

Community Formation in the Anthropocene: The Squatter Settlement versus the City Planners and Politicians

Joseph Nalven¹

¹ Ph.D., University of San Diego, USA

Abstract

City planners and politicians view spontaneous and illegal settlements as a threat and an opportunity. By contrast, the squatters strategize to manipulate the planning and political process to create a stable community. The outside researcher can seek a representative sample of communities in like situations or, alternatively, can study adjacent communities seeking to ally or compete with each other to gain formal recognition and become part of the existing urban framework. This common set of antagonisms in the community formation process can be extrapolated to an imagined anthropocene - one that requires a kaleidoscopic perspective that is, at once, formal and informal, normative and spontaneous, representative and case-study oriented.

Keywords: Anthropocene, *Invasión*, Settlements, Community, *Barrio paracaista*, Communal system

Introduction

If we imagined the anthropocene in the 1500s, would we have imagined its organization to have been strongly influenced by a primarily non-urban world? Probably so. Since then, that influence has shifted to a dominant urban world – from 4.1% urban in the 1500s to over 50% today with much of the shift occurring over the past century. Technology would likely continue to affect the pace moving forward; and the nature of ‘urban’ would also be affected with its attendant risks and benefits.

Given the growing dominance of the ‘urban’ environment for human settlements, studies of squatter settlements as a perceived disruptive factor can provide a useful challenge to how we imagine the anthropocene: the seeming irrational use of public space, the discontinuities in access to necessary infrastructure, the inequalities of center and periphery in urban spaces, the risks of social disorder and health all weigh on our calculations of how things ought to be. The ‘oughts’ might reflect our moral framing of the anthropocene as well as our ideological sense of what an evolving super community should be.

In this particular study of a squatter settlement (*invasión, barrio paracaista, barrio pirata, barrio clandestino, ocupación de hecho, ocupación dirigida*), in Cali, Colombia, the point of departure is the ‘actor’: The ‘actor’ forces us to look at how purposive action orients development. The ‘actor’ includes members of the community, outside technocrats and politicians who enter the community, and technocrats and politicians in their own official spaces. Each country, of course, has particular constraints such as economic capabilities, historical trends, and both legal and extralegal means to distribute resources for development. This ‘actor’ centered ethnography eschews any moral or ideological conclusions except insofar as advocated by the actors themselves. The goals are: to permit an empirical understanding of an urban community and to provide a data challenge to those who are engaged in formulating a more generalized understanding of the anthropocene.

History of an *invasión*

In the summer of 1971, the Pan American Games were held in Cali. Cali’s major newspapers capitalized on this international event with special sections and articles touting the city’s development. Omitted from the news, however, was an account of a large *invasión* on the eastern periphery of the city just prior to the Pan American Games. Omitted also, was an account of a land contest between squatters and policing agencies and between partisan elements in the government attempting to resolve this issue.

The difficulty in describing this illegal settlement is that it overlapped the legal development plans that had been underway for several years by Sr. and Sra. Manorroga and their company Vivienda Nacional, Ltda. The City Planning Agency raised the objections to the adequacy of sewer drainage. The eastern area of Cali in which the

development was located was subject to flooding. Further requirements were imposed by the Superintendent of Banking. When aspiring lot owners discovered potential roadblocks to the selling of lots, they decided to ‘invade’ what they presumed to be theirs. The ‘invasión’ acted as a signal to other residents of Cali who were in need of housing. Thereafter, a series of *invasións* occurred in this area. The Mayor suspected that the Manorrogas had started their own *invasión*. The City Planning Agency alluded to the possible participation of a populist party, ANAPO.

Given the reality of these spontaneous settlements, often unlawful and against planning norms and lack of sufficient infrastructure, two general strategies drove local government action.

The Mayor of Cali in 1971 viewed squatter settlements in relation to normative urban development. At one point he sent out the police to forcibly evict the squatters. Reluctantly he had agreed to the City Housing Agency to act as an intermediary between the squatters and the landowners. But he saw that approach as giving tacit approval to further illegal land developments. The Mayor objected to the City Housing Agency giving lots without physical infrastructure to offset the housing problem in Cali:

It is not at all certain the City Housing Agency has the capacity to provide that many lots. It is not right to deceive the people, much less for an agency of the State to give the people only a lot in which they will live in worse conditions: without water, without sewer lines, without electricity and with the possibility, many times, of obtaining those services in a short period of time. The housing problem here is very high, very acute. I prefer that people live in the houses of *inquilinos* (crowded housing), where they now live and where they have public services, than they should go and live on some lots in those tremendous conditions. (Interview notes, November 24, 1974, Nalven p. 76)

The Director of the City Housing Agency in 1971 saw himself echoing the legendary political hero from Cali, Alfonso Barberena Aparicio. Barberena was a charismatic Liberal party leader in the 1940s who sought to recover the city’s *ejido* land for the purpose of providing land for the ever-increasing and ill-housed poor population of Cali. Even though the Director’s understanding of the housing and land crisis was similar to the Mayor’s, he arrived at a different conclusion — likely in the spirit of Alfonso Barberena:

It is much better for the city to turn over dwelling (to the needy) with all services. It is somewhat dangerous to turn over simply the lot. But the phenomenon facing the cities is extremely grave. There are many families creating a pressure. So I wonder what is better. To live in a broken-down dwelling with five families as an *inquilino* in an inhuman asylum that has but one bathroom for all these families? That problem is more grave (than having an incomplete lot). On the other hand, if one is out in the fields, at least one is in the open air, and with time, one will bring all the necessities to this area. Those barrios that we see impoverished today we might see flowering tomorrow.

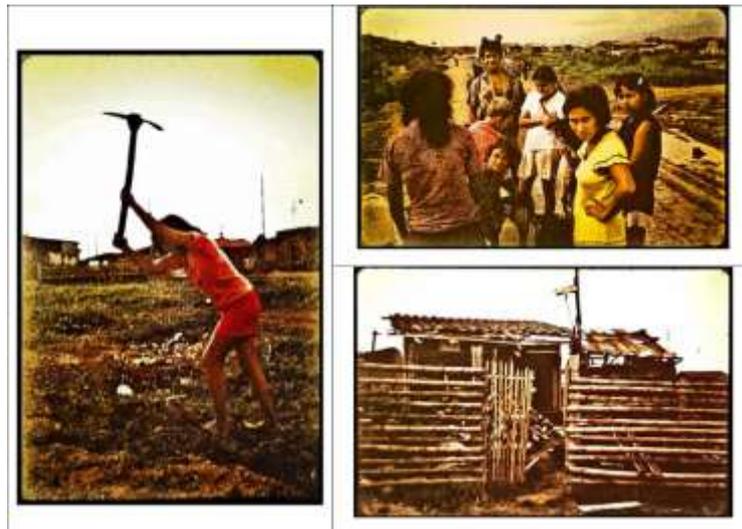
I don’t have any fear of the *barrios* that are formed in this way. To me, it seems that these *barrios* are being transformed.

