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**The role of Community-based urban agriculture in community
development in Bogotá, Colombia**

A case study of Casa B, community organization of the neighbourhood of Belén

Bachelor's thesis

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Olomouc, 2020

Declaration

I declare in lieu of oath that this bachelor thesis was written by myself under the professional supervision of Mgr. Zdeněk Opršal, Ph.D. All information derived from the work of others has been acknowledged in the text and in the list of references.

Olomouc, 2020

.....

Signature

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The thesis will be devoted to community-based urban agriculture and its role in community development, focusing on Bogotá, Colombia. Along with the increasing urbanization trend, community-based urban agriculture has the potential to strengthen food security, community empowerment and improve the livelihoods of the poor and marginalized urban population in the countries of the global South. However, at the same time, community-based urban agriculture in developing countries faces obstacles and risks, including a reserved attitude on the part of municipalities, unclear territorial relations, environmental risks, etc. The paper will attempt to map the situation in Bogotá, from community development and community-based urban agriculture on the example of the Belén, where the case study is conducted.

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Abstract

Colombia, with almost 78 % of its population living in urban areas, is one of the most urbanized states in Latin America. The scale of the country's urbanization, the result of modernization policies, violence and rural exodus, challenges its future development. As community has become one of the dominant responses to tackle urban poverty and vulnerability, this research is devoted to community-based urban agriculture and its role in community development in the capital of Colombia, Bogotá. Along with the increasing urbanization trend, community urban agriculture has the potential to strengthen food security, community empowerment and improve the livelihoods of the poor and marginalized urban population in the countries of the global South. However, at the same time, community-based urban agriculture in developing countries faces obstacles and risks, including a reserved attitude of local official authorities, land disputes, environmental risks among others. The paper attempts to map the situation in Bogotá from the community development point of view and is therefore focused on community-based urban agriculture in Belén, one of the Bogotá's vulnerable urban communities.

Key words: Community development, Community-based Urban Agriculture, Urbanization, Colombia, Bogotá, Belén

Abstrakt

Kolumbie, s téměř 78 % populace žijící v městských oblastech, je jedním z nejvíce urbanizovaných států Latinské Ameriky. Urbanizace, zapříčiněná modernizačními politikami, násilím a migrací z venkova, je výzvou pro budoucí rozvoj země. Jelikož komunita se stala jednou z dominantních odpovědí na řešení městské chudoby, je tento výzkum věnován komunitnímu městskému zemědělství a jeho roli v komunitním rozvoji v hlavním městě Kolumbie v Bogotě. Spolu s rostoucím urbanizačním trendem má městské zemědělství potenciál posílit potravinovou bezpečnost, zlepšit postavení komunity a živobytí chudých a znevýhodněných městských obyvatel v zemích globálního jihu. Zároveň však městské komunitní zemědělství v rozvojových zemích čelí překážkám a rizikům, mezi něž patří mimo jiné vyhrazený postoj místních úředních orgánů, pozemkové spory či environmentální rizika. Výzkum se pokouší zmapovat situaci v Bogotě z pohledu komunitního rozvoje, proto se zaměřuje na komunitní městské zemědělství v Belénu, jedné ze znevýhodněných městských lokalit v Bogotě.

Klíčová slova: komunitní rozvoj, komunitní městské zemědělství, urbanizace, Kolumbie, Bogota, Belén

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List of abbreviations

AUC	United Self-defence Forces of Colombia
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CIDOB	Barcelona Centre for International Affairs
DANE	Departamento Administrativo Nacional de Estadística (National Administrative Department of Statistics)
ELN	Ejército de Liberación Nacional (National Liberation Army)
EPL	People's Liberation Army
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
FARC	Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (The Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia)
HRW	Human Rights watch
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
JAC	Junta de Acción Comunal
M – 19	The Nineteen of April Movement
NGO	Non-governmental organization
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
RUV	Registro único de las víctimas
UA	Urban Agriculture
UN	United Nations
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UN-HABITAT	United Nations Human Settlements Program
WHO	World Health Organization

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1 Introduction

With the increasing level of urbanization, the phenomenon of Urban Agriculture is becoming progressively significant, particularly in developing countries where garden production can supply low-income households with fresh vegetables. However, food production is not the only positive outcome an urban garden can contribute to, especially in the community context.

Vulnerable localities across Colombia face various difficulties, such as high unemployment, delicate security situation, inequality among social groups, hard-to-access quality education, poor infrastructure, common mistrust toward the actual government. Displaced people left after long, and in some place still ongoing armed conflict. The environmental issue and weak condition of health care and its accessibility for those in need. Moreover, still increasing number of murdered social leaders.

Community development could represent a resistant answer to some of these issues and having a place like urban garden might be a starting point. A reason to begin to work with the territory and inhabitants through cultivation. Thus, this bachelor thesis is devoted to the phenomenon of community-based urban agriculture and its significance in community development.

To introduce the context, the paper examines first the conceptual background, beginning with Colombia, armed conflict and its consequences. The theoretical part focuses on the phenomenon of urbanization, urban agriculture and its relation to community development. The final part is field research realized in community organization Casa B, located in of the vulnerable neighbourhoods of Bogota, in Belén. The thesis aims to analyse the impact of community gardens and Casa B on community life as well as the influence on inhabitants of Belén.

2 Purpose of the research

The purpose of this research is to analyse the role of community-based urban agriculture and other activities of Cultural centre Casa B in community development of the neighbourhood of Belén.

The main research question is:

How has the community-based urban agriculture and related activities of Casa B community organization has been affecting the neighbourhood of Belén and its inhabitants?

The specific research questions are:

What have been the urbanization trends in Bogotá over the last 30 years?

How has the concept of community-based urban agriculture has developed in Bogotá?

What is the contribution of the urban gardens to community participation and community life in the neighbourhood of Belén?

3 Conceptual framework of the thesis

This chapter provides background information about the situation in Colombia and Bogota. Attention is also paid to urbanization in Bogota and its associated problems in the context of the wider political and security situation in Colombia. Furthermore, it describes Belén, Candelaria, where the community organization Casa B is settled. This is the location where the research was carried out. Last but not least, part of the thesis is devoted to the introduction of urban agriculture, with a focus on community-based urban agriculture and development of urban agriculture in Bogota.

3.1 Colombia

The Republic of Colombia is located in the northwest of South America. The country shares borders with Panama, Venezuela, Brazil, Peru and Ecuador. It has access to the Pacific Ocean and through the Caribbean Sea also to the Atlantic Ocean. Its territory, with more than 1 million square kilometres is geomorphologically quite diverse - it includes coastal territories, high Andes mountains, lowland plains and central highlands. The climate conditions reflect the geographical differences and have an implication for the high diversity of the ecosystem - there are tropical rainforests, deserts, savannas, mountain climate and steppes. More than half of the country (54,4%) is covered with forests, while approximately 38% of the land is devoted to agricultural production (CIA, 2019).

Colombia is also rich in natural resources, especially in oil, natural gas, coal, iron ore, nickel, gold, copper, emeralds and hydropower (CIA, 2019). Despite the potential of above mentioned natural resources, agriculture production (coffee and cut flowers) play an important role in the Colombian economy and export. The Colombian economy faces a number of challenges, among the most serious ones (in addition to dependence on primary commodities) are poor infrastructure, poverty, narco-trafficking, and an uncertain security situation (CIA, 2019). Considering demography, it is estimated that Colombia has 50 million inhabitants, from which approximately 80% lives in urban areas. The population grow rate is 0,97% (DANE, 2019).

3.1.1 Country's background

The Republic of Colombia was established in 1886, after a long period of colonialism, followed by a great struggle for independence. During all these years the situation has never been very peaceful, and in the 19th and 20th century it was similarly turbulent. Furthermore,

the political situation has always been divided by two strong parties, liberals and conservatives. The conflict between them escalated in 1948 when liberal politician Jorge Eliecen Gaitan was killed. This act has started another civil war called La Violencia, which lasted until the early 60's (Braun, 1987).

Despite the end of bipartisan violence in the 60's the Colombian government was not able to extent its right to exercise legitimate authority and the use of force over the whole territory. Therefore, various guerrilla groups have emerged. The main reason behind this development was the socio-economic exclusion of some minorities and obstacles for free political participation. Marginalized groups and stakeholders consisted of academic institutions and intellectuals as well as peasants and indigenous population (CIDOB, 2014). Among the most notorious guerrillas of the second half of the 20th century was the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, the People's Army (FARC-EP), the National Liberation Army (ELN), the People's Liberation Army (EPL) and the Nineteenth of April Movement (M-19).

The most important guerrilla FARC-EP was formed in 1964 as a peasant self-defence group with a Marxist-Leninist ideology and whose political strategy was mainly guerrilla fight. In 2000, the movement controlled almost 40 percent of Colombia's territory, with nearly 12,000 combatants. The number rose to 18,000 militants in 2007, according to the organization's statements (CIDOB, 2014). Despite proclaimed self-defence goals, FARC-EP has been involved in criminal attacks and drug trafficking. According to Human Rights Watch, "*since its inception in the mid-1960s, the FARC-EP has committed systematic abuses against civilians, including child recruitment, kidnappings, and widespread crimes of sexual violence*" (HRW, 2017: 2).

The ELN was established in 1965, its creation was influenced by the Cuban revolution. The ELN has had majority presence in the Catatumbo area, in the Norte de Santander area, in the southern Department of Bolívar, in the departments of Arauca, Cesar, Antioquia, Cauca, Nariño, Chocó and Valle del Cauca (CIDOB, 2014). The members of this guerrilla group have committed numerous abuses against civilians and in some areas, they continue to do so. Human Rights Watch accuses them of kidnappings, killings, forced displacements and the recruitment of minors (HRW, 2017). ELN is also notorious for abuse of anti-personnel mines (HRW, 2017).

Among other groups which are active in Colombia are various paramilitary groups. CIDOB describes them as predominantly extreme rights-wing groups that have their origins in the promulgation of Law 48 of 1968 through which the Colombian State allowed the privatization of use of force (CIDOB, 2014). These paramilitary organizations experienced a

great boom in the 1980's. In the 1990's, the United Self-defence Forces of Colombia (AUC) was created, bringing together various paramilitary groups. Thanks to reconciliation efforts between 2003 and 2006, around 23 groups in which participated 14 000 combatants were dissolved. However, some of them later reappeared in the form of criminal bands (CIDOB, 2014).

One of the most important factors of armed conflict and violence in Colombia is narcotrafficking. This issue became a large-scale activity in Colombia in the 1970's and 1980's, but this sector was tolerated at the beginning. With growing importance of guerrilla and paramilitary cultivation and smuggling of narcotics, crops became their main source of money. The boom of illicit crop plantation happened in the 90's, in conjunction of the growth of infamous Pablo Escobar's Cartel of Medellin and (the second biggest) cartel of Cali. Interestingly, Colombia has become the only country in the world where the three main plant-based drugs were produced in large quantities, with most of the production going to the US market (Ojeda, 2009).

According to McDermott (2018), since the death of Pablo Escobar in 1993 and the capture of the Rodríguez Orejuela brothers in Cali in 1995, the narcotrafficking organizations in Colombia have been in a process of gradual and irreversible fragmentation. Compared to the past, illegal activities are much more hidden. As McDermott notes *"Today's drug trafficker prefers to hide under the guise of a successful businessman, avoiding the ostentation and extreme violence that characterized previous generations"* (McDermott, 2018: 32).

3.1.2 Consequences of armed conflict

The government and the country's main guerrilla, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) reached a reconciliation agreement in 2016 to end 52 years of armed conflict (HRW, 2017). The conflict had approximately 7.9 million victims, from which according to The Office of the High Commissioner for Peace (2016) consisted from:

- at least 2,000 massacres
- 2,500 victims of extrajudicial executions
- 7,000 victims of forced recruitment
- 10,000 victims of torture
- 11,000 victims of antipersonnel mines

- 13,000 victims of sexual abuse
- 30,000 victims of kidnappings
- 45,000 victims of disappearances
- 220,000 victims of homicides
- 6.7 million victims of displacement

However, serious abuses by the National Liberation Army (ELN), the group formed by former FARC combatants, and paramilitary successor groups that partially demobilized more than a decade ago, continue to occur (HRW, 2019). Many human-rights defenders, indigenous and Afro-Colombian leaders, and other civil society activists face threats and many were killed. Christoph Harnish, Head of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) delegation in Colombia, doubts whether Colombia is indeed a post-conflict country. According to Harnish (2019) there are currently at least five ongoing armed conflicts in Colombia. In the country's most remote and impoverished areas, for many inhabitants of these regions, peace has never arrived (Harnish, 2019). On top of that, the identification and information of relatives of victims of more than 50 years of conflict has not been resolved, and *“the relatives of over 80,000 missing people in the country are still waiting for information”* (Harnish, 2019).

