

# Spatial Distribution and Socio-Economic Impacts of International Retirement Migration in the City of Cotacachi, Ecuador

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## **Abstract**

International Retirement Migration (IRM) is a growing phenomenon in the Global South. Changes in transportation and new communication technologies associated with globalization have shortened distances and made it possible to own land and buy homes in remote destinations. Countries such as Ecuador are part of this process and are considered in recent years as one of the favorite places to retire in the world, largely due to the low cost of living and real estate prices. Against this background and using the case study of the Andean city of Cotacachi (Ecuador), this dissertation analyzes the economic and socio-spatial effects of the development of high-cost real-estate properties for North American retirees around indigenous communities. In order to understand the IRM-related effects, this study contextualizes and discusses them in light of the highly uneven postcolonial land distribution.

Toward this end, this dissertation employs an innovative mixed-methods approach that combines the use of quantitative techniques such as satellite imagery analysis, data collection on land and housing prices, with qualitative methods, like participatory mapping workshops, focus group discussions and semi-structured interviews with stakeholders. On the one hand, the use of high-resolution satellite imagery combined with participatory mapping techniques provided a detailed understanding of the spatial and temporal transformations of foreign-owned properties in the city. Quantitative and qualitative research, on the other hand, provided empirical insights on the economic and social effects of IRM-related real-estate development on indigenous populations.

Three academic papers form the main body of this dissertation. Paper 1 maps and analyses the spatio-temporal growth of foreign-owned properties. Paper 2, goes further and discusses the economic and social effects of IRM on indigenous communities, particularly with regard to access to land and local housing and Paper 3, examines the social practices of the foreign retired population and how these practices influence the level of interaction between the two groups.

The findings of this dissertation addressed methodological, empirical, and conceptual gaps in the research literature on IRM. Triangulation of data based on satellite imagery analysis with field research data contributed to the representation of the spatio-temporal dynamics of IRM-related real-estate development. Beyond the spatial dimension and from a critical geographical perspective, the research demonstrated how transnational real-estate market related to IRM, coupled with local socio-structural factors such as highly uneven postcolonial land distribution, deepens existing inequalities in indigenous populations, marginalizing access to land and fostering socio-spatial fragmentation.

## Zusammenfassung

Internationale Altersmigration (International Retirement Migration, kurz IRM) ist ein wachsendes Phänomen im Globalen Süden. Im Zusammenhang mit der Globalisierung haben Veränderungen im Transportwesen und neue Kommunikationstechnologien die Entfernungen verkürzt und damit die Möglichkeit geschaffen, auch in entlegenen Gebieten Land zu erwerben und Häuser zu kaufen. Teil dieses Prozesses sind Länder wie Ecuador, das seit einiger Zeit als eines der beliebtesten Länder der Welt gilt, um seinen Ruhestand zu verbringen, besonders im Hinblick auf die niedrigen lokalen Lebenshaltungskosten und Immobilienpreise. Die vorliegende Dissertation analysiert am Beispiel der Andenstadt Cotacachi (Ecuador) die wirtschaftlichen und sozialräumlichen Auswirkungen des Baus hochpreisiger Immobilien für nordamerikanische Rentner in der Umgebung von indigenen Communities. Um die IRM-bezogenen Auswirkungen auf die indigene Bevölkerung zu verstehen, kontextualisiert und diskutiert diese Studie sie mit einer höchst ungleichen postkolonialen Landverteilung.

Die Dissertation verfolgt dafür einen innovativen *Mixed Methods*-Ansatz, in dem quantitative Techniken (wie die Analyse von Satellitenbildern und die Erhebung von Daten zu Land- und Immobilienpreisen) mit qualitativen Methoden (wie partizipative Kartierungsworkshops, Fokusgruppendifkussionen und halbstrukturierten Interviews mit Stakeholdern) kombiniert werden. Einerseits ermöglicht die Verwendung von hochauflösenden Satellitenbildern in Kombination mit partizipativen Kartierungstechniken ein detailliertes Verständnis der räumlichen und zeitlichen Veränderung ausländischer Besitzverhältnisse an innerstädtischen Immobilien. Andererseits liefern die quantitativen und qualitativen Studien empirische Erkenntnisse über die wirtschaftlichen und sozialen Auswirkungen der IRM-bezogenen Immobilienentwicklung auf die indigene Bevölkerung.

Drei Paper bilden den Hauptteil dieser Dissertation. Paper 1 kartiert und analysiert das räumlich-zeitliche Wachstum von Immobilien in ausländischem Besitz. Paper 2 geht darüber hinaus und erörtert die wirtschaftlichen und sozialen Auswirkungen des IRM auf indigene Communities, insbesondere im Hinblick auf den Zugang zu Land und lokalem Wohnraum. Paper 3 untersucht die sozialen Praktiken der ausländischen Bevölkerung im Rentenalter und in welchem Maß diese die Interaktion zwischen den beiden Gruppen beeinflussen.

Mit den Ergebnissen dieser Dissertation werden methodische, empirische und konzeptionelle Lücken in der Forschungsliteratur zu IRM geschlossen. Die Triangulation von Daten, die auf der Analyse von Satellitenbildern basieren, mit Daten aus der Feldforschung trägt zur Darstellung der räumlich-zeitlichen Dynamik der IRM-bezogenen Entwicklung auf dem Immobilienmarkt bei. Über die räumliche Dimension hinaus zeigt die Studie aus einer kritischen geografischen Perspektive, inwiefern der transnationale Immobilienmarkt im Kontext von IRM mit lokalen soziostrukturellen

Faktoren wie der höchst ungleichen postkolonialen Verteilung von Land zusammenhängt, bestehende Ungleichheiten in der indigenen Bevölkerung vertieft, den Zugang zu Land marginalisiert und eine sozialräumliche Fragmentierung begünstigt.

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Finally, I dedicate this work to all my *loved ones* who have gone ahead in this short journey that is life, who despite not being here, I know that somewhere they will be waiting for me with open arms.

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## List of abbreviations

IRM	International retirement migration
PDOT	Development Plan and Territorial Planning
GCs	Gated Communities
UNORCAC	Union of Peasant and Indigenous Organizations of Cotacachi
FGDs	Focus Group Discussions
PMWs	Participatory Mapping Workshops
INEC	National Institute of Statistics and Census
IOM	International Organization for Migration

# 1 Introduction

Ecuador is unique. There are many places around the world where you can find cheap land, Ecuador included. But in many of those places, you'd lead an uncomfortable life, far from friends and family and disconnected from the rest of the world. Not so in Ecuador. In this country, you can golf on breathtaking courses where you never have to make a tee time. You can have a driver, a cook, and a maid for a fraction of the cost you'd pay back home. You can eat a gourmet meal in world-class restaurants of every cuisine at prices unheard of in Los Angeles, New York, or London. Daily flights connect Ecuador to major hubs throughout the hemisphere. Cell phones are everywhere. Internet cafés are easy to find, and home computer hookups are common (*Excerpt from International Living magazine. Move to Ecuador. July 23, 2021*).

Ecuador is unique: Cheap land, low-cost of living, good connectivity, etc. This is how international retirement companies picture the country (see excerpt above) and advertise it as a *retirement paradise*. The excerpt illustrates a vital trend that is occurring in some countries of the Global South: international retirement migration (IRM) and related dynamic real-estate development.

IRM from relatively affluent northern countries to low-and middle-income southern countries is a growing phenomenon (Warnes, 2009). Countries such as Mexico, Costa Rica, Panama and Ecuador are receiving a substantial number of retirement migrants. According to the Social Security Administration, nearly half a million American retirees received their benefits outside the U.S by the end of 2021 (Social Security Administration, 2021).

Overall, while IRM is known as an important factor for regional economic development in the Global South (Janoschka & Haas, 2013), IRM's economic, social and spatial effects in the destination countries remain controversial. On the one hand, IRM is discussed as being beneficial for the local economy. For example, Gustafson (2013:2) argues that "Immigrant retirees buy homes, consume goods and services, provide employment opportunities for local workers, pay taxes..." But on the other hand, studies show that IRM increases the demand for new types of housing in destination countries (Huete, 2008; Membrado, 2015), which in turn leads to a number of negative effects. The impacts are diverse. IRM can lead to a sharp increase in property prices and land speculation (van Noorloos, 2013; Gascón, 2015); may encourage conflicts between local residents and second-home owners due to competition on the real-estate market (Shucksmith, 1983); produces territorial dispossession and gentrification (Bastos, 2013; Janoschka, 2011; Hayes, 2016; Hayes, 2020); contributes to socio-spatial segregation (Van Noorloos & Steel, 2015; Schweppe, 2022), among others.

Existing research on IRM and its impacts have focused mainly on cases within Europe (see, Casado-Díaz, 2006; Huete, 2008; Membrado, 2015; King et al., 2021) and the US (Serow, 1990; Walters, 2002; Sloane & Silbersack, 2020a), where this process has been ongoing for decades. However, due to the emergence of new migratory flows of retirees to countries in the Global South, recent studies have examined Latin American countries, such as Costa Rica (Janoschka, 2011; van Noorloos, 2013), Mexico (Lizárraga, 2010; Bastos, 2013; Monterrubio et al., 2018; Sloane et al., 2020), Brazil (Pontes da Fonseca & Janoschka, 2018), and Ecuador (e.g., van Noorloos & Steel, 2016; Hayes, 2013, 2020; Sloane et al., 2020; Efid et al., 2020). In this context, King et al. (2021) and Schweppe (2022) argue that new geographical frontiers of IRM are emerging across the Global South. Despite the existence of several studies that analyze the implications of IRM in the Global South, existing research has largely focused on urban or coastal retirement destinations. Furthermore, the study of the effects of IRM on indigenous communities in rural areas, taking into account the colonial legacy of land ownership, has received little attention. As stated by Janoschka & Haas (2009) and Croucher (2015), critical studies that assess the impact of retiree migration on the local communities so far remain limited. Against this backdrop and using the case study of the Andean city of Cotacachi, Ecuador, the aim of this dissertation is to contribute to a better understanding of IRM and its economic, social and spatial implications in the destination regions of the Global South.

In the case of Cotacachi, the biggest influx of IRM started in 2009, shortly after the U.S. economic and financial crisis (Viteri, 2015). Today, about 1,000 foreign pensioners live in the city (El Telégrafo, 2017). Although foreign retirees represent only a small proportion of the city's total population, they have a significant impact at the local level. Since the significant influx of foreign retirees several high-cost gated residential properties have been developed in the city, many of them in direct proximity to some indigenous communities, which are not only reshaping the rural landscape but also generating a series of transformations. Drawing on the spatio-temporal and socio-economic analysis of the IRM, coupled with the historical study of the uneven distribution of land in Cotacachi, this dissertation contributes to fill knowledge gaps in the fields on the IRM-related real-estate markets in the Global South, indigenous populations and its impacts on rural destinations. By addressing these elements, this dissertation poses four overarching research questions:

- I. *What is the spatio-temporal growth of the IRM in the City of Cotacachi, Ecuador?*
- II. *How does IRM-related real estate development affect land prices and indigenous communities' access to land?*
- III. *To what extent are colonial patterns of land control by landowning élites connected the emerging IRM real-estate market?*
- IV. *How does the development of gated communities for retirement migrants affect social practices of indigenous communities and which barriers shape the social interactions between these two groups?*

To answer these research questions, I have developed an applied and innovative mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative techniques such as satellite imagery analysis, database management (cadastral and real-estate market) with qualitative field research methods. On the one hand, the use of recent satellite images combined with the analysis of public cadastral databases provided detailed information about the spatio-temporal growth of foreign-owned properties in the city of Cotacachi. While qualitative research, based on participatory mapping workshops (PMWs), focus group discussions (FGDs) and semi-structured interviews with local stakeholders, on the other hand, provided empirical insights about the different opinions of social actors involved in the IRM and real-estate market and its impacts on the local population.

The dissertation is structured in seven chapters. The following chapter (*Chapter 2*) presents the conceptual framework employed throughout the dissertation. It provides reflections on key concepts derived from Economic Geography and International Migration studies. First, it addresses the concept of globalization to elucidate how the flow of foreign capital is connected to the real-estate market. Secondly, it delves into the concept of International Retirement Migration (IRM) to explain its spatial, social and economic consequences in the destination areas. Third, it reviews the main academic debates on the development of gated communities and their socio-spatial consequences. Finally, it discusses the concept of social practices as a useful tool to assess the social integration between the foreign population and the indigenous people.

*Chapter 3* introduces the study area and explains the local and international factors that have contributed to the influx of North American retirees to the city. Then, in order to understand how the IRM-related real-estate market operates and affects indigenous communities' access to land, it provides an overview of the historical process of land concentration and its connection to the emerging foreign real-estate market. In addition, the methodological approach used throughout the dissertation, the data collection process and the analyses are presented. After reflecting on the research design and its limitations, an overview of the empirical chapters is provided, which consist of three individual scientific papers.

The findings are presented in *Chapter 4, 5 and 6*. Empirically, this dissertation sheds light on the spatio-temporal growth of foreign-owned properties in the city of Cotacachi, Ecuador (*Chapter 4*). It further examines the economic and socio-spatial effects of IRM on indigenous communities' access to land and urban housing prices (*Chapter 5*). Looking further into IRM-related socio-spatial effects, *Chapter 6* analyses the forms of socio-spatial segregation caused by the development of gated communities and evaluates the integration processes between the foreign retirees and the indigenous population. Finally, *Chapter 7* point out the main findings of the dissertation by answering the research questions posed. It also reviews the methodological and conceptual contributions derived from these results and offers recommendations for further research on the topic.

## 2 Conceptual Framework

This chapter reflects the main conceptual framework that has been employed throughout the dissertation. I seek to use these reflections to contextualize the three empirical chapters as well as to provide further arguments for responding to research questions. Firstly, I address the concept of globalization to elucidate how the flow of transnational real-estate capital is connected to the IRM. Second, I present the concept of International Retirement Migration (IRM), to explain the patterns of mobilization of retired foreign citizens. I describe the push and pull factors that have contributed to this phenomenon and the spatial, social and economic consequences in the destination areas. Third, I review the main academic debates on gated communities and their relationship with socio-spatial segregation. And finally, I attempt to use the concept of social practices as a useful tool to assess whether or not there are social interactions between the retired foreign population living within these gated communities and the surrounding indigenous populations.

### 2.1 Globalization

Globalization can be defined as the “intensification of worldwide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa”(Giddens, 1990:64). As such, globalization has made the world more interconnected and distances have become shorter. People move while maintaining contacts with groups in different countries, and new communications and transport technology has made it possible to communicate and to travel more rapidly, and to own land and houses in distant, exotic destinations (Zoomers, 2010).

Globalization is further deeply connected with the spread of global capitalism (Friedman,1999). Harvey (2003), argues that today’s capitalist globalization is characterized by the financialisation of the economy. Financialisation refers to the growing influence of capital markets, their intermediaries and processes in contemporary economic and political life (Pike & Pollard, 2010). In this sense, economic globalization influences the current real-estate markets and produces “a massive increase in foreign and domestic investment in commercial and luxury residential construction” (Sassen, 1991), which in turn also has consequences for land use. While land has traditionally been considered a factor of production or location, it is increasingly becoming an object of financial investment and speculation. In this sense, the IRM-related flows of foreign investment in land and real-estate markets into new rural destinations areas such as the city of Cotacachi, are a current expression of the localised impact of globalisation.

Zoomers (2010), for example, in her study on globalization and the foreignisation of space, identifies IRM as one of the seven processes contributing to the current global land grabbing. In response to the rising cost of living, a large number of U.S. retirees

over the age of 55 move each year to Central and South American countries, where they settle in private condominiums that have all the amenities (Zoomers, 2010: 439).

Several authors have recognized globalization as a process that generates strong changes and inequalities in the territory. Pradilla (2006), argues that globalization has been responsible for the substantial changes occurring in the territory, the new organization of spaces and the changes in the lives of its inhabitants. Similarly, Harvey (2004) argues that current neoliberal policies and global processes lead to “accumulation by dispossession”: the concentration of profit in the hands of a few through the enclosure of public resources (e.g., land and wealth) and the exclusion of others from these resources. In a more socio-spatial contribution to the globalization debate, Bauman (1998:18) argues that globalization leads to progressive spatial segregation, separation and exclusion; a total communication breakdown between global elites and the locally tied rest: ‘Rather than homogenizing the human condition, the technological annulment of temporal/spatial distances tends to polarize it.’ According to Bauman, a key characteristic of globalization is the enormous segregation and difference between a hypermobile elite and a large group of poor who are either ‘imprisoned’ in local place or travel only because it is their only option for poverty alleviation (Bauman, 1998). All these characteristics are important to understand how globalization influences the IRM-related real-estate markets as well as its complex effects on populations in destination regions, which are discussed in the next section.

## 2.2 International Retirement Migration

International Retirement Migration (IRM) has been used in academic studies to refer primarily to the relocation (short - long term) of retired persons from Northern European countries to Mediterranean destinations (Egidi et al., 2020). Mediterranean destination such as Spain, Portugal, Greece, Italy and Croatia, among others, have received a considerable number of retirees and have been considered attractive retirement destinations for several decades (Casado-Díaz et al., 2004; O’Reilly, 2007). However, the map of IRM is rapid changing. New geographical frontiers are opening up in countries of the Global South (King et al., 2021b).

IRM has been analysed from a variety of disciplines such as sociology, anthropology, human geography, gerontology and has been defined with a variety of different terms. The literature includes different terms, such as *residential tourism or second home tourism* (Mazón & Aledo, 2005; Huete, 2008; van Noorloos, 2013; Gascón, 2015, 2016), *lifestyle migration* (Benson & O’Reilly., 2009, 2016; Van Noorloos & Steel, 2015; Hayes, 2015), *privileged migration* (Croucher, 2009; 2012) and *international retirement migration* (Howard, 2008; Rojas et al., 2014; Miles, 2015; Sloane & Silbersack, 2020; Schweppe, 2022). In this regard, several authors agree that IRM is difficult to categorize because it involves different phenomena ranging from “migration”

and “retirement” (Warnes, 2009) to aspects related to residential tourism (Nielsen, 2009). Moreover, motivation for the different forms of mobility varies significantly.

According to Warnes 2009, one of the ways retirement migration has been classified is by considering the mobility patterns of retired people. He proposes four types of mobility patterns for people who migrate internationally during retirement. They are: (1) persons who had moved from the “first world” to another country for work and return to their home country in retirement; (2) persons who moved from the “third world” to another country for work and return to their home country in retirement; (3) persons who move in retirement for amenity reasons from their home country to a location where they have not previously been permanent residents; and (4) family members who join individuals who are relocating or have relocated (Warnes 2009). In this study, the third group of retirees (persons who move in retirement for amenity reasons) is significant to the development of this dissertation.

### **2.2.1 Push and pull factors of IRM**

There is a wide range of *pull and push factors* that drive IRM, ranging from the search for destinations with a mild climate, financial advantages such as a low cost of living, affordable real-estate prices, to other factors relate to the possibility to enjoy a perceived better lifestyle, enriched by new cultures, landscapes and different amenities (King et al., 2021a).

According to IRM studies, climate is the most commonly expressed reason for migrants to relocate in a new destination country (Casado-Díaz et al., 2004; Howard, 2008). Casado-Díaz et al., (2004), based on the analysis of social surveys in nine southern European areas, found that about four-in-five participants mentioned climate as one of the main reasons for migrating. Financial advantages play an important role and constitute the second most frequent group of reasons expressed for the relocation (Casado-Díaz et al., 2004). Hayes (2013) drawing on the city of Cuenca, Ecuador argued that low cost of living and property prices, combined with the limited financial security in retirement in the United States, have made relocation an increasingly popular strategy to avoid adjusting to a lower standard of living upon retirement. The author states that the “Economic crisis in the United States in 2008 caused the loss of jobs of many people over 60 years, reduced their pensions and in some cases took their homes, which led to a search for better retirement conditions, in places where they can still enjoy a “comfortable retirement” (Hayes, 2013: 5). Another factor that has been little discussed in the literature so far, but that seems to be determinant at the moment of migration, particularly to countries in the Global South, is the search for idyllic places (Benson & O’Reilly, 2016 ; Kordel & Pohle, 2018) and the desire for a country lifestyle (Zasada et al., 2010). As stated by Benson & O’Reilly, rural locations are imagined to offer lifestyle migrants a sense of stepping back in time, getting back to the land, the simple or good life, as well as a sense of community spirit (Benson & O’Reilly, 2016: 612).

Security seeking also appears to be an important characteristic for older migrants when moving. Zasada et al., (2010), argue that home environment play an important role in the aging process, since older people prefer to have a familiar and safe environment where they can pursue their activities. These security demands are often met by acquiring residential properties within gated communities, which have a series of security measures and restricted access. In this line, Roitman (2010), stated that gated communities are offered in the real-estate market not only as secure spaces, but also as idyllic places surrounded by nature, with large spaces, green areas and access to different amenities. Another factor related to destination selection that may be particularly important is accessibility. Considering that aging individuals have a greater demand for facilities such as hospitals and require more help from their surroundings, the importance of accessibility should not be underestimated (Sassen, 2013). Repetti and Lawrence (2021) demonstrated that retirement migrants preferred locations that were easily reachable, either by car or by plane. Finally, researchers have identified that the decision to migrate and the choice of destination are influenced by their previous travel experiences as tourists (Casado-Díaz, 2006; Ashton et al., 2019 ; Benson, 2010). Prior visits create familiarity with the destination’s culture and people before migration. In subchapter 3.1.1, the local and international factors that have contributed to the influx of the foreign population in the case of the city of Cotacachi are explained.

Push factors (origin)	Pull factors (destination)	Authors
Unemployment and limited financial security due to the economic crisis in the U.S.	Good climatic conditions	Casado-Díaz et al., (2004) Howard (2008)
	Low living conditions Affordable property prices	Hayes (2013)
	Desire for idyllic rural locations	Zasada et al., (2010) Benson & O’Reilly (2016) Kordel & Pohle (2018)
	Search for security in gated communities	Zasada et al., (2010) Roitman (2010)
	Accessibility Health opportunities	Repetti and Lawrence (2021)
	Previous travel experiences	Casado-Díaz (2006) Ashton et al., (2019) Benson (2010)

**Table 2.1.** Push and Pull Factors of IRM (Own elaboration).



### 2.2.2 Economic, Social and Spatial Implications of IRM

IRM is a complex process that generates a series of territorial, social and economic changes (Roig-Munar, 2017). There is considerable academic evidence that recognizes the different effects of IRM in destination countries (Van Noorloos & Steel, 2015; Pontes da Fonseca & Janoschka, 2018; Hayes, 2020). Overall, while IRM is known as an important factor for regional economic development in the Global South (Janoschka & Haas, 2013), IRM's effects remain controversial.

On the one hand, IRM is discussed as being beneficial for the local economy. For example, Gustafson (2013:2) argues that "Immigrant retirees buy homes, consume goods and services, provide employment opportunities for local workers, pay taxes..." But on the other hand, several studies show that IRM leads to a number of negative effects on the host population. The impacts are diverse. IRM can lead a sharp increase in property prices and land speculation (Huete, 2008; van Noorloos, 2013); produces territorial dispossession and gentrification (Bastos, 2013; Janoschka, 2011; Hayes, 2016; Hayes, 2020); contributes to socio-spatial segregation (Van Noorloos & Steel, 2015; Schweppe, 2022), etc.

Looking in depth at case studies in Latin American countries, several authors have highlighted the social implications of IRM in the receiving communities (see, Rainer & Malizia, 2015; Hayes, 2015a; van Noorloos & Steel, 2016; Kordel & Pohle, 2018). Some studies point out that the level of interaction between foreign immigrants and the local population is low, with no signs of the establishment of strong bonds between groups (Cortes et al., 2014; Benson, 2015). Cortes et al., (2014) referring to the coastal community of Bahia Ballena, in Costa Rica noted that economic differences and the language barriers are the main reasons deterring interaction between amenity migrants and locals. Bastos (2013), in turn, taking as an example the case of Chapala, Mexico, argues that IRM-related real-estate development can be understood as a process of 'accumulation by dispossession' (Harvey, 2004). Highlighting how the rural population is displaced from their traditional agricultural activities due to rising land prices, Bastos (2013) further states that because of to this process "the population has lost its peasant character and is economically dependent on the jobs generated by residential tourism" (Bastos, 2013: 49). Thus, in the case of Chapala, the increase in residential tourism has not resulted in an economic uplift for the local inhabitants but, on the contrary, has resulted in territorial dispossession. For the Ecuadorian case, existing sociological studies focusing on Vilcabamba (Hayes, 2015a) and Cotacachi (Gascón, 2015; Gascón & Cañada, 2016) emphasize how IRM deepens existing forms of social inequalities and encourages the displacement of the peasant population. Gascón & Cañada (2016) further point out how this type of migration drives the conversion of land into a capital reserve, provoking a process of land speculation that threatens peasant reproduction strategies and contributes to de-peasantization and rural migration.

In sum, the body of literature presented in this section highlights the complex globalizing process of IRM and its socio-spatial implications at the local level.

## 2.3 Gated Communities

This section aims to elucidate the main conceptual contributions in the literature on gated communities (GCs), which has been employed in *Chapter 6* of this dissertation. It is divided into two parts, the first part 2.3.1 explains the main causes that have influenced the development of GCs for the Latin American cities, while the following section 2.3.2 analyses the economic, social and spatial implications of this type of residential developments.

Gated communities (GCs), as a particular style of residential development can be defined as “residential areas with restricted access in which normally public spaces are privatised. They are security developments with designated perimeters, usually walls or fences, and controlled entrances that are intended to prevent penetration by non-residents” (Blakely & Snyder, 1997 p. 2). These security developments can be seen all over Latin America, even in small and medium-sized cities (Borsdorf et al., 2007). While there are many similarities between GCs, they differ from country to country with respect to their characteristics and in particular with respect to the different reasons for their development (Mohamed Salah & Ayad, 2018). Blakely & Snyder (1997), provide one of the most popular typology based on *community function* by studying GCs of USA. They identified three different types of GCs: Lifestyle, Prestige, and security zone communities.

*Lifestyle communities:* These residential projects focus on leisure activities and are characterized by having recreational facilities and common services. They include retirement villages, golf communities, or suburban new towns. Developer of this types of projects seek to attract residents searching for identity, security, and a shared lifestyle with their neighbors (Grant & Mittelsteadt, 2004).

*Prestige communities:* These residential projects reflect desire for image, privacy, and control. They serve as symbols of wealth and status, focus on exclusivity over community includes the rich and famous communities, top-fifth developments, and executive communities for the middle class.

*Security zone communities:* These residential developments reflect fear of outsiders, involve retrofitting fences and gates on public streets controlling access. This category includes the city, the suburban, and the barricade perch. Blakely and Snyder call these enclosed urban neighborhoods ‘city perches’, because the gates are built by residents rather than by developers.

Other scholars who have attempted to classify GCs in Latin American countries such as Brazil and Argentina are Coy & Pöhler (2002). They argue that GCs can be classified according to their geographic location into two types: *Gated communities situated in the inner-city* and *Gated communities situated on the outskirts*. And they can be categorized according to the predominant types of buildings. Most inner-city GCs are large condominium complexes, walled and with strict security measures. While suburban GCs are large residential areas with high security and equipped with all the necessary amenities and leisure facilities (both types of interest to this dissertation).

### 2.3.1 Causes of the development of Gated Communities

There are several causes that influence the spread of GCs. Roitman (2010) identifies two main causes for the Latin American cities. The first ones of *structural type*, related to process of economic globalization and the increase in foreign investment. According to Sassen, economic globalization influences the real-estate markets and produces “a massive increase in foreign and domestic investment in luxury commercial and residential construction” (Sassen, 1991).

The second cause influencing the spread of GCs is of a *subjective type* and is more related to the desires, points of view and interests of the individuals living within these residential developments. Among the main subjective causes are: i) fear of crime; ii) the search for a better “lifestyle”; and iii) the achievement of a sense of community. The analysis of these subjective causes and the reasons why foreign retirees decide to live in this type of residential complexes are significant for this dissertation, particularly to understand the integration or segregation processes between foreign retirees and the indigenous population living around these complexes (research question IV).

According to the literature, *fear of crime* is the main driving force behind the development of GCs (Blakely y Zinder, 1997; Caldeira, 2000; Low 2000; Landman, 2000; Carvalho, 1997; Svampa, 2001). Some authors state, the state's inability to protect the lives and property of its citizens -especially in developing countries- has led to the emergence of private enclosed properties (Landman & Schönteich, 2002). Therefore, as stated by Blakely and Snyder, “the newest form of fortified community...places security and protection as its primary feature”. These new residential spaces “are easily identifiable by the existence of elements that clearly mark the limits of these districts: barriers, walls, walls of wire and sentry boxes of security, among others” (Roitman, 2003).