What can we do with the poor when the National Housing Agency programs fail to provide housing for them? At times, it is necessary to create the problems, one must create them. And, once created, the services will follow. (Interview notes, November 1, 1974, Nalven p. 74)

The dynamics at the municipal political level set the stage for an eventual permissiveness for the development of Barrio Olimpia — one of several that were emerging from the lands of the Manorrogas. However, the community-level cooperative efforts and antagonisms had a distinct dynamic from those at the urban center.

Community formation: Barrio Olimpia

Several local-level factors guide us into the kaleidoscopic social context in which residents formed their community: organizational options (*comité político, junta de acción comunal, minga*); race; leadership; and history.



Left: Woman at work in area designated to be a future boulevard.

Right upper: Barrio Olimpia residents waiting for water from a common hose; right lower: Barrio Olimpia temporary house with latrine at lower right to dispose of waste onto street in front of house. (1974-75)

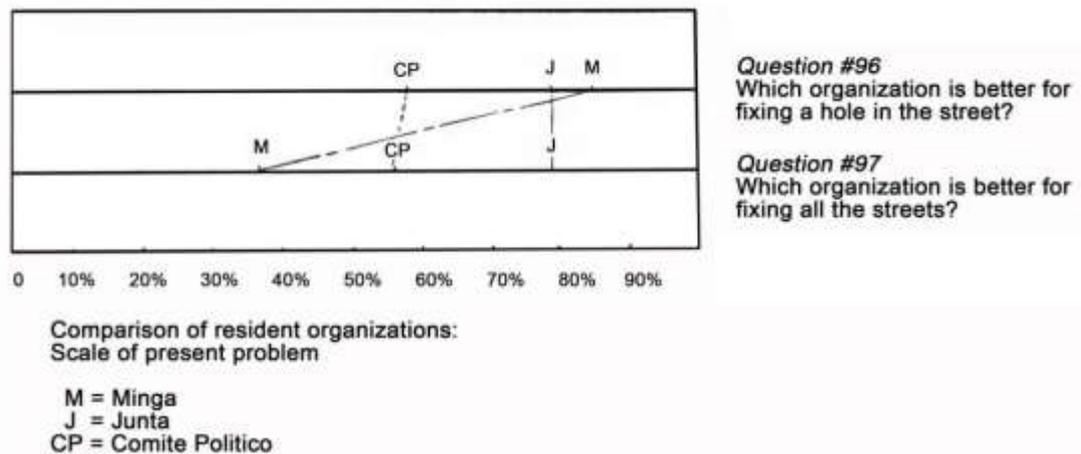
Understanding the organizing of collective action

Barrio Olimpia lacked paved streets, lacked residential potable water and sewer lines, had illegally attached electrical lines, lacked nearly every amenity one expected in a developed community in other parts of Cali. But residents did not lack commitment to organize to improve their habitational environment. They understood that efforts to fix a pothole could be managed by themselves, but putting in major infrastructural improvements required access to political actors and resources from the city and state. Local efforts could avoid party politics, but efforts extending beyond the immediate community could not.

A. ***Minga***: Collective action that could be used when the problem could be resolved by barrio residents themselves. The word was indigenous and could be used to describe antagonistic action against others: *A Sr. Gomez le hicieron minga para golpearlo*. ‘They ganged up on Sr. Gomez.’ More frequently, the term was used for achieving a benign common good.

B. ***Junta de acción comunal***: Colombia instituted the system of *Acción Comunal* in 1960 shortly after the agreeing to the National Front (Frente Nacional) political sharing arrangement in order to reduce widespread conflict following the period of *La Violencia* (1948-1958). That violence contributed to country’s urbanization. The *Acción Communal* system formalized what had functioned previously as *comites cívicos* (civic committees). These *juntas* were supposed to be explicitly non-partisan yet the residents saw them as *la trampolina de los políticos* (trampoline of the politicians). It was understood at an implicit level that the *junta* was the best medium for doing politics. Leaders of these non-partisan committees were often leaders of the political committees since it was the non-political committees that could receive government assistance in their own name.

C. ***Comité Político***: The political committees were often in competition with the *juntas* in order to demonstrate to the residents the kind of good deeds and access to resources that was within their power, and, should they receive a larger vote, they would be able to do more for the community since they would control a larger part of government resources. It is important to remember that the allocation of government resources followed differential partisan control of government agencies, referred to as *partiendo la marrana* (cutting up the pig — to be understood as a proportional legislative ‘pork’ process).



Community residents understood the preferred organizational form depending on the scale of the environmental problem. Compare the responses to Questions 96 and 97, the former asking about fixing a hole in the street while the latter asked about fixing all the streets. Residents saw the minga as the preferred organizational mode for fixing a small problem but not for large scale problems. Interestingly, the political committee was the second choice when compared to the non-political *junta de acción comunal*.

There is a further puzzle: even though we can decipher the various forms of social organization and the community's contextual understanding, it is interesting to explore the decision process of individual community leaders as they evaluate the configuration of forms as residents filter in and out of these organizations.

An outside observer, whether a journalist, a political scientist or sociologist, might easily accept their definition by custom or government regulation. The resident's understandings reach a more nuanced view. Here, we have two leaders who interpret the *junta* as 'really' political and the political committee as 'really' civic: the one is 'really' the other and vice-versa.

It is said that the *juntas comunales* are neutral, that they must not become in (party) politics. For me, that is absurd, it's absurd and a farce. . . Let's be realists. The *junta de acción comunal* not only here (Sector 15), but in all of Colombia, is composed of civic leaders who are nothing else but politicians — people who have some job in politics. They feel it, understand it . . . because there is no other way to obtain those [infrastructure] projects. (Interview of Alberto Jordan, Nalven p. 219)

A leader from Barrio Olimpia offered a similar inside-out view of political committees:

Obviously, the brigade that was created here was called the Conservative Brigade. But practically speaking, at its base, it wasn't (party) politics at all, but rather it was a brigade that could be better said to be civic. (Interview of José Mina, Nalven p. 219)

What has the form of a *junta de acción comunal* functions as, or is subject to manipulation, as a *comité político*; and what is nominally a *comité político* is alleged to function as a civic, non-political committee.

Community residents are not naïve. Their goal is to improve their severely handicapped environment. However, their opportunities are channeled through organizations. New organizations are formed and the question is often for whose benefit — personal or communal — and whether they will be effective beyond the boundaries of their community.

José Mina had been an organizer and member of several such committees. His explanation of how to understand them is instructive:

Q: Why do you now have a junta prodefensa in this barrio?

A: That makes me laugh when you say the word 'prodefensa' because . . .

Q: That's what I heard.

A: Yes, that's right. I want to comment on it, O.K.? And since you are taping this, I want to say something for the record. In the little that I understand, I take the defense of a barrio to mean when there is a cyclone, an immense tempest, a landslide — things of that nature. So the community has an interest in defending itself. And they take up a defense. . . . But here in this barrio, there are none of those things.

Q: Then why do some call it that?

A: That kind of defense is not understood. Not by the governor, nor the president of the Republic, nor by the mayor — because Barrio Olimpia is in the site in which it was constructed.

Barrio Olimpia has not moved. It has not been hit by a cyclone. God favors us. . . nor have our shacks been taken from us.

