Spatial planning for cooperative housing
A case study in Maria Auxiliadora, Cochabamba, Bolivia
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A Minor Field Study
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Preface

This work has been done as a Master diploma work in spatial planning, at Blekinge Institute of Technology in Karlskrona, Sweden. In the year of 2003 we were granted a scholarship from Sida to carry out a Minor Field Study, MFS, in Cochabamba, Bolivia during the autumn of 2003. The work in Bolivia was a great experience and taught us a lot about the conditions in a developing country. This experience has given us a perspective on ways of life and planning in Sweden and it will also provide us with good preparation for future work.

Many people have been involved in this project and without their help this project would not have been possible. We want to direct a special thank to our supervisor Mr Fernando Cossio and the employees at PROCASHA. They helped us, guided us and in other ways made our stay in Cochabamba a memorable time. We are forever grateful to our new friends Rúben Sanches Vargas and Miguel Larrazábal Vallejos, architect students at the University of San Simón and volunteer workers at Pro Habitat, for helping us with information and for taking such good care of us. A special thank is dedicated to Mr Huáscar Bolivar, architect at PROMESHA, University of San Simón, for taking time to help us and to show a great interest in our work. We also would like to thank Mrs Liliana Arévalo Gonzales, architect and technical advisor of the Honourable Municipal Advice of Cochabamba, for sharing her knowledge and experience with us and supplying us with material and information regarding the project. We would like to express our thanks and appreciation to all the people in Maria Auxiliadora for taking good care of us during our visits in the area.

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01 Resumen
Resumen

La falta de vivienda es un problema en Bolivia, las migraciones de las áreas rurales a las ciudades causan problemas en estas, generándose así un crecimiento rápido y sin planificación. La planificación urbana no tiene los recursos para mantenerse al ritmo de la necesidad de las familias de contar con una vivienda, los costos para acceder a una vivienda son altos, por tal razón se generan los asentamientos ilegales y a menudo llevan a un conflicto de uso de tierra. En algunas ciudades las partes grandes de la población viven en alquileres a menudo en áreas planeadas para otro uso de tierra, por lo general de uso agrícola.

En Cochabamba el número de habitantes ha crecido rápidamente, particularmente en las últimas décadas. Muchos de los inmigrantes son personas de bajos ingresos que buscan encontrar viviendas en las áreas accesibles a sus ingresos. Estos grupos de ingresos bajos acceden a una vivienda a través del establecimiento ilegal en las zonas periféricas.

Los costos de viviendas son altos en la mayoría de los distritos de la ciudad, haciendo que el acceso a la vivienda a través de la forma legal sea prácticamente nulo para estos grupos. En Cochabamba la expansión tiene lugar en las afueras de la ciudad en tierras destinadas para el uso de agricultura, generándose así un conflicto de usos de suelos, es decir, tierras que deberían ser de uso agrícola, son ocupadas por asentamientos poblacionales ilegales.

El enfoque para nuestro estudio ha sido el área ocupada por la comunidad María Auxiliadora en el Distrito 9, Cochabamba. Un grupo de mujeres que juntas desean construir por esfuerzo propio sus viviendas. El área se sitúa por delante una ladera, en un área destinada para el uso agrícola, pero en un pedazo de tierra no conveniente para este uso, debido a que el terreno es empinado y rocoso. Hay varias organizaciones no gubernamentales que están interviniendo en la zona, todas con una expectativa común, la de construir viviendas utilizando el método cooperativista. La vivienda construida de forma cooperativista es una nueva experiencia en Bolivia que podría ser un principio de una nueva manera de pensar y una nueva manera de resolver el problema de vivienda en el país. Hay un interés creciente por parte del gobierno y de las personas que necesitan un lugar donde vivir. El programa de vivienda cooperativista boliviano, se forma con conceptos tomados de la experiencia del Uruguay.

En este estudio, nosotros nos enfocamos en los problemas de la planificación espacial para viviendas construidas de forma cooperativista. A través de la planificación espacial, nosotros
demostramos cómo las áreas para viviendas pueden planificarse en el futuro, tomando en cuenta el enfoque del pensamiento de la cooperativa y vivir en cooperativa.

