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Diverse Articulations of Urban Indigeneity among Lowland Indigenous Groups in Santa Cruz, Bolivia

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This article contrasts politico-legal understandings of indigeneity to the lived experiences of urban residents in Santa Cruz (Bolivia) who belong to distinct lowland indigenous groups and whose specific demands are often not addressed by government authorities. It also critically examines power relations and patterns of exclusion within urban indigenous communities. The findings offer insights on the multiple, and at times conflicting, experiences of distinct urban indigenous residents. They also highlight the need to consider alternative indigenous struggles which confront unjust government practices that reproduce social exclusion and coloniality, but also problematise patriarchal relations and gerontocracy among urban indigenous groups.

Keywords: Bolivia, indigeneity, indigenous people, intersectionality, Santa Cruz, urban.

Bolivia has transformed from being a predominantly rural to an urban society. Indigenous peoples are no exception to this trend. While 5 percent of Bolivia's indigenous population lived in urban areas in 1950 (Torrico Foronda, 2011), 42 percent did so by 2012 (INE, 2012). Urbanisation did not automatically lead to improvements in living conditions of indigenous peoples, with many remaining trapped in poverty and confined to the urban margins (del Popolo, López and Acuña, 2009). As a consequence, indigenous peoples increasingly engaged in urban political struggles that centred on claims to universal basic rights and to participation in urban decision-making processes. Such political struggles have been mainly studied in Bolivia's highlands where urban indigenous peoples participated in anti-neoliberal uprisings, such as the 2000 water wars in Cochabamba or the 2003 gas wars in El Alto (Olivera and Lewis, 2004; Lazar, 2008; Webber, 2011). These uprisings led to the ousting of pro-neoliberal governments, to the election of a new government, and to a revaluing of urban indigeneity. Bolivia's former President Evo Morales, who was in charge of this new government until 2019, is himself of Aymara descent. This boosted the pride and confidence of urban indigenous peoples, especially of highland Quechua and Aymara groups (Canessa, 2014). Universal social welfare and redistribution policies have contributed to a reduction in poverty levels among urban indigenous groups across the country (Crabtree and Chaplin, 2013;

Postero, 2017). Indigenous peoples have also increasingly entered the urban middle classes – something that is particularly evident for El Alto's Aymara bourgeoisie (Tassi et al., 2013; Maclean, 2018).

While these are significant changes, this article demonstrates that government authorities in Bolivia continually fail to address the specific interests, needs and rights-based claims of lowland indigenous groups who also increasingly reside in cities. Empirically, I focus on the city of Santa Cruz where I shift attention away from widely studied highland Aymara and Quechua groups, which represent the city's but also the country's indigenous majority. Instead, I focus on the urban experiences of people who self-identify as belonging to lowland indigenous minority groups such as the Ayoreo, Chiquitano, Guaraní, Guayaro, Yuracaré and Mojeño. I deploy a combined intra- and inter-categorical intersectionality approach that, as will be clarified in the second and third substantive section, helps to unpack (a) discrepancies between lived experiences and official politico-legal representations of urban indigeneity and (b) similarities and differences between and within lowland indigenous groups residing in Santa Cruz.

The analysis presented in this article reveals that, despite differences linked to, among others, residential history, organisational affiliation or linguistic background, people belonging to distinct lowland indigenous groups share the common feature that they want to combine demands for universal and indigenous rights. Like most city dwellers, they want to benefit from the amenities of a modern urban life, including universal basic services and infrastructure. Like many rural indigenous peoples in Bolivia (Crabtree and Chaplin, 2013), they also claim land autonomy, the right to political and cultural self-determination, and the incorporation of indigenous knowledge and traditional medicine into public education and healthcare. Crucially, though, while national and local government authorities increasingly respect and address demands for universal rights and services, indigenous rights-based demands continue being ignored. Instead, urban policy and planning practice remains guided by colonial, essentialised and spatially bounded understandings that associate indigeneity with ancestral, and predominantly rural, territories but not with cities.

While leaders from distinct lowland indigenous groups challenge such official representations, the article also reveals how some of these leaders themselves contribute to exclusionary dynamics in their own urban communities and organisations in Santa Cruz. The analysis reveals how articulations of indigenous identity and processes of indigenous community governance are shaped by patriarchy and gerontocracy. This leads certain community members (i.e. elderly male leaders) to advance their interests while others (i.e. women and youth) remain left behind. The findings presented in this article further nuance academic debates that consider indigeneity as a dynamic category which changes over time and space, and which means different things to distinct actors (Canessa, 2007; Radcliffe, 2017; Rivera Cusicanqui, 2020). To leave no indigenous person behind in Bolivia, it is argued that indigenous rights must be applied within cities, multiple experiences of urban indigeneity must be considered, and patterns of exclusion within indigenous communities must be resolved.

