Reconceptualising indigenous territoriality through the lens of multi-locality and multi-activity: A comparative indigenous youth perspective from Bolivia

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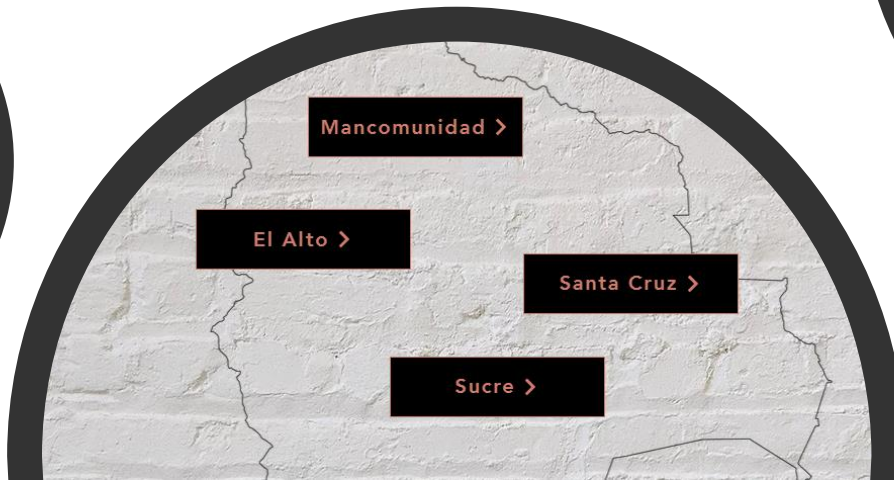
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Indigenous Development Alternatives: An urban youth perspective from Bolivia (alter-nativas.net)

- We compare indigenous youth mobility and related grassroots activism in different contexts in Bolivia.

- Our project develops an emerging tradition of youth participatory action research that "provides young people with opportunities to study the social issues that affect their lives" by being co-researchers in the project. (Camarotta and Fine 2008: 2)

Four case study specific projects defined by our young co-investigators from four collectives

Documenting the mobility patterns and visions of indigenous youth in a context of multiple crisis (El Alto)

Strengthen the role of young indigenous women in public spaces and indigenous territorial organisations in Santa Cruz city and department.

Exploring the involvement of young people in the territorial reconstitution of the Qhara Qhara Nation.

Examining changes in identity and territoriality as a consequence of extended urbanization and mobility. (Mancomunidades of the river Beni, Tuichi y Quiquibey)
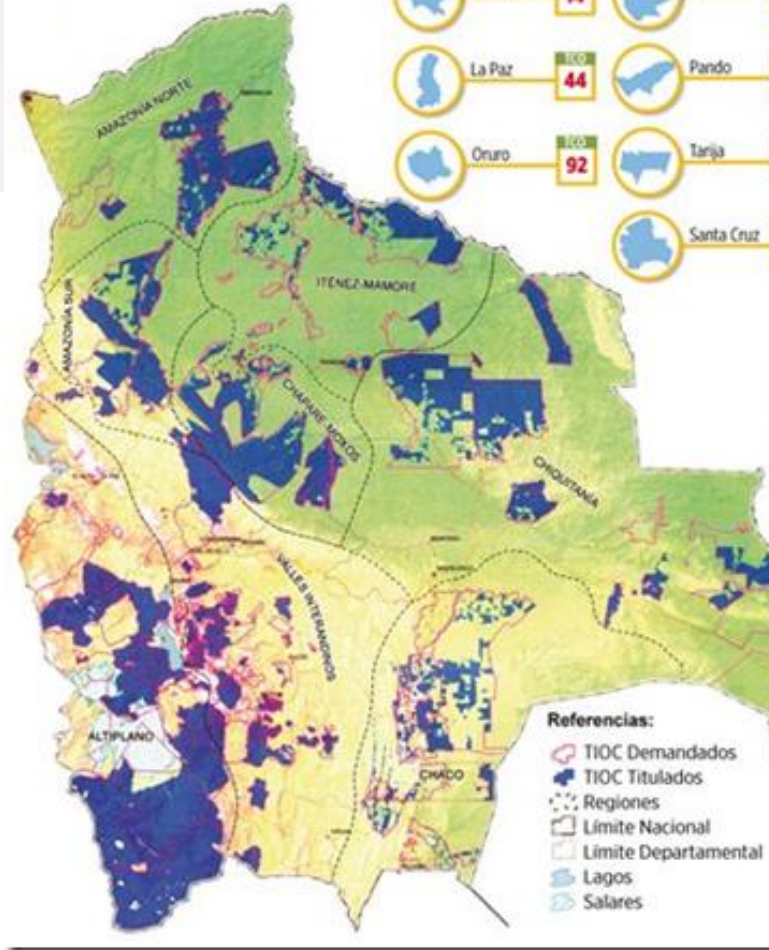
Comparative findings challenge conventional representations of indigenous territoriality

