YOUTH PARTICIPATION IN
INDIGENOUS TERRITORIAL GOVERNANCE

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By

MARIA PAULA SARIGUMBA

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Abstract

Indigenous territories, which cover more than one-fourth of the world’s land surface, overlap with distinct ecological areas and harbour significant cultural and biological diversity. Indigenous Peoples’ stewardship of customary lands can provide critical contributions to ensure livelihood and food security, combat climate change, and promote environmental knowledge. Given their significance, the use and governance of Indigenous territories are important areas of study. Of major concern involves keeping broad and diverse community memberships invested in local territorial governance. Young people are an important community sub-group often underrepresented in governance and decision-making spaces and understudied in the literature on environmental governance and natural resource management. In this thesis, I investigated the experiences and perceptions of Indigenous youth regarding territorial use and governance using a qualitative research approach. This involved a case study of youth from the Indigenous Territory of Lomerío in the Chiquitania region of eastern Bolivia, supplemented by insights from rural development and natural resource practitioners working in Latin America and internationally. I found that Lomerío represents an atypical yet instructive case of how Indigenous (and other rural and remote) communities might find a way for their young people to participate more actively in local territorial governance. A role for youth in the case of Lomerío was underpinned by an enabling socio-cultural environment that is welcoming of young people and open to creating meaningful roles for them within local governance systems and structures. Based on insights from Lomerío and other cases identified in broader literature, this thesis generates recommendations for communities and support organizations, as well as government policymakers, on how youth-community-territory linkages can be enhanced.

Keywords: Bolivia; environmental governance; gender; Indigenous territory; participation; youth
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CHAPTER ONE: Introduction

1.1 Background

As land stewards, Indigenous Peoples can provide critical contributions to addressing the global challenges of adapting to and mitigating climate change, conserving biodiversity, and attaining sustainability (Fa et al., 2020; Garnett et al., 2018; Howitt, 2018; Schuster et al., 2019). While Indigenous Peoples comprise only 6.2 percent of the global population (International Labour Organization [ILO], 2019), their customary territories have been estimated to span a quarter of the world’s terrestrial land surface (Garnett et al., 2018). These territories cover distinct ecological areas and landscapes (Garnett et al., 2018; Fa et al., 2020), encompass around 40 percent of global protected areas (Garnett et al., 2018), and contain high cultural diversity (Gorenflo et al., 2012). They are deemed critical to both biodiversity conservation and cultural survival (Howitt, 2018).

Given their importance and value, how these territories are accessed, used, and governed is of utmost relevance. Casting an eye towards the future, an important line of inquiry concerns who within the broad membership of “owner” communities can shape how such territories and lands are governed. This includes young people, whose energy, ideas, and manpower could provide invaluable (and much-needed) contributions to community and territorial development and sustainability (Macqueen & Campbell, 2020). Globally, there are as many as 67 million Indigenous youth¹ (United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, 2015), and among their number are those who will take on the responsibility for managing the customary lands, forests, and other local natural resources of their home communities (Kelless Viitanen, 2008).

Despite this, researchers and practitioners know relatively little about the factors that enable or hinder the youth in assuming these roles, due in part to current youth-oriented interventions that are based on unsubstantiated claims, assumptions, and evidence (International Fund for Agricultural Development [IFAD], 2019; United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs [UNDESA], 2018). To support a meaningful role for Indigenous youth in environmental stewardship, we first need to know more about their own experiences, perspectives, and levels of participation in relation to local environments, natural resources, and current governance.

¹ ‘Youth/s’ and ‘young people’ are used interchangeably throughout this thesis.
regimes. Such information can assist communities and support organizations in creating spaces for young people to take an active role in territorial activities and governance. This requires addressing current barriers to youth participation, including those that may be related to gender. While youth from Indigenous and other local communities can be underrepresented in governance structures and decision-making spaces (Erbstein, 2013; MacNeil et al., 2017; White, 2019), gender inequality can also create additional complexities in rural communities (Agarwal, 2010; Colfer et al., 2017; Elias et al., 2017). For instance, in Latin America, most leadership roles and the strongest “voices” in community-based natural resources management circles tend to be those of men (Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean [ECLAC], 2014).

Recognizing that Indigenous youth participation matters in environmental stewardship and governance across global regions, this research aimed to investigate the experiences and perspectives of young Indigenous women and men regarding territorial use and governance.

1.2 Research Objectives

The research was guided by four specific objectives:

- Investigate how young Indigenous women and men experience and perceive territorial governance;
- Identify and explore the barriers to and opportunities for Indigenous youth participation in territorial governance;
- Document initiatives to enhance youth participation; and
- Develop recommendations for Indigenous and local community leaderships, development organizations and practitioners, and government agencies and policymakers to support youth participation in Indigenous territorial governance.

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2 An emphasis on ‘territory’ and ‘territorial governance’ is evident throughout this thesis. This is intentional and moves away from a focus on ‘environmental governance,’ which is too narrow to reflect the gamut of activities, components, and meanings encapsulated in how Indigenous peoples access, use, and relate to their customary territories, of which the land and connecting to and managing the natural environment are just a part. Indigenous peoples relate to and govern a territory, not the environment.
1.3 Research approach

To meet these objectives, I employed a qualitative research design that comprise three main components. First, I engaged Indigenous youth in conversations about their experiences and perceptions on territorial governance. This involved talking to the youth from the Indigenous Territory of Lomerio in eastern Bolivia and the Indigenous youth from forest communities across Asia, Africa, and the Americas, including representatives who previously participated in a related research (Future of Forest Work and Communities [FOFW] project). Second, I gathered insights from experts in development and environmental organizations who work with youth and natural resources management issues, especially in Indigenous contexts. These insights were used to complement the information provided by the Indigenous youth. Third, I conducted a short document review to help identify ongoing and planned initiatives and innovations to enhance youth participation in community-based environmental governance, including Indigenous territorial governance. My chosen research design and methodology is discussed in more detail in Chapter 3 of this thesis.

1.4 Research significance

As the world’s forests and other natural ecosystems degrade and contract, the challenge to meet the ambitious global goals set to reduce the adverse impacts of climate change, protect biological diversity, and achieve sustainable development intensifies. Several recent studies have highlighted the positive contributions of Indigenous territories in meeting these challenges (Fa et al., 2020; Garnett et al., 2018; Howitt, 2018). However, understanding is limited on the role that Indigenous youth can or could play in such efforts. This research contributes knowledge to help address this gap, particularly on the role of Indigenous youth in territorial governance. From an applied perspective, this work supports the activities of Indigenous and other local communities by offering insights, identifying meaningful participation mechanisms, and providing recommendations that could feed into community and government policies supporting youth in environmental governance.

1.5 Structure of this thesis

This thesis is divided into six chapters. This first chapter comprises this Introduction where I present the background, objectives, approach, and significance of the research. The second
chapter presents a review of literature on the subject at hand and helps identify key knowledge gaps that the work addresses. The third chapter details the methodology that I employed in this research. The fourth chapter presents the main empirical findings from the work. The fifth chapter discusses the scholarly significance of these findings. The sixth and final chapter summarizes the key conclusions for each research objective and provides some final reflections.
CHAPTER TWO: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

To provide context for this research, this review focuses on the themes of Indigenous Peoples and their territories and the role of youth in environmental governance. First, I provide background on Indigenous Peoples globally, the extent and significance of their territories, and how they govern these territories, including the importance of building inclusivity into decision-making structures. This leads into the second part of the review, where I characterize youth, particularly rural and Indigenous youth, the challenges that they face, and what is known about youth participation in local environmental governance. I then discuss the gender dimensions of environmental governance and the differentiated situations of young men and women in rural communities. The review ends with a summary of the knowledge gaps that the research helps to address. While this literature review draws heavily on work conducted in Latin America, select lessons from other global regions are used to provide a broader perspective.