According to Roitman (2010), another reason for the emergence of GCs in Latin American cities is the search for a “better lifestyle”. GCs’ residents value the fact of being surrounded by nature and enjoying a wide range of services. In this sense, CGs are advertised by real-estate companies as places different from the city where it is

possible to have a closer contact with nature, have houses with green areas, as well as access to different amenities (Roitman, 2010). This issue, has been documented by other previous studies for the Ecuadorian case, where it is highlighted how international magazines specialized in retirement destinations, commercialized the country, building “unfair imaginaries of the place” (Viteri, 2015). Viteri's study of cultural imaginaries in residential migration in Cotacachi, Ecuador shows how most of the transnational migrants she interviewed were originally attracted to move to Cotacachi through magazines such as *International Living*<sup>1</sup>.

Likewise, the decision to move into one of these types of residential complexes is based not only on the fact of living in a safer environment or the search for a better quality of life, but also on the possibility of *building a sense of community*. The latter, according to Roitman, is also one of the other factors for the development of GCs. The discussion of building a sense of community has also received important attention within the academic literature on GCs and IRM. As some studies have demonstrated, “retired migrants value very positively the possibility of being surrounded by other families of the same origin and socio-cultural characteristics” (O'Reilly, 2000; Gustafson, 2002; Huete, 2005 cited in Huete, 2008: 73), which may explain in a certain sense the lack of relationship with the local community.

The development of GCs represents, in one way, a solution for a particular social group that has a high income and is looking for a better lifestyle (retired immigrants). However, at the same time, it is a complex territorial phenomenon that has had different types of consequences on the surrounding population, which are discussed in the following section.

### **2.3.2 Social, Economic and Spatial Implications of Gated Communities**

Gated communities constitute a complex urban phenomenon and their development has provoked different types of consequences, which have received considerable academic attention. In general, GCs are normally presented in highly negative terms, based on the common assumption that they are a major factor in the intensification of social segregation appear to be one of the symbols of territorial and social segregation (Balčaitė & Krupickaitė, 2018). Many scholars have recognized the different effects of GCs in the context of social-spatial segregation. The academic debate has been dominated by two different positions. There is one group of authors who argue that CGs encourage segregation (Svampa, 2001; Low, 2003; Campos & García, 2004; Atkinson & Blandy, 2005; Vesselinov, 2012). Svampa (2001), drawing on the city of Buenos Aires in Argentina, states that the physical barriers of GCs not only generate physical distance, but also social and symbolic distance. Atkinson & Blandy (2005), on the same line, argue that the closed elements of these residential compounds lead to the loss of social diversity (practices and customs) of the surrounding populations.

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<sup>1</sup> The world's #1 magazine on retiring overseas, delivered monthly to more than 100,000 Americans.

While Vesselinov (2012: 418) argues that “gated communities are thought to produce more social separation and fragmentation, which further leads to increased urban inequality”. In most cases, the particular style of residential developments are criticized for residential exclusion, social inequality, fragmentation of the city and the segregation of rich and poor (Balčaitė & Krupickaitė, 2018).

In contrast to these negative effects, research has also pointed to positive effects of the development of GCs on the local economy (Le Goix, 2005; Sabatini & Salcedo, 2007). Sabatini & Salcedo (2007) underline the economic impacts of these developments. They argue that the development of upper-class GCs provides advantages to poorer residents by bringing jobs into the neighborhood, triggering improved public services, etc. Additionally, GCs increase tax revenues for local governments (Le Goix, 2005). In the same way, some studies have also emphasized the positive effects at the social level. Among such cases, the research on Santiago de Chile (Salcedo and Torres, 2004) and Belo Horizonte, Brazil (Chase, 2008) are significant. Salcedo and Torres (2004), argue that spatial proximity allows poor citizens to integrate with GCs residents based on market relations like employment or service provision. They explain that poor local residents have a positive opinion of the arrival of the GCs in relation to: improvement of quality of life in the area, better job opportunities, reduction of the social stigma of living in a poor neighborhood, and increase in the value of their land. Although integration is mainly based on terms of market relations, they also acknowledge that the level of community integration between GCs residents and their neighbours is scarce (Salcedo & Torres, 2004 p. 33-34). Therefore, there is integration and segregation in the same time.

## 2.4 Social Segregation and Social Practices

Finally, to investigate to how the development of gated communities for retirement migrants affects social practices of indigenous communities and which barriers shape the social interactions between these two groups (research question IV), this dissertation employs the concept of *social practices*. A social theory that has been extensively sketched by authors such as Bourdieu (1972), Giddens (1979 & 1984), Schatzki (1996). Within theories of social practice, practices are the central aspect of social life. Schatzki (1996) defines practices as ‘a bundle` of activities, that consists of specific ways of doing and saying things. This theory provides an explanation of social life influenced by structural and subjective factors. In other words, what people do create structures (spatial, social...) and these structures in turn shape what people do.

Based on Shatzky’s definition, Shove et al. (2012) propose to understand social practices through the interrelation of two key elements such as: *competencies and materialities*. The first refer to the set of practical knowledge and skills (know how) that a group has and that make it possible to carry out a practice. For example, the indigenous communities of Cotacachi employ a set of ancestral agricultural practices and knowledge related to planting or harvesting dates, soil management, pastoral

techniques, etc. While, the second refer to the infrastructure, tools or resources that make possible or not the realization of these practices. It is important to note that the materialities are constitutive of the practices and not an external element: they define the possibility of its existence, as well as its transformations. Taking as an example the previous case, the existence of a certain type of resource - such as land or water - makes the development of such agricultural practices viable or not within indigenous communities.

In the same line, Young (2002: 211) has also identified social practices as instruments to study social segregation. She studies residential class segregation, considering them as “practices and processes that tend to homogenize the income and wealth level, occupation status, and lifestyle consumer tastes of communities”. She adds that “class segregation refers to an entire way of life in which relatively well-off people can conduct nearly all of their everyday activities insulated from encounters with those less well-off”. In this sense, Young’s conceptualization is relevant also for this dissertation since it considered urban social segregation in terms of social practices of affluent individuals, as well as being a result of their “tastes” and desires to be isolated forming homogenous social groups.

Based on the provided literature review and the identified research gaps, I detail in the following chapter the research design employed to investigate the spatial distribution and economic and social implications of IRM-related real estate development in the city of Cotacachi.

### 3 Research Design

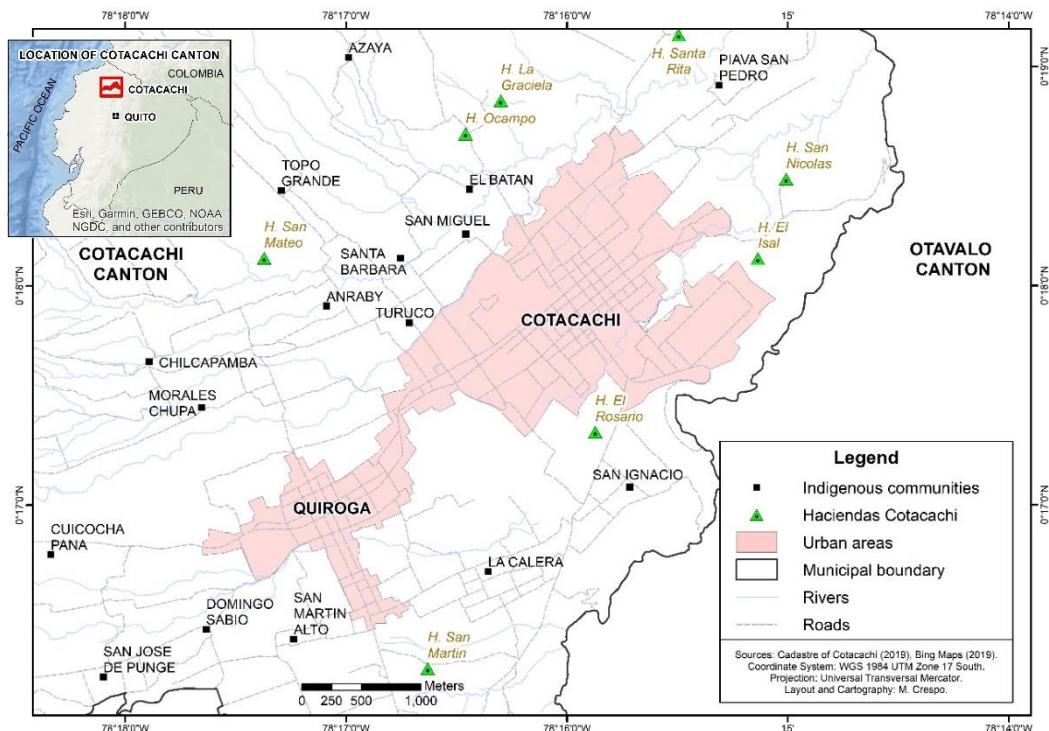
This chapter outlines the overarching research design of this dissertation. It is divided in five sections: The first section introduces the study area and explains the main pull and push factors that have contributed to the influx of IRM. Furthermore, it delves into the historical process of land distribution in Cotacachi and its relationship with the emergence foreign real-estate market (section 3.1). Section 3.2 outlines the reasons why this dissertation was undertaken, the first steps of the research and the literature review on the topic. Section 3.3 summarizes the methodological approach employed in each of the three empirical chapters and provides details on data collection. Section 3.4 then provides a critical reflection of the research design and the limitations during the data collection process. Finally, section 3.5 gives an overview of the three empirical papers of this dissertation. As the empirical chapters 4, 5 and 6 are individual research papers, each of the chapters includes a detailed section on the methodology and the data used.

#### 3.1 Setting the scene: Cotacachi as a new destination for IRM

Cotacachi is a rural canton located in Imbabura Province (northern Ecuador) about 80 kilometers from the Quito airport. Its population is about 40,000, with approximately 8,800 living in the city of Cotacachi (INEC, 2010). The canton is inhabited by different ethnic groups. 53.5 percent of the population self-identifies as mestizo (people with mixed European and indigenous ancestry), while 40.5 percent self-identifies as indigenous (INEC, 2010). Most of the indigenous people are located around the urban area<sup>2</sup> (See, Fig 3.1). Cotacachi's city is characterized by economic activities such as tourism, commerce, and leather manufacturing and is surrounded by old agro-industrial haciendas that produce flowers, vegetables, and fruit for export (Ortiz, 2004). These haciendas date back to the Spanish colonial era and are characterized by large and medium-sized landholdings (Zapata Ríos et al., 2006).

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<sup>2</sup> In Cotacachi, there are 43 indigenous communities that are grouped around the Union of Peasant Organizations of Cotacachi, UNORCAC (Guerrero, 2004).



**Figure 3.1.** Map of the study area and location of indigenous communities and haciendas

IRM to the city of Cotacachi only kick-started in 2009, shortly after the US economic and financial crisis (Viteri, 2015). As Hayes states, “the U.S. economic and financial crisis caused the loss of jobs for many people over 60, reduced their pensions and in some cases took their homes, which led to a search for better retirement conditions, in places where they can still enjoy a ‘comfortable retirement’” (Hayes, 2013: 5). It is estimated that there are about 1,000 foreign retirees residing in the city (El Telégrafo, 2017). However, this is an approximate figure, as there is no census data for migrants. Most of them come from countries such as the US and Canada, but there are also migrants who come from other countries such as: France, Germany or Australia in a smaller percentage (Crespo, 2014).

### 3.1.1 Pull and push factors of IRM

Some key pull factors have contributed to the influx of North American retirees to the city. First, Cotacachi has a mild climate most of the year and is surrounded by a series of natural attractions. The canton is located within the “Cotacachi-Cayapas Ecological Reserve”, one of the richest fauna and flora areas in Ecuador (PDOT, 2015). It is also home to the Cuicocha lake, which stands out for its beauty and easy access just a 5-minutes’ drive from the city. Second, the city has received several international awards for its model of participatory governance and inclusion of indigenous peoples. In 2002, Cotacachi received the “Cities for Peace” award granted by UNESCO, in 2006 the international award “Participatory Democracy” and in 2007 received the “Digital Cities” award granted by AHCJET. Thirdly, there has been strong international marketing by some companies specialized in retirement destinations such as “International Living



Magazine”, as well as, from U.S. residents through online blogs (Kline, 2013); who have promoted the country as one of the best retirement destinations. Indeed, Ecuador has been on the radar of the international media for several years and has been recognized according to "International Living Magazine" as one of the best retirement destinations in the world for the last 12 consecutive years (2008-2019), due to its exceptional quality of life and affordable cost of living. Another factor that has contributed to the influx of North American retirees to the city has to do with the legal requirements for purchasing real estate in Ecuador and the opportunities to apply for residency visas. “To qualify for residency visas, North American retirees have to be able to show pension income of at least US\$800 per month (for individuals, US\$850 for couples), or an investment of US\$25,000 in the Ecuadorian economy, an amount easily secured by investment in a property or condo unit” (Hayes, 2020). Furthermore, unlike other retirement countries, Ecuador's property laws do not distinguish between citizens or foreigners at all (Bayer 2018).

Finally, in addition to these aforementioned elements, factors such as the proximity to Quito's international airport, the adoption of the U.S. dollar as the official currency in Ecuador, as well as a growing community of expats residents have contributed to make Cotacachi one of the favorite retirement destinations.

### **3.1.2 Cotacachi’s Land Market: From Colonial Haciendas to Gated Communities for North American Retirees**

The historical process of land distribution in Ecuador and Cotacachi, in particular, is crucial to understand how the development of IRM-related real-estate projects is operating and impacting indigenous communities’ access to land and housing. Historically, land possession in Cotacachi has been characterized by strong inequalities. From colonial times (after the Spanish conquest of Ecuador in 1526) until the beginning of the republic (1809), landowning élites or *hacendados* (in Spanish) concentrated large extensions of land (called *haciendas*). Some scholars refer to these haciendas also as *latifundios* (Brown et al., 1988). These colonial haciendas were situated mostly in areas with good soils and suitable for agriculture (Zapata Ríos et al., 2006). Until national land reforms in the mid-1960s, these large haciendas operated through strong processes of territorial control and indigenous labor exploitation under the system known as “*huasipungo*” (Brown et al., 1988). Under this system, hacienda owners have forced indigenous people to work on their haciendas. In return for their labor, they were given the right to cultivate small plots of land on the hacienda as well as to collect firewood and use the hacienda’s water (Rhoades, 2006).

As a result of the agrarian reforms of 1964 and 1974, the hacienda system became fractured and the *huasipungos* were eliminated (Camacho, 2006). Officially, these land reforms aimed to divide the hacienda lands into parcels to be distributed to indigenous people. However, as several scholars have pointed out, the results of these land redistribution policies were not as expected (Guerrero & Ospina, 2003, quoted in Ortiz Crespo, 2004). The agrarian reforms, on the contrary, worsened the situation of

indigenous communities in several ways. First, the abolition of the *huasipungo* annulled their right to collect firewood and graze cattle on the haciendas they had previously cultivated, and second, although some indigenous people were granted land, many of these small lands were marginal, less fertile land and often their size were below the minimum of 5 hectares established by law [8, p. 82]. At the same time, many of the hacienda owners maintained their extensive lands (Brown et al., 1988). As Guerrero shows, after land reforms in 1974, large haciendas in Cotacachi, of more than 50 hectares, still controlled about 60% of the agricultural land (Guerrero, 2004). After all, these reforms eliminated the precarious *huasipungo* system, but did not change the uneven distribution of land (Martínez, 2007). During the 1980s and 1990s, the liberalization of land markets and agricultural modernization of the haciendas resulted in increasing numbers of land sales. On the one hand, hacienda owners sold parts of their properties to generate funds for the agricultural modernization of their haciendas (e.g. purchasing agricultural machinery, fertilizers, livestock, etc.). In addition, in 1994 an 'Agricultural Development Law' was passed, which liberalized land title and registration laws, making land sales easier (Pastor, 2014, pp. 45–46).

Finally, connected to IRM to Cotacachi, the influx of a significant number of North American retirees has triggered investments in the land and real-estate market in the region – mainly oriented to the sale of land for the construction of high-cost housing. In 2007, the first residential project for foreign retirees was built in the city. This residential project consisted of two buildings with a series of apartments with an area of 120 m<sup>2</sup> each (Interview with real-estate developer, 2020). However, due to the lack of land for the construction of large-scale developments, new IRM-related real-estate projects developed on the outskirts of the city. Most of these projects have been built on former hacienda lands and in direct proximity to existing indigenous communities (Crespo et al., 2022). Parts of the remaining colonial-era haciendas have been subdivided and sold to real-estate companies or to local or international investors to build luxury residential complexes for North American retirees. Hence, IRM-related real-estate projects have mainly favored the landowning élites or hacendados who have historically controlled the land in Cotacachi. However, as is to be expected in these cases, the boom in the real-estate development has inspired other actors to participate in the market. Owners of small-medium plots in the urban area (mainly of mestizo origin) have also started to sell lots to real-estate companies. Local authorities have purchased land in certain periurban areas and have begun to commercialize it. Previous foreign residents have built homes and market them internationally through websites. In sum, there are several actors involved in the IRM-related real-estate sector. Thus, today we can observe a great variety of residential projects ranging from single-family houses, townhouses, and apartments to the most luxurious homes in private gated communities throughout the city. The latter with a whole series of services and amenities such as ample spaces, access to green areas or gardens, 24-hour private security, fences, and security cameras, etc.

### **3.2 Background, first steps and literature review**

The initial idea to carry out this doctoral research was inspired by my previous Master's degree studies in the field of Rural Territorial Development carried out at the Latin American Faculty of Social Sciences (FLACSO-Ecuador), during the years 2012-2014. During these studies, I conducted research on the process of the foreignization of land in a small indigenous community in the city of Cotacachi (see Crespo, 2014). During my first field trip in 2012, I was able to identify several socio-spatial transformations due to the urbanization process of residential complexes related to the IRM in different areas of the city. This territorial complex process sparked my interest in the field of geographic research, so for the purposes of this dissertation, I conducted a broader literature review on the phenomenon of IRM, its motives and its possible impacts on the receiving populations. I focused on analyzing thematic, theoretical and methodological approaches to assess to what extent the issue of IRM within rural settlements with indigenous populations has been previously analysed and discussed. In that sense, scientific and non-scientific literature on this subject was collected, structured and evaluated, and several research gaps were identified that this dissertation aims to address. In addition to the outlined activities, I discussed and adapted my doctoral research project in different academic venues (national and international), as well as during the implementation of the project. This included discussions and consultations with a wide range of scientists from different fields, as well as presentations at conferences and workshops of various formats. Among them, the annual meeting of the working group "AK Berlin" in 2023, the PhD colloquium on environmentally-oriented economic geography (UMWIG) first in Cologne in 2020 and then in Luxembourg in 2022; the National Geography Congress of Ecuador in 2020 and then in 2023, among others. Based on these preparatory research steps, I developed the conceptual framework, the research questions, and methodological design of this dissertation, which is presented in the following section.

### **3.3 Methodological approach and database**

Due to the dynamic nature of IRM, lack of official spatial data for foreign-owned properties in the city and their prices on the real-estate market, and political and economic sensitivity of the topic, this dissertation employs a mixed-methods approach that combines the use of quantitative techniques as satellite imagery analysis, data collection on land and housing prices, review of cadastral databases, as well as qualitative methods, such as participatory mapping workshops, focus group discussions (FGDs) and semi-structured interviews with stakeholders. This innovative approach allowed me to triangulate spatial variables with data from the qualitative methods in order to analyse the socio-spatial implications of IRM in the study area. An overview of mixed-methods approach employed in the dissertation is presented in Figure 3.2.

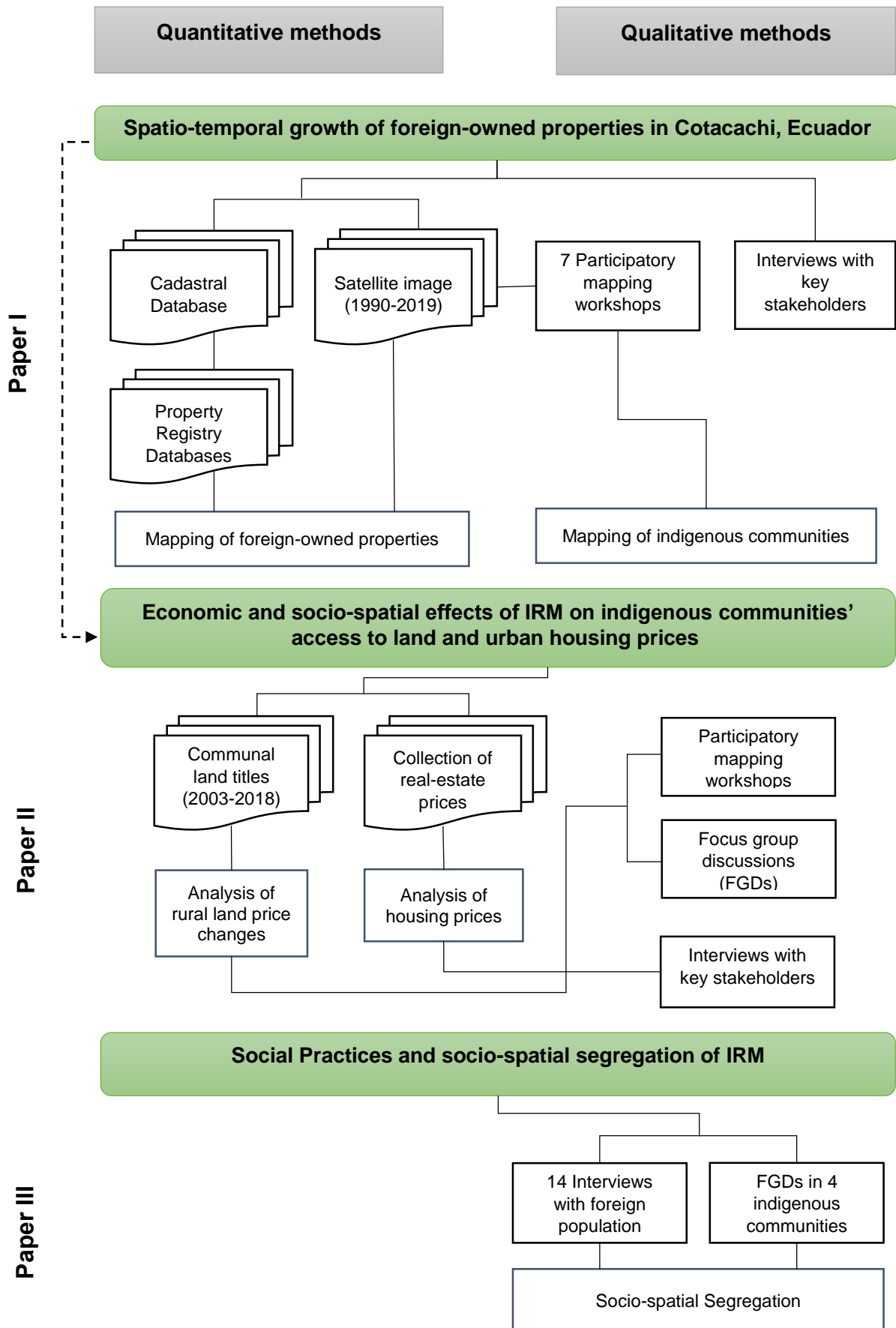


Figure 3.2. Overview of mixed-methods approach employed in the thesis

### 3.3.1 Quantitative data

Aliaga and Gunderson (2000) describe quantitative research designs explaining a phenomenon by collecting numerical data that are analyzed using statistical approaches. The greatest strength associated with quantitative research is that its methods produce reliable and quantifiable data that can potentially be generalized to a large population (Marshall, 1996). In addition, it is suitable to test and validate already constructed theories about how and why phenomena occur through testing hypotheses that are constructed before the data are collected.

As a first step, and due to the fact that no official spatial data on foreign-owned properties in the city of Cotacachi is available, this dissertation generated and employed quantitative data to analyze the spatial distribution and growth of residential projects related to the IMR (Research question I of this dissertation). For this purpose, high-resolution satellite images (less than 1 meter) of the year 2019 obtained through the Bing Maps platform were used, which allowed to clearly identify the location and distribution of the residential complexes for foreign retirees in the city. This information was complemented through the analysis of cadastral databases provided by the Department of Appraisal and Cadastre of the Municipality of Cotacachi from which it was possible to obtain relevant information regarding the nationality of their owners. The applicability and combination of these methods demonstrated the promising potential of the study to evaluate and identify the spatial dynamics of IRM (see paper I, chapter 4).

Subsequently, to identify the economic impacts related to the increase in agricultural land prices in the indigenous communities (Research question II of this dissertation), documents such as public deeds obtained from the Cotacachi Land Registry Office were collected and processed in order to obtain information such as land price, land area and year of purchase. In addition, the amount of land acquired communally before and after IRM-related developments began in the late 2000s was mapped in four indigenous communities adjacent to these residential projects. High-resolution orthophotos of these areas were used for this purpose. Finally, in order to analyse the increase in housing prices in the urban area of Cotacachi, and due to the lack of updated information on property prices in the city, I opted to work with the values of property prices according to the real-estate market. A total of 180 properties over a period of 1 year and 7 months were mapped (from May 2020 to February 2022). All the information was processed using ARCGIS 10.3 software. The generated data informed the analysis of the economic and socio-spatial effects of IRM on indigenous communities' access to land and urban housing prices (see paper II, chapter 5).

### 3.3.2 Qualitative data

This dissertation aims to provide not only a clear understanding of the spatial and economic implications of IRM-related real-estate development, but also to examine the diverse effects on the social sphere in the indigenous populations surrounding these foreign residential projects. Therefore, several qualitative methods were employed for this purpose, such as participatory mapping workshops (PMWs), focus group discussions (FGDs) and semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders, which allowed triangulating the quantitative data described above, as well as operationalizing the research questions in order to have clear explanations about this phenomenon, which go beyond describing, mapping or quantifying.

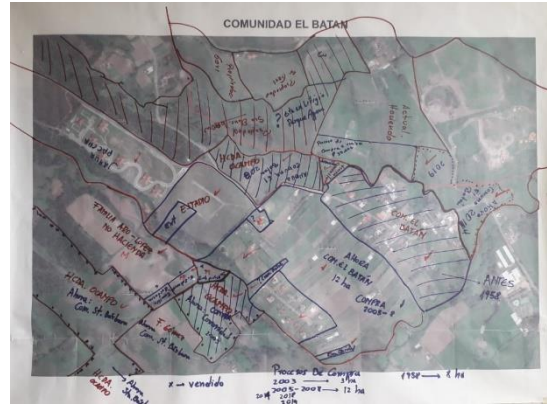
#### *Participatory mapping with indigenous communities*

Participatory mapping is a group-based qualitative research method that use local people to map places, transforming cognitive spatial knowledge into cartographic and descriptive information (Herlihy & Knapp, 2003). Participatory mapping of indigenous lands has been proven to be a powerful tool to better understand and integrate the knowledge, practices, and beliefs of indigenous peoples into conservation planning. The main purpose of mapping of this sort has been, and will continue to be, to assist indigenous peoples to claim and defend ancestral lands and resources (Chapin et al., 2005)

Participatory mapping workshops were conducted in four indigenous communities adjacent to these residential projects, namely Santa Bárbara, El Batán, Azaya and San Pedro. The aim of these workshops was to identify the territorial conflicts that occur due to the accelerated real-estate development related to the IRM and the actors involved in this process. In this sense, the workshops focused on mapping land tenure and ownership issues. For example, through this process it was possible to map where large colonial haciendas are located, which lands have been acquired by the indigenous communities before and after the IRM, as well as areas that have been sold to foreigners. For this purpose, high-resolution orthophotos were used and distributed among the participants. The workshops had the active participation of various members of the indigenous communities: youth, elders, women, as well as indigenous leaders. The participatory mapping workshops were carried out between October and November 2020. The applicability of this group-based qualitative research method allowed me to get a better understanding of the socio-spatial conflicts of IRM in indigenous communities.



**Figure 3.3.** Participatory Mapping Workshops (Azaya Community)  
**Source:** Field visit, October 2020.



**Figure 3.4.** Map of land tenure and location of foreign properties (El Batán Community)  
**Source:** Field visit, September 2020.