So the word ‘defense’ of the barrio is a fictitious word. It is an extra word because that doesn’t exist here. It could have been called ‘defense’ when this land was invaded and the army and the police came to destroy and get us out. . . . But here nothing of that exists.

The name ‘defense’ is being used by three guys here. It is something to provide elegance, and because they don’t know what the word ‘defense’ means. (Nalven, p. 216)

Thus far, we have seen that residents of this squatter settlement are aware of the various forms of community organization that are available to seek out the assistance from those who control infrastructure resources; they see the ways in which these organizational forms, and as well as themselves, can be manipulated by others and in which they, in turn, can manipulate the goal attainment process.

One essential requirement to getting resources is to have an official name for the community. To have an official name is to be recognized as part of the city and to be eligible for government infrastructure resources. Having a name also requires having officially recognized boundaries and therein lies the challenge of threading the needle of official planning norms, several of which Barrio Olimpia lack. In the next section, we will examine the unfolding of Barrio Olimpia’s quest to become official.

Before turning to this quest, it is worth stepping back and reviewing the theoretical-methodological approach and its implications for constructing the anthropocene.

A paradigm for explaining the construction of a settlement

The setting for this study is a squatter settlement in a developing country. Clearly, the setting is enmeshed in disruptive social change. Stable societies are at the other end of the spectrum and yet, as we contemplate an anthropocene, we would benefit from a paradigm that encompasses both. The greater challenge is that of disruptive social change and whether and how some greater stability can emerge.

This study has tied that dynamic change to the habitational environment — the combined needs for potable water, sewer lines, transportation/streets, electricity, and grading of land if it is subject to flooding, chief among them.

What is required is a focus on oriented- or purposive human action.

One can, of course, describe and articulate objective factors from measures of population size, territorial layout, and the like, and then project future needs for inhabitants (for example, the more toilets, the more flushes, the more sewerage to be disposed). This objective approach is helpful. But humans are curious beings and unless the change is mandated to follow a specific course and timing, such apparent social change may require authoritarian measures as described by the Mayor of Cali earlier. Imagine, by analogy, the internet and the Cloud. We can track the pace of technological development and economic investment and pinpoint. But, consider hacking, phishing and disclosure of essential software by disgruntled employees. Yes, humans are curious beings and whether we are speaking of the normative development of settlements or the projected development of communication and computational infrastructure, unexpected and disruptive activity can be allowed to be part of the explanatory paradigm. To do so, purposive human action — subjective to be sure — would be essential to the explanatory paradigm.

Human beings are purposive creatures, most of whom can give detailed accounts of what they do. These accounts, understandings, beliefs and rationales sum up to a more or less systematic ontology, a way of being, and an orientation to action. A description of such orientations provides the social-cultural anthropologist with a vehicle for explicating why people what they do from their point of view. It is this subjective dimension — whether analysts consider it right or wrongheaded, rational or distorted — that individuals use to guide their actions.

Since ethnographic data are often verbal reports — as gossip, claims, impressions — which may be designed to deceive, impress as well inform others, we can never certify our analyses and descriptions present ‘actually existing’ social relationships and processes. What one individual may claim as a social relationship, another may deny. At best, the ethnographer might observe an encounter or the lack of encounters and infer that one individual has something to hide or that the other is claiming a prestigious relationship without warrant. Given such subjective data, how does one incorporate it into models that rely on objective metrics (such as population size)? One can ignore such data to one’s peril. Including all relevant particulars, especially as they involve disruptive, unexpected and perhaps unlawful behavior and situations, then one must include the differential perceptions and claims. In effect, to explain what actually happens one must include what individuals think happened or might happen — an integration of multiple, individualized histories. (Nalven, pp. 18-22).

In this conception of social-cultural anthropology, the analytic boundaries between an objective social reality and a subjective personal reality are not only imprecise, they merge. To be sure, the analyst must not mistake the

maps or models of society — be they individual or aggregate, the informant's or the observer's — for empirical reality. That is a luxury only the participants can afford. Rather, when the anthropologist samples the universe of data, he or she must not only make sense out of social behavior, but also the way in the participants make sense out of their own and others behavior. The anthropologist requires a model that will permit each individual to stipulate their own personal ontology, making clear that the anthropologist does not confound the informant's explanations for his or her own. The assumption is that participants know the rules of their own culture and society implicitly by which they recognize the markers of prestige, loyalty, manipulation and the like, and can indicate the correct and incorrect forms of corresponding behavior.

Similarly, for assessing the impacts of urban growth on residents, government functionaries and elected officials, the insider perspective will incorporate data about the strategies that are perceived (or described) as requisites for personal and institutional adaptation.

History from the ground up: A matter of trickery or altruism?

One of the last sections to be invaded was owned by Padre Robles. His land was adjacent to the one of the final pieces of the Manorroga land that had been invaded. Both eventually become part of the Barrio Olimpia quest to be formally recognized.

It is worth working our way through four different accounts of Padre Robles' land. 'History' of this particular *invasión* could be written from title documents, letters to officials and final sale price. Padre Robles did receive a higher price per hectare than did the Manorrogas. But such a 'history' would skip over a 'Rashomon effect' in what actually occurred. The multi-perspectives share several elements, but diverge in ways that make the understanding of how a community forms difficult to disambiguate, especially those that are precipitated by disruptive events.

A. Padre Robles' account

Padre Robles not only owned land, but managed the distribution of lots on this land and established a temporary church. The Padre held Sunday and holiday services and said he set aside land for a future school to be run by a Catholic organization, *Fe y Alegria*. He represents a persona motivated partly by pecuniary interests, savvy to the ways of the city and the invaders, and guided by goodwill.

I came out one Saturday and found the people here building a settlement. . . . I knew how to fix it and I came out here in my car. . . . (There were) more than 500 persons. And I said, 'Gentlemen, this is mine. There are two ways for you to take possession of this. By violence — and I will give you violence, the violence of the law, and I will get you out. Or by dialogue and charity.' And then I invited them to dialogue. . . . 'If you accept me, then leave this land and I will name two captains from the two *juntas comunales* so that they can take charge of selecting the families for this land.' (Interview with Padre Robles; Nalven, p. 130)

The character of Padre Robles, by his own admission, was a mixture of religious and business elements. Although he presses the explanation that his sub-division is an act of responsible charity, the question remains whether residents in this area concur. The individuals who are aspiring lot owners on his land do not speak freely. One individual who questioned the Padre's actions to the Church hierarchy was asked by the Padre to take back his down payment and leave. Residents of Barrio Olimpia (not yet incorporating the Padre's land and settlers), which abuts the Padre's land, are not as fearful of Padre Robles and speak more openly about him. One resident of Barrio Olimpia, Nelsi Lomas, lived directly across from the Padre's land. She had been a squatter and remembered the Padre's reaction to the *invasión* in a harsher light.

One man came out and said, 'Padre, it looks like I won't leave because I need a house. I need some place to put my family and these lands are lying fallow.' The Padre told him, 'Don't be a fool. These are my lands. Nobody helped me get them, so why should I give them to you? . . . 'We did not tell you to give them to us. But why can't you give them to us; you have so much land? The Padre answered, 'Nobody helped me get them. I will give you shit if you believe that I will give you my land.'