2.2 Indigenous Peoples and their territories

2.2.1 Indigenous Peoples as environmental custodians

Globally, there are approximately 476.6 million people who identify themselves as Indigenous (ILO, 2019). Through their connection to place and territory and the way they use local lands and resources, Indigenous Peoples are recognized for their role in conserving biological and cultural diversity (Howitt, 2018; Kelles-Viitanen, 2008). A large body of work demonstrates how Indigenous and other traditional peoples have contributed positively to ecosystem management through traditional knowledge and associated practices and social institutions (Berkes et al., 2000; Lertzman, 2010), biodiversity conservation (Garnett et al., 2018), food security (Kuhnlein, 2017), carbon sequestration (Walker et al., 2020), and reduced deforestation (Paneque-Gálvez et al., 2018). These contributions have gained attention across various international fora,

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3 Estimates based on data from 58 countries (ILO, 2019).
4 Defining a population or a community as Indigenous can encapsulate several broad factors: self-identification as Indigenous at both individual and community-levels; having inhabited a place before colonization by settler societies; distinct social, economic, cultural, belief, or political systems; recognized as non-dominant societal group; resolved to maintain and reproduce their ancestral environments and systems; and having a strong linkage to customary lands or territories and the natural resources they contain (Martínez Cobo, 1982).
frameworks, and legal instruments, such as the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention (No. 169, 1989) of the ILO, the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security (VGGT). The role of Indigenous Peoples is also highlighted in major global initiatives, such as the Sustainable Development Goals, the Paris Agreement, and the Aichi Biodiversity Targets.

Recent studies on the extent and significance of customary territories have further highlighted the potential of Indigenous Peoples as critical environmental actors and stewards. Despite accounting for only five percent of the world’s population, Indigenous people’s customary territories span 28 percent of the world’s land surface (Garnett et al., 2018). It has been reported that these territories coincide with 40 percent of distinct and significant ecological areas, such as terrestrial protected areas and ecologically intact landscapes (Garnett et al., 2018). Further, Indigenous territories can often contain equal or higher biodiversity than government-run protected natural areas in the same regions (Schuster et al., 2019). Some of the best-protected forests in the world are situated within lands managed by Indigenous and local communities (Garnett et al., 2018; Walker et al., 2020).

Indigenous Peoples are thus seen as important custodians of biodiverse lands with high conservation value (Kelles-Viitanen, 2008). This is especially true in areas where they hold tenure rights and/or where they continue to apply their traditional knowledge and resource management practices (Blackman et al., 2017; Paneque-Gálvez et al., 2018). Recognizing the rights of Indigenous and local communities can limit the rate of deforestation and forest

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5 Article 8(j) of CBD stipulates the responsibility of the Contracting Party to “respect, preserve, and maintain knowledge, innovations, and practices of indigenous and local communities embodying traditional lifestyles relevant for the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity and promote their wider application with the approval and involvement of the holders of such knowledge, innovations, and practices and encourage the equitable sharing of the benefits arising from the utilization of such knowledge innovations and practices.”

6 This is an instrument recognizing Indigenous peoples’ right to self-determination within a nation-state, while establishing standards for national governments on Indigenous peoples’ economic, socio-cultural, and political rights, especially land rights (ILO Convention 169).

7 “Indigenous Peoples and other communities with customary tenure systems that exercise self-governance of land, fisheries and forests should promote and provide equitable, secure, and sustainable rights to those resources, with special attention to the provision of equitable access for women. Effective participation of all members, men, women and youth, in decisions regarding their tenure systems should be promoted through their local or traditional institutions, including in the case of collective tenure systems. Where necessary, communities should be assisted to increase the capacity of their members to participate fully in decision-making and governance of their tenure systems” Section 9.2, page 14 of VGGT.
degradation (Paneque-Gálvez et al., 2018; Walker et al., 2020). Areas governed by Indigenous and local communities have exhibited slow rates of forest loss and forest cover change (Corrigan et al., 2018; Porter-Bolland et al., 2011; Paneque-Gálvez et al., 2018; Walker et al., 2020). By protecting forests, a range of environmental goals can be met (Schuster et al., 2019; Walker et al., 2020; Woodley et al., 2012).

Aside from their contributions to biodiversity conservation, Indigenous territories have the potential to assist in climate stabilization. Most nations are working to curb global temperatures and avoid any rise beyond 2°C above pre-industrial levels, as outlined in the 2015 UN Paris Agreement on climate change. Forests and other lands play a significant role in meeting this target by capturing and storing carbon and mitigating climate change (Brack, 2019). Thus, good stewardship of forests offers a cost-effective natural climate solution (Griscom et al., 2017). The collective forestlands of Indigenous and local communities store at least 293 million metric tons of carbon, which is 33 times the global energy emissions in 2017 (Rights and Resources Initiative [RRI], 2018). Tropical forests, in particular, can store large amounts of carbon if they remain intact (Potapov et al., 2017; Watson et al., 2018). Intact forest landscapes (IFLs) are “seamless mosaic of forests and natural treeless ecosystems” (Potapov et al., 2017, p. 1) and “critical strongholds” (Fa et al., 2020, p. 135) that provide a multitude of environmental services, including storing globally important carbon stocks (Potapov et al., 2017; RRI, 2018; Watson et al., 2018). Good governance of Indigenous territories will contribute to keeping forest landscapes intact, since such territories overlap with a significant number of IFLs globally (Garnett et al., 2018).

Thus, from biodiversity conservation to climate stabilization, the contribution of Indigenous Peoples is significant (Fa et al., 2020; Garnett et al., 2018; Howitt, 2018). Some governments are beginning to acknowledge this by formally recognizing Indigenous rights to customary lands and resources and devolving management responsibility to them (Monterroso et al., 2019). It is realized that supporting Indigenous Peoples to self-govern these territories and lands may bring real and more equitable distribution of benefits from forest resources, enhance communality, and help countries attain or meet national biodiversity and climate-related commitments (RRI, 2015; Schuster et al., 2019; Woodley et al., 2012; Wily, 2011).
2.2.2 Governance of Indigenous territories

The potential contribution of Indigenous territories and the lands and resources they contain to global environmental goals and targets depends on how such territories are accessed, used, and governed. In some global regions, such as Latin America, many are accessed and managed as commons, defined by Ostrom (1990) as collective resources managed through community-derived rules and norms by an identifiable group of users or actors. To be sustained over time, these users need to be invested in the collective and willing to contribute the time, energy, and resources needed.

The ability of Indigenous and other local peoples to self-govern their traditional territories inevitably focuses attention on rights to resources and how such rights help provide incentives to self-organize and invest time and energy in shared resource management. Demands for legal recognition of land rights in favor of Indigenous Peoples and local communities are increasing worldwide. In India and Indonesia, 40 million hectares have been mapped as customary lands (RRI, 2015). In Colombia, 53 percent of the country’s Amazon region has now been designated for Indigenous Peoples (RAISG, 2012). In the Mekong region of Southeast Asia, over 6.7 million hectares of forests had been devolved to local communities by the end of 2018 (RECOFTC, 2020). Globally, however, formal recognition of community ownership/designation of lands and territories remains limited in around 18 percent of land across 64 countries studied by RRI in 2015. When it comes to forest lands, centralized governance may have decreased since

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8 Territories and areas conserved by Indigenous Peoples and local communities, whether formal or informal, hold several essential characteristics, such that communities 1) have “a close and profound relation with a site”; 2) are a “major player in decision-making related to the site and has de facto and/or de jure capacity to develop and enforce regulations”; and, 3) their “decisions and efforts lead to the conservation of biodiversity, ecological functions, and associated cultural values, regardless of original or primary motivations” (Borrini-Feyerabend et al., 2013:40).