Hay más **territorios indígenas** titulados en tierras alt

▶ En la actualidad, en tierras altas se registran 238 territorios indígenas, mientras que en tierras bajas la cantidad es de 60.

● Territorios por departamento

Chuquisaca TCO 13 — Potosí
Cochabamba TCO 14 — Beni
La Paz TCO 44 — Pando
Oruro TCO 92 — Tarija
— Santa Cruz

Referencias:
○ TIOC Demandados
● TIOC Titulados
Regiones
Límite Nacional
Límite Departamental
Lagos
Salares

#GUARDIANSOFTHEFOREST
PART OF THE SOLUTION TO CLIMATE CHANGE

INCLUSION OF THE ANCESTRAL KNOWLEDGE OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES AND LOCAL COMMUNITIES

Against politico-legal representations that associate indigenous peoples & rights with spatially fixed ancestral/ rural territories
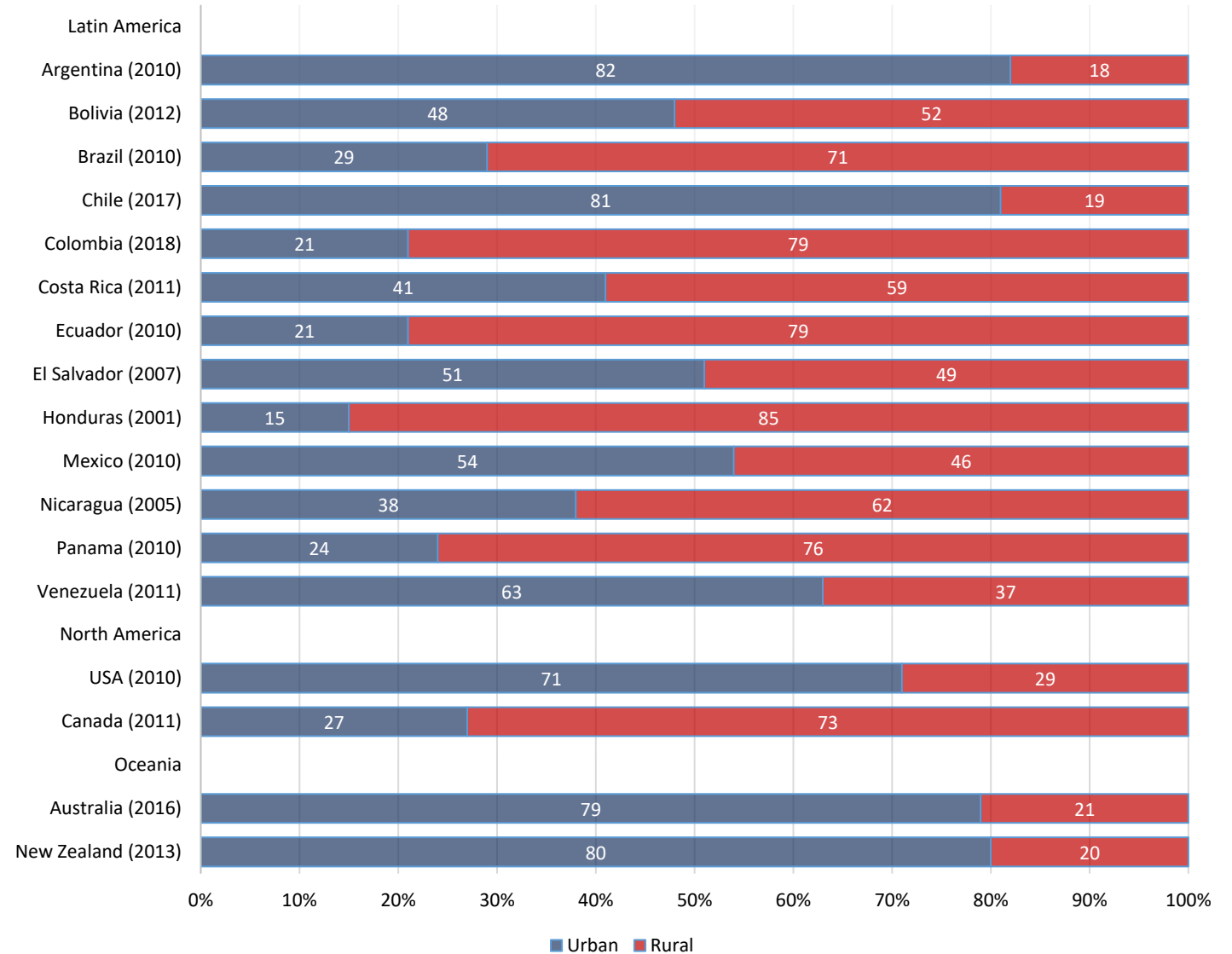
In cities where modernity has been developed we respect private property and individual rights according to the liberal model. By contrast in rural areas and particularly in our indigenous territories we subordinate individualism to collective indigenous rights

(Deputy minister of decolonial affairs, Bolivia)

Indigenous youths have a growing urban presence (but a uni-directional migration perspective is insufficient)

- Statistical data derived from population censuses confirms growing urban presence
- Limitations:
