



Titel/Title:

Autor*innen/Author(s):

Veröffentlichungsversion/Published version:

Zeitschriftenartikel/Journal article

Empfohlene Zitierung/Recommended citation:

Verfügbar unter/Available at:

(wenn vorhanden, bitte den DOI angeben/please provide the DOI if available)

Zusätzliche Informationen/Additional information:

Sources of Civic Engagement in Latin America – Empirical Evidence from Rural Ecuadorian Communities

1. Introduction

The point of view that civic engagement is a central form of social capital (Putnam, 1993: 173) has become very popular in recent decades (Bebbington et al., 2008; Putnam, 1993, 2000). Since citizen activism became to be seen “as essential in holding the state to account and constituting grassroots mechanism for promoting democracy” (Bebbington et al., 2008: 2888), a vast quantity of empirical studies have been carried out to analyse the determinants and consequences of volunteering (Knack, 2002; Dasgupta, 2000). Particularly at the beginning of research into this area, civic engagement was considered to be a driving force behind a large number of societal benefits. Although empirical results since draw a more differentiated picture, most literature assumes civic engagement to be “necessary for democracy to take root” (Seligson, 1999: 343).

The concept of civic engagement has not only influenced the academic debate, but also the policy-making process in the field of development cooperation. International (← p. 1442) organisations such as the World Bank and the United Nations as well as the European Union and national governments have implemented many projects aimed at reinforcing the civic engagement of the people in developing countries (World Bank, 2006; UNDP, 2004; Bebbington et al., 2006, 2008; Seligson, 1999). A strong civil society which is highly engaged in public affairs is considered to be an effective instrument in the struggle against rural

poverty. The measures taken by these organisations are therefore particularly aimed at the local level in rural areas, since these are the most marginalised regions in developing countries (UNDP, 2004).

However, several drawbacks exist with regard to the research literature. First, in contrast to the high number of empirical studies which analyse civic engagement in the OECD countries, we know very little about volunteering and its sources in developing countries (Molenaers, 2005). Development projects are therefore often based on empirical results generated for industrialised countries. However, the question of whether, and to what extent, the causal relationships identified for industrialised countries can be transferred to a developing-country context remains an area of dispute (Butcher, 2003). Second, research on civic engagement in developing countries is dominated by case studies (Ospina et al., 2008; Ortiz, 1999). Due to a lack of data, quantitative research in this context is very much underrepresented and its great potential remains unexploited. Third, the majority of the quantitative studies focus on civic engagement at the national level and disregard existing sub-national differences (Putnam, 1993). Because of sub-national heterogeneities, particularly in developing countries, civic engagement at the local or regional level needs to be considered to a greater extent (Snyder, 2001).

This article aims to address the abovementioned gaps by analysing forms and determinants of civic engagement in the rural communities of the Ecuadorian province of “Cotopaxi”, which is located in the Central Andes. The study is based on quantitative and qualitative data generated during a five-month field study. The quantitative data set contains data for all 33

rural communities in the province of Cotopaxi and is analysed by multivariate statistical techniques. Additionally, expert interviews were carried out to ensure a context-specific operationalisation of the central variables. The years of observation were 2005 and 2006.

The communities in Cotopaxi were selected for the following reasons. First, the local level in Ecuador is characterised in particular by its lively civil society (Faust et al., 2008; Ospina et al., 2008; Espinosa, 2000). Furthermore, in contrast to other provinces, the relevant determinants in Cotopaxi show a great deal of variation among the communities and are representative for the region as a whole. For example, the ethnic composition of the population – with white people, mestizos, Afro-Ecuadorians and indigenous people – is in line with the main ethnic groups of Ecuador and the distribution of these variables reflects the situation in the whole country. Moreover, by analysing all communities in a single province, potential confounding variables such as the political framework can be kept constant ('most similar systems design', Przeworski and Teune, 1970; Seawright and Gerring, 2008). Hence, the selected communities are exceptionally suitable for the investigation of forms and sources of civic engagement.

This paper is structured as follows. Section two describes civic engagement in the selected communities in more detail. Section three outlines the hypotheses for the (← p. 1443) empirical investigation. Section four presents the operationalisation of the central variables and describes the procedures for the empirical analyses, while section five illustrates the empirical findings. This is followed by a discussion of the results and the policy implications.

2. Civic Engagement in Ecuadorian Rural Communities

Forms of civic engagement always depend on the specific cultural context. In Latin America, civic engagement “means the active involvement of society in fields which concern society as a whole” (Art. 15 LRMⁱ, own translation, Molina, 2004). This concept emphasises the cooperative arrangement of public affairs (GTZ, 2001; Carrasco, 2003; IIG, 2004; Ortiz, 1998, 2003). Due to a lack of data on civic engagement at the local level in rural Ecuadorian communities, it is necessary to find an appropriate way to operationalise the theoretical concept. Membership in formal associations, which is often used to operationalise social participation, is only suitable to a limited extent, since this operationalisation does not differentiate between active and passive participation (Molenaers, 2005; Knack and Keefer, 1997). It is only if people are actively engaged in the given task that social participation is associated with personal contacts and social interactions, and thus with the generation of social trust and norms of reciprocity (Eastis, 1998). Furthermore, no distinction is made between bonding and bridging forms of civic engagement. Bonding networks such as dogmatic ethnic groupings are exclusive, while bridging ties such as parish assemblies link different groups together and are open to others. The positive effects of civic engagement are usually connected with bridging, non-exclusive forms of volunteering (Putnam, 1993; Knack and Keefer, 1997). In addition, informal kinds of social participation such as volunteering in single-issue projects with concrete aims are not considered (Molenaers, 2005).