El área del proyecto, María Auxiliadora, ha sido utilizada como caso de estudio. María Auxiliadora tiene un plan espacial y existen algunas viviendas construidas, pero este plan no considera los lineamientos y las necesidades del cooperativismo.

Nosotros hemos desarrollado tres tipos de propuestas, dos propuestas individuales y una propuesta adjunta al plan existente.

La primera propuesta individual, generalmente trata los aspectos de ¿cómo planear un área para viviendas construidas de forma cooperativista en Bolivia?, la propuesta trata por ejemplo, cuántos habitantes deben conformar una cooperativa de vivienda, los aspectos físico-espaciales del lugar y otros aspectos que pueden dar grandes oportunidades a un terreno de convertirse en un área de altas potencialidades para que funcione de manera correcta el cooperativismo. También ilustra tipos de vivienda que puedan usarse en una cooperativa y cómo las viviendas pueden agruparse para promover los pensamientos cooperativistas. Una parte trata el cómo construir en un terreno empinado, debido a que muchas de las nuevas viviendas se emplazarán en el terreno empinado.

La segunda propuesta individual, ilustra cómo el área que comprende a la comunidad María Auxiliadora puede planificarse en el futuro. La propuesta considera el pensamiento cooperativista y sus necesidades, siguiendo la línea de la primera propuesta individual. María Auxiliadora se sitúa en un terreno empinado y es probable que se planifiquen nuevas áreas de viviendas en este terreno. La propuesta ilustra la posibilidad de emplazar las viviendas en grupos alrededor de un jardín común en el terreno empinado, brindando así grandes oportunidades de funcionar como área de vivienda cooperativista. Se ha diseñado una propuesta para ilustrar la importancia de tener una coherente apariencia de cómo es un área de vivienda cooperativista.

La tercera propuesta, es la que se realiza adjunta al plan espacial ya existente e ilustra mejoras a este plan, para la comunidad María Auxiliadora. En esta propuesta nosotros tomamos en cuenta las viviendas construidas y los caminos existentes. El plan es ajustado para el terreno empinado y considerar la vivienda de forma cooperativista.
Introduction
Introduction

Housing is a problem in Bolivia, migrations from rural areas to towns causes problems in the fast growing cities. Since urban planning does not have the resources to keep up with the need for housing many settlements are illegal and often lead to a land use conflict. In some cities large parts of the population live in spontaneous settlements, often in areas that are planned for another use of land or unsuitable for housing.

In Cochabamba the number of inhabitants has grown rapidly, particularly in the past few decades. Many of the immigrants are low income people who search housing in areas accessible to their incomes. Low-income groups search housing through illegal establishment in peripheral zones. The high housing costs in most of the districts of the city make housing provided through legal conditions unaffordable for them. In Cochabamba the expansion takes place in the outskirts of the city and the land use conflict is about the conflict between land set aside for agriculture purpose and illegal settlements.

In focus for our study has been the area Maria Auxiliadora in District 9, Cochabamba. A group of women got together with a wish to build houses of their own. The area is situated on a hillside in an area for agricultural use but on land not suitable for this use because of the steep and rocky terrain. There are several non governmental organizations involved, with a common ambition to build a cooperative housing area. One of these is PROCASHA\(^1\), our main contact in the project and to which our supervisor in Bolivia belonged.

Cooperative housing is a new experience in Bolivia. The idea of cooperative housing could be a beginning of a new way of thinking and living and a new way to solve the housing problem in Bolivia. There is a growing interest, both from the government and from the people, of this new form of living. The Bolivian cooperative housing program is formed out of a concept that is used in Uruguay.

When we started to work with the project in Sweden our intention was to take part in a team and create spatial plans for a new low-income area of cooperative housing in Cochabamba, Bolivia. When we came to Bolivia the conditions for our study had changed as a plan for the area we were to study already had been prepared and building process in the area had started.
Aim
The overall aim of our study is to develop a plan for a cooperative housing area located in steep terrain. One focus is to create a spatial plan adjusted for cooperative needs and aspirations. Another focus is to discuss different ways of how to plan a cooperative housing area considering different house types and how these can be grouped to promote cooperative living. This is done through proposals for physical development which are presented by illustrative material to demonstrate how a cooperative housing area could look like in the future.

