

The Global Media Festival Course Module: Bolivia

Prepared by:

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Title of the Course Module:

Sustainable Development and the Indigenous Communities of Bolivia

Introduction: Instructions for Instructors

Issues: interdependent dimensions of sustainability; perception, distribution and use of land; forest management, short-term logging and deforestation; cultural identity and preservation; marginalization, indigenous rights and Bolivian law; pan-indigenous activism; conflicting views of “territory”, “community” “wellness” and the human-nature relationship; the “dialogic center” of sustainable development”; biodiversity and the Amazon basin

Time commitment: 4 hours (plus film viewing)

Overview. Bolivia is a small South American country with one of the highest levels of biodiversity and endemism of animal and plant species in the world. Its biodiversity extends to human populations as well, with 60% of the country self-identifying as indigenous and belonging to 37 ethnic groups of some 34 languages. Eighty percent of the country’s rich forest tracts are in the lowlands and have faced particular threats of deforestation. Once thought to be the site of the mythical El Dorado, this lowland region has experienced centuries of exploitative extraction and developmental neglect. Recent decades of short-term selective timber harvesting (high grading) and unsustainable cattle-ranching practices have contributed to spiraling environmental destruction and community fragmentation that have imperiled the health and cultural longevity of indigenous peoples. In the 1990s major pan-indigenous movements and protests known as the “March for Territory and Dignity, united Bolivia’s diverse ethnic groups to seek justice in land tenure and to decry mismanagement of their forests. Their efforts incited a national stakeholder dialog that incorporated indigenous concepts of “territory” and led to the passage of Bolivia’s 1996 Forest Law that instituted far-reaching reforms in management of silviculture and award of timber concessions and indigenous land titles. In the mid-2000s Bolivia emerged as a world leader in sustainable tropical forestry and had the most certified sustainable acreage of any country in the world (Dockry and Livingston, 2019).

In 2009 a new constitution declared Bolivia a “plurinational state” and recognized the *Pachamama* (an indigenous concept of “Mother Earth” as living dynamic system) as the center of all life. Reflecting the country’s indigenous belief system of *Sumak Kawsay* (harmonious living or sustainable development), the Constitution established a legal relationship between man and nature as interconnected,

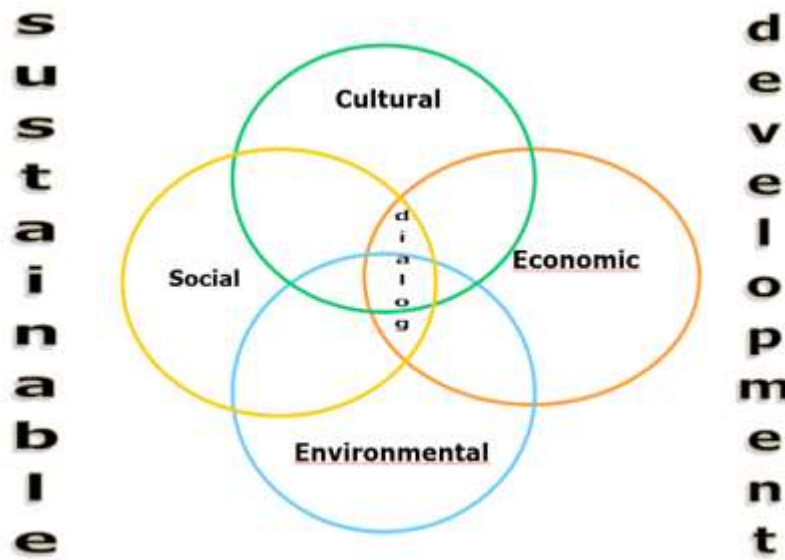
interdependent and complementary “in an undivided community of all living things.” The following year, 2010, a new law called the “Framework Law of Mother Earth and Integral Development for Living Well (*La Ley Marco de la Madre Tierra y Desarrollo Integral para Vivir Bien*) established new rights for Nature, including the right to life, regeneration, biodiversity, water, balance, restoration, and freedom from genetic alteration.

Media content: *El grito de la Selva/Cry of the Forest*. Alejandro Noza, Nicolás Ipamo, Iván Sanjinés; Producer CEFREC/CAIB. 2018. 94 min. Spanish w English subtitles



Considered Bolivia’s first Indigenous feature film, *Cry of the Forest* is a story told by and for the Indigenous peoples of the region of Beni, at the southern reaches of the Amazon Basin, in the years leading up to Bolivia’s 1996 Forest Law. The film’s “actors” are not professionals, but rather the inhabitants, *comunarios*, of the indigenous villages. The perspectives, events, processes, challenges and daily-life interactions in the film are thus as authentic as their storytellers and allow an intimate view of indigenous understandings of forest sustainability, of territory as spiritual as well as material, and of timeless community and relationship with nature.

