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# **Alternative and Indigenous knowledges in Quito's resilience strategy**

A discursive analysis of power relations

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## **Abstract**

Resilience has become a recent buzzword among urban planners who intent to increase a city's capacity to function despite disasters. Yet, scholars have raised concerns about the impact of resilience strategies on marginalized groups which are unproportionally exposed to and affected by environmental harm. Power relations inherently influence environmental governance and its outcomes for equity and justice; thus, this thesis investigates how processes of power shape 'for whom' and 'to what' resilience is built in Quito, Ecuador, particularly focusing on Indigenous peoples. Dimensions of equity and justice are analyzed by looking at both the recognition of citizens' and Indigenous knowledges and the space that is given to them to participate.

For this purpose, a case study design is applied combining data collected through interviews with officials of the Municipality of Quito, participatory conversations with Indigenous and Afro-Descendant students, and the analysis of official documents. A political ecology framework and critical discourse analysis sharpen the examination of representations of power in resilience planning. The findings demonstrate that power relations both constrain and augment the equitable potential of Quito's resilience strategy, on the one hand, limiting the agency of citizens and Indigenous persons in deciding 'to what' and 'for whom' resilience should be built while on the other hand opening up space for the inclusion of their voices in the design of particular actions.

*Keywords:* urban resilience governance, power relations, Indigenous peoples, knowledges, Quito, 100RC

## **Resumen**

La resiliencia se ha convertido en una cuestión importante en la gobernanza medioambiental de las ciudades para prepararlas a funcionar incluso en casos de desastres. Todavía, científicos han expresado su preocupación por el impacto de las estrategias de resiliencia en los grupos marginados, que están afectados de forma desproporcionada por los daños medioambientales. Por eso, esta tesis investiga cómo los procesos de poder determinan 'para quién' y 'para qué' se construye la resiliencia en Quito, Ecuador, centrándose especialmente en los pueblos indígenas. Las relaciones de poder influyen esencialmente en los resultados de la gobernanza medioambiental para la equidad y la justicia que se analizan a través del reconocimiento de los saberes ciudadanos e indígenas y del espacio que se les da para participar en la creación de la estrategia de resiliencia.

Para ello, se aplica un diseño de estudio de caso que combina datos recogidos a través de entrevistas con funcionarios, conversaciones participativas con estudiantes, y análisis de documentos. Un modelo de ecología política y un análisis crítico del discurso refuerzan la consideración del poder en la planificación de la resiliencia. Los resultados demuestran que las relaciones de poder restringen y aumentan el potencial equitativo de la estrategia de resiliencia de Quito, por un lado, limitando la agencia de los ciudadanos y de los pueblos indígenas en la decisión 'para qué' y 'para quién' debe construirse la resiliencia, mientras que, por otro lado, abren un espacio para la inclusión de sus voces en el diseño de acciones concretas.

*Palabras clave:* gobernanza de la resiliencia urbana, relaciones de poder, pueblos indígenas, conocimientos, Quito, 100RC

# Table of Contents

<b>Abstract .....</b>	<b>2</b>
List of Tables .....	5
List of Figures .....	5
Abbreviations .....	5
<b>1 Introduction.....</b>	<b>6</b>
1.1 <i>Aim and research questions</i> .....	7
1.1.1 Case.....	7
1.2 <i>Delimitations</i> .....	8
1.3 <i>Structure</i> .....	8
<b>2 Literature Review .....</b>	<b>8</b>
2.1 <i>Resilience thinking and planning</i> .....	9
2.1.1 Resilience critiques.....	9
2.2 <i>Knowledges and resilience</i> .....	10
2.2.1 Alternative ways of knowing in urban resilience strategies .....	10
2.3 <i>Indigeneity</i> .....	12
2.3.1 Urban Indigeneity .....	12
2.3.2 Indigenous knowledges .....	13
<b>3 Background .....</b>	<b>13</b>
3.1 <i>Resilience in Quito</i> .....	13
3.2 <i>Indigeneity in Quito</i> .....	14
3.2.1 Urban agriculture .....	15
<b>4 Theory .....</b>	<b>16</b>
4.1 <i>Political Ecology</i> .....	16
4.1.1 Relational Power.....	17
4.2 <i>Knowledges and the Pluriverse</i> .....	18
4.3 <i>Tying everything together</i> .....	19
<b>5 Methodology .....</b>	<b>20</b>
5.1 <i>Research design</i> .....	20
5.2 <i>Methods</i> .....	21
5.2.1 Data collection.....	21
5.2.2 Data analysis .....	24
5.3 <i>Ethical Reflections</i> .....	25
5.4 <i>Limitations</i> .....	26
<b>6 Analysis.....</b>	<b>26</b>
6.1 <i>Resilience in Quito's Resilience Strategy</i> .....	27
6.2 <i>Openness to alternative and Indigenous knowledges</i> .....	29
6.2.1 Alternative knowledges and participation .....	30
6.2.2 Indigenous knowledges .....	32

<b>7</b>	<b>Conclusion</b> .....	<b>35</b>
<b>8</b>	<b>References</b> .....	<b>37</b>
<b>9</b>	<b>Appendix A</b> .....	<b>43</b>
9.1	<i>Interview Guide</i> .....	43
9.2	<i>Participatory Conversation Guide</i> .....	44
<b>10</b>	<b>Appendix B</b> .....	<b>45</b>
10.1	<i>Informed Consent Form</i> .....	45

**List of Tables**

*Table 1* Interview partners ..... 22  
*Table 2* Participatory conversation partners..... 22  
*Table 3* Sampled documents ..... 23  
*Table 4* Pluriverse aspirations, codes ..... 25

**List of Figures**

*Figure 1* Analytical Framework..... 19

**Abbreviations**

100RC	100 Resilient Cities program – pioneered by the Rockefeller Foundation
C1	Conversation 1, ...
CDA	Critical discourse analysis
D1	Document 1, ...
I1	Interview 1, ...
P1	Pluriverse code 1, ...
PRA	Preliminary resilience assessment
RS	Resilience strategy
UN	United Nations
USFQ	Universidad San Francisco de Quito (San Francisco University of Quito)

# 1 Introduction

Disasters, like the current global pandemic but not only pandemics, have an influence on almost all humans in the affected areas. However, persons who are part of a marginalized group or are in a vulnerable situation are disproportionately more exposed to environmental harm and disproportionately negatively affected by it (Di Chiro 2016; Coolsaet 2021; Murdock 2021; Sun-Hee Park and Ruiz 2021). The field of environmental justice shows how social status is closely related to environmental exposure, meaning that specific populations with reduced access to resources and infrastructure are disproportionately affected by environmental detriments (Coolsaet 2021). Concerned groups and people mostly comprise those in already vulnerable situations, like persons with low-income and those who are otherwise marginalized for example because of gender and ethnicity like Indigenous peoples, communities of colors, or minorities (Coolsaet 2021). Furthermore, intersections of vulnerability enabling factors can occur; thus, it is important to recognize the uniqueness, complexity and multi-dimensionality of human lives (Di Chiro 2021).

Urban areas constitute just one physical space where disasters can hit and where marginalized groups face a disproportionate disadvantage. The current COVID-19 pandemic for instance, has been characterized by its ‘urban nature’, because more than 95% of all infections seem to have occurred in urban areas (UN-Habitat 2020)<sup>1</sup>. This is primarily explained by cities’ global interconnectedness and high density (Acuto 2020; Connolly, Ali, and Keil 2020; Sharifi and Khavarian-Garmsir 2020). The worsening of inequalities has been highlighted by various authors because people in vulnerable situations are further disadvantaged during the pandemic (van Barneveld et al. 2020; Martínez and Short 2021; Mishra, Gayen, and Haque 2020; Sharifi and Khavarian-Garmsir 2020) as is suggested by the environmental justice literature (Coolsaet 2021). These worries have also been raised in regard to Indigenous peoples (van Barneveld et al. 2020; McLeod et al. 2020; Power et al. 2020).

Resilience is a concept which aims to capture the capacity of certain systems, for instance of cities, to maintain its functions by persisting and adapting in the face of disasters and crises (Cretney 2014; Meerow, Newell, and Stults 2016). Resilience has been frequently employed as urban policy objective in order to make a city more resistant to disasters and crises (Allen, Griffin, and Johnson 2017; Borie et al. 2019; Meerow and Newell 2019; Meerow et al. 2016). Yet, scholars have indicated that environmental injustices might persist within these urban resilience strategies, as groups and persons in vulnerable situations seem to be further marginalized (Allen, Griffin, et al. 2017; Cretney 2014; Fitzgibbons and Mitchell 2019b; Leitner et al. 2018; McDonnell 2020; Tai 2020). Disregarding some groups not only deepens inequalities and is unjust but also risks undermining the resilience efforts of the whole city (Allen, Griffin, et al. 2017; Fitzgibbons and Mitchell 2019b). Hence, urban resilience strategies have been critiqued for its apolitical character, disregarding both power relations and questions of ‘to what’ and ‘for whom’ resilience is created (Côte and Nightingale 2012). It has been argued that power relations shape how resilience influences environmental justice (Griffin et al. 2017). Thus, this thesis focuses on power and examines the consideration of one marginalized group, namely Indigenous peoples, in one particular urban resilience strategy, concretely in Quito, Ecuador.

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<sup>1</sup> However, it must be noted that the report was published in April 2020 and hence only covered the dissemination patterns during the first few months of the pandemic

## 1.1 Aim and research questions

The aim of this case study is to discursively investigate how inclusive Quito's urban resilience strategy (henceforth RS) is. It is particularly examined 'to what' and 'for whom' resilience is built and how power that is exercised by different actors impacts this process. For this purpose, the research seeks to explore first, the RS's understanding and narrative of resilience and second, how much space is given to citizens and Indigenous persons to bring in their knowledges. Special attention is given to how power relations influence both the conceptualization of resilience and the inclusion of citizens to the RS. Due to the environmental justice theme and this study's focus on power, a political ecology perspective is chosen. The guiding research question of this study is stated in the following, which subsequently is specified by two sub-questions:

### **How do power relations shape 'to what' and 'for whom' resilience is built in Quito, Ecuador?**

*How does the conceptualization of resilience impact the inclusion of Indigenous peoples in Quito's resilience strategy?*

*How is power exercised through the inclusion of alternative and Indigenous knowledges in the resilience strategy and how does that influence equity?*

The underlying assumptions for these research questions are, firstly, that power relations are inherent to governance. Power is understood as relational, situated and emergent (Ahlborg and Nightingale 2018). Secondly, the definition of resilience might enable or inhibit an engagement with Indigenous peoples' interests (Wijsman and Feagan 2019). Thirdly, through including alternative and Indigenous knowledges other experiences and needs are considered which might contribute to a more equitable approach to resilience (Evans 2011). These assumptions are discussed in more detail in the following sections. A critical discourse analysis enables me to be attentive to representations of power in Quito's RS (Bryman 2016:540–43).

The relevance of this study lies in its contribution to empirical research on urban resilience planning and its discursive effect on environmental justice and equity, specifically for Indigenous peoples. Considering equity and justice in urban resilience strategies is of crucial importance for working towards sustainable and inclusive development as it is highlighted in the UN's Sustainable Development Goals, particularly within goal 11 which strives for 'Sustainable Cities and Communities' (United Nations 2021), and in the New Urban Agenda (UN-Habitat 2017). The empirical findings, furthermore, enrich the discourse about resilience in the field of Human Geography, through the examination of city specific challenges concerning resilience planning and Indigeneity as well as its potential to enhance equity and environmental justice. Moreover, it addresses a gap in the literature concerning the inclusion and representation of Indigenous peoples in urban resilience strategies. Crucially, this study hopes to inform a more inclusive approach to urban resilience governance.

### **1.1.1 Case**

Quito was chosen as study area because it displays a crucial case. The government of Ecuador officially recognizes diverse ways of living and being through the incorporation of the Indigenous concept of 'buen vivir' into its constitution and the acknowledgement to be a plurinational state. 'Buen vivir' recognizes the diversity and complementarity of life and is a commitment to emancipation and the

expansion of capabilities and potentialities of all humans (Rodriguez 2021:82–84) which can be seen as ontological opening to other forms of understanding. Plurinationality means that the state respects the knowledges of Ecuador’s Indigenous groups. This particular political framework makes Ecuador a very interesting case as it demonstrates political awareness towards the positions of Indigenous peoples in the Ecuadorian society. Furthermore, Quito is the only Ecuadorian city which is part of the 100 Resilient Cities program – pioneered by the Rockefeller Foundation which supports cities across the globe to advance their resilience. Within this program, the participating cities develop resilience strategies and share knowledge and experiences to target the stresses and shocks they face more effectively. Quito has been part since the program’s inception (Rodas Espinel and Jácome Polit 2017) and offers a significant case to analyze how power relations influence how inclusive its RS is, particularly considering Indigenous peoples. To gain deeper insights about the intersection between resilience and Indigenous knowledges a subunit on urban agriculture is chosen because of a clear connection between Indigeneity and agriculture during data collection. Thus, the subunit exemplifies how the inclusion of Indigenous practices can contribute to an equitable urban resilience governance.