He said that he was indeed a priest, but that he wasn't in Church, nor was he walking about in his cassock. . . . He could speak as he wished because he was in the street. He said that what has respect is in Church and with the cassock, for the rest he is a man as anyone else. (Interview with Nelsi Lomas; Nalven, pp. 131-32)

The forceful aspect of Padre Robles' character coincides with his self-representation. Residents also describe the Padre's success in getting the squatters off his land not only in terms of power, but of guile.

The Padre came up to Point Navarro and before a large group of squatters he pointed to his land. This was his land — what now belongs to Barrio Olimpia. He was going to give all this land to the squatters. Then he said we could invade (his) land — except for the piece which belonged to Sr. Manorroga and the CVC [La Corporación Autónoma Regional del Valle del Cauca, created in 1954 for large infrastructure such hydroelectric power]. That is, he sent us to invade his own land.

But, at the moment of truth, we saw that it was the other way around. The land he said was Manorroga's really belonged to him, and the land which he said belonged to him really belonged to Manorroga — the one he sent us to invade. He sent us to invade some else's land, not his.

When we finally realized what happened and who the real owners were, it made us laugh. He tricked us off his land onto another's. (Interview with Tomas Molina; Nalven p. 132)

The president of Barrio Olimpia's junta, José Mina, discounted the views of Lomas and Molina.

(These are) things which the people invented. (Interview with José Mina; Nalven: p. 133)

But who are these people who “invented” the accounts about Padre Robles and what were their relationship with José Mina?

Thomas Molina, who presented the case of trickery, was the first president of Barrio Olimpia's *junta* and was still active in *barrio* activities. Lomas, who painted the harsh image of Padre Robles, was the president of Barrio Olimpia's Conservative Brigade. The question of whether Barrio Olimpia residents will seek to include the Padre's lands within their proposed boundaries depends on the benefits that would result from its merger. And, the proposed benefits, in turn, partly depend on how Barrio Olimpia leaders view the Padre. For Tomas, it is a question of whether the Padre's promises can be trusted. For Lomas, it is less direct. Lomas resents the actions of José Mina, the current president of the *junta*. Mina is working closely with the Padre, apparently paying more attention to the Padre's needs than to those of Barrio Olimpia. Mina was one of the individuals selected by the Padre to help manage the allocation of lots.

Ultimately, the question becomes whether such differences, either about what happened or the motivations, are significant in going forward — whether these two areas will unite to form a larger community since, as well will see, city planning norms have minimum population requirements for recommending official recognition of the *barrio* as a formal entity within the city.

The next phase of this community's formation is one of fixing its boundaries such that it can present itself to city planners for approval. That approval is also subject to the influence of local politicians who focus on the *quid pro quo* of votes for community benefits. Local politicians are quick to cite a saying, *hay que sembrar para recoger* (one must plant in order to harvest), indicating the exchange of the resident's vote for the politician's good deed.

What's in a name: seeking official recognition

The strategy for Barrio Olimpia's improvement included being formally recognized within the city. Such recognition would facilitate inclusion in infrastructure plans as well as other resources flowing from the government. However, the boundaries of the communities in this area were being contested.

The question of contested boundaries for the community itself was partly a matter of communal identity formed during the process of squatting and partly one of finding the optimal locus for social organizational strength. That strength might be measured in election voting or personal connections between residents and government representatives (technical staff as well as elected officials).

However, the resolution of community boundaries was also subject to official planning criteria developed by the City Planning Agency. While these criteria were understandable from an urban design perspective, they could become an obstacle for *barrios*. Enter the politician and the process of modifying urban design criteria.

The *barrio*, as an administrative unit of the city, presented an unworkable framework for planning. Cali, in 1975, had more than 150 *barrios* and 40 years later, about 250.¹ It would be an enormous task to write a separate, development plan for each *barrio*. Rather, it is more useful to speak of the needs of zones and sectors. What is foreground and uppermost in the minds of *barrio* residents is background to city planners. The section of Norms & Design is responsible for assessing the petitions presented to the City Council. As the city grows, new sectors of the city are populated and, in the normal course of events, a committee from the *barrio* petitions for incorporation into the administrative and operational framework of the city.

Many of the guidelines for a *barrio*'s incorporation are fairly well known in the city by *barrio* leaders despite the city's having failed to pass an Accord by the City Council. In 1975, the City Planning Agency proposed a resolution to formalize and extend these guidelines. The norms proposed for creation of new *barrios* included:

1. The number of houses in the a new barrio must be between 800 and 1,200 or a population between 5,000 and 7,000.
2. 11% of the total land must be turned over to the city for a green zone . . .
3. When the settlement is illegal, the barrio must also have land set aside for green zones and community use. The boundaries which are used to define the new boundary must be clearly specifiable, preferably using major roadways or physical landmarks.
4. The barrio must not be divided by major roadways or any other element that would interfere with community life.
5. When a barrio is created by dismembering another, it must have the approval of the majority of dwellers in the new barrio and be accepted by the community action council of the original barrio.

While the norms proposed by the City Planning Agency are technically clear and concise, councilmen are often in an advocacy position for barrio committees, generally reflecting a political party connection between the two. What is important to the barrio residents is who and what is to be included in their community rather than aesthetic and design criteria set forth in planning norms: the boundaries for residents are social while the boundaries for city planners are technical.

In an interview with the city planner who was evaluating proposals that affected Barrio Olimpia. From the planner's view, Barrio Olimpia would be gobbled up by surrounding communities, especially since Olimpia had so few houses that fell below planning norms. Another nearby community, Barrio Campeon, would be the likely victor in this process.

I asked the planner about his decision.

A: It is not a decision, but a proposal. It is a proposal from a technical point of view. I do not make the decision. The City Council must analyze my proposal from a technical view and listen to the voice of the community. The Council is the one who decides, not me.

Q: Why did you propose those boundaries?

A: After going to the site and looking at it from a physical point of view and after speaking to the President of the Campeon Community Action Council. And since Barrio Olimpia had not formally submitted any petition, I spoke with the persons who wanted to unite as Barrio Campeon. [Note: Barrio Olimpia had submitted two such petitions, but these apparently were lost in the process.] I also considered the land that was still vacant (Padre Roble's land). The only solution was to integrate them all.

As for Barrio Olimpia, there were only 70 houses according to the plans that were shown to us by the City Housing Agency.

Q: But there is a history of the *invasión* and many people have the idea that . . .

A: I do not know the complete history of the *invasión*. I only know the part of *Manorroga*. The part about Olimpia I don't know.

I am completely ignorant of it. So I could tell you nothing.

Q: If the people there make an agreement with a politician — because it is said that the barrio is the basis of politics — do you think that they could win against the technical viewpoint?

A: That depends on the ability of the politician.

Q: So, it is always a grey area depending on several factors?