3.2 Urbanization

To fully understand the actual situation of housing conditions in Bogotá and related issues, the phenomenon of urbanization is characterized in the following chapter. Besides it analyses the actual situation in the capital, including the problems generated by fast urbanization.

Urbanization is a global phenomenon with major significance to people and to the environment (Elmqvist and et. al., 2013). The definition provided by OECD describes urbanisation as a process by which a large number of people becomes permanently concentrated in relatively small areas, forming cities (2003). According to the World Health Organization (WHO) the rapid urban growth is a result of two factors. First, the movement of rural populations into towns, and second the natural increase resulting from a surplus of births over deaths in urban populations (WHO, 1993). On the other hand, Elmqvist (2013) understands the expansion of cities as a combination of four forces: natural population growth, rural to urban migration, massive migration due to extreme events, and redefinitions of administrative boundaries.

Furthermore, the WHO says that cities usually represent the idea of better life conditions, while on the other hand the countryside is seen as a poor and depressed. That's why the migration from rural areas feeds urban places and contributes to the abandonment of rural areas with possible negative consequences to the agricultural production and food security (1993). Families who have moved to cities face various challenges. Wratten (2008) describes that urban households require money in order to buy basic items such as water, food and rent, which might be free or at least cheaper in rural areas. They also need to pay for goods and services which might not be available in rural areas but are normally consumed in the city such as electricity and hospital fees. This increases pressure to earn an income.

In some developing countries, there is a paradoxical phenomenon of poverty concentration in urban areas. This phenomenon is usually the result of rising food prices, declining real wages and redundancy on the formal labour market. The situation of the poor in urban agglomerations can be further complicated by health risks (e.g. various diseases associated with contaminated water resources, inadequate or missing garbage management and overall inadequate sanitary and hygiene conditions in areas with high population density and poor infrastructure). In addition, poor residents often inhabit marginal areas with a high risk of natural hazards such as landslides or floods. (Wratten, 2008).

3.2.1 Development of urbanization in Colombia

Latin America is a continent with the fastest urbanization trends in the 20th century and it is the world's most urbanized region whose cities are expected to grow further (Pauchard and Barbosa, 2013). In Colombia, decades of instability, violence and insecurity caused by armed conflict have further accelerated the urbanization process. Over the last five decades, Colombia has transformed *“from predominantly rural society, where more than two-thirds of its population were located in rural areas, ... in an essentially urban country, with nearly three-quarters of the population concentrated in cities”* (UNFPA, 2007, 7). Migration of rural population to urban centres has gained another impetus due to the decline of the agricultural sector, rural poverty and the concentration of land ownership (UNFPA, 2007). In addition, Pauchard and Barbosa (2013) pointed out other problem caused by fast urbanization and extreme lack of planning. It is the urban population growth and concentration that has led to a degradation of natural areas in and around the cities.

The three main urban areas in Colombia (Bogotá, Medellín and Cali) are located in the Andes Mountains and neither of them officially crosses the limit of ten million inhabitants to

be called a megacity (Pauchard and Barbosa, 2013). Even though the migration into cities as a consequence of forced displacement is significant, natural population increase is a factor that explains the major part of urban growth in large and medium-sized cities in Colombia (UNFPA, 2007). According to the UN, the current population density of Colombia is 45 people per square kilometre (DANE, 2019). For comparison, the Czech Republic has 134 people per square kilometre, yet it does not face the challenges of overpopulation in cities (ČSÚ, 2017).

A study conducted by UNFPA together with the University of Externado in Colombia explains the increasing concentration of the Colombian population in large cities (UNFPA, 2007). The study points out that Colombia is traditionally described as a "*country of cities*" because does not concentrate in the capital. A similar pattern can be found in other Latin American countries (UNFPA, 2007). Furthermore, the study analyses problems associated with exceeding a certain population density threshold. Such a situation makes the urban territory unsustainable and difficult to govern. The negative consequences include increased transit time to certain areas, elevated environmental pollution or problems of urban violence. These undesirable developments may eventually induce residents to look for other places to live in other neighbourhoods or even in neighbouring cities (UNFPA, 2007). The problematic situation in Colombia is also confirmed by Pauchard and Barbosa (2013), according to them the Colombian cities face one of the world's largest social and economic inequities (2013).

3.2.2 Bogota

The capital of Colombia, Bogota (Distrito Capital) is located in the centre of the country in an area known as savanna of Bogota at an average altitude of 2640 meters above sea level. Bogota is divided into 20 territorial administrative units. Not surprisingly, the capital is political, economic, administrative, industrial and cultural centre of Colombia. It has a total area of 1776 square kilometres and an urban area of 307 square kilometres where, based on a study by DANE (2019) live approximately 7 150 000 inhabitants. However, data on population size varies, depending on whether refer to the Capital District or to the entire Metro area. For instance, according to the World Population Review (2020) the city of Bogota has approximately 8 million inhabitants, while the metropolitan area 11 million. This makes Bogota by far the largest Colombian city, because two other large Colombian cities Medellin and Cali have approximately two and half million inhabitants each.



Figure 1: Map of localities of Bogota (source: Tierra Colombiana, undated)

Bogota has to face various consequences of the fast urbanization, from the socio-economic ones to the environmental ones. Besides, as UNFPA (2007) says, poverty and violence in Colombia are two realities that accompany the urbanization process. According to UNHABITAT (2016) Latin American cities, such as Buenos Aires, São Paulo, Bogota, Lima, Rio de Janeiro and Mexico City experience major deficits in basic infrastructure. On the other hand, a different document named State Report of The Cities of Colombia (2015) concludes that the case of Colombia's capital clearly shows the cons and benefits of an agglomeration. Among the benefits are better income, a greater number of employment opportunities, as well as better supply and cultural and recreational diversity. On the other side, there are heavy traffic, pollution and safety problems. But basically, the document says that all the negative externalities are the same as of any large city like Bogota. It also highlighted the mayor's office creative initiative among the urbanization, especially how they have prioritized public spaces in recent years. For example, since 1998, they have launched an effort to increase public spaces by constructing 200 km of bicycle paths and 300 small parks (UNHABITAT, 2016).

Even though Bogotá has increased subsidies to the poorest, reduced rates for public services and transportation (UNHABITAT, 2015) is still strongly marked by inequalities. Among its citizens, has an image of residential segregation that contrasts the rich north and the poor south (Dureau and Piron, 2010). As Salas Venegas (2008) confirms, the north hosts most of the rich households and the south is characterized by low-income households. However, he also points out that this division has its differences since very low-income households can also be found in the north. This is relatively unlikely in the opposite case. For example, in the

northern localities such as Suba or Usaquén can be found cohabitation between groups at different levels in the social hierarchy where both are 'isolated' from each other.

The poorest areas are mostly located in the periphery, especially in the south-east sectors of the city and in the municipality of Madrid. In the north-west of Bogota, it is already mentioned Suba, and in the north-east Usaquén. In the historic centre, on the border between the localities of Santa Fe and San Cristobal, can be found some sectors with a predominance of poor households as well. Municipality of Soacha shows one of the highest features of poor households.

Some of the poorest localities are called 'informal neighbourhoods'. According to Torres Tovar (1993) by 'informal neighbourhood' is understood the portion of urban space that the community built and now inhabits. Recognizes and culturally appropriates the territory and has been working and fighting for its improvement and consolidation. It is the unity that identifies the neighbourhood.

In Bogota, the formation of the informal neighbourhoods has not predominated because of invasion, but because of the processes of distribution of parcels due to pirate urbanization (Torres Tovar, 2009). Even though the phenomenon of the informal land market is usually associated with poor households, the relationship between informality and poverty is not a one-way street. The informal market in housing is not a result of insufficient household income, but on the contrary, might be part of the causes of poverty due to high land prices in the informal market (Camargo Sierra and Hurtado Tarazona, 2013).

The illegal household market is not the only problem Bogota is facing, there are many informal businesses across the whole country. However, as UNHABITAT (2016) explains, whether formal or informal, the commerce lacks the infrastructure, equipment, access to materials and markets which any firm of any size anywhere needs to expand and create higher-quality jobs. The result is low employment generation in the Colombian capital and quantity of people being in the informal sector.

Among frequent inhabitants of these informal sectors are internally displaced people and migrants from Venezuela. Cardona (1969) describes three ways of the migration process in his study about Bogota: gradual migration to the periphery; directly to the city centre and then to the periphery, and the periphery without stops. However, being in these neighbourhoods is one of the factors that contribute the most to the perpetual condition and vulnerability of these families. It is difficult to access basic social services as well as services of health, education,

employment, dignity housing etc (UNFPA, 2007). According to the Registro Único de Víctimas (RUV, 2017) there are 8,679,002 registered victims of armed conflict. The very same year 6832 were received in Bogotá. The number of Venezuelan migrants received in Bogotá differs a lot, according to Red Cross report (2018) 750 000 of migrants from Venezuela have been registered by the Colombian immigration department, from which 50% illegally (Malaver, 2018). Moreover, in Bogotá the city that receives this population the most it is becoming a humanitarian problem (Red Cross, 2018).

Another aspect of urbanization in Bogotá is gentrification, a process of urban revitalization caused by the arrival of people with different social and economic situation. Slater, Lees and Wyly (2008) say that this social problem is a result of factors like reinvestment of the capital, improvement of social conditions by higher-income groups and changes in the urban landscape. That causes direct or indirect displacement of lower-income groups. Cardeño Mejía (2007) claims that Bogotá is marked by gentrification especially in the urban centre (La Candelaria, Los Mártires and Santa Fe).

3.2.3 La Candelaria

The smallest municipality of the capital La Candelaria is located in the east-central part of Bogotá. It consists of seven parts: Belén, Las Aguas, Santa Bárbara, La Concordia, Egipto, Centro Administrativo y La Catedral. It is the oldest part of the capital, where the finding of the foundation of the church of Candelaria in the 16th century has been perceived as the establishment of Bogota. Due to its historical importance and colonial architecture, it has been recognized as a national monument (Alcaldía de Bogotá D. C., 2018). Moreover, there are museums, universities, theatres and cultural spaces. As local's mayor's office claims, it is an important tourist, an educational and commercial centre with 22 438 inhabitants.



Figure 2: Map of sectors of La Candelaria (González, 2011)

Even though it is the most attractive touristic location, it still has numerous urban problems, that are partly connected to the inequality between social groups. Considering that historically it was mainly inhabited by high-income groups which abandoned the area after El Bogotazo in 1948 and its violent consequences (González, 2011). Several years later a trend of return of these classes has begun again. As Smith (2013) describes, the dynamic of the relocation of inhabitants, known as gentrification, develops from the implementation of a policy of functional revitalization of the centre of Bogotá, headed by the State, with support from the private sector. Aimed at protecting the heritage and habitability of its historical buildings, the implementation of renovation works, the development of real estate projects and the transport systems. However, Dureau and Piron (2009) point out a certain complexity in the social composition, with a decrease of two lower classes, a concentration of low-income household in specific sectors, a permanence of the higher class and a slight growth of the intermediate classes.

3.2.4 Belén

The neighbourhood is quite small, in the main street, 6d are various small shops and businesses, such as carpentries or restaurants. The local church serves as a frequent meeting point. Although La Candelaria is one of the most famous parts of Bogotá, its neighbourhood Belén is mostly known as the 'dangerous one' or it is not known at all. Just a few outsiders come to visit.¹ The local foundation Marca Comunidad claims it is a result of being “*strongly stigmatized by political and economic interests of various kinds.*” Even though Belén was found

¹ The same applies to the neighbourhood of Egipto and Santa Bárbara

at the same time as the historical centre it is not considered as a national monument. But the foundation further explains, in the last 40 years, due to its strategic position, Belén has been affected by the threat of different development and land use plans. Some parts of Belén had to be eliminated to give space to bigger projects. Including macro housing, institutional and commercial projects (Marca Comunidad, undated).