The intention of this study is to provide an inspiration material for cooperative housing projects in Bolivia. It can also be used to show how areas of steep terrain can be developed into housing areas.

Methodology

Literature studies
The general information and facts about Bolivia and Cochabamba we got through literature studies. Literature about our project area and cooperative housing was collected during our stay in Cochabamba. Student works from the University of San Simón have been used to get up to date information about Maria Auxiliadora.

Fieldwork
The fieldwork was carried out during 10 weeks in Cochabamba, Bolivia. Most of the time was spent gathering information about the project area Maria Auxiliadora. Interviews were made about the project and also interviews to get the municipality’s point of view. Frequently we visited Maria Auxiliadora, some days we just walked around, observing people, activities and the environment. Other days we made inventories and investigations on land use, condition of existing buildings and streets, vegetation and other aspects of the environment of the whole area. As a result of the fieldwork we got to know the area well, established good contact with the people involved and living in the area and a good insight in daily life. By attending social activities and visiting people’s homes we gathered experience and a feeling for the life in Cochabamba among low-income people.
Draft plans were made during our stay in Bolivia. They were based on what we had recognised during our fieldwork. In the end of our stay we presented our ideas and some proposals for our supervisor.

To get more concrete information about low-income housing we visited some similar areas, Miraflores in Cochabamba and El alto in La Paz. Miraflores is a small recently planned settlement in the outskirt of Cochabamba with mainly semi-detached houses. In El Alto, a part of the capital La Paz, we studied how the buildings were located in the very steep terrain. This is the part of the city where about one million of the poor indigenous people live often under bad conditions.

**Workshops**

Two NGOs, PROCASHA and Pro Habitat, arranged workshops each Sunday in the community Maria Auxiliadora for the first group of people that were going to start their construction of houses in the new cooperative form. The aim of the workshops was to inform the people about cooperative housing, collaboration and building. These workshops gave us valuable information about the project and how to build low-income housing. It also helped us to get contacts with people not yet living in the area, but planning to build in the area, people that we probably not would have met otherwise.

**A survey**

To gain more detailed knowledge and understanding concerning the project area we made a small survey through a questionnaire. The result gave us information about the living conditions and a good insight in daily life. The questions focused on the house, the plot and the neighbourhood and we got knowledge about potentials in the area, what is missing and what the inhabitants would like to improve. The survey was carried out in Spanish without translator. Spanish is not our mother tongue which might have affected the result.
**Limitations**

Our field work was carried out in Bolivia during 10 weeks. The short time limits the extent of the study. There were also political disturbances and change of president in Bolivia during our stay that was an obstacle for our study for about 2 weeks.

We have been working with issues within the framework of spatial planning but many of the problems in the area are complex and need to be investigated from other points of views too.

In our project area people speak, Spanish, Quechua and Aymara. None of the languages are our mother tongue and this is likely to have effected our proposal in the way that we might have missed some points of a discussion or interview.
03 Background
Bolivia

Bolivia is the country located at the highest altitude and most isolated, in terms of communications with surrounding countries, in South America. It is the fifth largest country in South America, with an area of approximately 1,098,580 km², almost three times larger than Sweden. Bolivia has about 8 million inhabitants, 62 percent of them live in urban regions. 85 percent of the population live in the departments of La Paz, Cochabamba and Santa Cruz.

Bolivia is divided into five basic and diverse regions: the high Altiplano, the Highland valleys, the Yungas, the Chaco and the forested lowlands of the Amazon and Paraná basins. Cochabamba belongs to the Highland valleys. Chile and Peru border the country on the west, Brazil on the north and east, and on the south by Paraguay and Argentina. Bolivia is the country with the highest percentage of indigenous population on the South American continent. The population is divided into two major indigenous groups and several smaller ones. The largest groups are the Aymara and the Quechua.¹

Bolivia is the poorest country in South America. The living conditions are very bad and many people cannot afford a minimum standard of living. Race and class are closely intertwined in Bolivia in a social order which discriminates against the Indian population. The poor people in rural areas and in towns are almost exclusively of Indian origin. Regarding income, the gap between rich and poor is huge. During the 1990’s 20 percent of the urban population with the lowest income received 4 percent of the total urban income, while 20 percent of the population with the highest incomes received 54 percent of the total income.²

