

**How much internal migration does a census generate?
Estimates from a small-area study in Bolivia**

-Extended Abstract-

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ABSTRACT

On November 21, 2012, a new census will be fielded in Bolivia. Since the economic resources that each community or city receives from the state depends on the number of inhabitants recorded in the census, maximizing the number of recorded residents has become a crucial goal for municipal leaders. In some areas in Bolivia—urban and rural—those leaders have threatened to sanction migrants who do not return to their communities of origin for the census. In this paper, focusing on one urban and one rural area close to La Paz, and drawing on a mixed-methods approach that combines in-depth interviews, observations of neighborhood meetings, spot sampling of people’s movements before and after the census date, and bus ticket sales, I will evaluate the extent to which the impending census generates internal migration between (1) urban areas and (2) urban and rural areas. Anecdotal evidence suggests that this may be an important source of mismeasurement in Bolivian census data. Preparatory visits to the field sites were made in July 2012. The main fieldwork will be conducted in November 2012 with a follow up on December 2012.

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

On November 21, 2012, a new national Census will take place in Bolivia, one of the smallest countries in South America and home to a high percentage of population that defines themselves as indigenous. During one day, Bolivians will stay at their homes and respond to questions related to their income, their family composition, access to basic services, and their place of residence. Projections from the national census, held in 2001, estimate that the population will have surpassed the ten million mark (PIEB, 2012), and will ratify an increase in the most important urban centers of the country.

This paper deals with internal migration to the second biggest city of the country, El Alto, and the potential mismeasurement of the process due to the incapacity of the census to account for a variant of circular or oscillatory migration (Bilsborrow, Oberai, & Standing, 1984) in its data, the phenomenon of *double residence* (Mazurek, 2007). The analysis aims to contribute, first, to the broader theory of internal migration which according to some authors remains underappreciated (Lucas, 1997; Massey, 1987; Portes, 1997). In second place, and putting into practice one characteristic of the *ethnosurvey* (Massey, 1987) it aims to address the problems of measurement both of national censuses and other official sources which shows important limitations in the measurement (Massey, 1987). Finally, it also accounts for the tensions and consequent strategies that inhabitants of District 14 in El Alto develop to avoid sanctions in their communities of origin and in their neighborhoods.

El Alto. City Background

The city of El Alto originated as an *unattended* neighborhood of La Paz (Mamani R., 2005), the government seat of Bolivia. After demands for more autonomy that lasted more than thirty years, it became officially recognized as a city in 1988 (See Appendix 1) (Lazar, 2008). According to the national census of 2001 data, 62% of the Bolivian population defined themselves as indigenous, and in the

specific case of El Alto, 74% of its population defined themselves as Aymara and 6% as Quechua (Hylton & Thomson, 2005), the two most important indigenous peoples within the country. Over the course of the past four decades, the city's population increased some 600 percent, from 100,000 in 1976 to 647,000 in 2000 (Arbona & Khol, 2004). It remains one of the fastest growing cities in Bolivia.

El Alto is characterized by contradiction and inequality. On the one hand, it shows high levels of poverty, inadequate infrastructure and a relative incapacity of the state in providing security and basic services. Ninety percent of the population lives in varying degrees of poverty, 25.6 percent of which exist under "great poverty". Unemployment rates are also high. In 2008, thirteen percent of the population remained unemployed. High rates of participation in the informal market nevertheless make it difficult to obtain accurate data. (Poupeau, 2010) At the same time, it is the second industrial and manufacturing center in the country (Arbona & Khol, 2004; Poupeau, 2010). Every year 1,000 new companies are created. Its inhabitants work mostly in the informal economy and only less than 10% makes more than 400 US\$ a month (Poupeau, 2010). Some 5000 businesses have been incorporated in the city in the last few years, generating some 270 million dollars in manufactured exports—from textiles and furniture to candy and plastics.

Such unprecedented rates of growth, poverty, and industrialization are largely the result of the neoliberal structural reforms introduced by President Victor Paz Estenssoro in 1985 (Arbona & Khol, 2004). The introduction of structural adjustment reforms accelerated a migratory process that fostered laid-off miners and indigenous peasants from rural areas in the surrounds of La Paz and mining centers from the south, to settle in urban centers such as El Alto. (Lazar, 2008; Risor, 2010) Depending on their place of origin, neighbors settled on specific areas of the city, allegedly reproducing the geo-spatial organization of rural communities within the urban environment (Mamani R., 2005). Thus, people from the provinces located in the northern region of the Department of La Paz settled in the North of El Alto,

while the southern sector is mostly populated by migrants from the rural areas and mining centers from the south of La Paz (Mamani R., 2005). The waves of migration that began after 1985 continue today, and the city has become the second most populated in the country after Santa Cruz (Poupeau, 2010).