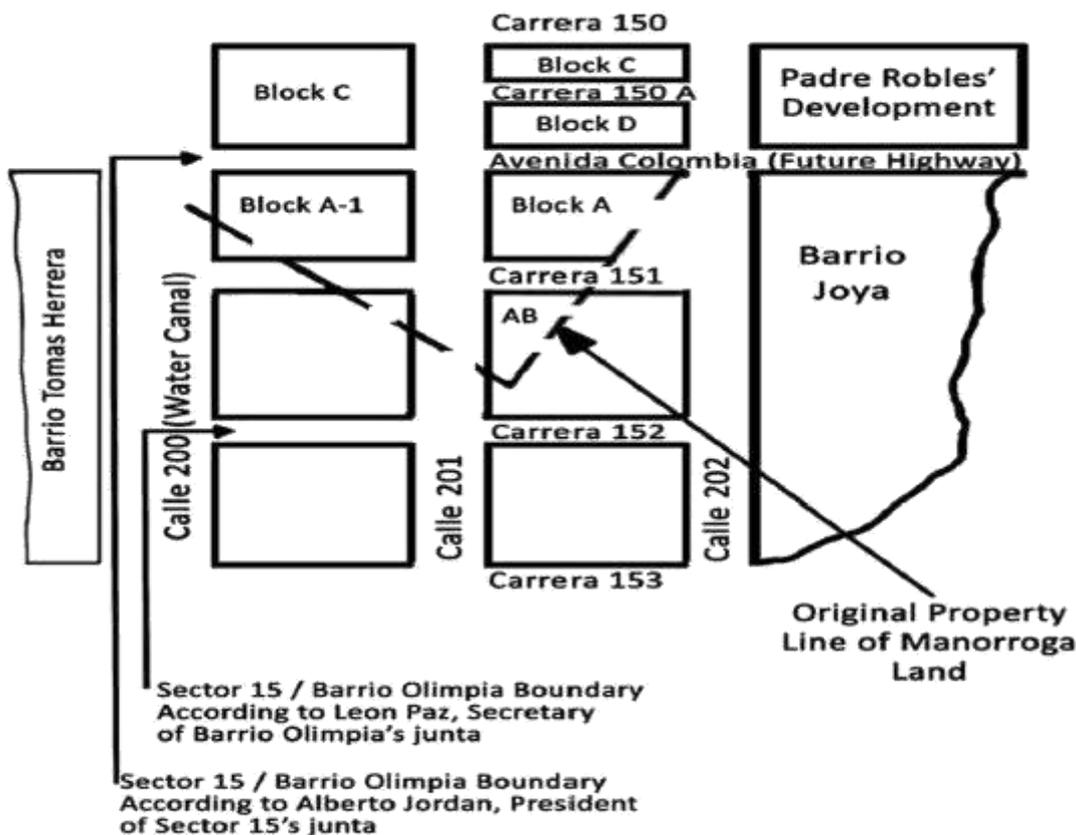
A: And the agreement can be made between the barrios amongst themselves. If there is no agreement, then there can be no solution because all the interested parties are not brought together, no come to a decision. Nor is it by force, nothing can be done by force. What is heard is the force of the community. (Nalven, p. 386)

The "force of the community" is what residents were struggling with. Barrio Olimpia and adjacent blocks, particularly those referred to as Sector 15, met to evaluate whether they might unite and form a larger entity. A decision to combine their respective boundaries would overcome several city planning norms. One prerequisite is precise definition of boundaries.

However, driving the several possibilities is a community of interest: What problems would be solved by combining neighbouring lots? Is it simply a name? Is it just formal recognition within the city's administrative framework? Is it a personal agenda about who would be recognized as the community leader in the new larger barrio?

While all of these considerations are in play, perhaps the one that resonates most with the wider population is the distribution and variation of environmental problems. If one area is higher than the other, then flooding would be of greater concern to one set of residents than the other; if one area already had access to the electrical grid or to water sewer lines, then they would be interested in lobbying for influence from government officials to get resolution of problems than the other area had yet to attain.

Two possible maps to form a new barrio were the subject of an evening meeting held to decide what would be an optimal boundary. The meeting illustrates the tension between what blocks would be included or excluded. Alberto Jordan, the President of Sector 15's *junta de acción comunal*, argues for inclusion of Blocks A-1 and A, up to the future boulevard, Avenida Colombia; Leon Paz, the Secretary of Barrio Olimpia's *junta de acción comunal* includes several additional blocks. Off to the side are other existing barrios, Tomas Herrera and Joya, as well as the blocks that would emerge out of the land owned by Padre Robles rather than the Manorrogas. These other barrios could simply absorb Sector 15 and/or Olimpia.



Two Interpretations of the Section 15 / Barrio Olimpia Boundary

From an outsider's perspective, such fine mesh distinctions are likely to be overlooked. The resident discussions are likely to be subsumed under the rubric 'poverty' or a generalized sense of 'problems of a squatter settlement.' The outsider is likely to find these discussions as tedious — of which boundary lines would be optimal or whether the environmental problems within those boundaries served an optimal community of interest; or assumed to be distracting arguments of egotistical pretenders to leadership.

Nevertheless, in order to understand how the community is formed under the disruptive conditions of a squatter settlement, the insider perspective reveals the frame of reference that orients residents. The following speech made at an evening meeting drew leaders from Barrio Olimpia and Sector 15 to study their potential community of interest. The speech by Sigifredo Gonzalez, one might note, is worthy of being included in famous historical speeches or the irony of Mark Antony in William Shakespeare's play Julius Caesar, Act 3, Scene 2. The rhetoric of persuasion helps locate the community of interest motivating humanity in critical moments. Unfortunately we overlook such speeches made by squatters as they build their part of the anthropocene.

About 40 residents of Barrio Olimpia and Sector 15 met for an evening discussion at a nearby classroom. The commentary given by Sigifredo Gonzalez became the pivotal moment in whether these two areas should petition to become a combined barrio. Barrio Olimpia had just over 700 residents and could use a larger residential area to meet the 3,000 minimum norm set by the City Planning Agency. But was this the central concern for Sector 15? Sigifredo analyzes the pros and cons of forming a combined barrio:

I have friends in Barrio Olimpia that I admire a lot. I cannot deny that, nor would I advance egotistical situations with these companions since they form part of the same class to which I belong and to which the majority here also belongs. Well, I will be specific.

I know what the problem of my friends in Barrio Olimpia is. I know it perfectly well. And, if any one of those congregated here would ask me what the problem of Olimpia is, I believe I am sufficiently able to answer in the affirmative what the problem is. I was listening to a companion at one time who said that the problems of Barrio Olimpia were the same as those of Sector 15, formerly Tomas Herrera. In part they are the same problems which are bothering us, (these are not) the same which are troubling them. In the majority they are the same, but one has to make a parenthesis in that our problem is much greater.

But as I said earlier, I am not here to advance a position of self-interest. I am apart from that. That is right. I have been out of things for some time and there are people who can testify to that right now, that I have been apart from everything for some time because of, well, personal reasons. But it is not that I have suffered from that isolation that I would abstain from what is happening to my community, to my class, because the problems I have are the problems of my class.