Expert interviews and workshops were conducted in order to avoid the abovementioned pitfalls and in order to ensure that the operationalisation was validⁱⁱ. Based on the qualitative

data, the following typical forms of participation in the Ecuadorian rural communities were identified.

a) *Mingas*. *Mingas* are a very traditional form of participation at the local level in the Latin American context. The people of a community come together and invest time and energy in a concrete project which usually lasts for several days, for example the planting of trees to avert erosion or the construction of a well (Ortiz, 1998, 1999). “A minga is an activity and a form of collective enforcement in which the whole of society participates to achieve something for the community. A minga has social character and encompasses the principle of reciprocity” (Torres, 2004, p. 90; Molina, 2004). When organising a Minga, collective enforcement is organised by scheduling the activity, rallying the community and supplying the relevant materials. It only takes place if the whole population of a community participates.ⁱⁱⁱ

b) *Annual strategy and activity plan*. The local governments have to develop an annual strategy and activity plan. In this plan, the local governments set out and determine policy strategies to enhance their community. The law^{iv} empowers citizens to influence the content of the plan. For example, citizens (← p. 1444) are given the opportunity to define local policy goals and the instruments used to achieve the defined objectives. If the citizens exercise this option, they have to organise assemblies in which the community comes together in order to define and articulate their demands (Torres, 2004).

c) *Assemblies on special issues*. The communities of Ecuador are affected by many problems, for example, in the sectors of the environment, education and health. In this context, a further platform for participation has evolved: special issues assemblies. In these assemblies people discuss, for example, environmental and health-related topics. The assemblies are aimed at

finding solutions or strategies to deal with the specific problems faced by the communities (Ortiz, 1999). They provide the opportunity to directly influence the policy strategies implemented by the local governments (Torres, 1999).

In all the interviews conducted, these forms of participation were considered to play a big role in the everyday lives of people in the rural communities of Cotopaxi. All these forms of participation are optional and only take place if nearly the entire population of a community participates. They are based on non-hierarchical, symmetrical ties among the members involved (Peralta et al., 2008). Molenaers (2005), who has identified similar forms of volunteering in Nicaraguan communities finds that it is essential to look for these types of indicators, which are, in the context of developing countries, alternative operationalisations for the horizontal and voluntary forms of civic engagement within the concept of social capital (Molenaers, 2005, p. 165).

Table one shows the distribution of the numbers of the different forms of civic engagement.

The data covers the period from January to May in both 2005 and 2006.^v

Table 1. Descriptive statistics

	N	Min	Max	Mean	Standard deviation	Variance coefficient
Mingas 2005	31	0	14	3.25	3.17	.98
Mingas 2006	31	0	17	3.88	4.47	1.15
Special issue assemblies 2005	31	0	10	1.9	2.24	1.17
Special issue assemblies 2006	31	0	6	1.9	1.94	1.02
Strategic plan assemblies 2005	31	0	6	1.59	1.5	.94
Strategic plan assemblies 2006	31	0	6	1.13	1.56	1.38

The level of civic engagement varies greatly among the local communities. The variance coefficient for the different forms of participation ranges between 0.94 and 1.38. Mingas, as the most traditional form of civic engagement, are also the most frequent. For example, one community had 17 mingas in the year 2005, while in other communities not a single minga was organised. 17 mingas is an outstanding number considering the fact that the community comes together for a period of several days for each minga. In three communities no mingas took place in either the first or in the second period. The number of assemblies on special issues as well as those held on the annual strategy plans indicates strong differences between the communities, even though the overall amount of these forms of participation is smaller than for mingas. The citizens of some communities make no use of the (← p. 1445) opportunity afforded to them to influence the annual strategy plan of their local government, while others organise assemblies more than once a month to articulate their demands. On average, citizens participated 1.9 times in special issue assemblies and 1.36 times in annual strategy planning assemblies over the five month periods. The correlation of civic engagement is very high between the two periods and among the three indicators. Citizens who organised many mingas also participated heavily in assemblies. Furthermore, the level of civic engagement remained constant over time.

3. Theories and Hypotheses

When analysing the sources of civic engagement, several factors have to be taken into account. The following section discusses the influence of socioeconomic, sociodemographic, political and cultural determinants on social participation in Ecuadorian rural communities.^{vi}

3.1 Socioeconomic and Sociodemographic Determinants

Wilson finds that the “[l]evel of education is the most consistent predictor of volunteering” (Wilson, 2000: 215; Putnam, 2000; Brehm and Rahn 1997). Education is usually accompanied by better knowledge of the possibilities available for civic engagement. This is of great importance in Ecuadorian communities, since new participatory mechanisms were institutionalised during the state reform process in the second half of the 1990s. For example, even though parish assemblies were organised before the reform process, the legal rights afforded to citizens to influence local policy goals and instruments were only introduced in 1999. In terms of the Ecuadorian province of Cotacachi, Peralta et al. (2008) state that a significant share of the population is still unaware of the new participatory mechanisms (pp. 2925). Higher levels of education are assumed to increase the probability of people being informed about these possibilities (Torres, 1999). Educated people are more interested in the overall state of society and are more willing to stand up for their interests in the public domain. Furthermore, “schools are communities with the potential to inculcate social norms, such as norms of engagement in collective action like civil and political activity” (Campbell, 2006, p. 104; Verba et al., 1995). By generating abilities such as the assimilation of information and the articulation of demands, education paves the way for civic and political engagement (Brehm and Rahn, 1997; Rothstein and Stolle, 2003). Hypothesis one is therefore as follows: *the higher the ratio of well-educated people, the greater the resourcefulness of the community, and thus the higher the level of civic engagement (H1).*