  - Censuses only provide static statistical snapshots and often fails to capture different forms of mobility (Perales Miranda and Parraga 2021)
- To date such shifts are mainly understood to be the result of uni-directional migration patterns and related push/ pull factors (UN Habitat 2010)
  - Yet, our findings show people operate in multiple places for a variety of reasons

	Urban	Rural
Latin America		
Argentina (2010)	82	18
Bolivia (2012)	48	52
Brazil (2010)	29	71
Chile (2017)	81	19
Colombia (2018)	21	79
Costa Rica (2011)	41	59
Ecuador (2010)	21	79
El Salvador (2007)	51	49
Honduras (2001)	15	85
Mexico (2010)	54	46
Nicaragua (2005)	38	62
Panama (2010)	24	76
Venezuela (2011)	63	37
North America		
USA (2010)	71	29
Canada (2011)	27	73
Oceania		
Australia (2016)	79	21
New Zealand (2013)	80	20

Key finding

The different territorial realities of indigenous youths are best captured through a multi-locality and multi-activity perspective

Core definitions

based on:
Cielo and Antequera Duran (2012)

Multi-locality: concomitant residence in rural, urban, and peri-urban locations within and/or beyond a specific national territory.

Multiactivity: participation in diverse socioeconomic, political and cultural activities occurring in different territories.

Multi-locality and multi-activity is nothing new but exists since pre-colonial times (e.g. ayllu).