9 Several thinkers (Bruce, 1998; Maxwell & Wiebe, 1998; Schlager & Ostrom, 1992; and Sunderlin et al., 2008) have worked on defining land tenure, which is viewed as a legal term defining the “right to hold the land” and not simply “holding the land”. Further, land tenure encompasses social dimensions, such as relations of actors and institutions who are granting and managing access to ownership of land and natural resources (Maxwell & Wiebe, 1998). Sunderlin et al. (2008) categorized tenure as either customary or statutory. Customary tenure comprises oral agreements defined at the community level while statutory tenure constitutes formal mechanisms bounded in state law. Land tenure has also been described as a “bundle of rights,” which are a specific set of rights related to doing activities on the land (Bruce, 1998), defined by Schlager and Ostrom (1992) as access (right to enter the land), withdrawal (right to extract resources in the land), management (right to manage and regulate the land), exclusion (right to determine who can access the land), and alienation (right to sell or lease the rights to the land).
1990 (Food and Agriculture Organization [FAO], 2020), but most remain administered by the state\(^{10}\) (RRI, 2016). Formal recognition of customary rights remains uneven, and this is more apparent in some countries than others (Monterroso et al., 2019).

Obstacles to effective customary governance include reconciling rights over existing claims, addressing legal overlaps, creating enabling conditions, and building equitable institutions (Monterroso et al., 2019). The latter is significant. It is not enough to think about tenure and associated rights, but strong and inclusive community institutions and organizations must also be developed (Assies, 2006; FAO, 2011). Legitimate institutional arrangements can deliver more effective resource management than tenure ownership alone, especially over the long-term (Ostrom & Nagendra, 2006). ‘Effective’ management requires broad community participation in decisions about their tenure systems and may require the adaptation of long-standing customary institutions (FAO, 2012). Increasing the representativeness of local institutions, so that they provide voice and capacity to all community members – men, women, youth – has become a key consideration (FAO, 2011; FAO, 2012). As one of the underrepresented community sub-groups (ECLAC, 2014; Erbstein, 2013), the youth form the focus of the research presented here.

### 2.3 Youth and environmental governance

#### 2.3.1 Characterizing youth and their global development significance

There is no universal definition for “youth” or “young people.” Definitions vary among international organizations and governments depending on sociocultural, institutional, economic, and political factors (Asian Development Bank [ADB] & Plan International, 2018). For operational purposes, the United Nations (UN) defines youth as those between 15 and 24 years of age (UN, 1981; UN, 1985). Yet in practice, age is not always the sole indication of who is or isn’t a “youth”. Some societies regard youth as a transition phase for young people as they begin to take on greater responsibilities for family, for finances, or in their community, and so is not strictly age dependent. In a community context, it may be the period when they begin to be given specific roles to play or rights to exercise (ADB & Plan International, 2018).

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\(^{10}\) 59 percent in Latin America, 62 percent in Asia, and 92 percent in Africa
The differing definitions complicate the estimation of the global numbers of youth. Following UN’s age-specific definition, the youth totaled 1.2 billion in 2015, or around 16 percent of the world population (UNDESA, 2018). Approximately 83 percent of these youth were living in developing countries and half of these were considered rural (UNDESA, 2017; IFAD, 2019). Projections suggest that the global youth population will grow to 1.3 billion by 2030 (UNDESA, 2015), with the rate of growth higher in lower-income countries (UNDESA, 2017). In a world with a lot of young people (IFAD, 2019), a ‘demographic dividend’ or ‘youth bulge’ is seen as an opportunity for supporting economic growth and development (ADB & Plan International, 2018; Clendenning, 2019). Governments have been encouraged to invest in and create enabling conditions for their youth to leverage this opportunity (IFAD, 2019). Youth engagement has thus gained increased traction among policy- and decision-makers, and the youth have become a focal point for achieving the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda and other development frameworks (UN, 2018; UNDESA; 2018). This extends into the fields of rural development, where engaging young people has become a development mantra (IFAD, 2019) and is seen as part of broader efforts to reduce poverty, generate employment, and secure food security, amongst other development goals (IFAD, 2019).

For the purposes of this research, I considered ‘youth’ to be young women and men between 15 and 30 years old. A more detailed rationale for this choice is provided in Chapter 3.

2.3.2 Barriers to effective participation of youth in community development

Although close to half of the world’s population is under 30 years of age, young people are rarely central in political decision-making (United Nations Development Programme [UNDP], 2015). In two out of three countries, national governments do not consult young people in planning for poverty reduction or national development. To harness the potential of young

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people, we need to understand the different barriers that can impede their effective participation. We know that in a rural context, a range of social issues, from limited employment to poverty, migration, education, technology and finance, and land rights, may come into play (Robson, Sosa, et al., 2019). In this section, I look at the most frequently reported barriers.

Many young people have trouble finding employment, with close to half a billion people around the world unable to find decent work (ILO, 2020a). Globally, the youth labor force remains underutilized, with one-fifth of young people estimated not to be in any form of employment, education, or training (ILO, 2020b). Among employed youth, 77 percent work in the informal economy, with attendant issues of job insecurity, instability, and lack of social protection (ILO, 2020b). Around 30 percent experience high levels of poverty (ILO, 2020b). In rural areas, precarious working conditions can push youth out of their communities to predominantly urban areas (ECLAC, 2018; Deotti & Estruch, 2016). Indigenous youth can be more adversely impacted than non-Indigenous youth, as reported for Latin America (ECLAC, 2008).

Differential access to education also impacts rural, and especially Indigenous, youth (FAO et al., 2014). Generally, access to education is more limited and the level of educational attainment is lower among Indigenous youth than their non-Indigenous counterparts (World Bank, 2015). Formal education systems are often not well matched to Indigenous cultures, histories, and needs (Trucco & Ullmann, 2015), resulting in low attendance and high dropout rates, with cascading effects on illiteracy, unemployment, and poverty (ECLAC, 2014). These factors temper the educational expectations of rural young people, which tend to be lower than those of their urban counterparts (Haller & Virkler, 1993). Because of poor and limited schooling, young people in rural areas sometimes miss out on information and knowledge that would enhance their skills and work prospects (FAO et al., 2014). Resorting to wage labour, either in home regions or as part of a migrant workforce, is a common outcome (ECLAC, 2018; Portilla, 2017).

Rural youth can suffer from limited access to secure land because of structural impediments tied to land rights, land tenure systems, and customary practices (Landesa, n.d.; White, 2019). In Indigenous and other traditional communities, land issues are often long-standing, going back to when their territories were colonized by settler societies and extractive industries (ECLAC, 2014). When tenure systems are weakened, young people are among those less likely to access limited land-based opportunities. Young people are disproportionately unable to own land or
hold sole title (IFAD, 2019; White, 2012). Landlessness makes farming and other land-based livelihoods less reliable (Barney, 2012; Portilla, 2017). Inheritance of land can be another limiting factor. Most children only get to inherit land at a later stage in life, thus “delaying their transition to independence and their attainment of greater decision-making authority” (IFAD, 2019, p.: 33). When they do obtain land, it is often degraded; they struggle to access and thus benefit from more productive/fertile lands (Yeboah et al., 2018; FAO et al., 2014).

The prospects for youth are also influenced by their relative inclusion or exclusion from community life and development, including territorial use, planning, and decision-making. Traditionally, the youth are not regarded as important stakeholders in their communities (IFAD, 2019), lack real decision-making powers (Salter, 2022), are rarely taken seriously, and are often excluded from the decisions that impact their lives (Cahill, 2007). Even when efforts are made to include the youth, these can feel more symbolic than meaningful (Brennan & Barnett, 2009). For example, in international forest decision-making processes, youth delegates felt that “opportunities to express their opinion” are limited (Yunita et al., 2017), leading to charges of tokenism. Hart (1992, p. 9) defined tokenism as “those instances in which children are apparently given a voice, but in fact have little or no choice about the subject or the style of communicating it, and little or no opportunity to formulate their own opinions.” It could also lead to “youth-washing” where leaders invite young people “to platforms and into private meetings to burnish their own images but ignoring their demands” and devolve the need for action to solve problems to the youth (Salter, 2022).