In the rural areas of Ecuador, many communities have to deal with high rates of unemployment. Similar to education rates, unemployment affects the resources available for

social participation. By analysing two participatory forums in Brasil, Coelho and Favareto (2008) find that the participants were typically well-educated and had permanent jobs (pp. 2946). Having a permanent job, i.e. being in employment, implies greater and easier social contact with one another people. Citizens who are in work are able to quickly exchange information about the given situation and the relevant problems facing their community. They can use the social networks (← p. 1446) at the work place to organise mingas or parish assemblies. In contrast, unemployment limits the opportunities available for civic engagement and decreases people's motivation to participate (Bebbington et al., 2008). *Hypothesis two is based on the assumption that a high level of employment facilitates community group activity and therefore postulates that a high rate of employment is associated with a high level of civic engagement (H2).*

Furthermore, the Ecuadorian communities in question vary greatly with regard to their demographic structure. The demographic structure is important for the level of civic engagement, since old and young people typically differ in their propensity to volunteer. From middle-age on, the level of civic engagement usually decreases (Halpern, 2005). Because young people still have much of their life ahead of them, their motivation to create a worthwhile living situation for themselves and their families is higher than that of old people. Young people tend to be more willing and able to be involved in public affairs and the strategic planning of the development of the community. *Therefore it is assumed that communities with a high ratio of old people are associated, ceteris paribus, with a low level of civic engagement (H3).*

Moreover, geographical conditions also influence the potential to organise mingas and assemblies. In rural Ecuadorian communities, the population of some communities is highly scattered. Distances in this region represent a real problem due to poor roads (or the complete absence of roads) and a lack of a means of transport. The opportunities available for getting in touch with others are thus low to non-existent. Therefore, population density affects the opportunity structure of civic engagement. In scattered communities, people have to spend more time and money cooperating in order to be able to organise mingas or assemblies. In contrast, in very densely populated communities cooperation is easier because of easy access to relevant information and the close proximity of other people (Torres, 2004). *It is assumed that a low population density is associated with a weak level of civic engagement (H4).*

3.2 Political Factors

According to the law^{vii}, the local Ecuadorian governments are required to reinforce the social participation of the people (Torres, 2004; GTZ, 2004). It can be assumed that local political actors encourage the civic engagement of citizens when this is perceived as benefiting people's living situation. Policy strategies that represent the demands of society and which are characterised by fairness, makes civil society more willing to participate (Molenaers, 2005; Booth and Bauer Richard, 1998; Kaufmann et al., 2004; Skopcol et al., 2000). In contrast, hierarchical forms of political mechanisms such as clientelism, patronage or corruption make horizontal ties in the form of mingas and assemblies less likely. *Thus, the level of civic engagement should be relatively high in communities with local governments that are highly engaged in community affairs (H5).*

Furthermore, it can be assumed that the provision of public utilities such as drinking water, roads, schools, and parish halls has an effect on civic engagement. Two opposing hypotheses can be derived.

First, if a community is characterised by an extensive provision of public utilities, the necessity to be engaged in public affairs is lower. The state assumes the (← p. 1447) responsibility of supplying public utilities and social participation becomes an unattractive option (the “crowding-out” hypothesis, Oorschot and Arts, 2005). In contrast, when the community lacks basic services, the organisation of mingas or parish assemblies to discuss and improve living conditions in the community is much more pressing (Molenaers, 2005). *A low coverage of public utilities might therefore be associated with a high level of civic engagement (H6a)*. According to the second hypothesis, the existence of public utilities creates the conditions required for civic engagement to emerge in the first place (Halpern, 2005). From this perspective, the adequate provision of public utilities is seen as a resource of the community which enables investment in civic engagement. Without public utilities such as roads or parish halls, people would not have the opportunity to get together or they would have to spend more time and money on civic engagement than people in communities with a high rate of public utility coverage (Rothstein and Stolle, 2003). *Public utilities could make civic engagement flourish and a high rate of utility coverage might correspond with a high level of civic engagement (H6b)*.

3.3 Cultural Determinants

Ecuadorian rural communities are characterised by an ethnically very heterogeneous society encompassing white, indigenous, Afro-Ecuadorian and mestizian people. Since the

indigenous and the Afro-Ecuadorian people were marginalised and repressed in the course of history, the distrust between the different ethnic groups is still very high. However, mingas or parish assemblies require the participation of the whole community and therefore the collaboration of the different ethnic groups. Working together in a minga or in an assembly is easier if the people have the same ethnic roots and share the same norms and values (Alesina and La Ferrara, 2000; Zamosc, 2003; Assies, 2000; Knack and Keefer, 1997). “[T]he greater the social and cultural differences between people, the more difficult it tends to be for them to form social connections, and the higher the probability of direct exposure to prejudice, discrimination and conflict” (Halpern, 2005, p. 260). Ethnically fragmented communities make cooperation among the different groups less likely (Alesina and La Ferrara, 2000; van Cott, 2006). *It can therefore be expected that ethnic heterogeneity is associated with low levels of volunteering (H7).*

Moreover, in the Ecuadorian context, a significant part of the population is made up of indigenous people. A lot of case studies suggest that indigenous people are more likely to participate in public affairs because participation is deeply anchored in the indigenous tradition as an instrument to express their own demands (Torres, 1999; Peralta, 2008; Muñoz 1999, Ortiz, 1999). The case studies reveal that the indigenous tradition is characterised by norms of reciprocity as well as non-hierarchical forms of cooperation (Jackson and Warren, 2005). Civic engagement as a form of participation in public life might be taken more for granted in these communities than in others (Muñoz, 1999; Bebbington, 2001). Furthermore, indigenous people had previously been living in disastrous conditions. Cooperation or working together was the only possible way in the struggle against repression (Ortiz, 2003;

Bebbington and Perreault, 2001; Jackson and Warren, 2005). Hence, according to hypothesis eight, a high ratio of indigenous people corresponds to a high level of civic engagement (H8).