### *Focus group discussions*

In addition, focus group discussions (FGDs) were held in the four indigenous communities mentioned above. FGDs are commonly used to gain insights into complex topic that are constituted by collective actions. In gathering a specific, targeted group of people, certain topics and question are discussed and discursively addressed within these groups (Flick, 2009). Hence, due to their interactive, participatory character, FGCs generate reflective and multi-layered insights into research topic compares to individual interviews. Many authors affirm that the FGDs are particularly suitable for pointing out unexpected aspects of a social phenomenon, as it concentrates more on the frames of reference of groups analysed, than on those of the researcher (Morgan & Spanish, 1984).

The aim of the FGDs was to gain in-depth knowledge about the economic, social and spatial implications of IRM-related real-estate development in the indigenous communities. A questionnaire was used to structure the discussions (See Appendix A). The FGDs were integrated by several members of the indigenous communities: youth, elders, women, as well as indigenous leaders. On average, each workshop had 7 to 12 participants. The age of the participants varied widely, but most were between 40 and 50 years old. The FGDs were recorded, conducted in Spanish and lasted approximately 2 hours.

### *Semi-structured interviews*

For this research, a total of 40 semi-structured interviews were conducted. Interviews included stakeholders involved in the real-estate market, such as realtors, builders of residential projects, owners of the haciendas, etc. The aim of these interviews was to understand how the IRM-related real-estate market operates and to identify which are the players involved in this process. Interviews were also conducted with local government and municipal institutions, as well as with representatives and presidents of different indigenous communities. Additionally, a total of 14 interviews with the

retired migrant population were also carried out. These interviews were focused mainly to know whether there are processes of integration or segregation between the foreign and native population (4th research question of this thesis). To conduct interviews and FGDs, a list of open-ended questions was used for each of the groups described above (See Appendix A). Both methods were recorded and transcribed. In this sense, verbal consent was obtained to record and take notes of participants' opinions. Due to the political and economic sensitivity of the topic, participant's names have been anonymized in along the dissertation. The fieldwork was carried out in two stages: Participatory mapping workshops were held in October 2020, while semi-structured interviews with stakeholders and FGDs in indigenous communities were conducted between May and June 2022.

The combination of quantitative secondary data (e.g. satellite imagery, cadastral and real estate portal databases) and qualitative data from the participatory mapping workshops, FGDs and semi-structured stakeholder interviews allowed answers to the research questions, as well as mitigating data uncertainties and triangulating the research results.

### **3.4 Critical reflection of the research design**

A critical self-reflection of the research design is necessary to provide transparent insights into the suitability and limits of the research. Although the research design has proven to be suitable for assessing the spatial distribution and the socio-economic implications related to IRM real-estate development in the case of Cotacachi, there are some limits of the data that can be summarised along two aspects: First, in relation with the lack of spatial data to quantify IRM and property prices, and second due to political and economic sensitivity of the topic.

Regarding the first point, in the case of Ecuador, there is no updated official information available regarding the number of foreigners residing in the country. Data on the elderly and migration are largely collected through national population censuses. In Ecuador, the last census was conducted in 2010 and data for the new 2022 census has not yet been published. In addition, as several social scientists interested in the analysis of the IRM have pointed out, there are inconsistencies in the data recorded by these official entities (see e.g., O'Reilly, 2000; King et al., 2000). As King et al.,(2000) state, the difficulty in quantifying IRM has to do with a number of specific basic problems, such as those related to the definition of the term international migrant<sup>3</sup>. The authors state that the criteria commonly used to define international

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<sup>3</sup> The UN recognizes that there is no legal definition of an international migrant. However, they define it as someone who changes their country of habitual residence, regardless of the reason for migration or legal status. In general, a distinction is made between short-term migration, which covers movements of between three and 12 months in duration, and long-term or permanent migration, which refers to a



migrants, such as country of origin or length of stay (permanent, semi-permanent and seasonal), are not only debatable, but also lead to very different estimates. In addition to that, in Cotacachi, there is no updated information on property prices in the city. The municipality's cadastral database was not updated at the time of the research. Therefore, on the one hand, I worked with the values listed in the public deeds to analyze the increase in rural prices and, on the other hand, with the values published in two real-estate portals for the analysis in the urban area. It is important to mention here, that the values advertised on these real-estate websites are slightly higher than the final sales prices recorded in the municipal databases. However, they offer a clear idea of the behavior of the real-estate market in the city of Cotacachi. In this sense, other studies have similarly employed the use of real-estate portal databases to examine the spatial distribution of housing prices and their impact on the local population (e.g., Yrigoy, 2017).

Second, the study of IRM-related real-estate development and its effects on a local level brings with it a political and economic sensitivity to the subject that creates certain challenges in conducting research and collecting data. As mentioned in subsection 3.1.2 that describes how the IRM-related real-estate market operates. The construction of high-cost properties for U.S. retirees in different parts of the city has sparked the interest of a number of national and international actors to be part of this process. Landowning elites, developers, government authorities, real-estate companies, foreign residents, among others, participate in the lucrative land market. In this sense, the visions of each group about this topic are different and sometimes opposed, depending on their economic interests. Therefore, in the face of these limitations, this dissertation triangulated the information, combining geospatial analysis methods with qualitative field research techniques, such as focus group discussions and participatory mapping workshops that allowed a broader social approach to the topic, mitigating data uncertainties, maximizing data quality and contributing to a better understanding of the spatial distribution and economic impacts of IRM.

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change of country of residence of one year or more in duration.  
<https://refugeesmigrants.un.org/definitions>

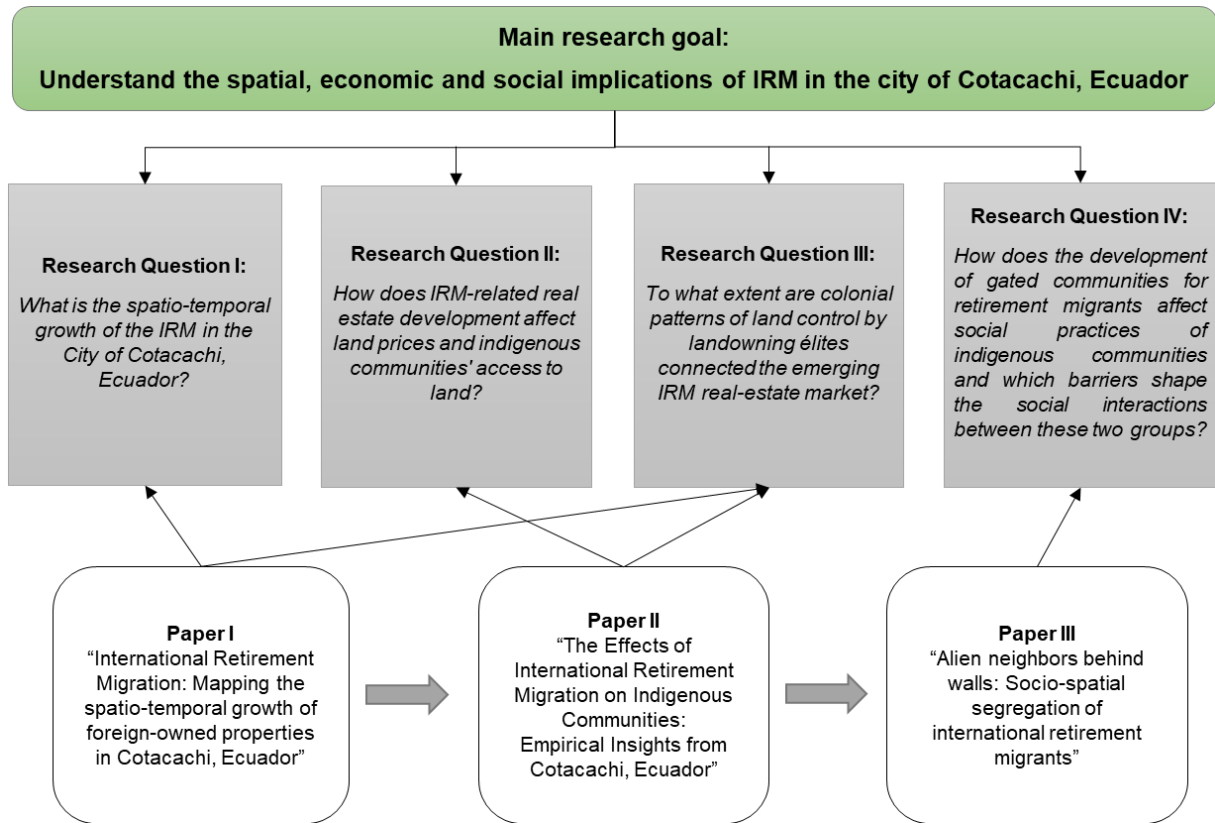
### 3.5 Overview of empirical papers

Moving to the dissertation's core chapters, I briefly sketch out the contribution of each of the three academic papers that address this dissertation and their relationship to the central research questions (See Figure 3.5).

The first paper entitled: “**International Retirement Migration: Mapping the spatio-temporal growth of foreign-owned properties in Cotacachi, Ecuador**”, published in the *Journal of Maps*, analyses the spatial distribution and temporal growth of properties acquired by foreign retirees in Cotacachi and explains it in the historical context of land concentration and land tenure by landowning élites. With this focus, it contributes to answer the research questions I and III.

The second paper entitled: “**The Effects of International Retirement Migration on Indigenous Communities: Empirical Insights from Cotacachi, Ecuador**”, published in the *Journal of Latin American Geography*, discusses the main economic and socio-spatial effects of IRM-related construction of comparatively high-priced retirement homes on indigenous communities' access to land and housing prices in the urban area. In order to entangle the IRM-related real-estate effects, it contextualize and discuss these in light of the colonial highly uneven control over land and the specific role of large colonial landowners in the city of Cotacachi, Ecuador. Through this approach, research questions II and III are addressed.

The third paper entitled: “**Alien neighbors behind walls: Socio-spatial segregation of international retirement migrants**” (*currently under review*), based on the theoretical approach of five social practices, examines how gated communities for retired migrants influence the social structures and practices of indigenous communities and which barriers hinder social interaction between the two groups. With this approach, this article contributes to answer research question IV.



**Figure 3.5.** Overview of the research questions and contribution of each academic paper (Own figure).

## 4 Paper I: International Retirement Migration: Mapping the spatio-temporal growth of foreign-owned properties in Cotacachi, Ecuador

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### Abstract

International Retirement Migration (IRM) is a growing phenomenon in the Global South. Using the example of the city of Cotacachi in the Ecuadorian Andes, this paper analyzes the spatio-temporal growth of the properties acquired by foreign retirees. We have developed a multi-temporal map that visualizes the spatio-temporal patterns of foreign-owned real estate properties and explains them in the historical context of land tenure. As no official spatial data is available for foreign-owned properties in Cotacachi, the mapping was developed based on data triangulation from remote sensing, participatory mapping, document analysis (e.g., a cadastral database), and semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders. With this origin approach, the map reveals a significant growth in the number of properties and the size of the land acquired by foreigners particularly since the 2008 United States' housing crisis. Most of the foreign-owned properties are located at the urban fringe and have been built on former *colonial hacienda* lands in direct proximity to existing indigenous communities.

**Key words:** International Retirement Migration, real estate market, spatial distribution, agricultural land, GIS, Ecuador

### Introduction

International Retirement Migration (IRM) is a growing phenomenon in the Global South and Ecuador is considered one of the best destinations for retirement. The American magazine International Living has ranked the country as one of the top 10 places to retire in the world for consecutive years (International Living 2021, 2022). Andean cities such as Cotacachi, Cuenca, and Vilcabamba are among the main destinations of IRM, partly due to comparatively affordable housing prices, the low cost of living, and excellent climatic conditions.

Existing research on IRM and its impacts have focused mainly on Europe and the United States, where this process has been ongoing for decades (Casado-Diaz, 1999; Huete, 2008; Blasco, 2009; Membrado, 2015). However, recent studies have been carried out in Latin American countries, such as Mexico (Lizárraga, 2010; Bastos, 2013; Monterrubio et al., 2018; Sloane & Silbersack, 2020), Costa Rica (Janoschka, 2011; Van Noorloos & Steel, 2015), Panama (Benson, 2013) and Brazil (Pontes da Fonseca & Janoschka, 2018).

The impacts of IRM are diverse. IRM generates a sharp increase in property prices (Huete, 2008; Lizárraga, 2010); land speculation (Van Noorloos 2013), territorial dispossession and gentrification (Bastos, 2013; Janoschka, 2011; Hayes, 2016, 2020), social segregation (Gustafson 2016; Casado-Diaz 2016), etc. Some scholars have also pointed out positive aspects; including the generation of employment, tax contribution, and new service sectors (Torres Bernier 2003; Huete, 2008).

Despite the existence of several studies that analyze the impacts of IRM in Latin America as mentioned above, few studies exist for the Andean region of Ecuador. Some scholars have focused particularly on analyzing the economic and social impacts of retiree migration in cities such as Cuenca and Vilcabamba, where this migration process has been going on for many years (Van Noorloos & Steel, 2015; Hayes, 2013, 2016, 2020; Sloane et al., 2020; Efid et al., 2020). However, due to the recent history of this phenomenon in the city of Cotacachi, this issue has not yet been addressed considerably. In addition, only few studies have examined the issues of IRM in the context of land foreignization in colonial hacienda histories (Gascón, 2015, 2016; Hayes, 2016, 2018). Focusing on the city of Vilcabamba, Hayes (2016) analyzes how lifestyle migration drives foreign real estate investment and relates it to the historical control of land by a powerful landowning elite. According to him, this development has a significant effect on the local population, culminating in gentrification. Similarly, Gascón (2015) for the case of Cotacachi, pointed out that “this phenomenon causes land speculation processes that threaten peasant reproduction strategies and that contribute to depeasantisation and rural migration” (2015, p. 4). In sum, foreign-local contestation over land emerges as a key problem of IRM. However, none of the existing studies map and quantitatively demonstrate the spatio-temporal growth of foreign-owned properties since 2008 and explain it in the colonial historical context of land tenure.

For this purpose, the map and this article follow two specific objectives: first, to map and quantify the number of properties and the amount of land acquired by foreigners in the city of Cotacachi for the last three decades (1990-2019). Second, explain the spatio-temporal patterns of foreign-owned property growth in the context of the historical background of land tenure. This paper is organized as follows. Section 4.2 provides a brief overview of the historical process of land tenure in Cotacachi and the emergence of a new foreign real estate market. Section 4.3 details the data and cartographic methods used for the mapping of foreign-owned properties and

indigenous communities. Section 4.4 shows the results obtained through these methods and finally, section 4.5 presents the conclusions.

## **4.2 Land tenure in Cotacachi: from colonial haciendas to foreign real estate investment**

Understanding which land is sold and which actors are involved in selling land for foreign-owned residential complexes requires a look back into the colonial history of land tenure. In Cotacachi, at least three key historic moments can be identified: i) the predominance of large colonial haciendas; ii) the fracture of the hacienda system; iii) the agricultural land market for foreign retirees.

Large haciendas existed from colonial times until the beginning of the Republic of Ecuador and were characterized by strong processes of territorial control and indigenous labor exploitation under the system known as *huasipungo*. Derived from the Quechua words *huasi*, "house," and *pungo/pungu*, "door." Under this colonial system, the hacienda owners forced indigenous people to work on their haciendas. In exchange for their labor, they were given the right to cultivate small plots of land on the hacienda (called *huasipungos*), as well as the right to collect firewood and use the hacienda's water (Rhoades, 2006). However, although they cultivated and lived on these plots, the land did not belong to them as they were only given a right to use. As a result, the land of the haciendas was spatially divided: 1) the land cultivated directly by the hacienda owner and 2) the land used by indigenous families for their own interest; the latter generally being of lower quality and located on hillsides (A. Guerrero, 1975).

As a result of the agrarian reforms of 1964 and 1973, the hacienda system became fractured and the *huasipungos* were eliminated (Camacho, 2006). The reforms aimed to promote a more equitable land distribution through the state expropriating and dividing the large haciendas. However, the results were not as expected (Guerrero & Ospina, 2003, quoted in Ortiz Crespo, 2004). Many of the haciendas maintained their extensive lands (Brown et al., 1988). Historical data on land tenure shows that 1.1% of landowners controlled about 60% of the agricultural land in 1974 (Guerrero, 2004).

During the 1980s and 1990s, land tenure was characterized by the fragmentation of large properties as land was sold by hacienda owners to generate funds to modernize their haciendas (e.g., purchasing agricultural machinery, fertilizers, livestock, etc.). In addition, in 1994 an "Agricultural Development Law" was passed, which liberalized land title and registration laws, making land sales easier (Pastor, 2014:45-46). This allowed hacienda owners to sell land to outsiders who had no previous connection to ongoing and contentious land claims.

Finally, in recent years, the influx of foreign retirees to the city has triggered a strong real estate market, mainly oriented to the sale of agricultural land for IRM-related real estate. In most cases, parts of the remaining land of the colonial haciendas were sold to real estate agents who developed a series of residential complexes or gated

communities in different areas (Quishpe & Alvarado, 2012). Three key factors have motivated the strong increase of IRM to Cotacachi: first, the US economic and financial crisis of 2008 affected the financial security of many older adults, which led them to search for better retirement conditions in countries with lower costs of living (Hayes, 2013:6). Second, a tourism development policy promoted by the municipality in previous years, based on tourist attractions (Gascón, 2016). Third, strong international promotion by some companies specialized in retirement destinations and by U.S. residents through online forums highlighting favorable living conditions for elderly people for relatively little money, including low-cost healthcare and access to the Ecuadorian Social Security System, as well as specific discounts on taxes and transportation costs.

Additionally, no restrictions exist on foreign real estate investment in Ecuador. In fact, anyone can freely buy property in Ecuador upon their arrival using only their passport. Ecuador's constitution guarantees everyone the right to buy and hold property. These conducive conditions are clear comparative advantages for Ecuadorian destinations of IRM compared to other countries applying restrictions on foreign real estate investment.


### **4.3 Materials and methods**

#### **4.3.1 Study Area**

Cotacachi is a rural canton, located in northern Ecuador, in Imbabura Province, about 80 kilometers from the capital's airport (Quito). It has a population of 40,036 inhabitants, with approximately 8,800 living in the city (INEC, 2010). The main economic activities are agricultural production, leather manufacturing and tourism (PDOT, 2015). The canton is divided geographically in three zones (the urban zone, the subtropical zone and the Andean zone) and is inhabited by different ethnic groups. 53.5 percent of the population self-identifies as mestizo, 40.5 percent as indigenous and 2.5 percent as white (INEC, 2010). This study focuses on the urban area and the so-called Andean zone, the latter characterized by the high presence of an indigenous population and where, since the last decade and half, a strong real estate development of foreign properties has been observed.

IRM to the city of Cotacachi in the Ecuadorian Andes only kick-started in 2009, shortly after the US economic and financial crisis (Viteri, 2015). Today, about 1,000 foreign pensioners live in the city (El Telégrafo, 2017). However, this is an approximate figure, as there is no census data for migrants. As Hayes (2013) states, it is difficult to have exact figures for migrants arriving in countries such as Ecuador, because many foreign citizens do not require a visa to visit Ecuador and also because these types of migrants tend to move around constantly or return to their countries of origin. Most of them are low-income pensioners of U.S. origin (Viteri, 2015). But they also come from other countries, such as Canada, France, Germany and Australia in smaller numbers (Crespo, 2014).

Since the arrival of the foreign retirees, a wide range of residential projects ranging from stand-alone houses, townhouses, or condominium units have been developed in the city. Most of these properties include a full range of services and amenities such as large green spaces, access to communal areas or gardens, 24-hour private surveillance, security cameras, etc. The foreign-owned residential complexes in Cotacachi (see Figure 4.1), thus, clearly differ in terms of their amenities and their architectural structure from the generally self-built houses in the neighboring indigenous communities (see Figure 4.2).

	<p>The House of Dreams is a gated community located near the city.</p> <p>With a Mediterranean design, this residential complex is composed of four buildings consisting of five apartments each. All first-floor units are handicap accessible.</p> <p><b>Price:</b> USD125.000</p> <p><b>Area:</b> 135 m<sup>2</sup></p> <p><a href="#">(2 Bedroom - 2 bathrooms)</a></p>
<p><b>Figure 4.1.</b> Residential condominium complex for foreign retirees (The House of Dreams) <b>Source:</b> Quantum Real Estate. Available: <a href="https://www.plusvalia.com/propiedades/cotacachi-hermoso-departamento-en-venta-en-segundo-59639462.html">https://www.plusvalia.com/propiedades/cotacachi-hermoso-departamento-en-venta-en-segundo-59639462.html</a></p>	
	<p>Self-built adobe house (Azaya community)</p>
<p><b>Figure 4.2.</b> Typical model of a dwelling in one of the indigenous communities <b>Source:</b> Field visit, October 2020</p>	



### **4.3.2 Mapping the spatio-temporal patterns of foreign-owned properties**

Due to the fact no official spatial data is available for foreign-owned properties in Cotacachi, the mapping was developed based on a combination of different cartographic methods and sources of information (see Figure 4.3). First, a visual interpretation and digitalization of the large residential complexes was carried out. For this purpose, we used a high-spatial resolution satellite image (less than 1 meter) from the year 2019 obtained through the Bing Maps platform. In doing so, we were able to identify 20 large residential foreign complexes or gated communities that were subsequently validated. Second, to identify smaller foreign-owned residential properties such as stand-alone houses, apartments, as well as unbuilt land purchased by foreigners, the cadastral database provided by the Department of Appraisals and Cadaster of the municipality of Cotacachi was analyzed. This database contains alphanumeric information of all properties in the city from which it was possible to know their geographic location, total area (m<sup>2</sup>), constructed area (m<sup>2</sup>), the names and surnames of the owners, etc. To identify foreign-owned properties, a labor-intensive, consecutive two-step search process was performed: 1) we identified properties owned by people with foreign names and surnames in the Cadaster; and 2) we used the online public system of the Civil Registry (<https://servicios.registrocivil.gob.ec/cdd/>)<sup>4</sup>, to verify whether the identified owners are of Ecuadorian or foreign nationality. As a result of this process, a total of 467 foreign-owned properties were identified. Finally, to map the spatial growth and distribution of foreign-owned properties in the city, we developed a multi-temporal map based on three time periods: A) 1990-2007, B) 2008-2013, C) 2014-2019 (See Figure 7.1 in the chapter on empirical contributions). In order to be able to provide this information, the purchase dates of these properties were obtained through the database of the Property Registry Office.

### **4.3.3 Mapping the boundaries of indigenous communities**

Official boundaries of indigenous communities do not exist in Cotacachi. To map the territories of the indigenous communities, two cartographic methods were used. First, participatory mapping workshops were conducted in different indigenous communities. Due to the high number of communities in the study area, the workshops were carried out mainly in seven indigenous communities where the largest number of foreign-owned properties are most notable (Azaya, La Calera, El Batán, San Ignacio, San Pedro, Santa Bárbara, and Tunibamba). For this purpose, high-resolution satellite images and orthophotos were used, which were distributed among the participants to draw the boundaries of their communities. The workshops had the active participation of several members: youth, elders, women, as well as indigenous leaders. Second, the boundaries of the indigenous communities, which were not considered in the participatory mapping workshops, were estimated based on existing

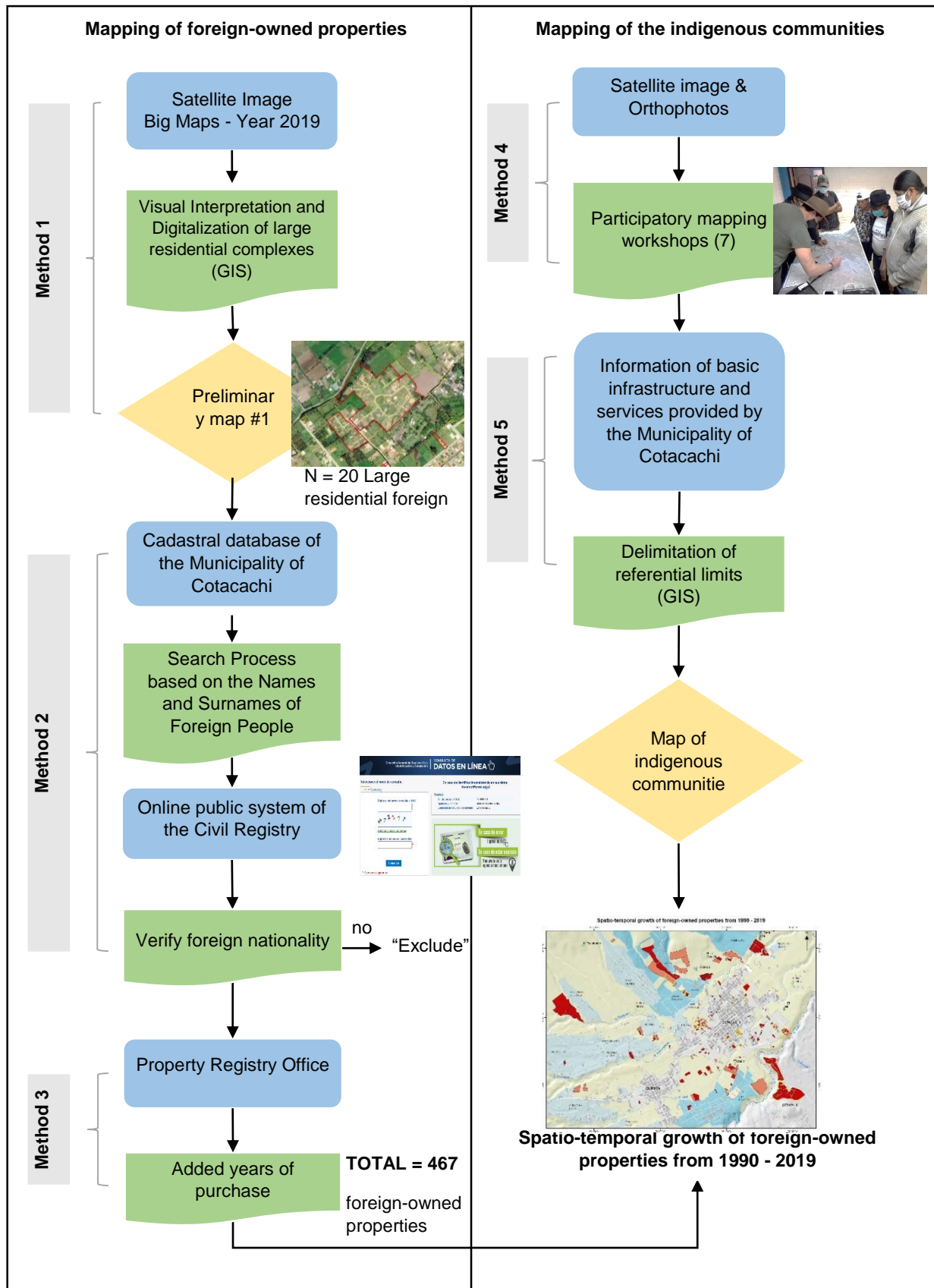
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<sup>4</sup> The Civil Registry offers the service of consultation and generation of electronic certificates of citizen identity data.

information of the basic infrastructure and services (main roads, schools, etc.) provided to indigenous communities by the Municipality of Cotacachi. Therefore, these limits are considered as referential. All the information was processed using ARCGIS 10.3 software.

#### **4.3.4 Interviews with key stakeholders**

Finally, to know how the real estate market for foreign properties has developed in recent years, semi-structured interviews were carried out with different stakeholders. Interviews were conducted at the two main real estate agencies in the city (Santana Real Estate and Cotacachi Homes), as well as two telephone calls to the main builders of real estate projects for foreigners. Likewise, several conversations were held with members of the Department of Appraisals and Cadastre, as well as the Land Registry of the Municipality of Cotacachi. The interviews and workshops were held between September and October 2020. The usage of different secondary data sources (e.g., a cadastral database, satellite images), as well as methods such as participatory mapping and related interviews helped us to mitigate the uncertainties of our database and triangulate our results, which are presented in the following section.