Recent scholarship tends to emphasize constructions of citizenship and the centrality of identity politics among the Aymara migrants and working class mestizos that constitute El Alto's population. In light of the widespread social unrest of the past decade, scholars have stressed the rural/proletarian strategies of sociopolitical mobilization organization (Gutiérrez A., 2008; Hylton & Thomson, 2005; Mamani R., 2005). Migrants—whether militant miners from Oruro or Aymara peasants from the La Paz countryside—implemented the normative sociopolitical organizations to new urban contexts in El Alto (Gutiérrez A., 2008; Hylton & Thomson, 2004, 2005; Lazar, 2008; Mamani R., 2005). Some scholars have placed particular emphasis on the transposition of traditional forms of Andean socioeconomic organization, particularly the *ayllu*—that is, loosely based kinship networks characterized by gender complementarity, labor reciprocity, specific forms of justice, and communal modes of production and capital accumulation (Mamani R., 2005). In some areas, this social structure provided the foundation for neighborhood organizations, *juntas vecinales* (neighborhood councils), which represent the interests of neighbors, while mediating local state institutions and generating networks with other diverse socioeconomic organizations, such as trade unions and education *juntas* (Lazar, 2008).

Internal migration to El Alto. Problems and realities.

Most inhabitants in El Alto have double residence. They live their everyday lives in the city, but at the same time they keep plots of land south of La Paz and in rural areas (Mazurek, 2007). In a broad sense, the case of the city of El Alto does not contradict general arguments on migration. It is indeed a case where immigrants choose large cities as their final destination, due to changes in the processes of industrialization and to the possibility of accessing job offerings whether formal or informal (Todaro,

1969). However, it contradicts the trends predicted by Nelson (1976) and Lee (1980) in two senses. First, because migrants to El Alto keep double residence, with permanent trips to their communities of origin in order to fulfill tasks during times of harvesting or to assume a political position within the community organization (Arbona & Khol, 2004; Mazurek, 2007). And second, because the case of El Alto shows a high percentage of its population living under conditions of double residence, with recently created District 14 at one of the extremes of the distribution. This district, located to the further western area of the city shaping its limits with neighboring rural areas and has 91% of its population living, according to a survey launched by the NGO FOCAPACI in 2011 (FOCAPACI, 2012).

The mechanism of double residence, however, despite being an important strategy that allows inhabitants to cope with poverty and scarcity of resources, represents both a source of tension for inhabitants in that condition and a problem of mismeasurement of internal migration for the National Census. A part of state economic resources destined to rural communities and cities depends on the number of inhabitants in both locations. Neighbors of urban areas and rural communities see this event as an opportunity to obtain more resources from the government if their number of inhabitants increases in the census. Thus, depending on their location and their interests they are commanding their residents to be present in the communities or the city under threats of losing parcels of land or benefits in the neighbors. These potential sanctions and the discussion of strategies to avoid this pressures are ratified with observations of neighbor city council meetings undertaken during the month of July in La Paz and warnings made by specialists in Bolivia (PIEB, 2012). The possibility of mismeasurement during the census is latent due to a potential increase in the intensity of migration prior and after the event.

Proposed Methodology

This paper aims to analyze the potential mismeasurement of data by recurring to one characteristic of what Massey denominates as *ethnosurvey* (Massey, 1987) i.e. a mix-methods data

collection. Through in-depth interviews, participant observation, spot sampling, and data from inter-provincial transportation tickets sales it will be possible to assess the potential flaws in data gathering during the day of the national census.

The census will be held on Wednesday, November 21, 2012. According to the Law, every individual in the country should remain in their own residence during that day, with only the teams in charge of gathering data being able to mobilize across the country. More than 250,000 volunteers will have the responsibility to visit every household in both rural and urban areas during that day, with a section entirely dedicated to the usual residence (Rees, Bell, Duke-Williams, & Blake, 2000) of Bolivian population.