Military juntas have ruled the country during most of its independent period since 1825 and this has complicated and delayed the democratic processes outlined in Bolivia’s constitution.
from 1947. The country was hit by hyperinflation and devaluation and at the same time, the political structure and state institutions were weak. Democracy has survived and become stronger in spite of this, and a number of general elections and power shifts have taken place.\textsuperscript{3}

Bolivia has a wealth of natural resources. These include plentiful minerals, timber and natural gas. Tin is Bolivia’s most important mineral and the nation ranks among the world’s leading tin producers. 90 percent of Bolivia’s export trade consists of natural gas and minerals. In recent years the production of coca and cocaine has been one of Bolivia’s most important sources of employment and income. The cultivation of coca leaves forms the basis for the production of cocaine. About 10 percent of the working population is directly dependent on the coca industry for their livelihoods. The government has been successful in wiping out coca plantations and offered programmes providing other employment. The aim is to entirely wipe out the production of coca for sale.\textsuperscript{4}

**Cochabamba**

The department of Cochabamba is located in the middle of Bolivia. The capital of the department is the city of Cochabamba which is the third largest city of Bolivia with a total population of about one million inhabitants. The population in Cochabamba is divided into an urban and a rural population. 59 percent of the inhabitants are living in urban areas and 41 percent are living in rural areas. The number of inhabitants has grown a lot the last years. Since 1992 the female population has increased more than the male population. The density of the population is 26 inhabitants / km\(^2\), the highest in the whole country.\textsuperscript{5} There are big differences between the districts in the city, for example the access to necessary infrastructure and service varies a lot. In general people with more resources live in the centre

![Cochabamba in Bolivia](image)
and in the northern parts of the city while the people with fewer resources live in the fringe areas of the city or in the south. Our project area is located in District 9, in the south of Cochabamba.

**Administration**

Bolivia is divided into nine *departamentos*. Each *departamento* has a governor appointed by the national president and a department legislature comprising members elected by municipal councillors. For administrative purposes, the *departamentos* are divided into *provincias* of which there are 94. For the purpose of local government, the country is divided into 312 *secciones / municipalidades*. The *secciones / municipalidades* are then divided into *cantones* or *distritos*.

Cochabamba is one of Bolivia’s nine *departamentos* and it is an exception from ordinary structure, its *secciones / municipalidades* and *provincias* are merged into one level and they are called *municipalities*. The *municipalities* are divided into *distritos*, since there are no *cantones* in Cochabamba. The *departamento* of Cochabamba has 16 *municipalities*, which are sub-divided into 14 *distritos*.

Every *municipal* makes its own annual budget that is followed up. They make also a development plan which is valid for five years. This is called *Plan Desarrollo* and it is adjusted to the budget and revised every year.

**Community planning**

The municipality of Cochabamba has to administrate and improve the technical infrastructure and also has to preserve and develop historical, cultural and aesthetic values. The Municipality has not managed to keep up with the requirements, for instance the rural areas are still neglected in the planning.

The Department of Cochabamba consists of 14 districts, each with an own *Casa Municipal*. The division into *Casa Municipal* is in accordance to the electoral district for the municipal election. *Casa Municipal* for District 9 is situated in Pucara Grande and it functions as a small mayor office. It was established in 1995 and at that time the preparation of the district’s
development plan started, Plan Desarrollo de Distrito 9. The services provided by the Casa Municipal relate to certifications for tax payments, land use planning, registration at the Real Property Registry and granting permits for different economic activities. Casa Municipal has the responsibility to prepare and follow up Plan Operativo, and the regularization process.

Plan Operativo is a plan for the development of the year and has the objective to define each year’s investments that can be derived from the resources assigned through the law of Popular Participation, Ley de Participación Popular. Plan Operativo is expressed in concrete projects regarding water, sewer system etc. The plan is connected to the Municipal budget and is revised every year.