There is, however, a need to explore unique contemporary features of this phenomenon

Common features (1)
Multi-locality/ multi-activity as coping strategy in a context of multiple crises

3. El problema que representa a los jóvenes indígenas en mi contexto.

DW

Informales frente al abismo

Common features (2)

While many indigenous peoples hold a foot in the city, the city does not want to accommodate indigenous peoples (Spedding 2012).

Staying between multiple worlds means valuing and combining aspects of these worlds. That does not mean that people live hybrid lives (Canclini 1995) but their experience is more along the lines of ch'ixi (Rivera Cusicanqui 2018).
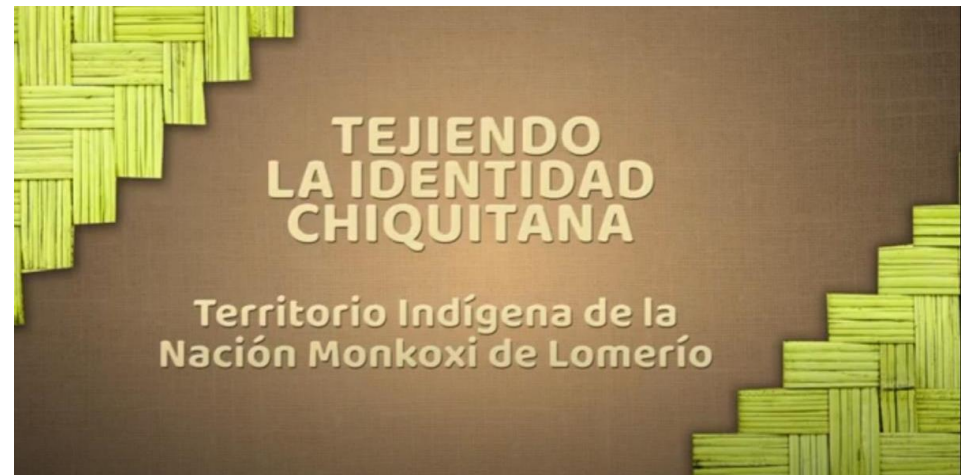
El Alto

- **Pendular lives between city and campo**
- Strong incentive to maintain connection to community of origin (without presence, one loses their right to the land)

Santa Cruz (JIASC)