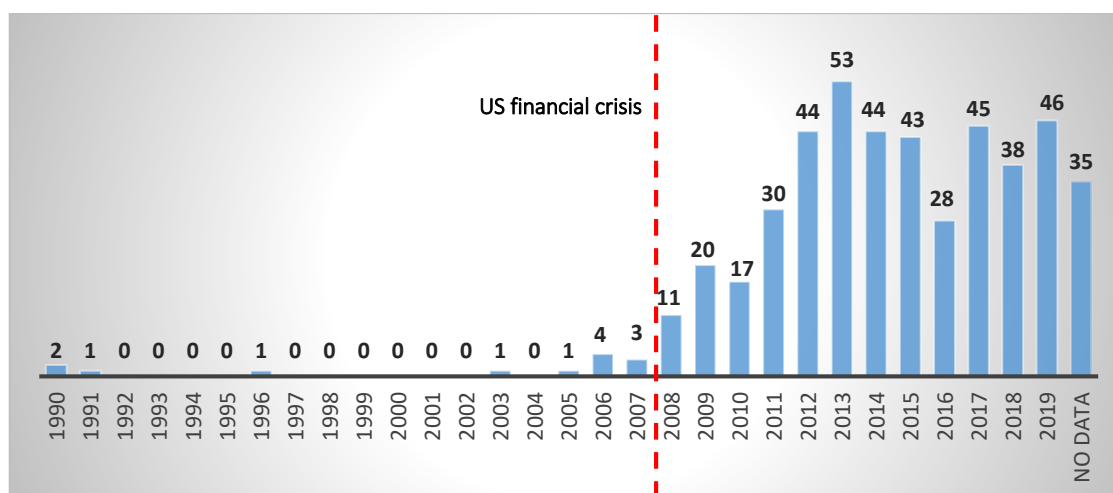


**Figure 4.3.** Methodological scheme used for the mapping of foreign-owned properties and indigenous communities in the city of Cotacachi, Ecuador (own design).

## 4.4. Results

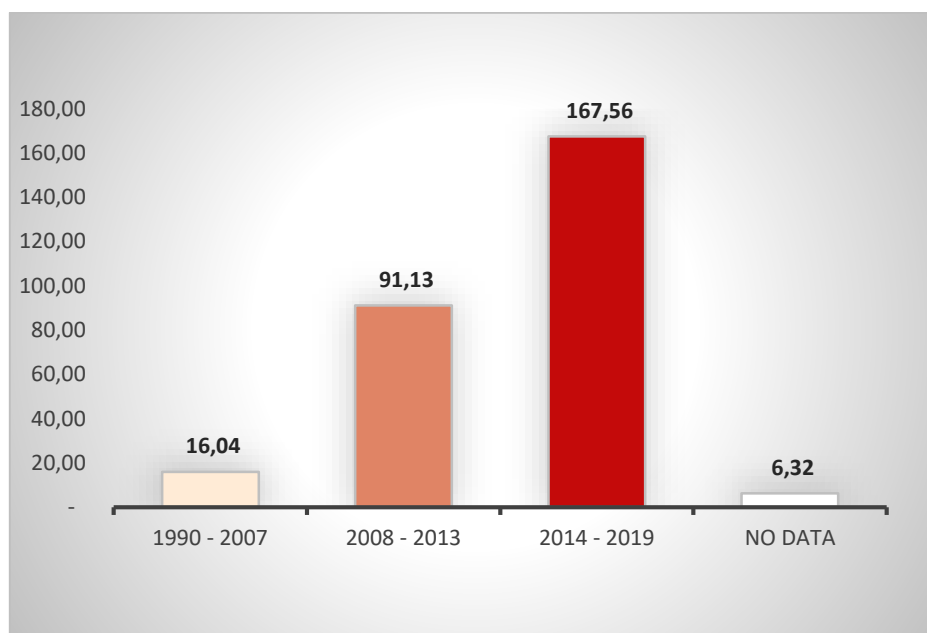
### 4.4.1 Number of properties and amount of land acquired by foreign retirees

The results show a significant growth in the number of properties acquired by foreign retirees in the last several years. From 1990 to 2007, only 13 properties were registered to foreign names in the city. However, since 2008, there has been a steep increase in property purchases by foreigners with a total of 454 new properties registered as of 2019 (see Figure 4.4). According to the data obtained through the cadastral database of the municipality of Cotacachi, there are 467 properties owned by foreigners. However, it is important to mention that this information does not consider the properties that are for rent, so the total number of foreign households in Cotacachi might even be considerably higher. According to our interviews with the Property Registry Office, transactions are generally carried out directly by foreign citizens. This is because for e.g., to Visa issues, foreign citizens prefer the property to be in their name, rather than in the name of a third party (real estate agent). Purchasing property in Ecuador worth \$30,000 or more can help make a retiree eligible for an 'Investor Visa' in the country. (Bayer 2018; Haines 2018a, quoted in Sloane & Silbersack, 2020).



**Figure 4.4.** Number of properties purchased by foreigners from 1990 - 2019  
**Source:** Cadastral Database of the Municipality of Cotacachi, 2019. (Own elaboration)

Similarly, the results obtained through multi-temporal mapping show an increase in the area of land purchased by foreigners. As shown in Figure 4.5, during the first study period (1990-2007), there were only about 16 ha of land owned by foreigners. However, during the following period (2008-2013) this area increased to more than 91 ha and then to about 167 ha in the last period (2014-2019). In sum, a total of more than 280 ha of land has been purchased by foreigners within about three decades (1990-2019). If we compare this figure with the size of the urban area (568 ha), the amount of land acquired by foreigners represents about 49% of the urban area of Cotacachi.



**Figure 4.5.** Land purchased by foreigners from 1990 - 2019

**Source:** Cadastral Database of the Municipality of Cotacachi, 2019. (Own elaboration)

#### 4.4.2 Spatial distribution and growth of foreign-owned properties

The multi-temporal map visualizes the spatial distribution and growth of foreign-owned properties over the three time periods analyzed: (A) 1990-2007, (B) 2008-2013, (C) 2014-2019. Foreign-owned properties are located both inside and outside the urban area. According to our interviews, the first residential projects designed for foreign retirees were built mainly within the urban area. The very first project, called 'Primavera 1', was constructed in 2007 and consisted of a building with 8 apartments plus a detached house. Then, a second larger residential project was immediately built nearby, called 'Primavera 2', consisting of 4 buildings with 32 apartments (Interview A, 2020). However, land for construction of large-scale housing projects with a private open space for all kinds of amenities is in short supply within the urban area of Cotacachi. Individual plot sizes are small and unbuilt plots are spatially dispersed. Therefore, the development potential within the city was limited. In addition, strong promotion by U.S. residents through online forums (Kline, 2013) quickly boosted the real estate sector in Cotacachi, pushing development outside the urban area (Gascón, 2015). Therefore, the spatio-temporal expansion of foreign-owned properties concentrated on areas located directly beyond the urban boundary, but in close proximity of about one to two kilometers to the urban center.

On the other hand, the map shows that many of the foreign-owned residential properties have been built on agricultural land, which belonged to former colonial haciendas. As Quishpe and Alvarado (2012) state, the large and medium-sized haciendas, stretching back to colonial times, were divided and sold to real estate companies to build residential developments for foreigners. In addition, a high number of foreign-owned properties are located in direct proximity to existing indigenous

communities, resulting in a series of conflicts especially in relation to the issue of access to land. As previous studies have shown, the construction of housing for foreign retirees close to these areas “has generated a sharp increase in the price of rural land and has decelerated a land market that once allowed young farmers to continue agricultural activities” (Gascón, 2015: 1). According to our map, there are several indigenous communities where the presence of foreign properties is most significant: San Pedro, El Batán, Azaya, Santa Bárbara, Topo Grande, San Ignacio, and La Calera.

#### **4.5 Conclusions**

In this paper, we document the spatio-temporal dynamics of IRM-related real estate development in the Andean city of Cotacachi, Ecuador. Based on data triangulation from remote sensing, participatory mapping, document analysis (e.g., a cadastral database) and semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders, we developed a multi-temporal map showing the spatial distribution of the foreign-owned real estate properties and its link to the historical colonial process of land tenure. Our results show that foreign land ownership in Cotacachi has accelerated since the 2008 financial crisis. Our multi-temporal map reveals that most of these residential properties are located at the urban fringe of the city and have been built on land that used to belong to the former *colonial haciendas* in direct proximity to several existing indigenous communities. In this way, our findings not only support existing studies on IRM-related effects in Cotacachi (Gascón 2015, 2016) but also enhance them in outlining in detail where these processes of land speculation and depeasantisation have mostly occurred.

The developed map is unique, as no official spatio-temporal data is available for foreign-owned properties in Cotacachi – maybe even for all of Ecuador. In this sense, this research proposes a methodological approach which could be applied in other areas where the phenomenon of IRM is gaining momentum. Here it can be also used to inform public policy and territorial planning debates.

As most of these properties are in direct proximity to several indigenous communities, future research is needed to better understand the series of socio-economic and spatial effects of IRM in these areas, which have only been shortly addressed in this article. In particular, issues related to land price increases, land speculation, land use changes, as well as impacts on the livelihoods of the indigenous people need to be analyzed in more detail. Therefore, the multi-temporal map prepared in this study will contribute significantly to a better spatial knowledge of IRM-related effects.

## **Software**

The software used to create the map was ArcGis 10.3. The data and graphics were processed on Microsoft Office Excel 2019.

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The authors would like to thank the staff of the Municipality of Cotacachi for their collaboration in providing the information, as well as the representatives of the indigenous communities for their active participation in the workshops.

## **Disclosure statement**

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

## **Data availability statement**

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding authors upon reasonable request.

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## 5 Paper II: The Effects of International Retirement Migration on Indigenous Communities: Empirical Insights from Cotacachi, Ecuador

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### **Abstract**

International retirement migration (IRM) is known to be an important factor for regional economic development in some low-and middle-income countries. However, IRM's effects on land prices and real estate markets, especially housing, are controversial. Using the case study of the Andean city of Cotacachi, Ecuador, this paper discusses the economic and socio-spatial effects of IRM-related construction of comparatively high-priced retirement homes on indigenous communities' access to land and housing prices in the urban area. Based on the analysis and collection of quantitative and qualitative data, the paper identifies that IRM-related foreign investments result in increased prices of (agricultural) land and urban housing. This especially affects indigenous communities as they are historically marginalized in access to land. To understand the IRM-related effects, we contextualize and discuss these in light of the historical control of land by landowning élites. Our data show that recent IRM-oriented real estate development—paired with highly uneven postcolonial distribution of land—has unequal socio-spatial effects: land-rich élites benefit from selling land to both local and foreign investors, while landless and land-poor indigenous communities face increasing difficulty in accessing land for agriculture.

**Key words:** *international retirement migration, economic and socio-spatial impacts, land and housing prices, indigenous communities, Cotacachi, Ecuador.*

## Introduction

International retirement migration (IRM) from relatively affluent countries in the Global North to low- and middle-income countries in the Global South is a growing phenomenon (Warnes, 2009). Ecuadorian cities such as Cotacachi, Cuenca, and Vilcabamba have received a significant number of foreign retirees in the last few decades. Many of them come from the United States and Canada. They have decided to relocate to these locations mainly due to the lower cost of living and affordable property prices (Hayes, 2014; 2020). Although foreign retirees represent only a small proportion of the city's total population, they have a significant impact on the economic, social, and spatial domains. Since the number of retirees has started to rise, several residential projects have been developed in the city, most of them built on former colonial agricultural estate (*hacienda*) lands in close proximity to existing indigenous communities (Crespo et al., 2022), which are not only reshaping the landscape but also affecting the local community.

This article discusses how the development of IRM-related real estate projects in the Andean city of Cotacachi, Ecuador impacts agricultural land and urban housing prices. Drawing on a spatio-temporal and socio-spatial analysis, we explain how the historical control of land by landowning élites (*hacendados*) endures and produces new unequal IRM-related geographies. This entanglement of highly uneven postcolonial distribution of land and IRM-related investments results in increased prices for (agricultural) land. In turn, this increases the difficulties that land-poor indigenous communities face in accessing land for agriculture.

### 5.1. International retirement migration

IRM refers to the relocation of relatively affluent elderly people, who move either part-time or full-time to new places. The choice to pursue such relocation is often largely motivated by aspects such as better climatic conditions, the search for new experiences, or a more relaxed lifestyle (Schweppe, 2022). However, research indicates that for some, limited financial and economic security for retirement in their home countries also plays an important role in the decision to migrate to low- and middle-income countries (Hayes, 2014). In fact, as Hayes (2013) states referring to the case of Ecuador:

The economic crisis in the United States caused the loss of jobs of many people over 60 and reduced their pensions which led to a search for better retirement conditions in places where they can still enjoy a comfortable retirement (Hayes, 2013: 5).

The literature includes different terms, such as *residential tourism or second-home tourism* (Gascón, 2015, 2016; Huete, 2008; García, 2005; van Noorloos, 2013), *lifestyle migration* (Benson, 2009; Hayes, 2015a, 2015b; van Noorloos & Steel, 2015), *privileged migration* (Croucher, 2009, 2012), and *international retirement migration* (Howard, 2008; Miles, 2015; Rojas et al., 2014; Schweppe, 2022; Sloane & Silbersack, 2020). In this regard, several authors agree that IRM is difficult to categorize because it involves different phenomena ranging from migration and retirement (Warnes, 2009) to aspects related to residential tourism (Nielsen, 2009). Moreover, motivation for the different forms of mobility varies significantly.

Existing research on IRM and its impacts have focused mainly on cases within Europe (see Casado-Díaz, 2006; Huete, 2008; King et al., 2021; Membrado Tena, 2015) and the U.S. (Serow, 1990; Sloane & Silbersack, 2020; Walters, 2002;), where this process has been ongoing for decades. However, due to the emergence of new migratory flows of retirees to countries in the Global South, recent studies have examined Latin American countries such as Costa Rica (Janoschka, 2011; van Noorloos, 2013), Mexico (Bastos, 2013; Lizárraga, 2010; Monterrubio et al., 2018; Silbersack et al., 2020), Brazil (Pontes da Fonseca & Janoschka, 2018), and Ecuador (e.g., Crespo et al., 2022; Efirid et al., 2020; Hayes, 2013, 2020; Sloane & Silbersack, 2020; van Noorloos & Steel, 2016). In this context, King et al. (2021) and Schweppe (2022) argue that new geographical frontiers of IRM are emerging across the Global South. Today, IRM stretches into increasingly peripheral and rural regions like the Ecuadorian Andes. Despite the existence of several studies that analyze the implications of IRM in the Global South, existing research has largely focused on coastal and urban retirement destinations, paying little attention to the impacts on rural areas, particularly in territories with indigenous communities. Additionally, much of the research conducted so far has focused explicitly on analyzing the characteristics and motivations of the foreign, migrant population, leaving aside the impact on local communities. As stated by Janoschka & Haas (2013) and Croucher (2015), critical studies that assess the impact of retiree migration on local communities so far remain limited.

Drawing on the aforementioned existing literature on IRM in coastal/urban settings, there is considerable academic evidence that recognizes the socio-spatial effects of IRM in destination countries (Hayes, 2020; Pontes da Fonseca & Janoschka, 2018; van Noorloos & Steel, 2015). Overall, while IRM is known to be an important factor for regional economic development in the Global South (Janoschka & Haas, 2013), IRM's effects on land prices and real estate markets, especially housing, remain controversial. On the one hand, IRM is discussed as being beneficial for the local economy. For example, Gustafson (2013, p. 2) argues that “Immigrant retirees buy homes, consume goods and services, provide employment opportunities for local workers, pay taxes...” But on the other hand, studies show that IRM increases the demand for new types of housing in destination countries (Huete, 2008; Membrado, 2015), which in turn leads to a number of negative effects. The impacts are diverse. IRM can lead to a sharp increase in property prices and land speculation (Gascón,

2015; van Noorloos, 2013); may encourage conflicts between local residents and second-home owners due to competition on the real estate market (Shucksmith, 1983); produces territorial dispossession and gentrification (Bastos, 2013; Hayes & Tello, 2016); contributes to socio-spatial segregation (Schweppe, 2022; van Noorloos & Steel, 2015), among other effects.

With regard to the social conflicts generated by this type of migration in rural settlements, Bastos (2013), taking as an example the case of Chapala, Mexico, argues that IRM-related real estate development can be understood as a process of 'accumulation by dispossession' (Harvey, 2004). Highlighting how the rural population is displaced from its traditional agricultural activities due to rising land prices, Bastos (2013) further states that because of this process "the population has lost its peasant character and is economically dependent on the jobs generated by residential tourism" (p. 49). Thus, in the case of Chapala, the increase in residential tourism has not resulted in an economic uplift for the local inhabitants but, on the contrary, has resulted in territorial dispossession.

For the Ecuadorian case, existing sociological studies focusing on Vilcabamba (Hayes, 2015a) and Cotacachi (Gascón, 2015; Gascón & Cañada, 2016) emphasize how IRM deepens existing forms of social inequalities and encourages the displacement of the peasant population. Gascón & Cañada (2016) further point out that this type of migration drives the conversion of land into a capital reserve, provoking a process of land speculation that threatens peasant reproduction strategies and contributes to depeasantization and rural migration. Yet, due to the dynamic nature of IRM as well as the lack of official information, none of the existing studies have analyzed and mapped the economic and socio-spatial effects of IRM on agricultural land and urban housing prices. To address this gap, this paper sets out three main research questions:

1. What are the mechanisms by which IRM-related real-estate development affects agricultural land and housing prices in Cotacachi?
2. How does IRM-related real estate development affect indigenous communities' access to land?
3. To what extent do colonial patterns of land control by landowning élites influence the emerging IRM real estate market and its socio-spatial effects?

In the next section, the specifics of the study area are described, as well as the local and international factors that have contributed to the increase in IRM in Cotacachi.

## 5.2. Cotacachi a new destination for IRM

Cotacachi is a rural canton located in Imbabura Province (northern Ecuador) about 80 kilometers from the Quito airport. It has a population of about 40,000 inhabitants, with approximately 8,800 living in the city of Cotacachi (Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Censos [INEC], 2010). The canton is divided into three zones (the subtropical zone, the Andean zone, and the urban zone) and is inhabited by different ethnic groups. 53.5 percent of the population self-identifies as mestizo (people with mixed European and indigenous ancestry), while 40.5 percent self-identifies as indigenous (INEC, 2010). The majority of the indigenous communities are located in the Andean Zone and around the urban area,<sup>2</sup> while the mestizo population lives in the urban and subtropical zone. The urban area of Cotacachi is characterized by economic activities such as tourism, commerce, and leather manufacturing, and is surrounded by agro-industrial estates (haciendas) that produce flowers, vegetables, and fruit for export (Ortiz, 2004). These are former haciendas that date back to the Spanish colonial era and are characterized by large and medium-sized landholdings (Zapata Ríos et al., 2006). However, this rural landscape is being transformed. IRM has triggered strong real estate development in different parts of the city of Cotacachi, where several residential complexes for foreign retirees have been built. This study focuses mainly on the effects of IRM on rural land prices in indigenous communities located in the periphery of the city, and housing prices in the urban area, where strong real estate development has taken place in the last few years (see Figure 5.1).

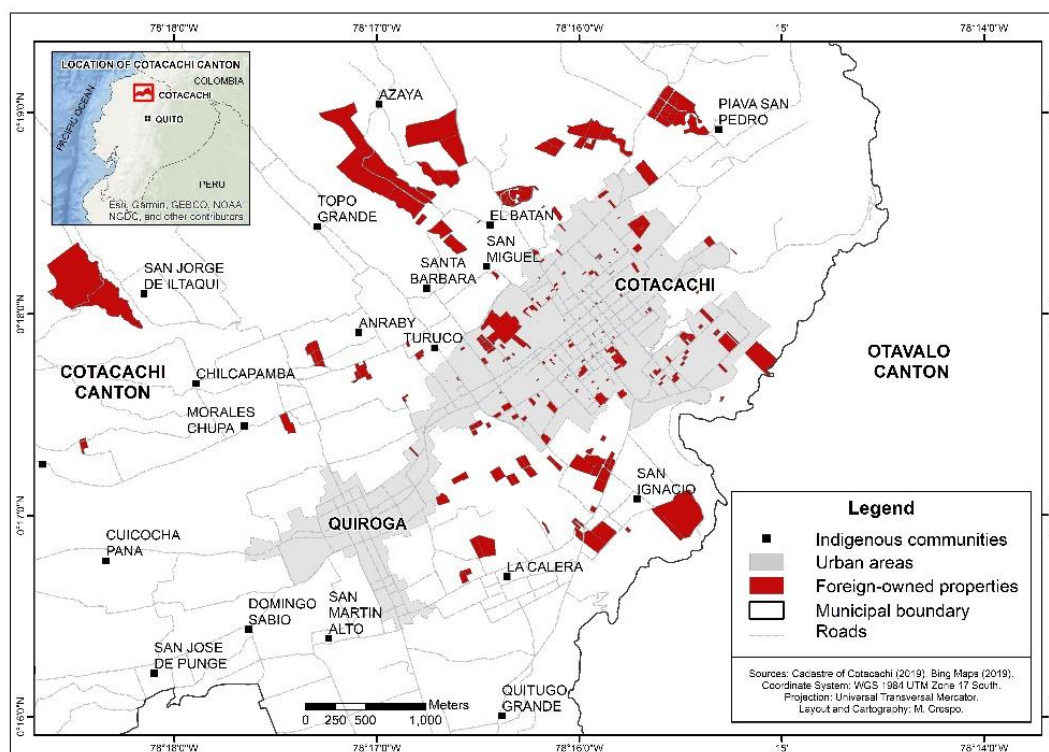


Figure 5.1. Study area and location of foreign-owned properties in the city of Cotacachi (Map by authors).

According to interviews (see methods section, below), foreign retirees started to come to Cotacachi in large numbers around 2010, shortly after the U.S. real estate crisis. This crisis, which occurred between 2007- 2008, undermined the financial security of many American seniors, leading to a search for 'low-cost' lifestyle retirement destinations (Hayes, 2013). It is estimated that there are about 1000 foreign retirees residing in the city (El Telégrafo, 2017). However, this is an approximate figure, as there is no census data for migrants. Most of them come from countries such as the U.S. and Canada; a smaller percentage come from other countries such as France, Germany, or Australia (Crespo, 2014).

Some key pull factors have contributed to the influx of North American retirees to the city of Cotacachi. First, a tourism promotion strategy, based on natural and cultural attractions, and supported by the Municipality, the Assembly of the Cotacachi Cantonal Unit (AUCC) and the Union of Indigenous and Peasant Organizations of Cotacachi (UNORCAC), encouraged tourism to the canton in recent years (Gascón, 2015). The canton has a number of natural assets, as well as abundant water resources. In the Andean zone these include the Cotacachi volcano and its two lakes, Piñán and Cuicocha (Ortiz et al., 2009). In addition, the canton is located within the Cotacachi-Cayapas Ecological Reserve, one of the richest areas in Ecuador in terms of fauna and flora (PDOT, 2015). Second, the city has received several international awards for its model of participatory governance and its inclusion of indigenous peoples.<sup>5</sup> Third, there has been strong international marketing by companies specializing in retirement destinations such as International Living Magazine<sup>1</sup>, as well as from U.S. residents promoting the city through online blogs (Kline, 2013), which has labeled the country as one of the best retirement destinations for its low cost of living and excellent climate. Finally, the legal framework allowing foreigners to acquire property and the opportunities for retirees to apply for residency visas makes Ecuador an attractive destination for IRM. In order to qualify for residency visas, lifestyle migrants must demonstrate a pension income of US\$800 per month for individuals (US\$850 for couples), or an investment of US\$25,000 in the Ecuadorian economy, easily secured through the purchase of a property or condo unit (Hayes, 2020).

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<sup>5</sup> In 2002, Cotacachi received the "Cities for Peace" award granted by UNESCO, in 2006 the international award "Participatory Democracy" and in 2007 received the "Digital Cities" award granted by AHCINET.



### 5.3. Cotacachi Land Market: From Colonial Haciendas to Gated Communities

The historical process of land distribution in Ecuador and Cotacachi, in particular, is crucial to understanding how the development of IRM-related residential projects is impacting indigenous communities' access to land and housing. Historically, land possession in Cotacachi has been characterized by strong inequalities. From colonial times (after the Spanish conquest of Ecuador in 1526) until the beginning of the republic (1809), landowning élites or hacendados concentrated large extensions of land (haciendas). These large haciendas operated through processes of territorial control and indigenous labor exploitation under the system known as *huasipungo* (Brown et al., 1988). Under this system, landowners forced indigenous people to work on their haciendas. In return for their labor, indigenous people were given the right to cultivate small plots of land on the hacienda, to collect firewood, and to use the hacienda's water (Rhoades, 2006).

The agrarian reforms in 1964 and 1974 fractured the hacienda system and abolished *huasipungos* (Camacho, 2006). Officially, these land reforms aimed to divide the hacienda lands into parcels to be distributed to indigenous people. However, as several scholars have observed, these land redistribution policies had unexpected results (Guerrero & Ospina, 2003). The agrarian reforms worsened the situation of indigenous communities in several ways. First, the abolition of *huasipungo* annulled the right to collect firewood and graze cattle on the haciendas. Second, although some indigenous people were granted land, many of the parcels were small, marginal, less fertile and often their size was below the minimum of 3.5 hectares established by law (Blankstein & Zuvekas, 1973). At the same time, many of the hacienda owners retained their extensive tracts (Brown et al., 1988). In Cotacachi, for example, after land reform in 1974, large haciendas of more than 50 hectares still constituted about 60 percent of the agricultural land (Guerrero, 2004). In fact, these reforms eliminated the precarious *huasipungo* system but did not change the uneven distribution of land (Martínez, 2007). During the 1980s and 1990s, the liberalization of land markets and agricultural modernization of the haciendas resulted in increasing numbers of land sales. Hacienda owners started to sell parts of their properties to generate funds for agricultural modernization (e.g., purchasing agricultural machinery, fertilizers, livestock, etc). In addition, in 1994, the Agricultural Development Law was passed which liberalized land title and registration laws, making land sales easier (Pastor, 2014).

Furthermore, in connection with IRM to Cotacachi, the in-migration of a significant number of North American retirees has triggered investments in land and real estate in the region—mainly oriented toward the sale of land for the construction of high-cost housing. According to our interviews, the first residential projects for foreign retirees were built in 2007, shortly before the number of foreigners started to rise significantly (2010), and were marketed online by foreign investors who had already established their businesses in the city. These residential projects were built in the center of the

city and consisted of a set of apartments with an area of 120 m<sup>2</sup> each (Interview with real estate agent, 2021). However, due to the lack of land for the construction of large-scale developments, new real estate projects aimed at international retirees were established on the outskirts of the city. Most of these projects were built on former hacienda lands and in close proximity to existing indigenous communities (Crespo et al., 2022). Parts of the remaining colonial-era haciendas were subdivided and sold to real estate companies or to local or international investors to build luxury residential complexes for North American retirees. An emblematic case that illustrates this process is the Hacienda Ocampo. This hacienda is an old colonial hacienda in the area, located a short distance from the city center. It illustrates different processes of fragmentation and sale of land. As the administrator of the hacienda, who has worked there for more than 30 years, states:

In the beginning, the Hacienda Ocampo had an area of more than 500 hectares, now there are only 50 hectares left. Almost all of it has been sold, most of it to foreigners. The current inheritors have each sold their part of the hacienda. Recently a 4-hectare piece of land was sold to a North American, and now he is building some houses for sale (Interview with hacienda manager, 2022, translated from Spanish by the authors).

As the above quotation shows, IRM-related real estate projects have mainly favored the landowning élites or hacendados who have historically controlled land in Cotacachi. However, as is to be expected in these cases, the influx of a substantial number of relatively affluent North American retirees has inspired other local actors to participate in the real estate market. Owners of small-medium plots (mainly of mestizo origin) have also started to sell land to real estate companies. Thus, the area is now characterized by a large variety of IRM-related residential projects ranging from single-family houses, townhouses, and apartments to the most luxurious homes in private gated communities throughout the city—the latter with a whole series of services and amenities such as spacious surroundings, access to green areas or gardens, 24-hour private security, fences, and security cameras, etc. One of these developments is the Jahua Paccha residential complex, located just outside the center of Cotacachi, between the indigenous communities of El Batán and Azaya. It is a large, private residential gated community consisting of 48 apartments of approximately 120 m<sup>2</sup> each (see Figure 5.2).



**Figure 5.2.** Foreign residential complex "Jahua Pacha".  
Formerly the land of Hacienda Ocampo.  
**Source:** Photo by M. Crespo, field visit, October 2020.