(← p. 1448)

4. Measurement, Method and Data

The quantitative data was collected with the support of the local governments in the rural communities and validated by representatives of civil society as well as by international donor organisations. In the following, the operationalisation of the context-specific variables is discussed in further detail (see table three below for a complete list of variables).

The level of *civic engagement* was measured by the number of a) mingas, b) assemblies on special issues and c) assemblies on the annual strategy plan. As the correlation between the level of civic engagement between the two periods was high (Pearson's r between .54 and .75), the mean for each of the three indicators was calculated. The correlation matrix indicates that the three indicators measure one latent dimension, which has also been substantiated by a factor analysis. The eigenvalue is 2.05 and the identified factor explains 68.3 per cent of the overall variance. The three indicators were then summed up in an additive index. Due to the different ranges, the z-standardised values were used to avoid the weighting of particular indicators.

A close look at the function of the local governments is required for the operationalisation of the *policy output of the local governments* in the communities. The main task of the local

governments is not the provision of services or goods, but rather transferring societal demands in their communities to other government levels. Furthermore, according to the law^{viii}, local governments should cooperate with other local governments to empower the marginalised rural areas to participate in the political system. Therefore, two main indicators for policy output can be identified: a) The number of petitions for community goods submitted at other levels of governments; and b) the number of meetings with other local governments concerning special issues (Torres, 2004; GTZ, 2004). Analogous to the level of civic engagement, data for a) and b) were compiled for the period from January to May in both 2005 and 2006. The forms of activity are highly correlated with each other and between the two periods. The means of the indicators are based on one factor. Therefore, the z-standardised values of the indicators were summarized. Table two shows the results of the factor analyses.

Table 2. Factor analyses

<i>Civic engagement</i>		<i>Policy output of local government</i>	
Indicator	Factor 1	Indicator	Factor 1
Mingas	.87	Petitions for community goods	.87
Special issue assemblies	.69	Special issue meetings with other local governments	.87
Strategic plan assemblies	.90	Eigenvalue	1.52
Eigenvalue	2.05	Explained variance in %	75.86
Explained variance in %	68.28	N	30
N	30		

Notes: Principal components analysis: varimax rotation

Data for the variables which were not described in detail were taken from the national statistical office of Ecuador (SIISE, 2004). (← p. 1449)

Given the structure of the data set with two points of observation, multivariate cross-sectional ordinary least squares regressions were run.

5. Empirical Findings

Before discussing the results of the regression analyses in detail, we will focus on the interrelationships of the independent variables. The correlation matrix reveals some interesting details. Communities with a high population density are also characterised by a relatively high coverage of public utilities and a high level of education. Therefore, the provision of public utilities and education is particularly high when people live near to each other. The share of old people in these communities is typically high and indigenous people form a minority part of the population. In contrast, indigenous communities are relatively scattered communities with a low coverage of public utilities, a low level of education, and relatively young citizens. In the following, the effect of each variable on civic engagement is analysed by controlling for the effect of all other alternative explanatory variables.

In order to ensure unbiased, efficient and robust estimates, it has to be verified whether the Gauss Markov assumptions are fulfilled. By conducting regression diagnostics, two potential sources of inefficiency and biasedness of the estimators can be observed. First, the Cook-Weisberg test for the overall estimations indicates heteroscedasticity ($\text{Var}(u|x) \neq 0$) and the Szroeter-test shows that the heteroscedasticity is caused by the ratio of indigenous people. When the ratio of indigenous people is high, the variance of the residuals becomes higher and therefore the point estimate more inefficient. The plots of the residuals against the predictors illustrate that the values of two units are responsible for the heteroscedasticity. Due to a missing theoretical indication of omitted variables, the problem can be solved econometrically by running the OLS regressions with White (1980) robust standard errors^{ix}. Furthermore, all models documented were also specified with dummies for the two units, to ensure that the

empirical findings for the integrated variables do not depend on the two units mentioned. The results remain the same.

Table 3. Hypotheses and operationalisations

Independent variable	Expected influence on civic engagement	Operationalisation (data source)
<i>Socioeconomic and sociodemographic resources</i>		
Level of education	positive	Percentage of youngsters between the ages of 12 and 17 who attend secondary school (SIISE, 2004)
Unemployment	negative	Number of economically inactive individuals in relation to the working-age population (SIISE, 2004)
Population density	positive	Population in relation to area in square kilometres (SIISE, 2004 and provincial government)
Demographic structure	negative	People older than 65 years in relation to the overall population (SIISE, 2004)
<i>Political determinants</i>		
Policy output of local governments	positive	Number of petitions submitted at other sub-national levels from January to May in both 2005 and 2006 (own elevation) Number of meetings with other local governments from January to May in both 2005 and 2006 (own elevation)
Public utilities	positive	Proportion of people supplied with public utilities in relation to the overall population (SIISE, 2004)
<i>Cultural determinants</i>		
Ethnic fragmentation	positive	According to Alesina and La Ferrara (2000), the ethnic fragmentation is measured by $1 - \sum s_{ki}^2$ where i represents the specific community and k the specific ethnic group (here: white, afroecuadorians, mestizos, black, indigenous). s_{ki} is the share of the ethnic group in a specific community (SIISE, 2004 and own calculation)
Indigenous people	positive	Proportion of indigenous people in relation to the overall population (SIISE, 2004)

(← Table 3 p. 1451)

Second, high β values for one unit in the models integrating the policy output of the local governments indicate that this unit has a high influence on the overall estimation (=influential case). The affected community shows a low level of civic engagement in combination with a high level of cooperation on the part of the local government. To ensure that the empirical findings are not based on the influential case, models two to four were also specified with a

dummy for this case (see table four). All other assumptions required for the OLS regressions were met. The techniques used are illustrated in table three. To make the results comparable, the root mean squared error is presented.

