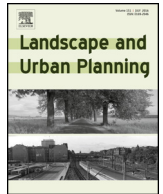




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Urbanites, smallholders, and the quest for empathy: Prospects for collaborative planning in the periurban Shullcas Valley, Peru

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HIGHLIGHTS

- Urbanites appreciate quality of life on the new urban periphery of Huancayo.
- Smallholders depend on the lease of additional farmland in the Shullcas Valley.
- Smallholders fear the urbanization of irrigated farmland on the valley floor.
- Cognitive empathy of urbanites toward periurban smallholders exists.
- Empathy should be created and/or valorized for collaborative planning processes.

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ABSTRACT

Given the regional geographic specificities of Central Andean valleys, the social and environmental impact of dispersed urbanization on smallholder farmers is particularly high in the new urban peripheries of Peruvian mountain cities. Collaborative planning is seen as promising approach to achieve sustainable use of the remaining agricultural areas.

Cognitive empathy between local stakeholders in periurban areas of the Peruvian Andes—more powerful urbanites and less influential smallholders—is a helpful ingredient for collaboration at eye level: but are urbanites empathetic toward smallholders and their perceptions of urban expansion? Using the example of the periurban Shullcas Valley near the city of Huancayo Metropolitano, this empirical study reveals: (1) the city dwellers' motives to live on the new urban periphery, (2) how urbanites assess the impacts of urban growth on smallholders, and (3) to what degree these assessments conform to the farmers' perceptions.

The results show that urbanites are mostly empathetic toward smallholders: they clearly perceive advantages and disadvantages, especially the irretrievable loss of agricultural land on the valley floor. However, they show little awareness of the smallholders' land tenure situation and their dependency on the lease of additional farmland. Consequently they largely overestimate the advantages of rising land prices driven by an increasing demand for lots. The results point to the need for including periurban smallholder farmers into urban planning and call for the creation and/or valorization of cognitive empathy in a preparatory process to collaborative planning—especially in the new urban peripheries of the Central Andes.

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1. Introduction

1.1. Background and aims

Unbridled and dispersed growth of urban areas characterizes many new peripheries of cities across the world and challenges

planners and policy makers to handle both risks and opportunities of the loss of agricultural land in emerging periurban areas (Allen, 2003; Dematteis, 1998; Simon, 2008; Tacoli, 1998). Despite being a global concern, periurban growth—and its impact on people and their environment—is highly dependent on regional geographic specificities, that is, the physical geographic setting and its relation to the mind-shaped cultural geographic framework (human–environment interaction); a fact that becomes particularly evident in mountain regions, where complex relief, high altitude, and cultural diversity have led to small-structured patterns of land use and land cover that are rapidly changing in

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the context of global changes (an overview is given by Borsdorf et al., 2015). Periurbanization—understood as a process that produces temporarily or permanently mixed rural–urban land cover structures—is both driven by and impacting on human land use of different stakeholders on new urban peripheries, a constellation that evidently causes competition between land use agents.

To plan sustainable land use of remaining agricultural areas in periurban interfaces, it is therefore crucial to consider the different attitudes and ideas of local people who perceive landscapes and shape their environment (Nassauer & Opdam, 2008, p. 634; for theoretical thoughts on “landscape” and “environment” underlying this study see Berque, 2013). This need for consultation is reflected in the ongoing discussions on collaborative planning (Bishop, 2015; Carmona & Schoonraad, 2006; Healey, 1997; on critiques see Tewdwr-Jones & Allmendinger, 1998; Brand & Gaffikin, 2007; Fischler, 2000). The latter can be seen as a participatory approach focused on consensus building in policy making, where “individuals representing differing interests engage in long-term, face-to-face discussions, seeking agreement on strategy, plans, policies, or actions” (Innes & Booher, 1999, p. 11), with the aim “to improve the quality of their places” (Healey, 1997, p. xi). To achieve this goal, valuable efforts have been made on developing and testing citizen-inclusive social learning formats (e.g. focus groups or workshops) and knowledge-based information or communication tools (e.g. landscape visualizations or community-based GIS) for enabling laypeople to effectively interact with experts (e.g. Albert, 2013; Brown & Raymond, 2014; La Rosa, Lorz, König, & Fürst, 2014; McCall, 2003; Orland, 2015; mountain case studies include Atzmanstorfer, Resl, Eitzinger, & Izurieta, 2014; Peris, Acebillo-Baqué, & Calabuig, 2011; Malek & Boerboom, 2015; Zanon & Geneletti, 2011). Research has concentrated on methods and techniques for improving communication between planners or policy makers (“experts”) and all other stakeholders (“laypeople”). However, if consensus building between all parties is considered a key for sustainable development of regionally specific landscapes—such as new urban peripheries in mountains—, then it can be useful to pay particular attention to the relationship between laypeople with conflicting interests and uneven degrees of power and influence.