Methodologically, the article draws on qualitative data collected during three rounds of fieldwork in 2012/2013 (5 months), 2016 (3 months), and 2018 (3 weeks) as well as on findings from virtual engagements in 2020. In 2012/2013, I was based in La Paz, where I conducted interviews with national government authorities, focusing on the translation of indigenous rights outlined in Bolivia's 2009 constitution within urban areas. In 2016 and 2018, I was mainly based in Santa Cruz to undertake research with the different indigenous groups discussed in this article. This involved attending meetings

of their respective organisations, participating in community events, co-organising a conference on indigenous urbanisation trends with local communities and support NGOs, and conducting 23 in-depth interviews with different residents (names are omitted and replaced with pseudonyms when using direct quotes) as well as government authorities. Throughout this period, I particularly developed relationships with Jóvenes Indígenas y Afrobolivianos de Santa Cruz (JIACS, Indigenous and Afrobolivian Youths of Santa Cruz) – an organisation that is composed of youths from indigenous and non-indigenous minority groups. In 2020 I initiated a new collaborative project with JIACS. Affected by the Covid-19 pandemic, interactions so far have taken place via monthly virtual workshops and online interviews.

In this article, I draw on insights from the above-mentioned fieldwork trips and online interactions. I complement this with content analysis of relevant policy documents, secondary sources and grey literature. My own intersectional identity as a young, male and foreign researcher from the global North based in a UK university, who is fluent in Spanish, but not articulate in the indigenous languages spoken by some members of the groups discussed here, no doubt influenced how I was perceived, to whom I could talk, and what was shared with me. I have been careful not to misrepresent the diverse articulations of indigeneity and the priorities shared with me. I am aware that some of the issues discussed here, particularly those around gender and intergenerational inequalities within communities, cover sensitive topics. In writing about these issues, I have sought to stimulate critical debate among interested readers but also among my different interlocutors in Santa Cruz with whom I discussed these topics and shared a preliminary version of this article, and who consented that the findings should be published to reach a wider audience.

The first section of this article offers a historical overview of indigenous urbanisation trends in Bolivia, paying attention to differences between highland and lowland indigenous groups, and to constitutional changes introduced by the former Morales government and implications for urban indigenous peoples. The second section examines the multiple and diverse interests and demands of lowland indigenous groups living in Santa Cruz and contrasts them to official government discourse and practice. The third section examines power imbalances among indigenous groups in Santa Cruz, focusing on gender and intergenerational dynamics which disadvantage women and youth. I conclude with some lessons for future research and practice on urban indigeneity.

Differentiated Urbanisation Trends among Highland and Lowland Indigenous Peoples

The concept of indigeneity serves as entry point for analysing specific processes through which meanings of being indigenous are constructed in different contexts (Radcliffe, 2017). In this section I provide an overview of urbanisation trends among indigenous peoples in Bolivia. I also reflect on how Bolivia's government, particularly the government of former President Evo Morales, addressed urban indigeneity. Following recent debates in urban studies on planetary urbanisation, I define urbanisation as a process occurring along a double movement of concentrated and extended urbanisation 'in which the contradictory socio-spatial relations of capitalism (commodification, capital circulation, capital accumulation and associated forms of political regulation/contestation)' are at once 'embedded within concrete contexts' and 'extending across place, territory and scale' (Brenner, 2013: 95). I draw on this perspective to examine

the multiple driving forces that contribute to the urbanisation of indigenous peoples and their territories. Moving beyond neo-Marxian planetary urbanisation scholarship and drawing on the literature on urbanisation trends in Latin America and particularly Bolivia, I capture the interplay of capitalism, (neo)extractivism, colonialism, land and infrastructure speculation, and violent conflict, which, taken together, lead to differentiated urbanisation trends among lowland and highland indigenous groups in different parts of Bolivia.

A Historical Overview of Indigenous Urbanisation in Bolivia

The urbanisation of indigenous peoples is nothing new. The geopolitical territory which today represents Bolivia contained urban agglomerations throughout its history of human inhabitation (Hardoy, 1973; Lombardo and Prumers, 2010). The land on which the city of Santa Cruz is situated, for example, was inhabited by Chané, Guaraní and Yuracaré groups prior to the colonial conquest (Kirshner, 2013; Apoyo Para el Campesino Indigena del Oriente Boliviano [APCOB], 2014). The Spanish colonisers occupied indigenous territories, destroyed pre-colonial settlements and established colonial cities on top of the ruins. Colonial cities were conceived of as 'planned' spaces associated with 'white' Spaniards or people of 'mixed blood' who were granted citizenship (Hardoy, 1989; Abercrombie, 1994). The countryside was conceived of as 'Indian' place, home to the 'non-white' native population, which was granted relative political autonomy over internal community affairs but denied citizenship and barred from living in cities. In this sense, indigeneity was constructed as the antithesis of urban life and being indigenous was associated with social exclusion and inferiority (Horn, 2019).

