

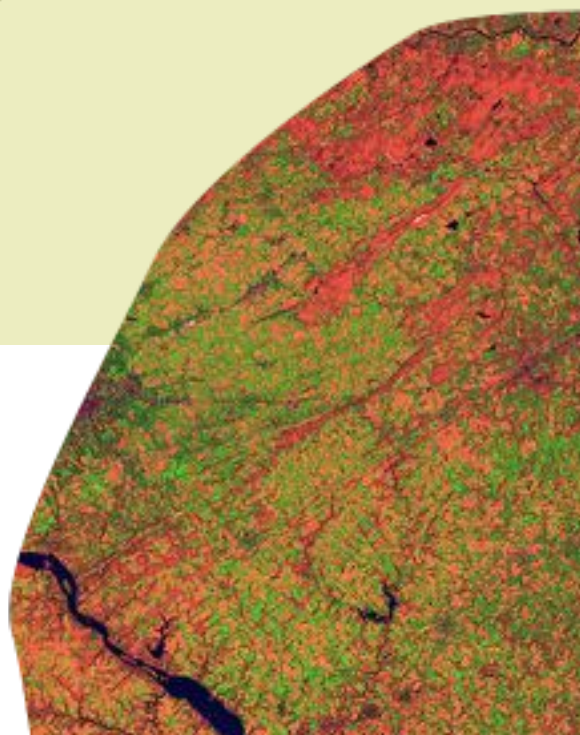
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**Occupy Climate
Change (OCC!)**
*Grassroots initiatives
entry*



FORMAS



Bicivilizados Ibarra

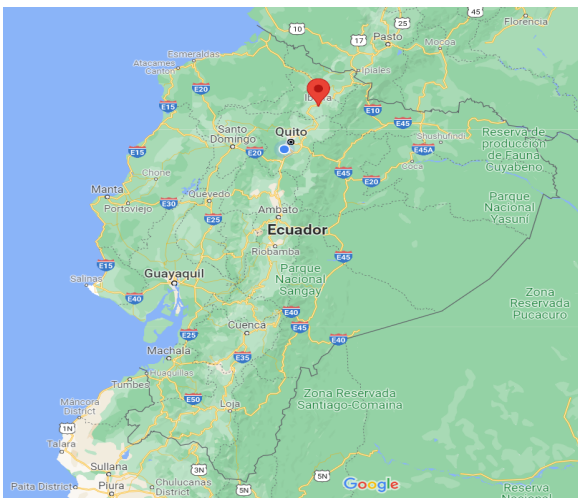
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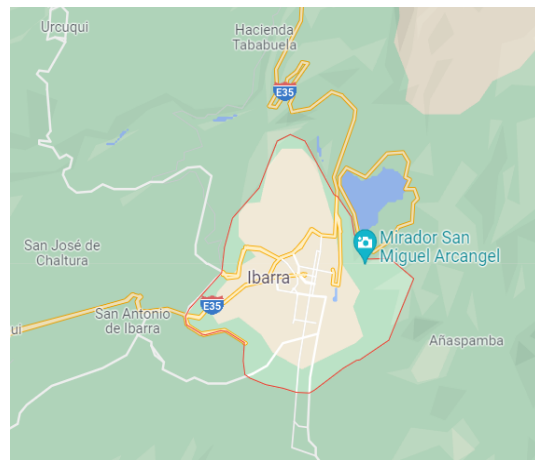
"The bicycle as a tool for economic, social and environmental development"

Where is this grassroots initiative implemented? Who are the promoters? Who are the beneficiaries?

Bicivilizados Ibarra began with the heat of the pandemic in June 2020. This initiative began with a group of friends, who decided to promote a bike ride in the city of Ibarra to vindicate the fight for the implementation of bike paths. Being the first time these paths were established within the urban area, this action caused an important public debate.



Map 1. The location of Ibarra in Ecuador



Map 2. Ibarra city (Google s.f.)

The main promoters of this initiative were Karen Sarabia, Esteban Berborich, and Rosalía Suarez. They were the first to meet and talk about the possibility of organizing the first cycle ride. Juan Arias is also one of the promoters, although he has not been there since the founding of Bicivilizados, his presence has been key in the development and planning of the following events.

The beneficiaries are Ibarra citizens. This initiative was born to be accessible for everyone; from children to the elderly, large and small families, groups of friends, adolescents, young people and adults who have the interest to promote biking as an environmental, economic and social alternative.

How does this initiative engage with climate? Does it tackle mitigation, adaptation, both or other dimensions of climate change?

This initiative promotes the use of the bicycle as an alternative means of transport within the city, thus inviting citizens to reduce the use of automobiles. Its objective is to change Ibarra inhabitants' behaviour in order to contribute to the construction of a more sustainable and clean city, which is friendly to pedestrians and cyclists.

This initiative tackles mitigation and adaptation dimensions of climate change. The mitigation mechanisms applied by this movement can be evidenced in vehicles' emissions reduction to the environment. These emissions are made up of highly polluting gases for the atmosphere, such as carbon monoxide (CO) and nitrogen oxide (NO₂), which accelerate global warming.