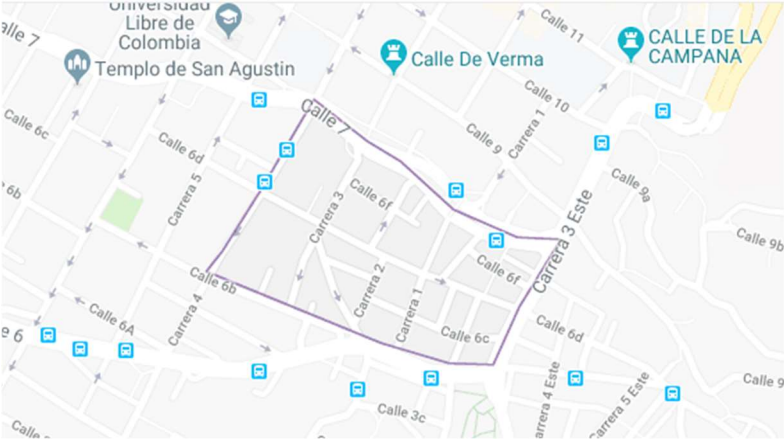


Figure 3: Map of neighbourhood of Belén (google maps, 2020)

3.3 Urban Agriculture

Urban Agriculture (UA) is a globally known phenomenon spread across the World’s first-class cities as well as the poorest ones. Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO, 2020) says it is a “growing of plants and the raising of animals within and around the cities.” Furthermore, it distinguishes on urban and peri-urban agriculture and highlights its potential in contribution to household food security (especially in unfavourable economic periods) together with advantage of having fresh local food in markets instead of transported and more expensive goods. As a result, now-days there are approximately 800 million people worldwide practising UA (FAO, 2020).

The concept has many forms depending on social or economic situation of people along with the level of urbanization. For example, in Berlin small urban gardens are perceived as a place to relax, have fun, and within certain social group is urban agriculture seen as a “cool lifestyle activity” (Banhazi, 2019). On the other hand, in Nairobi, Kenya UA is focused on production and for many, it represents the source of livelihood (Opršal, 2018). Another almost classic example of urban agriculture is Havanan, Cuba, where inhabitants started to grow their own crops due to the prolonged economic crisis and related food supply problems. Later, initially spontaneous urban agriculture began to be supported by the Cuban government itself (FAO, 2014).

Although urban agriculture can have many benefits, it also faces various difficulties. Among most serious are health issues, (e.g. food contamination as a result of air or water pollution or direct intoxication of farmers due to the inappropriate application of agrochemicals). In addition, there is always an increased risk of transmitting diseases from animals reared in densely populated areas to humans (FAO, 2020). Another problematic aspect is unsecured land tenure many urban farmers have no legal title to the land they cultivate. Finally, approach of local municipalities towards urban agriculture is often negative and especially in African countries is urban agriculture seen predominantly as an illegal activity (Opršal, 2018).

Considering environmental aspects of UA, negative as well as positive consequences can be expected. Among the risks is possible contamination of soil due to incorrect application of agrochemicals or risk associated with an increased occurrence of mosquitos due to the water bodies used for irrigation. On the other hand, green (cultivated) areas may partially complement urban greenery. It increases humidity and decreases temperature in cities. Bryld (2003) describes the positive effect of recycling, as the organic waste generated in cities can be used in farming. Furthermore, UHBABITAT (2014) highlights the potential of well-planned UA in reduction of climate change impacts by decreasing ecological footprint related to food production in distant localities, and also points to its potential to improve biodiversity.

3.3.1 Urban Agriculture in Bogota

Origin of UA has begun in the middle of the 20th century when most of the people migrated from rural areas to cities because of the era called La Violencia. As the Botanical garden of Bogotá (2011) claims, many farmers brought their seeds as well as knowledge and the peri-urban and urban-agriculture had begun. However, until 2004 it was illegal, or in other words, there was no law treatment on this issue. But between 2004 and 2008 Bogota's mayor Luis Eduardo Garzón, known for his interest in food and nutritional security launched a program called "Bogota without hunger" as a part of Capital district development plan "Bogotá without indifference, a social commitment against Poverty and Exclusion." Part of the program was the institutionalization of UA within the capital (Agudelo Gutiérrez, Sanabria Cepero, 2011). As it states in the Development Plan, "*actions will be taken to ensure that the poorest and most vulnerable people have access to food with equity between gender, generations and ethnicities*" (Alcaldía Mayor de Bogotá, 2004: 39).

Among the supply of nutrition food in child and community canteens, was also a promotion of UA where an important part took Botanical Garden of Bogotá. Many workshops, capacitation in gardening and technical knowledge of agriculture in terraces were realised. The program later continued with a different name, Well-Nourished Bogota, but it ended up between 2012 and 2016, due to lack of resources, which was also a frequent critique since it began to exist (CITEGO, 2014).

Projects that work without state support or alliance with local's mayor's office and promote in various ways UA are spread across whole Bogota. Some of them are a foreign and international organization and other bottom-up initiatives. As a representative example is a French organization Sembrando Confianza, along with many French volunteers as well as local employees popularize the concept of UA, organize local market with fresh vegetables and food products, such as bread, yoghurt or cheese among many. Furthermore, they have urban gardens in some of the non-privileged neighbourhoods, like Santa Rosa, where ecological workshops for children take place as well as crops focused just on the production run with the help of locals (Sembrando Confianza, 2018).

The example of the bottom based initiative is located in Ciudad Hunza, in the locality of Suba. Group of local women called Loma Verde took an action decades ago and started a small urban roof-top garden, that contributed to community empowerment. During the years another local initiative started to function and together they worked up to the construction of the local school and children's playground. However, their biggest success was the enforcement of legality of their parcels (ENDA, 2016).

3.4 Community-based Urban Agriculture & Community Development

The concepts of Community-based Urban Agriculture together with community development have been lately widely popularized, and both represent relatively complex issues. To understand the background of investigated location, the term community will be defined and together with development linked to Urban Agriculture.

The term community as such has been explained in many ways, however Theodori (2005) points out, that many universally accepted definitions involve components like shared territory, common life, collective actions, and mutual identity. In his own definition he says that community is defined as a place-oriented process of interrelated actions through which members of a local population express a shared sense of identity while engaging in worries of everyday life. (Theodori, 2005: 662) Nevertheless a definition given by Dušková (2011)

contains some additional ideas. According to the authors of the Encyclopaedia the term refers to a group of people who share a common culture, values and/or interests and are connected by the social identity and/or space they inhabit. Thus, there can be various types of communities which differ based on the location or in accordance to the common interests of the people in the group. For example, the first one is a tribal area or a neighbourhood, the second one is a community of weavers or potters. However, defining the geographic or conceptual borders is not usually that simple. In addition, with factional, ethnic or religious identities it might create misunderstanding of certain locality and further complicate the situation. Moreover, the incompetent use of term may confuse local administrative units that probably have power to influence the development of that certain locality (Mansuri and Rao, 2004).

The concept of development is as well complex, and its wrong interpretation is likely to cause an unwanted action. According to Dušková (2011) development can be defined as a positive change in a society that has been intentionally provoked or caused within a given state or from abroad, often by a governmental or non-governmental actor. On the other hand, it can also be seen as a) a long-term process of structural social transformation, or b) a short or medium term outcome of targeted action and achieving the established goals (Summer and Tribe, 2008). However, similarly as definition of community, there are many of them and the “development community” could hardly choose just one, that would grasp the whole issue.

The concept of community development was created when the two previous terms met. Theodori (2005) claims that community development has been perceived as a popular approach of improving the social, economic, and environmental quality of life of residents of a community. Additionally, Nikkah and Redzuan (2009) defined its two basic goals. The first goal is to improve the quality of life of all members of the community, the second one is to involve all members of the community in the process.

It is important to point out that there is a difference between process and method. Process is defined by Schuringa (2007) as a change that is happening in the community and is focused on creating better conditions for solving problems. On the other hand, method refers to a way that stimulates and influences a change in a positive course. Moreover, there are another two terms that need to be differentiated from each other. It is Community-based development and Community-driven development. The first one is used when referring to projects that actively incorporate beneficiaries in planning and management. While the second one applies to projects where community is the supervisor and have direct control over the decisions, management and

finance (Mansuri and Rao, 2004). Nevertheless, Theodori (2005) criticizes a lack of systematic theory and a clear understanding of what a community is and how it develops in practice.

Because voluntary cooperation and self-help efforts are related to community development, the concepts of participation and empowerment cannot be left behind (Nikkah and Redzuan, 2009). As Javan (1998) explains, people must be involved in those decisions that affect their lives, thus gaining confidence, self-esteem and knowledge, and developing new skills. Further, Nikkah and Redzuan (2009) claim, that to succeed in community development, beneficiaries must emotionally identify themselves with the programs. As a result, that perception would provide strength and a sense of purpose to the current of changes over the whole country. Also, effectiveness of the community development depends on the sustainability and the on level of people's participation.

On the other hand, Berner and Philips (2003) highlight danger of depoliticization of active participation and community empowerment. They argue that development can be hardly based only on community development and community self-help, without redistribution of resources. They also claim, that in some cases, the increased community participation and empowerment could cause reduction of social programs as well as government's and donor's investment into the locality.

Speaking of donors, to them community development represents a challenge, because it is usually a long-term process, with hard measurable achievements, especially as they are not always obvious (Dušková, 2011). Another precarious issue is the way communities are perceived. Berner and Philips (2003) describe they can be seen as idealization of homogenous groups with only common interest and needs. Moreover, they drive attention on inequality in distribution of benefits, with the statement "*the more capable get more*".

There is a significant diversity among the academic literature in search for community gardens, not mentioning community-based urban agriculture. Various papers are published in journals focusing on broad variety of research topics such as geography, health, urbanization or nutrition (Guitart et al., 2012). Moreover, most of the available literature is focused on cities of Global North, while Global South is usually represented by Africa or South-east Asia. However, community garden's popularity is growing and being used by variety of groups such as youth, hospitals, elderly or local residents of neighbourhoods (Teig et al., 2009). This is because their usefulness in many aspects of community development, notable design of community buildings and space, education, or health promotion (Turner, 2011).

As it was indicated in chapter 3.3.1, two approaches can be distinguished, top down and bottom up. The first one can include the mentioned foreign organization, NGO, clinics, community centres, as well as institutional gardens such as schools, churches or prisons. These projects are characterized for its main objectives, which can differ, depending on social group. For example, they can serve for purposes such as psychological therapy, support of marginalize groups (HIV, orphans, etc.) It is important to point out that these gardens do not focus on production nor they serve as a “survival strategy”. The bottom up approach is not implemented by any outsider organization. Usually it is local initiative which serves as a production unit, helping to sustain low-income families. (Opršal, 2018)

An interesting aspect is strong division in gender roles. Bryld (2003) points out the fact that women are more likely to fit into the daily work pattern of urban gardens, because of the closeness, that allows them to attend the cultivation as well as the household. Moreover, men do not perceive urban production as a business, but as marginal activity. Besides, some studies have shown, that women are happy to work in urban gardens (Maxwell, 1999). On the contrary, Potts (1997) highlights the danger for unskilled women of being trapped in low-income work.

4 Case study: Casa B

This case study is based on field research conducted by the author in winter 2019/2020. First, it introduces the community organization and describes the methodology of the investigation. The following part analysis the interviews, whose outcomes are summarized in the last chapter.

4.1 Casa B

Casa B is a non-government apolitical cultural centre located in the neighbourhood of Belén in Candelaria, also known as Proyectos imaginarios. It was founded in 2012. The team of Casa B is a group of people who work on the creation of an innovative proposal of alternative education and trying to achieve sustainable development in their neighbourhood. As it is presented on the official page of the organization, they experiment with arts, sciences and sports to promote the rights of children and youth through the recovery of memory and by constructing a future in a community. They don't try to build an alternative school but as they say about themselves: "*We are a big family that is building a world of possibilities, that dreams, learns, teaches and creates*" (Casa B, 2019).