Such spatial divisions could never be fully maintained. Indigenous peoples continued to live, though often in dire conditions, within colonial and early postcolonial cities (Hardoy, 1989); they also engaged in urban markets and patterns of split-migration (Albó, Greaves and Sandoval, 1981). Rural–urban binaries blurred further in the twentieth century as indigenous peoples increasingly migrated to cities. For example, violent conflict associated with the Chaco War (1932–1935), which unfolded on the ancestral territories of indigenous groups such as the Guaraní and Ayoreo in Bolivia's lowlands, triggered migration to Argentina but also to Bolivian cities such as Santa Cruz (Izquierdo and Combès, 2003; Roca Ortiz, 2008).

A new phase of indigenous urbanisation followed the 1953 Agrarian Reform Laws which granted citizenship rights to indigenous peasants, abolished the hacienda system, and introduced land distribution mechanisms. Land distribution mainly occurred in Bolivia's highlands, where extensive subdivisions left Aymara and Quechua peasants with small plots and this encouraged temporary or permanent migration to cities (Albó, Greaves and Sandoval, 1981). In Bolivia's lowlands, in contrast, the government favoured large-scale agro-enterprises over land redistribution, leaving many indigenous groups landless and stimulating migration to cities such as Santa Cruz (Gill, 1987; Izquierdo and Combès, 2003).

Another important cycle of urbanisation occurred in the 1980s and 1990s, when the implementation of a neoliberal reform package by Bolivia's government led to wage cuts and staff downsizing in public and privately owned enterprises. Such trends have been particularly noted for state-owned mining enterprises such as the Bolivian Mining Corporation (COMIBOL); more than 30,000 of its workers lost their jobs (Torrico Foronda, 2011). Small-scale agricultural units in Bolivia's highlands also struggled in a context of a fall in domestic prices and a reduction in international

demand (Andolina, Laurie and Radcliffe, 2009). Consequently, miners and peasants, most of them of Aymara and Quechua descent, migrated to major cities such as La Paz, El Alto, Cochabamba and Santa Cruz. In the lowlands, in contrast, Bolivia's government granted permissions to companies for large-scale agriculture, deforestation and extractive activities, which often unfolded on indigenous territories. Confronted by this situation, indigenous groups resisted displacement and started organising collectively. For example, lowland indigenous groups formed the Confederation of Indigenous Peoples of Bolivia (CIDOB) in 1990 through which they raised demands for collective landownership (under the umbrella of 'territory') and recognition of their social and cultural *usos y costumbres* (Postero, 2007). Throughout the 1990s Bolivia's government incorporated some of these demands into new legislation, which promoted identity politics and cultural rights without necessarily challenging capitalist development (Andolina, Laurie and Radcliffe, 2009). Private sector investments continued to be prioritised over indigenous territorial rights, contributing to displacement and expropriation, which triggered further migration to urban hubs such as Santa Cruz in the 1990s and 2000s (APCOB, 2014).

Despite indigenous urbanisation trends, politico-legal discourse and practice remained guided by an essentially rural understanding of indigeneity. Urban indigenous peoples continued to be denied indigenous rights but also faced additional challenges such as insecure land tenure, precarious housing and lack of educational and employment opportunities (Goldstein, 2004; Postero, 2007; Lazar, 2008). To confront this situation, urban indigenous peoples formed alliances with other rural and urban social movements and, during the 2000 water wars and 2003 gas wars, resisted patterns of socio-economic exclusion, pushed for the ousting of the pro-neoliberal government led by former President Sanchez de Lozada, and paved the way for the election of President Evo Morales (Olivera and Lewis, 2004; Lazar, 2008; Webber, 2011).

Differentiated Politics of Indigeneity by the Morales Government

The Morales government ratified a new constitution in 2009 that incorporated some of the demands of the conglomerate of social movements that formed part of the 2003 uprisings. The 2009 constitution advocates the broadening of the collective rights of indigenous peoples. Crucially, though, the new constitution and subsequent legislation have failed to grant specific indigenous rights to urban indigenous peoples. According to Bolivia's 2009 constitution, cities represent 'intercultural communities' (article 218) composed of diverse ethno-racial groups, including people of indigenous descent, who are granted universal rights to healthcare, housing, basic services and tenure (articles 18–20 and 393). Universal rights tend to be individual in nature. This is evident, for example, in the 2012 Law to Regulate Property Rights over Urban Estates and Housing, which only recognises individual tenure within urban conglomerations.