When the youth are not fully represented in governance and decision-making spaces, their ideas and opinions are not properly heard or considered, leading to local policies and policy interventions that may poorly match youth needs and aspirations (FAO et al., 2014). When they are not involved, the youth have little knowledge of community activities and initiatives (Zetina et al., 2019; Robson et al., 2019). Customary institutions that leave youth out of deliberation processes can also create tensions between young and old (ECLAC, 2014), limiting the ability of young people to exercise their capacities and empower themselves (UNDESA, 2018). This, in turn, can alienate youth from community processes (Pritzker & Metzger, 2011).

In summary, economic, socio-cultural, and institutional barriers can challenge the participation of Indigenous and other rural youth in community development, including territorial governance.
These barriers combine to constrain or limit the role that young people play, which means that community decisions and trajectories can unfold without the involvement and consent of the next generation of leaders and decision-makers. As a result, the engagement of young people in rural community settings has become a focus of concern, with more young people demanding a seat at the table (Clendenning, 2019; IFAD, 2019; Robson et al., 2019). Through empowerment to participate, the youth may experience an enhanced sense of control and esteem and be encouraged to lead initiatives for the benefit of their peers and their communities (Pritzker & Metzger, 2011). Empowerment can “set the stage for clearly identified youth roles and long-term participation in the community development process” (Brennan & Barnett, 2009, p. 305). Such realities provide important context for leadership in communities and other rural development organizations to consider as they look to engage the youth in key aspects of community life and development. These are realities that need to be addressed if youth potential is to be fully realized.

2.3.3 Youth participation in environmental governance

“I think they underestimate us as youth, our ideas and what will work...we are the next generation, we want to bring more” - female Indigenous youth from the Poplar River First Nation (Robson et al., 2019)

While the barriers discussed above affect rural youth in varying ways, the participation of youth in environmental governance and decision-making has become a particular, emergent focus. Most international development goals, such as the Sustainable Development Goals, have resolved to take effective measures and actions to empower certain sub-groups, such as youth, women, and Indigenous Peoples in their processes (UN, 2015) and to ensure their representation at all governance levels. In forestry, the Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF) advises that the voices of such vulnerable groups must be heard by removing obstacles and supporting platforms to incorporate varied perspectives, resolve conflicts, and find solutions to fully realize the value of forests and halt deforestation (FAO & CPF, 2018). Recently, we’ve seen how the youth are taking center stage in leading movements and asserting actions for environment and climate change (FAO, 2019). They have shown strong social and environmental awareness (UN, 2010), and many have expressed their desire to make a difference in these areas (Van Den Hazel, 2019; FAO, 2019). In an Indigenous territory in Bolivia (Guarayos), young people have been
vocal about rampant land grabbing and have organized themselves to reclaim their right to use the land and forest in their territories (M. Soriano-Candia, personal communication, 21 May 2020). Similar movements have emerged in the Standing Rock Indian Reservation in the United States (Elbein, 2017), Wet’suwet’en Nation in Canada (Little, 2020), and Lumad ancestral lands in Southern Philippines (Lee, n.d.).

These examples provide evidence of the concerns, energy, optimism, and aspirations of young people to make a difference. Understanding aspirations was an important part of this research, since these are what young people use to orient their future (White, 2019), influence life choices and self-perception (Schaefer & Meece, 2009), and ultimately direct life outcomes (Leavy & Smith, 2010). Most youth aspire to a better future, but what this means or looks like for Indigenous youth in a remote and rural region of the world can be unclear. A survey of 10,000 rural youth in 21 African countries revealed how the majority expects a significant improvement in their lives over the next five years (German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development [BMZ], 2017). But does that equate to a life away from their home (rural) community or region? In Lao PDR, for example, young people still desire a ‘rural modern life’ based on smallholder farming (Portilla, 2017). Indeed, many rural youths are active in land-based activities (FAO et al., 2014), deriving income and livelihood from forests and other natural resources (Macneil et al., 2017).

It is apparent that youth engagement may be a vital component in securing sustainable rural landscapes (Macqueen & Campbell, 2020). This is no less the case for youth from Indigenous communities and territories (UN, 2015; IFAD, 2019). Development agencies and practitioners working in community-based natural resources management now stress the importance of integrating youth into governance activities and processes (FAO & CPF, 2018; Robson et al., 2019; IFAD, 2019). The FOFW project connected researchers to young people from forest communities across Asia, Africa, and the Americas to examine youth aspirations and better understand if and how forest-based work and livelihoods could offer meaningful opportunities for local youth. In Mexico, forest youth spoke about how they were still connected to the land and would like to participate in community-making processes (Robson et al., 2019). In Guatemala, there were “strong connections between village youth, their community, and their forest” (Zetina et al., 2019, p. 41). In Peru, young people who had emigrated from their
community to a regional urban center maintained an interest in forest-related occupations (Quaedvlieg et al., 2019). In Canada, the youth discussed about staying or returning to their communities because of proximity to the forest where they can practice their cultural traditions and engagements (Asselin & Drainville, 2020).

Yet barriers exist. Young people can be frustrated at their lack of voice and involvement in territorial use and governance (Robson et al., 2019). They are frustrated because they want to be heard by their communities and challenge the prejudices and misconceptions that older community members may hold about their skills and motives (Vargas-Lundius & Suttie, 2014). Participation in community life, including environmental governance, means having “the right, the means, the space, and the opportunity and where necessary the support to participate in and influence decisions and engage in actions and activities so as to contribute to building a better society” (Council of Europe, 2015, p. 5).

Youth participation can be understood as a process that involves young people in the “institutions and decisions that affect their lives” (Checkoway & Gutierrez, 2006, p. 1), with inclusion in such deliberations essential to connecting youth aspirations with socio-political realities on the ground (Rajani, 2000; Ibrahim, 2011). And youth participation will likely result in undertakings and policies that are more sustainable and thus better placed to achieve broader development goals (Department for International Development, 2010) such as social development, organizational capacity, and environmental conservation (Checkoway & Gutierrez, 2006). In this way, youth participation is not the “icing on the cake” but an integral part of development strategies (IFAD, 2019). This holds equally true for rural, resource-dependent communities; engaging their young people contributes important knowledge and improves overall decision-making (Macneil et al., 2017).

A caveat, however. Scholars have argued that this participation must be meaningful; activities must be relevant, exciting, challenging, and grounded (Jennings et al., 2006). Mechanisms and strategies should be created and implemented to build an environment conducive to effective youth engagement in planning and policy processes, in ways that have the potential to positively affect lives and futures (FAO & CPF, 2018; IFAD, 2019; Vargas-Lundius & Suttie, 2014). Finding innovative ways to engage young people is thus important (Crowley & Moxon, 2017).
For example, Evans et al. (2019) demonstrated how participatory monitoring of forests can improve decision-making in Indigenous communities.