## 1.2 Delimitations

A case study design is applied; thus, the research engages with resilience planning in Quito in a detailed and holistic manner and produces contextual and case-specific insights instead of striving to produce generalizable findings. Besides, this study is limited to examining the strategic approach to resilience building in Quito and neither investigates the implementation of the strategy nor its actual impact on Indigenous peoples. Moreover, this research does not evaluate Quito’s resilience strategy for its potential to foster resilience but rather how it addresses issues of equity and environmental justice specifically regarding Indigenous persons.

## 1.3 Structure

Following the introduction to this research, a review of the relevant literature is presented. The third section describes the background of the case, including information about the 100 Resilient Cities program, Quito’s resilience strategy, and urban agriculture as well as Indigeneity in Quito. Thereafter, decolonial, feminist political ecology is discussed as a theoretical lens, and the concept of the pluriverse is introduced as the analytical framework. The research methodology is presented in the fifth section, which includes a description of the research design, applied methods and critical discourse analysis. In addition, ethical reflections and limitation are considered. The sixth section discusses the analysis and is structured around the two research sub-questions, first addressing the conceptualization of resilience and second the inclusion of alternative and Indigenous knowledges. The final section provides answers to the general research question, concludes, and offers some comments on further studies.

# 2 Literature Review

Environmental governance, like urban resilience planning, has been found to promote a managerial discourse which represents a technical worldview (Adger et al. 2001; Leitner et al. 2018). Yet, authors have argued that environmental governance is not just a ‘technical adjustment’ but rather involves political decisions which present real trade-offs for the lives of people (Gonda 2019). A technical and apolitical approach to resilience disregards dimensions of power (Côte and Nightingale 2012); evi-



dence shows that this marginalizes the voices of those in already vulnerable situation (Allen, Griffin, et al. 2017; Borie et al. 2019; Cretney 2014; Fitzgibbons and Mitchell 2019b; Leitner et al. 2018). In order to find out ‘for whom’ and ‘to what’ resilience is created, there is a need to investigate whose knowledges are included (Fabinyi, Evans, and Foale 2014). The following presents what has been researched and written about these issues. First, the meaning, origin and critique of resilience thinking and planning are discussed. Second, evidence about the inclusion of alternative knowledges in resilience building efforts is presented which is succeeded by an exploration of Indigeneity and Indigenous knowledges.

## 2.1 Resilience thinking and planning

Resilience is a very current topic in the academic discourse, especially as it is frequently employed as urban policy objective to sustain and/or improve a city’s functions despite experiencing shocks and stresses (Allen, Griffin, et al. 2017; Borie et al. 2019; Meerow and Newell 2019; Meerow et al. 2016). Scholars have argued that urban resilience has become a strategic concern for policy makers as there is an increasing realization that risks and uncertainties cannot be controlled, predicted, and managed but that rather new approaches to work with the complexity of physical and social environments have to be adopted (Griffin et al. 2017:4–6). Urban resilience for this study, is defined as

“the ability of an urban system [...] to maintain or rapidly return to desired functions in the face of a disturbance, to adapt to change, and to quickly transform systems that limit current or future adaptive capacity”. (Meerow et al. 2016:45)

Originally, the concept of resilience arose in ecology out of a dissatisfaction with physical understandings of ecosystems according to which ecosystems always return to a static equilibrium (Côte and Nightingale 2012; Cretney 2014). Instead, C.S. Holling, who is often considered to be the founder of this concept, advocated that ecosystems have the capacity to persist by absorbing change within a zone of stable functioning without impacting the system’s basic functions (Cretney 2014; Holling 1973). Subsequently, the concept of resilience has been translated to various fields, including social sciences, which has contributed to its complexity as there is not one common definition of resilience and different lenses highlight or add different aspects to it<sup>2</sup> (Allen, Griffin, et al. 2017:2–4; Edwards 2020; Herrera 2017). In principle, it could be said that meanings exist on a continuum varying between an engineering’s and a socio-ecological view. The engineering perspective advocates for resilience to define a system that ‘bounces back’ to the pre-disaster state, hence, striving for a return to the previous condition which has been criticized for disregarding system complexities (Cretney 2014; Edwards 2020). Resilience from a socio-ecological perspective, in contrast, focuses on community capabilities in strengthening a community’s resilience. Furthermore, the importance of transformation and adaptation within systems boundaries is emphasized, leading to a more transformative understanding of resilience as opposed to a conservative one (Cretney 2014; Edwards 2020).

### 2.1.1 Resilience critiques

The literature highlights concerns over the widespread adoption of the concept of resilience, particular about its apolitical and normative character (Allen, Griffin, et al. 2017; Borie et al. 2019; Côte and Nightingale 2012; Cretney 2014). It is argued that framing the resilience discourse as being inherently in the general interests of all citizens disregards questions of power, agency and culture as for example

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<sup>2</sup> A comprehensive review of the evolution of the concept of resilience and its different meanings exceeds the scope of this literature review and can be found for example in Edwards (2020).

different citizens have different needs and priorities towards the city system (Borie et al. 2019; Côte and Nightingale 2012; Cretney 2014; Fabinyi et al. 2014; Leitner et al. 2018; McDonnell 2020; Tai 2020). At the same time, it is acknowledged that an apolitical framing contributes to the popularity of the concept, as it enables different stakeholders with divergent interests to collaborate for the joint goal of resilience (Allen, Griffin, et al. 2017).

Nevertheless, scholars like Cretney (2014) or Leitner, Sheppard, Webber and Colven (2018) are concerned that an apolitical approach leads to the perpetuation of the neoliberal ideology which can lead to further marginalizing people in vulnerable and disadvantaged situations. A definition of urban resilience that understands disturbances as coming from outside the city system and which focuses on the management of and adaptation to shocks and stresses leaves little space to efforts of mitigation or of addressing root causes which might lie in political and economic realms (Leitner et al. 2018:1277). Relatedly, Allen, Johnson, Khali and Griffin (2017) identify that top-down resilience efforts can reproduce injustices because of the concepts' inability to appropriately address structural inequalities, power imbalances and underlying vulnerabilities. Moreover, through examining resilience planning and environmental justice, the authors found that justice is a requirement for achieving resilience as environmental injustices can lead people to undermine general resilience efforts through attempts to strengthen their own resilience. Correspondingly, Fitzgibbons and Mitchell (2019b) explore justice and equity in urban resilience strategies by examining recognition, redistribution, and participation. They argue that "cities that hope to address inequality [...] must specifically identify disempowered social groups and make effort to combat their powerlessness by including them in the creative processes that might ultimately affect their situation" (2019b:651).

Hence, to address these shortcomings, Meerow and Newell (2019) among other authors (Côte and Nightingale 2012; Fabinyi et al. 2014; McDonnell 2020) emphasize the importance of asking 'for whom' resilience is created and 'to what' to bring back dimensions of power. Analogously, the study at hand asks these questions for the resilience strategy of Quito. However, to answer 'for whom' and 'to what' resilience is created, there is a need to investigate whose voices are heard, and whose are silenced (Fabinyi et al. 2014). It has been argued that threats, disasters and responses are not framed objectively but rather are politically constructed (Côte and Nightingale 2012:481). Furthermore, Wijsman and Feagan (2019) emphasize that actors are influenced by their social position in what and how they know, which is also referred to as positionality. Therefore, the subsequent section looks more deeply into issues of knowledges in resilience approaches.

## 2.2 Knowledges and resilience

Knowledge cannot be neutral (Foucault 1980 in Wijsman and Feagan 2019:71), therefore, a situated understanding of knowledge which recognizes the context in which knowledge is produced is fundamental (Côte and Nightingale 2012; Haraway 2009; Wijsman and Feagan 2019). Hence, knowledge can neither objective nor universal, or how Côte and Nightingale (2012:481), drawing on Haraway (1991), put it: "Resilience cannot be 'seen from nowhere'". Therefore, it is essential to ask who and whose knowledges and views are included in a resilience strategy and how.

### 2.2.1 **Alternative ways of knowing in urban resilience strategies**

Building on the previous discussion, urban resilience strategies can be seen as visions for a city's future which include and represent specific forms of knowledge while excluding others (Borie et al. 2019). More concretely, scholars have argued that alternative knowledges tend to be overruled by

more technical knowledges and thereby little space for participation and co-creation is created (Borie et al. 2019; Briggs and Sharp 2004; Wijsman and Feagan 2019; Yeh 2016). In this work, alternative knowledges refer to kinds of knowledges which are not grounded in technical, scientific knowledge<sup>3</sup>; the former has been referred to as lay knowledge, the latter as expert knowledge (Evans 2011). Briggs and Sharp (2004) and Yeh (2016), for instance, argue that while local knowledges<sup>4</sup> are included, commonly only selective parts of these knowledges are used in particular stages of projects. More specifically, local knowledges which ‘fit’ into the Western scientific perspective, in other words that are technical and rational, are integrated while other parts are left out (Briggs and Sharp 2004; Yeh 2016). Moreover, seldom are local knowledges included to influence the process of the project or research (Briggs and Sharp 2004). This, they argue, leads to both decontextualizing knowledge and to creating a hierarchy where whatever is ‘useful’ is extracted from local knowledges while the rest is ignored, thereby furthering the colonial project of universalizing western knowledge (Briggs and Sharp 2004; Yeh 2016).

Returning to the discourse about resilience, the literature demonstrates clear concerns about the inclusion of alternative, more specifically local and Indigenous knowledges in urban resilience strategies (Borie et al. 2019; Fitzgibbons and Mitchell 2019b; Tai 2020; Wijsman and Feagan 2019), even though it might enrich and foster resilience building (Robbins 2012:131–34). Wijsman and Feagan (2019:73) assert that “urban resilience scholarship seems exclusively grounded in the knowledge systems of western science”. Relatedly, Borie et al. (2019) analyze different narratives of urban resilience in the global south to investigate how framing resilience through a natural science and technology discourse works to “leave [...] out forms of knowledge that would allow other necessary values and understandings of resilience to be visible” (Borie et al. 2019:211). They found that the dominant narratives of resilience were technocratic and deeply grounded in scientific knowledge which risks ‘epistemic domination’ of other types of knowledge. This relates to what Li (2007) calls ‘rendering technical’. Rendering problems technical, she argues, results in an incomplete and skewed approach that only regards aspects which can be solved within a technical framework and disregards political and economic processes. Indeed, Leitner et al. (2018) assert that urban resilience strategies exclude the perspectives of marginalized groups. Yet, as Fitzgibbons and Mitchell (2019b) have argued, it is crucial to address the recognition, redistribution, and participation of persons in vulnerable situations to further equity through resilience strategies.

The study at hand particularly focuses on recognition and participatory aspects. Yet, one must be careful to assume that participation automatically results in an appropriate representation of a groups’ interests and needs (Blaser 2014; Cameron, de Leeuw, and Desbiens 2014). Additionally, the effectiveness of participatory methods to inevitably further equity and justice has been questioned (Cooke and Kothari 2001; Fitzgibbons and Mitchell 2019b). Highlighted issues include identifying the relevant stakeholder groups; expert bias which might lead to discounting local citizen knowledge; staying within mainstream voices due to the consensus approach; and difficulties to include traditionally marginalized groups (Evans 2011). Yet, conducted work also demonstrates that citizen participation opens a possibility for more transformative approaches which can foster justice and equity (Borie et al. 2019; Chu, Anguelovski, and Carmin 2016; Griffin et al. 2017; Radcliffe 2015:127) besides improving and legitimating the governance process and regarding ethics in providing citizens the opportunity to take part in decisions that ultimately affect them (Evans 2011). Chu et al. (2016), for instance, find evidence that more inclusive climate adaptation planning improves climate equity and justice in the global

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<sup>3</sup> Even though a dichotomy is drawn here, no hierarchy is created.

<sup>4</sup> Local knowledges are understood to be alternative ways of knowing which are situated in a specific geographical context (Briggs and Sharp 2004:661).

south. Recognizing the shortcomings and the potential of participatory approaches, the study at hand focuses specifically on Indigenous peoples' recognition and inclusion in Quito's RS. Thus, the next section discusses Indigeneity, its presence in urban areas as well as Indigenous knowledges in governance.

## 2.3 Indigeneity

Defining what constitutes Indigeneity is an ambiguous and contested process whereby political impositions are likely made (Johnson et al. 2007; Shaw, Herman, and Dobbs 2006). Indigeneity is deeply linked to identity and thus very personal and diverse. Additionally, there lies danger in essentializing Indigeneity which might contribute to disempowerment (Coombes et al. 2011). Therefore, Indigenous identity is understood as a relational concept (Coombes et al. 2011). Nevertheless, the literature describes some common characteristics which many Indigenous groups identify with (Johnson et al. 2007; Shaw et al. 2006). These include a kinship relation with the environment, meaning that everything is seen as alive and connected and that there is a responsibility for care and mutual reciprocity, and an emphasis on the meaning of land (Cajete 2000 in Shaw et al. 2006). One crucial characteristic of Indigenous persons is that they self-identify as Indigenous (Fine-Dare 2020:6).