They make numerous workshops for children, youth, and adults from the sector, hold various events on the weekends and run urban gardens. Among the frequent activities are classes of English, French or German, a skate club and much more depending on volunteers and their possibilities. Once a month a local magazine is published by a group of youth called Boletín Periódico. Casa B also provides access to a place called Mediateca which can serve as a study room, a playroom, a classroom but also as a library, where everyone can borrow a book. Sometimes during the week, lunch is given to those who participate in workshops, often cooked by women from Women's Circle. There is a project called Fábrica de Utopías (Utopian Factory) which directs its focus on tools that transform the city in a positive way, following the youth's mindset and its many forms of expression (Casa B, 2019).

A few times the team of Casa B has mediated an intercultural exchange to those who have worked a lot in Boletín Periódico. So, some of the youth had a chance to spend three months in Portugal, Italy and France at a video-making course or three weeks at a photography workshop in Cuba.

Part of the organization is a group of local women, called Círculo de Mujeres, established in February 2019. There are usually meetings of 4 up to 8 women during the week. They take

care of the urban gardens and have various activities such as workshops on women’s health or agriculture ones, where they learn how to cultivate, how to process the crops etc. Recently they have also learned to brew beer and established their brand called Estrella de Belén. As most of them are professional cooks they also prepare food for events.

On Saturdays are held so-called Cinehuertas, free cinema in the garden. So far, these are children or commercial movies, the aim is to attract residents of the neighbourhood and then play environmental documents, or films with social issues and bring together the inhabitants. Sometimes discussion is prepared to open up some important actual issues.



Figure 7: graffiti on Casa B (source: Veronika Rojová, 2020)



Figure 6: behind the garden (source: Diogo Guerreiro, 2019)



Figure 5: people working in the gardens (source: Casa B, 2019)

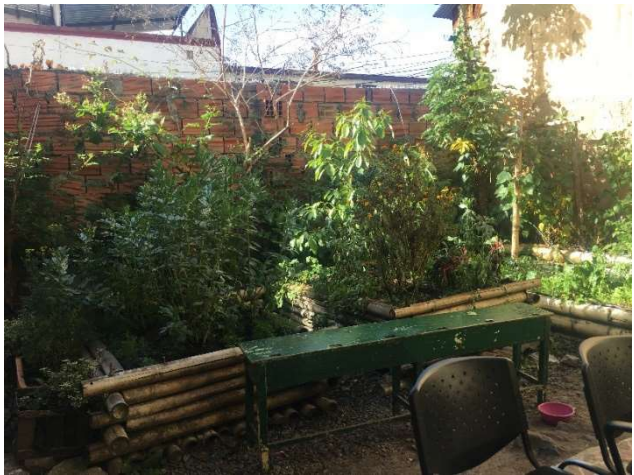


Figure 4: gardens (source: author, 2020)

4.2 Methodology

This chapter describes the methodology used in field research. In following subsections is described the type of the research with its main objective, the time-frame, the methods of data collection, the research sample, the analysis of collected data, the quality of the research and research limits with research ethics.

4.2.1 Type of the research and its main objective

This qualitative research was designed in the place during my one-year stay at the local University of Externado in Colombia located in Candelaria. Living close to the area allowed me to get familiar with the local context and values. Besides, when I was volunteering in Casa B for two months, I have got an exceptional insight into the organization and the community. By helping organize events or teaching classes of English I had the opportunity to observe and have many informal dialogues with the members of the community, coordinators and children. All this experience contributed to the development of the research and might have influenced my opinion about the organization which could have been an advantage as well as a disadvantage of the research.

The main objective was to analyse the role of community-based urban agriculture and other activities of Casa B in the community development of the neighbourhood of Belén. The main research question has been based on literature described in chapter 3.4 and later, on the observation of the investigated organization, accompanied by experience from two other projects in Bogotá focusing on work with the community through urban agriculture. I must point out that my original vision of the research was slightly different as I have overestimated the role of urban agriculture in community development in Belén. The reality was a bit different since the significance of the phenomenon is not that big compared to the impact of Casa B in general.

4.2.2 The research sample

The research sample was chosen based on categories of analyses. In the beginning, I planned to make at least 15 semi-structured interviews divided into three groups of respondents: coordinators, women from Women's Circle and youth. But some of them are participating in Women's Circle and at the same time work as coordinators. Thus, I made various sets of questionnaires to cover most of the researched areas.

After the thirteenth interview, I was not getting new information. Therefore, to expand the spectrum of information, a French volunteer was included. Due to that decision I had a chance to find out a different point of view, in some ways very similar to mine. Using the method of snowball, allowed me to talk with a vice-president of the local neighbourhood's council called Junta de Acción Comunal (JAC), which has a connection to the local's mayor's office. And finally, as I was getting more information about the social-economic and infrastructure problems of the neighbourhood, I was related to an expert on the locality. An

investigator at the Centre for Research and Special Projects of the University of Externado in Colombia who works with civil society organizations and since 2014 has collaborated with the Corporation Proyectos Imaginarios.

In this way, I made 16 interviews, with 7 young participants (aged between 15 and 27), 4 coordinators recognising one as the partial owner of the house and one as the main coordinator. Then 4 women from the Circle, one volunteer, one expert and one political player.

Regarding gender equality, the fact that among the questioned groups there were members of a Women’s Circle makes it quite difficult to keep a gender balance. Consequently, there are 10 women and 6 men.

4.2.3 The methods of data collection

The interviews were chosen as a core method of data collection. According to Ortiz (2013), their main functions is to obtain information and opinions from individuals and social groups. Hence it was the most convenient approach in this research. Before starting, a mind map was created to help me organize the categories of analyses from which I was able to form questions. Nevertheless, the categories were later changed and added due to the development of the research.

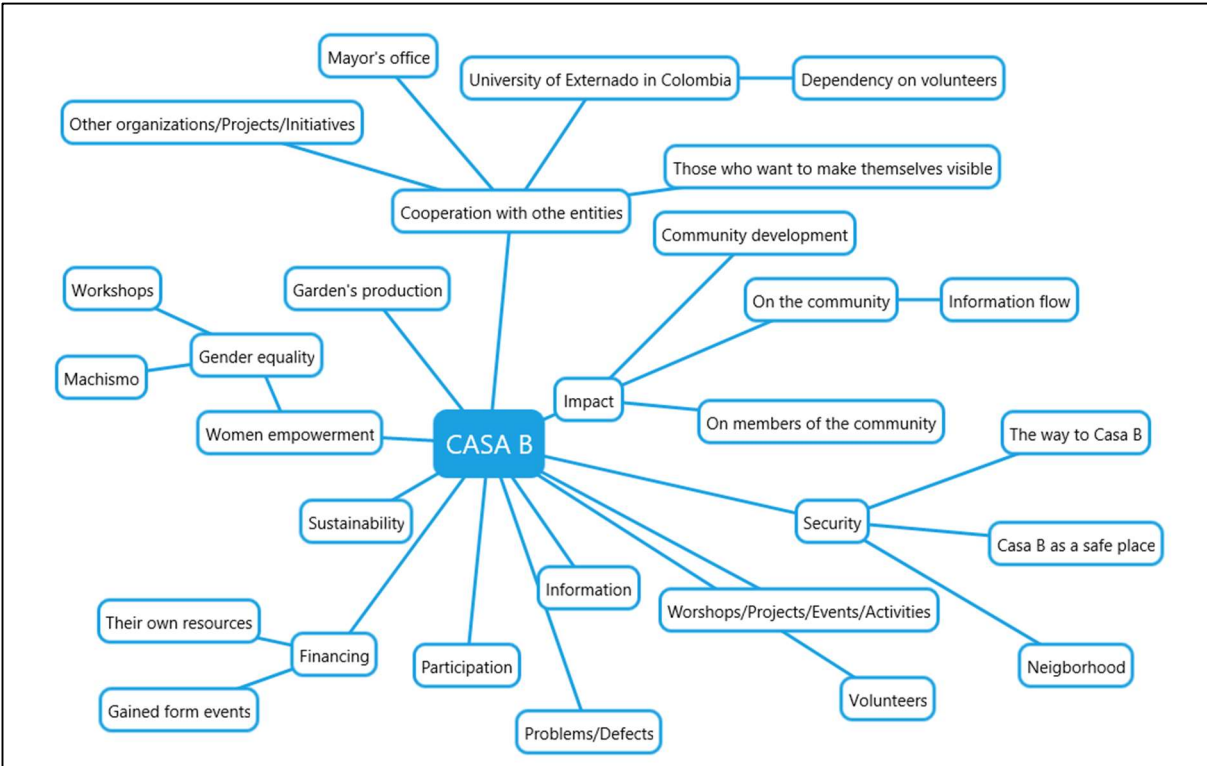


Figure 8: Mind map

Because observation is one of the core methods of data collection, it was also used in this field investigation. It is a targeted, systematic and organized follow-up of perceptions that are described, and they are given a certain meaning. While the role of the researcher is significant (Dušková, Šafaříková, 2015).

There are many types of observation, in this case, I used a non-standardized observation, considering there was no formalization. I have changed the specific research questions due to my observation. In the same way, it was a participated observation by cause of my volunteering in the organization. It is when the observer acts in the place where the researched phenomenon occurs, directly enter to the researched group and participate in its life, basically becomes one of the actors, but at the same time does not hide the investigation (Dušková, Šafaříková, 2015).

The semi-structured interviews were chosen as a convenient method of data collection. According to Hendl (2008), this type has a clear structure and purpose, but the interviewer can ask further questions or either change some of them as well as specify the meaning. The researcher adapts to the respondent. So, in this case, it allowed me to develop more questions, when interesting information was mentioned. Most of the interviews were carried out directly in the field which permitted me to be in the centre of the community and the respondents to have a familiar place to stay. In that way, they felt less timidity because most of them already knew me. That is why I have chosen this method rather than a focus group because some of the young people could have felt shame to speak in front of the others about sensitive topics. The majority of the questions were open-ended ones, only a few were closed, as a practical thing was asked. All interviews were in Spanish to prevent confusion or misunderstanding.

The interviews differ depending on the addressed group of people. All of them took between 5 to 40 minutes. To obtain most of the respondents a method of a snowball was used. As Dušková and Šafaříková (2015) explain, it is a method through which we select respondents by asking those we have already interviewed to contact other people they know and who, at the same time, meet our predefined criteria.

4.2.4 Time-frame of the field research

The following table shows the time process of field research.

Phase	Start	Finish	Time	Description
Preparation	August	December	5 months	Literature review, development of the main research question and specific ones.
Observation	October	January	4 months	Getting to know the locality, community and organization. Informal talks with members of the community were carried on.
Data collection	08.01.2020	22.01.2020	14 days	Interviews with chosen subjects.
Data analysis	12.01.2020	12.03.2019	2 months	Transcription, coding, analysis and interpretation of the data.

Figure 9: Time-frame of the field research

4.2.5 The analysis of collected data

In the beginning, I transcribed all interviews and marked interesting citations. Then I put the whole document into program Atlas ti, created with a purpose to process the qualitative research data. Considering the definition given by Hendl (2008) that qualitative analyse is a systematic non-numerical data organization to reveal topics, regularities, quality and relationships. I started to create codes. Some of them were based on categories which I created thanks to mind map, some of them on given questions and a few emerged during coding. Later, several groups of codes had evolved into categories. After that, the mentioned data was generated and I did a profound analysis, whose results are described in chapter 5. The thematic analysis was used because its main objective is to describe and interpret the topics and phenomenon occurring in the case study (Dušková, Šafaříková, 2015). Since the interviews were made in Spanish, I translated the used citations.

4.2.6 Quality of the research and research limits

My stay in the cultural centre gives a notable viewpoint on the research. On one hand, it could be an advantage that I had an insight into the organization, on the other hand, it could be taken as a downside because it could have affected my research results and personal opinions.

It is important to mention, that this is the author's first research. For that reason, a lack of experience and deep knowledge could have been a problem. However, I have the theoretical knowledge of the researched field obtained by reading articles and books. Furthermore, I had various consultations with experts on urban agriculture as well as on community development in Colombia.

An extra complication is a language because the thesis is written in English while the data was collected in Spanish. That could cause a misinterpretation. Moreover, the author's first language is Czech, which might add further difficulties.