While work on youth is emerging, there seems little systematic research on youth participation (Checkoway & Gutierrez, 2006), especially in rural and community-based contexts (IFAD, 2019). Most work available uses a Western or Eurocentric lens (Jeffrey, 2008; Farrugia, 2014), uses indicators that are often focused on urban youth (Trivelli & Morel, 2019; Looker & Naylor, 2009; Punch et al., 2007), seldom captures disaggregated factors (e.g., gender breakdown) (Doss et al., 2019), and can narrowly center on issues about migration (Portilla, 2017). Researchers have begun to solicit youth perspectives on environmental change (MacDonald et al., 2013; Smith et al., 2016) but little attention has been paid to the implications for territorial governance and decision-making (Zurba & Trimble 2014). Few studies focus on building youth capacity for environmental stewardship and/or governance (see Browne et al., 2011; Nursey-Bray & Palmer 2018), especially in Indigenous communities. This is problematic because an inherent risk of acting with limited knowledge is that interventions and strategies are based on incorrect assumptions (e.g., “young people are uninterested in farming”). Finally, because youth is not a homogenous group but rather comprises individuals of different ages, genders, backgrounds, and realities, interventions should be context-specific but enabling for all (Clendenning, 2019; Clendenning et al., 2019; Panelli et al., 2007).

The intersection of youth and gender is one area not well understood in the rural development and environmental fields (Clendenning et al., 2019; Park & White, 2018), and is the focus of the final section of this literature review.

2.4 Youth, gender, and the environment

2.4.1 Gender dimension in youth studies and environmental research

When considering Indigenous youth perspectives on environmental and territorial governance, the lived experiences, ideas, and aspirations of young women and men may not be the same. Thus, gender becomes an important dimension to consider, which also extends to the structures and institutions (including the social norms) that shape any such differences.
Research on gender in community-based natural resources management is now well established, whether on agriculture (Quisumbing et al., 2014; Sachs, 1996), forestry (Reed et al., 2014; Agarwal, 2010; Colfer et al., 2016; Elias et al., 2017) or fisheries (Bennett, 2005; Frangoudes & Gerrard, 2018). Such work has shown that men and women play different roles within rural households and communities. We know that women can play a key role in households highly dependent on natural capital for livelihood (Meinzen-Dick et al., 2019) and hold “intimate experience with and knowledge of their communities’ resources and natural resource management and should be regarded as key stakeholders” (Silverman, 2015, p. 24). However, women are often disadvantaged by laws and regulations on resource use (RRI, 2017), male dominance (Evans et al., 2017), and traditional norms and culture (Giovarelli, 2016). Many rural women struggle to obtain tenure rights to the lands that they use and depend upon, with adverse impacts on their livelihood, family, and the well-being and development of their community (Bose, 2017).

Strengthening women’s roles and rights, such as by securing tenure, can have cascading effects on the overall effectiveness of community governance and development (RRI, 2017), including more efficient and more equitable outcomes in the use of natural resources (Agarwal, 2010). Giovarelli et al. (2013) found that women’s tenure rights are linked to their increased participation in household decision-making, income generation, and household expenditures. It also enhances their status as stakeholders and/or rightsholders, increasing their participation in decision-making in community affairs and in managing land and natural resources (Silverman, 2015; RRI, 2017). However, “customary tenure arrangements, social institutions, and statutory law often embody gender inequalities and unequal power relations for women” (Silverman, 2015, p. 3). Moreover, most tenure reforms have focused on granting rights to land at the household level, rarely factoring in who in the household holds those rights (Lastarria-Cornhiel et al., 2014). Working to secure women’s rights can help influence the attainment of important development goals, including those tied to sustainability and conservation (Meinzen-Dick et al., 2014). In a context of demographic transitions and migration, with men sometimes more likely to migrate out of communities to seek job opportunities, women may come to assume greater responsibilities in governing community lands (RRI, 2017).
While gender has become a researched topic in developing our understanding of people-environment interactions, work on youth is only now emerging (Clendenning, 2019; Park & White, 2018; White, 2019). Within this field, little attention has been paid to how youth and gender might intersect (Park & White, 2018; Clendenning et al., 2019). Many efforts in rural development disregard “how gender – the socially determined roles of young men and young women – affects transitions into adulthood” (Doss et al, 2019, p. 1). Youth are “young men and women (gendered), they are rural/urban, they are ‘classed’ and in many cases ‘raced’, dis/abled, and ascribed ethnicity” (White, 2019:8). One person’s position is thus made up of a web of cross-cutting (‘intersecting’) relationships, where “multiple identities” are produced (White, 2019:8). This is understood as ‘intersectionality’ in the social sciences (Collins & Bilge, 2016), which helps us recognize the unequal distribution of power and the varying situation and needs of women and girls and men and boys (ADB & Plan International, 2018). We cannot fully comprehend youth if we look at them in isolation, without the concepts and relationships that they are tied to (White, 2019). As Elias et al. (2018:101) point out, “greater attention to intersectionality is needed to anchor young women’s and men’s interests and opportunities.” Understanding the differences and commonalities in issues, experiences, aspirations, and potentials between young rural men and women is needed if we are serious about addressing the challenges of rural youth (White, 2019).

2.4.2 The situation of young women and men in rural communities

The experiences of young men and women can be similar or different based on family and community norms and expectations, which, in turn, can impact the constraints they face and the potentials and opportunities that are available to them (Doss et al., 2019). Both young men and women in rural areas may aspire to have a “better” or more “modern” life (Elias et. al, 2018; Portilla, 2017). Many might hope to gain formal employment (blue- or white-collar jobs) even though such jobs can be in short supply in rural areas (Robson et al., 2019). Other youth will consider rural-based, including land-based, livelihoods as meaningful work and employment options (Elias et al., 2018; Portilla, 2017; Robson et al., 2019). However, differences in aspirations might remain. For instance, a global comparative study on occupational aspirations and trajectories revealed that young rural women show little interest “to engage in knowledge-intensive or ‘modern’ agriculture” when compared to rural young men (Elias et al., 2018, p. 82).
Gender norms and patriarchal relations appeared to discourage young women from taking part in such activities (Elias et al., 2018).

Life in rural areas can be challenging for the youth, and often much more for young women, with the triple “burden” of being young, female, and rural limiting their ability to contribute fully to community productivity and prosperity (IFAD, 2019). Based on an analysis of gender-differentiated data from 42 countries, it was found that a higher proportion of young rural women than men are married, cohabitating with their spouses or in-laws, and less able to have a job or education (Doss et al., 2019). With lower levels of formal education, employment, or training, it is common for rural young women to assume domestic and reproductive roles (Doss et al., 2019). Young women in rural areas often have roles that don’t constitute “paid work” (Macqueen & Campbell, 2020) or form “part of ‘hidden’ and gendered work of household maintenance” (Clendenning et al., 2019, p. 3). The changing demographics in rural areas, with more men migrating out of their communities for employment, may appear empowering to women but there may be no resulting improvement in their decision-making authority over the use of resources (Fakir & Abedin, 2020). Opportunities for building capacity, such as training programs, are generally more accessible to men and may not even match the needs of young women (Macqueen & Campbell, 2020). In many societies, “many doors open to boys as they become men… [and] windows of opportunities… begin to close for girls” (Doss et al., 2019, p. 1).

Access to land is a particular barrier facing rural youth and a driver of out-migration (Kosec et al., 2018). Access can be more limited for young rural women than men, for whom sole land ownership is less likely (Doss et al., 2019). Similarly, the prospects for land inheritance can influence how young people imagine their futures, and here too the situation is often different for women versus men (Berckmoes & White, 2014; Kosec et al., 2018). Beyond land, young women are often more excluded than young men in terms of participation in communal decision-making spaces (Clendenning, 2019). For young females, social norms in traditional rural areas are a major limiting factor for their participation (Trivelli & Morel, 2019) because decision-making spaces are commonly dominated by male community members (Elias et al., 2018; Evans et al., 2017). This is often the case in Indigenous territories (ECLAC, 2014). As a youth participant in one of the FOFW workshops in Mexico explained, “in this community, nearly all the decisions
are taken by men. The only way women participate is through doing cargos. And I have seen, I’ve been in assemblies, and I’ve seen how men dominate everything, even on the issues where women are well placed to contribute” (Robson et al., 2019, p. 31).