The 2009 constitution and subsequent legislation only recognises specific indigenous rights – such as the right to collective tenure, to prior consultation about developments on indigenous territories, to autonomy and territorial control, and to indigenous justice – for so called 'indigenous native peasants' (article 30.1). The 'indigenous native peasant' category excludes urban indigenous peoples and, instead, mainly seeks to generate synergies between different rural indigenous groups and peasants in Bolivia's highlands and lowlands (Burman, 2014; Fontana, 2014). Urban indigenous peoples therefore have remained outlawed from specific indigenous rights (Colque, 2009; Goldstein, 2013;

Horn, 2019). Such trends were confirmed in an interview with Félix Cárdenas Aguilar, Bolivia's Deputy Minister of decolonial affairs:

> In cities where modernity has been developed […] [we] respect private property and individual rights according to the liberal model. […] By contrast, in the rural areas and particularly in our indigenous territories, where we also have individualism but to a lesser degree, we subordinate individualism to collective indigenous rights. (interview, Félix Cárdenas Aguilar, 2013)

Despite being in a role to promote decolonisation, this government official reproduced colonial and essentialised understandings of indigeneity that associates indigenous peoples with a specific, invariably rural, territory. Such an understanding, to paraphrase Rivera Cusicanqui (2020: 54), 'affirms and recognises [bounded rural indigenous territories] but at the same time obscures and excludes' those indigenous peoples who live in cities. Like national government authorities, officials in Santa Cruz's municipality were guided by a colonial, spatially bounded and essentialised understanding of indigeneity. This was evident in the following statement by one of my interviewees: 'Santa Cruz is a city and not an indigenous territory. Indigenous territories only exist in the countryside so why should we bother to apply indigenous rights?' (interview, Senior Official, 2018). As will be outlined below, this official politico-legal approach to indigeneity speaks against the diverse experiential and identificatory perspectives of urban residents in Santa Cruz who belong to different lowland indigenous groups.

Multiple Indigenous Experiences in Santa Cruz

Santa Cruz is the capital city of Bolivia's Santa Cruz department and is situated in the country's lowland region. The city was established by the colonisers in 1561 on ancestral indigenous lands (see previous section). It was originally called Grigotá by indigenous inhabitants. The colonial founder, Ñuflo de Chávez, named the city after his hometown in the Spanish Extremadura (Kirshner, 2013). Throughout its colonial and early pre-colonial history Santa Cruz remained a quiet lowland town. Since the second half of the twentieth century the city has transformed itself into Bolivia's economic and financial centre, overtaking La Paz in terms of population and economic power (Kirshner, 2013). Politically, Santa Cruz was, and remains, a centre of political opposition towards the national government led by former President Morales and the political party Movement Towards Socialism. In the early Morales years, opposition groups called for regional autonomy. While comprised of a diverse conglomerate of stakeholders, including some lowland indigenous groups, the Santa Cruz opposition movement was dominated by far-right political groups and local elites belonging to the agro-industrial and extractive development sector. Local elites have positioned themselves as ethnically, racially and culturally different from Andean people; they have mainly promoted the interests of white and mestizo groups while opposing indigenous rights-based agendas (Fabricant, 2009; Fabricant and Postero, 2013). Opposition parties that mainly represent the interests of the Santa Cruz elite continued to be in control of the city's municipal government during the period in which this research was conducted.

According to Bolivia's 2012 census, Santa Cruz has a population of 1.4 million and the wider metropolitan area is home to 2.6 million people (INE, 2012). The city is organised along a series of concentric ring roads and structured into 16 districts, with

indigenous peoples mainly living outside the city centre in outermost concentric circles or at the peri-urban fringe. Approximately 10 percent (150,000 people) of the city's population identify as belonging to one of Bolivia's 34 officially recognised indigenous nations. The majority represents Aymara and Quechua residents who migrated to the city from Bolivia's highlands (INE, 2012). Approximately 43,000 people belong to lowland indigenous nations – namely the Ayoreo, Chiquitano, Guaraní, Guarayo, Mojeño and Yuracaré. Lowland indigenous residents hence represent not only a minority in the city but also a minority among the city's indigenous population. Most indigenous residents, irrespective of whether they are of highland or lowland descent, live in ethnically mixed neighbourhoods. Many have urban jobs, rent or own a house, and their children are enrolled in schools or universities (Postero, 2017). Within the city, highland groups mobilise less around their indigenous identity, but they form part of organisations such as neighbourhood associations, school boards and trade unions to meet their specific interests and needs (Izquierdo and Combès, 2003). In contrast, as will be outlined below, lowland groups often form part of indigenous organisations that represent them in the city. Some residents belonging to the Ayoreo and Guaraní have also established their own urban indigenous territories in which they live collectively and with which they have established cultural and social connections that form the basis of their identity.