There are two missing values for the level of civic engagement and one missing value for the policy output of the local government. To allow comparisons among the different model specifications, the regressions are estimated for the 30 communities with a full data set. Due to the problem of having “too few cases/ too many variables”, it is not appropriate to include all relevant variables in one model. Therefore, several models were specified, integrating different combinations of the independent variables. Table three/four shows the empirical findings of the multivariate (← p. 1450) regression analyses for a selection of model specifications^x (values in bold indicate significant results that at least attain the 5 per cent level). Model one tests the socioeconomic and sociodemographic variables, while the cultural and political variables were assessed in model two. Models three to five only integrate the variables which had the greatest effect in the previous estimates.

The empirical result for the demographic structure in model one corresponds to the theoretical prediction. Hence, communities with a high ratio of old people tend to show lower levels of civic engagement. But the results indicate only a weak effect. The same holds true for the population density. If people live close to each other, the probability of volunteering is slightly higher. Again, the coefficient and the standard error are indicative of a very weak effect. According to the theoretical predictions, the impact of unemployment on the level of civic engagement is negative. However, due to the high standard error, the coefficient is far

Table 4. Determinants of civic engagement: multivariate analyses

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
Constant					
<i>Socioeconomic and sociodemographic determinants</i>					
Unemployment	-.14 (.10)	-	-	-	-
Educational level	-.10 (.04)*	-	-.04 (.02) ¹	-	-.05 (.02)*
			-.04 (.03) ²		
Population density	.01 (.00)	-	-	-	-
Demographic structure	-.17 (.19)	-	-	-	-
<i>Political determinants</i>					
Policy output of the local governments	-	.28 (.24) ¹	.17 (.22) ¹	.28 (.22) ¹	-
		.59 (.27)* ²	.50 (.22)* ²	.60 (.26)* ²	
Public utilities	-	-.00 (.02) ¹	-	-	-
		-.00 (.02) ²			
<i>Cultural determinants</i>					
Ethnic fragmentation	-	-.11(2.25) ¹	-	-	-
Indigenous people ³	-	.56 (2.27) ²			
		.05 (.02)** ¹	.04 (.02)* ¹	.05 (.02)** ¹	.04 (.02)*
		.05 (.02)** ²	.04 (.02)** ²	.05 (.02)** ²	
R2 (Root MSE)	.40 (2.10)*	.47 (1.98)* ¹	.52 (1.85)** ¹	.47 (1.90)** ¹	.50 (1.84)** ²
		.53 (1.91)** ²	.57 (1.77)** ²	.52 (1.84)** ²	
N	30	30	30	30	30

Notes: *p ≤ 0.05, **p ≤ 0.01, ***p ≤ 0.001, White (1980) robust standard errors in brackets; ¹models are estimated without the dummy for the influential case; ²models are estimated including the dummy for the influential case; ³because of the weak exponential course of the variable ‘indigenous people’, the estimations were also specified with the logarithmic values of this variable without a difference to the documented empirical findings. The Ramsey test shows that the linear models are adequately specified. Histograms and p-p-plots indicate normally distributed residuals. Furthermore, the variance inflation factors are examined to detect multicollinearity. The VIF-values are far below the normally used limit of 4 and therefore unproblematic. The deviation between the observed values and the predicted values, which indicate outliers, is smaller than three standard deviations.

(← Table 4 p. 1454)

from being significant. Furthermore, the influence of the coverage of public utilities is close to zero and neither a positive nor a negative effect on social participation is observable. Similar (**← p. 1451**) results can be found for the level of ethnic fragmentation. Ethnically very heterogeneous communities have the same level of civic engagement as very homogenous ones.

Arguably the most striking result is the revealed negative effect of the level of education on civic engagement, which contradicts the theoretical assumptions. To ensure that the effect of education is not caused by omitted variables, a variety of models were estimated including control variables such as economic wealth, the living conditions with regard to housing and health or the geographical region of the community. The coefficients are negative in all models when including the rival explanatory factors. Taking the specific context of the rural communities in developing countries into account, this striking result becomes more comprehensible. The low educational level in these contexts means that scarcely anybody attends, or has attended, school. For instance, in one of the analysed communities the proportion of people having completed primary education is just 9.6 per cent. A low educational level in this case means a low variance within the community, because more than 90 per cent in this community have not completed any level of education at all. Therefore, it can be suggested that an increasing level of education is associated with a rising educational fragmentation in the community population. In developing-nation contexts, the population often only marginally benefits from an enhanced overall educational situation. By correlating the education level with a measurement of educational heterogeneity^{xi}, which considers the distribution of the educational achievements within a community, initial empirical results

corroborate this assumption. Including educational heterogeneity in the regression analyses demonstrates that volunteering is less likely when educational fragmentation is high. Thus, if the people benefit very unequally from educational possibilities, an increasing educational level might inhibit horizontal and bridging forms of civic engagement.

The effect of an active local government (policy output) on the level of civic engagement is positive in all models. However, the empirical results differ depending on whether the dummy is included or not. All models without the dummy show a positive but weak influence. Thus, the results clearly demonstrate that this weak influence is caused by a single case unit with an uncommon combination of values for the output level and the level of civic engagement. The effect in those models which include the dummy is positive and significant, at the 5 per cent level. Communities with governments which translate the demands of citizens to other levels of the political system or cooperate with each other also demonstrate a high level of volunteering. Governments which themselves demonstrate a high level of civic engagement also provide incentives for the citizens to cooperate as well.