This paper will base a part of its analysis on a mix-methods approach. A first part of the data was already gathered through participant observation in meetings of the neighborhood council of District 14 where discussions on the best strategies to avoid sanctions both in the community and the neighborhood were analyzed . A second part, will be obtained during the months of November and December, 2012, and will consist of in-depth interviews with around 10 neighborhood council leaders, out of a total of 48, which will provide an approach to their motivations and final actions to avoid sanctions.

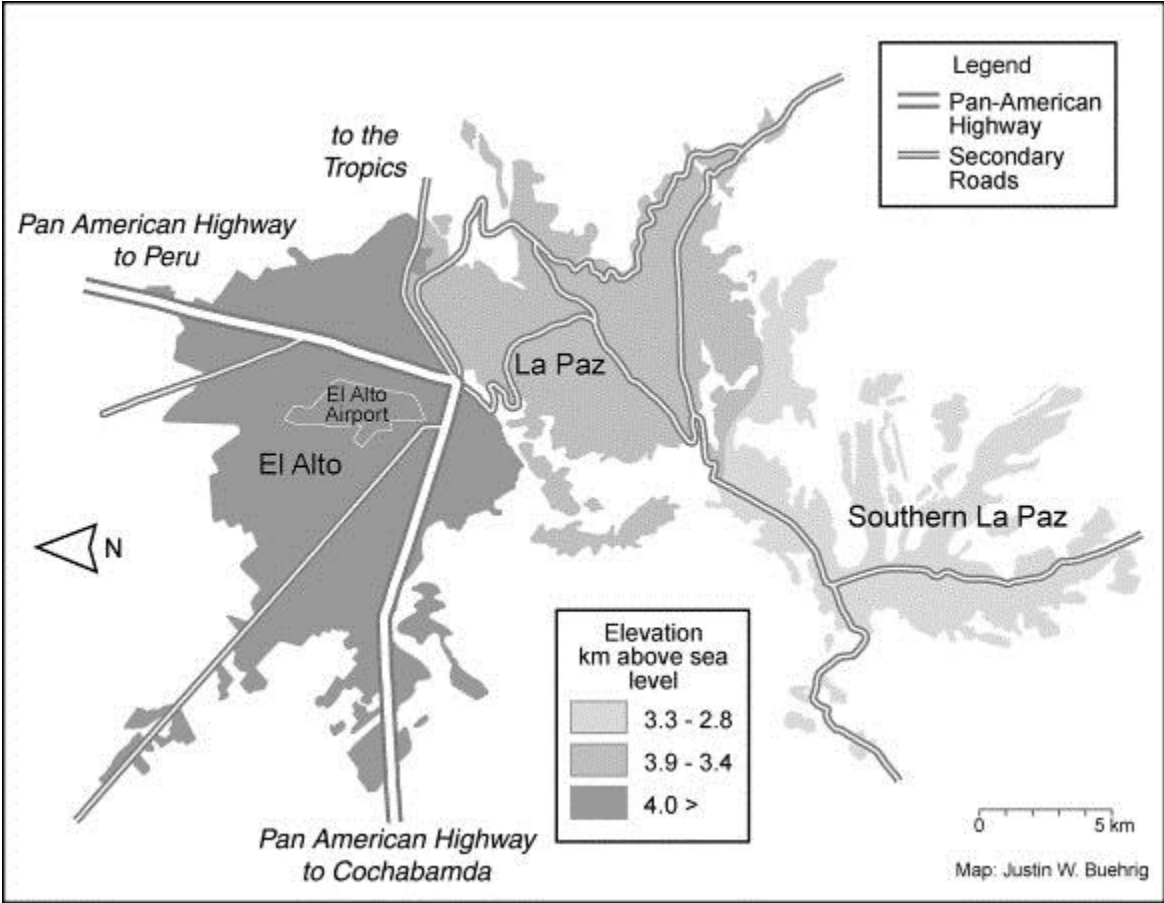
Finally, a third part of the data will be based on a combination of spot sampling (Bernard, 2000) and data collection of tickets sold by inter-provincial transportation companies, which will be gathered five days and one day before the census, and one day and five days after the event. In the case of spot sampling, two spots, one in the hub of inter-provincial transportation of the city of El Alto and one in the most important transportation hub of the District 14 – right across the central Plaza of the District – will be the chosen locations to gather data.