Within political ecology scholarship, Indigeneity is deeply linked to social and environmental justice issues like "diminished access to the world's resources, to the political and economic networks of power that manage and distribute those resources" and the experience of a disproportionate share of ecological problems (Cameron, de Leeuw, and Greenwood 2009:356). Engaging with Indigeneity and Indigenous knowledges as a non-Indigenous author from a North European university poses threats of misrepresentation, manipulation, romanticization and of not fully "taking other ontologies seriously" (Blaser 2014:52) and thereby reproducing colonial ways of being and knowing (Cameron et al. 2014; Hunt 2014). I address some of these representational issues through reflexivity, discussion of my positionality and member checking as is considered in the methodology section.

### 2.3.1 **Urban Indigeneity**

Indigeneity is commonly associated with rurality, which however does not necessarily correspond to Indigenous livelihoods (Fine-Dare 2016; Horn 2018; Peters 2011). Research has shown that the colonial period caused a conceptual and physical removal of Indigenous communities from urban areas in the Americas (Fine-Dare 2016; Peters 2011). Fine-Dare (2020:7) describes the conceptual abstraction of Indigenous peoples from cities as 'curious assumption' considering the impressive built structures and infrastructures designed and constructed by Indigenous communities in Latin America. Peters (2011) highlights the negative implication of both colonialism and every-day city life on Indigenous peoples in North America. The author finds that marginalization happens through stigmatization which is based on the perception that Indigenous peoples are not part of urban areas. Moreover, it is stated that contemporary municipal colonialism contributes to systemic discrimination as the views and livelihoods of Indigenous people are perceived to be incompatible with general urban planning and are thus excluded (Peters 2011). Similarly, Horn (2018) discovers that the widespread practice of locating Indigenous issues in rural areas contributes to the exclusion of urban Indigenous interests in urban policy making in South America which constitutes an obstacle to inclusive development. The study at hand contributes to the literature through investigating the inclusion of Indigenous knowledges in urban resilience governance in one specific Latin American city.

### 2.3.2 Indigenous knowledges

To complement the previous discussion about alternative knowledges it is crucial to highlight what differentiates Indigenous knowledges from alternative knowledges. Indigenous knowledge, in this work, is understood to be an alternative way of knowing yet going somewhat further. Some have argued that an epistemological conflict shapes the relation between scientific and Indigenous knowledges which remains unaddressed in resilience theory (Côte and Nightingale 2012:482). This is because of the embedded characteristics of Indigeneity in Indigenous knowledge (Shaw et al. 2006). Yeh (2016), for instance emphasizes that a western conceptualization of knowledge differs substantially from an Indigenous understanding of knowledge as the latter entails “ethics and values, [...] cultural identity, and cosmology” (Houde 2007 in Yeh 2016:35). These characteristics which are holistically integrated in Indigenous knowledges, are argued to be left out and ignored which leads to an incomplete and decontextualized representation of Indigenous knowledges (Briggs and Sharp 2004; Yeh 2016). Tai (2020) found this to be the case with a resilience strategy in East Taiwan, where the local Indigenous group is included in the discourse but remains underrepresented and without real political power.

In order for Indigenous knowledges to be included into politics, de la Cadena (2010:esp.358-362) has argued that the political needs reconfiguration so that it allows ontological plurality through unlearning the assumption of a singular world. A crucial element of such pluriversal politics is recognizing that different worlds exist and that what is commonly referred to as inanimate ‘nature’ from a Western perspective (for example plants, mountains and rivers), might be perceived as a brother or sister who has own agency in a different ontology (de la Cadena 2010). This commitment to pluriversal politics is to some extent reflected in the Ecuadorian constitution with the inclusion of the concept of ‘buen vivir’ and the dedication to a plurinational state (Rodriguez 2021) which makes Quito a relevant case to investigate the inclusion of Indigenous knowledges in resilience building efforts. To address some the ontological issues when investigating Indigenous knowledges, this study uses the concept of the pluriverse in its analytical framework.

## 3 Background

Quito is the capital city of Ecuador which is located in the Andes at an altitude of 2850 meters and has approximately 2.2 million inhabitants (INEC 2010). The following section offers some background to the study area regarding resilience and Indigeneity.

### 3.1 Resilience in Quito

Quito’s resilience building efforts are supported by the ‘100 Resilient Cities’ program (henceforth 100RC) which was pioneered by the Rockefeller Foundation, a philanthropic organization, in 2013. It attempts to enhance the resilience of cities globally by providing selected cities with resources to employ a ‘Chief Resilience Officer’ and to design a ‘City Resilience Strategy’ as well as a network of member cities and partners for mutual exchange and learning. 100RC finalized its activities in July 2019, but the Rockefeller Foundation continues to provide support to the member cities through the ‘Global Resilient Cities Network’ (The Rockefeller Foundation 2021). The program has been described as useful tool to recognize and address shocks and stresses and as an opportunity to trial participatory and cross-sectional of governance (Galderisi, Limongi, and Salata 2020). Furthermore, the

inclusion into a global resilience network has been emphasized to foster both sharing practices and knowledge building (Chase and Frankel-Goldwater 2018:61; Galderisi et al. 2020).

Yet, scholars have questioned 100RC's impact on justice and equity. In an examination of resilience strategies in ten participating cities<sup>5</sup>, Meerow, Pajouhesh and Miller (2019) find that most cities adopt the resilience definition of 100RC which results in an apolitical framing of resilience that does not directly include social dimensions in its narrative. Leitner et al. (2018:1283) caution that the participatory elements in the 100RC program might be "dictated from above", especially who is involved, and that the provided 'Resilient City Framework' limits possible ways in which participants can engage with both the concept of urban resilience and potential focus areas and groups. 100RC has also been critiqued for the short time period which is allocated for stakeholder participation that might inhibit real engagement with citizens (Galderisi et al. 2020). Relatedly, Fitzgibbons and Mitchell (2019b) analyze 31 resilience strategies across the global north and south and discover that only few strategies actively include marginalized groups and give them the opportunity to participate and self-identify what should be done. Furthermore, they observe that some strategies have direct negative impacts on communities in vulnerable situations. The authors suggest that 100RC does not provide clear guidance on issues of inclusion, equity and justice but that it is in the cities' assessment to be sensitive to them (Fitzgibbons and Mitchell 2019b). This however might perpetuate inequalities while having decisive influence on 'achieving' resilience, as has been discussed in the literature review.

After Quito had officially become part of 100RC program in 2015, a city's Resilience Officer was designated and the first phase of the program, the 'Preliminary Resilience Assessment' (PRA), was conducted (Rodas Espinel and Jácome Polit 2017:30). Following the PRA, which was published in January 2017, the City Resilience Strategy was developed until October 2017 with AECOM, an infrastructure consulting firm, as a strategic partner (Rodas Espinel and Jácome Polit 2017:30,34). The process has been described as semi-standardized; thus, some guidelines were provided for the city's work. Fitzgibbons and Mitchell's (2019a, 2019b) study shows that Quito's resilience approach scored medium-high on criteria for participation and medium-low on issues of recognition and redistribution.

### 3.2 Indigeneity in Quito

Indigeneity in Quito has been described as highly heterogenous (Horn 2018:488; Radcliffe 2015) which was also emphasized by Indigenous students I talked to. According to the 2010 census<sup>6</sup> 91.478 people (4,1%) self-identify<sup>7</sup> as Indigenous in Quito (INEC 2010). Indigenous groups have been discriminated because of their ethnic belonging (Fine-Dare 2020; de la Torre and Striffler 2008; Radcliffe 2015). The county's colonial history continues to inform the social order in which Indigenous persons have been described as the most disadvantaged (Radcliffe 2015:19). Discrimination has also been mentioned by the Indigenous students I talked to. One says that "*it is hard to accept that this [discrimination] continues to happen*".

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<sup>5</sup> The majority of the reviewed cities are located in the United States, only one city from another region is included which is Mexico City.

<sup>6</sup> There should have been a census in 2020 which was postponed because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

<sup>7</sup> Most states in Latin America measure Indigeneity through self-identification, which, however, is not unproblematic, as for example Telles and Torche (2019) have demonstrated. They find that the number of Indigenous peoples can vary widely, depending on the marker that is used for Indigeneity. Furthermore, some Indigenous groups might be underrepresented.

One specificity of ethnicity which must be considered is *mestizaje*. *Mestizo/a* means mixed-blooded and refers to persons with Indigenous as well as Spanish/white ancestry in Latin America. Originally, the concept of *mestizaje* arose out of a biopolitical project which aimed at erasing the ethnic diversity and ontological difference of Ecuadorians (and Latin Americans) and at uniting the nation through the creation of one single race (de la Cadena 2000, 2010; Roberts 2012:116–23). Nowadays, different persons have diverse understandings of and connotations with the concept of *mestizaje* (positive and negative) and identities are often fluid between Indigenous and *mestizo/a* (de la Cadena 2000).

Concerning urban governance, Horn (2018) found that urban Indigeneity is officially recognized in Quito but that this acknowledgement does not directly translate to an inclusive implementation of policies across sectors. Similarly, one student explained that even though a plurinational and multicultural state is outlined in the Ecuadorian constitution that “*in practice, within governance, it is not well understood*”. The main obstacles to more inclusive policy making are described to be difficulties to simultaneously promote both universal and Indigenous right as well as conflicting developmental priorities (Horn 2018). Specifically, it is argued that in practice the interest and well-being of the majority group is prioritized over the interests of specific groups; particularly, in the case of economic development, Indigenous interests and collective rights frequently are ignored<sup>8</sup> (Horn 2018). Contrary, Chu, Anguelovski and Carmin (2016) identify broad inclusivity in urban climate adaptation planning and implementation in Quito regarding Indigenous groups.

### 3.2.1 Urban agriculture

Indigeneity is commonly associated with rurality and thus with agriculture, as has been discussed earlier. Even though this does not reflect Indigenous livelihoods and is problematic in political realms, Indigenous knowledges have been especially related to agriculture. Indigenous students highlighted the intimate connection between humans and *pachamama* or *la madre tierra*<sup>9</sup> which refers to the environment and “*the nature where we are and that allows us to live*” as one student explained. Also, interview partners connected Indigeneity and resilience with agriculture. Therefore, the examination of an urban agriculture program was added during data collection.

The examined program AGRUPAR (Agricultura Urbana Participativa<sup>10</sup>) is a project of the Economic Promotion Agency which is funded by the Municipality of the Metropolitan District of Quito (Rodríguez Dueñas and Proaño Rivera 2016:7). It was initiated in 2002, aims to promote sustainable urban agriculture which is rooted in ancestral knowledges and works especially with people in vulnerable situations. AGRUPAR seeks to contribute to food security, an increased income and social integration of the participants and to foster resilience and sustainability in Quito. It basically supports the self-production of agroecologically<sup>11</sup> grown produce by participant in their *huertos*<sup>12</sup>, community gardens, or similar. Furthermore, weekly markets provide the participants with the opportunity to increase their incomes through selling what they do not need for themselves (Rodríguez Dueñas and Proaño

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<sup>8</sup> For example, consulting Indigenous groups about developments within their territories has been neglected in the past (Horn 2018).

<sup>9</sup> Mother Earth

<sup>10</sup> Participatory urban agriculture

<sup>11</sup> Here, agroecology refers to more than just organic produce and rather stands for a holistic philosophy of life which is deeply grounded in Indigenous knowledges which emphasize the connection between humans and nature, as was explained by one interview partner.

<sup>12</sup> gardens

Rivera 2016). According to my interview partner, AGRUPAR's contribution to Quito's resilience lies in the strengthening of both the food system and social relations:

*“So, the huerto plays a very important role [...] from the point of view of improving the access and availability of food, but we also see the resilience of urban agriculture in its opportunity to build relationships, to build a social fabric”.* (I2)

The project AGRUPAR is emphasized in Quito's resilience strategy as a local benchmark for successful practices which foster resilience (Rodas Espinel and Jácome Polit 2017:93). This study uses it as an example for how the inclusion of Indigenous knowledges can contribute to sustainable and inclusive resilience building efforts.

## 4 Theory

This section elaborates how the research questions were approached through the lens of political ecology. Concretely, I adopt a decolonial feminist political ecology approach which recognizes multiple ways of being in and seeing the world. Through a relational conceptualization of power, a situated understanding of knowledges, and the pluriverse the discourse about resilience is analyzed seeking to gain insights about how power relations shape how resilience is conceptualized in Quito's resilience strategy, how much space it allows for alternative and Indigenous knowledges and how that might influence equity and justice. The following firstly describes how political ecology informed my understanding of the research problem. Secondly, I discuss what power is, where it might occur and how Quito's RS is entangled with it. Thirdly, knowledges and the pluriverse are conceptualized and the analytical approach is described. Lastly, I tie the different concepts together as they tie my thesis together.

