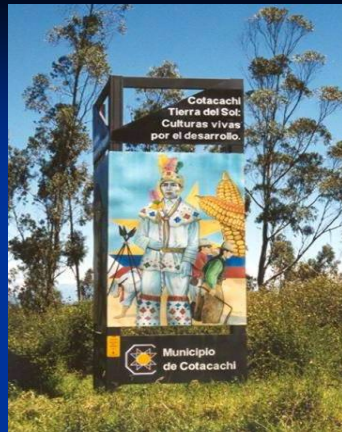


Cotacachi, Ecuador: Experiences in Decentralization and Democracy 1995-2005

Robert E. Rhoades

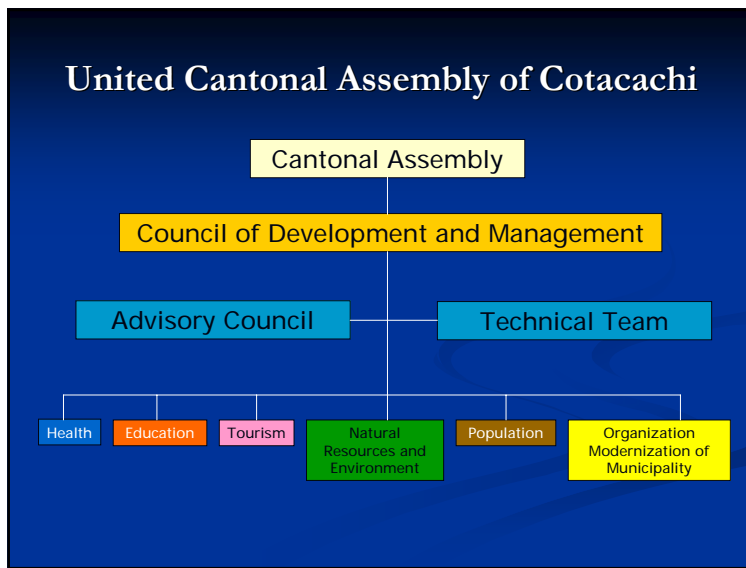
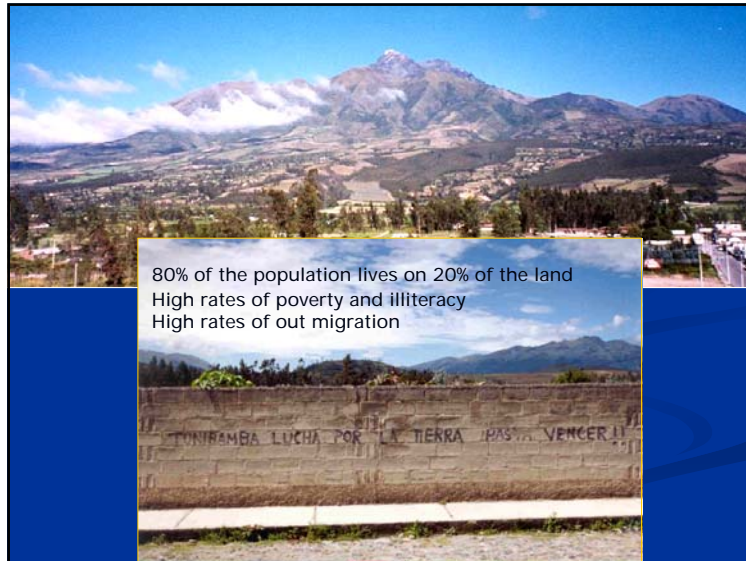
Dept. of Anthropology
University of Georgia, Athens



Cotacachi, Ecuador

Historical Antecedents

- 1960s Agrarian Reform
- 1970s Indigenous organization founded to fight racism
 - Restructuring social and economic relations
- 1980s Indigenous agenda shifts to development
- 1990 National indigenous uprising
 - Indigenous mayor elected
 - Establishment of Cantonal Assembly
- 2000 Cotacachi wins International Awards for governance and conflict resolution



What is Cantonal Assembly?

- Permanent citizen body that works with canton government
- Two day meeting of stakeholders (November)
- Participants meet in working groups to develop priorities and plans
- Presented at plenary session
- Approved plans become part of canton's actions
- Can make policy (e.g., environmental regulations)

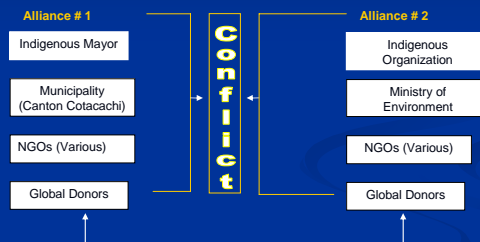
Two Examples of Decentralized Decision-making

- Management of Cotacachi-Cayapas Reserve
- Mining and citizen's rights

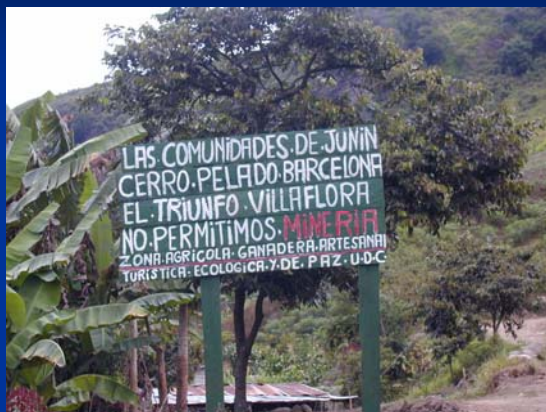




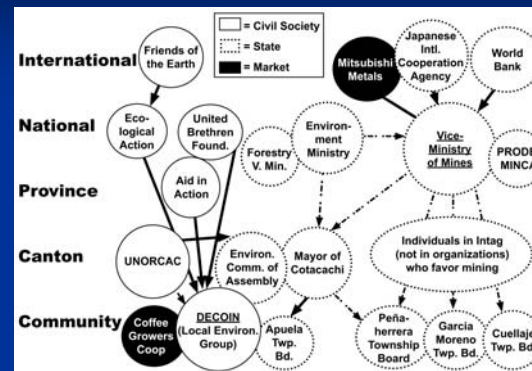
Strange Bed Fellows with Lago Cuicocha Struggle



Mining Dispute



Advocacy Coalitions: Mining in Intag



Source: Flora et al. (2005)

The Mayor Negotiating



The Cotacachi Experiment: Preliminary Conclusions

- Based on mountain culture model of assembly
- Philosophy of solidarity, equity, and reciprocity
- Legal basis in international agreement and national law
- Open and diplomatic indigenous leader (Auki Tituana)
- Decisions anchored in science and indigenous knowledge
- Not perfect model but gradually achieving widespread citizen participation

Cotacachi Awards

- 2000 Dubai International Award for Participatory Governance
- 2002 UNESCO's Cities for Peace Award