The film demonstrates as well the interconnectedness of all four dimensions of sustainability—not only economic and environmental, but also social and cultural—and the impacts of decision-making based on immediate economic gain.



Learning outcomes:

1. To engage students in critical thinking about Western and indigenous understandings of sustainable development
2. To discuss the role of locally produced media and environmental activism in engaging citizens to take action regarding our future
3. To explore diverse and often conflicting perspectives and practices of community, territory, nature, health, well-being
4. To understand the issues of marginalization, exploitation, deforestation in one of the world's centers of biodiversity
5. To understand principles of indigenous land management
6. To discuss the implications of a legal framework of sustainability in an extractive economy

Resources

1. Dockry, Michael and Nancy Livingston. "Indigenous Protest and the Roots of Sustainable Forestry in Bolivia." *Environmental History* 0 (2019): 1–26
https://www.fs.fed.us/nrs/pubs/jrnl/2018/nrs_2018_dockry_001.pdf
2. Dockry, Michael (2012). "Indigenous Perspectives on Sustainability: The 1990 Indigenous Peoples' March for Territory and Dignity and the Origins of the Bolivian National Forestry Law." Chapter 5 of *Indigenous Forestry in the Americas: Comparative Environmental Histories in Bolivia and Wisconsin*. PhD dissertation, University of Wisconsin-Madison.
<http://www.mikedockry.net/wp-content/uploads/2012/09/Chapter-5-1990-March-and-Bolivian-Forestry-Law.pdf>

Instructions:

1. Prepare the class for viewing the film *Cry of the Forest* by assigning the questions accompanying the reading by Dockry and Livingston, "Indigenous Protest and the Roots of Sustainable Forestry in Bolivia," which presents a historical and cultural overview of the issues depicted in the film.
2. View film and have students prepare the accompanying viewing activities for class discussion
3. Conduct post-viewing class activities and assign out-of-class tasks

Course Module Activities: Instructions for Students**A. Previewing: Content focus**

Read the article "Indigenous Protest and the Roots of Sustainable Forestry in Bolivia" by Dockry and Livingston, which deals with the role of indigenous protest in Bolivia's forest reform. Note or copy the passages that respond to the following items. Be prepared to discuss your understanding of these items in class.

1. Find in this article the passages that inform us as to the **impact(s)** of:
 - a. High grading
 - b. Transport infrastructure

- c. Cattle ranching and petroleum excavation
 - d. Rotating dictatorships
 - e. Large scale timber companies
 - f. Small scale illegal logging
 - g. National park formation and boundary regulation
 - h. State control of “trees and forest resources”
 - i. The March for Territory and Dignity
2. What do you learn in this article about the indigenous worldview in Bolivia?
 - a. What is “territory”, what is “dignity”, what is “community” and how are the three connected?
 - b. Why do indigenous peoples consider the demarcation and prohibition of habitation in national parks inconsonant with sustainable development?
 - c. What is the Pachamama?
 3. What demands were at the root of the pan-indigenous protest marches and how were these marches realized?
 4. How did the Forestry Law of 1996 reflect indigenous ideas and reform forest management?
 5. The Constitution of 1995 declared Bolivia a “multiethnic and pluricultural nation.” The Constitution of 2009 declares Bolivia a “plurinational state.” What is the difference?
 6. According to this article, who are (or should be) some of the stakeholders in decision-making for sustainable forest management in Bolivia?



B. Previewing: Form Focus

1. *Cry of the Forest* is an example of indigenous “*cine propio*”; that is film produced by and for local communities on their “own” topics and issues. How is it carried out with limited resources? Listen to the filmmaker Iván Sanjinés, one of the film’s creators, as he discusses the why and how of *cine propio* in Bolivia.
https://mediaspace.gatech.edu/media/Bolivian+Indigenous+Media+and+the+Protection+of+the+Forest+-+Iván+Sanjinés/1_2lt1lad5

2. The film credits its production to the *National Indigenous Plan of Audiovisual Communication* and the entities below. What can you find out about the composition and purpose of each?