### 4.1 Political Ecology

This study aims to analyze how power operates across ethnical dimension in resilience governance whereby resilience is conceptualized as a struggle over resources to face environmental problems. Thus, this investigation is placed at the heart of political ecology which deals with the social and political conditions of environmental struggles (Forsyth 2003:2). Work in political ecology is grounded in environmental justice concerns and committed to explicitly consider power relations and politics (Robbins 2012). As has been discussed earlier, scholars of political ecology have raised the concern that issues of power are not sufficiently addressed in apolitical resilience discourses, where resilience is 'rendered technical' (Li 2007). Hence, this research engages political ecology with resilience to arrive at some answers for the case of Quito. Indeed, when it comes to resilience, Fabinyi et al. (2014) advocate to look for power in discursive dimensions, besides material ones, in order to “deconstruct whose voices become privileged and whose voices are silenced, and why” (Fabinyi et al. 2014:7). This supported the choice for employing critical discourse analysis which is discussed in more detail in the methods section.

This research takes a poststructural approach as it looks at the articulation of power and knowledge through questioning and examining the “political effects [...] of ostensibly 'objective' and 'apolitical' concepts” (Robbins 2012:71), namely resilience efforts. Furthermore, the study adopts a normative and explicitly political approach. This is firstly because resilience is an inherently power-laden concept which combines descriptive elements of what can make a system more resilient with normative assumptions that resilience is of interest to and to the benefit of all (Côte and Nightingale 2012:484).



Secondly, by investigating the inclusion of Indigenous groups in urban environmental policy I directly advocate for an equitable approach which acknowledges Indigenous knowledges and agency.

It has to be recognized that political ecology is a very diverse and heterogeneous field (Robbins 2012). This research, thus, situates itself within a feminist and decolonial strand of political ecology (Sultana 2021). Decolonial feminist political ecology emphasizes the recognition and legitimization of an ontological plurality in ways of knowing and advocates for situated research which, among other, explores alternative approaches to science, challenges technical knowledges, and envisions diverse ways to be and participate in the world (Rocheleau and Nirmal 2015). The discursive analysis at hand seeks to “articulate multiple worlds, worldviews, and cultures” (Rocheleau and Nirmal 2015:795), particularly through applying the lens of the pluriverse which is outlined further below. Though, before going into detail about the role of the pluriverse, power is conceptualized and connected to the research problem.

#### 4.1.1 Relational Power

An explicit inquiry of power relations is central to work in the field of political ecology (Robbins 2012). Power for this thesis is understood following Ahlborg and Nightingale’s (2018) conceptualization who define power as embodied and situated, meaning that power cannot be ‘held’ nor is power inherent to particular political positions. Rather, power is relational and emergent and can only be observed in the moments of its expression. Power might emerge from human agency or from constitutive factors, which are institutions (in its broadest understanding) and relational networks that shape the conditions for interaction and agency, and which are beyond individual control. Constitutive factors both occur from discourse and influence discourse. Human agency and constitutive factors shape and transform each other; hence, a clear separation is difficult to achieve (Ahlborg and Nightingale 2018:esp. 387-390). Applying this conceptualization of power, Quito’s RS is understood to be a constitutive factor which designs structures and spaces that affect human agency in resilience building, particularly through its recognitional and participatory processes. Therefore, by analyzing the discourse about resilience in Quito, this study seeks to elicit where and how power is exercised in the RS and which effect this has on (re)producing inequalities, more concretely on the space which is given to citizens and Indigenous peoples in building resilience.

In their paper Ahlborg and Nightingale (2018:391–92) identify four locations where power is exercised<sup>13</sup>: firstly, knowledges and ontologies which shape the governance process; secondly, dynamic system configuration or key elements of a project which translate a plan into infrastructure and institutions; thirdly, access and entitlements to the resources; and finally, the everyday lives of people and how they interact with a project. The first location where power is exercised, knowledges and ontologies, is already visible in planning while at the remaining locations power occurs during and after implementation. As this study evaluates the strategy for building resilience, knowledges and ontologies are chosen as research location for the investigation of power in Quito’s resilience efforts. Hence, knowledges and ontologies are understood to be power-laden in the sense that being able to incorporate ones’ view of the world, in other words one’s knowledge, are moments where power is tangibly expressed and made visible. Through examining the types of knowledges which shape the RS, insights about how power is exercised to in- or exclude can be drawn. Thus, this research discursively examines how Indigenous persons and knowledges are recognized and included in urban resilience govern-

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<sup>13</sup> Ahlborg and Nightingale’s (2018) paper specifically discusses power in resource governance. As was argued above, resilience is understood to be a resource which can improve one’s preparedness towards stresses and shocks. Thus, it is considered appropriate to apply their theorization of power in resource governance on resilience governance.

ance how that might advance equity in Quito. To achieve this, I use Ahlborg and Nightingale's (2018) analytical framework about power and knowledges/ontologies<sup>14</sup> as a basis and add to it the concept of the pluriverse to enhance its analytical depth. The pluriverse helps me to draw more concrete insights about how different knowledges are represented and included and to what effect.

## 4.2 Knowledges and the Pluriverse

Knowledges are conceptualized as encompassing knowing in the sense of information, practices, worldviews, and opinions. Alternative knowledges are recognized in citizens' voices, in contrast to expert or policy maker knowledge. Indigenous knowledges are identified when the documents or my interview partners refer to 'Indigenous' or 'ancestral' knowledges or practices or to those of specific Indigenous nations. When referring to 'Indigenous knowledges' and 'Indigenous interests', the plural is consciously used to acknowledge the diversity, heterogeneity, and intersectionality of Indigeneity. Even though the focus of this study is on Indigenous knowledges, alternative knowledges in a more general way are analyzed due to two factors; firstly, the data shows a less explicit engagement with Indigeneity as was expected; therefore, alternative ways of knowing are utilized to infer the RS's openness to Indigenous ways of knowing. Secondly and more importantly, the types of knowledges which are included in the strategy, irrespective of its kind, allow me to draw conclusions about how power is exercised through the RS and how that might impact Indigenous peoples. To do so, I use the pluriverse.

In the words of the Zapatistas the pluriverse aspires "a world in which many worlds fit" (Zapatista National Liberation Army 1996 in Kothari et al. 2019:v). The pluriverse describes a reality in which different epistemologies and ontologies, meaning different ways of knowing about and being in the world, are recognized and valued equally. It is linked to a dissatisfaction with the common ontological narrative of a 'one world world' which assumes that every being lives in the same reality (Blaser and de la Cadena 2018:3). Additionally, it recognizes the multi-dimensionality of different lives, including human, animal and plant lives, and engages in a practice of decolonization (Kothari et al. 2019). This is highly consistent with a decolonial and feminist political ecology effort to engage with multiple ways of being in and seeing the world (Rocheleau and Nirmal 2015; Sultana 2021). The pluriverse is considered appropriate to examine the openness of Quito's RS towards alternative and Indigenous ways of knowing because it essentially designates a world in which every knowledge is valued equally. This appreciation of exchange between different worlds was also notable during conversations with Indigenous and Afro-Ecuadorian students.

The pluriverse is operationalized for this study by summarizing its core social aspirations which should lead to a peaceful and dignified co-existence of all worlds (Kothari et al. 2019:xxi–xl). They are as follows:

- (1) Respecting a plurality of ways of living and knowing
- (2) Connecting ancestral<sup>15</sup> and contemporary knowledges in a horizontal and respectful dialogue
- (3) Establishing transformative initiatives which tackle the roots of a problem
- (4) Giving political agency to the marginalized, exploited and oppressed
- (5) Making the generation, transmission and use of knowledges accessible to all

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<sup>14</sup> To improve the readability, further references are only marked by the word 'knowledges', as ontologies are seen to be intimately integrated in knowledges.

<sup>15</sup> In this study 'ancestral' is equated with Indigenous, following Kothari et al. (2019) and my interview partners.

I complement these values with insights of Briggs and Sharp (2004) and Yeh (2016) to achieve a more analytical engagement with knowledges. The two added characteristics are

- (6) Using knowledges holistically, meaning not only specific parts and to a limited extent
- (7) Establishing no hierarchy between different ways of knowing

These indicators help me to evaluate how open Quito’s RS is towards alternative and Indigenous knowledges because of the pluriverse’s emphasis on the co-existence of multiple forms of being, living, experiencing, and knowing about the world. The representation of alternative and Indigenous knowledges allows me to infer how power is exercised through the RS and what effect that might have on the marginalization of Indigenous groups. Thus, the data is analyzed in light of these pluriversal values.

### 4.3 Tying everything together

Political ecology builds the theoretical framework around my understanding of the research problem and my analysis of the collected data. In addition to describing ‘for whom’ and ‘to what’ resilience is created (descriptive), I analyze the recognition and participation of alternative and Indigenous knowledges through the pluriverse to draw findings about who exercises power and how it shapes ‘for whom’ and ‘to what’ resilience is created (analytic). Concretely, I argue that a discursive relationship exists between resilience and knowledges, which means that there is a mutual interaction where knowledges influence how resilience is framed and conceptualized at the same time as the understanding of resilience shapes which knowledges are included to which extent. An examination of this discursive relationship allows me to identify how power is exercised and inferences are drawn about the potential effect on Indigenous groups. These considerations build the framework for the thesis at hand and are visualized below (*Figure 1*).

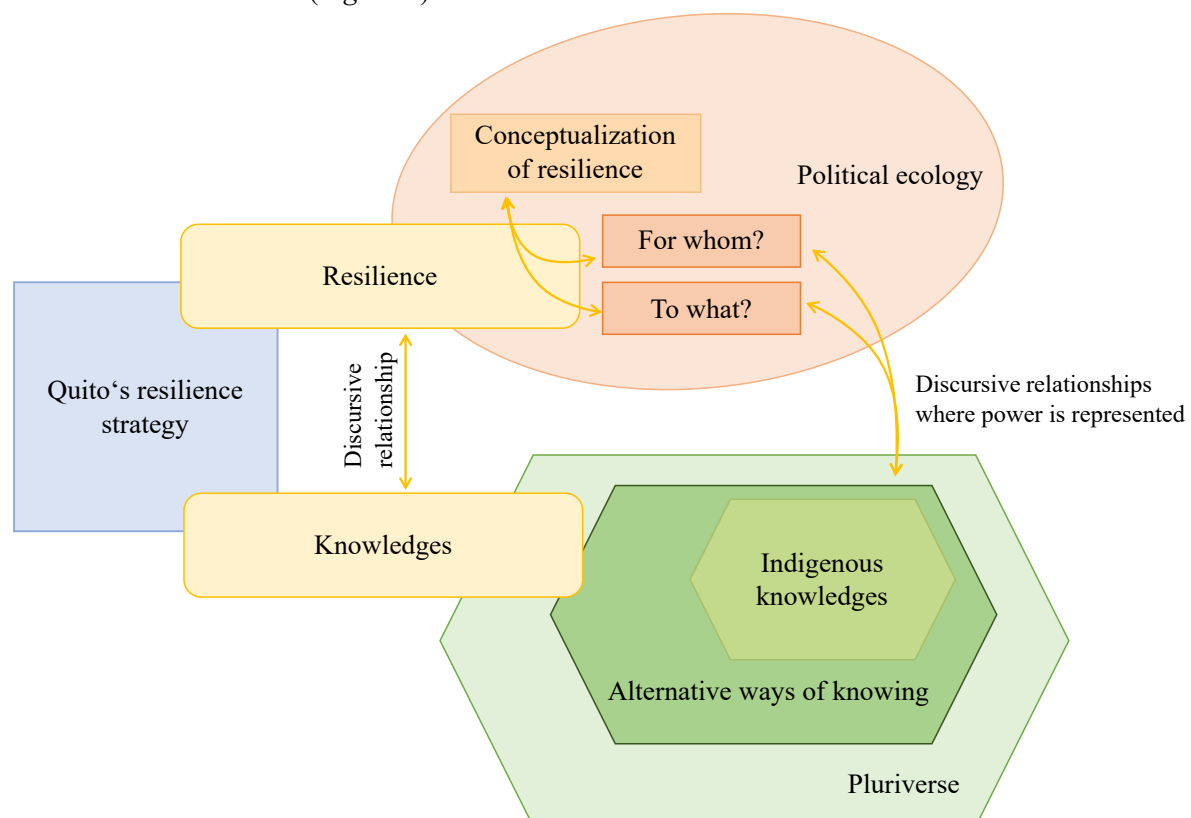


Figure 1 Analytical Framework

## 5 Methodology

This study applies a critical discourse analysis to data about Quito's resilience strategy and particularly about alternative and Indigenous knowledge within the strategy, which was collected through interviews, participatory conversations<sup>16</sup> and document analysis. The following describes the approach and the tools I use to answer the research questions. Firstly, I justify the research design, an embedded single-case study. Secondly, I explain the methods I used, present the data I collected and clarify how it was analyzed through a critical discourse analysis. This is followed by a reflection on the ethical considerations of this study. Lastly, I describe the limitations that arise from the chosen research design and methods.