The greatest and most stable effect can be observed for the ratio of indigenous people. In the majority of the specifications the effect is significant at the 1 per cent level. The empirical findings confirm the theoretical assumption that a high ratio of indigenous people is accompanied with a high level of engagement in public affairs. This effect is stable even when taking account of all other factors. Hence, neither a passive local government nor a low population density can hamper the civic engagement of the indigenous people. The root mean squared error of 1.772 and the F-test indicate that the most efficient model is model three,

estimated with the dummy, the educational level, the policy output and the ratio of indigenous people. (← p. 1453) It is also significant at the 0.1 per cent level.

Table 5. Comparison of hypotheses and empirical findings

Hypotheses	Theoretical assumptions	Empirical findings
H1 (Level of education)	positive	negative
H2 (Unemployment)	negative	slightly negative
H3 (Population density)	positive	slightly positive
H4 (Demographic structure)	negative	slightly negative
H5 (Policy output of local governments)	positive	positive
H6a (Public utilities)	negative	no relation
H6b (Public utilities)	positive	no relation
H7 (Ethnic heterogeneity)	negative	no relation
H8 (Indigenous people)	positive	strongly positive

6. Conclusion

In contrast to the vast quantity of empirical studies on civic engagement in the OECD countries, very little data is available for the developing-country context. This is unsatisfactory when one considers that civic engagement has been highlighted as important by a great number of international donor organisations and national political actors which have implemented numerous projects in order to strengthen the civic engagement of the society. The importance of an active civil society is emphasised in particular for local rural areas. However, there is no comprehensive understanding of what volunteering means in this context and what the main driving forces behind it are. Systematic empirical analyses are necessary to test whether the hypotheses assumed by policy makers are valid. This paper has attempted to fill this gap and to determine the patterns of civic engagement and its sources at

the local level in the 33 rural local communities in the Ecuadorian province of Cotopaxi. Various socioeconomic, political and cultural variables as well as their influence on the level of volunteering were analysed. So what are the main empirical findings and what are the implications?

From a descriptive perspective, there is a remarkable variance of civic engagement between the communities as well as a remarkable level of civic engagement within some communities. For instance, the civil society of one community organised at least three mingas per month – all of which lasted several days – while others failed to hold a single minga in the period of observation.

With respect to the explanatory dimension, there is good and bad news. In contrast to the theoretical assumptions and the opinions and fears of the experts interviewed, the level of cooperation in ethnically heterogeneous communities is similar to the level of civic engagement in homogenous communities. Thus, the expected prejudices and distrust against members of other ethnic groups associated with low levels of civic engagement cannot be sustained empirically. Against the historical background of repression of the indigenous and Afro-Ecuadorian population, this is a remarkable result. (← p. 1454)

In contrast to the expectations, it emerged that the level of education had a negative impact on civic engagement. While education is assumed to be an “extremely powerful predictor of civic engagement” (Putnam, 2000, p.186) in the context of OECD countries, the positive effect cannot be observed in the communities analysed. A more detailed investigation

suggests that increasing educational levels, especially in rural areas of developing countries, might be associated with an increase in educational heterogeneity and fragmentation. “[R]ising educational levels produce an inequitable distribution of the opportunities for educational advancement” and thus, might hamper engagement in horizontal, bridging forms of volunteering (Campbell, 2006, p. 53). The results demonstrate that the relationship between the level of education and civic engagement is less self-evident than expected and that causal mechanisms may be different in different contexts.

Additionally, the level of civic engagement depends on the policy output of the local governments. If politicians are actively engaged in improving the living situation of the people in their community and cooperate with each other, civil society follows this example and shows a high level of social participation. Hence, the civic engagement of public and private actors is complementary.

The strongest and most robust influence of all predictors analysed is the share of indigenous people in the population. This suggests that the level of civic engagement mainly depends on the cultural tradition and the extent to which norms of reciprocity and helpfulness are rooted in the population. Putnam (1993) has termed the empirical findings of the cultural roots of civic engagement “a depressing observation for those who view institutional reform as a strategy for political change” (Putnam, 1993, p. 183). This perspective is very gloomy. Knowing about the great potential of indigenous people to have a strong civil society does not necessarily mean that political governance is of no avail, but it might help to mobilise less active parts of the society.

Regarding the patterns and sources of civic engagement in a rural region within the context of a developing country, what lessons have we learned? One is that civic engagement has deep cultural roots. This seems to suggest that the effectiveness of development projects that seek to reinforce people's civic engagement by modifying political or socio-economic conditions is rather limited. The study has also shown that an effective empowerment of civil society not only requires the provision of opportunities but also the guarantee that people will benefit equally from these. Whether the great hopes associated with civic engagement are really justified and whether a strong civil society is really a potent instrument in the struggle against rural poverty are questions that belong to another research project that is yet to be examined. However, the active involvement of people in public affairs is of value in its own right and is necessary to help keep democracy alive. (← p. 1455)

i. LRM = Ley de Régimen Municipal

ii. The people interviewed were representatives of sub-national governments as well as representatives of international and national donor organizations.

iii. In some Latin American regions there is the possibility of opting out of a minga. If someone opts out, he or she pays a fee instead of participating. This possibility does not exist in the communities examined.

iv. Ley Orgánica de las Juntas Parroquiales Rurales

v. The period from January to May was chosen for the comparison because community festivities start as of June onwards. These festivities, which vary among the communities with regard to frequency and date, are often accompanied by forms of civic engagement, especially mingas. Therefore, data collected in June and later are deemed to be invalid. Data were compiled over two periods to minimize the possibility that some communities had to deal with external influences such as environmental shocks in one year which would present a skewed level of civic engagement.

vi. However, the causal directions are not unambiguous. The literature also discusses the effect of civic engagement on some of the determinants mentioned, such as government performance or the level of coverage with public utilities (Knack, 2002). These relationships are mutually reinforcing and the hypotheses can be conversely formulated.

vii. See endnote iv.

viii. Ley Orgánica de las Juntas Parroquiales Rurales

ix. When running the OLS regressions with robust standard errors, the normal variance covariance matrix is weighted by the non-constant error variance. Robust standard errors therefore tend to be larger.

x. Due to the vast quantity of possible model specifications, not all model specifications can be displayed. For example, several estimations were run to control for the influence of welfare, geographical region or the level of illiteracy. The results do not vary from the presented results.

xi. According to the ethnic heterogeneity, the educational heterogeneity is calculated by $1 - \sum s_{ki}^2$ where i represents the specific community and k the specific level (here: no school, completion of primary education, completion of secondary education and higher institutions). s_{ki} is the share of the group with a certain level of education in a specific community.