From the perspective of social exchange theories (Cook & Rice, 2006), people are supposed to be selfish, conducting some sort of subjective cost–benefit analysis to make decisions for their own benefit (reminiscent of rational choice theory). Yet following the empathy–altruism hypothesis of Batson et al. (1991), empathy makes people help others even if they incur a cost by doing so (Sanderson, 2009, p. 481); an opinion shared by French philosopher and Nobel laureate Albert Camus, who showed “optimism and faith in the ability of human beings to struggle for a just world in their everyday lives out of a sense of cooperation and empathy” (Sagi, 2002, p. 46). At least two different types of *Einfühlung* or empathy—an English translation of the German term introduced by British psychologist Edward B. Titchener in 1909 (Wispe, 1987, p. 20–21)—can be defined. Simply put, emotional empathy refers to the ability to share the emotions of others (Stephan & Finlay, 1999), while cognitive empathy means the ability to understand the others’ points of view and thus is “the extent to which we perceive or have evidence that we have successfully guessed someone else’s thoughts and feelings” (Hodges & Myers, 2007, p. 297). The latter type is a potentially helpful but often underestimated ingredient for collaboration at eye-level in urban planning.

For new urban peripheries in mountain valleys and basins of the Central Andes are places where Incan worldviews (Julien, 2010) merge or clash with globalized *Weltanschauungen*, these rural–urban interfaces seem especially interesting for investigating cognitive empathy between land use competitors. Given the indigenous cultural heritage (Borsdorf & Stadel, 2015; Gade, 1999;

Sarmiento, 2013), rapid development of urban areas in the Andes (e.g. Álvarez-Berrios et al., 2013; Córdova Aguilar, 2000 provides a detailed analysis of Peru), and the sociospatially and environmentally fragmented character of globalizing Latin American cities (Borsdorf, 2003; Inostroza, Baur, & Csaplovics, 2013; Klaus, 2013; Roberts, 2003), the limited space on mountain valley and basin floors is increasingly contested between urbanites in search for quality of life, and periurban smallholders, who lease (additional) farmland to cope with their daily struggles for a livelihood. Stadel (2008, p. 25, adapted by the author) summarizes potential negative impacts of urban growth on Central Andean agriculture: (1) speculation with agricultural land because of expected expansion of urban land use; (2) conversion of agricultural land to residential areas, transportation infrastructures, shopping centers, industrial parks or recreation complexes; and (3) intensification of market-oriented agriculture in the face of growing demand. Empathy-based collaborative planning of remaining agricultural areas could be a solution to these periurban problems.

Hence, the central research question is whether urbanites living in the new neighborhoods on the outskirts are empathetic toward the periurban smallholders and their perceptions—advantages (benefits) and disadvantages (negative effects)—of urban expansion. Using a case in point, the study aims: (1) to reveal the urbanites’ motives to live on the new urban periphery; (2) to hypothetically ask how city dwellers would assess pros and cons of urban growth if they were smallholder farmers; (3) to compare and contrast these perceptions with smallholders’ attitudes; and (4) to assess the degree of cognitive empathy.

1.2. Study area

To answer the central research question and to reach the mentioned aims, the new urban periphery of Huancayo Metropolitan has been selected—a Peruvian intermediate city of currently 425,000 inhabitants distributed over seven districts of the Province of Huancayo in the Junín Region (Haller & Borsdorf, 2013, p. 553; Instituto Nacional de Estadística e Informática, 2009). Located in the agriculturally favorable *quechua* altitudinal zone (up to 3500 m asl; Pulgar Vidal, 1996; Zimmerer & Bell, 2013 provide an examination of this altitudinal model), at approximately 3260 m asl in the valleys of the Mantaro River and its tributaries Shullcas and Cunas (12°45′ southern latitude and 75°12′36′ western longitude), Huancayo not only functions as the region’s capital, but also represents the social and economic center of the Central Peruvian Andes. The migration-driven increase in population, which has doubled in the last 35 years (Haller & Borsdorf, 2013; Instituto Nacional de Estadística e Informática, 1981; Instituto Nacional de Estadística e Informática, 2009), drove the peripheral expansion of urban land by +45% between 1988 and 2008 (Haller, 2012).

In its latest version, the urban development plan of Huancayo (*Plan de Desarrollo Urbano de Huancayo 2015–2025*) already acknowledges the need for protecting “ecological and agricultural” areas by regulating land use (Gerencia de Desarrollo Urbano Ambiental, 2015, p. 11). Yet the same document does not explicitly list agricultural communities or smallholders among the social actors of urban development (only the irrigation councils and the regional governments’ administration of agriculture are included)—while it does consider for example real estate developers, universities, and even religious institutions (Gerencia de Desarrollo Urbano Ambiental, 2015, p. 119). This seems a major omission in the inclusion of stakeholders in the protection of periurban agricultural land.

The same is true for the so-called *Planes de Desarrollo Concertado* (jointly agreed development plans), which exist in each of the nine provinces of the Junín Region. As shown by Miguel Miguel (2015) they do not satisfactorily consider the goals of sustainable develop-

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