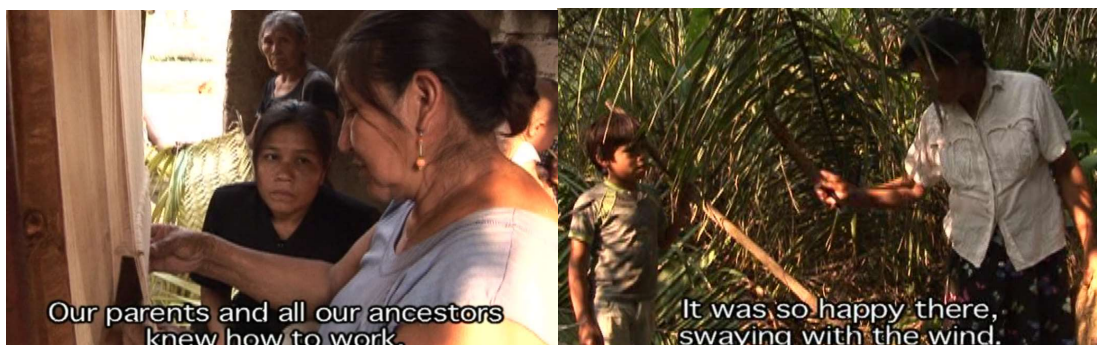
C. Viewing Activities. The questions in this section are designed to guide you through the film's content.

1. Why does the film open with a graveyard scene? Who are the dead?
2. The setting begins in 1990 with the story of Mercedes, in the village of Trinidad de la Selva and then jumps ahead to the year 1996 in the Community of Bella Selva. Why were these two years significant in Bolivian history?
3. As Mercedes settles in a new village, in what ways does the film depict indigenous ideas of "community"? Cite specific scenes



1Macororo = castor oil plant

4. Describe through specific scenes or dialogues how Nature is viewed and integrated with the indigenous idea of community and with the indigenous





concept of time (past and present). How does this contrast with Western views?

5. In one scene the *comunarios* wear costumed images of animals to celebrate a festival dedicated to the plants and animals. What are the rules on this day? Research and describe the rituals associated with Bolivian “Carnaval” and the ceremony of the “challa”



It was a day of celebration for all animals and plants.

6. Who are the main “storytellers” of this film? Describe in detail the various roles assumed by women and by men in the indigenous communities. How do they intersect in decision making? Describe the structure and protocols of the town meetings depicted in both villages. Who are the real voices of authority, in your opinion?



Teach me



They I saw a change. They became sad and I saw the trees were bleeding



7. In Mercedes story, what kind of deal is struck between the indigenous community of Trinidad de la Selva and the Marita logging company? What promises were made? What promises were kept? How was the conflict resolved?



8. What are the perceptions and attitudes of mestizos and indigenous people toward one another? Cite specific examples of how these are demonstrated in the film. Provide an example from the film of obstacles faced by indigenous communities in lodging complaints through legal channels. What factors contribute to indigenous marginalization?





9. Through radio broadcast and conversations in Bella Selva we hear that an indigenous march is planned to protest treatment of the forest and further indigenous rights. What details can you find out about this march from the film itself? How was it conducted? What were its goals/demands? What was it protesting? How did the

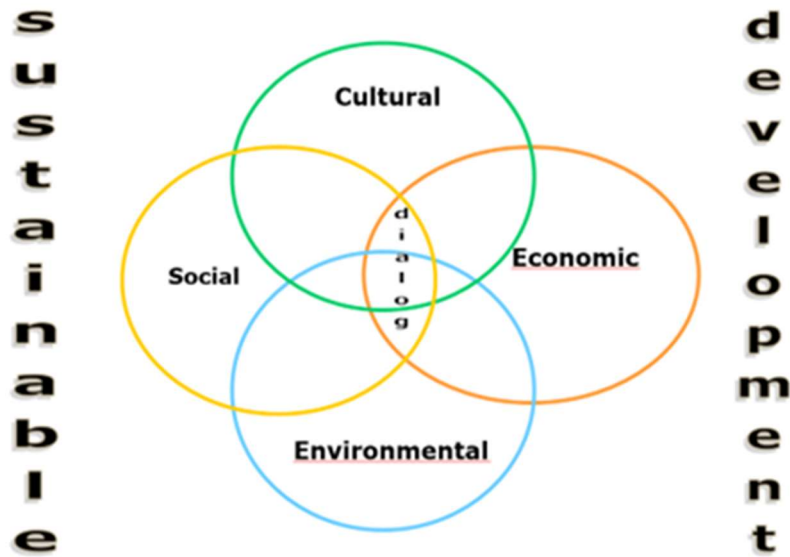
indigenous view of community facilitate its effectiveness? What was the outcome of that march in 1996?

10. In the final scenes of the film, who is Mercedes revealed to be? Why is she considered worthy of an authority post in the community? How is the tenor of this community meeting different from the one witnessed in Mercedes' former community?