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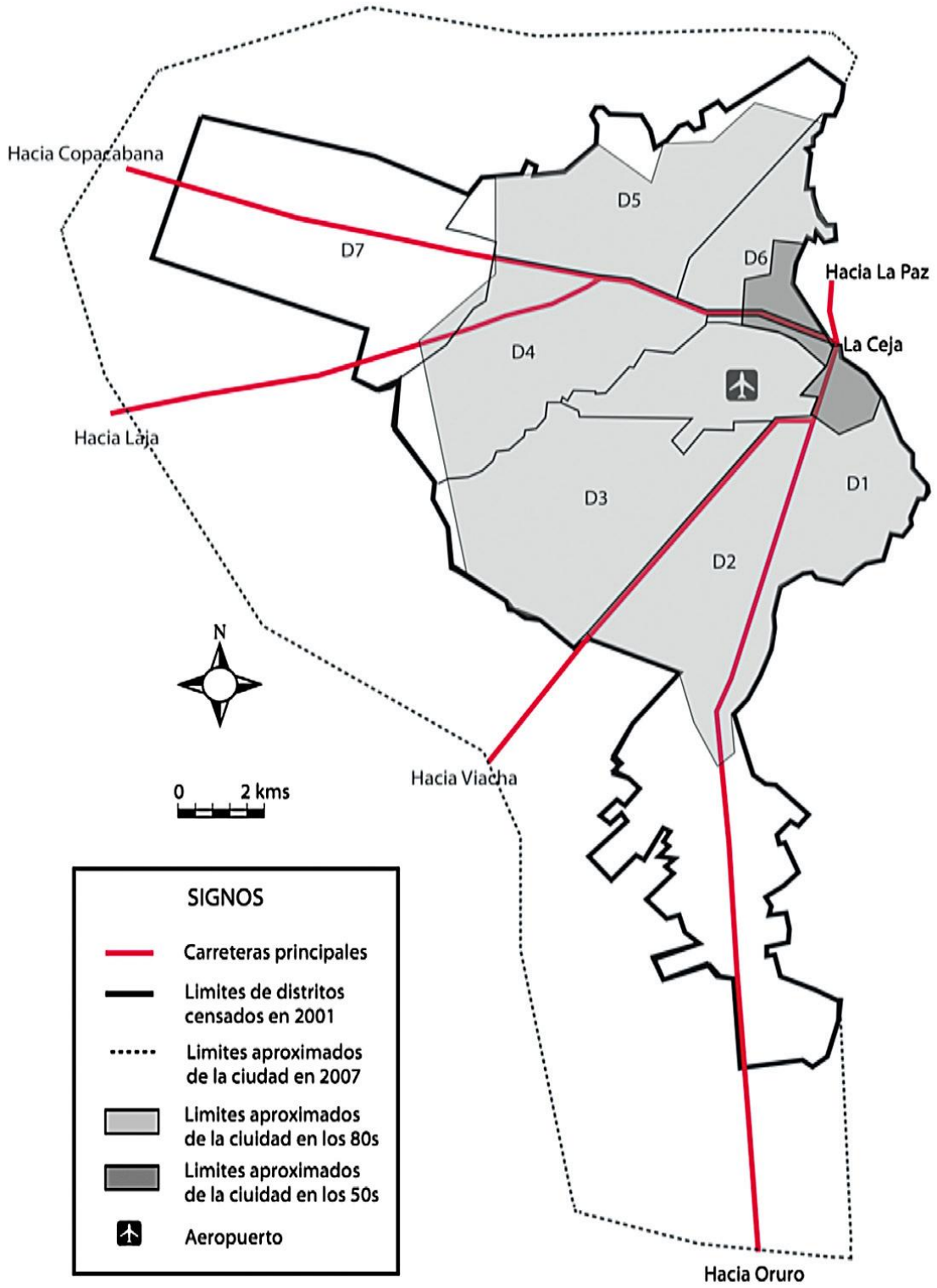
APPENDIX 1

Map of the cities of La Paz and El Alto



APPENDIX 2

Map of El Alto - Districts



- SIGNOS**
- Carreteras principales
 - Limites de distritos censados en 2001
 - Limites aproximados de la ciudad en 2007
 - ▒ Limites aproximados de la ciudad en los 80s
 - Limites aproximados de la ciudad en los 50s
 - ✈ Aeropuerto