The remainder of this section investigates articulations of indigeneity and associated interests and needs among Santa Cruz's diverse indigenous lowland population. To do this, I deploy an intra-categorical intersectionality approach which looks at social categories such as indigeneity in a more nuanced way (McCall, 2005). While not completely rejecting processes of categorisation, such an approach challenges homogenisation, essentialisation and static definitions of categories such as indigeneity which, as was outlined in the previous section, often remain associated with specific people who maintain ties to ancestral rural territories. Instead, an intra-categorical intersectionality approach focuses on social groups at neglected points of intersection and on examples in which people cross the social, cultural, economic and spatial boundaries that are traditionally associated with their groups, thereby emphasising social categories as dynamic and changing (McCall, 2005; see also Canessa, 2007 for a discussion on the dynamic and constantly changing nature of indigeneity). Here, I focus on intersections between indigeneity and the urban, a space conventionally associated as non-indigenous (see previous section). I proceed to explore the diverse experiences and articulations of urban indigeneity by focusing on different indigenous residents who, among other issues, belong to distinct lowland indigenous nations, form part of a variety of organisations, and express a different relationship to the city. The findings presented here closely resemble what Rivera Cusicanqui (2020) defines as 'ch'ixi'. In other words, people who belong to different lowland indigenous nations and reside in Santa Cruz live a reality in which indigenous and urban worlds, and different official understandings of rights and categories of identity associated with them, coexist without ever fully mixing. This leads them to demand universal rights and services, but they also claim recognition for certain indigenous rights. To advance their interests, they belong to organisations representing their indigenous nation, but they also enter into alliances with members of other indigenous nations as well as with non-indigenous residents. An intra-categorical intersectionality approach foregrounds these diverse experiential articulations that connect indigeneity with the urban while challenging colonial, essentialised and spatially bounded understandings that continue to guide politico-legal discourse and practice.

Santa Cruz's Ayoreo Population

The Ayoreo historically represented a nomadic indigenous group that lived of hunting, gathering and fishing in Bolivia's and Paraguay's Chaco region (Fischermann, 1976; Riester and Weber, 1998). At present, approximately 2,600 Ayoreo live in Paraguay and 3,000 in Bolivia, out of whom 549 live in Santa Cruz (Roca Ortiz, 2008; IWGIA, 2010). Members of this indigenous group lived in relative isolation until the Chaco War (1932–1935) when their territories were invaded by soldiers as well as peasants and missionaries who brought new diseases and contributed to the deaths of many Ayoreo (Riester and Weber, 1998). In the late 1960s and early 1970s, Catholic missionaries forcibly relocated some Ayoreo groups to Santa Cruz with the aim to 'evangelise' and 'civilise' them (Roca Ortiz, 2008). Other Ayoreo came to the city because of territorial displacement or because they wanted to access better services such as healthcare. A young Ayoreo born in Santa Cruz put it as follows: 'Our ancestors were either forced into the city by missionaries, pushed away from their land by *colonos*, or they followed their nomadic lifestyle and searched for better places to live in difficult times' (interview, Julieta, 2016).

Newly arriving migrants often ended up homeless on the streets of the inner city where they engaged in begging or sex work (Roca Ortiz, 2008). Ever since their arrival in the city, Ayoreo have been affected by racism and stigmatisation. According to a first-generation migrant, the Ayoreo were often 'seen as an eyesore, as pure filth of backward origin who pollute the city centre' and for this reason municipal authorities displaced them from the inner city in the 1970s, allowing them to establish a settlement in the urban periphery (interview, Franco, 2016).

At present, the majority of the city's Ayoreo population lives as a unified community in the peripheral settlement of Degűí. Here, residents live in houses constructed out of wood and corrugated iron, lacking secure tenure and access to adequate sanitation (APCOB, 2014). In a context of continuing urban growth, communities like Degűí are affected by land and real estate speculation, leading to a 'constant threat of displacement from the outside but also from insiders [referring to some local leaders and Ayoreo community members] who want to benefit from selling our land to people who have nothing to do with our community' (interview, Fernanda, 2018). Most Ayoreo approached for this research said that, to confront such internal and external threats, they are interested in gaining collective tenure rights. As is the case for many indigenous peoples worldwide, land represents an active social relation for the Ayoreo, allowing them to preserve their collective identity. According to another local resident, 'getting collective tenure would bring people together. It would help us to decide collectively about what happens to our land. It would also provide us with a space to interact, live, celebrate and work together according to our customs and traditions' (interview, Carla, 2018). Demands for collective tenure, however, continue to be ignored by local authorities in a context where legislation only recognises individual tenure, as explained in the previous section.

The Ayoreo in Santa Cruz are organised into clans, or *Jogasui*, of extended families and the wider community of Degűí is represented by the Association of Ayoreo Residents in Degűí (ARAD), which is affiliated with the national organisation Central Ayorea Nativa del Oriente (CANOB). ARAD, like other indigenous organisations in the city, is not recognised by the municipality of Santa Cruz, which mainly engages residents organised in neighbourhood organisations (*juntas de vecinos*) in processes of citizen participation and consultation. A core demand by the ARAD leadership therefore is to gain official recognition of their organisation to be consulted about decisions affecting the Ayoreo and their urban territories.