4.2.7 Research ethics

The research ethic in this investigation was based on the principle 'Do no harm'. But as Chambers says, "*in reality, there is no such a thing as the best concept, approach, perspective or final method for working with communities, but only a permanent combination of adaptation, improvement, development, improvisation and creativity driven by commitment and based on research, practice, doubts and reflection*" (2007: 23). In this case, being part of the organization made things easier. Before every interview, I asked for an oral consent of the respondents and I also ensured them that they could stop at any time. In the beginning of the record, I explained the purpose of the research, the reason I am doing and ensured them it is anonymous.

5 Results of the field research

This chapter presents the outcomes of the field research. I divided the topic into 8 categories, that are further distinguished on 29 codes. Moreover, one transversal category was created to cover the connections between categories and their mutual dependency.

	CATEGORIES	CODES
1	FINANCE	Personal economic benefits
		Money of Casa B
2	COOPERATION	With JAC
		With University of Externado
		Political
		Volunteering
3	PARTICIPATION	Reason/motivation to begin to participate
		Participation in general in Casa B
		Family support
4	GARDEN	Garden participation
		Garden production
		Impact of gardens
		Main purpose of gardens
		Knowledge – gardens
		Ecological question
5	PROBLEMS	Of Casa B
		Of Belén
		Security
6	PROJECT SUSTAINABILITY	Future of Casa B in five years
		Project sustainability
		Structure of Casa B
		Plans for future
7	IMPACT	Contribution to the community
		Individual impact
		Personal benefit

		Lessons learnt
8	PERCEPTIONS	Perceiving of Casa B
		Main purpose of Casa B
	TRANSVERSAL CATEGORY	CODES
	CÍRCULO DE MUJERES	Functions of Women's Circle

Figure 10: Categories and codes

5.1 Category 1. Finance

The fact, that Casa B is a non-governmental organization makes the category about finances influential. It is not only related to the way they are gaining funds, but also to economic opportunities Casa B represents for the inhabitants of the neighbourhood of Belén. So, I divided the topic into two codes, *Finance of Casa B* and *Personal economic benefits*. Moreover, this section is partly related to the category of Sustainability, Cooperation and Problems.

The code *Finance of Casa B* is mostly described from point of view of coordinators, women from the Circle, and partly is based on my observation. In the beginning is important to note, that the house and the gardens are property of four friends, from which one of them is the coordinator and others usually come to visit the house just during cultural events.

In general, the coordinator says they get funds from *"donations, organizations that know us in Europe and Colombia. Plus, we have strategic alliances with other organizations and activities that we carry out directly here in Casa B."* Those activities are already mentioned Cinehuertas, where a movie is projected, while a beverage or small food is prepared to sell. On the same principle work other cultural events as he later adds: *"Most of the financial support is through solidarity networks. Once a month we hold a dinner event in a restaurant located little further on the north called Seis Manos. Like that, we manage to finance the basics of the project"*. However, not all the resources come from these events, like another coordinator describes *"it's very individual. We all put in a little. The people involved in the house support the projects with what they can. When there is a sold product there is an income for the project."* This description corresponds to what I have seen during my volunteering. For example, when lunch was cooked, women from the Circle often paid a significant part of the expenses. One of the women it confirmed when describing the topic of money of the Circle: *"We give a percentage to Casa B, something to the Women's Circle and what's leftover we share."* In that way is hard to plan anything, as long as the incomes are irregular and unstable because the only consistent event is the beneficial party at the restaurant. Besides, *"only through the solidarity*

party, we manage to pay one person, the main coordinator.” The rest of the work in Casa B depends on voluntary help.

The code *Personal economic benefits* is mostly related to Women’s Circle and a few coordinators. Certainly, there is not a word about big amounts of money. In the Circle, it is usually the rest of gained money from events (after the division between the Circle and Casa B). Nevertheless, one of the coordinators admits: *“it is not a lot of money, but it gives me the opportunity to have space where I can create or develop personal projects, that can be economically beneficial for me.”* That is what another woman completes with *“a lot of personal satisfaction.”* Moreover, adds that *“maybe the business will grow and there will be more possibilities to create jobs.”* Based on these premises, there is hope between the participants and coordinators in possible future income or work possibilities. Considering the new project of beer production, the hope is at least partly justified. On the other hand, there is *“almost always a deficit of capital”* that complicates planning of expansion.

5.2 Category 2. Cooperation

As it was indicated in the previous chapter, question of cooperation is a crucial issue for Casa B. Because I have observed many types of cooperation, (even a bad one) I decided to divide it into four codes. First, I describe the political part, represented by cooperation with the Mayor’s office and cooperation with Junta de Acción Comunal (JAC). Then an important player in local development University of Externado and finally, the phenomenon of volunteering.

In the beginning, I assumed that there will be at least some form of help from the local mayor’s office because it seems to be an important unit in local development. However, my prediction was wrong. All the coordinators confirmed, that there is no form of cooperation neither help nor alliance. That’s why I looked for a lower municipality unit, which is JAC. It could be understood as the council of the neighbourhood, voted by citizens, carried by inhabitants of the neighbourhood voluntarily, without any claim for a cash reward. President of the JAC is the only actor with a direct connection to the local mayor’s office. The most visible part of the cooperation between Casa B and JAC is a 'rental agreement', as the vice-president explained, *“we (JAC) do not have our own space, so Casa B provides us with a room for free.”* From part of the coordinators, I haven’t noticed any other sign of cooperation or help. Nevertheless, the vice-president of JAC says. *“We have a strategic alliance with Casa B since 2016 ... we have managed to promote very important things for our community, for example, a farmer’s market which had a great response.”* The connection between Casa B and JAC was

also confirmed by the expert from University of Externado: *“They are very linked to the projects, principally to the garden project, which is an excuse for something else, especially for JAC.”* By that statement might be meant a desire of higher popularity of JAC gained by involving into “good looking” projects of Casa B. On the other hand, the vice-president has mentioned some disagreements between the members, which did not want to specify. In that order, it is hard to take the vice-president’s opinion for the opinion of the whole council. Besides, one of the women from the Circle is also a member, so the attitudes toward Casa B are diverse. That disorder and lack of united attitude could explain the almost 'non-existing cooperation' coordinators were talking about.

What makes a difference is a cooperation with the University of Externado. Even though the expert from Externado says that *“Externado does not have projects directly in the gardens.”* They have *“an alliance with them so that students from FIGRI can participate in the volunteer program and develop what they know academically in the organization. For example, they can plan projects and carry out recreational or educational activities.”* The work of volunteers is one important aspect of the alliance. However, the vice-president of JAC, highlighted the scholarships and the certificate programs for the people from the sector offered by this university. On the other hand, adds many young people from the sector *“haven't been able to take an advantage of it.”* And continues: *“this is no longer the fault of the institution but of the student.”* When asked what could be done, replies *“last year, doctor Gina and doctor Manuel created an alliance with school Fenalco² in which they are working on Project of Life, where the young people of tenth and eleventh grade are changed. I call it changing the chip, for me is like changing the expectations that they have about entering this type of university because of the costs.”* Clearly, this does not directly include Casa B, but it is later explained in the category of Impact.

Even though the topic of *Volunteering* could be described within the previous code I decided not to, due to its significance. In *Finance* was said that only one person gets to pay, that means that all the run of Casa B depends on volunteers, their free time and willingness. But as one of the women claims, *“Many people have come to help us.”* However, motivation can differ according to the ‘type of volunteer’. The already mentioned group include students from Externado doing their internship or volunteer program for credits. This implies them to be quite active in preparing workshops or events. And once they finish the semester, the help is finished too. The other group represent foreign people, whose motivation starts with getting to know the

² School located in the sector.

culture up to learning Spanish or honestly helping while having holidays. They usually teach foreign language, help to organize events or work on gardens, as one woman says: *“a French boy came to teach us how to sow.”* Interestingly, one of the youngsters pointed out another aspect of having foreign people around such a project. It is the different manner of *“thinking outside of Colombia”*. He said that *“their way of thinking is broader and more knowledgeable in attitudes.”* Advantages of these interactions are described in category Impact. Finally, the most important group are the people from the neighbourhood, trying to make a difference. As the main coordinator says he learnt to appreciate *“the strength of young people's generosity aimed at transforming the territories.”* Despite the fact that the last two groups have a sincere attitude and desire to do something, the activities or workshops of the house more or less stands on volunteers from Externado. As I could see during Christmas holidays, between semesters when most of the activities were paused.

5.3 Category 3. Participation

This is the only category, where a content analysis took place while studying code *Participation in general in Casa B*. Other codes were designed to explain and to complete the first one. It is *Reason/motivation to begin to participate* and *Family support*. Moreover, the motivation of founders and coordinators will be examined. All these codes are the basis for the category of Impact because without a motivation that leads to participation there would not be such an influence.

Describing the first code is simple because all young participants and women from the Circle told me they come to the house almost every day. They usually immediately explained by living *“really close to the house”*. I assume it is partly the *reason to begin to participate* for most of the people. The other reasons differ depending on whether is referred to youngsters or women.

In the case of the first group, one girl said she started to come to Casa B *“because many parents in the neighbourhood had to work, and it was normal for us children to look for things to do. So, I was one of those kids, because my parents worked all day.”* Another girl then described how she entered: *“Dario, Estefania and Chucho who originally founded it, walked through the neighbourhood and that's when they started looking for children who wanted to come in. That's how I managed to come, and I've been here for six years.”* Another described the same situation: *“One day Dario appeared, I was with a friend and we said, well, let's see what happens. And we started to attend courses of film, dance, music and theatre”*

The women's motivation is then quite clear as one of them describes, *"I started because my son Felipe was attending and then I got involved by taking care of the dogs, by cleaning the house and so on."* This confirms another woman: *"I learned about Casa B through my daughters and we practically grew up with it."* However, at that time Circle did not exist, the coordinator said it was at the beginning of 2019 when *"the Women's Circle started as a focus group where we saw the needs of the women and decided that it should not be just one meeting."*

To begin to 'see the needs', has also given a started point to establish the whole project. One of the founders states: *"I feel that Bogotá needs new ways of living, new ways of relating to each other that are very close to the thinking of young people and women."* The motivation is also expressed by coordinator and women from the Circle, *"We are important to remind people that life is not just the violence we lived every day, not the car bombs, the guerrillas or Uribe's paramilitaries, but that it is us making the community. We built it, and the neighbourhood belongs to us. We have to work now more than ever because people need to be aware of what is going on."*

Family support is an important element in participation. A significant part of respondents confirmed they do have a support. For example, one of the boys opened up: *"I think because of my history, my family has felt like ... I don't know ... proud."* One woman was joking by saying *"they support me, even though sometimes make fun of me, that this is my first house."* However, some of them admitted: *"at first, they didn't support me because they thought I was just wasting my time."* One girl affirmed: *"At first it was a shock because they thought that by being at Casa B I was going to neglect my study, so they saw it more like a nursery where you go for help with homework and to get food."* But *"now that I've grown up, as well as Casa B they like it a lot because thanks to it, new doors have opened to my career and my life."* This positive progress confirms another boy: *"Now they have realised that I have changed a lot by being here and I have learned various things."*

5.4 Category 4. Gardens

At the beginning the category about urban gardens seemed to be a very important topic, but as the research continued its significance was becoming smaller in the overall view. However, is necessary to go through the factors which influence the run of the gardens, its general appearance and analyse its potential. To do that, 6 codes were created, *Participation in gardens, Garden production, Ecological question, Gained knowledge – gardens, Impact of*

gardens and *The main purpose of gardens*. Before analysing the codes, the process of creation and motivation is described by one of the founders.

"We bought a parcel among four friends. At that moment we were thinking about what we could do, and we discovered that urban garden was a very strong response of resistance to an idea of a densified city, disconnected from life, nature, but above all disconnected from the Colombian peasants. So, the garden is a door to the rural world of Colombia. That is why we made the garden."