### 5.1 Research design

To address the proposed research questions an embedded single-case study design is applied to gain an in-depth and holistic understanding of power in the conceptualization of resilience and the perception of Indigenous and alternative knowledges in the RS of Quito (de Vaus 2001; Yin 2003). As Yin (2003:13) has highlighted, case studies are particularly suited to investigate “contemporary phenomena within its real-life context when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident”. Indeed, Quito's colonial history has influenced how Indigenous peoples and their knowledges have been addressed; furthermore, several different actors are involved in the creation of the RS, as discussed in the background section. Thus, the context is of high relevance, and it is neither possible nor desirable to separate the phenomenon under investigation from its context. In addition, case studies possess a unique strength “to deal with a full variety of evidence” (Yin 2003:8) and relying on multiple data sources support a triangulation of data which adds to the internal validity of the study (Creswell and Miller 2000). Choosing an embedded single-case design enables me to examine the phenomenon at hand in a detailed and critical manner (de Vaus 2001:220–21); yet, avoiding an abstract level of analysis through having a subunit of analysis (Yin 2003:45).

In this study, the RS of Quito is the overall case and the urban agriculture project AGRUPAR constitutes the subunit of analysis. Quito allows for a crucial case study as the commitment of the Ecuadorian constitution to a plurinational state (Rodríguez 2021:82–84) implies political recognition towards the marginalized positions of Indigenous groups in the Ecuadorian society. Initially, the study was designed to adopt a holistic single-case design; the subunit was added during the process of data collection due to its enriching insights which contribute to gaining a deeper understanding of the case. Repeated references to the project during the interviews and a clear connection between Indigeneity and agriculture, supported the choice for examining this aspect to include more relevant details which benefit the overall understanding of the case of Indigenous knowledges and resilience in Quito. The thesis adopts an emergent design (Creswell and Creswell 2018:182) as I tried to be open to emerging themes during the process of the study (i.e. the subunit) to ensure that my investigation is of relevance to the participants (Scheyvens 2014).

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<sup>16</sup> Participatory conversation is not a method described in the literature; rather, it is a description of the process that in some ways resembles a focus group and is further explained below.

## 5.2 Methods

I used qualitative data collection because of its suitability for examining discourse (Graebner, Martin, and Roundy 2012:280) which is directly connected to my research aim to look at representations of power through how alternative and Indigenous knowledges are recognized and valued within the RS of Quito. Furthermore, the open-endedness and nuanced richness of qualitative data (Graebner et al. 2012) enabled me to gather information about the meanings of resilience and about how the interests and knowledges of marginalized groups are integrated in the RS. The following elaborates on the data collection through interviews, participatory conversations, and documents, before describing the critical discourse analysis strategy.

### 5.2.1 Data collection

This research builds upon both primary and secondary data. I empirically conducted semi-structured interviews, held conversations with Ecuadorian university students and analyzed documents to collect specific and critical information about the case at hand which was combined with insights of academic scholars, to offer a greater context and relevance to the case. First, I describe my interview and conversation partners and the rationale behind choosing them. Then, I define which documents I included into the analysis and how they were selected.

#### Interviews

To answer my research questions, I conducted three qualitative in-depth interviews with key informants. Interviews are “conversations for knowledge-producing purposes” (Brinkmann 2013:140). One key purpose of this method is to understand how others make meaning, seeing them as active agents rather than just sources of information (Warren 2001). I chose to do interviews precisely because of this method’s capability to learn about how others experience and interpret the world (Graebner et al. 2012). More specifically, only through conducting in-depth interviews can I really understand how my interviewees conceptualize resilience and know more about their openness to alternative and Indigenous ways of knowing. Choosing interviews with officials provided me with targeted evidence about these topics in the context of Quito which directly relates to my research questions (Yin 2003:86–92).

My key informants are representatives of the Municipality of Quito and have worked with urban resilience (*Table 1*). While my first and third interviewees<sup>17</sup> have been part of the creation of Quito’s RS, my second interviewee has worked with strengthening resilience through agricultural initiatives which represent a particular set of actions within the RS. The Metropolitan Directorate of Resilience was sampled purposively as it works with the development of the RS which is at the central attention of this study. The project AGRUPAR was sampled by purpose as well. I made use of the snowball technique for choosing key informants as my first interview partner connected me with the second and third informant. The officials I talked to had different foci which enriched the data I could collect. Thus, through having three interview partners I gained insights into the RS itself, its conception of vulnerability and risk, the participatory processes, the inclusion of Indigenous peoples as well as the role of urban agriculture in resilience building and the importance of Indigenous knowledge for this, which enabled me to answer my research questions.

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<sup>17</sup> The interviews are named according to the order I talked to them.

Interview	Position	Length of Interview
I1	Metropolitan Directorate of Resilience	56:20
I2	AGRUPAR (Participatory Urban Agriculture)	38:50
I3	Metropolitan Directorate of Resilience	52:40

Table 1 Interview partners

The interviews were semi-structured to have some guiding themes but to still provide room for my interviewees to bring up and discuss topics that are relevant to them (Roulston 2014). A general interview guide can be found in Appendix A which was slightly adapted according to interview partner. The interviews lasted between 35 and 60 minutes, took place online and were recorded with the interviewees' consent.

### Participatory conversations

As I investigate an issue which is concerned with Indigeneity and Indigenous knowledges, it is necessary to talk to Indigenous persons to avoid othering (Cameron et al. 2009; Scheyvens 2014:239–40). In addition, these conversations helped me to infer how power, that is exercised by the RS might influence justice and equity. I reached out to students of the program of ethnic diversity (Programa de Diversidad Étnica)<sup>18</sup> at the University San Francisco of Quito (USFQ), and got the opportunity to talk to three students, two of which identify as Indigenous and one as Afro-Ecuadorian (Table 2). These conversations are considered participatory as they influenced the development of the research question by shaping my understanding of the case and its context, particularly about Indigeneity. Furthermore, one Indigenous student offered insights and comments on my final draft.

Conversation	Ethnicity	Field of Studies	Session	Length
C1	Indigenous	Architecture	A	58:50
C2	Afro-Ecuadorian	International Relations	A	
C3	Indigenous	Civil Engineering	B	56:00

Table 2 Participatory conversation partners

The participatory conversations can be compared to small focus groups, where the aim was to explore what it can mean to be Indigenous or part of an ethnic minority, to live in Quito while having an Indigenous or Afro-descendent background, how resilience is understood from their perspective and how they engage with different ways of knowing. Like in focus groups, the emphasis was on how meaning is constructed (Bryman 2016:500–523). However, just one of the conversations was a group conversation, while I talked to the third student separately because of organizational matters (Table 2). Hence, the conversations do not correspond to usual focus groups which approximately hold six to ten participants (Cameron 2005). The sample of students was convenient and not representative. Nevertheless, it provided me with insights into the lives of Indigenous and Afro-Ecuadorian university students which guided the development of the research aim and enriched my understanding of the context. Unstructured questions guided the conversations (Appendix A) which lasted around 60 minutes and were recorded after ensuring consent.

<sup>18</sup> The program of ethnic diversity supports Indigenous peoples, Afro-Ecuadorians, and members of other minority groups to gain access to academic education (USFQ 2021).

All recordings are stored on an external hard drive to ensure confidentiality. The program *Zoom* was used for facilitating the interviews and conversations, and the meetings were protected by password to guarantee confidentiality to my participants. The interviews and conversations were held mostly in Spanish which was preferred by my interview partners; all translations are by the author. All participants signed an informed consent form which was designed building on Scheyvens (2014:164–68) (see Appendix B). Usually, one limitation of interviews is a small sample size which does not allow for generalizations to greater populations (Brinkmann 2013; de Vaus 2001). However, as other authors have highlighted and as it is the case in this study, this might not be the goal of the scientific undertaking (Brinkmann 2013; Graebner et al. 2012; Warren 2001). A practical limitation of the interview method and the conversations is the role of researcher who has a profound influence on the exchange and the information emerging from it (Warren 2001). To address this issue, I tried to be reflexive about my own position and the influence I might have had. I further expand on this in the ethical considerations section.

## Documents

To complement the collected data and to engage in data triangulation (Yin 2003:97–101), I analyzed official documents about resilience (Bryman 2016:552–54). The advantage and at the same time disadvantage of adding documents to my pool of data is that the documents were not created for the purpose of this study (Bryman 2016:560–62; Yin 2003:85–88). Thus, on the one hand they are less likely to be influenced by my investigation (Bryman 2016:546); on the other hand, there was an intention behind creating these documents which might make them biased in another way (Bryman 2016:560–62). Therefore, it is important to consider the context around each document and evaluate their authenticity, credibility, representativeness, and meaning (Bryman 2016:546). As is highlighted by Bryman (2016:552–54), authenticity and meaning are usually not problematic with official documents, but the researcher has to engage in a reflection about its credibility and representativeness. Moreover, my role as a researcher has a profound influence on the findings by choosing which documents are to be analyzed (Yin 2003:85–88). Hence, in the following I carefully present the documents I analyzed, including their context, objective, and a justification why they were chosen. *Table 3* gives an overview across the sampled documents.

Document	Title	Year	Organization	Nr. of Pages
D1	Resilient Quito – Resilience Strategy Metropolitan District of Quito	2017	Municipality of the Metropolitan District of Quito, 100 Resilient Cities	152
D2	City Resilience Framework – City Resilience Index	2014	The Rockefeller Foundation, ARUP International Development	24
D3	Quito Siembra, Agricultura Urbana (Quito Plants, Urban Agriculture)	2016	Municipality of the Metropolitan District of Quito, ConQuito, AGRUPAR	84

*Table 3* Sampled documents

All documents are sampled by purpose. The first document is *Resilient Quito*, the strategic plan of the city to achieve resilience. This document particularly helped me to understand how resilience is conceptualized and to what extent and how Indigenous knowledges and interests are included within the RS. This document was chosen because it is the city’s official strategy which reflects the aspirations of policy makers. The document is authentic, being published by the municipality of Quito, and meaningful, as its aims are clear. It is judged to be credible, not in the sense that it is free from error or distortion, but in the sense that it represents the city’s official approach, which also satisfies the criteria representativeness.

The second document, the *City Resilience Framework*, was published by the Rockefeller Foundation in collaboration with Arup International Development<sup>19</sup> in 2014. It sets the framework for how urban resilience can be understood and operationalized in order to apply it for building resilience. This document enriched my understanding of the general approach 100RC takes towards resilience, ‘to what’ it should be created and ‘for whom’, which forms part of the context in which Quito’s RS was designed. The consideration of this document deepened the contextual analysis of this case. The document was judged to be authentic, and its meaning is clear. It is credible and representative in the same way as D1.

The third document, *Quito Siembra*, describes and explains urban agriculture under the program AGRUPAR in the city of Quito. It is valuable to this study as I gained further insight into how Indigenous interests and knowledges are included in the urban agriculture efforts of Quito which contribute to the city’s resilience. The document is authentic, meaningful, credible, and representative, like the previously discussed documents.

### 5.2.2 Data analysis

To analyze the gathered data, critical discourse analysis is employed. The analysis is structured around the two sub-research questions, first investigating the RS’s conceptualization of resilience and its representation of citizens and Indigenous groups. Second, the space that is given to alternative and Indigenous ways of knowing is examined. Throughout, attention is paid to how power is exercised and by whom. The interviews were transcribed, and the drafts and documents coded and analyzed as is described in the following.

#### Critical discourse analysis

Critical discourse analysis (henceforth CDA) is especially suited to assist me in answering the research questions because of its attention to the “role of language as power resource” (Bryman 2016:540), critically investigating “social inequality as it is expressed, signalled, constituted, legitimized and so on by language use” (Wodak 2001:2). The advantage of using CDA instead of only discourse analysis lies on the clear linkage CDA establishes between discourse and power in arguing that discourse is representational of power (Bryman 2016:540–43). Already by choice of the political ecology framework I am particularly sensitive to questions of power; CDA supports me to be further attentive to these issues through a close exploration of the written and spoken words.

There is not one way to apply CDA, rather, it is a heterogeneous concept with methodological and theoretical variations (Wodak 2001:3). I adopt a basic approach of CDA, oriented at Fairclough’s understanding (Jørgensen and Phillips 2002:64–89), using it as a tool rather than a complete theory to analyze the collected data. This incorporates acknowledging that discourse is constitutive and constituted, which means that discourse influences social practices and relations, like power relations, and at the same time is influenced by other social practices and relations as well as structures (Jørgensen and Phillips 2002:65). Thus, it is crucial to examine not just the text and its use of language but to investigate text within its context by analyzing the processes which shape how the text is produced and consumed as well as the broader social practices that surround the text (Jørgensen and Phillips 2002:66–71). Discourse is understood as language use, which constitutes a social practice (Jørgensen and Phillips 2002:66–67).

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<sup>19</sup> Arup is an international firm consisting of “designers, planners, engineers, architects, consultants and technical specialists” which work with the built environment (Arup 2021).