#### **5.4. Mixed-Methods Approach: studying the economic and socio-spatial effects of IRM**

To analyze the economic and socio-spatial effects of IRM-related residential projects on indigenous communities' access to land and housing prices in the urban area of Cotacachi, we employed a mixed-methods approach combining quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis (see Figure 5.3). Due to the dynamic nature of IRM, the lack of updated official information on land and housing prices in the city (cadastral registers), and the political and economic sensitivity of the topic, a creative and often time-consuming multi-method approach had to be employed. Therefore, empirical data remain limited and certain information had to be anonymized in order to protect informants and researchers alike.

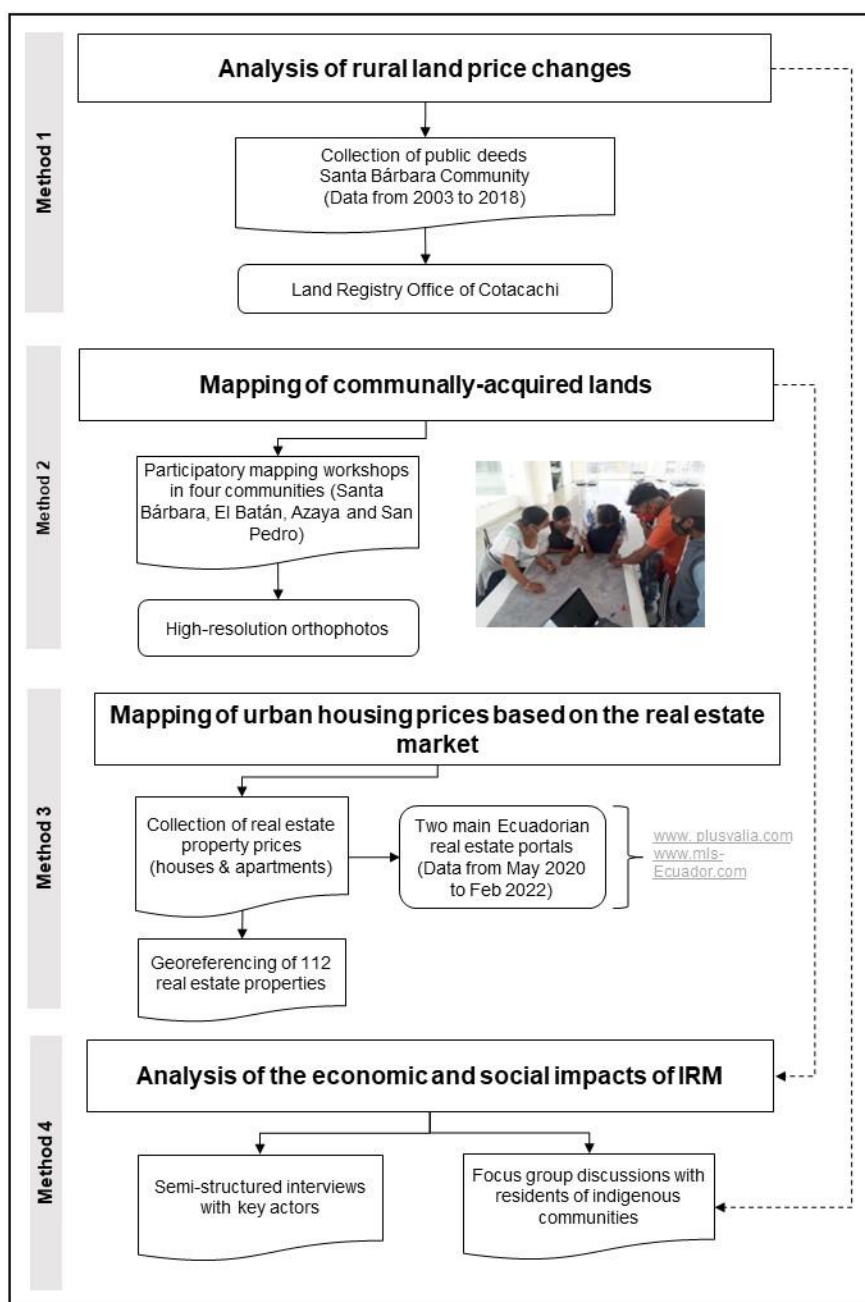
First, we analyzed agricultural land price changes in the indigenous community Santa Bárbara, located in the periphery of the city and surrounded by several IRM-residential projects. The information was obtained through legal documents, such as land titles or public deeds that were collected at the Land Registry Office of Cotacachi, from which we were able to obtain information such as the area of land acquired by the community and the transaction year as well as price. The data cover land prices acquired communally or collectively by members of the indigenous community over a 15-year period (from 2003 to 2018). Then, we mapped the amount of land that had been communally purchased before and after IRM-related developments started in the late 2000s, with the cut-off date set at 2010 (see Figure 5.5). For this purpose, participatory mapping workshops were conducted in four indigenous communities adjacent to these residential projects, namely Santa Bárbara, El Batán, Azaya, and San Pedro. Participants examined high-resolution orthophotos to identify the plots

acquired by the communities as well as the plots that were acquired by the foreign population. All the information was further processed using ArcGIS 10.3 software.

Second, we mapped housing prices in the urban area of Cotacachi and compared them to the location of foreign-owned properties (see Figure 5.8). Due to the lack of updated official cadastral information on housing prices in the city, we opted to work with the values of property prices according to the real estate market. We obtained information on residential properties using two widely used real estate market portals ([plusvalía.com](http://plusvalía.com) and [mls-Ecuador.com](http://mls-Ecuador.com)). These portals were selected based on two criteria: 1) they are the main publicly available Ecuadorian real estate portals, and 2) they provide an exact or general geolocation of each property. Two types of properties were considered for the analysis (houses and apartments), and commercial properties were excluded. A total of 180 properties over a period of one year and seven months were analyzed (from May 2020 to February 2022). However, only 112 properties were mapped, since exact geographic location was not published for all sites. Subsequently, to determine the location of the foreign-owned properties, we used the results generated in our previous study conducted in Cotacachi (Crespo et al., 2022). This study provides information on the spatial distribution and temporal growth of foreign-owned properties in the canton. Finally, based on the total number of properties collected, we compared the average prices per m<sup>2</sup> of the properties located within and outside the residential projects for foreign retirees. It is important to mention that although the prices of the properties listed in these portals (asking prices) are slightly higher than the final sale prices, they offer a clear idea of the behavior of the real estate market in Cotacachi. In this sense, other studies have similarly employed the use of real estate portal databases to analyze the spatial distribution of housing prices and their impact on the local population (e.g., Yrigoy, 2017).

Third, to analyze the social impact of rising agricultural land prices, focus group discussions (FGDs) were held in the four indigenous communities mentioned above. The FGDs counted on the active participation of various members of the indigenous communities: youth, elders, women, as well as indigenous leaders. On average, each workshop had seven to 10 participants. The age of the participants varied widely, but most were between 40 and 50 years old. A questionnaire was used to structure the discussions. In addition, we conducted semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders to gather their opinions regarding the increase in housing prices in the city. Key informants were real estate agents, constructors of residential projects, administrators of the haciendas, and the population of the urban area (mestizos). Interviews and FGDs were conducted in Spanish and recorded. Verbal consent was obtained to record and take notes of participants' opinions. Due to the political and economic sensitivity of the topic, participants' names have been anonymized in the research. Participatory mapping workshops were held in October 2020, while semi-structured interviews with stakeholders and FGDs in indigenous communities were conducted between May and June 2022.

The methodological scheme used to study the economic and social-spatial effects of IRM in the study area is presented in Figure 5.3.



**Figure 5.3.** Methodological approach to analyze the economic and socio-spatial effects of IRM in the city of Cotacachi, Ecuador (Design by authors).

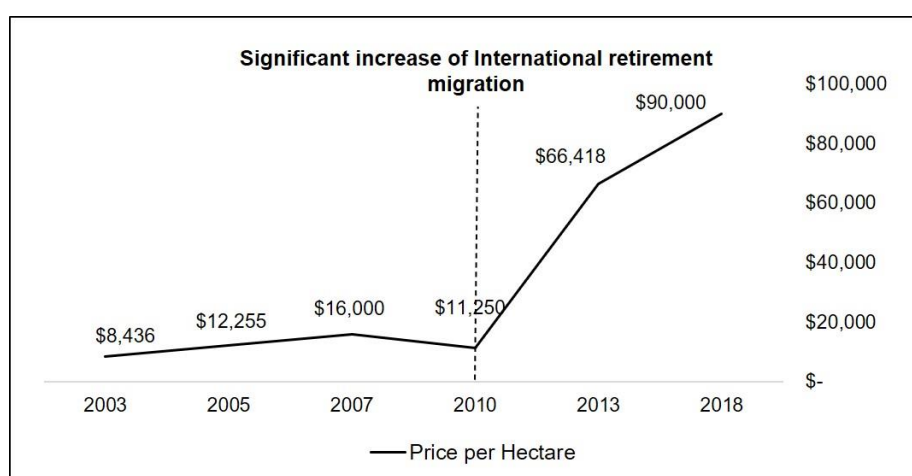
## 5.5. Results

The in-migration of a significant number of North American retirees, largely motivated by financial and economic factors in their home countries and the low-cost of living in Cotacachi, has triggered the emergence of a lucrative real estate market, resulting in the construction of high-cost gated residential complexes for retirees in different parts of the city, which in turn is generating a series of economic, social and spatial repercussions that are discussed below.

### *IRM effects on land prices and indigenous communities' access to land*

According to the analysis of land prices and interviews with local stakeholders, the effects of IRM on land prices and the repercussions on the indigenous communities of Cotacachi are significant. First and foremost, the development of IRM-related real estate projects has resulted in a sharp increase in agricultural land prices. Data obtained through the collection of public deeds of communally purchased land show that the price per hectare of land in one of the indigenous communities adjacent to IRM-related properties went up from US\$8,436 per hectare in 2003 to US\$90,000 per hectare in 2018. As shown in Figure 5.4, land prices started to increase mainly from 2010 onwards, corresponding to the influx of IRM-related real estate investments in the city. During interviews and FGDs, members of this community expressed IRM-related effects:

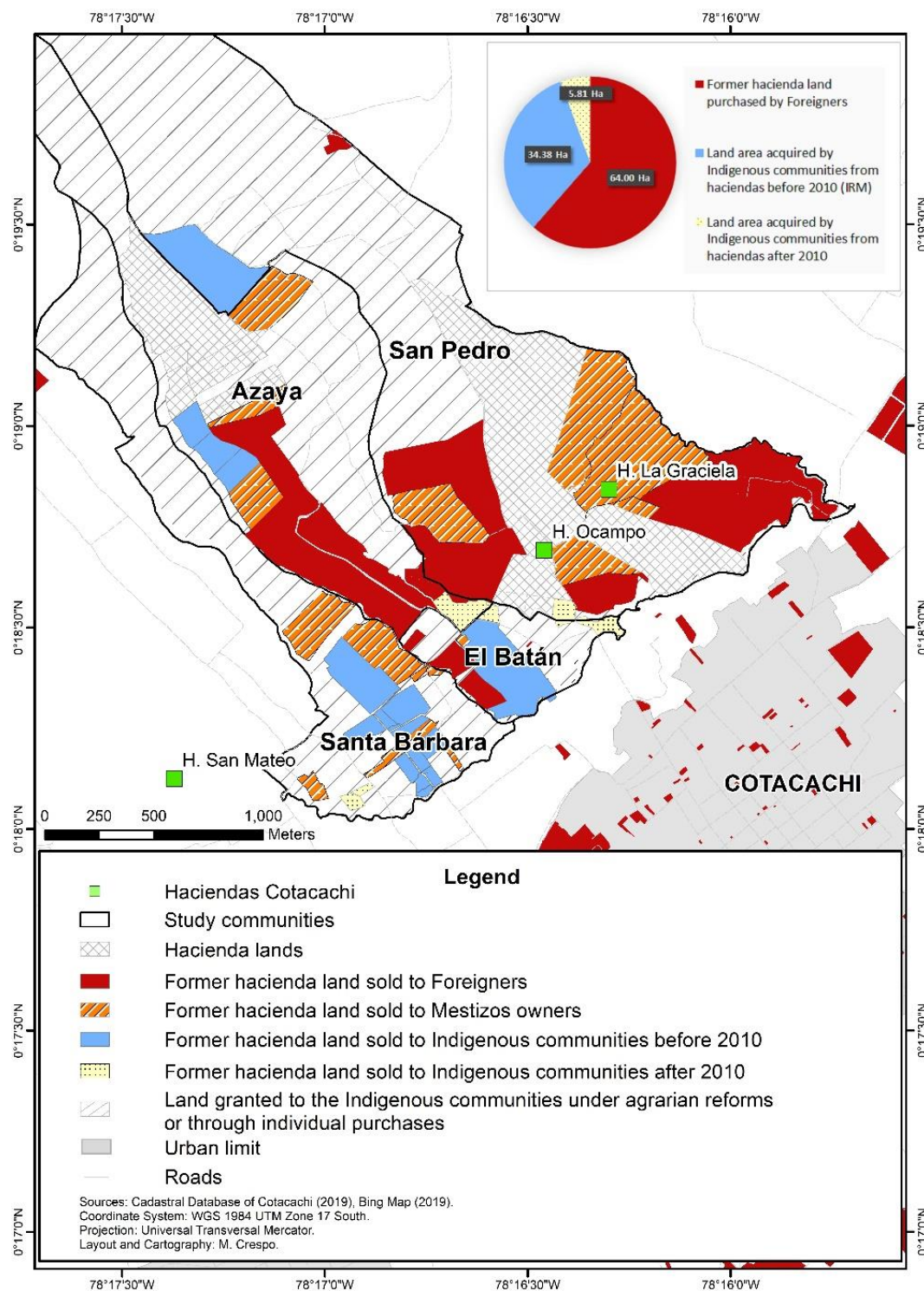
Since the arrival of the foreigners, land has become very expensive. A hectare of land that used to cost around 7,000 and 8,000 dollars is sold today for more than 80,000 dollars. Now it is very difficult for us to buy land under the current conditions (Interview with indigenous community member, 2022, translated by the authors).



**Figure 5.4.** Land price per hectare (Santa Bárbara Community)  
**Source:** Data obtained through community land titles. May 2022.

Second, IRM-related developments directly and indirectly affect indigenous communities' access to land. Drawings and discussions from participatory mapping workshops in the four communities highlight the spatio-temporal changes and the increased problems for indigenous communities to access land in Cotacachi. In particular, participatory mapping indicates that before the influx of IRM-related real estate investments in Cotacachi in the late 2000s, indigenous communities were able to communally buy land from the haciendas. However, today this is no longer possible. Before 2010, the four indigenous communities acquired several plots of land (a total of 34.38 hectares) from haciendas or mestizo landowners. After 2010, the communities have only acquired about 5 hectares of land, even though their desire to acquire land to develop their agricultural activities has been increasing over time. In addition, Figure 5.5 shows the expansion of IRM-related real estate developments around the aforementioned indigenous communities. It is remarkable to note that the land currently owned by foreign retirees (64 hectares) is double the amount of land acquired communally in the four study communities. The FGDs further support the visual data generated in the participatory mapping workshops:

Nowadays it is very difficult for us to buy land in the current conditions, no matter how much we organize among several families, we cannot buy. The hacienda owners prefer to sell the land to foreigners because they pay more money. We have to go into debt and borrow money from the bank, while the foreigners pay in cash (FGDs, 2022, translated by the authors).





These statements highlight the difficult situation faced by the indigenous communities located around these residential projects regarding land access and the price of agricultural land. As can be seen in these cases, land has become a high-value commodity. As identified in earlier studies, the influx of a new high-income population group who are willing and able to invest large sums in real estate projects has driven a process of converting land into a "capital reserve," due to the fact that the increase in prices has reduced landowners' willingness to sell land (Gascón, 2015, p.14). Today, the landowning élites or hacendados prefer to keep their properties and do not sell them in order to increase the value of the land, thus generating a speculative process. This is having a strong impact, particularly on the indigenous communities that have historically inhabited and cultivated these lands. Today, land is an extremely scarce resource for indigenous families.

IRM-related effects on the indigenous communities are further aggravated by difficult structural and social conditions. The canton of Cotacachi has one of the highest rates of poverty due to unsatisfied basic needs in the province.<sup>6</sup> According to the last census, 72 percent of the population lives in poverty (INEC, 2010). Further, the indigenous communities of Cotacachi have historically had problems related to land distribution and land access. As discussed in relation to the process of land concentration in Cotacachi, from colonial times until the beginning of the republic, landowning élites have concentrated large areas of land (haciendas). These haciendas are mainly located in the lower areas of Cotacachi, where the slopes are less steep and provide better conditions for agriculture (Zapata Ríos et al., 2006). In contrast, the indigenous people of Cotacachi are mainly land-poor smallholders and practice agriculture on land that is generally not favorable for agriculture. Official data show that 68.8 percent of the indigenous families own between one and five hectares, and 31.2 percent own less than one hectare (PDOT, 2015).

In addition, this situation has been aggravated by the cultural practice of land inheritance: in Ecuadorian indigenous communities, parents divide their land among their children, for example, when they marry. However, with the process of family subdivision by inheritance, these small properties become ever smaller, resulting in a marked process of territorial fragmentation into so-called *minifundios*, forcing heirs in many cases to abandon their traditional agricultural activities and to seek new forms of income generation in the cities. All these factors, together with the fast-growing IRM-related real estate boom, highlight the enormous challenges and the difficult situation that many of the indigenous communities in Cotacachi are facing regarding land access and the development of agriculture.

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<sup>6</sup> The Unsatisfied Basic Needs (UBN) is an indicator used to measure household poverty. In the case of Ecuador, the National Institute of Statistics and Census (INEC) considers five dimensions: i) economic capacity; ii) access to basic education; iii) access to housing; iv) access to basic services and v) overcrowding (INEC, 2010).

*IRM effects on housing prices*

At first glance, IRM-related real estate investments appear not to affect housing prices in the urban area of Cotacachi, as the developments for foreign retired citizens are built mostly on the agricultural land of former colonial haciendas on the periphery. However, the in-migration of a considerable number of North American retirees has also affected the real estate market in some parts of the urban area, where a number of single-family houses and apartments in gated condominiums have been built. In addition, old colonial houses have been remodeled according to the tastes and preferences of the immigrants. It is clear that North American retirees differ from Cotacachi's residential population in terms of income, lifestyle, and housing preferences (see Figures 5.6 and 5.7). The new residents demand housing with more expensive features. Thus, foreign-owned residential houses clearly differ in terms of architectural structure, amenities, and cost from local residents' houses.



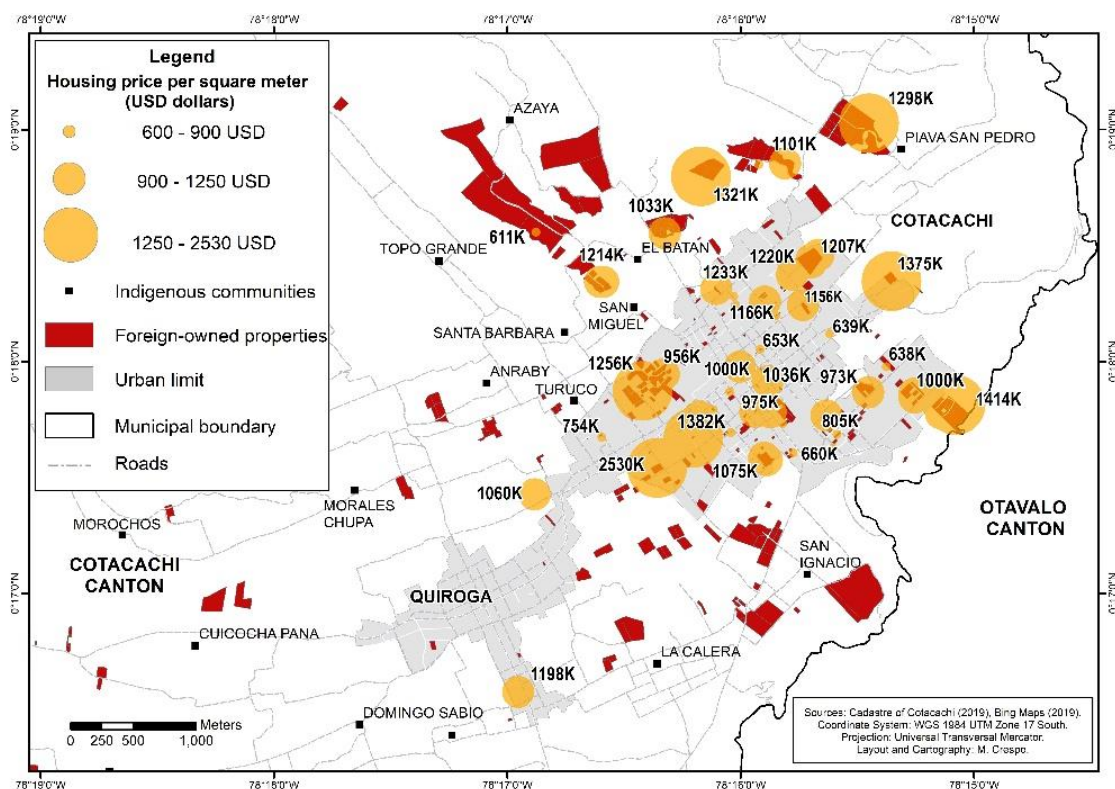
**Figure 5.6.** Private residential developments for foreign retirees “The House of Dreams”  
Real-estate price: USD 130,000.

**Source:** Photo by M. Crespo, field visit, June 2022.



**Figure 5.7.** Homes located in front the private residential complex “The House of Dreams”  
**Source:** Photo by M. Crespo, field visit, June 2022.

Our findings, based on mapping 112 properties advertised for sale in the main real estate portals for Cotacachi, show that foreign-owned properties have the highest value in the real estate market and are, on average, 35 percent more expensive than the properties aimed at the local Cotacachi (mestizo) population. The average price per m<sup>2</sup> of properties that are located inside residential complexes for foreign retirees is USD 898, while for those outside these complexes it is USD 668. The spatial distribution of prices according to the real estate market is shown in Figure 5.8.



**Figure 5.8.** Prices of properties for sale on the real estate market in Cotacachi  
**Source:** Plusvalía.com and mls-Ecuador.com (Elaborated by authors).

Interviews with urban residents (the mestizo population) support our findings. Most participants expressed concern about the increase in housing prices in the city caused by IRM. However, some respondents also perceive IRM-related real estate development as a positive factor. They mention a series of improvements in the city since the North American retirees started to move to the city in larger numbers (including more sources of employment, the provision of new services, etc.). As one interviewee states:

The positive part is that the city is growing. There may be more jobs for people who want to start a business. The negative part is that the capital gain has increased considerably in built houses. For example, a house that used to cost 50,000 USD today costs almost double (interview with urban resident, 2022, translated by the authors).

In addition, interviewees observed that IRM-related real estate development impacts rental prices. However, since we did not systematically collect data on rental prices, we cannot verify these statements with a second source. A brief review of the two real estate portals used in this research shows that a small 50 m<sup>2</sup> apartment is priced at USD 600 per month, similar to rental prices in one of the best areas of Quito, the capital city. As is to be expected in these cases, when housing prices rise, low-income renters face higher rents and greater difficulty in finding affordable housing. The opinion of one of our interviewees highlights this issue:

I am from Quito, I arrived last year in Cotacachi with my two children for work. Finding an apartment here has been very difficult for me. The owners prefer to rent to foreigners because they pay more (interview with urban resident, 2022, translated by the authors).

These opinions are reinforced by some advertisements found throughout the city that highlight the interest of some owners in renting or selling their properties exclusively to foreigners (see Figure 5.9).



"For rent or sale only to foreigners/Americans".

**Figure 5.9.** Advertisement in a restaurant in Cotacachi  
**Source:** Photo by M. Crespo, field visit, September 2022.

## 5.6. Conclusions and discussion

Based on empirical insights from Cotacachi, we have documented and discussed the economic and socio-spatial effects of IRM on land and urban housing prices and the associated effects on indigenous communities' access to land. We have shown that the in-migration of a significant number of North American retirees, largely motivated by financial and economic factors in their home countries and the low-cost of living in Cotacachi, has triggered the emergence of a lucrative real estate market, resulting in the construction of high-cost gated residential complexes for retirees in different parts of the city.

As a result of the IRM-related developments and the associated speculation, agricultural land prices in and around the indigenous communities have risen considerably in the last decade. A small group of landowning élites who have historically controlled land in Cotacachi have gained from the IRM-related increase in land prices connected with the transformation of agricultural land into housing. Our findings show that the changes in the real estate market, triggered by IRM, have resulted in increasing disparities on the local level that have their roots in the colonial system of land distribution between different socio-ethnic groups. While some groups gain directly—by selling land and promoting development—and some indirectly—e.g., from new business or employment opportunities—others' livelihoods are threatened by this process. The flow of foreign capital associated with the IRM real estate market has triggered a process of speculation in Cotacachi that is marginalizing access to agricultural land in the indigenous communities located near these complexes, thus generating what Harvey (2004) defines as accumulation by dispossession.

Furthermore, our data show that the construction of these high-value private developments directly affect urban housing prices. North American retirees differ from Cotacachi residents in terms of income, lifestyle, and housing preferences. These new residents demand housing with more expensive features. This results in the emergence of a new segment in the real estate market, with significantly higher prices. Similarly, these changes can be interpreted with Harvey's theory of a spatial fix, whereby the migrants seek to fulfil their desire for a decent lifestyle, which is no longer possible in their place of origin, by moving to another space (Harvey, 2001). Yet their spatial fix results in negative effects on deprived population groups in Cotacachi.

In sum, this study contributes to a better understanding of the IRM-related economic and socio-spatial effects that are rooted in colonial legacies of highly uneven distribution of land in Ecuador, as in other parts of the Global South. This study has focused on two dimensions: agricultural land and urban housing. However, our empirical insights for the case of the city of Cotacachi in the Ecuadorian Andes suggest that future research is needed to better understand the various and complex effects of an IRM-oriented real estate market. In particular, these comprise comparative studies that focus on analyzing land prices in other retirement destinations, and research on

the characteristics of the immigrant population, their reasons for migrating, as well as their integration with the local population, need to be addressed in more detail.

### **Software**

The software used to create the maps was ArcGis 10.3. The data and graphics were processed on Microsoft Office Excel 2019.

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No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

### **Data availability statement**

The data that supports the findings of this study is available from the corresponding authors on reasonable request.

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## **6 Paper III: Alien neighbors behind walls: Socio-spatial segregation of international retirement migrants**

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### **Abstract**

International retirement migration (IRM) is a growing phenomenon in the Global South. Although IRM-related real estate development is known to be an important factor at the macro-economic level, its socio-spatial effects at the local level are controversial. Using the case study of the Andean city of Cotacachi, Ecuador, this article analyzes to what extent the development of gated communities for retired migrants around indigenous communities fosters socio-spatial segregation. Based on the analysis of five social practices, this paper examines how gated communities for retired migrants influence the social structures and practices of indigenous communities and which barriers hinder social interaction between the two groups. The paper uses a mixed-methods approach which combines in-depth interviews with retired migrants, focus group discussions with indigenous communities, and participatory mapping tools. We found that the development of IRM-related gated communities around indigenous territories impact the traditional agricultural practices of the indigenous communities, especially those related to access to land. Limited interaction between retired migrants and indigenous communities, due to a lack of common practices, hinders the creation of social bonding between these two groups.

**Key words:** International Retirement Migration, Gated Communities, Social Practices, Indigenous communities, Cotacachi, Ecuador.

### **Introduction**

International retirement migration (IRM) is a growing phenomenon in the Global South, including especially Ecuador. Andean cities such as Cotacachi, Cuenca, and Vilcabamba have become favorite retirement destinations for increasing numbers of foreigners. Many of these retirees come from the United States and Canada and have decided to relocate to Ecuador mainly due to a lower cost of living and affordable property prices (Hayes, 2014, 2020). Although foreign retirees represent only a small proportion of Cotacachi's total population, their presence has an impact in economic, social, and spatial domains.

Since the influx of the foreign population, several gated communities have been developed on the periphery of the city, in direct proximity to some indigenous communities, which are reshaping the urban landscape. In this paper, we focus on the social relations between these two groups.

Enclosed spaces, such as gated communities (GCs), have commonly been viewed as a negative phenomenon in different countries as they inhibit social interactions between households living inside and outside the gates and, thus, lead to the segregation of social groups (Manzi & Smith-Bowers, 2005; Roitman, 2005).

