

IGU May 2024 Quito

Conference theme: Geographical thinking in/from the Global South and alternative paradigms

Paper proposal

### **Kichwa geographies of citizenship: Alternative paradigms in Cotacachi, Ecuador**

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#### **Abstract**

Drawing on fieldwork in Cotacachi canton, the paper examines the insights and experiences of Kichwa Indigenous peoples regarding the lived dimensions of their citizenship. Encompassing interactions in public space, legal rights and responsibilities, as well as the quality of state services, ordinary experiences of citizenship reflect complex outcomes of contests over identity, claims and resources. This approach situates Indigenous citizenship firmly in existing material and discursive relations, rather than solely about multiculturalism and plurinationalism-interculturalism (Rivera Cusicanqui 2012; Rojas 2013; Alès & Puerta Silva 2017). We foreground diverse Kichwa experiences and accounts of state services (health centres, municipal offices, and registry offices), including service users, Indigenous leaders, and Indigenous public functionaries (cf. Ortiz 2012). How do Kichwa Indigenous people in the northern Ecuadorian Andes understand and critique actual existing citizenship? How do their critical reflections on citizenship's formal and everyday dimensions inform collective and individual proposals and actions for change? Our analysis seeks to centre Indigenous epistemologies and agendas of citizenship by mapping the exclusionary power that determines the quality of and access to effective rights and dignified claims. Interviews in Kichwa and Spanish, walking interviews, and participatory mapping provide original insights into citizenship-making power and spaces at the dynamic interface between formal elements, public interactions, and "sites of ordinary lives" (Staeheli 2011: 395; Painter & Philo 1995). The paper analyses how Kichwa residents enact and theorise *de facto* exclusionary citizenship through their practices, social relations, and alternatives (Staeheli et al 2012; Robins et al 2008). By thinking with Kichwa people from Cotacachi, the paper seeks to critically engage Anglophone theories of postcolonial citizenship and challenge the coloniality of geographical theory (Mora 2017; Sadiq 2017; Radcliffe & Radhuber 2022).

#### **Key words**

Ordinary citizenship, Indigenous citizenship, Indigenous epistemologies, daily experiences, alternative paradigms

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