Concretely, I do not agree, particularly I, that is my opinion, very personal and I respect the opinion of others, I do not agree with the annexation to any of the adjacent barrios. (Applause) I do not agree that we should form part of Joya, nor that we form part of Olimpia, nor that we should form part of Tomas Herrera.

There has been an opportunity some time back. Someone from Olimpia, who among other things – I have many friends there who are also troubled and worried about the social situation of our people – at one time, as I was saying, they came to me. A division developed there. I don't know what the cause was to lead to that division. I had been part of one of the committees that had been constituted in the *barrio*; perhaps that is why I left because I was glutted with work. So I needed a rest and I stayed by myself until today when I returned. My friends who know me can tell you if that is not so.

At that time, a friend of mine from Olimpia told me these very words. “*Hombre*, why don't we from this avenue over go with you? Everyone on this side of the canal to the south, let us form a *barrio* from Avenue Santander – whatever it is to be called.” I liked the idea. I liked that idea. Why shouldn't I? If I was part of the committees, not of one but of the many committees in Barrio Tomas Herrera, and I had noticed that all the work that the people were doing that formed part of this area, it was an extensive undertaking. Why? Because everything was improving there and, for us, there was absolutely nothing. I liked the idea that person put forward at that time.

Just today that person has returned saying the same thing.

“*Hombre*, I would do anything to advance that situation.” I did not want to accept. I liked the idea, but I did not want to raise that opinion before (our) committees because I would have been labeled a divisive person. They would have flattened me. Of that I am sure. They would have said to me that I was working against the progress of the *barrio*. So I left it.

Later, the problem has come to public attention, which we are now studying. And I repeat that I do not agree, particularly I am not in agreement with the annexation of this section with any of the *barrios* surrounding us. I do not agree. Why? We know very well the problem over there and we know what situation we will be faced with. They have unhooked us from the balls of Tomas Herrera, and they want to pin us on the tail of Joya. We do not want to be the tail of Joya. We do not want to accept the tail of Joya now that we have had the experience of being the tail of Tomas Herrera.

But there are people who want to be the tail of Olimpia. It is not that there are no able people in Olimpia. I repeat, I do not have any fears. On the contrary, I have many friends and neighbors over there in Olimpia. But what will happen? The people of Olimpia will not be able to solve any of our problems. Why? Because, as I was saying from the beginning, even though we have multiple problems that are parallel between Olimpia and this area, it is also certain that we have a problem of much greater magnitude. And that is the economic, territorial question.

The representative of Barrio Olimpia, physically represented here in these moments is merely looking to obtain legal status. That is what is holding up Olimpia. Olimpia has been constituted for some time. We are not going to say that because they are newer (than us), we will not accept them. We are not going to say that we do not like the name of Olimpia. The name is the least problematic. The name could be Pedro or Juan. It doesn't bother us.

That is what is happening. While we are talking, contradictions are beginning to surface during the debate. I had listened at one time of my companion José (Mina), who twice suggested annexation. That is contradictory for us. We do not want a nexus. It is not that they are not sufficiently noble, nor sufficiently respectful, nor sufficiently able, but that our problem will remain exactly the same. I ask any of those from Olimpia if in their area they have the same habitational problem that we do? I am sure that they will answer in the negative.

After Sigifredo raised the ever present suspicion of personal motivation, and then dismissed it, he rejected the concern over a name for the proposed new barrio: “The name could be Pedro or Juan. It doesn’t bother us.” From his perspective, the community of interest was a condition to difficult to reach for these two areas. Sigifredo raises the problem that outsider experts would likely focus on: “even though we have multiple problems that are parallel between Olimpia and this area . . .” It is tempting to collapse the crazy quilt set of “habitational” problems into an aggregate situation. Yet, Sigifredo zeroes in on a disjunctive problem that undermines a possible community of interest. For Sector 15, Sigifredo focuses on “the economic, territorial question.”

Sigifredo saw the proposed merger with Barrio Olimpia as distracting the residents of Sector 15 from the possibility of a forced merger with nearby Barrio Joya. The land value of Barrio Joya was three times that of Sector 15. Residents in Sector 15 feared that the value of their land would be equated with that of Barrio Joya, causing a dramatic increase in property taxes. That is the central issue for Sigifredo: “we have a problem of much greater magnitude and that is the economic, territorial question.”

Sigifredo’s argument works against an aggregate perspective of poverty. In its place, we find a particularistic viewpoint. He first cites the commonality of problems between Sector 15 and Barrio Olimpia, but then goes on to differentiate the unique clustering of problems: those of Barrio Olimpia are centered on the question of legalization and a name reflecting the barrio’s history, while those in Sector 15 are centered on land values. “in the majority,” he asserts “(the problems) are the same, but one has to make a parenthesis in that our problem is much greater.”

Insofar as adjacent localities perceive their cluster of problems to be different, they will be less likely to cooperate. At the outset, their priorities will be different and their communities will pull in different directions.

Sigifredo was looking at distinct problems for each community – for Olimpia, it appeared to be one of legal status; to join with Joya with higher property values, Sector 15 residents would be faced with increased tax costs. Apart from these issues, there are background concerns as to what is the optimal community definition with which to lobby for electricity, waste water disposal, schools, health clinics and the like.

If we imagine an ideal barrio in which there is an equitable distribution of resources and needs – that is, a barrio in which everyone profits and suffers from their living situation in the same way – we would find that as a problem is resolved, the entire community benefits simultaneously. Unfortunately, the pattern of progress in these lower class, incomplete communities is a patchwork quilt. Resources are inequitably divided. Moreover, some areas benefit from an improvement before other areas. As we have seen in Barrio Olimpia, regional conflicts develop out of invidious comparisons and a growing difference in the priorities of collective action. The end result may be the splitting of fissioning of the barrio into smaller units in which the needs are perceived to be more homogeneous than in the larger unit. From this perspective, it is understandable why barrio splitting (or a failure to create larger units) is more prevalent in Cali than fusing of smaller areas in a larger barrio. Understandable, too, are the norms proffered by the City Planning Agency to set a minimal population size as well as other design norms than are oriented to spatial rationality than to local histories of community formation such as the disruptive *invasión* of land by squatters. (Nalven, pp. 162-63)

Caveats and Methodological Limitations

Several methodological limitations might usefully be considered. These will serve as caveats in evaluating the process of community formation historically, understanding the interplay of social structure and individual action, and the situated community.ⁱⁱ

Caveat 1: The historical metric as a legacy for political action

Thus far, community formation has been guided by the history surrounding the squatting that emerged as Barrio Olimpia (1971-1975). However, this metric could easily reach back to the Spanish colonists settling on an early indigenous community in the early 1500s.