Existing literature on this subject refers to them as “walled and gated residential developments that restrict public access,” catering in the main to the middle and upper classes (Atkinson & Flint, 2004: 2). They include private properties, individual houses, and common private properties for collective use and are characterized by a series of security devices such as walls, fences, doors, barriers, alarms, guards, etc.

For the Ecuadorian case, existing sociological studies focusing on rural retirement destinations like Vilcabamba (Hayes, 2015) and Cotacachi (Gascón, 2015; Gascón & Cañada, 2016) have highlighted the societal effects related to IRM and the development of GCs. Both authors argue that the development of high-value housing for foreign retirees causes land speculation which threatens the livelihoods of farmers and leads to rural outmigration. However, despite the existence of such studies, there is still a lack of knowledge on whether and how IRM-related development of gated communities has contributed to socio-spatial segregation, particularly with regard to indigenous communities. Furthermore, we have no knowledge of studies that analyze the social interaction between the migrants living inside these residential complexes and the indigenous communities living close to them. In order to address this gap, this paper sets the following research question: ***Why does the development of GCs for retirement migrants affect the social practices of indigenous communities and which barriers and facilitators shape the social interactions between these two groups?***

The research employs the theoretical approach of ***social practices*** proposed by Schatzki, which defines them as “a temporally evolving, open-ended set of doings and sayings” (Schatzki, 2002, p. 87). Within this theoretical approach, practices are the central aspect of social life and their realization allows interrelation with other social groups. By analyzing the social practices of retired migrants living in GCs and the indigenous populations living outside of them, this paper provides empirical evidence to understand the socio-spatial effects related to IRM and segregation in indigenous communities in Cotacachi, Ecuador. The research employs a series of qualitative mixed methods, such as semi-structured interviews with foreign retirees, focus group discussions (FGDs) with members from indigenous communities, and participatory mapping tools. The paper is structured in five parts. Section 6.1, summarizes the literature debate on GCs and social segregation as well as outlining the main theoretical and methodological framework used for this research.

Section 6.2 describes the study area and the autochthone and allochthone factors that have contributed to the emergence of Cotacachi as a destination for IRM. The methodological strategy employed in the research is described in section 6.3, while section 6.4 presents the results obtained from the analysis of five social practices observed during fieldwork. Finally, section 6.5 summarizes the main findings of the paper and ends with the conclusions of the study.

## 6.1 Gated Communities and Social Practices

Gated Communities (GCs) can be understood as walled or fenced housing developments with restricted access, which often includes a guard and other forms of private surveillance (Atkinson & Blandy, 2005). These compounds usually possess high-quality infrastructure, services, and different amenities that can only be used by their residents (Bandauko et al., 2022). Blakely & Snyder (1997) provide one of the most cited typologies by studying GCs. They identified three different types of GCs:

*i) Lifestyle communities:* These residential projects focus on leisure activities and are characterized by having recreational facilities and common services. They include retirement villages, golf communities, or suburban new towns.

*ii) Prestige communities:* These residential projects reflect the desire for image, privacy, and control. They serve as symbols of wealth and status and focus on exclusivity over community. They shared few facilities and amenities.

*iii) Security zone communities:* These residential developments reflect a fear of outsiders and involve retrofitting fences and gates on public streets, controlling access.

The most prevalent forms of IRM-related GCs in the city of Cotacachi are lifestyle communities and security zone communities.

Most of the literature on GCs has focused on their socio-spatial effects. The academic debate has been dominated by two different positions. There is one group of authors who support the idea that CGs encourage social segregation. Authors like Svampa (2001), for example, drawing on the city of Buenos Aires in Argentina, states that the physical barriers of GCs not only generate physical distance, but also social and symbolic distance. Atkinson & Blandy (2005), along the same lines, argue that the closed elements of these residential compounds lead to the loss of social diversity (practices and customs) of the surrounding communities. Vesselinov argues that “gated communities are thought to produce more social separation and fragmentation, which leads to further increased urban inequality” (Vesselinov, 2012: 418). In most cases, GCs are criticized for residential exclusion, social inequality, fragmentation of the city, and the segregation of rich and poor (Balčaitė & Krupickaitė, 2018). However, there is also another perspective. A smaller group of researchers argues that GCs may have a positive impact upon poor neighborhoods and even foster social

integration. Among such cases, the research on Santiago de Chile (Salcedo and Torres, 2004) and Belo Horizonte, Brazil, (Chase, 2008) are significant. Salcedo and Torres (2004) argue that spatial proximity allows poor citizens to interact with GCs' residents based on market relations such as employment or service provision.

They explain that poor local residents have a positive opinion of the emergence of the GCs in relation to the improvement of the quality of life in the area, better job opportunities, a reduction of the social stigma of living in a poor neighborhood, and an increase in the value of their land. Although interaction is mainly based on the terms of market relations, they also acknowledge that the level of community integration between GCs' residents and their neighbors is scarce (Salcedo & Torres, 2004 p. 33-34). Therefore, there is integration and segregation at the same time.

To analyze the link between GCs and social segregation, this paper employs the theoretical framework of **social practices** defined by Schatzki (1996). Within this theoretical approach, practices are the central aspect of social life. Schatzki (1996) defines practices as a bundle of activities that consists of specific ways of doing and saying things. Examples are socialization and recreational practices, farming practices, celebration practices, religious and cultural practices, and others. According to Schatzki, these doings and sayings are linked in a practice through three major principles: (1) through **understandings**; (2) through **explicit rules and principles**, and (3) through "**teleoaffective**" **structures** (Schatzki, 1996; 99).

Understandings refer to the body of practical knowledge and skills (know-how) that a social group has and that make it possible to carry out a specific practice. For example, the indigenous communities of Cotacachi possess a series of ancestral knowledge related to their agricultural practices and livelihoods that are passed on from generation to generation, such as when to plant a particular crop, how to conserve and manage the soil, the use of natural medicine, etc. Explicit rules refer to prescriptions, procedures, and principles of proceeding that a social group follows. Taking into account the same group, the indigenous communities of Cotacachi have a series of norms or principles that govern their activities within their territories, such as the principles of solidarity and reciprocity through collective work. The term "teleoaffective structures" may need further explanation. Etymologically, the first half of the word, 'telos,' denotes that all practices entail 'a set of ends and tasks that individuals should or may pursue' (Schatzki, 2002: 80) and the second part of the word, 'affective', denotes an emotional component encompassing the appropriate emotions. The teleoaffective structures then are the framework under which certain doings or sayings are assessed by actors – while certain doings maybe meaningless for one actor, they might carry a specific meaning for another. This is, for example, the case with certain rituals or religious practices performed by indigenous communities – or specific practices of the retirement migrants. Schatzki affirms that these specific ways of doings and sayings exist when these three elements actively coexist and cease to do so when any of these elements disappears, making the existence of the practice

not possible. He also emphasizes that practices have a social nature, which means that through the participation in a practice a person coexists or interrelates with other social groups: Practices create social contexts.

Along this line, some authors have pointed out the importance of considering social practices as a tool to study the urban social segregation of GCs in small cities (e.g. Roitman et al., 2010). According to Roitman (2013), the analysis of social practices makes it possible to determine whether or not there are social interactions, understood as direct exchanges of communication, experiences, and activities, between two different groups.

Taking into consideration this theoretical framework, as well as the empirical evidence gathered in our interviews with retirement migrants and indigenous communities, our paper studies socio-spatial segregation by analyzing the extent of five observable social practices: (1) Communication practices between residents in gated communities and other inhabitants of Cotacachi; (2) the mobility practices of retired migrants and time spent in the city; (3) socialization practices and venues of socialization; (4) the participation of retired migrants in the socio-cultural practices of indigenous communities; and (5) agricultural practices, especially in relation to access to land in indigenous communities. A table with the practices analyzed, as well as the qualitative methods employed in the study, is presented below.

Social Practices		METHODS
1	Communication practices between gated and non-gated residents (language barriers)	i) Interviews with IRM
2	Mobility practices of IRM and time spent in the city	ii) Focus group discussions (FGDs) in indigenous communities
3	Socialization practices and venues of socialization of IRM	iii) Participatory mapping workshops
4	Participation of IRM in the socio-cultural practices carried out by indigenous communities	
5	Agricultural practices (access to agricultural land)	

**Table. 6.1.** Social Practices for indicating socio-spatial segregation of IRM

## 6.2. Cotacachi a new destination for IRM

Cotacachi is a rural canton, located in northern Ecuador, in Imbabura Province. It has a population of 53,000 inhabitants, with approximately 10,000 living in the city proper, composed of different ethnic groups: 53.6 % of the population self-identifies as mestizo (people with mixed European and Indigenous ancestry), 41.7 % as indigenous and



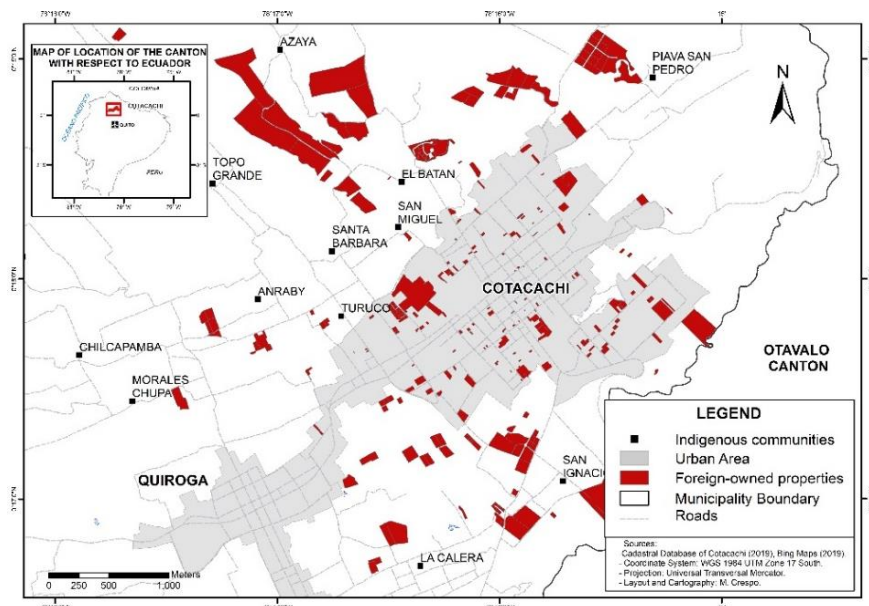
1.4 % as white (INEC, 2022). The economy of this area is based on traditional crops and handicrafts (Ortiz, 2004).

Foreign retiree immigration is not a new phenomenon in Cotacachi; numbers rose significantly in 2009, shortly after the U.S. economic and financial crisis (Viteri, 2015). As Hayes states, the real estate crisis in North America, which began in 2008, undermined the financial security of many U.S. seniors, leading them to search for low-cost places where they can still enjoy a comfortable retirement (Hayes, 2013).

Some key factors have contributed to the influx of North American retirees to the city. First, a tourist development policy promoted by the municipality in previous years, based on natural and tourist attractions (Gascón, 2016:19). Cotacachi has a mild climate most of the year and is located within the “Cotacachi-Cayapas Ecological Reserve,” one of the richest fauna and flora areas in Ecuador (Territorial Development and Ordering Plan, 2015-2035). Second, the city has received several international awards for its model of participatory governance and inclusion of indigenous communities. In 2002, Cotacachi received the UNESCO "Cities for Peace" award, in 2006 the international award "Participatory Democracy," and in 2007 the AHCIET "Digital Cities" award. Third, there has been strong international marketing by some companies specialized in retirement destinations such as "*International Living Magazine*"<sup>7</sup>, as well as U.S. residents through online blogs (Kline, 2013), which has promoted the country – and Cotacachi specifically – as retirement destinations for its low cost of living, excellent climate conditions, and especially its proximity to Quito's international airport. Additionally, the legal framework allowing foreigners to acquire property and the opportunities for retirees to easily apply for residency visas makes Ecuador an attractive destination for IRM. “To qualify for residency visas, North American retirees have to be able to show pension income of at least US\$800 per month (for individuals, US\$850 for couples) or an investment of US\$25,000 in the Ecuadorian economy, an amount easily secured by investment in a property or condo unit” (Hayes, 2020: 12). Furthermore, unlike other retirement countries, Ecuador's property laws do not distinguish between citizens or foreigners (Bayer, 2018). As a result of this national and international promotion, a wide range of residential projects for U.S. retirees has been developed in the city (see. Figure 1), ranging from stand-alone houses, townhouses, and apartments to the most luxury homes within GCs. Most of these foreign-owned properties have been built on former colonial hacienda lands in direct proximity to existing indigenous communities (Authors, 2022). They include a full range of services and amenities such as large green spaces, access to communal areas or gardens, 24-hour private surveillance, security cameras, etc. where access for non-resident individuals is difficult to obtain. These structures differ completely from the rest of the city's environment.

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<sup>7</sup> The world's #1 magazine on retiring overseas, delivered monthly to more than 100,000 Americans.



**Figure 6.1.** Study area and location of foreign-owned properties in the city of Cotacachi (Map by authors).

### 6.3. Methodology

The development of GCs for North American retired migrants in direct proximity to some indigenous communities raises questions regarding the socio-spatial implications of IRM. Analyzing the social practices of GCs residents helps to understand the extent to which this phenomenon enables or hinders segregation. Our analysis is a triangulation of data gathered by combining three qualitative methods: i) interviews with the foreign population; ii) focus group discussions (FGDs) in indigenous communities, and iii) participatory mapping workshops. The research was carried out in two parts and took place in the city of Cotacachi during the months of June 2021 and July 2022.

The first part consisted of interviews with international migrants. A total of 17 interviews were conducted. The interviews took place mostly in the migrants' homes or in cafes or restaurants close to their places of residence and focused on the IRMs' social practices and their networks, in particular *with whom* they interact and *where* these interactions take place. Migrants were contacted through two Facebook web pages (Cotacachi Expats Community and Cotacachi Expats), where migrants discuss various topics of interest in the city. Twelve of the interviewees were U.S. citizens and five were Canadians, ranging in age from 65 to 80 years old. The interviews were recorded, conducted in English, and lasted an average of one hour. All respondents were anonymized.

The second part of the research involved FGDs and participatory mapping workshops in five indigenous communities (Santa Bárbara, El Batán, San Ignacio, Azaya and San Pedro) where the presence of residential complexes for foreign retirees is most notable. The objective of the FGDs was to get to know the opinions of the members of indigenous communities regarding the integration of the migrants in the local activities, while the participatory mapping workshops allowed to identify the spatial distribution of the CGs. For the latter purpose, high-resolution satellite images were used, which were distributed among the participants to map the locations of the GCs and discuss their impacts in relation to indigenous communities' access to land. In the workshops various members of the indigenous communities participated: youth, elders, and women as well as leaders of the indigenous communities. On average, each workshop consisted of a group of 7 to 10 people. The age of the participants varied widely but most were between 40 and 50 years old. A set of guiding questions was used for the discussions. The FGDs were recorded, conducted in Spanish, and lasted approximately two hours. For the analysis, all interviews and FGDs were transcribed and personal data was anonymized. Finally, the interviews were analyzed through a set of categories to evaluate the socio-spatial segregation between these two groups, paying special attention to the social relationships between the two groups and the issue of access to land in indigenous communities. It is worth mentioning that several studies have employed qualitative research methods based on the opinions of the participants as a fundamental element to examine socio-spatial segregation (see e.g. Roitman, 2005 ; Roitman, 2013 ; Moore, 2022).

#### **6.4. Results**

Taking into consideration the analysis of five observable social practices, our results show that the level to which retirement migrants socialize with indigenous communities is low and is fractured by a series of influences such as: i) language barriers; ii) practices related to mobility and the time foreigners spend in the city; and iii) their lifestyles and specific meeting places. In Schatzki's terms, this relates mainly to the understandings and teleoaffective structures of the practices analyzed.

##### ***Communication practices***

A fundamental factor that makes social interaction between retired migrants and indigenous communities difficult is language. Our interviewees acknowledged having problems in this regard. The indigenous communities of Cotacachi have their own native language (Kichua), yet many community members also speak Spanish. When GCs residents and members of indigenous communities were asked about how they communicate with their neighbours, participants expressed difficulties in this regard: *“Due to the language, we have not been able to communicate with them. We often have to ask someone to help us with translation” (Interview, leader of one of the indigenous communities, June 2022)*. As stated by one of the migrants: *“I am 84 years old. I just can't learn the language. We have taken classes three different times and*

*just can't remember the words. I know a lot of words, but I can't put them together when talking like this" (Interview, Canadian retiree, June 2021).* A retired couple mentioned one of the possible reasons for the lack of expertise in the language: *"The majority of the expats keep themselves to themselves and avoid contact with others and I think there is a reason for that. Some expats are afraid to learn Spanish because they have never tried to learn a foreign language before" (Interview, U.S. retirees, June 2021).*

Similarly, the pensioners interviewed recognized the importance of learning the language as an essential element for integrating. *"If you want to integrate into the community and know what is going on, you need to learn the language" (Interview, Canadian retiree, June 2021).* As previous studies in other retirement destinations have shown, language has always been a point of difficulty in terms of integration for expatriates migrating to countries where their native language is not spoken (Rojas et al., 2014; Gustafson & Laksfoss Cardozo, 2017).

### ***Mobility practices of foreign retirees and time spent in the city***

A second key factor that fractured the integration process between the two groups are the mobility practices of migrants and the time they spent in the city. At least two types of mobility practices can be identified: i) retirement migrants who reside in the city on a temporary basis – transnational or trans-local retirement migrants and ii) retirement migrants who reside in the city on a permanent basis.

The first group typically owns a second home in their country of origin and have acquired - or rented - a property in Cotacachi. This group is characterized by staying short periods in the city, largely motivated by the good climate conditions, and regularly returning to their home country. Paris (2010) uses the term *transnational second home ownership* to refer to "the ownership of residential property in countries other than the owner's primary residence" (p. 135). As one of the participants of U.S. origin, who has lived in the city for more than 7 years, stated: *"The majority of expats I know and have met are here because Cotacachi is a cheap place to live and has an excellent climate. Some of them have second homes and come from the northern part of the United States or Canada, where the winter lasts three or four months a year, and they come to Ecuador where the climate is good and it's basically the same temperature every year. So, they have a house here and a house there" (Interview, U.S. retiree, April 2021).* Within this group are also trans-local retired migrants, for example, foreign retirees who live in the city for short periods of time between three to five years and then decide to relocate to another destination within Ecuador. Other popular retirement destinations are the cities of Vilcabamba and Cuenca, located in the south of the country<sup>8</sup>. In general, retired trans-local migrants prefer renting a property rather than buying it.

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<sup>8</sup> Cuenca is the most popular city among expatriate retirees and has the largest number of foreigners, with about 12,000 residents.

The second group of migrants – those who live there on a permanent basis – sold their homes in their country of origin, since it is too expensive to maintain two houses, and have been motivated to migrate to Cotacachi largely for financial or economic reasons. As Hayes (2013) states in his study conducted in another of the popular retirement destinations such as the city of Cuenca, Ecuador, the “economic crisis in the United States in 2008 caused the loss of jobs for many people over 60, reduced their pensions, and in some cases took away their homes, leading to a search for better retirement conditions in places where they can still enjoy a “comfortable retirement” (Hayes, 2013: 5). This group of migrants resides most of the time in the city and returns to their home countries for vacations only between one and three months a year, usually at Christmas time, to visit their families and children. They see Cotacachi as their habitual place of residence and their country of origin as a “vacation” place.

We assume that these different practices of mobility of the foreign population result in a differentiation regarding the closeness between IRMs and local communities. We further speculate that transnational/trans-local migrants, may regard the investment in social networks in Cotacachi as a sunk cost – therefore, they do not put much effort into establishing social relations there. Meanwhile, retired migrants who live most of their time in Cotacachi are likely to have a greater interest in creating social networks locally.

### ***Socialization practices and venues of socialization of retired migrants***

Another important factor in assessing whether social integration exists is to consider the practices and venues of socialization of retired migrants. These aspects take into account with *whom* and *where* residents of the GCs interact in order to determine if there are social interactions between the people living “inside” and “outside” of these residential complexes. It considers that there are social interactions between these two groups if they socialize together and use similar venues for socialization.

When residents of the GCs of North American origin were asked if they have a relationship with their neighbors from the indigenous communities, two positions became visible: denial of a relationship and a distanced relationship based on economic exchange. One respondent answered: *“We don’t have any relationship with our neighbors.”* Another interviewee stated: *“You know, we are retired, we want to enjoy our lives, we live insulated. We don’t have any relationship with the people who live outside our gated communities. Except the people who take care of the maintenance of our garden. We have a maid who is indigenous”* (Interview, U.S. retiree, April 2021). Similarly, participants in the FGDs conducted in the indigenous communities stated that they do not have social relationships with the migrant population: *“Most of the foreigners often keep for themselves within their urbanizations. They don’t mix with the community, they live among themselves”* (FGDs in one of the communities, April 2020). Yet, a third group claimed to have social ties with foreigners living in the gated communities.

What is observed today in Cotacachi is that retirement migrants tend to group together and create their own community around a set of social practices and venues that segregate them from the local population. Thus, since the establishment of a community of retirement migrants, a number of meeting places, such as restaurants, bars, cafeterias, etc., have opened in the city to meet the demand of this group. All of these services are "American style," with food options according to (assumed) U.S. preferences and prices that are far beyond the reach of the majority of locals. Some of these businesses are even managed by migrants. These forms of social grouping have also been reported by some of our participants. As stated by one U.S. resident who has been living in Cotacachi for more than seven years: *"There are some expats who come here and learn everything they can about Ecuador and the place they live in and their people. They are few, unfortunately. The vast majority of expats that I know keep themselves to themselves. They have lunch together, they shop together, and they even travel together. They don't want to socialize with other people"* (Interview, U.S. retiree, April 2021). These interview quotes coincide with previous findings in other popular retirement destinations for foreigners, such as Boquete in Costa Rica. McWatters (2008) points out that symbolic barriers, such as the preferred tastes of the migrant population, language, and the cost of services, are quite effective in fracturing social relations and creating two different types of communities. In this sense, this model of social grouping inhibits a meaningful relationship between retirement migrants and locals.

Additionally, as other studies have showed, retired migrants value very positively the possibility of being surrounded by other families of the same origin and socio-cultural characteristics (O'Reilly, 2000; Huete, 2005) and often socialize with other expatriates, thus creating 'expatriate bubbles' (Croucher, 2012), which may also explain a certain lack of relationships of the expatriate community with the local community.

### ***Involvement of retired migrants with local communities activities***

Likewise, our empirical findings obtained in the FGDs reveal the low involvement of retired migrants in events and activities carried out by indigenous communities. It is important to note that the indigenous communities of Cotacachi employ a set of representative social mechanisms to resolve internal conflicts, distribute communal resources equitably, and strengthen their solidarity ties (Rhoades, 2006). This includes a variety of practices, such as the *Minga*, celebrations, festivities, rituals, etc. The *Minga* is a form of collective work – not necessarily agriculture-based – on an exchange basis. It includes a series of activities to maintain and care for the community's territory. It is used, for example, for family work, such as sowing or the cultivation of crops in the plots, as well as for the realization of collective social works, e.g. the cleaning of water sources or the maintenance of community roads, etc. However, more than a form of work, the *Minga* represents at the same time a space for meeting and exchange among indigenous communities.

As one of our interviewees affirms: *“The Minga is where the land is worked and cultivated, where the community meets, where conversations are held with neighbors, where ancestral knowledge is shared. In the Minga, women, children, youth, and elders participate, the whole community comes together”* (FGDs, President of an indigenous community, June 2021). However, despite the fact that some GC residents live within the indigenous communities, there is no interest to participate in these social practices. According to the opinions expressed in the FGDs conducted in communities, as well as the interviews with the IRM, the participation of foreign residents in these social-cultural activities is low. As one of community leader remarked: *“We have invited them to participate in the activities organized by the community, but they are not interested. They never participate in a community Minga”* (FGDs, President of an indigenous community, June 2021).

This statement is complemented by one of the opinions expressed by one of the migrants interviewed who has lived near one of these communities for more than 10 years: *“I don't participate in the Mingas, because I prefer to pay the fine or pay a person to do it for me. Because with a pick and shovel in my hand, I don't do much and in these same 8 hours of Minga I can do more productive things. [...] They feel uncomfortable if I am there, I feel uncomfortable. I don't have the same work rhythm and I'd rather pay them a \$10 fine and do a day of more productive activity than do a Minga. [...] For me personally, integrating into indigenous communities is not in my interest”* (Interview, U.S. retiree, June 2021).

While the indigenous communities of Cotacachi are characterized by employing a series of mechanisms to maintain and strengthen their social cohesion, their sense of belonging to the territory, their customs and their ancestral practices, the migrants bring with them different sets of social practices, lifestyles, and conceptions of space and often they are involved in transnational networks and practices. This clearly affects the social interactions and relationships between these two groups – as the meaning of doings and sayings differ. The Minga is not only about work, it's about exchange, but the underlying teleoaffective structures have to be learned. Thus, so far, the understanding of the respective other group's practices is lacking, contributing to processes of social segregation.

However, a small group of retirement migrants are more integrated in the neighboring indigenous communities. There are some projects or social initiatives led by U.S. citizens to support the indigenous communities. Perhaps one of the most recognized projects at the moment is "Place of Hope", a donation program aimed at providing food for elderly people with limited economic resources in Cotacachi. Likewise, there are certain meeting places where migrants and locals gather to socialize and where local communities sell their products. For example, every Thursday morning there is an organic “Farmers Market”, where both local and IRMs sell their products. These initiatives show the interest of a sub-group of the migrant population to be part of the local community. As stated by one of the retirement migrants who actively collaborates

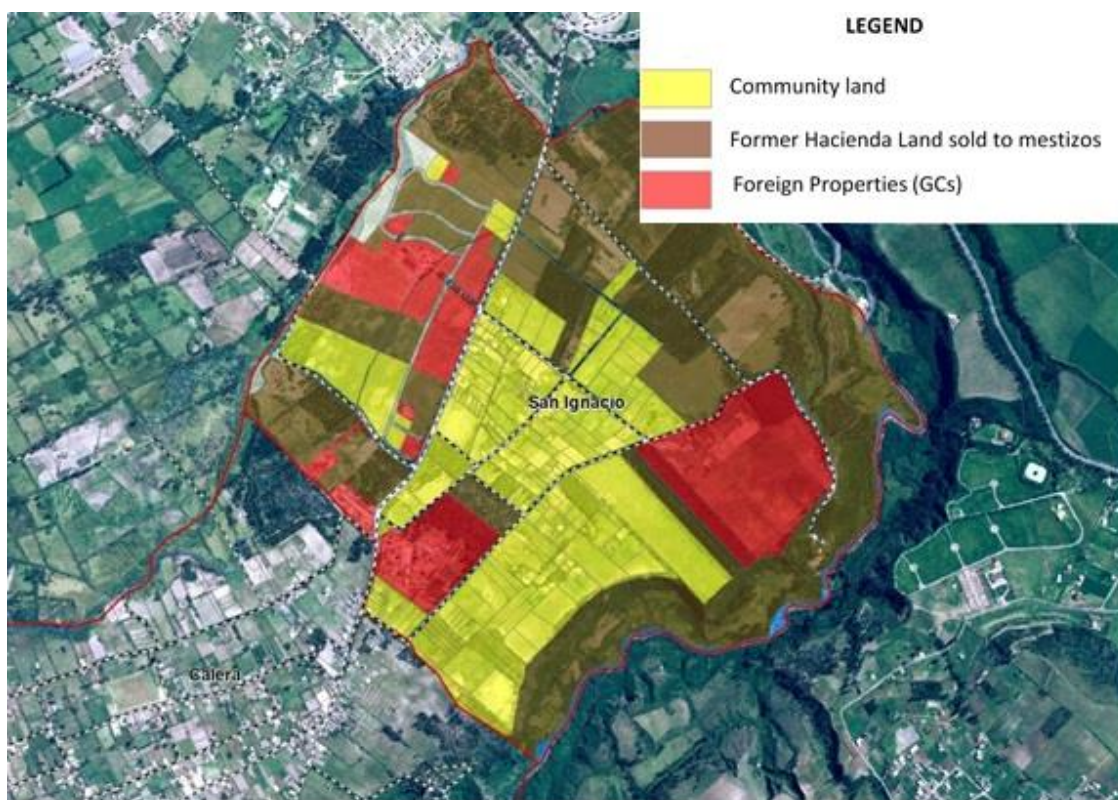
in a philanthropic project: *“The needs of the indigenous communities in Cotacachi are enormous. I support the project at least once a week. Working for them enriches my understanding of their culture. I feel privileged to be able to live here and contribute, even a little”* (Interview, U.S. retiree, June 2021). These charity practices might eventually contribute to social interactions between IRMs and local communities and, consequently, decrease social segregation. As previous studies carried out in other Latin American cities have shown, solidarity practices and heightened social consciousness resulting from the charity projects carried out by GCs’ residents can engender a “de-segregating” effect (Roitman, 2013). Yet, they might also result in cementing segregation as those who are active in charity put themselves in the position of donors.