First code *Participation in gardens* could have also been classified in the previous category but being in this one makes the topic continuous as the factors are more related. When youngsters were asked if they participate in gardens most of them answered in the same way as one of the boys: *"when there are things to do, I help."* The majority of participants also admitted something similar to: *"For me, it's something new because I've never been to the countryside nor I have never done anything in agriculture. So, I'm just sort of helping out and learning at the same time."* In general, young people take part in project Cinehuerta, as one of the girls says: *"I worked on making the Cinehuerta. We must take good care of the garden, but right now we are concentrating on this project."* As a result, the majority of them connect the space with this event instead of cultivation. The main coordinator describes the activity in gardens bit more progressively. *"We do a lot of projects, one person is in charge of the garden, but the neighbours take care of the garden whenever they can, we have a tank where we collect water and let's say it has been a slow but strong process of community appropriation of that space."* Contrary to that comment one woman states *"we all can take care of the garden, but people from outside can't."* This difference in proclamations could represent a gap in reality and could use some intern reflection.

Moreover, the run of the garden is commented by one of the women: *"Well the garden had no one who would take care of it until the Circle was consolidated and we started to make use of it."* After deeper investigation, turned out that even though the garden has existed approximately seven years, not a lot of cultivation was happening in there. That problematic is captured in *Garden Production*. To introduce the topic, a coordinator and women from Circle says that *"the idea is to make a self-sustaining place for our projects and also for feeding the people at Casa B."* The founder added that *"the garden has a more pedagogical character than a production one. But anyway, it produces every time a crop comes out. Some of the products are used in Casa B or we distributed them between us."* To complete the picture of the garden another woman from Circle described: *"There's chard, spinach, coriander, rue, there's*

blackberry, lulo and beans and corn ... there are quite a few." All those statements were made at the beginning of the interview, to enter the topic. However, when more detail questions were asked, the situation appeared to be slightly different. For example, when describing last year cultivation seemed to be more describing the establishment of the garden: *"we took a small collection of all the crops that had survived the abandonment and, let's say the cherry tomatoes were bitter, the lettuces didn't taste good. Then we said we have to clean it up, use other seeds, re-nurture the soil and re-sow everything."* Based on these premises, was clear, that before the creation of the Circle, cultivation as such was quite neglected. The coordinator and women from the Circle it explained: *"Sometimes you lose interest because it does not generate a lot of food or many benefits, but I think it's a process. To be there step by step, to be aware, and also to be reading and studying."* This positive and patient attitude is then reflected in common happiness when something actually grows up.

On the other hand, knowledge represents an important role especially when the gardens should serve as an example or educational place. The code *Knowledge* should originally describe 'gained knowledge', but the respondents admit themselves: *"We have a lot of initiative, but we lack the technical knowledge to maintain the crops."* That was supported by another statement: *"For now, there is something sown, but sometimes we don't know what has been sown."* However, as it was mention by the coordinator it is a slow process of learning. Some women talk about what they have learned: *"With a French boy I learned some things about permaculture. It's a small place so you have to concentrate on the different varieties of plants to grow maximum in a minimum of space."* And some highlighted that *"having urban agriculture helps especially children to understand how the process of food production works."*

Speaking of *Ecology*, some coordinators assured me it is a priority of Casa B, but realistically it does not look like. The most precise description of the situation is given by one of the women who says: *"We try to be ecological. The organic waste goes directly to the compost and we try to recycle as well to sort the waste."* But according to what I have seen, the organic waste goes to the compost only when the coordinator remembers.

The code *Impact of gardens* is mostly connected to the creation of a relationship with nature. As one of the boys describes, *"One begins to understand many things about the crop. My family is all from Bogotá, which is a very urban environment. We don't have a tradition of cultivation, but the garden brings it from the countryside to the city."*

Finally, to conclude the topic of gardens, the code *Main purpose of gardens* is used to show the diversity of opinions of a wide range of people. A woman from Circle says: *"it*

connects us with life and the countryside." The vice-president of JAC declares: *"The purpose of the gardens is to generate healthy food."* Contrary to that, a volunteer thinks that *"the garden is eventually used more like a social place than a place of learning about urban agriculture."* For example, adds: *"During the anti-governmental strike, it was a place where people gathered."* The point of view of an expert from Externado is more complex: *"The gardens are an excuse for the development of appropriation of the territory. Because it is an instrument for people to make them like the territory. It makes them realize that the territory produces and that they are capable of making the territory produce."* Then as explains *"a sense of appropriation is developed. As a result, there is a sense of community and through business opportunities are generated links of trust among the people."*

5.5 Category 5. Problems

This category is designed to capture the defects and problems Casa B, as well as the neighbourhood. Some of them might be the reasons why the project has begun. The far-reaching code is *Security*, followed by *Problems of the neighbourhood* up to *Problems of Casa B*.

The *Security* of the sector is a highly discussed topic. However, as it is later described it can depend a lot on a perception. A boy living 'higher in the hills'³ says: *"I can be in Casa B from half-past eleven and I know it's very quiet because the police always pass by here plus some neighbours are on the streets. So, I feel safe instead when I go up to where I live. I don't feel there like going out for a walk."* By that statement can be deduced, that Belén comparing to Egipto or other sectors is not that insecure. The vice-president of JAC says: *"This neighbourhood was once very dangerous. There were many criminal gangs, drug dealing, etc. Casa B and other cultural houses have managed to reduce that."* A girl living in the neighbourhood expresses another opinion: *"Gangs that operate here are not from this neighbourhood. Because the people from Belén help each other and try to maintain a good image of the neighbourhood. That's why we intend to fit into the touristic part."* It is hard, to sum up a level of security based on a few opinions and feelings of locals. However, it is important to distinguish whether a local person speaks about the situation of his neighbourhood or an outsider living in the north of Bogota. In reflection about an excursion to this sector one group of students from University of Externado admitted: *"At the beginning of the tour, we had limited perceptions about safety and coexistence in the neighbourhood because we considered that it was dangerous to go up to the community and stay there for a long time."* Although the

³ Is referred either to neighbourhood Egipto or even higher in this particular case La Pena

people living there are not dangerous, the judgement of outsiders who have never visited it is still very strong. It might be prejudice; on the other hand, a coordinator explains: *"The context of the neighbourhood is difficult. Historically, this area has been considered dangerous. Everyone was saying, don't go to Egipto because they rob you, don't go up to Belén because they kill you, you don't get out alive."* All these social stigmas then create a misleading perception of the territory.

Exactly this conflict of perceptions is then reflected in code *Problems of the neighbourhood* and describes the consequences. The vice-president of JAC claims: *"they depress the neighbourhoods by talking about insecurity. Then they make us say do not visit us because our sectors are already terrible. What they do, begins to lower the cost of housing."* A coordinator adds information about a plan of local mayor's office which is known as revitalization. *"This process is intended to transform the neighbourhood and that means gentrification. It is when the real residents of the sector leave. Honestly, here it has already happened with the construction of avenue. Because they buy land very cheaply and the community has to move to the south."* The vice-president later comments the situation with avenue: *"I don't know how good the avenue is. But it is not good for us because it's a space that has caused an impact."*

Additionally, when asked about the problems, unemployment was mentioned a few times, but the vice-president states *"it is not a problem of this neighbourhood, but all the neighbourhoods of Bogota and the whole country. Unemployment is the reason why there are more and more informal vendors."* The lack of work opportunities is one of the motivations that drives the energy into the projects of Casa B, especially into the ones which could generate income. The expert also mentions another feature: *"there is a too much-floating population in the city and it's a sector that has quite a lot of international tourists."* That statement is supported by the vice-president when describing the range of people living in the neighbourhood. *"We can find everything here. Migrants from Venezuela, people who are born and raised here and others who came from other cities in Colombia."* The relatively diverse group of neighbours is from point of view of the expert obstacle, but not an one participant in Casa B mentioned it as an issue, indeed they have not mentioned it at all.

Yet an issue of information is considered by many as a significant problem of neighbourhood. A boy involved in the project of the local magazine claims: *"Many times, people are not well informed. They don't know what's going to happen and I think that's*

important.” This problem is then connected to the gentrification, because people do not know the real price of their parcel, or do not have access to the right information.

Finally, a few times mentioned trust issue must be highlighted. One of the founders describes the roots of it: *"A very big difficulty, a Colombian difficulty is the lack of trust among people because of the armed conflict. We have built between us a culture of distrust. So how to break that?"* The lack of trust is then reflected in the question of security as well as in Casa B.

The aim of the code *Problems of Casa B* is not to criticize but to sum up issues that slow down the initiatives or complications that challenge the coordinators. One of the funders says that while establishing the project *"It was a big confidence-building challenge."* That is confirmed by one of the coordinators when describing problems of Casa B: *"Safety issues are trustworthy. Sometimes you lose things, it's a sensitive issue."* In this case ‘losing stuff’ generate another mistrust between people. Which is then projected into another issue as one of the women describes: *"Communication is a constant task but with the Circle, it has been a nice exercise because we did not communicate assertively. Now we have found a way to express what we think."* Although she has mentioned the positive development and admits the problem, a constructive solution might have been found only in the Circle because other coordinator says *"we should learn to organize better."* On the other hand, defends the actual situation, *"sometimes, because of our time availability it's not possible."* The problems with planning were confirmed by the French volunteer and by me during the internship. Interestingly only one girl it comments from another point of view by recommendation: *"they should everyone let know that there's some class."* She refers to the lack of publicity of classes and workshops, but behind it stands the bad organization.

Among the more practical things are the Finances, already described in the first category. However, it is considered a problem. The coordinator says: *"I feel that there is a lack of resources and materials."* Which can be seen in a house, like one of the founders explains: *"Well, the ceiling is very bad. That's why we did crowdfunding because we have to change it."*

5.6 Category 6. Sustainability of the project

This category could be described by many approaches, nevertheless, it focuses on the point of view of funders, coordinators and the expert. Moreover, it analyses future expectations. Motivation and participation are an important segment of the sustainability of the project. However, it was already described in category 3. as well as the motivation of funders to establish the project. This section will first portray the *Structure of CASA B*,

then interpret the opinions on *Project sustainability*, and finally examine the *Plans for future* and *Future of CASA B in five years*.

The first code pictures how Casa B is structured and how the decision-making process is lead. Although the property as such belongs to four persons, they are not that present in the house anymore, except one. However, the main coordinator states: "*They are always very supportive.*" Most of the daily work does the main coordinator who is also the only person who gets to pay. The rest of the work depends on voluntary help. Speaking of the organizational stuff a woman from Circle describes: "*We meet and discuss the proposal or issue, see the pros and cons, and then make a decision. The work is collaborative.*" The collaboration, especially in the Circle, is highlighted by another woman: "*rather than a structure of the organization, there are roles.*" She then explains that everyone is taking care of certain things.

Project sustainability was meant to be an uncomplicated code but already during interviews turned out not to be. On a question, if Casa B is sustainable the main coordinator answers: "*We are a self-sustaining house through our projects. That is the idea. Always generate self-sustainability with the activities.*" On the contrary the founder responses: "*No we are not sustainable, because all of our work is voluntary.*" Thus, the expert is confronted and defines sustainability. "*As long as the three pillars of sustainability are the social, the economic and the environmental ones I would say Casa B is almost sustainable. It has the social and the environmental part, but it needs more resources in the economic part to be able to develop.*" Later the diversity of opinions is explained: "*Maybe the founder told you no because he was thinking about economic sustainability, which is always limited.*" That would correspond with the fact, that the main coordinator is the only one who gets to pay, in that way does not consider the finances as important. Moreover, the author would not be so sure about environmental sustainability, because what they do is more perceived as an educational activity. For example, one of the boys says, "*it's a way to teach people that what you can buy in any vegetable store they can plant themselves in a house.*"

The code *Plans for future* speaks for itself however, the question was given only to coordinators and women from the Circle. Because when the young participants were asked if there is something they miss or something they would like to change in future, most of them have responded that they are content as it now, just one expressed the desire to have more inter-culture exchanges.