Applying a simplified version of Fairclough’s three-dimensional model, I firstly analyzed the text itself paying attention to how my interview partners and the documents refer to resilience and Indigenous knowledges. Secondly, I studied the context in which the texts and interviews were situated and considered the results of the analysis within these circumstances. In a first round of analysis a thorough reading enabled the emergence of interesting themes from the data which was accompanied by noting down ideas. In a second round, the data was analyzed through the codes that have been developed in the analytical framework, which are organized around the pluriverse (*Table 4*), by highlighting relevant passages and noting down thoughts. This was followed by an organization of the observations which resulted in analytical notes. In a last step the findings of each document and interview were put together to achieve a holistic account.

Pluriverse	Code
P1	Respecting a plurality of ways of living and knowing
P2	Connecting ancestral and contemporary knowledges in a horizontal and respectful dialogue
P3	Establishing transformative initiatives which tackle the roots of a problem
P4	Giving political agency to the marginalized, exploited and oppressed
P5	Making the generation, transmission and use of knowledges accessible to all
P6	Using knowledges holistically, meaning not only specific parts and to a limited extent
P7	Establishing no hierarchy between different ways of knowing

*Table 4* Pluriverse aspirations, codes

### 5.3 Ethical Reflections

Conducting research always has ethical implications (Scheyvens 2014). I am dedicated to ensuring the participants’ anonymity, confidentiality, and autonomy over what they chose to share with me. Furthermore, I have been committed to meet my participants with an open mind and to represent them in a respectful and appropriate manner acknowledging their agency and multi-faceted lives. To avoid extractive research, the findings are communicated back to the participants to ensure that the project is of value to them. I have continuously engaged in reflecting upon my own position in both the interaction with my participants and the presentation and interpretation of the data (Manning 2018; Scheyvens 2014).

Multiple authors have highlighted the indispensable engagement with positionality for conducting ethical research (Manning 2018; Scheyvens 2014; Sultana 2007, 2021). My positionality is influenced by my background as a white, Austrian student who had the opportunity to study at a Swedish university and do an exchange semester in Quito at USFQ in the spring of 2020. I, furthermore, engaged in a remote research internship with one professor at USFQ between January and March 2021 where I worked with urban planning for sustainability which opened my mind to the policy perspective in addition to a critical academic perspective. My positionality could have benefited me in establishing contacts to officials. Yet, my research findings might be partial as the study is conducted in a relatively unfamiliar cultural context, particularly considering the representation of Indigenous knowledges. I neither can nor want to speak for Indigenous peoples or groups. Engaging with Indigenous ontologies and knowledges as a non-Indigenous person holds dangers of misrepresentation, othering, romanticization and the perpetuation of existing knowledge hierarchies (Cameron et al. 2014, 2009; Hunt 2014; Scheyvens 2014:239–40). One possibly problematic aspect of my representation of Indigeneity is that I use the example of how Indigenous practices in agriculture contribute to resilience. This could be perceived as grounded in the perception of Indigeneity as rural phenomenon even though it is not my

aim to reinforce this connection. Unfortunately, that was the area where I could access data. I engage in member checking with one Indigenous student who reviewed the final draft which I hope brings me closer to representing Indigeneity in an appropriate way.

Wijsman and Feagan (2019:74) write that “as researchers we are located within networks of power and participate in the (re)configuration of power relations”. I am aware that I mainly represent the views of policy makers which might contribute to a perpetuation of power relations as unfortunately, the Indigenous organizations I initially planned to talk to did not respond to my request. Yet, this project aims to create useful insights for academia and officials with the aspiration of an enhanced inclusion of Indigenous knowledges in resilience efforts. Thus, the study questions power relations in resilience building efforts, thereby impairing the continuity of power relations.

#### 5.4 Limitations

From the chosen research design some limitation arise. Firstly, as I only look at one particular case, I cannot draw general conclusions about how urban resilience strategies address and recognize Indigenous voices and interests. However, this is not my aim but rather to gain a holistic insight into one crucial case to further conceptual knowledge around how alternative and Indigenous knowledge interact with resilience building efforts and how power relations influence this interaction.

Secondly, my data set is quite small as access to potential interviewees was limited, on the one hand, due to the COVID-19 pandemic which inhibited a personal presence, and on the other hand, because I did not receive many answers to my email requests. I am aware of this issue and tried to overcome it through triangulation by combining insights from interviews and documents which were complemented by participatory conversations as well as academic literature.

Thirdly, the collected data might be biased because of the emergent design and the snowballing technique I used to get access to the second and third interview. Thus, I was careful to critically engage with the data I collected and aware that I only look at part of the picture. Engaging in data triangulation helped me to overcome part of the bias as the documents serve their own cause which is unrelated to this thesis. In addition, the conversations with students brought in a different perspective.

## 6 Analysis

This section discursively analyzes Quito’s resilience strategy to identify how power relations shape ‘for whom’ and ‘to what’ resilience is created. Applying a relational conceptualization of power (Ahlborg and Nightingale 2018), I argue that power is located within knowledges and ontologies which shape the resilience strategy. Adopting a decolonial, feminist political ecology approach which recognizes multiple ways of being in and seeing the world, the concept of the pluriverse enables me to identify how different ways of knowing are recognized. Hence, to arrive at findings about how power relations shape the inclusion of urban Indigenous peoples, I first examine the RS’s conceptualization of resilience and second its openness to alternative and Indigenous knowledges. These two sections correspond to the two sub-research questions; the second question is divided in two subsections to first discuss alternative and second Indigenous knowledges. Also, the second section integrates insights from the subunit of analysis about Indigenous knowledges in the urban agricultural program AGRU-PAR. This enriches the discussion by contributing to a deeper understanding of Indigeneity and Indigenous knowledges in Quito’s RS and provides a positive example of how the inclusion of Indigenous knowledges can enhance resilience.

Due to the discursive relationship between resilience and knowledge, clear connections between the research questions are evident; the separation in the described sections serves a structured illustration. When referring to the resilience strategy (RS), Quito's general approach to achieve resilience is meant which is reflected in the documents as well as the interviews and not only the document 'Resilient Quito'.

## 6.1 Resilience in Quito's Resilience Strategy

This section discusses the collected data regarding the first research question about the conceptualization of resilience. Specifically, it is asked how the definition and narrative of resilience impact the inclusion of Indigenous peoples in the RS. This analysis is built on previous literature in political ecology which theorized that an apolitical conceptualization of resilience limits its potential for furthering equity. The collected data shows that even though the RS's definition of resilience is adopted from 100RC, which reflects an apolitical and technical engagement with resilience, Quito's RS is concerned with firstly, addressing structural and social issues like poverty and exclusion, and with secondly, fostering active citizen participation. Thus, it opens up space for the agency of citizens and Indigenous peoples in resilience efforts in contrast to what other authors have observed with technical and apolitical approaches to resilience (Allen, Johnson, et al. 2017; Cretney 2014; Leitner et al. 2018).

The definition of resilience that is applied in Quito's RS is quoted from 100RC:

*"Urban resilience refers to the ability of people, communities, companies and systems that form part of a city to survive, adapt, and grow regardless of the types of acute shocks and chronic stresses they experience."* (Document 1:24)

The interviews mirror this understanding of urban resilience as sustaining the city's function, which is also expressed in the City Resilience Framework (D2). As my informant puts it, resilience is about *"how can the city maintain its functions meaning provide [...] despite of different disturbance"* (Interview 1) and the document states: *"Resilience focuses on enhancing the performance of a system in the face of multiple hazards, rather than preventing or mitigating the loss of assets due to specific events"* (D2:3).

Yet, my interviewee and the document highlight the important role of adaptive capacity (I1, D1): *"Building urban resilience does not mean returning to a previous or normal condition. It is about developing the capacity to prepare and adapt to change, and to be able to continue functioning in a more effective and efficient way."* (D1:24). My interview partners furthermore recognize the contextuality of resilience and do not claim universality to their understanding of it (I1, I3). Indeed, interviewee 1 explained that *"what I am trying to say is that there is not one recipe or one-size fits all solution in general"* (I1). Thus, the understanding of resilience in Quito could be classified as socio-ecological which acknowledges the complexities of systems and aspires to be transformative (Cretney 2014; Edwards 2020). However, the RS's definition of resilience does not include a social dimension and it does not reflect on its apolitical character which might work to deepen inequalities as multiple authors have highlighted in the field (Allen, Griffin, et al. 2017; Borie et al. 2019; Côte and Nightingale 2012; Cretney 2014; Fitzgibbons and Mitchell 2019b; Leitner et al. 2018; Tai 2020).

Similar to the resilience definition, the 'target group' of the RS is defined in apolitical terms. The interview partners and documents indicate that the RS is intended towards people in vulnerable situations and young people (I1, I3, D1). The latter are seen as an opportunity to sustainably shape the future by channeling their energy, as my interviewee states: *"we have a big amount of young people, mostly educated, [...] all that energy, where do we want to direct it"* (I3). Vulnerability is understood

in a socio-economic sense “*from the perspective of poverty, gender, age and disability*” (I1); this, my interview partners argue, is mainly due to information constraints in Quito. The RS acknowledges that people in vulnerable situations are most severely affected by shocks, like earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, landslides, floods and forest fires; and stresses, like social inclusion, environmental degradation, physical vulnerability of households, socio-economic vulnerability, exposed infrastructural services, and biodiversity loss (D1:32). The document reads that “*the vulnerable population is concentrated in critical areas, which exacerbates their exposure to threats and amplifies the impact an event may have. [...] [Furthermore, the] structural issues mainly harm the most vulnerable sectors of the population*” (D1:32). It can be observed that data indicates a quite apolitical understanding of vulnerability with no regard of ethnicity or race, even though the literature brings forth much evidence about the disadvantaged and vulnerable situations that members of minority ethnic groups experience (Di Chiro 2016; Coolsaet 2021; Murdock 2021; Sun-Hee Park and Ruiz 2021).

However, the strategy throughout discusses the importance of first, structural issues, and second, citizen participation and social factors. The collected data indicates that resilience is not build towards specific natural threats but that a broader approach is taken to tackle structural issues which in the case of a disaster should help to mitigate its impact, strengthen response, and accelerate recovery (I1, D1:32). Resilience seems to be perceived as a mean to improve the quality of life in the city by addressing structural problems. ‘Resilient Quito’ states that “*establishing urban resilience as a governing principle is fundamental to living in fairer and more sustainable societies*” (D1:11). This tendency is reflected in the specific actions of the RS of which only a handful are directed towards immediately preparing the city to address threats through neighborhood preparedness, neighborhood volunteer networks and disaster preparedness awareness campaigns (D1:94-107). The majority of the 64 actions are aimed at tackling structural issues (D1:40). One of my informants, who has been heavily involved in the creation of the RS, emphasizes that

*“it doesn’t make sense to focus only on natural threats and man-made threats and so on if we don’t address also what really makes us vulnerable, meaning poverty, meaning spatial exclusion, socio-economic exclusion or environmental degradations or let’s say the difficulties of people to access to the labor market, and so on”.* (I1)

Quito’s focus on structural issues, including structural inequalities, appears to be uncommon among the 100RC program. In their comparative study, Fitzgibbons and Mitchell (2019b) observe that 100RC does not guide cities to adopt an equitable approach.

Citizen participation constitutes the first of the 5 pillars of the RS which organize its 16 stated goals and 64 actions (D1). The RS states that pillar A

*“focuses on facilitating participatory processes as guidelines for democracy, validating the public administration’s work, and strengthening processes of co-responsibility between citizens and the municipality. It aims at strengthening institutional and community capacities to build participatory processes and provide clear and effective mechanisms for citizen engagement.”* (D1:13)

Furthermore, while some of the RSs’ actions focus on technical solutions to urban sprawl and exposure to threats for example through improving mobility and upgrading the built environment, many actions emphasize the importance of building and strengthening the social fabric of the city through enhancing citizen participation and supporting the economy to ensure incomes. The interviews and documents demonstrate that the social has been identified as playing a major role in creating resilience (I1-3, D1-2). ‘*Collective identity and mutual support*’ is recognized as one of 12 indicators describing fundamental attributes of a resilient city in the City Resilience Framework (D2:7-11) and interviewee 3 states that

*“the things that we identified that make a community more resilient than others [...] are basically, actually community, like having these ties, and knowing who lives near you, what are their conditions, do they need help if there is an earthquake, is there a doctor, [...] – actually having this [...] social net”.* (I3)

Together with the emphasis on structural issues, the engagement with citizens and social conditions could be interpreted as an attempt to overcome some of the threats an apolitical definition poses, namely ignoring root causes (Leitner et al. 2018:1277), by addressing and mitigating them.