Plan Desarrollo and Plan Desarrollo de Distrito 9 are plans of general character and they deal with development aspects for a specific territory, like economic issues, natural resources, the population and the environment. The plans are at two different levels, municipal and district level. Plan Desarrollo is an instrument for overall planning of the Department of Cochabamba. This plan has an implementation period of approximately five years. Plan Desarrollo de Distrito 9 is a plan with recommendations for District 9 (it is like a more detailed Swedish Comprehensive plan).\(^6\)

**Law of popular participation**

The structural changes that Bolivia goes through have generated series of instruments that are very important for the transformation of the country and even to support the development. In this ambition, one fundamental law is the law of popular participation, Ley de Participación Popular. The recognition, promotion and consolidation of the process of popular participation is the main objective of this law. The objective is also to incorporate decentralization in the political and economic life of the country to the indigenous communities and urban farmers. The intention is to try to improve the quality of life for Bolivians through a more organized distribution and better administration of public resources. The law of popular participation recognizes the important local organizations in Bolivia, for example Non Governmental Organizations. After the promulgation of the law, the Base Territorial Organization became the body representing the neighbourhoods in contacts with the Municipal Authority.\(^7\)
District 9

District 9 is located in the south part of the city, and it is divided into four sub-units for farming: La Maica, Azirumarca, Pukara and Valle Hermoso. District 9 plays a fundamental economic role in the region because of its predominantly agricultural and cattle farming nature. The total population in District 9 was in 1996 about 33,000 inhabitants. The population is expected to triple to the year of 2015.\(^8\)

The situation is critical for District 9 due to the uncontrolled occupation of land for housing. Before 1994 the municipality of Cochabamba did not have the responsibility to plan rural areas. The building process accelerates and the planning is not able to manage the situation and keep up with the need of planned land for housing. In order to improve living conditions for both the new settlers and the old inhabitants, the Municipality of Cochabamba has a development plan for the area (*Plan Municipal de Desarollo, Distrito 9*). Today most of the people in District 9 lack adequate access to water sanitation, proper roads, day care centres etc. Our project area, Maria Auxiliadora, is situated in the south of District 9 in Sivingani. Sivingani is an area for agriculture and cattle farming, divided into four parts: Maria Auxiliadora, San Rafael, Lustrabotas and Olmedo.

*María Auxiliadora in Cochabamba*
**Climate**

The temperature in Cochabamba is most of the time pleasant with a mean temperature of about 18°C during the year. Because of the altitude the temperature can fall drastically at night. In Cochabamba rain falls about 400-500 millimetres over the year. Rain falls mainly from December to February, during the rest of the year the lack of water is a large problem. Heavy rains are a threat as roads and houses can be damaged. Heat and lack of water make the area dusty and people need shade to protect themselves from the sun. The wind direction is principally from southeast.

**Health**

There are a lot of health problems in the area, most of them due to the poverty of the population. Lack of hygiene and malnutrition are two main problems. The hygiene problems are the result of environmental pollution due to the absence of water and sewerage systems, the presence of dust and flies, and the lack of refuse collection. The most serious health problem in Bolivia is a widespread parasitic illness called *Chaga*, known as ”poor man’s plague”. The virus comes from a beetle, called *Vinchuca*, which lives in the building material *adobe*. The virus enlarges the heart, which leads to death. Most affected are the rural regions, up to 3000 metres above sea level, where 70 percent of the people are affected and 40-60 percent of the people in peri-urban areas. Today health organizations are working to spread information about the disease and how to protect oneself to minimize the problem.

**Women’s situation**

Bolivia is a country that still presents high levels of inequality between men and women. Similar to other Latin American countries the cultural conditions and present traditions in urban and rural areas are often of patriarchal character. Power is rested in men while women often are discriminated, subordinated and treated inequality. It is frequent that men consider women to be ”weak and inferior” and that they are to fulfil task related to reproduction, such as take care of the home and children. The fact is that women still are relegated to private spaces and men often alone occupy public spaces. This means that women’s participation in decision making process in public environment is limited. Though women in general are discriminated in society, they usually have a strong position in the household. They are the one that takes care of the family and the homes. Poverty has forced women to double work. In many cases
it is the woman who generates the main earnings in the family. The women’s productive activities are related to domestic work. They sell products in the market or street (informal) or in best cases they work with health and education (nurse, teacher). These activities depend on their educational level.