Most of the Plans are related to the parcel with urban gardens, for example, every woman mentions something similar to: *"In the future, the garden will be sustainable and will help us to sustain vegetables to prepare meals."* With this is connected another intention expressed by the founder: *"We would like to build a kitchen and be able to cook the things we produce in the garden. It would be a place where we can learn to cook the local products. The whole project would be around nutrition."* Then adds the ideas for programs that also involve the elderly population, one of them is to let grandmothers teach traditional recipes. Or to focus on healthy food by inviting *"cooks who know alternative and modern preparations."* The coordinator who instruct the brewery says: *"It would be good to have a crop of species that serve for beer production."* But this is a desire, not a plan. Interestingly a lot of women say they would like to have more debates where they can *"discuss issues of common interest and share experiences with the community."* From a more strategical point of view, *"the idea is to create alliances with organizations so that we can learn, transmit and have feedback of what we do."* Finally, is added by the founder that: *"It would be nice to have a paid team so that there are permanent people in the house"*

The last code in this section is *Future of Casa B in five years*, design to mark the way people expect to see Casa B and how much they count on it. The belief that it will work is a positive factor for participation. The main coordinator sees Casa B being *"recognized worldwide as a place of alternative education with transformation."* Another coordinator as *"a place of reflection and action that transforms not only our territory but the entire city."* One of the women says: *"I see it great and powerful. I see the house filled every day with children taking their workshops. I see our Circle with the kitchen set up and the garden with big fruits."* While another woman thinks more about the economic prospects: *"In five years I hope the Circle will be a working reference for the locality and eventually for the city."* But she also *"hope that we will be stronger than ever and continue to attract more women to these initiatives or these processes."* The enormous hope signifies only a positive aspect for participation and motivation not only for community development as such but also for the sustainability of the project. On the other hand, exaggerated belief could make harm when something does not work out as they wish.

5.7 Category 7. Impact

This category examines the impact Casa B has caused for the last eight years. First describes the code *Lessons learn*, which serves only for coordinators and founders. Secondly

focuses on *Personal benefits* the people have gained by participating, which is then connected to *Individual Impact* that tries to mark some internal change. Finally, evaluates if *Contribution to the community* has been noted. And if so, which changes inhabitants of the neighbourhood have observed.

Lessons learnt noted by some coordinators were mostly abstract, just a few mention a practical or useful thing. A woman from Circle says she learnt to "Write a letter or speak in public." However, many say a phrase similar to: "One tries to learn from mistakes." Related to that was often a topic of social relation, as a coordinator admits "one of the lessons is that personal relationships are very important." Moreover, a coordinator expresses gratitude towards the role of locals and volunteers: "We have learned to value the importance of volunteering and the strength of the generosity of young people for the transformation of territories." What seems to be most important of all is what one of the founders says: "I have one lesson. It's good to do things slowly. Design the projects, not for two or three but many years."

The code *Personal benefit* was the most visible impact while asking young participants. Perhaps because they have been participating the longest time. However, even the French volunteer who has spent there six months mentions: "For me, it's a cool opportunity to really find people who live in this neighbourhood which is very familiar and a little closed." For youngsters, the most beneficial activity was participation in their local newspaper called Boletín Periférico as a girl says: "The Periférico helps a lot. Let's say in my case while editing I have created good contacts." Other boy highlights the intercultural programs: "For example, with the Periférico, we had the opportunity to study audio-visuals in Cuba. Other friends of mine went to France, Portugal and Italy and in three months we will go to Serbia, to Belgrade. It is super cool." The great amount of them reacts on classes: "In English classes, we learn a lot to defend in the language." The most popular was English and French. Lastly, a girl brings up the usage of the library called Mediateca: "I like to be in the Mediateca. It is a very beautiful place in the house where we can all read and do our work. It's very quiet. It's much better than studying at my house." Although she was the only one to mention this space, usually every youngster was using it to study, read or hang out with the others. This fact could clarify why all of them answered positively on a question if they visit Casa B even in times when no class, workshop or activity is prepared.

The code *Individual impact* is the element that is not evident right away but needs time, patience and effort. This code primarily focuses on young people involved in Casa B. In general,

all of them has admitted some kind of change of their personality and expresses gratitude to Casa B. For example, one of the boys says: *"I didn't do drugs or steal, but I was antisocial, I didn't talk to anybody."* Then admits: *"I know this has helped me to be a more sociable person. A person with projection, who has an interest in things."* Another adds: *"Casa B has helped my family and foremost helped me as a person and changed my world."* His friend describes the result of the development: *"It already helped me to focus on the student careers I want to do. I'm going to study graphic design."* One of the girls describes the process of her evolution: *"I had a different view of the world and it was Casa B who change my direction in life because I was a kid who just liked ... I don't know. Be on the street and play. But now I want to be an intellectual person, who studies what she wants, who travels and volunteers."* Another girl has experienced something similar: *"I can see beyond the boundaries that I had in my mind and that is what I will always be grateful because they changed my life."*

Finally, one of the leaders of the newspaper who has been participating since the beginning says: *"I've lived here for 19 years, but some people have been here much longer and did not do anything. With Casa B I learned that we are a neighbourhood, we are a community and we are one and we all have to support, respect and trust each other."* As a result, not only, they have worked on themselves, but also realized the problems the community and Colombian society is facing and actively fight for a change. So, as one of the founders says: *"Casa B is a place where I can imagine that dreams can be possible, but that everything is a construction through community building."*

A girl states: *"I learnt that the union can be generated by a house."* In such a manner, code *Contribution to the community* describes the influence Casa B has on the development in the neighbourhood. As it was indicated, young people are the example of the most visible impact, and a lot of people in the neighbourhood has noticed this change as well. The vice-president of JAC claims that because of Casa B there are: *"Processes to get young people to give up, for example, drug addiction, keep them busy so they have different perspectives on life."* The similar point of view has a coordinator: *"Young people are getting more involved in cultural projects and activities."* Due to change of perspectives, they start to have ambition and vision, but as the girl explains: *"Education here in the country is complicated to access. So, it was rare to see a person who wanted to study or who could study at a university. Things have changed for my generation. Most of us are in college and a lot of that change is due to Casa B."* A boy describes the progress: *"We have been urged that if you want to do it and you have that purpose you can do it, even if there are no funds to study. It gets done."* The progress

comments one of the founders too: *"When kids used to be asked what they wanted to be when they grew up, they said I want to be a cop or a footballer. And now they say I want to be a carpenter. I want to be a tailor like my grandmother, I want to be a cook, I want to be a doctor. It completely changes the imaginary of possibilities and opportunities for them."* In that way, as the people started to see the changes on their kids a coordinator claims: *"I have seen most of the parents getting involved with the same organization."*

This process is later sum up by the vice-president of JAC: *"People are feeling more identified. Now a lot of teenage kids come and take over the territory, and so they have more love for the neighbourhood."* The problem is that *"people see this area as dangerous, but it is not true. Casa B changes people's perspective on security."* And not only change the perspective of outsiders but change the security situation as such. A woman describes: *"Before Casa B was created people didn't do things like sitting around drinking aguapanela⁴, getting a hot soup ... all free."* But they do now, because *"there is a public space, so it seems to be more welcoming."* Moreover, people get to know each other better that is why a girl says: *"Everyone knows each other so security in the neighbourhood is good."* 'Knowing each other' does not only have an impact on security but also a flow of information. The leader of newspaper claims, even though *"they lived in the neighbourhood, they were not informed of what was going on. And with the Periférico and Casa B, the community has already learned to be interested in what is being planned in the neighbourhood."*

Between other contributions belongs the example people give to the children, as a woman admits: *"My children see that there are people who do things for others without expecting anything in return and that's great."* Additionally, the people have learnt, that *"you may not need many resources to do something. The spirit makes everything possible."* That statement replies to the political issue because there has been (and still is) a pressure to represent political parties or movements in exchange for resources. But *"it's been free of politics. It is learned to keep the name of Casa B above ideology or movement."* As a woman adds: *"It's the way to give a voice to Belén in front of Candelaria's mayor's office."* Due to this approach the initiative has the support of the local people, who know that it is their success and that it is them who can do changes, without waiting for someone else to come and say them what to do.

⁴ Typical hot beverage

5.8 Category 8. Perceptions

The final category is about perceptions, people were asked how they perceive Casa B, and what they think its main purpose is. The aim is to find out why Casa B has left such a big impact.

First, a volunteer thinks: *"It's a very cool place for people from the neighbourhood to meet. The garden introduces a little bit of camp in the city. That is good because Bogota is a city with pollution where is rare to find nature."* Different points of view have young people, as a leader of the newspaper explains: *"It welcomes people who may feel they have no place to go. We don't function as a regular community house with the presence of the state where you pay. We are not a school either. We are more. We're like a group of friends who learn together."* Another girl claims: *"I perceive it as a family. Because from the moment you arrive you feel a friendly atmosphere and loving treatment."* Other says she sees it *"like a second family. It's a super cosy place. Everyone's supportive. Whatever you need, there's always someone to help you."* A boy confirms it by statement: *"It's quite comfortable here because it's like being in your living room. It becomes almost like a second home. Also, you can come and hang out with all your friends."* Almost all youngsters have mentioned something related to the word 'family' or 'home'. However, the woman usually referred to the Circle, only one has expressed how she feels about Casa B. *"It gets you out of your stress, you come here, you have fun, you learn to socialize, and especially if you come here with a bad or an arrogant attitude, you leave with a different one."* Could be assumed, that for them the activities, gardens, nor education does not represent such importance as the place itself. That state of mind a bit contrasts with the next code.

In the code *Main Purpose*, people did not share sensitive thoughts. On the contrary, they usually connected it to the problems the neighbourhood is facing. For example, a boy claims: *"Casa B has worked in many ways. It has worked as a meeting place as well as a protest against the state. Because Belén is one of the neighbourhoods that is closest to the presidential palace. But most of the people do not even though it's half a block away."* In such a manner, many respondents say the main purpose is to *"make the neighbourhood visible."* Others think more on the personal development by saying: *"For me, it's an open space of teaching and learning for everyone and an important public space."* That complements the opinion of a woman who claims: *"The aim is to have a space for the community and to be able to think about different and fairer future for young people."* A coordinator sees the purpose from a wider point of view:

"I would say that unifying the community and allowing children and young people to open their minds and meet other people to explore their environment." And the main coordinator it sums up by saying the main purpose is to *"transform, educate and build."*

5.9 Transversal category: Women's Circle

The transversal category was made up additionally because neither of the previous section can cover the *Functions of the Circle*, nor the connectivity with other categories. However, some of the relations are already described in the category of Garden, Finance and Sustainability and in all of them the Women's Circle plays an important role.

In general, the Circle does not have any hierarchy or leader, the work is based on cooperation and division of work. One of them says: *"We focus on three main lines. First is a woman's self-care through the promotion of the female spirit. Second is self-sustainability, which looks for resources to maintain it and the last is work with the community."* Based on these pillars they do various meetings, discussions and workshops. For example, one woman claims: *"We develop workshops oriented on the healing of body and the spirit. Reflection workshops on how to be a leader, how to empower those capacities that each one has individually, we do poetry nights, we do film afternoons."* Interestingly, every woman I spoke to mention *"workshop on womb healing"* and many commented the discussion about *"woman having ownership over her body and the decisions that concern her body."* It primarily focused on the question of abortion, that is in Colombia very complicated to realize and generally rejected by society. Lot of them also speak about the discussion related to 'machismo' and shared experience on how their husbands reacted. No further citation will support this issue, as it is very sensitive for the participants.

However, few women mention, for example, the lessons learnt: *"It teaches me how to grow as a person. And because I learn from the things other women say."* Or the impact of participation: *"It strengthens my spirit and also serves as therapy so that I can handle personal things."* A lot of them highlighted something similar to: *"It's a meeting of spiritual needs, listening to each other."* Based on that statement, can be assumed, that for the women from the neighbourhood is important to have their place, friends and work out of their family environment. As one of them concluded: *"The main purpose of the Circle is to empower women, to make them visible to society because they have lost much of their prominence as women. So, take them out of the homes and let them realize that there are different things than washing the*

dishes, having the children, the husband, and all the other bullshit that we make up to make people happy in society."

5.10 Connectivity

This category is designed to capture the dependency and relations among categories. Each code is described in one category, even though many codes have relations to various topics. Most of the connections are already described within the categories. In the beginning, it seemed that Women's Circle does not have a big influence. However, it turned out they are related to four important categories. After deep analyses could be assumed, that Casa B depends on them because the women took the responsibility for the gardens and provide small, but regular income which has a positive effect on the category of Sustainability and Impact. On the other hand, Casa B exists since 2012 and the Circle was established in 2019. Hence, there cannot be assumed dependency but only an improvement of the economic situation, higher participation and broader association with the community members.