Reflecting on these findings under consideration of the different actors which are involved allows a more detailed understanding of power in the RS to emerge. Not only does the RS condition space for citizen agency (as was theorized earlier), but also the RS itself is conditioned by structural factors, like its funders and partners. 100RC has been found to promote a rather technical approach to resilience which is coherent with the analyses of other scholars (Leitner et al. 2018; Meerow et al. 2019). These authors furthermore discuss the technical assistance of 100RC’s strategic partners ARUP and AECOM, of which the latter assisted Quito in the creation of its RS (I3, D2). Thus, it could be argued that the technical aspects of the RS reflect the influence of 100RC and AECOM which conditions the space in which the RS is created. However, the findings demonstrate that the RS is by no means limited by its structural conditions, like the adopted definition of resilience, as they do not necessarily predetermine the approach which is taken towards resilience; rather, there still is space for human agency as Ahlborg and Nightingale (2018) have emphasized. Indeed, the officials responsible for designing the RS utilized this space to include structural and social concerns. In other words, the data indicates that Quito’s RS could overcome its apolitical conceptualization of resilience and, thereby, created room for the inclusion of Indigenous interests among others. These findings contribute to theory by demonstrating that human agency can have a major impact on environmental governance even under limiting constitutional factors.

The question ‘to what’ resilience is built can, then, be resolved by arguing that its aim is to address structural issues. Resilience, moreover, is created particularly for people in vulnerable situations and young people which answers ‘for whom’. Returning to the first research question, it can be said that even though the conceptualizations of resilience and vulnerability do not offer direct space for the representation of Indigenous peoples in the RS, the focus on firstly, addressing structural causes of vulnerability and secondly, on fostering citizen participation opens up indirect space for including Indigenous knowledges and interests.

## 6.2 Openness to alternative and Indigenous knowledges

Addressing the second research question about how power is exercised through the inclusion of alternative and Indigenous knowledges in Quito’s resilience strategy and how that impacts equity, this section discusses the space which is given to alternative and Indigenous knowledges. Drawing on my analytical framework, the knowledges which are included, and the recognition and extent of participation of alternative and Indigenous knowledges reflect power relations. The pluriverse allows a more detailed analysis of how different ways of knowing are included and recognized. The first part of this section investigates the RS’s openness to alternative knowledges through looking particularly at the participatory processes which were conducted as part of the RS. The second part specifically looks at the role of Indigenous knowledges in the RS. Here, the insights are complemented with findings of the urban agriculture program AGRUPAR.

## 6.2.1 Alternative knowledges and participation

My interview partners highlighted that the RS was developed “*in a highly participatory way*” (I1, I3). Additionally, the City Resilience Framework (D2) indicates the need to consult citizens and particularly people who live in different realities to those who are usually consulted in policy making, by stating that “[*o*]ur research suggested that [*l*ower income groups’] concerns and priorities were very different to those of the government and the private sector” (D2:5). The second quote demonstrates an awareness that the inclusion of alternative voices might impact the concerns of the RS, which in essence is exercising power. Hence, the inquiry into citizen participation allows me to understand how much space is given to alternative knowledges<sup>20</sup> and thus infer how well the RS is suited to address inequity. The data indicates both structural constraints and at the same time an openness to the inclusion of alternative knowledges which eventually can contribute to a more equitable resilience governance. The following discussion of the analysis is structured chronologically, following the creation process of Quito’s RS.

The RS was built in two stages, first a Preliminary Resilience Assessment (PRA) was conducted and second, the strategic document ‘Resilient Quito’ was designed (D1:30, I3). The aim of the first phase was to “*identify the areas where efforts need to be made to build a resilient city*” (D1:30), or in other words to detect “*which sectors were the strongest, which ones were perceived the weakest or the ones that could fail in case of an x event*” (I3). This was done through consultations with stakeholders. My informant (I3), who also co-coordinated these meetings, explained that this process was

*“kind of given to us by 100RC. They have a set [...] series of steps and even though [...] they designed it to be participatory, it was focused mainly to include people that were either already part of the municipality, working closely with the municipality, we had some people from the academia, we had private sector, we also had some civil society organizations but it wasn’t targeted to citizens, like [...] individuals or people from the neighborhoods, it was still a high level. So, it was a very – I would say – top-down process”.*

(I3)

The team of the RS seemed to be aware of the limitations of a top-down approach to resilience, which might inhibit a more equal spread of risk as Allen et al. (2017:15) claim. The data suggests that the stakeholders involved in the creation of the PRA, apart from the civil society organizations perhaps, represent an expert view of the world, which is coherent with the apolitical conceptualization of resilience. This is not to argue that a technical approach to resilience is something inherently negative; though, other authors have highlighted that extra caution has to be applied for it to be inclusive as technical programs have been shown to tend to exclude other forms of knowing (Borie et al. 2019; Briggs and Sharp 2004; Wijsman and Feagan 2019).

Supporting these authors’ concerns, the data indicates that alternative knowledges might only be included to a very limited extent through the engagement with civil society organizations in the PRA. This is consistent with the overall findings of Fitzgibbons and Mitchell (2019b) who observe that collaborations mostly take place with key stakeholders and experts while the inclusion of resident’s knowledges usually happens in a partial way and marginalized groups are seldom offered the possibility to self-identify their priorities. As the PRA decides on the areas of work for the RS, leaving citizen knowledges aside demonstrates a disregard for the plurality of ways of living and knowing and thus, does not satisfy the criteria of the pluriverse (Kothari et al. 2019). Hence, power is exercised according to the assessments of policy makers and persons in privileged positions which might limit the trans-

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<sup>20</sup> Alternative knowledges are understood as ways of knowing that are not grounded in technical, scientific knowledge; thus, citizen knowledges are alternative knowledge as was discussed earlier.

formative potential of the RS to further equity. However, it remains unanswered, how much space could be given to citizen participation, in other words, how strict the guide of 100RC must be followed at this planning stage.

Within the second phase, the design of 'Resilient Quito', concrete actions were planned to address the previously identified issues (D1:30). The RS team states that "*we were aware that [the first phase] did not actually include most of the people or the view from the citizens*" (I3); therefore, participatory actions with citizens were designed to identify more concrete areas of work within neighborhoods and to encourage neighborhood leaders to adopt a '*resilience lens*' for other neighborhood projects (I3). These actions were implemented within an already existing participatory structure of the municipality which was used as a channel to get in contact with neighborhood assemblies and neighborhood leaders who act as representatives of their neighborhoods (I3). Yet, the RS recognizes that parts of the population are not represented within that structure (D1). Indeed, one document states that there are

*"more than 2.000 neighborhoods [in the Metropolitan District of Quito], however only 189<sup>21</sup> have established assemblies. This indicates a still-developing participatory agenda, resulting in a large majority of the population, which includes vulnerable groups, with no representation".* (D1:44)

To address this, the RS proposes actions to strengthen participatory capacities and to increase the number of neighborhoods that are represented through active neighborhood leader trainings (D1:46-51). With the participatory approach, citizen knowledges and capacities are acknowledged to be important for the design of actions and their agency for building resilience is recognized. This is coherent with the general focus of the RS on fostering citizen participation which was discussed earlier. A respect for the plurality of ways of living and knowing is demonstrated in this approach (P1). Furthermore, some political agency is given to neighborhood leaders and assemblies which might be redirected to marginalized, exploited, and oppressed groups (P4). Thereby, the generation and transmission of knowledges could also be accessible to citizens (P5). Thus, three criteria of the pluriverse are satisfied by the participatory approach of the RS (Kothari et al. 2019).

Connecting these findings to the discussed literature, it could be argued that within the second phase alternative knowledges are acknowledged and included. Through participatory measures, different ways of being in and knowing about the world are recognized and solutions are sought in collaboration or what Yeh (2016:39) refers to as "keep[ing] different epistemologies in productive tension with each other". Through including citizens and by letting them exercise power, the RS opens up space for alternative ways of practicing resilience which are in accordance with affected citizens. Thereby, this participatory process contributes to a transformative approach (P3) which has the potential to further equity (Wijsman and Feagan 2019). This finding is consistent with other authors who found that Quito performed relatively well on integrating equity into its RS, particularly considering participatory aspects (Fitzgibbons and Mitchell 2019b).

Thus, it can be observed that the RS presents some openness to include alternative perspectives which might positively impact equity. Even though the data shows that the framework of 100RC does not offer guidance on how to include marginalized perspectives, which is coherent with the literature (Fitzgibbons and Mitchell 2019b; Leitner et al. 2018), and might even hinder an engagement of citizens during the first phase, the RS of Quito realized a space for alternative knowledges during its second phase to shape the actions to build resilience. Yet, this opportunity for citizen participation is confined firstly, by the process which determined the areas of work which was defined by technical expert knowledges. Secondly, issues of representation within the citizen participation system limit the num-

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<sup>21</sup> Numbers from 2017.

ber of citizens that can actually participate. Here, structural conditions might actively constrain the agency for those who created the RS. On the one hand, 100RC might limit the possibilities for citizen engagement because of a set structure during the first phase; on the other hand, the municipality of Quito, who's citizen participation system is still in development, might confine the reach of the program. Yet, the already existing system is still perceived more effective than building a new one for the RS (I3) and efforts are made to overcome issues of limited representation through training (D1) and to include alternative knowledges. Thus, it can be argued that power is exercised to both limit and enhance the inclusion of alternative knowledges. This demonstrates that the RS itself is a product of discourse and reflects the struggles for the inclusion of different ways of knowing.

The findings show that the RS is concerned with the interests and knowledges of citizens and actively attempts to foster their inclusion even though the RS's agency is conditioned by institutional factors like 100RC's guidelines and the municipal participatory system. Yet, the RS's openness towards alternative knowledges in the design of actions enables citizen, Indigenous persons among them, to shape the process of building resilience which can possibly contribute to equitable environmental governance.

### 6.2.2 Indigenous knowledges

Based on the previous discussion about the strategy's openness towards different ways of knowing, this section examines how Indigenous knowledges are recognized by and included in the RS. Primarily, this part looks at Indigenous interests, before examining the interaction of the RS with Indigenous practices. As above, political ecology and the pluriverse are used as guidance to infer how power relations shape the valuation of Indigeneity and its knowledges. It has been found that Indigenous practices are recognized throughout the RS, but that there is additional scope to foster active participation of Indigenous persons. The urban agriculture project AGRUPAR represents a positive example of how the active inclusion of Indigenous knowledges can foster both equity and resilience at the same time.

Indigenous interests are not explicitly mentioned nor addressed in Quito's RS (D1) which reflects the promotion of universal or majority groups interests over specific groups interest as was discussed by Horn (2018). One official explains *"I have to acknowledge that Indigenous people in general, and then their knowledges and so on, they weren't really included in the strategy [...] there isn't one action devoted specifically to them"* (I1). Moreover, Indigenous peoples are not included in the conceptualization of people in vulnerable situations, even though one interview partner stated that *"when [Indigenous peoples] come into the city, they are automatically included into the vulnerable population group [...] they necessarily have to be taken into account when working with any kind of social inclusion policy in the city"* (I1). However, the particular interests and needs of Indigenous groups are not regarded, even though their disadvantaged situation is not only evident from the literature (Fine-Dare 2016; Horn 2018; Radcliffe 2015), but also my informants are aware of it. One interviewee states that *"we have issues of racism and economic inequality which many times align with this – the more Indigenous you look, the more racism you could maybe experience [and] the less opportunities you have"* (I3).

The data indicates that structural and institutional constraints are quite limiting to Indigenous agency. It remains uncertain if the RS's universalizing approach, which does not recognize the difficulties of ethnic minority groups, can contribute to an improvement of the situation of Indigenous peoples. From a pluriversal perspective, recognition of and respect towards a plurality of ways of living and knowing (P1) are crucially emphasized (Kothari et al. 2019). Similarly, Fitzgibbons and Mitchell's (2019b) theorization of an equitable and just approach to resilience highlights the importance of recognition.



Though, what needs to be considered in the context of Quito is *mestizaje*. As Interviewee 3 explains, “we do not have [...] two separate races, like [...] the case of the United States where they have white and black, here it’s more like we are all mixed [...]. That I think is important to understand because when we talk about Indigenous communities, I think that sometimes people imagine very rural or very unique Indigenous communities, what we have mostly here is very mixed, and with some degrees of difference but very mixed. [...] they are within us, they are – it’s mixed, it’s very hard to try to target”. (I3)

This quote of one official reflects the challenges of defining the socially constructed and dynamic concept of Indigeneity (Johnson et al. 2007; Shaw et al. 2006) and demarcating it from *mestizaje* (de la Cadena 2000). It, furthermore, visualizes the difficulties of combining an acknowledgement of Indigenous difference with the interests of the majority society, as has been observed by others in the context of Quito (Horn 2018). Through the lens of the pluriverse, relativizing and equalizing ethnicity is problematic in the light of the explicit aim to create “a world in which many worlds fit” (Zapatista National Liberation Army 1996 in Kothari et al. 2019:v). However, attempting to include many worlds poses the challenge of defining Indigenous persons, which, in itself, is highly contested (Coombes et al. 2011; Johnson et al. 2007; Shaw et al. 2006). Bringing in power, it could be argued that the RS is designed in way that limits the space for Indigenous agency because their voices are not included, which is coherent with the observations of one Indigenous student (Conversation 3) and Horn’s (2018) findings.