Santa Cruz's Guaraní Population

Like the Ayoreo, the Guaraní have a long-standing presence in Santa Cruz, with some arriving because of territorial displacement and expropriation, and others coming for personal motivations such as family ties or an interest in accessing land or better socio-economic opportunities (Izquierdo and Combès, 2003; Postero, 2007). Approximately 15,000 Guaraní live in Santa Cruz (APCOB, 2014). In the 1980s and 1990s, Guaraní migrants settled on peri-urban territories at the outskirts of the city where they formed communities on lands for which they obtained tenure rights in the early 1990s. According to APCOB (2014), approximately 145 families, representing 830 people, still live on these lands in a community and according to a local youth 'this maintains some sense of cohesion between families and the wider community and helps the Guaraní to preserve their language and cultural traditions' (interview, Sara, 2016). Yet, like the Ayoreo, these Guaraní communities are affected by the physical expansion of the city and this puts pressure on the territorial integrity of communities, with some individuals subdividing and selling land to outsiders. While this generates profits for some, most Guaraní residents associated land subdivisions with a loss of community or as a local leader put it, 'this community is increasingly destroying itself and in the future we will be fragmented and lose one of our core characteristics, that of living in community and owning our territories' (interview, Fernando, 2016). Like the Ayoreo, then, most of my Guaraní interlocutors emphasised the importance of urban land as a social relation.

As in rural territories, Guaraní whose territories are affected by urbanisation are organised in *Capitanías* at community-level and different communities in the city are represented by the Capitanía Zonal Santa Cruz (ZONACRUZ), which forms part of the Asamblea del Pueblo Guaraní (representing Guaraní in different parts of Bolivia's lowlands) as well as of CIDOB (for national representation) and the Coordinator of Indigenous Organisations of the Amazon (for international representation). Political struggles by *Capitanías* focus on claims to collective tenure within the city. At the national level, ZONACRUZ has supported territorial struggles by lowland indigenous groups and resisted the dismantling of CIDOB by the Morales government (Postero, 2017). Within their communities, residents have also organised with non-Guaraní neighbours for community policing efforts and to confront environmental problems associated with a toxic landfill near their homes (Postero, 2017).

The case of the Guaraní further highlights the important differences that exist among residents belonging to the same indigenous group. Not all Guaraní in Santa Cruz live in a community on one territory. In fact, as outlined by Izquierdo and Combès (2003), the majority of more recent migrants, especially youths who come to the city to study or find work, live in ethnically mixed low-income neighbourhoods such as Plan 3000. These Guaraní do not form *Capitanías* and, instead, to meet their immediate interests in their neighbourhoods, they get involved in neighbourhood associations composed of indigenous and non-indigenous members. Some of these Guaraní maintain close ties with their rural communities of origin. They are also often involved in city-wide, regional, national and international umbrella organisations representing the Guaraní and other indigenous nations.

Santa Cruz's Chiquitano, Guarayo, Mojeño and Yuracaré Population

Unlike some Ayoreo and Guaraní who still inhabit urban spaces communally, people who self-identify as Chiquitano (approximately 21,000 people), Guarayo (approximately 3500 people), Mojeño (approximately 3800 people) and Yuracaré (approximately 160 people) tend to live dispersed in different peripheral neighbourhoods of the city (APCOB, 2014). More than 60 percent of these indigenous residents represent youths aged under 25 who arrived in the city to access university education or employment. Most engage in informal sector activities such as construction, market vending or domestic work. While for some the city 'represents a permanent home' (interview, Andrea, 2018), others treat the city 'as temporary residence where you study and learn the skills that are needed to improve life back home' (interview, José, 2018).

Organisational and social activities are less structured around a particular territory but centred around universal rights as well as claims for better political representation and recognition of indigenous traditions and cultural practices. Those involved in informal work often belong to trade unions. Students who treat the city as their temporary home mainly organise in university-based cultural associations that bring together people from their own as well as other indigenous nations. In contrast, those who permanently settled in Santa Cruz formed a city-wide network called Asociación de Pueblos Indígenas de Santa Cruz (APISACS, Association of Indigenous Peoples of Santa Cruz). APISACS drafted its own integrated development plan that, like the plans of Ayoreo and Guaraní organisations, demands the recognition of collective tenure. In addition, though, APISACS calls for the ratification of new municipal legislation that incorporates traditional medicine into public health, the introduction of community-based housing projects, the creation of municipal programmes for indigenous tourism and occupational training, and the promotion of indigenous culture within school and university curricula. APISACS also runs a city-wide indigenous football league and organises cultural events and meetings in public spaces which 'represent important sites for indigenous peoples to demonstrate their presence and to turn a white city into an indigenous city' (interview, Marcelo, 2018).

Similarities and Differences among Lowland Indigenous Groups in Santa Cruz

Members of different lowland indigenous groups shared that they expressed a combination of demands for universal (individual) rights and collective (indigenous) rights. To improve their living conditions, all want to have better housing and to benefit from universal services to healthcare and education. As evidenced above but also in previous research by APCOB (2014) and Izquierdo and Combès (2003), they also claim recognition for rights to collective tenure, to be consulted about decisions affecting their urban territory, to personal and organisational self-determination, to incorporate their *usos y costumbres* into different sectoral interventions, and to participate in urban decision-making processes in a way that aligns with communities' own organisational principles. Such demands offer an urban articulation of the specific rights for 'indigenous native peasants' that are outlined in Bolivia's 2009 constitution. Yet, these demands remain ignored by government authorities, which continue to conceive of cities as non-indigenous spaces. In addition to being denied indigenous rights-based claims, most indigenous peoples approached for this research stated that they continue to be affected by racism and discrimination.

