

**Indigenous youth's livelihood strategies in an era of globalization: mobilities, knowledges and identities**

This project aims to investigate indigenous youth's lifeworlds in an era of economic and cultural globalization. Whereas it has been well-established that the invention of youth as a life-stage and a social group was part of industrial modernity, the lived experiences and self-understandings of contemporary indigenous youth in Latin America are not well-known. This project examines how Nahua youth in Mexico devise diverse livelihood strategies and envision a future for themselves within and outside their rural communities in the context of their increasing integration into transnational economies.

Indigenous livelihoods and identities in Latin America have been shaped by a history of colonialism, subordination to the dominant national culture and incorporation into global markets. Throughout Latin America, indigenous communities were isolated from each other in the process of subordination to the nation-state. Being in insulated places allowed indigenous peoples to maintain their native languages, customary practices, and subsistence forms of life rooted in the use of local natural resources. Indigenous people have been the custodians of biodiversity. We know that non-industrial forms of managing natural resources and indigenous forms of knowing and relating to the environment have allowed the preservation of local ecosystems, and that the preservation of biodiversity and cultural diversity are mutually dependent. Struggles to protect territory, to regain lost lands, and to maintain the language and the right to know in different ways, that is struggles for cultural transmission, remain central features of contemporary indigenous politics and identifications.

Contemporary processes of economic, political and cultural globalization have unsettled depictions of indigenous peoples as rooted in place and culturally stuck to themselves. Globalization has set young generations of indigenous communities on the move in search of life and labor opportunities. Indigenous youth migrate to the cities and transnationally in search of labor, accessing globalized consumption practices and styles, and managing different forms of knowledge and identity. Indigenous youth have become political and economic actors in their communities thus altering local power structures in the hands of elders. My research poses critical questions in this particular context. Who is going to preserve native crops varieties and agro-ecological knowledge adapted to particular locales for long periods of time if indigenous youth seek economic opportunities beyond traditional forms of production to improve their living conditions? How are indigenous youth envisioning a future for themselves and their communities and on what grounds of memory and experience are they devising diverse livelihood strategies? How are indigenous youth positioned in relation to the transmission and use of the land in their communities?

Ethnographic studies of indigenous communities, classic or otherwise, have rarely incorporated youth as research subjects and participants. That is, indigenous youth's experiences, self-understandings, knowledges and life projects are unknown because they have not been looked for. This research project situates youth at the center of the socio-economic and cultural dynamics of contemporary indigenous communities. It seeks to investigate indigenous youth's livelihood strategies in relation to their knowledges and identities in an era of globalization by looking at the perceived occupational opportunities and labor trajectories of Mexican Nahua youth between 14 and 25 years old. It will investigate the occupational opportunities created by formal education, access to new technologies, their migratory experiences, the use of local knowledge, natural resources and ethnic identity in the global market, tourism, incorporation into illicit transnational economies, and youth's own cultural production. The results will help us to understand the role youth have in the dynamic process of reproducing and transforming cultural memories, knowledge and identity, as well as in the struggle for sustainable forms of life and the transformation of unjust social relations.