes and relationalities at the intersection of local and extra-local power. In Manzano, the tools of statecraft only thinly veiled practices embedded in interpersonal relations and local politics, where dissent was negatively sanctioned with exclusion. In many ways this was a revanchist response to a resettlement whose agencies and landless territory undermined the legitimacy of traditional political leaders: here, minga practice was a reassertion of local power. However, the precariousness of statecraft was no less palpable in Pusuca, where list-making and decisions on resource and project inclusion were arbitrated by the Esquel Foundation. In Pusuca, everyone answered to a council that in practice was difficult to distinguish from the foundation. Power brokerage was not truly established by the community and it could be lost entirely through cooptation by the foundation or devolve into forms of dyadic reciprocity and patronage, as in Manzano. And yet, whether it was through forms of reciprocity that have been central to so many historical forms of Andean statecraft, or by standardizing and regulating participation, both local councils and NGOs were able to secure

outside support for development projects and recruit minga participants to realize collective objectives. Alas, this came with the exclusion of those whose labor and exchange relations were perceived as nonconforming in these respective regimes of minga practice.

Acknowledgments

Notes

[1] All names are pseudonyms.

[2] Locals engaged in a code switching of sorts, sometimes de-emphasizing disaster risk designations because they believed it would inhibit their ability to secure scarce resources (e.g., credit and infrastructure), while in other contexts, which might legitimize claims to formal support (e.g., housing and infrastructure), they emphasized the designation.

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