### ***Agricultural Practices - Land Marginalization***

Finally, the rapid development of CGs for retired migrants around indigenous communities has triggered a process of land speculation in Cotacachi that is marginalizing access to agricultural land for indigenous peoples. Land has become a highly valuable commodity, which is benefiting one group (those who own the land), but marginalizing access to this resource for the indigenous peoples that have inhabited these areas. It is important to mention here that the indigenous communities of Cotacachi have historically had problems related to land access and can be broadly considered as land-poor smallholders. Official data shows that 68.8% of the indigenous families own between one and five hectares and 31.2% own less than one hectare in Territorial Development and Ordering Plan (PDOT, 2015-2035). Additionally, this situation has been aggravated by the cultural practice of inheritance: in the Ecuadorian indigenous communities, sons have the right to inherit their father's land. This, together with the current population growth, has led to a significant fragmentation of land and a further decrease in the size of the plots, resulting in a strong process of territorial fragmentation into so-called minifundios. A clear example of the marginalization of agricultural land, due to the construction of CGs for retired migrants, is the indigenous community of San Ignacio, a small locality located a few minutes from the city of Cotacachi (See Fig 2). Since the influx of U.S. retirees, this community has experienced significant real estate development. Owners of the old haciendas as well as mestizo landowners have been fractioning and selling their lots to local and international real estate agents where various private gated residential complexes have been built, making access to land and the development of agricultural activities in this community difficult. As several members of this community state: *“Our community is small. Here we no longer have land to farm. The land we could cultivate has been sold to foreigners”* (FGDs, San Ignacio community, June 2021). In addition, part of these territories where GCs are located today, used to be a part of old colonial haciendas, agricultural areas that were traditionally used by the indigenous communities for different practices either to plant crops, to graze their animals, as a transit space between communities, or even in some cases to collect water for irrigation.



However, today these spaces can no longer be used, thus breaking with the traditional agricultural practices of this community. As stated by one of the oldest members of this community: *“Before these complexes were built, the hacienda owner used to let us plant or graze our cattle, sometimes we planted corn and beans on this land and shared it with the community and our families. Today we can no longer use these plots. We can’t even enter. Everything is walled”* (FGDs, San Ignacio community, June 2021, translated by the authors).



**Figure 6.2.** Land tenure Map (San Ignacio Community)  
**Data Source:** Participatory mapping workshops, San Ignacio Community (2022)

All these factors highlight a new form of socio-spatial segregation. The influx of a significant number of IRMs to Cotacachi not only led to the emergence of different types of social practices that affect the forms of integration and coexistence of the local population, but also reveals the complexity of the socio-spatial context (“Zusammenhang” according to Schatzki) in which territories are re-negotiated and that affect the indigenous communities’ livelihoods.

## 6.5. Conclusion

This paper has analyzed how living close might not necessarily mean living together but rather living apart – divided by walls, fences, and barriers. Based on empirical data, we analyzed to what extent the development of gated communities for retirement migrants in direct proximity to indigenous communities fosters socio-spatial segregation. The theoretical and methodological framework employed in this paper shows that the level of interaction between foreign retirees living within these GCs and the surrounding indigenous communities can be understood by interpreting the *social practices* of these two groups. Based on the analysis of five social practices, we clearly observe that because of differences in the understandings, explicit rules, and the underlying teleoaffective structures, interactions between the groups studied are difficult. Specific factors, such as linguistic differences, the specific meeting places of the foreign population, their mobility practices, as well as the duration of their stay in the city, make it difficult to create social relations between these two groups. In this sense, the coexistence of different worlds of practices manifests social and spatial segregation and alters the territory and traditional ways of life of the indigenous communities of Cotacachi. Our findings show that the development of high-cost IRM-related GCs around indigenous communities marginalizes indigenous communities' access to land, affecting the development of their agricultural practices and traditional livelihoods. Further, within the group of IRM the level of interaction with local communities varies in relation to language skills and the grade of engagement in transnational practices.

While the analysis of social practices used in this paper is valid to understand the socio-spatial effects related with the segregation of the gated communities in the case of Cotacachi, the inclusion of other types of practices, such as the generation of employment as a result of the construction of new residential complexes, as well as the provision of new services that have not been addressed in this paper could further contribute to a better understanding of this phenomenon and the study of the relationship between these groups. Our findings underline that proximity is not equal to closeness. The embedding in different worlds of practices goes along with a worlding of Cotacachi in a Heideggerian sense as the IRMs do not necessarily live in Cotacachi but create enclaves have more to do with their places of origin than with the city that surrounds these enclaves. Thus, many of the IRMs are not strangers in the meaning of Simmel – distanced but part of the group and taking over specific functions or responsibilities – but aliens that hardly interact with the places and communities around them.

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No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

## **Data availability statement**

The data that supports the findings of this study is available from the corresponding authors on reasonable request.

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## 7 Conclusion

In this concluding chapter, the empirical, methodological and conceptual contributions obtained in the dissertation are presented. Firstly, the main findings of the three empirical chapters are summarized and structured around the four research questions of this dissertation (section 7.1). Secondly, the methodological contributions employed to analyze the spatio-temporal dynamics of IMR and its economic and social effects are discussed in section 7.2. Finally, the dissertation's main conceptual contributions derived from these findings are outlined and connected to current debates in economic geography and migration studies (section 7.3).

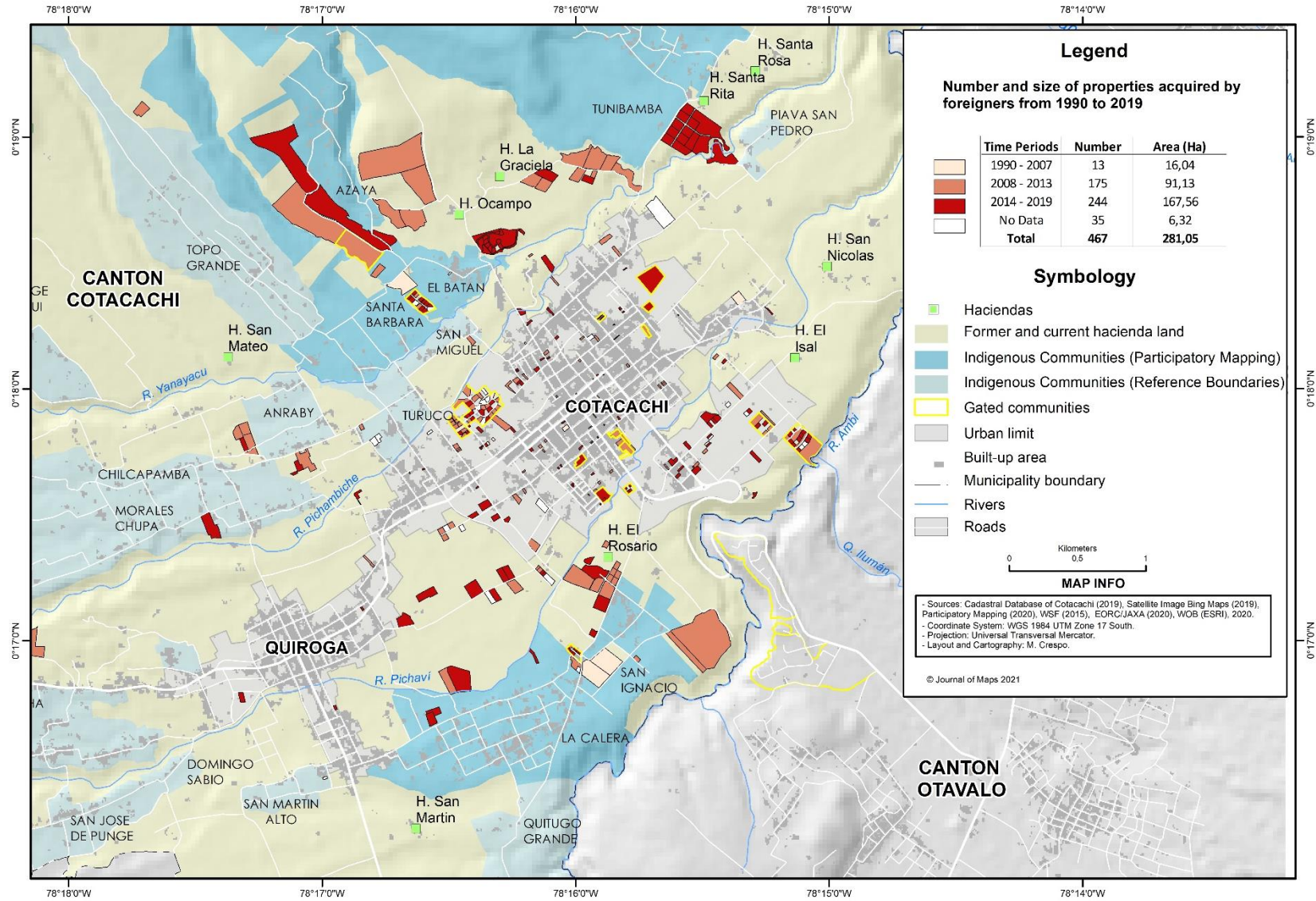
### 7.1 Empirical contribution

#### I. What is the spatio-temporal growth of the IRM in the City of Cotacachi, Ecuador?

*Chapter 4* (paper I) of this dissertation provides empirical insights into the spatio-temporal dynamics of IRM-related real-estate development in the Andean city of Cotacachi, Ecuador. The multi-temporal map based on data triangulation from satellite imagery, participatory mapping, document analysis (e.g. cadastral database) and semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders shows a significant growth in the number of properties acquired by foreign retirees in the last decades. In sum, a total of more than 280 ha of land has been purchased by foreigners within about three decades (1990–2019). If we compare this number with the size of the urban area of the city of Cotacachi (568 ha), the amount of land acquired by foreigners represents about 49% of the urban area. The results show that foreign land ownership in Cotacachi has accelerated since the 2008 financial and economic crisis. This fact is complemented by previous studies that state that the economic crisis in the U.S. caused many people over 60 to lose their jobs and reduced their pensions, leading them to seek lower cost retirement destinations outside their countries of origin (Hayes, 2013: 5).

In addition to this rapid IRM-related real-estate development in the city, Figure 7.1, reveals the spatial distribution of foreign-owned properties. As observed, most of these residential properties are located at the urban fringe of the city and have been built on land that used to belong to the former colonial *haciendas* in direct proximity to several existing indigenous communities (Crespo et al., 2022). In this way, the findings not only support existing studies on IRM-related effects in Cotacachi (Gascón, 2015, 2016) but also enhance them in outlining in detail where these processes of land speculation and depeasantisation have mostly occurred.

# Conclusion



**Figure 7.1.** Spatio-temporal growth of foreign-owned properties from 1990-2019 in Cotacachi, Ecuador



## II. How does IRM-related real estate development affect land prices and indigenous communities' access to land?

Based on the analysis and collection of quantitative and qualitative data, *Chapter 5* (paper II) documented and discussed the economic and socio-spatial effects of IRM on land and urban housing prices and the associated effects on indigenous communities' access to land. The study shows that the in-migration of a significant number of North American retirees, largely motivated by financial and economic factors in their home countries and the low cost of living in Cotacachi, has triggered the emergence of a lucrative real-estate market, resulting in the construction of high-cost gated residential complexes for retirees in different parts of the city, which in turn is generating a series of economic and social repercussions to the indigenous populations, which are summarized below:

### *1) IRM-related effects on land prices and indigenous communities' access to land*

The rapid IRM-related real-estate development has turned land into an object of speculation and investment, increasing its prices. Data obtained through the collection of public deeds of communally purchased land shows that the price per hectare of land in one of the indigenous communities adjacent to IRM-related properties went up from \$8,436 per hectare in 2003 to \$90,000 per hectare in 2018. The results show, that land prices started to increase mainly from 2010 onwards, corresponding to the influx of IRM-related real-estate investments in the city. This process of speculation is marginalizing access to agricultural land in the indigenous communities located near these complexes. Participatory mapping conducted in four indigenous communities indicates that before the influx of IRM-related real-estate investments in Cotacachi in the late 2000s, these communities were able to communally buy land from the haciendas. However, today, this is no longer possible. Before 2010, the four indigenous communities, acquired several plots of land (a total of 34.38 hectares) from haciendas or mestizo landowners. After 2010, the communities have only acquired about 5 hectares of land, even though their wish to acquire land to develop their agricultural activities has been increasing over time. The FGDs support these findings. According to conversations with several members of these indigenous communities, they stated that it is very difficult for them to buy land under the current conditions. The landowners or hacendados prefer to sell the land to foreigners because they pay more money.

Furthermore, IRM-related effects on the indigenous communities are further aggravated by difficult structural and social conditions of this group. First, Cotacachi canton has one of the highest rates of poverty due to unsatisfied basic needs in the province<sup>9</sup>. According to the last census, 72 percent of the population lives in poverty

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<sup>9</sup> The Unsatisfied Basic Needs (UBN) is an indicator used to measure household poverty. In the case of Ecuador, the National Institute of Statistics and Census (INEC) considers five dimensions: i) economic capacity; ii) access to basic education; iii) access to housing; iv) access to basic services and v) overcrowding (INEC, 2010).

(INEC, 2010). Second, there are great inequalities in land distribution in indigenous communities. As discussed in section 3.1.2, which addresses the issue. Large land holdings are owned by a small group of landowning élites or *hacendados*. In contrast, indigenous people are characterized by being mainly land-poor smallholders and develop their agricultural activities on land that is generally not favorable for agriculture. Official data shows that 68.8 percent of the indigenous families own between one and five hectares and 31.2 percent own less than one hectare in PDOT (2015). Additionally, this situation has been aggravated by the cultural practice of land inheritance: In Ecuadorian indigenous communities, parents divide their land among their children, for example, when they marry. However, with the process of family subdivision by inheritance, these small properties become ever smaller, resulting in a strong process of territorial fragmentation into so-called *minifundios*. Forcing them in many cases to abandon their traditional agricultural activities and to seek new forms of income generation in the cities. All these factors, together with the fast-growing IRM-related real-estate boom, highlight the enormous challenges and the difficult situation that many of the indigenous communities in Cotacachi are facing regarding land access and the development of their agricultural practices.

## 2) IRM-related effects on housing prices

At first glance, IRM-related real-estate investments appear not to affect housing prices in the urban area of Cotacachi, as the developments for foreign retired citizens are built mostly on the agricultural land of former colonial haciendas on the periphery. However, the in-migration of a considerable number of North American retirees has also affected the real-estate market in some parts of the urban area, where a number of single-family houses and apartments in gated condominiums have been built.

It is clear that North American retirees differ from Cotacachi's residential population in terms of income, lifestyle, and housing preferences. The new residents demand housing with more expensive features. This results in the emergence of a new segment in the real-estate market, with significantly higher prices. The results, show that the construction of these high-value private developments directly affects urban housing prices in Cotacachi. Foreign-owned properties have the highest value in the real-estate market and are, on average, 35% more expensive than the properties aimed at the local Cotacachi (mestizo) population. These changes can be interpreted with Harvey's theory of a spatial fix, whereby the migrants' seek to cure their desire for a decent lifestyle, which is no longer possible in their place of origin, by moving to another space (Harvey, 2001). Yet their spatial fix results in collateral side effects for deprived population groups in Cotacachi.

### **III. To what extent are colonial patterns of land control by landowning élites connected the emerging IRM real-estate market?**

The highly uneven distribution of land tenure in Cotacachi, which is colonially inherited is crucial for understanding how the current IRM-related real-estate development operates and affects indigenous communities' access to land. *Chapter 5* (paper II) of this dissertation documents the historical process of land distribution in Cotacachi from colonial times to the recent IRM-related real-estate market and demonstrates how land tenure has been marked by strong inequalities. Large extensions of land are owned by a small group of landowning elites (hacendados), while indigenous people are mainly land-poor smallholders and develop their agricultural activities on land that is generally not favorable for agriculture. The study sheds light on how this group of landowning elites are “active agents” in promoting the sale of agricultural land and the construction of different residential projects for North American retirees. The graphic data, as well as the interviews with stakeholders, illustrate how these large colonial properties have been divided up and sold to local and international real-estate companies in order to build gated communities (GCs). However, as it is to be expected in these cases, the influx of a substantial number of relatively affluent North American retirees has inspired other local actors to participate in the real-estate market. Owners of small-medium plots (mainly of mestizo origin) have also started to sell land to real-estate companies. Thus, today we can observe a great variety of IRM-related residential projects ranging from single-family houses, townhouses, and apartments to the most luxurious homes in private gated communities throughout the city.

Consequently, the benefits and cost of the IRM real-estate market in Cotacachi are highly unevenly distributed between different social groups. While land-rich élites (hacendados) – together with small-medium landowners (mainly of mestizo origin) gain directly – by selling and promoting land – landless and land-poor indigenous communities are threatened by this process. Hence, IRM-oriented real-estate development – paired with highly uneven postcolonial distribution of land – has unequal socio-spatial effects in the indigenous people and deepens existing inequalities.

### **IV. How does the development of gated communities for retirement migrants affect social practices of indigenous communities and which barriers shape the social interactions between these two groups?**

Focusing on the analysis of five observable social practices like: (1) Access to Gated Communities; (2) Communication between gated and non-gated residents; (3) Socialisation practices and venues of socialization; (4) Charity work benefiting the outside poor communities and; (5) Involvement of foreign retirees in socio-cultural practices carried out by indigenous communities, *Chapter 6* (paper III) provides empirical evidence for understanding the socio-spatial effects related to IRM and segregation in indigenous communities in Cotacachi.

The results show that the level to which retirement migrants socialize with indigenous communities is scarce and is fractured by a series of elements such as: i) the lifestyle of the migrants; ii) language barriers; and iii) practices related to transnational mobility and the time foreigners spend in the city. In Schatzki's terms this relates mainly to the understandings and teleoaffective structures of the practices analysed (Schatzki, 1996; 99).

The study shows that the influx of a new foreign population to the city brings with it a series of social practices, lifestyles and conceptions of space that differ completely from the ways of life of the indigenous peoples. On the one hand, the development of gated communities for foreign retirees surrounding indigenous communities reveals forms of privatization of space that generate physical barriers. On the other hand, symbolic barriers, such as language differences, specific meeting places of the foreign population, their transnational relocation practices, as well as the length of their stay in the city hinder the generation of social interactions between these two different groups. While the analysis of these social practices used in this dissertation is valid to understand the socio-spatial effects related with the segregation of the gated communities in the case of Cotacachi, the inclusion of other types of practices such as the generation of employment as a result of the construction of new residential complexes, as well as the provision of new services that have not been addressed could further contribute to a better understanding of this phenomenon and the study of the social relationship between these groups.

## **7.2 Methodological contribution**

The study of the IRM implies a series of methodological challenges. As several scientists interested in the analysis of this topic have pointed out, the lack of information related to IRM and the limitations of data sources make it complex to track this phenomenon (O'Reilly, 2000; King et al., 2000; Casado Díaz & Rodríguez Rodríguez, 2002). In order to address these challenges, this dissertation employed an innovative mixed-methods that combined the use of quantitative techniques such as satellite image analysis, review of cadastral databases, data collection on real estate prices with qualitative methods from the social sciences, such as participatory mapping workshops, focus group discussions (FGDs) and semi-structured interviews with stakeholders.

The use of high-resolution satellite data combined with the analysis of cadastral databases proved to be beneficial to map the spatial distribution and temporal growth of foreign-owned properties in the city of Cotacachi. For these purpose, free access high-resolution satellite imagery from the Bing Maps platform were used to identify the location of large residential complexes in the study area, while the Cadastral database of the Municipality provided detailed information about these properties, such as area, owners' nationality, year of construction, etc. The use of these variables allowed to identify the number of properties acquired by foreign retirees in the city over a period

of almost 30 years (1990-2019) and answering the research question I of this dissertation. On the other hand, to investigate the economic effects of IRM-related real-estate development on agricultural land prices and housing prices in the urban area (Research Question II), public deeds from the Cotacachi Property Registry were collected on indigenous communal lands, while for housing prices in the urban area, a total of 180 properties were analysed and collected over a period of 1 year and 7 months through two real-estate web portals. It is necessary to mention here that both processes described above required intensive and time-consuming data collection, editing, validation and analysis. However, both quantitative methodological approaches proved to be relatively easy to operate and can be replicable in other data-lacking contexts. In this sense, this innovative approach allowed the development of new methodological perspectives that improved knowledge on the socio-spatial and economic dynamics of IRM.

While, as noted above, the use of open-access satellite imagery together with the analysis of cadastral and real-estate market databases provides important empirical insights into the spatial distribution of IRM-related real-estate development over time, as well as its economic effects on agricultural land and housing prices, only very limited conclusions on the implications of IRM at the social level (e.g., in relation to indigenous communities' access to land, the highly uneven land tenure structure in Cotacachi and its relation to the recent real-estate market, the barriers affecting social integration between foreign and indigenous residents) could be drawn. In this sense, the combination of quantitative analysis techniques with qualitative field research shed new light on ongoing effects of IRM. Moreover, as other studies have shown, the study of the changes in residential mobility of the migrant population based solely on quantitative terms is inadequate (Huete et al., 2013).

To develop a multidimensional understanding of the diverse effects of IRM in the social sphere. This dissertation also employed qualitative social science techniques such as: participatory mapping workshops (PMWs), focus group discussions (FGDs) and semi-structured interviews with local stakeholders. PMWs conducted in four indigenous communities proved to be a powerful tool to integrate local knowledge of indigenous populations and to understand territorial conflicts related to land access and the emerging IRM-related real-estate market. The application of this technique made it possible to map aspects related to land tenure, identify the actors involved in the process, and graphically locate agricultural land sold to foreign citizens. While FGDs, allowed to go deeper into complex social issues on aspects related to the colonial control of land by the landowning élites, the problems of indigenous communities' access to land due to the expanding real-estate market (Research Questions II and III), as well as to look further into what are the cultural elements or barriers that hinder social interaction. Finally, the semi-structured interviews were particularly useful for identifying the different opinions of the actors involved in this process. Although this dissertation has largely focused on analyzing the effects of IRM on the local indigenous population, the interviews with the retired international population were of

significant help in contrasting the different points of view, especially on issues related to the integration of this group with the local community (Research Questions IV of this dissertation).

Furthermore, while carrying out research for this dissertation, findings from quantitative research particularly helped to support future research procedures. For example, the results obtained from the map on the spatial distribution of foreign owned-properties, presented in *Chapter 4* were subsequently used as input for comparisons with real-estate market data in *Chapter 5*. In this way, it was possible to examine property prices according to the real-estate market within foreign residential complexes and properties outside of them. Similarly, the interviews and conversations held with the indigenous communities and the foreign population in the first fieldwork led to the formulation of new research questions, like those concerning to the physical or cultural barriers that influence social interaction between these two groups, discussed in *Chapter 6* of this dissertation.

For these reasons, by combining different methodological approaches, this dissertation makes an academic contribution to better understand the different impacts related to the emerging form of spatial mobility of older people known as IRM. This includes in particular, the representation of spatial-temporal dynamics on IRM-related real-estate development, so far little or not addressed in the existing literature. In this sense, future empirical studies on IRM transformations may benefit from the adoption of this type of multi-temporal approaches developed in this dissertation.

### **7.3 Conceptual contribution**

From a conceptual point of view, the study of the IRM is of vital importance within the debates of Economic Geography in order to understand the relationship between the current migratory processes of older people, the globalizing phenomenon of the land market and its growing real-estate investment. The influx of a significant number of North American migrants, largely motivated by financial and economic factors in their countries of origin and the low cost of living in the city of Cotacachi, represents one of the most expressive manifestations of these globalizing processes and allows us to understand that we are facing another type of mobility whose direction (North-South) is opposite to that of most international migratory flows (Lizárraga Morales, 2008), which implies multiple links to and from the local space. Changes in transport and new communication technologies has made it possible to communicate and to travel more rapidly, and to own land and houses in distant, exotic destinations (Zoomers, 2010). In this context, economic globalization influences the real-estate market and produces “a massive increase in foreign and domestic investment in luxury commercial and residential construction” (Sassen, 1991).

This dissertation, from a critical geography perspective, has demonstrated how IRM-related translational real-estate investment, coupled with local socio-structural factors like highly uneven postcolonial land distribution, results in increased inequalities in the receiving population. While some groups gain directly – by selling and promoting land – and some indirectly – e.g., from new business or employment opportunities – others' livelihoods are threatened by this process. The empirical evidence obtained throughout this research demonstrated that the development of high-cost residential complexes for North American retirees in direct proximity to indigenous communities does not constitute an instrument of local economic development as such, but on the contrary, as we have seen, generates a series of complex territorial conflicts that affect the livelihoods of these populations. In this context, these changes can be interpreted with Harvey's theory of a spatial fix, whereby the migrants' seek to cure their desire for a decent lifestyle, which is no longer possible in their place of origin, by moving to another space (Harvey, 2001). Yet their spatial fix results in collateral side effects for deprived population groups in Cotacachi.

Similarly, the IRM has turned Cotacachi into a transnational space: a place where different ethnic and social groups coexist in the same territory, including indigenous people, mestizos and foreigners. These are spaces where different social relations are produced and unequal power relations are exercised. In other words, we are in the presence of a territory where borders are blurred and new cultures intermingle. As Haesbaert (2013) would mention, a transterritorial space, "perhaps more appropriate to indicate the overlapping, imbrication and joint coexistence of territories" (Haesbaert, 2013: 38).

In sum, this dissertation contributes to a better understanding of the IRM-related economic and socio-spatial effects that are rooted in colonial legacies of highly uneven distribution of land in Ecuador, as in other parts of the Global South. This study has focused on three dimensions: the spatio-temporal growth of foreign-owned properties, the impact on land prices and indigenous communities' access to land, and socio-spatial segregation.

However, empirical insights for the case of the Andean city of Cotacachi suggest that more academic work is needed to better understand the complex IRM effects. Further geographic expansion of IRM-related real-estate development could bring some risks to the receiving communities: the construction of new residential projects, could cause environmental damage, especially related to water scarcity, high housing prices in the urban area could generate processes of urban gentrification, and so on. In addition, further research is needed to analyze the strategies that indigenous populations employ to cope with the lack of access to agricultural land due to the urbanization process, market dominance by transnational real estate companies, and issues of public policy and land regulation. These aspects are beyond the scope of this dissertation, but future research may address them in more detail.