- **Santa Cruz: "face-to-face" vs. "affective" multi-local connections**

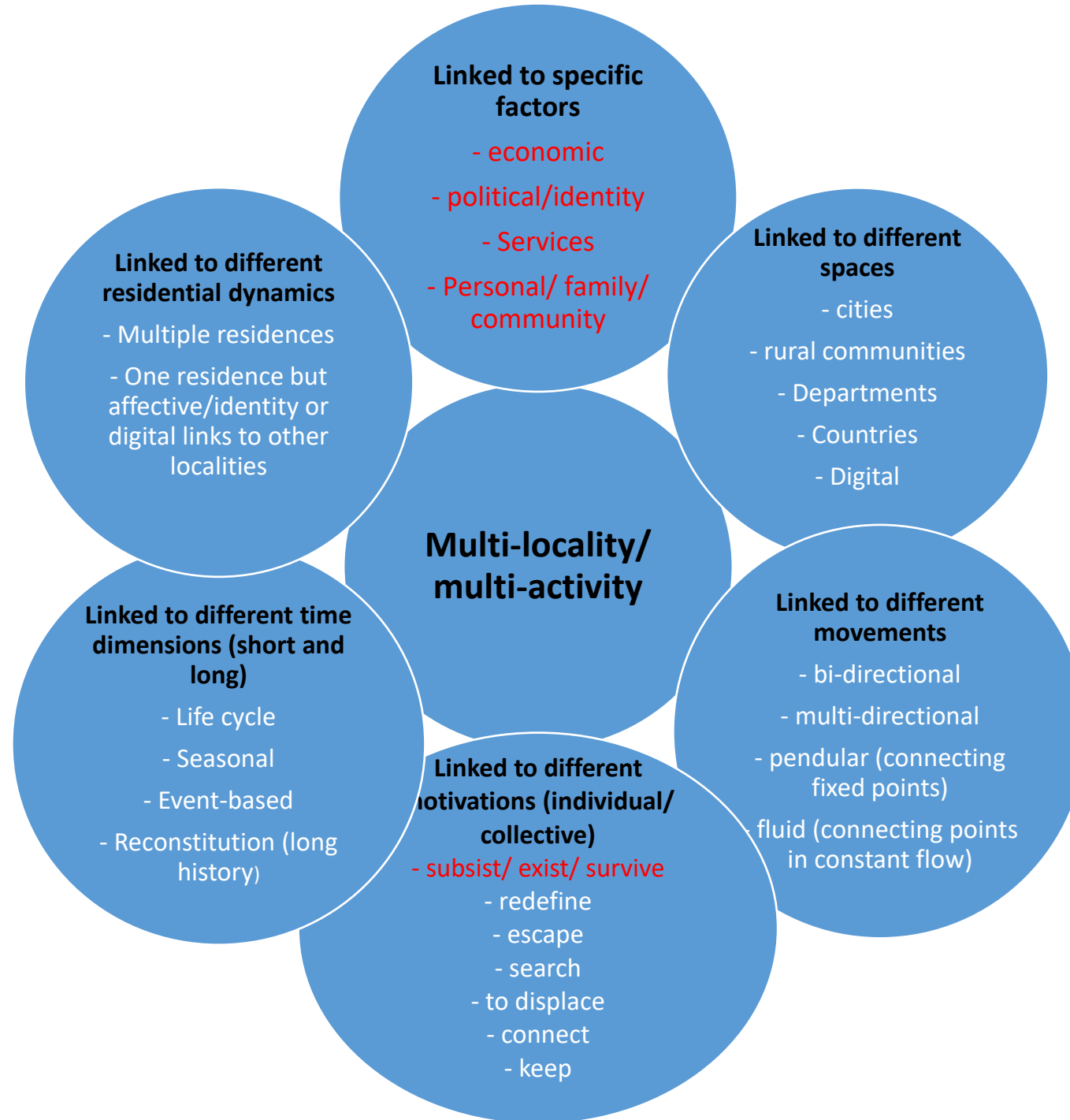Mancomunidad de Comunidades de los Ríos Beni, Tuichi y Quiquebey

o **Madidi national park as primary residence (though under threat) + multi-directional connections**

Nación Qhara Qhara

- **Reconstitution of different markas and ayllus as a nation encompassing urban and rural spaces that cross departmental boundaries.**

The multiple dimensions of indigenous mobility

Linked to specific factors
- economic
- political/identity
- Services
- Personal/ family/ community

Linked to different residential dynamics
- Multiple residences
- One residence but affective/identity or digital links to other localities

Linked to different spaces
- cities
- rural communities
- Departments
- Countries
- Digital

Multi-locality/ multi-activity

Linked to different time dimensions (short and long)
- Life cycle
- Seasonal
- Event-based
- Reconstitution (long history)

Linked to different movements
- bi-directional
- multi-directional
- pendular (connecting fixed points)
- fluid (connecting points in constant flow)

Linked to different motivations (individual/ collective)
- subsist/ exist/ survive
- redefine
- escape
- search
- to displace
- connect
- keep

Concluding remarks

- A multi-locality/ multi-activity perspective challenges…
  - …spatially "fixed" representations of territory;
  - …uni-directional migration approaches;
  - …totalizing perspectives of the complete urbanisation of society.
- It calls instead for…
  - …a conceptualisation of indigenous territoriality without boundaries, in constant flux, and spanning multiple physical, political, socio-cultural and environmental life-worlds within Abya Yala.
  - …a focus on continuous mobility across rural, urban, departmental, and national boundaries (be that circular, pendular, extending from one place to another etc.)

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