Besides lack of services and basic infrastructure (water, sewerage system and electricity) deficiencies can be in the design of spaces that women use more frequently. Among these, women points out the kitchen and laundry facilities. The kitchen is generally shared with other functions or, in the event of extended families, shared with other users and laundry facilities, usually are improvised in the patio in pails. When there are no services near the neighbourhood, such as health centres and educational centres, the woman is the one that experiences most difficulties. The women consider that they loose valuable time and money when they have to go to the city and the opening hours of these centres coincide with the hours that they are loaded with domestic work. It is often a long distance to the schools which means a conflict for women who do not have enough time to take children to and from school, thus they are forced to send their small children alone. They prefer to leave their children in a nursery in the neighbourhood, unfortunately these do not have the same functions as the school. Women often feel they lack appropriate places for rest and recreation for the family, like recreational equipment for children and youths. The insecurity in the neighbourhoods generates specific problems for the women. Lack of public lighting, juvenile gangs and the problem with alcoholic are some of these problems. 12
Cooperative Housing

Cooperative housing is a new experience in Bolivia. It has been welcomed by the government with the ambition to constitute as an alternative housing policy. Housing cooperatives in Uruguay have been model for this development. They have much knowledge and many years of experience. The project in Maria Auxiliadora is the first cooperative housing project in Bolivia.

What defines a cooperative

The housing cooperative is constituted by a group of people with a common need for housing. All group members contribute the effort and the initiative.

The cooperative can be seen as an artificial, completely controlled person that is guided by the members to achieve housing at the lowest possible cost. This artificial person obtains resources from the savings, manpower from the members and from credit resources, administered by the associates. The artificial person buys material and recruiting subcontracts in tasks they can not carry out by themselves.\(^\text{13}\)

The cooperative way of organize the housing demand gives people with limited economic resources opportunity to achieve a higher living standard. The way of collaborating brings advantages, for example it eliminates the “middleman” and the cooperative can acquire material to better prices than if obtained individually. It can also stimulate essential services for the neighbourhoods (such as running water, electric power, primary school).\(^\text{14}\)

Function and organization

The cooperative in Maria Auxiliadora is based on the following principles.

The cooperative has four organs for leadership and control. The General assembly, *Asemblea general*, is the supreme body where all the members meet on an equal level and democracy. The Directive Council, *Consejo Directivo*, is the guiding organ of the conducive cooperative. This organ is responsible of representing, legislate and execute. The Development Commission, *Comisión Fomento*, is the organ that takes charge of the information, communication, the members and their families as well as the relationship between the cooperative and the community. The last organ, the Fiscal commission, *Comisión Fiscal*, is the organ that controls the cooperative.\(^\text{15}\)
The technical advice

The cooperative has a technical adviser to help the members make decisions and administer the funds. This advice should be offered without profits with a genuine cooperative purpose. An intention of a cooperative is to develop more effective techniques of construction and maintenance of buildings to reduce the cost for the occupants.

The cooperative requires advice in varied fields to achieve their purpose. In a legal point of view they for example need a juridical person for advising and to create drawings over the terrain and in an administrative point of view to search for efficient organizations to help them. The cooperative also need financial advice to search for the most convenient financial sources and the investment of resources. To help the group understand the cooperative ideal they need social advise.  

Social values of cooperative housing

The mutual aid goes through different stages and especially the building process gives much experience in both an economic and a social point of view. Experiences that are shared working as a cooperative, organization and function, demonstrate some advantages of this system. It is not only a solution for the housing problem though it also offers new possibilities to live together in the future. It shows that training in administration and organization gives an active participation later on for maintenance and future improvement in the area. The educational aspect promotes initiatives for the construction, maintenance and improvement of the housing and services, not only in the cooperative point of view though it is also positive for the neighbourhoods.

The function of the social company and the economic demands from the members is a permanent effort of training from the organizational stages until the building process, as well as in the later stage that is the maintenance of the cooperative. It is also positive for the development of own initiatives and to find suitable assistance from outside of the community.
Values of cooperative housing

The actions the cooperative form brings can get a higher number of citizens to get interested in the problems of housing. This establishes a reciprocal action between the authorities and the citizen to either get for the cooperative system or another system, public or private. The cooperatives act against the concentration of the political and economic power in few hands. It is possible to work in close relationship with the government and the municipalities to contribute to the urban planning for developing social aspects of housing and make the citizen understand their civic responsibilities. The private promoters and the public system do not act or invest with high risk and therefore a cooperative system gives the people strength by working together.\textsuperscript{18}