References

Zamosc, L. (2003) Agrarian Protest and the Indian Movement in the Ecuadorian Highlands.

In: Langer, E.D., and Munoz, E. (eds) *Contemporary Indigenous Movements in Latin America*, (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources),.

Assies, W. (2000) Indigenous peoples and reform of the State in pp. 37-64 *Latin America*. In:

W. Assies, G. van der Haar, A.J. Hoekema (eds) *The Challenge of Diversity. Indigenous peoples and reform of the State in Latin America*, (Amsterdam, The Netherlands: Thela-Thesis), pp.3-22.

Espinosa, M.F. (2000) Ethnic politics and State reform in Ecuador. In: Assies, W., van der

Haar, G., Hoekema, A.J. (eds) *The Challenge of Diversity. Indigenous peoples and reform of the State in Latin America*, (Amsterdam, The Netherlands: Thela-Thesis), pp.3-22

Jackson, J.E., and Warren, K.B. (2005) Indigenous Movements in Latin America, 1992-2004:

Controversies, Ironies, New Directions. *Annual Review Anthropology*, 34, pp. 549-573.

-
- Coelho, V.S., and Favareto, A. (2008) Questioning the Relationship between Participation and Development. A Case Study of the Vale do Ribeira, Brazil. *World Development* 36(12), pp. 2937-2952.
- Peralta, P.O., Ortiz, A.S., and Arboleda, M. (2008) Neo-Corporatism and Territorial Economic Development: The Ecuadorian Indigenous Movement in Local Government. *World Development* 36(12), pp. 2921-2936.
- Torres, V.H. (1999) El Desarrollo Local en el Ecuador: Discursos, Tendencias y Desafíos. In: M. Hidalgo (ed.) *Ciudadanías emergentes. Experiencias democráticas y el desarrollo local*, (Quito, Ecuador: Abya-Yala), pp. 15-38.
- Alesina, A., and La Ferrara, E. (2000) Participation in Heterogeneous Communities. *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 115(3), pp. 847-904.
- Bebbington, A. (2001) El Capital social y la intensificación de las estrategias de vida: organizaciones locales e islas de sostenibilidad en los Andes rurales, in: A. Bebbington & V.H. Torres (eds) *Capital Social en los Andes*, (Quito, Ecuador: Abya-Yala), pp. 11-38.
- Bebbington, A., and Perreault, T. (2001) Vidas Rurales y Acceso a Recursos Naturales: El Caso de Guamote. In A. Bebbington and V.H. Torres (eds) *Capital Social en los Andes*, (Quito, Ecuador: Abya-Yala), pp. 69-104.
- Bebbington, A., Abramovay, R. and Chiriboga, M. (2008) Social Movements and the Dynamics of Rural Territorial Development in Latin America. In: *World Development*, 36 (12), pp. 2874-2887.

-
- Bebbington, A., Woolcock, M., Guggenheim, S., and Olson, E. (Eds.) (2006) *The Search for Empowerment. Social Capital as Idea and Practice at the Worldbank* (West Hartford, CT: Kumarian Press).
- Bebbington, A., Bebbington, D.H., Bury, J., Langan, J., and J.P. Munoz (2008) Mining and Social Movements: Struggles over Livelihood and Rural Territorial Development in the Andes. *World Development*, 36(12), pp. 2888-2905.
- Booth, J., and Bayer Richard, P. (1998) Civil Society and Political Context in Central America. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 42(1), pp. 33-46.
- Brehm, J., and Rahn, W. (1997) Individual Level Evidence for the Causes and Consequences of Social Capital. *American Journal of Political Science*, 41(3), pp. 999-1023.
- Butcher, J. (2003) A Humanistic Perspective on the Volunteer-Recipient Relationship: A Mexican Study. In P. Dekker and L. Halman (eds) *The Values of Volunteering: Cross-Cultural Perspectives*, (New York: Kluwer), pp. 111-126.
- Campbell, D. (2006) What is Education's Impact on Civic and Social Engagement? In: Centre for Educational Research and Innovation OECD (ed) *Measuring the Effects of Education on Health and Civic/Social Engagement*, (Paris, France: OECD), pp. 25-126.
- Carrasco, D. (2003) Ecuador: descentralización y participación ciudadana, proyecto de estudio e investigación. In F. Carrión (ed) *Procesos de descentralización en la Comunidad Andina*, (Quito, Ecuador: FLACSO), pp. 309-342.