More usefully, the early 1900s illustrate a coming-to-terms with *terratienientes* (landholdings of wealthy individuals) who had squatted, in effect, on the city’s *ejidos* (communal lands). Whether going back to the Roman layout for settlements, Law of the Indies (1542) or to a Spanish royal decree (1771) reaffirming Cali’s right to *ejido* lands, there were attempts to correctly designate *ejido* lands to the community and not wealthy landowners. In 1829, after the independence of Colombia from Spain, Simon Bolivar decreed that *ejido* lands should be returned to the

city of Cali. In 1849, Judge Juan Nepomuceno Nuñez Conto took down oral testimony from city residents on the location of *ejido* lands. However, the lack of a registrar's precision became an obstacle to the recovery of *ejido* lands. (Codigo de Ejidos Comunales, Graficas Pelasquez, 1945: Nalven, pp. 55-60)

Ejido land began to be thought of as housing for the poor seen in the creation of Barrio Obrero (the Worker's barrio) in 1919. This was during the first period of Cali's explosive growth by 60% from 1912 to 1918. The City Council directed its engineer to lay out blocks for this barrio as well as where individual lots would be. The engineer has directed to relocate those families who had already settled in this area to conform to the layout of the plan. (Codigo de Ejidos Municipales, Acuerdo 31 de 1919).

This incremental approach dissatisfied Alfonso Barberena — first as a city councilman in Cali, then as a congressman, and then as the director of *Personeria Municipal para Ejidos y Vivienda Popular* an agency he spearheaded in the passage of a national law Law 41 in 1948. This law was also known as *la ley Barberena*. He was a charismatic leader who led the recovery of *ejido* land to serve as housing for the urban poor. His official role enable him to identify original *ejido* lands, recover them in the name of the city and, in turn, sell the land to needy residents of Cali. Two large barrios, Terron Colorado and Municipal, were created in this way. His action also led to the embargo of city funds in 1958 for overstepping his authority.

In 1966, the *Personero de Ejidos* was replaced by a new agency, *Instituto de Vivienda Popular del Municipio de Cali* (INVICALI, the Lower Class Housing Agency of Cali, referred to in this essay as the City Housing Agency).

Thus, the act of rectifying the past — of recovering *ejido* lands from wealthy landowners — was longstanding. The act of 'squatting' can be seen in the centuries appropriation of communal lands by wealthy families, by the fears that current landowners might initiate squatting on their own lands to force the city to acquire them at a better price, and by the lower-class individuals who had squatted on land (whether *ejido* or not).

Moreover, the focus of this study of Barrio Olimpia could be seen not simply as relieving overcrowding and population growth for the lower class, but also as a moral quest to recover the city's patrimony (*ejido* land).

In the same way, the building of the anthropocene should consider the historical legacy of the place: is urban growth and the tactics to occupy its space a question of dynamic growth, of economic, and/or a moral issue?

Caveat 2: Structural influence on individual action

Part of this study was situated at INVICALI, the City Housing Agency, and not at the National Housing Agency. Access to government officials, especially by those who were squatters in Barrio Olimpia and other lower class *barrios clandestinos*, was easier at the city agency rather than the national agency. Leapfrogging locality to those appointed at the national level is problematic; these individuals do not seek out votes for the perceived importance of local elections and the perception of obtaining community resources and individual favors.

The Secretary-General of the City Housing Agency received requests for the allocation of a lot under the agency's purview — often in the form of a *carta de recomendación* (letter of recommendation from a person thought to have influence and a personal connection, also known as *palanca* or leverage). I witnessed an individual bringing just such a recommendation to the Secretary-General. I asked him to explain what he understood to be the mindset of those seeking his favor:

In our environment, the genius of the humble person is well developed. So, for example, when someone has a need for housing or a lot, there are thousands of applications. Thousands have filled out applications. So he asks, 'which is the easiest way for me to get this? Maybe someone I know knows the Director and will recommend me there.' So he will give me a note or letter of recommendation. He goes, presents the letter, the Director attends to him and so on. . . . still the person has to fill out the necessary housing forms. (Interview with Secretary-General of INVICALI, Nalven p. 92).

The access for the squatter is even clearer from the perspective of locally elected officials rather than the agency employee:

At first, lots were only given out by the administration. But since, in reality, all the members of the (City Housing Agency) Governing Board are politicians, it was decided that each political party should have its quota of lots in accord with its proportion of representation on the Board. The mayor at the time got very angry over this. He said that we were going to see a lot of influence peddling and all sorts of things. I don't believe that. Actually (the allocation process), is now feeding all the (political) parties and, in this way, it is not serving people in all political currents of Cali. (Interview with City councilman, Nalven pp. 90-91).

While it is clear that patronage and technical requirements are often in an intimate relationship with each other, and that this relationship is well understood, what is uncertain is its distribution across community, city, state and nation — and not only the distribution but how it is affected. In other places, that question can be tribal, familial, ideological and the like. It is not simply the adage of ‘who you know,’ but deciphering its importance against ‘what you know’ in an infinity of proportions.

I once observed an individual seeking a job from a local official but with no letter of recommendation. As an astute observer, or so I thought, I challenged him. How can you seek a job without a letter of recommendation? He pointed out that he was an ‘entucador’ (an assertive person) and that he did not need a letter of recommendation.

Thus, the organization of social structure (here the City Housing Agency, city and barrio politics) frames the seeking of favors and resources, and can operate concurrently or alternatively with regional and national structural organization, but such structure is not determinative of results as understood by the persistent action of individuals: the calculus from the actor’s point of view is opportunistic and sometimes may actually ignore what is culturally expected.

Some might object that such detailed attention to distribution and variation overwhelms generalizing an understanding of the Anthropocene. Perhaps.

However, there is a significant footnote that brackets this paradigm: I was partially accepted at the City Housing Agency as an outsider, the anthropologist from the United States. Yes, I had a grant from the Organization of American States (la OEA), but I was teased that that organization was not ‘la OEA,’ but ‘la CIA.’ There was an element of distrust. Also, unless one had a connection, the inner workings of the agency were off limits to everyone. I was unaware of this obstacle at the time. However, I had made friends with two Colombians, one a Liberal and one a Conservative, and they without my knowledge had put me in touch with the elected senator who was given the City Housing Agency as his election prize. He was not expected to be selected since he was far down the list of candidates, but an overwhelming turnout for Liberals resulted in his winning a Senatorial seat. His surprise election earned him the nickname of ‘Sexto’ for his place on the list. His surprise election and the recommendation I had received from my friends had earned me an audience with Sexto. He, in turn, advised the new director of the City Housing Agency to give me everything that I needed. That turned out to be access to the minutes of the Governing Board, normally kept secret from any and all outsiders. I had no similar entrée to the City Planning Agency, which would have further expanded my understanding of community formation.

In building our epistemology of the anthropocene, just as my ethnography of a community in formation, we are subject to the vagaries of data gathering and analysis, and what these mean. We are fortunate in what we have seen and should continue to wonder about what we have not. Humility is a concomitant to epistemology.

Caveat 3: The situated community: size, adjacency and ad hoc-ness

While this ethnography goes beyond a single community’s boundaries and pursues the political field generated by several community residents, it is still a ‘community study.’ In fact, the *raison d’etre* of the political field that has been described is located in a single community. All of the city agencies and government officials which are discussed are linked to this community. Those are the linkages — the networks — that were followed in tracing the problem-solving activities of government agencies and community residents; these linkages and activities led to this community initially and subsequently led back to different agencies and officials. The nucleus of these linkage *is* the community studied. The methodological choices guided the study to specific ethnographic results: the size of the community and the decision to look at adjacent rather than scattered (‘representative’) communities for points of comparison. As with all ethnographic studies there are ad hoc factors that test whether the conclusions are overdetermined and suggest further research beyond the scope of the immediate study.