Since the collective encourages a behavioral change in people from an early age, we can also categorize it as an adaptation measure. One of the programs promoted by Bicivilizados is Wolf Kids. For this program, children are accompanied by a bicycle caravan with adults behind them, so that they can feel secure biking in the urban area.

What are the main objectives? What are the main values?

The main objective of Bicivilizados is to engage more people who use the bicycle as an alternative means of transport in order to change the environmental, economic, and social dynamics that exist around the use of cars and other fuel-based vehicles.

Another fundamental objective is to promote friendlier and more sustainable cities, where pedestrians and cyclists have greater access to public space, to the streets, and to the city roads. It is also intended to demand greater safety when biking, and promote bike activism as a resistance mechanism against climate change and its consequences on the environment.

The main value that sustains its mission is the firm conviction of seeing the bicycle as a tool for change and therefore as its fight banner to build more socially, economically, and environmentally friendly cities.

What is the timeline? Are there already visible effects?

Bicivilizados Ibarra was born in June 2020 with the organization of the first bike ride. Since then, the main events that the group has organized are massive bike rides, in the form of *critical mass*. Generally, one or two cycle rides are organized per month since the continuous call for these events allows to lay the foundations for maintaining the group's visibility.

In addition, they also organize forums and conversations around topics related to biking (climate change, bicycle-based ventures, etc.). To carry out these activities during the pandemic, digital platforms were of great support for spreading the initiative in other cities around Ecuador.

In the future, the frequency of the rides is expected to increase, perhaps becoming one cycle a week as occurs in cities like Quito. In the long term, it is also expected to help in the promotion of micro enterprises related to biking.

The most important visible effects have undoubtedly been the cycle rides in which 150 to 180 people have been summoned. The smaller cycles generally have an average of 50 to 80 people.

Who are the actors involved? What is their background?

The key actors of this initiative are the founders and five more members who work as coordinators inside the collective. Bicivilizados does not have a vertical structure, it could be said that the only thing that directs the movement is to love biking. Decisions in the movement are made based on initiatives, that is, one of the coordinators proposes something and then everyone takes the decision

as a group. The coordinators work under the motto that anyone supports the cause as they can, whether from time, from space, economically, etc.

The actors behind are young people and adults between the ages of 25 and 40. They are people connected with issues of climate change, with artistic and cultural processes, etc. They have different backgrounds but all of them share the love for biking and for building fairer and more sustainable cities.

Which limits (institutional, physical, social, etc.) does it encounter?

The movement has faced certain social and institutional limits. Regarding the social limits, once the bicycle lanes began to be consolidated, a group of citizens criticized the initiative arguing that the new bike paths create more traffic in the city. This position reflected a political issue with the clear objective of attacking and delegitimizing the movement.

Regarding the institutional limits, the group does not have the municipality or other public institutions' support that guarantee the cyclist safety, or that promote public policies in favor of biking. Evidence of the lack of interest of political authorities on this particular issue, is the state of the city's 4 km bike paths. This infrastructure has not been properly maintained and no investment has been made to fix the sections that are already deteriorated.

Are any shortcomings or critical points visible? What other problematic issues can arise from its implementation?

One of the problems that has arisen from the implementation of the initiative, is the fact that not all coordinators are in complete agreement with the fact of including a political vision to the activities that the movement organizes. So, this is an issue they are still tackling. Although all the coordinators agree to see the bicycle as their fighting horse, not all agree that this is a political act. However, for some members of the collective, the activities promoted by the movement constitute a political act by themselves.

Some members argue that bigger changes will only come from promoting public policies in favor of biking. For these members, the best strategy would be for the group to start thinking about

changes related with legal and political opportunities, that is, to fight for the approval of a law or ordinance.

How would it be potentially replicable in other settings?

Definitely, the initiative could be implemented in other cities of Ecuador and the world. The movement has had considerable recognition and opportunities to grow. Through the use of online platforms, the collective had the opportunity to form networks with other movements in other cities of the country. This has made it easier to develop face-to-face events in the future.

Is this initiative conducive to broader changes (law, institutional arrangements, long-term sustainability, or community preparedness, etc.)? If yes, which?

Yes, this initiative can lead to broader changes in the city. As mentioned, an important group of coordinators consider as a future objective, to promote the creation of an ordinance or a regulation that could promote two main things: the use of bicycles within the city as an alternative means of transport, and the security and infrastructure necessary to make biking safe. However, in order to achieve this political goal, it is vital that all the team embraces a vision of political activism. In the words of Juan Arias, coordinator of the group: “Only from political power can radical changes be made. The changes come when you manage to touch the fibers of power and from there, you create transformations. Transforming the city in favor of pedestrians and bicycles is a political act and as a collective, we should have the ability to understand it and work for it”.

Links for knowing more about Bicivilizados Ibarra:



Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/bicivilizadosibarra/>



Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/1945996255533377>

References:

Interview with members of Bicivilizados Ibarra

Google. s.f. Google Maps location of Ibarra. Retrieved October 15, 2021 from <https://goo.gl/maps/JytRkixc3psZCMoB7>



Images credit by Bicivilizados Ibarra