To access universal rights and basic services, indigenous residents, like most urban residents, engage in organisations such as neighbourhood associations, school boards or unions that advocate around particular issues such as housing, education or labour rights. To claim specific indigenous rights, they mobilise in organisations that represent their indigenous nation, but they also form alliances with other indigenous nations to address shared concerns. For example, leaders of ARAD, ZONACRUZ and APISACS have joined forces and, with support from local NGOs, developed an urban indigenous governance proposal which they shared with municipal authorities in February 2014 with the aim to lobby for the incorporation of urban indigenous demands into a new municipal charter. According to this proposal, each lowland indigenous group residing in Santa Cruz would elect its own indigenous councillor to represent them in the municipal council. Election criteria should be defined according to each community's own organisational principles. The three organisations have throughout the last years, so far without success, used this proposal to lobby Santa Cruz municipality about the incorporation of indigenous communitarian democracy within procedures of city-level governance. In doing so, they have hoped to improve indigenous representation and establish a mechanism for indigenous residents to monitor – from within government – how urban indigenous interests and rights-based claims are being addressed.

Despite similarities between urban indigenous groups, important differences prevail. For some Ayoreo and Guaraní, indigeneity is associated with ties to urban land on which they live in community. In contrast, other groups, which do not live in one particular area, maintain specific traditions by meeting in public spaces for cultural or sports events. Tensions also exist within indigenous communities. This is evident among the Ayoreo and Guaraní where some seek to sell or subdivide urban land to outsiders, often against the will of other community members. While many indigenous people approached for this research consider the city as their permanent place of residence, others treat Santa Cruz as temporary home. Being indigenous in the city therefore has multiple meanings for different indigenous residents who articulate distinct interests and needs and are involved in an array of organisations.

Inter-Categorical Complexity: Who Represents Urban Indigenous Residents?

While challenging dynamics that ignore indigenous rights-based demands at the level of urban governance, exclusionary practices also prevail within urban indigenous communities where women and youth often are barred from participating in decision making processes. Yet, women and youth are not passive victims but increasingly confront patterns of patriarchy and gerontocracy. This section explores gender inequalities and intergenerational tensions within indigenous communities by deploying an inter-categorical intersectionality approach (McCall, 2005). Such an approach helps us identify 'social boundaries that prioritise the participation of some groups of people [i.e. elderly men] over others [i.e. youth and women]' (Castán Broto and Neves Alves, 2018: 373–374) and how resources are distributed according to 'people's positionings along socio-economic grids of power' (Yuval-Davis, 2011: 7).

It is particularly elderly men, and less so elderly women, who hold leadership positions in indigenous organisations in Santa Cruz, and who play a key role in negotiating with and lobbying government authorities. Most of my interlocutors explained this trend by the fact that men generally take on more public-facing positions while women play a

stronger role in the community and the family where they engage in reproductive labour and maintain linguistic and artisanal traditions. Meanwhile, youths do not receive leadership positions as they 'lack experience and yet need to learn about what it means to be a proper member of the community' (interview, Juan, 2018).

The above-mentioned accounts on gender roles and intergenerational differences can be understood better in historical context. Lugones (2010) highlights that contemporary patriarchal relations should be understood as a byproduct of colonialism. The colonisers imposed a Christian heterosexual system which privileged white men, favoured indigenous men as public representatives of their families and communities, and subordinated indigenous women and children. According to Lugones (2010), such gender relations prevail until the present leading to the coloniality of gender. While some of my interlocutors associated the dominance of men in political affairs with colonialism, others stated that 'relations between young and old, women and men have ancient roots and are grounded in our ancestral principles' (interview, David, 2016). Like David's testimony, previous research has highlighted the key role of indigenous world-views on gender complementarity such as *chachawarmi* for understanding contemporary gender roles and intergenerational relations (Burman, 2011; Maclean, 2014).

Whether rooted in indigenous world-views and/or colonial history, most indigenous women and youth approached for this research seemed sceptical about how gender and intergenerational relations played out in practice. While they supported many of the demands raised by the leaders of community-based organisations (see previous section), they also highlighted that local leaders exclude them from decision-making processes, fail to consider their particular needs and sometimes (ab)use their position for purposes of personal enrichment. The last point is noted by Roca Ortiz (2008: 56) for the Ayoreo organisation ARAD, which comprises a leadership board of eighteen people, in their majority men, who have in the past used their position to access better 'housing and an abundance of goods: mobile phones, TV's, DVD players, sound systems and even air conditioning'. Similarly, research participants were often suspicious of the practices of their leaders and feared that, instead of promoting the territorial integrity of their community, they contribute to dismantling what is left of communal lands. For example, a young Ayoreo resident accused leaders of using their position to engage in land and real estate speculation by 'selling communal land to private companies or outsiders' and using the money generated from such transactions to 'construct a new house for themselves in wealthier parts of Santa Cruz' (interview, Julieta, 2016).