-
- Curtis, J., Baer, D., and Grabb, E. (2001) Nations of Joiners. Explaining Voluntary Association Membership in Democratic Societies. *American Sociological Review*, 66(6), pp. 783-805.
- Dasgupta, P. (2000) Overview: Economic Progress and the Idea of Social Capital. In P. Dasgupta and I. Serageldin (eds) *Social Capital. A Multifaceted Perspective* (Washington, DC: World Bank), pp. 325-401.
- Eastis, C. (1998) Organizational Diversity and the Production of Social Capital: One of these Groups Is Not Like the Other. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 42(1), pp. 66-77.
- Faust, J., Arneth, F., von der Goltz, N., Harbers I., Illerhues J. and Schloms, M. (2008) *Political fragmentation, decentralization and development cooperation: Ecuador in the Latin American context* (Bonn: German Development Institute).
- GTZ, Deutsche Gesellschaft für technische Zusammenarbeit, (2001) *Competencias: ¿Que descentralizar? Un estudio de las posibilidades de la descentralización administrativa en el Ecuador* (Quito, Ecuador: GTZ).
- GTZ, Deutsche Gesellschaft für technische Zusammenarbeit, (2004) *Juntas Parroquiales de Cotopaxi. Línea Base* (Quito, Ecuador: GTZ).
- Halpern, D. (2005) *Social Capital* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press).
- IIG, Institut Internacional de Governabilidad, (2004) *República de Ecuador. Perfiles Nacionales de Governabilidad* (Barcelona, Spain: IIG).
- Kaufmann, D., Kraay, A., and Mastruzzi, M. (2004) Governance Matters III. *World Bank Economic Review*, 18(2), pp. 253-287.

-
- Knack, S. (2002) Social Capital and the Quality of Government: Evidence From the States. *American Journal of Political Science*, 46(4), pp. 772-785.
- Knack, S., and Keefer, P. (1997) Does Social Capital Have an Economic Payoff? A Cross-Country Investigation. *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 112(4), pp. 1251-1288.
- Molenaers, N. (2005) Tracing the contradictions: associational life versus informal networks in a third world context. In S. Roßteutscher (ed) *Democracy and the role of associations. political, organizational and social contexts*, (London: Routledge), pp. 153-167.
- Molina, M.B. (2004) *Análisis y caracterización de escenarios de participación ciudadana. Estudio de caso de la provincia de Cotopaxi* (Quito, Ecuador: FLACSO).
- Muñoz, J.P. (1999) Indígenas y gobiernos locales: entre la plurinacionalidad y la ciudadanía cantonal. In M. Hidalgo (ed) *Ciudadanías emergentes. Experiencias democráticas y el desarrollo local*, (Quito, Ecuador: Abya-Yala), pp. 39-62.
- Oorschot, W., and Arts, W. (2005) The Social Capital of European Welfare States. The Crowding out Hypothesis Revisited. *Journal of European Social Policy*, 15(1), pp. 5-26.
- Ortiz, S. (1998) *Participación Ciudadana. Análisis y propuestas para la reforma del Estado*, (Quito, Ecuador: UASB).
- Ortiz, S. (1999) Participación ciudadana y desarrollo local: Algunas pistas de reflexión. In M. Hidalgo (ed) *Ciudadanías emergentes. Experiencias democráticas y el desarrollo local*, (Quito, Ecuador: Abya-Yala), pp. 63-86.

-
- Ortiz, S. (2003) *Experiencia Participativa del Cantón Cotacachi. 1996-2002. Sistematización. Módulo de gestión social de los recursos naturales* (Quito, Ecuador: FLACSO).
- Ospina, P., Santillana A. and Arboleda, M. (2008) Neo-Corporatism and Territorial Economic Development: The Ecuadorian Indigenous Movement in Local Government. *World Development* 36 (12), pp. 2921-2936.
- Przeworski, A. and Teune, H. (1970) *The Logic of Comparative Inquiry* (Malabar, FL: Krieger Publishing).
- Putnam, R.D. (1993) *Making democracy work. Civic traditions in modern Italy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press).
- Putnam, R.D. (2000) *Bowling alone. The collapse and revival of American community* (New York: Simon and Schuster).
- Rothstein, B., and Stolle, D. (2003), Social Capital, Impartiality and the Welfare State: An Institutional Approach. In M. Hooghe and D. Stolle (eds) *Generating Social Capital: Civil Society and Institutions in Comparative Perspective*, (New York: Palgrave). pp. 191-210
- Seawright, J., and Gerring, J. (2008) Case-Selection Techniques in Case Study Research: A Menu of Qualitative and Quantitative Options. *Political Research Quarterly*, 61(2), pp. 294-308.
- Seligson, A.L. (1999) Civic Association and Democratic Participation in Central America: A Test of the Putnam Thesis. *Comparative Political Studies*, 32(3), pp. 342-362.
- SIISE (2004): *Base de Datos. Sistema Integrado de Indicadores Sociales del Ecuador, Gobierno del Ecuador* (Quito, Ecuador: SIISE).

-
- Skopcol, T., Marshall, G., and Munso, Z. (2000) A Nation of Organizers: The Institutional Origins of Civic Voluntarism in the United States. *American Political Science Review*, 94(3), 527-546.
- Snyder, R. (2001) Scaling Down: The Subnational Comparative Method. *Studies in Comparative International Development*, 36(1), 93-110.
- Torres, M.P. (2004) *Las Juntas Parroquiales Rurales del Ecuador como nueva instancia de gobierno seccional autónomo: ventajas, limitaciones y perspectivas* (Quito, Ecuador: FLACSO).
- United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) (2004): *Democracy in Latin America. Towards a Citizens' Democracy* (New York: UNDP).
- Van Deth, J.W., and Newton, K. (2005) *Foundations of Comparative Politics. Democracies of the Modern World* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press).
- Van Cott, D.L. (2006) Multiculturalism versus Neoliberalism in Latin America. In K. Banting and W. Kymlicka (eds) *Multiculturalism and the Welfare State: Recognition and Redistribution in Contemporary Democracies*, (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press), pp. 272-291.
- Verba, S., Schlozman, K.L., and Brady, H.E. (1995) *Voice and Equality: Civic Voluntarism in American Politics* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press).
- Weingast, B. (1998) Constructing Trust: The Political and Economic Roots of Ethnic and Regional Conflicts. In K. Soltan, E. Uslander, and V. Haufler (eds) *Institutions and Social Order*, (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press), pp. 163-200.