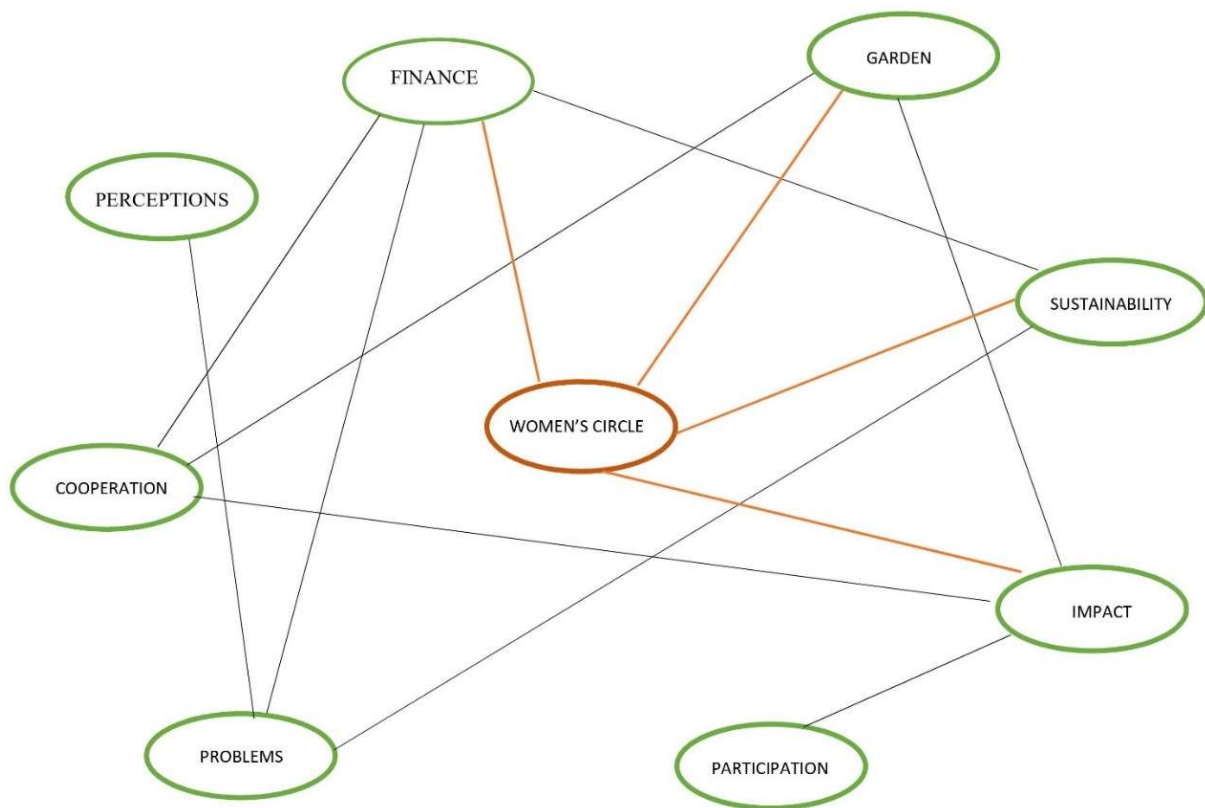


Figure 11: Connectivity and dependency of categories

5.11 Outcomes of the research

This section summarises the research and describes its outcomes. First, there has been noted a significant impact on young people's lives. Most of them have confessed previous difficulties with social interactions and admitted an improvement after being involved in the organization. Personal growth has allowed them to dream, to have a vision of what they want to do. This motivation has transformed into ambition, which together with their effort, and help from coordinators have led to better educational possibilities and made education more accessible even for those who do not have the funds.

When parents and inhabitants of the neighbourhood had seen the progress of adolescents, they started to visit Casa B as well. They began with events organized in gardens and some of them established the Women's Circle. In general, the active approach of the neighbours was becoming more and more influential. This trend has helped some of the inhabitants of Belén to fall in love with the territory and later identify with it as well as with the projects of Casa B.

The higher participation in projects and feelings of common aim or interests have had various effects. As people got to know each other, they feel safer in Belén and spend more time in the streets. That causes a more friendly and welcoming image of the neighbourhood and starts to change people's perspective on the security issue in the sector. Another positive consequence is better information flow among the neighbours, that helps them to fight against the gentrification.

The Women's Circle turned out to be an important factor in community development. Taking the initiative and responsibility for the gardens make people realize their territory can produce and in future provide certain sustainability to Casa B. However, for now, the gardens represent a nice common space where the workshops or the debates are organized, but more importantly space that allow the neighbours to meet, spend time together and lead discussions about current problems Colombian society is facing. Additionally, set the basis for women's empowerment.

6 Conclusion

This chapter concludes the result of the research to answer the research questions and connect the outcomes with the theory described in chapter 3. First responds the specific research question focusing on a theoretical overview. Second, answers the specific research question with a focus on the investigated area and finally summarize all the results into the main research question.

Regarding the first specific research question about the urbanization trends in Bogotá over the last 30 years. There have been found numerous issues Bogota is facing due to fast urbanization process, that has begun after 1950 and is continuing by cause of a large number of displaced people migrating to cities. Among the most visible tendencies is inequality reflected in Bogota's housing condition, poor infrastructure in vulnerable localities and hard to access quality education. Moreover, the city lacks urban green, is marked by high air pollution levels and is known for its insecurity in some areas. Bogota, as well as other Latin American cities, struggles with the informal market of parcels and vendors. Finally, certain parts of the city face process of gentrification, that could, even more, extend inequality.

The concept of urban agriculture as a response to the lack of nature in Bogota and supplier of fresh food is still not that common. However, the first step to a change happened in 2004 when the concept was legalized. In the following years, numerous workshops and educational activities held by Botanical garden of Bogotá took place. Until approximately 2016 when the project went out of money. Even though urban agriculture does not have a mayor's financial support numerous community garden function across Bogota. Top-down or bottom-up initiatives represent the new popular hipster way of eco/organic movement.

To clarify the contribution of the urban gardens to community participation and community life in Belén field research outcomes are applied together with the previous theoretical overview. As it was indicated in the category of Garden, the production was neglected until the establishment of Women's Circle. Still, production is not a priority and they rather highlight the garden's educational purpose. However, based on various premises and observation, participants lack the knowledge and for now, can produce herbs for tea. While production nor education do not contribute to community participation nor community life, space as such does. To develop some sort of community appropriation in vulnerable areas it is crucial to have a public space or place where people can meet, discuss, interact and get to know each other. Activities on the urban garden have managed to attract people by cultural events, debates or

simply by calming green environment, that also represents a place where everyone can contribute to making it produce or just improve the appearance. After some time, space becomes important to the community. For example, during the anti-government protests, the urban gardens served as a place for dialogue and meetings of protesters. Differentially Cinehuertas contributed to an interesting social situation, meeting of two social groups. On one side, an active inhabitant of Belén, on the other, friends of coordinators, foreign people and (as one of the volunteers highlighted), “*people from the north*”. In that way is hard to assume whether the project contributes to decreasing of inequality or not. However, that issue is related to the main research question:

How the community-based urban agriculture and related activities of Casa B community organization have been affecting the neighbourhood of Belén and its inhabitants?

The partial components of the impact have been defined in chapter 5.11. and led to conclude the overall influence of Casa B. First, it is important to point out that traditional distinction on top-down and bottom-up approaches is not valid in this case, because has both characteristics. In that way, it's a unique project connecting people not only in the neighbourhood of Belén but among Bogota. Based on the outcomes of the research, even though the garden does not produce nor educate as it could, Casa B has left a significant impact. The importance of participation and motivation were proved to be crucial in community development as well as the slow application of projects. Although Casa B faces various difficulties, lack of financial resources rather connects the people through the same problem then cause program threatening situation. When the participants are aware of a potential, they are willing to work for it. Moreover, the division of areas into categories has shown mutual dependency among the topics as well as the importance of Women's Circle. Even though is still new, the women have demonstrated that inhabitants of Belén are serious about their new active approach toward their territory and its appropriation.

But, as long as the security and lack of trust represent a crucial issue in vulnerable communities across Colombia the work of few cultural centres cannot repay years of fear and injustice among the society. Besides, when social leaders are being killed almost every day, people in these initiatives have the right to be afraid. On the other hand, these social leaders know their work is now more important than ever.

Theories highlight the importance of public space in community development. Thus, based on this investigation community garden might be the adequate solution for vulnerable areas with high level of urbanization and lack of public space.

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Annexes

Questions for Coordinators/founder:

1. Introduction
2. What is your function in Casa B? Do you live here or near Belén?
3. Why have you decided to be more than just a visitor at Casa B and become one of the leaders?
4. Why have you decided to set up a project like that?
5. According to you, what is the main purpose of CASA B?
6. How did the urban gardens project get started? What were the main reasons for establishing this project?
7. What are the main purposes of the gardens, what is the idea, how does it work?
8. Were there any difficulties at the beginning? Which ones? Are there still some problems in the gardens?
9. Is there any regular participation/someone in charge?
10. Who has access to take care of the gardens?
11. What's going on with the production?
12. What other projects related to Huertas are there?
13. What are the plans with urban gardens in the future?
14. Does participating in these projects bring any benefits to your personal life?
15. What are the sources of funding? Is there any support from the local mayor's office?
Where is financial support obtained? Formal/informal
16. Is the NGO sustainable currently?
17. Speaking of cooperation, CASA B has some partners, can you describe which ones? Do they bring any benefits? If so, which ones? If not, can you describe your experience with cooperation proposals?
18. Do you consider the ecological issue to be one of the priorities?
19. What is the status of the property as such?
20. How do you see CASA B in 5 years?
21. Do you think CASA B has somehow changed the way you see your neighbourhood?
22. Do you notice any changes in the neighbourhood since CASA B came into existence?
If so, which one?
23. Lessons Learned
24. Can you describe any difficulties that Casa B has had or continues to have?

25. Anything else you'd like to share on that subject?

Questions for Women from Women's Circle

1. Introduction
2. What are you doing in Casa B, do you live here in Belén or nearby? Has your family lived here long? Or did they move from the countryside?
3. Since when are you in Casa B, why did you start working/ coming/staying here?
4. Why have you decided to participate in the Women's Circle?
5. How often do you go to Casa B?
6. What do your family/family members think about your participation in the Women's Circle? Do they support you?
7. How does the Women's Circle work? Is there an organizational structure?
8. How many are you now? Is there regular participation?
9. According to you, what is the main purpose of Circle of women?
10. What activities does the Circle of women do now? What are its plans?
11. Does it focus in any way on the empowerment of women?
12. In the case of Huertas, how does it work?
13. Is there any regular participation/someone in charge?
14. Who has access to take care of them?
15. What's going on with the production?
16. Did anyone help you in the beginning, or do some of you have the knowledge of agriculture?
17. What kind of plants are there?
18. Do you pay attention to producing organic products?
19. How do you handle the garbage from the gardens?
20. What other projects related to gardens do you have?
21. Have you ever used the skills you have been taught at CASA B?
22. Does participation provide them with any economic/personal benefits? If so, can you give an example? If not, do you think you will in the future?
23. Does the Circle have any problems?
24. What could be improved?
25. Do you think CASA B has somehow changed the way you see your neighbourhood?
26. Do you notice any changes in the neighbourhood since CASA B came into existence? If so, which one?

27. Lessons Learned

28. How do you see CASA B and Circle in a few years?

Questions for youth, volunteers

1. Introduce yourself. Do you live here or nearby?
2. Since when do you visit CASA B? Why did you start working/ coming/staying here?
3. How did you find out about CASA B?
4. Which workshops do you visit and why?
5. Do you participate regularly? How often do you go to Casa B?
6. What do your family/family members think about your participation in CASA B activities? Do they support you?
7. Are you happy with the offer? Is there anything missing?
8. Is it just the class you're interested in at CASA B or are there other things you find cool?
9. Do you participate in the garden project? Why? What do you like doing there? Have you learned something new?
10. What do you think of CASA B? How do you perceive it?
11. According to you, what is the main purpose of CASA B?
12. Do you visit CASA B even in times when there is no workshop? Why?
13. Do you think CASA B has somehow changed the way you see your neighbourhood?
14. Do you notice any changes in the neighbourhood since CASA B came into existence?
If so, which one?
15. Lessons Learned
16. Is there anything that makes it difficult for you to come to CASA B activities?
17. Are there any benefits to participating in CASA B activities? What are they?