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## Appendix

### Appendix A: Supplementary material

#### Lists of interviews, focus group discussions and participatory mapping workshops

<b>ID</b>	<b>Method</b>	<b>Participant/ Group</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Date</b>
1	FGDs	Santa Barbara Community	Santa Bárbara Community	16.05.2022
2	FGDs	El Batán Community	El Batán Community	17.05.2022
3	FGDs	Azaya Community	Azaya Community	17.05.2022
4	FGDs	San Pedro Community	San Pedro Community	24.05.2022
1	Participatory mapping workshops	Santa Barbara Community	Santa Bárbara Community	20.10.2020
2	Participatory mapping workshops	El Batán Community	El Batán Community	19.10.2020
3	Participatory mapping workshops	Azaya Community	Azaya Community	20.10.2020
4	Participatory mapping workshops	San Pedro Community	San Pedro Community	24.10.2020
1	Interview	Foreign Citizen (Alli)	Cotacachi	20.10.2020
2	Interview	Retired foreign citizen (Roy Wiffin) - USA	Cotacachi	02.05.2022
3	Interview	Retired foreign citizen (Carlton Higginbotham) - USA	Cotacachi	03.05.2022
4	Interview	Retired foreign citizen (Jo Merriam) - USA	Cotacachi	05.05.2022
5	Interview	Retired foreign citizen (Christina März) - GER	Cotacachi	05.05.2022
6	Interview	Retired foreign citizen (Steve Donoso) - USA	Cotacachi	06.05.2022
7	Interview	Retired foreign citizen (Delia Marie Dale) - USA	Cotacachi	10.05.2022
8	Interview	Retired foreign citizen (Dorothy) - USA	Cotacachi	10.05.2022
9	Interview	Retired foreign citizen (Molly)	Cotacachi	20.05.2022
10	Interview	Retired foreign citizen (SN)	Cotacachi	24.05.2022
11	Interview	Retired foreign citizen (Teresa)	Cotacachi	29.05.2022
12	Interview	Retired foreign citizen (Johanna)	Cotacachi	30.05.2022
13	Interview	Retired foreign citizen (9)	Cotacachi	24.05.2022

14	Interview	Retired foreign citizen (10)	Cotacachi	26.05.2022
15	Interview	Retired foreign citizen (11)	Cotacachi	30.05.2022
16	Interview	Real estate agent - Cotacachi Homes	Cotacachi	04.05.2020
17	Interview	Real estate agent - Santana Real Estate	Cotacachi	05.05.2020
18	Interview	Real estate agent -REMAX	Quito	20.05.2020
19	Interview	President of the Union of Peasant and Indigenous Organizations of Cotacachi (UNORCAC)	Cotacachi	20.10.2020
20	Interview	Developers of residential projects	Cotacachi	15.05.2020
21	Interview	Developers of residential projects	Cotacachi	17.05.2020
22	Interview	Manager of Hacienda Ocampo	Cotacachi	25.11.2020
23	Interview	Director of the Planning Department of the Municipality of Cotacachi	Municipio de Cotacachi	30.05.2022
24	Interview	Head of Appraisals and Cadastre of the Municipality of Cotacachi	Municipio de Cotacachi	18.05.2020
25	Interview	Property Registrar of the Municipality of Cotacachi	Municipio de Cotacachi	29.10.2020
26	Interview	President of the Women's Central Committee UNORCAC	Cotacachi	30.10.2020
27	Interview	Director of Tourism of the Municipality of Cotacachi	Municipio de Cotacachi	30.10.2020
28	Interview	President of the Indigenous Community El Batán	El Batán Community	08.11.2020
29	Interview	Indigenous Woman Community of Santa Barbara	Santa Bárbara Community	10.11.2020
30	Interview	President of the Indigenous Community Santa Bárbara	Santa Bárbara Community	10.11.2020
31	Interview	Indigenous resident	Azaya Community	10.05.2022
32	Interview	Indigenous resident	Azaya Community	12.05.2022
33	Interview	Indigenous resident	San Pedro Community	12.05.2022
34	Interview	Indigenous resident	San Pedro Community	17.05.2022
35	Interview	Urban resident (mestizo population)	Cotacachi	10.05.2022
36	Interview	Urban resident (mestizo population)	Cotacachi	12.05.2022
37	Interview	Urban resident (mestizo population)	Cotacachi	14.05.2022
38	Interview	Urban resident (mestizo population)	Cotacachi	14.05.2022
39	Interview	Urban resident (mestizo population)	Cotacachi	17.05.2022
40	Interview	Urban resident (mestizo population)	Cotacachi	10.05.2022



**Semi-structured interview guideline for key informants**

**1) Local Authorities (Mayor, Director of Planning, Director of Tourism, Others)**

**Arrival of Foreigners**

1. Can you tell me, in what year did the first foreigners arrive in Cotacachi and why did this process take place?
2. Do you know how many foreigners live here today and from which countries they are mostly from?
3. Does the municipality have any kind of register or census of foreigners?

**Tourism Promotion**

4. Has the municipality carried out any type of tourism promotion or advertising campaign to attract foreign tourists to the canton?
5. How do foreigners know or inform about Cotacachi?

**Real Estate Boom - Control & Regulations**

6. As a result of the arrival of foreigners, there has been a significant growth in real estate, as well as in land sales especially in indigenous communities. What do you think about this? How is the municipality controlling this process? Is there any type of ordinance, norm or law from the municipality that regulates the sale of agricultural land to foreigners?
7. Do you know the number of residential complexes for foreigners that exist in Cotacachi and where are they located?
8. Do you know who are the people who sell mainly the land (real estate agents, indigenous people, landowners, individuals, others)?

**Speculation & Prices**

9. Do you think that the arrival of foreigners has influenced the rise in land prices? Can you give me please some examples?
10. Can you tell me what the municipality is doing to control speculation process?
11. Do you think that the high cost of real estate, as well as the lack of vacant land in the city has led to the development of new spaces in peripheral areas?

**Socio-Economic Impacts**

12. What kind of impacts (positive or negative) do you think the arrival of foreigners has brought to the canton (list each change (+/-) you have mentioned)? Please explain.
13. On the other hand, many of these properties are located in rural areas, can you tell me how the indigenous communities have reacted to this issue? Do they see it in a positive or negative way? Have there been any impacts? What has the municipality done about it?

## 2) Real Estate Agents

1. Can you tell me, what kind of services your company offers? (sale of homes, sale of land, rental houses, rental condos, construction of new houses, others)
2. Can you tell me where most of your customers are from? Are they nationals or foreigners?
3. In the case of foreigners, can you tell me what countries they are from, what is their average age, what do these people do?
4. Do you know, through which information media foreigners get informed about the properties you offer? (Websites, magazines, or through other expats, etc)
5. Can you tell me, if the majority of foreigners prefer to buy or rent their properties?
6. Can you tell me if foreigners buy the properties to live for a long time (retirement) or buy them as an investment or business opportunity?
7. In the case of a purchase, can you tell me how you carry out the process? Is it done in person or virtually? How do they deal with the matter of language? Do you have translators?
8. Which types of properties do foreigners prefer to buy/lease? (condos, family homes, gated communities, others) What type of features should these properties have, for example: size, location, security, furnishings, services, etc.
9. Can you tell me what is the average price that foreigners are willing to pay for a property? What do they think about the price they pay, do they agree?
10. Do you know what is the average income of foreigners?
11. Can you tell me where most of the foreigners' properties are located? (within urban or rural areas)
12. Do you think that property prices have increased due to the arrival of foreigners? Can you give me some examples?
13. Do you know if there have been any resale or multi-transaction processes?
14. Do you consider that there has been a construction boom? If so, in which year did this phenomenon begin? Who is in charge of building the new homes?
15. Do you know how many real estate offices there are currently in Cotacachi? Can you tell me where the majority of the owners are from? Are they national or foreign?
16. Do you think that property sales have increased or decreased over the years, can you tell me about this process?
17. Does your company have records of the number of properties you have sold to foreigners in recent years? Can I have access to this information?

### 3) Local Authorities (Property register / Department of Cadastres)

#### Land Purchase and Sale Process

1. Do you know the number of properties that have been purchased by foreigners in Cotacachi? Do you have any records? (Domain Transfers, Purchase/Sale Contract)
2. Do you know who are the people who sell the land? (indigenous peoples, landowners, particulars, others?)
3. Through whom is the transaction carried out (real estate agencies, brokers, etc.) or is it negotiated directly with the interested parties?
4. Do you know the number of hectares of land that have been sold to foreigners?
5. What is the current price of a hectare of land? And what was the price before the arrival of the foreigners?
6. What was the use of the land that was sold? (agricultural, residential, forest, unused, others)
7. What kind of use has been given to the land that was sold to the foreigners? (Construction of houses, private residences, others.)
8. Do you know if communal land has been sold? If so, can you explain to me how this process happened? (to whom was it sold, in what year, to what amount, what area, etc.)
9. Do you consider that there is land available in the communities? In whose hands is the land available?
10. What changes have you observed after the arrival of the foreigners to Cotacachi? In your opinion, are these changes positive or negative?
11. Who do you think are the most affected by the sale of land? Why?
12. Who do you think benefits most from the sale of land? Why?
13. Do you think that the new residences for foreigners imply the construction of new services for the municipality? (For example: construction of new roads, provision of drinking water, electricity, garbage collection, etc.)

### 4) Community Members, Indigenous Leaders

#### Arrival of foreign retirees

1. What changes have you observed after the arrival of the foreign retirees in the community?
2. In your opinion, are these changes positive or negative (list each change (+/-) you have mentioned)? Please, explain.

#### Land Prices

3. What is the current price of a hectare of land? And what was the price before the arrival of the foreigners?
4. Have you noticed an increase in land prices?
5. Is it possible for you to buy land at the current price? Why?
6. Who sells the land? (real estate, landowner, others)
7. Do you consider that there is land available in the community? In whose hands is the land available (Landowners)?
8. What mechanisms have you developed to purchase land at this time? (access to loans, collective purchase, others forms)

**Employment & Improvements**

9. Do you think that the construction of residences for foreigners has generated sources of work within the community? What kind of work? Where are the people employed from? (local or from outside Cotacachi)
10. Have you seen some improvements within the community after the arrival of the foreigners (e.g. construction of new roads, infrastructure, provision of drinking water, electricity, garbage collection, etc.)?
11. Do you know if there have been problems with access to other services? (For example: roadblocks, use of water sources, etc.)

**Integration and Socio-Spatial Segregation**

12. How is your relationship with your new neighbors, do they get along well or have there been any problems or conflicts?
13. Could you tell me, if foreigners are integrated into your community? Do they participate in the local activities that the community organizes? Do they attend the festivities or religious celebrations? Or do they perform any type of social or voluntary activity within the community?
14. Do you have access to the foreign properties?
15. Could you tell me, if the plots where the foreign complexes are constructed were used by the community in the past? For what type of agricultural activities were used?
16. How do you communicate with the foreigners? Do they speak Spanish or only English?
17. Do you know of any cases of community members who have had to abandon or migrate out of the community due to lack of land? Where did these people go? What type of activity are they now engaged in?

**Local Strategies**

18. Can you tell me, how the community has organized itself to deal with the land sales process?
19. Are there any ordinances or internal regulations within the community that control the sale of land?
20. What type of strategies or mechanisms has the community developed to purchase land under current conditions (access to loans, collective purchase, other forms)?
21. Have participatory meetings been held to address this issue? (such as community assemblies, workshops, etc)
22. Does the municipality participate in these processes or offer any type of assistance or accompaniment?

## 5) Foreign Retirees

### Migration (General Aspects)

1. Could you tell me where are you from?
2. Could you tell me what were the reasons you decided to leave your country? (economic reasons, political reasons, health, retirement).
3. Could you tell me what is your occupation?
4. How long have you been living in Cotacachi?

### Motivation Factors

5. Could you tell me what were the main factors that motivated you to move to Cotacachi? (Weather, Low living costs, Currency (\$USD), Housing prices, etc.)

### International Promotion

6. By which means did you get to know or hear about Cotacachi? (Articles in international magazines, websites, Friends and family members, etc.)

### Property Characteristics

7. Could you tell me if you lease or buy a property?
8. What kind of property do you live in? (Private House, Condo Apartments, Gated Communities, others)
9. In your case, through whom did you buy or rent your property? (Real Estate Agencies, Landowners, Friends, Locals, Others)
10. Is your property located near to indigenous community?

### Prices & Transaction

11. How much did you pay for your property?
12. What do you think about the prices you paid?

### Integration Vs Social Spatial Segregation

13. Do only foreigners live in your residential complex or also locals? From which countries do your neighbors come from?
14. Does your property have any type of security such as walls, electric fences, cameras, guards, etc.?
15. Is there restricted access for those who do not live in the residential community?
16. ¿ Are there any rules or regulations within the residential community that must be complied with, and could you please explain?
17. Could you tell me how is your relationship with the indigenous peoples, do you get along well or have there been any problems?
18. Do you participate or get involved in any kind of activity that the community organizes?
19. Could you tell me what kind of activities you have done to integrate with the indigenous communities?
20. How do you communicate with them? Do they speak Spanish?
21. Have you had any kind of conflict with members of the indigenous communities? Could you tell me in detail what happened and how you resolved it?

### Organization

22. How has the foreign community organized itself? Is there an association of foreign residents in Cotacachi?

## **Focus Group Discussion Guideline**

### **Main Objective:**

- To gain in-depth knowledge of indigenous communities' opinions on the economic, social and spatial effects of IRM-related real estate development.

### **Activities:**

- Presentation of the research and the objectives of the workshop.
- Brief presentation of each participant (name, role in the community, what do they do for living)

**Participating communities:** Santa Bárbara, El Batán, Azaya and San Pedro.

**Materials:** FGDs Guideline, participant registration sheets, flipcharts, markers, cardboards, post-its, tape.

## **Subjects**

### **Migration - Arrival of foreigners**

1. Can you tell me, in which year did the foreigners arrive in your community?
2. Do you know how many foreigners live in your community?
3. Do you know the number of residential complexes or houses of foreigners within your community?
4. What changes have you observed after the arrival of the foreigners in the community?
5. In your opinion, are these changes positive or negative (list each change (+/-) you have mentioned)? Please, explain.

### **Land Access and Tenure**

1. Could you tell me how the community had access to this land? Who owned this land before? (landowners/hacendados or the government)
2. Was this a purchase process or was it given as part of the Agrarian Reform?
3. Currently, in whose hands is the land concentrated? Who are the owners of the large properties?
4. Is your land owned or leased?
5. Do you have a land title? (It is either communal or individual title).

### **Land Purchase and Sale Process**

6. Do you know who are the people who sell the land? (indigenous peoples, landowners, individuals, others)

7. What do you think are the factors that motivate them/you to sell the land? (improved income, business, debts, etc.)
8. Who are the buyers of the land? (foreigners, locals, real estate agencies, others)
9. Where are the buyers from?
10. Through whom is the transaction carried out (real estate agencies, brokers, etc.) or is it negotiated directly with the interested party?
11. Do you know the number of hectares of land that have been sold in the community?
12. What was the use of the land that was sold? (agricultural, residential, forest, unused, others)
13. What kind of use has been given to the land that was sold to the foreigners? (Construction of houses, private residences, others.)
14. Is the land sold private or communal?
15. Do you know if communal land has been sold? If so, can you explain to me how this process happened? (to whom was it sold, in what year, to what amount, what area, etc.)
16. In the case of communal land, how was the decision made for the sale? Was there a vote in the community? Was the decision unanimous or was it decided by a small group?

#### **Community organization – Institutional**

17. How has the community organized itself to deal with the process of buying/selling land?
18. Have participatory meetings been held to address this issue? (such as community assemblies, workshops, etc)
19. Does the municipality participate in these processes or offer any type of assistance or accompaniment?

#### **Legal Aspects**

20. Is there any type of ordinance, norm or law by the municipality that regulates the sale of land in Cotacachi?
21. And within the community, do you have any type of internal code/norm that regulates the sale of communal land?

#### **Land Speculation**

22. What is the current price of a hectare of land? And what was the price before the arrival of the foreigners?
23. How have you been affected by the rise in land prices? Is it possible for you to buy land at the current price? Why?
24. What mechanisms have you developed to purchase land at this time? (access to loans, collective purchase, others forms)
25. Do you consider that there is land available in the community? In whose hands is the land available?

### **Economic, social and cultural impacts**

26. How have you been affected by the rise in land prices?
27. What changes have you observed after the arrival of the foreigners in the community?
28. In your opinion, are these changes positive or negative (list each change (+/-) you have mentioned)? Please, explain.
29. Who do you think are the most affected by the sale of land? Why?
30. Who do you think benefits most from the sale of land? Why?
31. Do you think that the construction of residences for foreigners has generated sources of work within the community? What kind of work? Where are the people employed from? (local or from outside Cotacachi)
32. Some improvement has been seen within the community after the arrival of the foreigners (e.g. construction of new roads, access to health, infrastructure, provision of drinking water, electricity, garbage collection, etc.)
33. Do you know if there have been problems with access to other services? (For example: roadblocks, use of water sources, etc.)
34. Do you know of any cases of community members who have had to abandon their agricultural activities due to lack of land? What type of activity are they now engaged in?
35. Do you know of cases of people who have had to leave or migrate out of the community due to lack of land? Where did these people go?

### **Socio-Spatial Segregation**

36. Do you have access to these residences or are they gated communities where entry is not allowed?
37. Can you tell me, if foreigners are integrated into your community? Do they participate in the activities that the community organizes? Do they attend the festivities or religious celebrations?
38. How is your relationship with them, do they get along well or have there been any problems? Please explain
39. How do you communicate? Do they speak Spanish or only English?

## **Participatory mapping workshop guidelines**

### **Objetives:**

- To identify graphically where are located the properties acquired by foreign retirees, as well as communal territories and private haciendas.
- To identify the "socio-spatial" conflicts that are occurring due to land sale processes.
- To Identify the different actors involved in the process of land purchase - sale.

### **Activities:**

- Presentation of the research and the objectives of the participatory mapping workshops.



- Brief presentation of each participant (name, role in the community, what do they do for living)

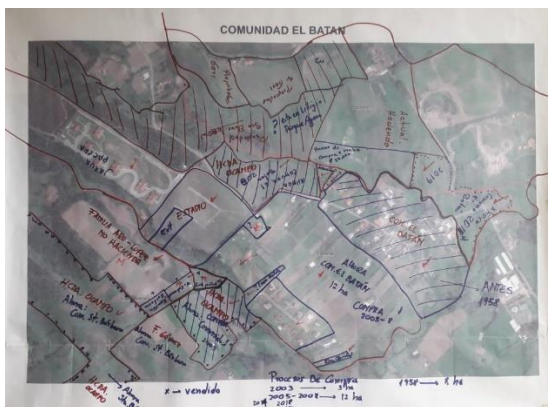
**Participating communities:** Santa Bárbara, El Batán, Azaya and San Pedro.

**Materials:** Satellite images or high-resolution orthophotos of the study areas, markers, 'post-its', tape.

### Location of foreign residences and territorial conflicts

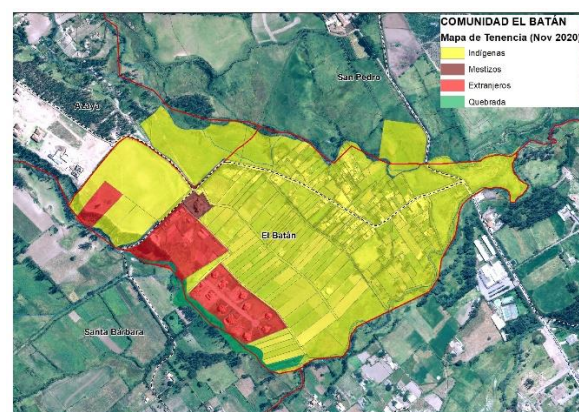
1. Can you tell me, what are the boundaries of the community?
2. Can you tell me where the main road is, the school, the church, your house, the river, the mountain, etc.? (Main geographical elements in the community)
3. Can you tell me where are located the communal territories, the private lands?
4. Can you graph where are the cultivation areas, the forest, the degraded areas, etc.?
5. Can you tell me where the residences for foreigners are located?

### Land tenure maps of indigenous communities and the location of foreign properties



Map of El Batán Community

**Source:** Participatory Mapping Workshops  
October 2020.

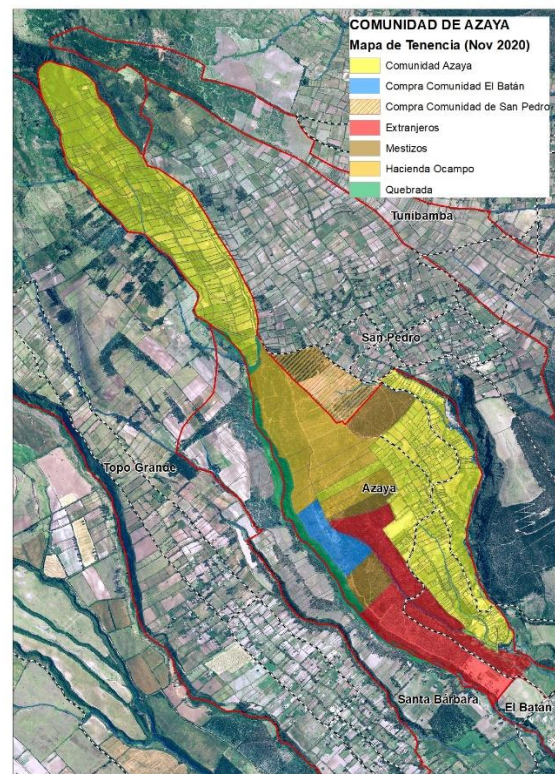


Map of El Batán Community

**Source:** Processed in ArcGis.  
November 2020.



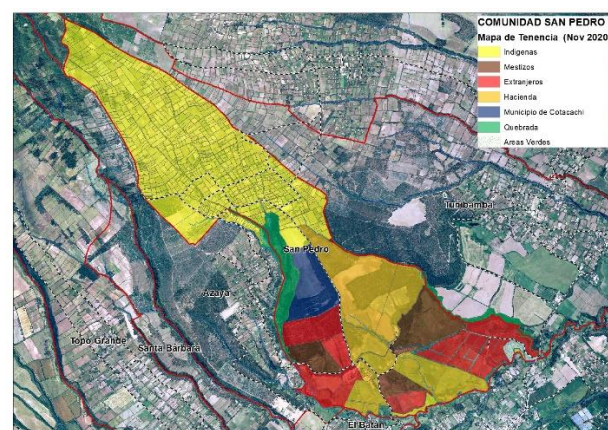
Map of Azaya Community  
**Source:** Participatory Mapping Workshops  
 October 2020.



Map of Azaya Community  
**Source:** Processed in ArcGIS.  
 November 2020.



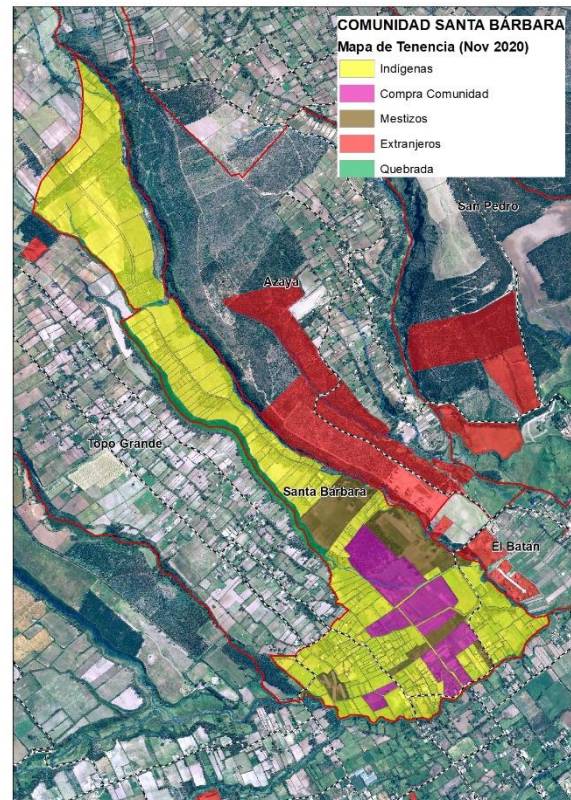
Map of San Pedro Community  
**Source:** Participatory Mapping Workshops  
 October 2020.



Map of San Pedro Community  
**Source:** Processed in ArcGIS.  
 November 2020.



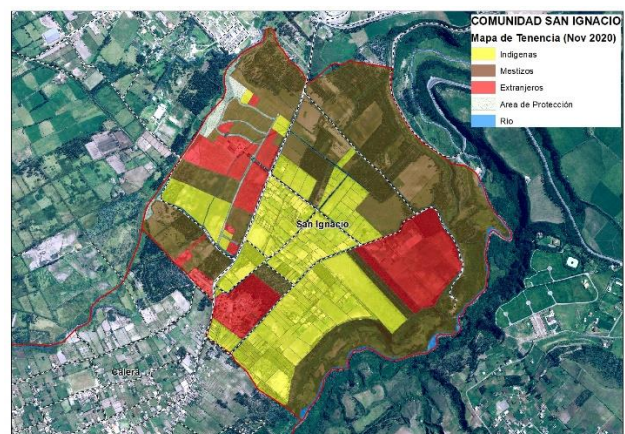
Map of Santa Bárbara Community  
**Source:** Participatory Mapping Workshops  
 November 2020.



Map of Santa Bárbara Community  
**Source:** Processed in ArcGis.  
 November 2020.



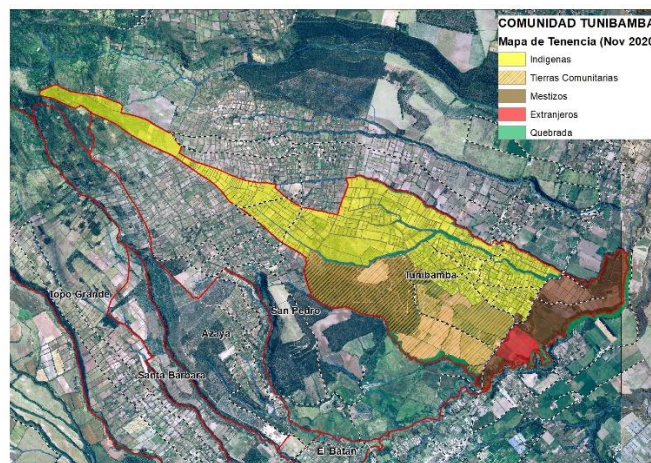
Map of San Ignacio Community  
**Source:** Participatory Mapping  
 Workshops November 2020.



Map of San Ignacio Community  
**Source:** Processed in ArcGis.  
 November 2020.



Map of Tunibamba Community  
**Source:** Participatory Mapping Workshops November 2020.



Map of Tunibamba Community  
**Source:** Processed in ArcGIS. November 2020.

## Appendix B: Own Contribution

The three papers in this dissertation were co-authored by Peter Dannenberg, Alexander Follmann and Carsten Butsch (*University of Cologne, Germany*).

While the design and conception of each article were discussed in detail with my co-authors, most of the writing and publication work was done by me and documented through my condition as principal author. Furthermore, the data used in the three articles have been collected, processed and analyzed exclusively by me during the 4 years of research and the two consecutive fieldwork phases in the city of Cotacachi, Ecuador. Besides the joint design and conception, papers I and II have been reviewed by anonymous reviewers during the publication process. The third paper has not yet been published, but has been discussed in detail in different academic dialogue spaces, such as conferences/workshops, both inside and outside Germany. Among them the Working Group Berlin 2023, the PhD colloquium on environmentally oriented economic geography (UMWIG) in Luxembourg in 2022 and the III National Geography Congress of Ecuador in 2023.

## Appendix C: Eigenständigkeitserklärung

### Erklärung zur Dissertation


gemäß der Promotionsordnung vom 12. März 2020

„Hiermit versichere ich an Eides statt, dass ich die vorliegende Dissertation selbstständig und ohne die Benutzung anderer als der angegebenen Hilfsmittel und Literatur angefertigt habe. Alle Stellen, die wörtlich oder sinngemäß aus veröffentlichten und nicht veröffentlichten Werken dem Wortlaut oder dem Sinn nach entnommen wurden, sind als solche kenntlich gemacht. Ich versichere an Eides statt, dass diese Dissertation noch keiner anderen Fakultät oder Universität zur Prüfung vorgelegen hat; dass sie - abgesehen von unten angegebenen Teilpublikationen und eingebundenen Artikeln und Manuskripten - noch nicht veröffentlicht worden ist sowie, dass ich eine Veröffentlichung der Dissertation vor Abschluss der Promotion nicht ohne Genehmigung des Promotionsausschusses vornehmen werde. Die Bestimmungen dieser Ordnung sind mir bekannt. Darüber hinaus erkläre ich hiermit, dass ich die Ordnung zur Sicherung guter wissenschaftlicher Praxis und zum Umgang mit wissenschaftlichem Fehlverhalten der Universität zu Köln gelesen und sie bei der Durchführung der Dissertation zugrundeliegenden Arbeiten und der schriftlich verfassten Dissertation beachtet habe und verpflichte mich hiermit, die dort genannten Vorgaben bei allen wissenschaftlichen Tätigkeiten zu beachten und umzusetzen. Ich versichere, dass die eingereichte elektronische Fassung der eingereichten Druckfassung vollständig entspricht.“

Teilpublikationen:

- Crespo, M., Follmann, A., Butsch, C., & Dannenberg, P. (2022). International Retirement Migration: Mapping the spatio-temporal growth of foreign-owned properties in Cotacachi, Ecuador. *Journal of Maps*, 18(1), 53-60.
- Crespo, M., Follmann, A., Butsch, C., & Dannenberg, P. (2023). The Effects of International Retirement Migration on Indigenous Communities: Empirical Insights from Cotacachi, Ecuador. *Journal of Latin American Geography* 22(2), 116-141.
- Crespo, M., Follmann, A., Butsch, C., & Dannenberg, P. (2023). Alien neighbors behind walls: Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies Socio-spatial segregation of international retirement migrants. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* (currently under review).

Köln, den 12.08.2023




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Marcelo Crespo