C. Post-viewing Discussion

1. Throughout the film the stories alternate past and present, blurring into each other until the background of Mercedes is finally revealed at the end. Why do you think the filmmakers relied on this flashback technique? How does it reinforce the film's message?
2. Summarize the film's message in terms of the four interdependent dimensions of sustainable development. In this film, what are the social, environmental, economic and cultural impacts of making decisions based on perceived short-term economic benefits?



- Diagrams of sustainability often include a connective “dialogic center” to represent where minds meet to share clashing perspectives and seek resolution. Imagine a dialog between Dominga, the village healer, and the wife of the owner of Marita Logging. How will each describe her view of nature? What questions will each ask the other in order to understand the other’s point of view? In your view, which others of the film would be helpful contributors to this dialog?



- The film makes various references to the chewing of coca leaves, a practice that is prolific in the Andean region of Bolivia, where it helps combat the symptoms of ‘soroche’ or altitude sickness. Article 384 of the Bolivian Constitution of 2009 recognizes and protects the coca leaf as part of cultural patrimony, “a renewable natural resource of Bolivia's biodiversity, and as a factor of social cohesion”. Research and discuss the U.S.-initiated Plan Colombia, an effort to criminalize and eradicate coca (an ingredient of cocaine) in the countries of Colombia, Peru and Bolivia. What were the impacts of these efforts –positive and negative--on the four dimensions of sustainability.

5. Read the Preamble to Bolivia's Constitution (page 5) and summarize its key ideas and how they are reflected in "Cry of the Forest"
https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Bolivia_2009.pdf

6. While *Cry of the Forest* is a work of fiction, it is based on real events and on the lives of the "comunarios", its actors, who are the production team's first engagement, who express their opinions about the dialogue, the music and even about the course of the story. Gabriela Zamorano Villarreal provides examples of how this filmmaking not only derives from reality, but comments and intervenes in it. Here she describes the town meeting scene in which the community has to decide whether to accept or reject the presence of the logging company:

*It took about two hours to develop [the scene]. In every shot comunarios developed their dialogue, some of it in Spanish, some in Moxeño, arguing against and in favor of confronting the company. As always, early dialogues were timid and sloppy, but little by little they became more fluid, better improvised, and full of character... Finally, as scenes were done, the team shouted "¡Hecha!" and applauded happily. As the team started to pick up the equipment, the corregidor called for everybody's attention ... He then gave a solemn speech thanking the team for having chosen their community to work. He said that as the film shooting went on they felt that this work was useful to speak about their problems. He then addressed the comunarios: "As many of you have heard, there is again that tractor wandering around. We've told them they couldn't use our road to bring in their machines, we don't want them here. I ask the support of you all so we can go together, tonight or early tomorrow, to talk to that company owner for once! ... It was like a repetition of the filmed scene. Gabriela Zamorano Villarreal (2017). *Indigenous Media and Political Imaginaries in Contemporary Bolivia*. University of Nebraska Press.*

Considering Zamorano's description, discuss the potential impacts, both *local and global*, of indigenous cinema that authentically engages community. Share your view of the success of *Cry of the Forest* in achieving those objectives.

7. If you had been present during the visit of filmmaker Ivan Sanjinés to Georgia Tech, what questions would you have wanted to ask him about the real life events, about indigenous beliefs and practices, about indigenous filmmaking, about the future of Bolivia's sustainability?
https://mediaspace.gatech.edu/media/Bolivian+Indigenous+Media+and+the+Protection+of+the+Forest+-+Iván+Sanjinés/1_2lt1lad5

D. Assignment:

Choose one of the following related topics (or another approved by your instructor) as the theme of a 750-word essay. Then summarize your research findings in a succinct 5-minute oral presentation to class.

Indigenous Cultural Identity Preservation
Bolivia's Forest Law of 1996
Future of Silviculture in Bolivia
Pachamama, Sumak Kawsay and the Indigenous Worldview
Threats to Biodiversity in the Amazon
Sustainable development and indigenous media in Latin America
Traditional Medicine and Intercultural healthcare in Bolivia
Indigenous Rights and the Constitution
Indigenous Women and community decision-making
Plan Colombia and its Impact on sustainability
Land use and Deforestation in the Amazon

F. Further Reading

1. Background and legal structures of Bolivia's Forest Law of 1996:

Keenan, Alexandra. "Bolivia Forest Law 1996.

<http://www.cisd.org/aichilex/Target7-Bolivia1996>

2. History and Future of Forest Management and Silviculture in Bolivia:

Fredericksen, Todd (2000) "Logging and conservation of tropical forests in Bolivia." *International Forestry Review* 2(4), p. 271.