Reflecting on similarities and differences among young men and women is thus important to identify more effective and grounded interventions for youth across specific contexts. An assessment of policies and programs for youth in the rural development sector showed little attention was paid to gendered impacts and how experiences specific to young men and young women were seldom captured (Doss et al., 2019).

2.5 Summary and research gaps

As custodians of some of the world's most biologically diverse areas, the knowledge, practices, and institutions of Indigenous Peoples provide significant contributions to biodiversity conservation and sustainable development goals. Given than Indigenous Peoples have gained greater legal (statutory) rights to their traditional territories, the ways in which they manage their lands are of paramount interest. One area of interest concerns how communities, as they think through current and future strategies, are challenged to find effective mechanisms to meaningfully engage younger community members to ensure continuity and renewal in the way they use and govern these territories.

Yet research on youth engagement is still in its infancy, especially concerning Indigenous and rural youth in the Global South. While the role of youth in creating sustainable rural landscapes has been recognized in recent development initiatives and the push for a youth agenda has been gaining attention, recent key reports (Clendenning, 2019; Clendenning et al., 2019; Macqueen & Campbell, 2020; Park & White, 2018; White 2019; FAO, 2014; IFAD, 2019) all point to an overall lack of knowledge about youth engagement processes on the ground. This includes whether Indigenous and rural youth see themselves as actors within the sphere of territorial use and governance, including the motivations and barriers that will shape their likely involvement. In addition, little is known about how youthfulness (age) intersects with gender to determine what involvement will look like for young men and women, respectively.
My research responded to these knowledge gaps, focusing on lessons from an Indigenous Territory in eastern Bolivia and complemented by insights from rural development practitioners working internationally. In the next chapter, I provide a full description of my research design.
CHAPTER THREE: Methodology

3.1 Researcher background and standpoint

In 2017, I was consulting with the forestry team of FAO, one of the specialized agencies of the UN that works with member nations to achieve sustainable forest management. The ‘youth agenda’ was emerging and attempts to mainstream youth in FAO programs and projects were becoming apparent. The FAO forestry team was involved in developing outlooks for the future of the forestry sector and this meant talking about the youth. As the youngest team member, I was in charge of incorporating a youth dimension into FAO regional forestry initiatives. I organized regional consultation workshops with youth foresters and youth from forest communities and engaged in online conversations with them to gather their views and opinions, which we weaved into knowledge products for member states and development practitioners. I also managed a project that supported rural youth in several countries in Asia, with the aim to connect youth to agriculture, forestry, and fisheries-based livelihoods. My previous work had given me access to information and actors in the rural development sector, which helped in conducting this research.

As a young person myself, I became invested in and passionate about the topic of youth empowerment, and I wanted to learn more. Soon, I was actively looking for further opportunities that involved working with the youth. One of these was the FOFW project, which brought together youth, researchers, and NGOs in several different countries and continents to engage youth in meaningful conversations about rural life, forests, and their futures. I volunteered to conduct a youth visioning workshop in a rural community in the Philippines. I was later invited to a workshop at the University of Saskatchewan to share the stories we had heard. Here I met Dr. James Robson, with whom I shared research interests and learnt about the master’s program at the School of Environment and Sustainability (SENS), University of Saskatchewan. I also met Dr. Marlene Soriano-Candia of the Instituto Boliviano de Investigación Forestal (IBIF), from whom I first heard about the case of Indigenous youth in Lomerío, Bolivia. The opportunity arose to dig a little deeper into questions of youth, forests, and environmental governance through research and I jumped at the chance.
Having a history of activism during my college years brought me closer to Indigenous struggles in the Philippine countryside, and I remain an ally of these movements. However, I am an educated woman coming from a middle-class, non-Indigenous background. These are positionalities that carry worldviews that I know I must be mindful of when working in cross-cultural contexts. Similarly, when I started working in the development sector, I learned how important it is to avoid perpetuating forms of tokenism. In my earlier work articulating and mainstreaming FAO’s youth agenda, I came to understand how work on youth cannot ignore other positionalities such as race, income, and gender. These are things that I can relate to through my personal experiences as a young female Asian working in an international setting, where I have been exposed to forms of discrimination and intimidation. These experiences pushed me to question and understand the underlying gender dimensions of our undertakings and led me to see myself as a feminist and, by extension, a feminist scholar. It is one of the reasons I was so interested in incorporating a focus on not only youth but also gender in this research.

These personal experiences and insights have shaped how I approached my research design for this project.

3.2 Research approach and strategy of inquiry

I adopted a qualitative approach informed by an interpretivist/constructivist philosophical worldview. This posits that there is no single reality, that reality is constructed by individuals or groups, and to understand such realities requires interpretation (Crotty, 1998; Lincoln et al., 2018). ‘Constructed reality’ becomes a “product of processes by which social actors together negotiate the meanings for actions and situations” (Blaikie, 1993, p. 96).

My job as researcher on this project was to interpret the constructed realities of my participants (youth) by unveiling the underlying meanings of their feelings, experiences, and views, in this case in relation to community life and territorial governance. By focusing on the lived experiences and standpoint of youth, I hoped to be better placed to understand what shapes their decisions, motivations, and narratives (Portilla, 2017; Huijsmans, 2016; Matthews & Tucker, 2007; Worth, 2015). However, coming from a non-Indigenous background, I also knew that interpretation of such experiences and perspectives would necessarily lean on my own subjective lens and understanding.
My research design also draws on ideas and concepts from feminist epistemologies, informing choices of methods and my particular interest in the intersection of youth and gender. Haraway (1988, p. 581) simply defines feminist objectivity as “situated knowledges.” Research on feminism requires an understanding of “the power of knowledge and epistemology; boundaries, marginalization, silences, and intersections; relationships and their power differentials; and your own socio-political location (or “situatedness”)” (Ackerly & True, 2010, p. 22). It analyzes the impacts of power differences in creating knowledge and shaping social relations (Harding & Norberg, 2005). Thinking about one’s research paradigm, and constructing and interpreting social realities, requires subjectivity and reflexivity (Patton, 2005), which matches feminist epistemologies. I had intended for the research to allow both women's and men’s voices to be heard and, in doing so, unveil their respective lived experiences and perceptions. This would enable some exploration of the gendered roles and power dynamics that exist within Indigenous communities and consideration of how possible gender gaps can be closed. While I’m aware of power structures embedded within and outside my research, it was also important for me to question my assumptions about what knowledge is and whose knowledge matters as part of my role within the research process.

3.3. Research participants and sampling strategy

Table 3.1 provides information about my research participants and other key data sources, the data collection methods employed, sampling strategies, and modes of analysis.

Table 3.1: Research design

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source of Information</th>
<th>Data collection methods</th>
<th>Sampling strategy</th>
<th>Analysis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Community case study (Indigenous youth in Lomerio) | Semi-structured interviews | • Convenience 
• Representative | Thematic analysis |
| Rural Development practitioners       | Semi-structured interviews | • Convenience 
• Snowball  |               |
| Documents                             | Document review         | Purposive                  | Content analysis |
In the subsequent section, I describe the two main groups of participants who took part in (and thus informed) the research: the youth from the Indigenous Territory of Lomerio in Bolivia and rural development practitioners working in Latin America and internationally. I explain how they were identified and recruited as participants (including selection criteria used). After describing my participants, I explain the data collection methods (semi-structured interviews, document review) used in the research. I also discuss the rationale for choosing these methods and, in the case of semi-structured interviews, the different ways that interviews were conducted.