Most women approached for this research also complained that members of local indigenous organisations ignore (or even violate) their specific rights, interests and needs. An exception, perhaps, is the Guaraní organisation ZONACRUZ, which contains a specific women's committee that campaigns against domestic violence and for the involvement of women in political, social and cultural affairs within the Guaraní community in Santa Cruz. While gender inequalities are being confronted by ZONACRUZ's women's committee, there remain intergenerational discrepancies as indigenous youths feel under represented within this community organisation. A young Guaraní woman highlights some of the problems resulting from this: 'All our woman leaders are old but the majority of us are young and our interests and problems are simply not considered' (interview, Sara, 2016). This was further elaborated by a young Ayoreo woman:

> Our leaders do not address our problems. Many young women suffer sexual abuse and violence here and sometimes our own leaders are the

> perpetrators. So, of course, they do not listen to us when we demand more protection and respect as women. (interview, Carla, 2018)

Young indigenous women therefore face multiple axes of oppression related to racism, sexism and gerontocracy.

To confront and change this situation, a group of Ayoreo, Chiquitano, Guaraní, Guayaro, Yuracaré, Mojeño and Afro-Bolivian youths – with support from a local NGO – have formed their own organisation called Jovenes Indígenas y Afrobolivianos de Santa Cruz (JIACS). JIACS, which is composed of a majority of young indigenous women, broadly supports the political agenda of organisations such as APISACS, ZONACRUZ and ARAD but, in addition, has in recent years led several campaigns that raise awareness about the specific problems of youths belonging to indigenous and other minority groups. In 2020, JIACS launched a campaign about health and sexual abuse targeting indigenous youths. JIACS also runs leadership training programmes for young women, with the aim to confront gender and intergenerational inequalities, and alter patriarchal structures within community-based organisations. According to an interview with a JIACS youth leader, these activities have led to slow transformations:

> Because of our activism APISACS has a new leader who is a woman. We are consulted by her and some of our work feeds into this organisation. APISAC's new leader also gave us a platform to share our sexual rights campaign with the wider leadership board which remains dominated by men. They listened, but I am still not sure whether they will change their attitudes. You see, patriarchy has always existed, and it will take time to change minds and attitudes in the city and within our communities. (interview, Alejandra, 2020)

JIACS continues to confront and reject patriarchal relations within local organisations and communities as well as in the wider city of Santa Cruz. Its political position is hereby similar to that of communitarian and anarcho-feminist groups in Bolivia, which not only call for decolonisation and the promotion of indigenous rights, but also for depatriarchisation and the emancipation of women (Burman, 2011).

Conclusions

This article has explored multiple and diverse articulations of urban indigeneity as expressed by residents belonging to lowland indigenous nations who live in Santa Cruz. Two key insights emerge from this analysis. First, urban residents belonging to different lowland indigenous groups challenge colonial, essentialised and spatially bounded understandings of cities as non-indigenous spaces and rural territories as indigenous habitats. Such tropes continue to guide official politico-legal discourse and practice in Bolivia, leading to the restriction of collective (indigenous) rights to rural areas while applying universal (individual) rights elsewhere and especially in cities. The urban indigenous residents approached for this research seek to combine the best of both urban and indigenous worlds. They want to benefit from universal rights and services and, to do so, they engage with other indigenous and non-indigenous residents in organisations such as neighbourhood associations, school boards or trade unions. In the meantime, they also demand the recognition of specific indigenous rights such as the right to inhabit and govern urban lands collectively. While local and national

government authorities have failed to respond to such specific demands until the present, organisations such as ARAD, ZONACRUZ and APISACS already propose possible urban governance solutions which, if implemented in practice, could better address the interests, needs and concerns of urban indigenous residents.

Second, even as coloniality and essentialised notions of indigeneity and the urban are challenged, patriarchy and gerontocracy prevail within urban indigenous communities as well as in articulations of indigenous identity. Residents belonging to minority indigenous lowland groups thereby articulate exclusionary notions of urban citizenship as well, even as they struggle for the recognition and coexistence of indigenous and universal rights in cities. Evidence from Santa Cruz, however, also suggests that young indigenous women are already laying the groundwork for a new and perhaps more inclusive urban indigenous and intercultural politics, which not only confronts unjust, exclusive and racist government practices, but also challenges patriarchal relations, sexism and intergenerational conflict *within* and *beyond* urban indigenous communities.

Let me conclude by calling for further applications of an intersectionality approach to urban indigeneity in other contexts, to critically examine how urban indigenous peoples are framed, how they define their own identity and associated interests, needs and political struggles, and what this implies for more inclusive urban development approaches that seek to leave no indigenous person behind. The findings from this article further suggest a need to move from a focus on indigenous 'communities' towards re-centring analysis onto the everyday experiences of different community members and patterns of inequality within communities.

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