3. Indigenous World View and Sustainability Concept

Pittman, Thea. Sumak Kawsay and the Sustainable Development Agenda: Critical Debates and Creative Responses from a Latin American Indigenous Perspective". UK Research and Innovation. <https://gtr.ukri.org/projects?ref=AH%2FR004242%2F1>

Buxton, Nick. The Law of Mother Earth: <http://therightsofnature.org/bolivia-law-of-mother-earth/>

Waldmüller, !J.(2014), Buen Vivir, Sumak Kawsay, 'Good Living': An Introduction and Overview". *Alternautas* 1(1):17-28. <http://www.alternautas.net/blog/2014/5/14/buen-vivir-sumak-kawsay-good-living-an-introduction-and-overview>

Eduardo Gudynas. "Buen Vivir: Today's Tomorrow." *Development* (2011) 54: 441.

4. Indigenous Rights and Environmental Protection

Brown, Timothy. "Protecting Nature and Indigenous Rights In One of Earth's Most Diverse Landscapes." Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies."

<http://environment.yale.edu/news/article/protecting-nature-and-indigenous-rights-in-biodiverse-bolivia/>

5. Indigenous Traditional Medicine

Mathez-Stiefel, Sarah-Lan, Ina Vandebroek, Stephan Rist. "Can Andean medicine coexist with biomedical healthcare? A comparison of two rural communities in Peru and Bolivia." *Journal of Ethnobiology and Ethnomedicine*. 2012; 8: 26.

Torri, Maria Costanza and Daniel Hollenberg (2013). "Indigenous Traditional Medicine and Intercultural Healthcare in Bolivia: A Case Study from the Potosi Region". *Journal of Community Health Nursing* 30(4):216-29

6. Bolivia Today and Tomorrow

Ding, Helen, et al. Climate Benefits, Tenure Costs: The Economic Case For Securing Indigenous Land Rights in the Amazon. World Resources Institute. https://www.illegal-logging.info/sites/files/chlogging/Climate_Benefits_Tenure_CostsWRI.pdf

Fredericksen, Todd, et al. (2003). "Sustainable Forestry in Bolivia: Beyond Planned Logging". *Journal of Forestry*. Jan 2003, 101. Pdf download site: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/237285992_Sustainable_Forestry_in_Bolivia

Islander, Richard (2014). "Rights of nature and the indigenous Peoples in Bolivia and Ecuador: a Straitjacket for Progressive development Politics? *Revista Iberoamericana de Estudios de Desarrollo / Iberoamerican Journal of Development Studies*. Vol. 3, issue 2, pp. 148-173. Pdf download site: https://www.academia.edu/9130530/Rights_of_Nature_and_the_Indigenous_Peoples_in_Bolivia_and_Ecuador_A_Straitjacket_for_Progressive_Development_Politics

7. Sustainable development and indigenous media in Latin America

Zamorano Villarreal, Gabriela. "Crafting contemporary indigeneity through audiovisual media in Bolivia. In *Recasting commodity and spectacle in the indigenous Americas*. School of Advanced Study, University of London, London, pp. 77-95. <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/33337606.pdf>

8. Preserving Cultural Identity

Albro, Robert. "The Future of Culture and Rights for Bolivia's Indigenous Movements". Carnegie Council Fellows Conference, June 13-15 2005 https://www.carnegiecouncil.org/publications/articles_papers_reports/5212/_res/id=Attachments/index=0/5212_fellowPaper_albro.pdf

Healey, Susan. "Cultural resilience, identity and the restructuring of political power in Bolivia" https://dlc.dlib.indiana.edu/dlc/bitstream/handle/10535/1488/Healey_susan.pdf?sequence=1

9. "Dignity", Indigenous rights and Constitution

Constitution of 2009: https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Bolivia_2009.pdf

Hammond, John J. Indigenous Community Justice in the Bolivian Constitution of 2009. *Human Rights Quarterly* 33 (2011), 649-681.

"The Mother Earth Law and Integral Development to Live Well, Law No 300"

<http://www.lse.ac.uk/GranthamInstitute/law/the-mother-earth-law-and-integral-development-to-live-well-law-no-300/>

10. Plan Colombia and Sustainability

Beatriz Acevedo, Dave Bewley-Taylor and Coletta Youngers (2008). "Ten years of Plan Colombia: an analytic assessment". The Beckley Foundation Drug Policy Program. http://reformdrugpolicy.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/10/paper_16.pdf

11. Land Use and Deforestation

Perz, Stephen G., Carlos Aramburu´ and Jason Bremner. "Population, land use and deforestation in the pan Amazon basin: a comparison of Brazil, Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru and Venezuela ´ *Environment, Development and Sustainability* (2005) 7:23–49