3.3.1 Youth from the Indigenous Territory of Lomerío, Bolivia

This research centred on a case study of youth from the Indigenous Territory of Lomerio located in the Chiquitania region of eastern Bolivia (Figure 3.1), a 5 to 6-hour bus ride from the nearest city, Santa Cruz de la Sierra, where an increasing number of people from Lomerio migrate to for study or work reasons. The territory was connected to the main electricity grid only a decade or so ago, and now has limited internet connectivity. It is increasingly common for community members to have smartphones, with WhatsApp\(^{12}\) being widely used. Additional contextual information on Bolivia and the Indigenous Territory of Lomerio is provided in Box 3.1.

The Chiquitania region is home to the Chiquitano dry forest, an ecologically important forest ecosystem that encompasses more than 70 percent of the Department of Santa Cruz and constitutes the largest and best-preserved tropical dry forest in South America that is rich in biodiversity and ecological functions (International Model Forest Network, n.d.). Due to its natural, historical, and cultural value, a part of this forest has been recognised as a UNESCO World Heritage site (Anívarro et al., 2019).

\(^{12}\) A free web or mobile phone application for text messages and voice/video calls.
My decision to work in Lomerío was based on previous youth engagement work (Robson et al., 2019), and my supervisor’s partnership with the Instituto Boliviano de Investigación Forestal (IBIF). IBIF has developed a strong working relationship with Lomerío over the past five years, which included prior experience working with youth in the community (M. Soriano-Candia, personal communication, 21 May 2020). IBIF was instrumental in helping me engage the Indigenous territory, particularly the Central Indígena de Comunidades de Lomerío (CICOL). CICOL is the main administrative social organization that represents Lomerío’s 29 member communities and oversees governance of its territory. It also ensures that any research is conducted in an ethical manner and responds to the needs of its member communities.
Box 3.1: Background on Bolivia and the Indigenous Territory of Lomerío

Bolivia is a country rich in history, culture, and natural resources, where Indigenous Peoples account for 4.12 million people or 41 percent of the total population (World Bank, 2015). It has a long and complicated history of colonization and post-colonial independence, during which much of its economy has been driven by extractive industries (Klein, 2003), with an often-detrimental impact on Indigenous lands and livelihoods (Robb et al., 2015). It is only during the recent decades that new opportunities have been created for Indigenous and other local communities to gain greater control over customary territories and resources. In the mid-1990s, the Government of Bolivia introduced “[the] decentralization of political power, and agrarian land reform” (Taylor et al., 2003). In 1994, the constitution was reformed to acknowledge the rights of Indigenous Peoples and communities. Moreover, it recognized Indigenous groups as a legal corporation, the “owners” of their ancestral lands, paving the way for Indigenous Peoples to gain greater autonomy over land governance (Ortega, 2004).

This shift can be seen in the use and management of the country’s almost 51 million hectares of highly biodiverse forests (FAO, 2020). While the Bolivian state retains control over the country’s natural forests, the Agrarian Reform and Forest Law of 1996 enabled communities to hold greater forest access and use rights (Lawry & McLain, 2012). Policy reforms saw a significant redistribution of forest areas to local communities and Indigenous territories. Laws were promulgated to strengthen these reforms, such as the National Agrarian Reform Service Law that cemented the communal property rights of Indigenous lands through the creation of Native Communal Lands or Tierra Comunitaria de Origen (TCO). Despite these advances, Indigenous and other local communities still suffer from incomplete formal land titling, lack of clarity on which stakeholders hold which rights, inter-communal conflicts and territorial disputes, pressures from logging and agricultural companies, and socio-economic issues (Monterroso et al., 2019; Ortega, 2004; RRI, 2015). Within the forestry sector, Indigenous groups saw major flaws in the 1996 Agrarian Reform, including the prioritized titling for agricultural colonists on Indigenous land as indicated in its technical rules (Ortega, 2004). Protests by communities across the country called for Indigenous territorial concepts to be better integrated into national plans and legal frameworks (Dockry & Langston, 2018), prompting the Bolivian government to create an Indigenous-controlled territories (or ICTs) category and include community demands and values in the most recent round of reforms to the Forestry Law (Dockry & Langston, 2018). Upon receiving titles to their ICTs, Indigenous land claims are operationalized once the Indigenous community develops a government-approves forest management plan (Del Gatto et al., 2018), which provides formal direction and strategy for land and resource management. As of 2013, 111 such management plans had been approved, covering 1.8 million hectares (Ortega & Rodriguez, 2013).

The ICT of Lomerio is an example of Indigenous communities taking advantage of agrarian reforms to secure greater control and autonomy over their customary lands and territories. Lomerio is located in the Chiquitania region, in the eastern lowlands of Santa Cruz, Bolivia, a vast tract of dry forest lands (Chiquitano dry forest) (Pinard et al., 1999). It is one of Bolivia’s more prominent success stories in asserting territorial sovereignty, characterized by a decade-long struggle that resulted in the declaration of the Autonomous Statute of the Monoxiki Nation of Lomerio in 2009 (Instituto para el Desarrollo Rural de Sudamérica [Sudamérica Rural IPDRS], 2015; Centro de Estudios Jurídicos e Investigación Social [CEJIS] & CICOL, 2013). Collectively, Indigenous communities have gained ownership to 259,188 hectares of forest lands that comprise the ICT (Sudamérica Rural IPDRS, 2015). Legal titles provided the communities of Lomerio with the incentive structure and apparatus with which to devise its own set of territorial rights and responsibilities and an appropriate institutional structure to govern local territorial resources, economic, and political systems, as well as to administer its relationship with the state (CEJIS, 2018). A third of the territory has been set aside for community forestry to combat illegal logging in the area while supporting the local families that rely heavily on forests and forest products for their livelihood.

Member communities of the ICT are organized into four main zones: San Antonio, Santa Rosa del Palmar, El Puquío, and San Lorenzo. In terms of governance, the ICT is administered by a centralized committee known as the Estructura Organizativa de la Central Indígena de Comunidades Originarias de Lomerio (CEJIS & CICOL, 2013). At both territorial and community levels, authorities are recognizing the need to emphasize youth participation in questions of territorial and forest use and governance. In their recently approved forest management plan, CICOL (2019) reflects upon the lack of coordinated mechanism for youth participation. The research builds on earlier work by IBIF as part of the FOFW project to engage Indigenous youth to further explore their views and perspectives.
Rather than interviewing a fixed number of youth participants, I took the view that research validity would be more dependent on depth of analysis (of participant experiences) than the number of interviewees (after Holt & Slade, 2003). As such, I aimed for a small, relatively homogenous sample (Brocki & Wearden, 2006; Collins & Nicolson, 2002) of between 10 and 20 youth. The selection criteria were as follows:

1. Community members between 15 and 24 years of age, with potential exceptions to accommodate those over 24 still recognized as “youth” in their communities
2. Based in or from one of the communities that comprise the Indigenous territory of Lomerio (Note: of the 29 communities that make up the territory, IBIF suggested a pre-selection of 11 communities based on the level of natural resource dependence, youth population, and ability of the local youth to participate in the research given transport and connectivity issues)
3. Self-identifies as an Indigenous person
4. Self-identifies as man or woman or is gender neutral (Note: There was a conscious effort to recruit female participants and to aim for them to constitute 50 percent of the participants.)
5. Could be single, married, and/or have children.

My youth participants were identified through a combination of convenience and representative sampling strategies, following the advice from IBIF, CICOL, and a community researcher from Lomerio. In total, 18 Indigenous youth from Lomerio participated in the research, representing eight of the 29 communities within the territory. Further details about these participants, including their age, gender, occupation, and home community are provided in Table 3.2.