Barrio Olimpia is relatively small. Can it be considered representative? Indeed, its smallness was an obstacle to obtaining legal status. Did its smallness affect its progress?

One resident observed *mundo pequeño, infierno grande* (a small world is a large hell). The implication is that a small community has more social conflict. Such conflict would seem to inhibit collective social action and, presumably, the community’s progress. The politics of improvement was marred by divisiveness, most visibly by conflict between the high and low sides of the community. Note that the low side was more susceptible to flooding. In general, the quest for community improvement more often results in the splitting than the uniting of communities. The reason for this fissioning is the greater uniformity of needs within smaller residential areas and, as a result, the greater potentiality for cooperation. Thus, as residents seek smaller administrative units (communities) to further their petitioning activities, they create smaller arenas in which political aspects of social relationships more frequently correspond to neighborly relationships. The fissioning of communities suggests that the compacting of political and neighborly aspects of social relationships integrate cooperative efforts. At the same time, however, the creation of smaller communities and more compacted relationships can also embitter or negate collective action.

The selection of a small rather than a larger community may have limited the description of a much wider range of urban and social phenomena. But the ‘smallness,’ both socio-politically as well as environmentally, provided a tangible, complex and ambiguous context that helped focus the analysis of the linkages within and without the community that defined how an urban network functions and connects different elements of the political structure as well as how the distribution of resources are conceptualized. Differently stated, more is not better; what is important is a methodology that has a critical focus appropriate to context and the actors that inhabit it.

Here, we can understand how a methodological strategy to select a representative sample of lower-class barrios can act to blind the study to the relationship between adjacent barrios. One method is not necessarily ‘better’ than the other in generalizing how community organizations function. By selecting communities that are geographically dispersed in the urban setting, communities are treated as isolates. Each community is considered as interacting with supra-local or government authorities and *not* as interacting with adjacent communities.

The contiguity of residential localities was an important aspect of political contests within these communities. Not only is there an ‘adjacency effect’ with respect to the physical connection of infrastructure, but also with respect to the negotiation of boundaries that would optimally result in an improved arena for political mobilization. One’s neighbors are particularly important when the boundary lines are unclear. The research strategy in this study brought some issues into focus and likely put other issues out of focus.

It is worth noting that in either research strategy, serendipitous events could fall outside the intended frame of study. Such surprises should be included as a reminder of the incompleteness of our understanding. Call it ad hoc-ness. Several blocks within this community received water but not as a result of community organizational efforts. The Director of Public Utilities was willing to add a small area onto a water project designated for an adjacent community because it would cost little. What is significant is not merely the smallness of the area, but its location. There is the luck of the draw to be considered: if this area was located in an inaccessible part of the city instead of being adjacent to an area in the process of receiving physical facilities, they would have received nothing. Their smallness would have been unimportant. Unexpected and a reminder that isolated individual action can be effective. The Director of Public Utilities recounted what he saw as apolitical assistance to a community in need:

One day we were putting in a tube so that the people would have water even though it was a provisional system — in Barrio Joya. So some neighbors in Barrio Olimpia came over. They asked me to come over to see the situation in Barrio Olimpia. At no time did they speak of Block ‘A’ or Block ‘B,’ but they told me, ‘Look, you are putting in a project to help the water service in Barrio Joya. And we are neighbors of Barrio Joya and we don’t have any water. What can we do?’ We went around that day with them with complete impartiality.

And we saw a small zone which lacked water. And I had put in the services for Barrio Tomas Herrera and I saw that these neighbors did not in fact have these services. So I ordered the water put in.

Why did I order the water to be put in when I became familiar with this situation? Because it was a very poor barrio, with the same socio-economic characteristics as its neighbors. So it fell within the philosophy we were putting into effect. So Barrio Olimpia had been like an infinity of other barrios. We said that, well, this is a piece that can be done quickly, without us needing special financing because it was relatively small. And water was put in because the community is small and very democratic meetings, as you yourself have seen, the people said they wanted water. (Nalven, pp. 408-09)

The time horizon of Barrio Olimpia – not a Cosmic Clock – the study described how a community is formed following the networks within and without, texture and intentionality. The cosmic clock and data sets of human settlement is purposefully oblivious to this ‘noise’ – the gods of Gilgamesh were likewise annoyed by this human noise and unleashed a flood.

Year 2 speculation is a compilation of disastrous events. The cynic’s view: why bother? The hedonist’s view: live for today since there will be no tomorrow.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cosmic_Calendar#Future_of_the_Earth_and_Solar_System_\(%22Year_2%22\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cosmic_Calendar#Future_of_the_Earth_and_Solar_System_(%22Year_2%22))

Reflections on the anthropocene — Avoiding the metric fallacy and apparent paradoxes

Carl Sagan’s Cosmic Clock is a metaphor that presents a hypothetical metric. The world does not, in fact, end on December 31 of his mythical year. On January 1, we simply repeat our annual cycle of seasons. The point is that we live on a human scale, not a universal metric.

Consider that millennia ago Zeno of Elea crafted another hypothetical metric.ⁱⁱⁱ He asked us to assume a race between the fastest athlete Achilles and the slow moving tortoise. The tortoise was given a head start. Achilles ran half the distance in a short measure of time and half of the remainder in another short measure of time. And so on and on. In this hypothetical world measured with the assumption that time and space are infinitely divisible,

Achilles never passes the tortoise. But, in reality, Achilles zips past the tortoise. The illusion that Achilles does not rests on a mistake of assuming that empirical reality reflects the mathematical hypothetical world of the infinite divisibility of time and space. Achilles is ancient representative of the anthropocene. He lives in the empirical world of humanity. He beats the tortoise in the foot race.

Sagan's Cosmic Clock presents another hypothetical mathematical representation of the evolution of the universe with several different scales of reality superimposed on each other: the beginning and end of the universe, the creation of earth and its atmosphere, the presence of flowers and biological life forms, the presence of humanity. A metaphor with a big bang ending. But I prefer a different a different metaphor and a different text. The Torah's first book is Genesis. And every year, we begin again with a narrative of a people. We have the opportunity to reinterpret, add and subtract meaning, look at literal, etymological, historical and current perspectives. We are not bound to a literal clock, but look to a promised land that is always waiting to be entered.

Other metrics might look to catastrophic events such as earthquakes and plagues and asteroid impacts or to simulated fear-filled catastrophes prophesying a future based on assumptions about a world in change. We've encountered these metrics before — the fashionable 'end-of-the-world' mindsets that ask if we only do X or Y, then we could hope for renewal.

The anthropocene is all of these and more.

A reasoned approach would play with all of them — but mindful, skeptical and stoic. And with a measure of humor.

How baffling it is that we imagined cities incinerated by alien bombs and death rays when all they really needed was Mother Nature and time.

— Rick Yancey, *The Infinite Sea*

What the caterpillar calls the end of the world the master calls a butterfly.

— Richard Bach