The interview data, however, indicates that Indigenous practices are appreciated (I1-3) which opens up space for Indigenous involvement and agency. One originally Indigenous practice, that was mentioned repeatedly during the interviews is *minga*. *Minga* basically refers to a community initiative where “people [...] from a certain community or their neighborhood get together to do something for their community” (I3). The underlying rationale is cooperation, one interviewee told me “it’s kind of a way of saying ‘now we do something for me, and tomorrow we do something for you, and that’s how we organize’” (I1). This practice was also evident in the conversations with students (C1,3) and seems to represent an important part of Indigenous living and working. Yet, this practice is not only common among Indigenous communities but among the general population; interview partner 3 puts it as follows: “this Indigenous practice [is] widespread in the city [...] we all know about it” (I3).

The RS acknowledges this practice and includes it in specific actions of the strategy, thereby, in a way, linking ancestral and contemporary knowledge (P2). Another, more critical way to view it could be to argue that the practice of *minga* is operationalized and that the RS is in some way selective and extractive of Indigenous practices (P6). One student explained that in their municipality Otavalo, which is north of Quito, conflicts have occurred between Indigenous initiatives, that performed *mingas* to build infrastructure like a lake promenade, and the local municipality which ‘wants to take advantage of [the community initiative]’ (C3). Further research would be needed to resolve whether and to what extent the usage of the practice of the *minga* might be opportunistic of Indigenous knowledges. From a representational perspective, it could be reasoned that by including *minga* in the RS, this Indigenous practice is acknowledged which could contribute to an improved social status of Indigenous persons. It was observed that the collected voices show great acknowledgement for the social network and the community ties of Indigenous communities. One interview partner said that “having this social net, that is what supports you. And I think that’s hard to build, that’s hard to build. It is something that Indigenous communities have more [...] that’s their strength, you know” (I3).

Another practice that was commonly related to Indigenous peoples and appreciated for its impact on the city's resilience is agriculture (I1-3). One interview partner states that “[Indigenous people] were bringing their piece of agriculture to the urban area [...] we tried to strengthen [that they] bring agricultural practices to the city, we want that. Actually, that's resilience, that's building resilience” (I3). The data about the urban agriculture program AGRUPAR reflects this recognition of Indigenous knowledges and practices (I2, D3). Indeed, my interview partner explains that

*“we promote an agriculture that is based in agroecology. So, when we talk about agroecology in the Andean region, we talk about recognition, about recognizing and recovering ancestral knowledges, about appreciating these wisdoms, about valuing everything that was developed many years ago, because it has a scientific base, eventually it is scientifically based”.* (I2)

Besides a recognition of Indigenous knowledges, the work of AGRUPAR fosters Indigenous practices (I2):

*“Thanks to the knowledge of these pueblos<sup>22</sup> seeds are preserved. Like corn, potato, quinoa, amaranth – seeds of various Andean crops [...]. The wealth of these pueblos is that they continue to maintain all those genetics and that original biodiversity from many, many years ago. So, that is something very valuable, especially if one thinks about the seasons of planting that they experienced, how they rotated the crops to control pests and diseases, and all these practices of using extracts and botanical principles. And that's only the production part.”* (I2)

As can be seen above, the data indicates a very appreciative and inclusive encounter with Indigenous knowledges which is also reflected in the document: “Urban agriculture is a key part of Quito's food system that has allowed the recovery of ancestral knowledge, know-how, customs and traditional Andean crops (D3:29).

Looking at it from the perspective of the pluriverse, it can be argued that AGRUPAR respects a plurality of ways and ideas of living (P1), that it links ancestral with contemporary knowledge (P2), that it makes knowledge accessible through sharing practices, particularly Indigenous practices (P5), and that there is a transformative aspiration (P3) which underlies AGRUPAR's philosophy. The latter is prevalent in its holistic approach to urban agriculture, attempting to improve their participants' and the city residents' lives in every way. Furthermore, the data suggests that conventional agricultural techniques get discriminated in favor of agroecological approaches thereby valuing Indigenous knowledges over technical scientific knowledge (P7). The data does not allow assumptions about the extent to which particular parts of Indigenous knowledges are chosen to be included while others are not (P6). It is assumed, however, that AGRUPAR's teachings do not reflect every aspect of Indigenous knowledges (e.g. cultural identity and cosmology) but rather focus on the practical aspects of agriculture. Nevertheless, the program AGRUPAR exemplifies how the recognition and participation of Indigenous practices can contribute to a successful and equitable urban resilience governance.

Turning to Quito's RS, it can be argued that it respects a plurality of ways of living (P1), but concerns could be raised about the inclusion of Indigenous knowledges and peoples. More concretely, the interview partners clearly demonstrate a recognition of Indigenous practices, particularly concerning community organization and cohesion; yet, the RS displays additional scope to foster active participation of Indigenous persons, which is required for a proper inclusion in urban environmental governance (Fitzgibbons and Mitchell 2019b). Thus, it could be argued that power is exercised to support the status-quo, which is in accordance with previous literature claiming that urban Indigenous interests are

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<sup>22</sup> Used to refer to Indigenous groups.

perceived secondary to the general populations' interest (Horn 2018). The results indicate that the RS does not consciously alter constitutive factors which limit Indigenous agency, but that Indigenous marginalization might persist throughout Quito's resilience efforts. To achieve a more equitable and just resilience outcome, it could be suggested that the RS takes AGRUPAR's work as an inspiration of how actively including Indigenous knowledges can contribute to both the livelihoods of Indigenous peoples and the resilience of Quito.

*A short note on the COVID-19 pandemic:*

No evidence has been found that the pandemic changed or strengthened the RS's engagement with alternative or Indigenous knowledges. However, the collected data suggests that municipal support for addressing structural issues has increased (11,2).

## **7 Conclusion**

This thesis asked how power relations shape 'to what' and 'for whom' resilience is created in Quito, Ecuador because concerns have been raised about the implication of resilience building efforts on equity and justice. In addition to describing for whom and to what resilience is created, I analyzed the recognition and participation of alternative and Indigenous knowledges through the pluriverse to draw conclusions about who exercises power and how it shapes for whom and to what resilience is created. My data indicates that power plays out between different actors, mainly the officials who were in charge with designing the resilience strategy, the 100 Resilient Cities program (100RC) which funded the project and provided assistance, the municipality of Quito which supported resilience building efforts, citizens who participated in the process, and Indigenous persons who are at the concern of this study.

The findings demonstrate that power relations both constrain and augment the equitable potential of Quito's resilience strategy. 100RC and the municipality of Quito work as constitutive factors which condition the space of agency for the officials. 100RC provided a process guide and technical assistance which especially shaped the first phase of the resilience strategy in which the areas of work were defined. The exercised power appeared insensitive to issues of equity and justice which resulted in a rather apolitical definition of resilience not regarding the role of structural problems and not acknowledging that disasters are socially constructed. Here, neither citizen nor Indigenous knowledges were included to frame to what or for whom resilience should be created.

During the second phase of the resilience strategy, efforts to foster citizen participation were constrained by the municipality of Quito because its participatory structure only covers part of the neighborhoods. Here, power was exercised in an indirect manner but still limited the scope and character of voices which were included in the design of specific actions to foster resilience. Hence, this study argues that the guidelines of 100RC and the municipal participatory system constrain whose voices are heard and whose knowledges are included in Quito's resilience strategy and thereby support the status-quo which hampers an equitable and just approach to building resilience.

Despite constraining constitutive factors, the officials managed to emphasize equity and justice in the resilience strategy through opening up space for the inclusion of citizens' voices. Through the policy makers' agency, the importance of social ties for resilience was communicated, structural issues were addressed and actions to improve the citizen participation structure of the city were fostered. Thus, power exercised by officials contribute to a more transformative approach to resilience building which

enhances its impact on equity and justice. This contributes to existing literature by arguing that an apolitical framing of resilience does not necessarily translate into apolitical actions.

Regarding Indigenous peoples, the findings show that a general resilience approach prioritizes the interests of the majority population over those of Indigenous groups in Quito, which supports the findings of previous literature. The data indicates that Indigenous practices are recognized for its positive impact on resilience, particularly Indigenous community initiatives and Indigenous knowledges about agriculture, even though Indigenous persons are not identified as a specific 'target group' of the resilience strategy. Constitutive factors, like 100RC's insensitivity to the inclusion of Indigenous and marginalized groups and the municipality's overall policy approach, might have contributed to not discuss ethnicity and to not include Indigeneity explicitly within the resilience strategy besides difficulties to draw clear lines between ethnicities, particularly differentiating Indigenous peoples and *mestizas/os*. The chosen subunit about the urban agriculture program AGRUPAR gave insights into how Indigenous knowledges can actively be incorporated in resilience building efforts to strengthen resilience, equity, and justice at the same time.

Further research on power relations and the inclusion and representation of marginalized groups in urban resilience strategies could adopt a comparative case study design in order to gain more specific insights into which power processes might be context specific in comparison to possibly more generally observable power relations in resilience governance. Additionally, the implementation of Quito's resilience strategy could be investigated, paying particular attention to power relations and implications for equity and justice concerning Indigenous peoples.

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## 9 Appendix A

### 9.1 Interview Guide

- (1) How did you start working with resilience in Quito?<sup>23</sup>
- (2) How would you define resilience?
  - a. Could you give some examples?
  - b. How is resilience operationalized?
  - c. How do you conceptualize risk and disaster?
  - d. Who are the people in vulnerable situations?
    - i. What made you conceptualize vulnerability in socio-economic terms, like, poverty, age, gender, and disability?
  - e. How does AGRUPAR contribute to Quito's resilience?
- (3) How was the resilience strategy created?
  - a. How did the participatory process for the resilience strategy look like?
    - i. Who participated and how were the participants selected?
    - ii. What did they do?
    - iii. What was the output and how did it inform the resilience strategy?
- (4) What are Indigenous interests towards resilience?
  - a. How do these interests differ from those of other groups?
  - b. How are Indigenous interests integrated in the strategy? Have Indigenous groups been involved in its creation?
- (5) Why and how are local and Indigenous knowledges important for the resilience strategy/AGRUPAR's aims and activities?
  - a. How did you go about local knowledges when designing the resilience strategy/AGRUPAR's actions?
    - i. How are Indigenous voices integrated in the design of the actions?
    - ii. What are common challenges to urban Indigenous peoples?
  - b. Are there any guidelines or recommendations from 100RC about how to work with local and Indigenous knowledges?
  - c. How is Indigenous knowledge generally perceived? Among the municipality and generally citizens?
- (6) How does the COVID-19 pandemic impact and alter the resilience strategy/AGRUPAR's work?
- (7) Is there something else you would like to add or bring up?

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<sup>23</sup> As was mentioned in the text, not all the sub-questions were asked to all interview partners, rather they were chosen according to my interviewee's expertise. This interview guide is a collection of these different questions.

## 9.2 Participatory Conversation Guide

- (1) Who are you? Where do you come from? Which ethnic group do you feel part of? What do you study?
- (2) Could you tell me a bit about what it means to be Indigenous or Afro-Ecuadorian for you?
- (3) Identifying Indigenous/Afro-Ecuadorian, how is it to live in the city of Quito?
  - a. Are there some Indigenous/Afro-descendant groups? Are you part of one such group?
- (4) What is it like for you to study at a university which is oriented at North American universities, bringing in your culture and Indigenous knowledges? How do you connect these different ways of knowing?
- (5) What does resilience mean to you?
  - a. In the face of pandemics?
- (6) Is there anything you would like to add or bring up?

## 10 Appendix B

### 10.1 Informed Consent Form

#### **Informed consent form**

My name is Maeve Hofer and I am a student at Lund University in Sweden. I am currently writing my bachelor's thesis about the representation and inclusion of indigenous groups in urban environmental governance. For this I concretely study the Metropolitan District of Quito and investigate how well indigenous interests are integrated in the overall resilience strategy of the city. I pay special attention to the conceptualization and meanings of resilience, particularly in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic, and to how indigenous knowledges have been addressed by the resilience strategy in Quito. You have the right to ask any questions about the project at any time. I hope that this research can benefit you, as my research participants, and contributes to academic insights regarding dimensions of power and inclusiveness in resilience studies.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. I am not aware of any potential harm that could occur to you because of your participation in this study. The information you share with me will inform my research which will be published by Lund University and be publicly accessible. A version of the final work will be shared with you. I will treat the information you choose to share with me confidentially and provide anonymity. Your name will only be used if you explicitly give me permission to do so. I will store the collected data on an external hard drive to ensure your privacy. You can withdraw your participation anytime without giving reasons by contacting me via email ([ma4288ho-s@student.lu.se](mailto:ma4288ho-s@student.lu.se)) or my supervisor, Muriel Côte ([muriel.cote@keg.lu.se](mailto:muriel.cote@keg.lu.se)).

If you agree to participate in the study, please sign below. If you agree to audio recording, please tick the box. You can withdraw your agreement to audio recording at any time.

I agree to the audio recording of the interview.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date and place