

Supplementary Material 1 - Additional Information About Study Sites

1. La Paz City

La Paz has considerable variation in altitude levels and is practically surrounded by extremely steep-sided valleys that have conditioned its urban growth patterns until now [1]. Its development started at the end of the 19th century [2], and by the 1940s the population had reached around 300,000 people. It continued to grow rapidly reaching around 900,000 in the late 1980's when it was split by the creation of the city of El Alto [2,3]. Since then La Paz boundaries are defined by the mountains' basin, with El Alto constituting the areas in the plateau surrounding the city. Currently the municipality has an estimated population of around 800.000 inhabitants [4], which makes it the third most populous city in Bolivia.

Due to La Paz importance in the colonial era, the city established in its early stages a segregated type of settlement. Indigenous people and mestizos¹ established their communities on the surrounding hills, a pattern that continued even after the official segregation period ended around mid-20th century [2], setting the rule of thumb that: "the higher the altitude, the lower the price and the poorer the neighborhood". This urbanization pattern has had major implications for the provision of public goods and services that remain until now [2].

While the city has overcome its segregationist past, there is still a clash between the modern/western way of living, and the indigenous/traditional practices (mostly by Aymara/Quechua people) that characterize many (often informal) aspects of city life [5][6]. Despite this clash, the municipality has committed to prioritize inclusive and intercultural policies [5], with many of the interviewed stakeholders recognizing this effort (personal comm: C1; D1).

It is worth mentioning that the new city of El Alto has experienced a remarkable growth since its creation, driven partially by rural migration. Currently, this is the second most populated city in the country, with an estimated population of 900.000 inhabitants [4]. Furthermore, most of the industrial sector moved from La Paz to El Alto in the late 20th century, due to the space constraints in La Paz and the implementation of policies that favored industrial development in El Alto. As a result the industrial sector has practically disappeared in La Paz, finalizing the transition of the city towards a service- and tourism-based economy [2] (personal comm: F2; K2).

2. Santa Cruz de la Sierra city

Santa Cruz de la Sierra is located in the eastern side of Bolivia. It is the largest city in the country both in terms of population and geographical extent [4]. Most of the region is located in tropical lowlands, just around 400 meters above the sea level. The colonization process in the eastern lowlands, followed a different pattern than other parts of the country, and is largely responsible for the decline of most semi-nomadic indigenous population in the region. This influenced greatly the city's identity throughout its history, resulting in a much weaker indigenous influence compared to other cities in the country such as La Paz [7].

For many centuries, Santa Cruz remained isolated from national development efforts, which revolved almost completely around the mineral exploitation in the western region. For instance, until the 1950s, Santa Cruz had only around 40.000 inhabitants [8] (La Paz had already more than 300.000 inhabitants [2]). The 1950s was in many ways the turning point in the city's development, especially through the national

¹ Term that describes people of indigenous and Spanish ancestry

strategy to end economic dependency on the mining industry and improve national food security. Central to these goals was fossil fuels exploration and commercial agriculture in the eastern region [9], which led to a large influx of migrants (both domestic and international). This complicated any urban planning attempt, and in less than 60 years the population increased 30-fold approximately, reaching around 1.2 million people in the early 2000s [10].

Today, Santa Cruz is the economic and industrial center of Bolivia. The overall contribution of the region amounts to 30% of the national GDP [11], mostly through agriculture and industry [12]. Santa Cruz de la Sierra is seen as Bolivia's hub of modernity and progress, focusing on industrialization and strong private sector activity, as it hosts the headquarters of multinationals in the energy, technology and business sectors [8]. However, the uncontrolled urban growth and migration from poorer regions has also caused serious urban challenges related to informal settlements, informal commerce, lack of employment, public safety and inadequate public services provision [6,8].

References

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