Since travel to Bolivia was not possible due to the COVID-19 pandemic, I was assisted on-the-ground by IBIF’s gender and inclusion officer and a local community researcher, the latter of whom was hired to help me recruit participants and conduct and transcribe some of the interviews. Upon identification, youth participants were sent an electronic invitation in Spanish to participate in an interview and were provided information about the purpose of the research, the desired outcomes, and potential implications. Once they confirmed their availability and gave
their informed consent, a suitable date and time were set, and the interview was conducted either remotely (by me) or in-person by the community researcher.

Table 3.2: Breakdown of youth participants based on home community, age, and gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pre-selected communities</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Palmira</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surusubi</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>El Puquio</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monterito</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>San Lorenzo</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coloradillo</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Todo Santos</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Puesto Nuevo</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Las Trancas</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>San Antonio</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>El Cerrito</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.3.2 Rural development practitioners

While Indigenous youth from Lomerio were my primary research participants, I also contacted and interviewed practitioners working in the areas of rural development and community-based resources management to gather their insights on youth-community relations and interactions. I employed a mix of convenience and snowball sampling, tapping into my professional networks as a first step and then asking the first group of interviewees to recommend others I could potentially speak to. A total of 11 practitioners were interviewed. They represented both typical and key “experts,” with a typical expert characterized as one whose knowledge base leans towards the praxis of the area of study and a key expert as one who is interested in both theory and practice and can provide the researcher with facts and independent conclusions (Ilya, 2011). Table 3.3 provides a list of the geographical scope of their work as practitioners. They consisted of a mix of country coordinators of youth projects/campaigns, rural development and gender and social inclusion practitioners at international development agencies, Indigenous youth leaders, researchers, etc.
Table 3.3: Information about the practitioners

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Geographical scope of work</th>
<th>Affiliation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Harlem Mariño Saavedra</td>
<td>Peru</td>
<td>UN-REDD Programme (previously Organización Nacional de Mujeres Indígenas Andinas y Amazónicas del Perú)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twila Cassadore</td>
<td>USA</td>
<td>San Carlos Apache Tribe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rose Hayahay</td>
<td>Philippines</td>
<td>Save Our Schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fermin Sosa Pérez</td>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>INDAYU A.C.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iliana Monterroso</td>
<td>Guatemala/Latin America</td>
<td>Center for International Forestry Research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marlène Elias</td>
<td>Global</td>
<td>Alliance of Bioversity International and CIAT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bharati Pathak</td>
<td>Nepal</td>
<td>Federation of Community Forestry Users Nepal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yemi Adeyeye</td>
<td>Global</td>
<td>Young Professionals for Agricultural Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jessica Clendenning</td>
<td>Indonesia/Asia-Pacific</td>
<td>National University of Singapore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sarah Wright</td>
<td>Australia/Philippines</td>
<td>University of Newcastle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cécile Ndjebet</td>
<td>Cameroon/West &amp; Central Africa</td>
<td>African Women's Network for Community Management of Forests</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pantju Nam</td>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>University of Adelaide</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rurelyn Bay-ao</td>
<td>Philippines</td>
<td>SABOKAHAN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raciel Ali González Rojas</td>
<td>Costa Rica</td>
<td>Universidad Nacional de Costa Rica</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reeta Khulal</td>
<td>Nepal</td>
<td>FECOFUN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eh Pho Nuchanat</td>
<td>Myanmar</td>
<td>Karen Education Culture Department</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Araceli López Gutiérrez</td>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>Asociación de Comuneros</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The so-called “expert” interview has become a popular tool in interpretative organization research based on social constructivist approaches (Froschauer & Lueger, 2009). Although it has its own risks and subjectivity, Bogner et al. (2009, p. 2) argued that such kind of interview provides a “more efficient and concentrated method of gathering data,” as it provides rich and deep insights on a particular topic. The knowledge and experiences of such research participants can act as “crystallization points” (Bogner et al., 2009), providing a broader sense of the themes and trends that the research focuses on. For my work, it also provided an opportunity to compare the perspectives of Indigenous youth from Lomerío with those of the practitioners working in other regions of the world (whether in local, national, regional, or international settings), and

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13 For practitioners’ insights, full names and affiliations are given at the first instance their names appeared on the draft. Subsequent insights from the practitioner would be cited on a first/last name basis.
maybe give a sense as to how ‘typical’ or ‘atypical’ the case of Lomerio represented (in terms of youth engagement and empowerment and youth participation in Indigenous resource management and territorial governance). I also saw these practitioners as a potentially useful source of information about current initiatives and strategies to enhance youth participation, both in terms of the communities and regions where they work and the efforts of the organizations, programs, and policies that they represent or are involved in implementing.

Practitioners were interviewed remotely by video call, phone, or e-mail.

3.4. Data collection methods

Semi-structured interviews served as the primary data collection method and provided data that informed all four research objectives. A document review was also carried out to provide important supplementary data to meet Objective 3. These methods are summarized in Table 3.4.

Table 3.4: Research objectives and corresponding data collection methods and sources

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objective</th>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Investigate how young Indigenous women and men experience and perceive territorial governance</td>
<td>Semi-structured interviews</td>
<td>Indigenous youth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identify and explore the barriers to and opportunities for Indigenous youth participation in territorial governance</td>
<td>Semi-structured interviews</td>
<td>Indigenous youth Practitioners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Document initiatives to enhance youth participation</td>
<td>Document review Semi-structured interviews</td>
<td>Indigenous youth Practitioners Document review</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop recommendations for Indigenous and local community leaderships, development organizations and practitioners, and government agencies and policymakers to support youth participation in Indigenous territorial governance</td>
<td>Semi-structured interviews</td>
<td>Indigenous youth Practitioners</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.4.1 Semi-structured interviews

Thompson et al. (1989, p. 138) describes interviewing as “the most powerful means of attaining an in-depth understanding of another person’s experiences.” As Smith and Osborn (2003) note, semi-structured interviews are particularly appropriate for my research because of the way they enable the researcher to guide the conversation via a set of pre-determined themes while
allowing participants to tell their stories, using their own narrative (Brocki & Wearden, 2006). In my study, such format allowed for personal accounts and perspectives to be explored, while helping to create a sense of collaboration between myself and my participants. It is also allowed for prompting and probing, which helped me understand and gather experiences, insights, opinions, and perspectives. I approached my semi-structured interviews with the idea that my youth “participants [are] the primary experts,” and that meaningful engagement with them was critical to the success of the research (Alexander & Clare, 2004, p. 82).

When interviewing Indigenous youth, I incorporated a mix of descriptive, narrative, structural, contrast, evaluative, circular, and comparative questions (after Smith et al., 2009). For interviews with experts, I structured my questions differently. I developed draft interview schedules that were used as guides. Most questions were formed and structured in a way that allows for additional questions to be asked “on the fly” and provides for a more free-flowing conversation (Brocki & Wearden, 2006).

In the interviews, I noted patterns and themes that emerged across interviews and that would shine a light on the experiences, opinions, and observations of my interviewees (Smith, 1999). The goal of the researcher is not to generalize or regurgitate those lived experiences, but to analyze them using an appropriate inductive or deductive lens (Brocki & Wearden, 2006). I did this by engaging Indigenous youth from Lomerío in semi-structured interviews that explored themes related to their experiences, feelings, and perceptions regarding their participation and place in community processes, as well as to the use, management, and governance of the Indigenous territory and its natural resources. Based on insights from Smith et al. (2009), my interviews with the youth participants comprised a mix of types of questions, namely:

- descriptive (e.g., Can you describe your role in your community/organization?)
- narrative (e.g., How did you start participating in community meetings?)
- structural (e.g., How do they invite attendees to the general assembly?)
- contrast (e.g., Are opportunities in the community the same or different for young men and women? If yes, what are these?)
- evaluative (e.g., How do you feel when the youth are heard/represented in your community?)
- circular (e.g., What do leaders in your community think about the youth?)
● comparative (e.g., *What changed (from before) after the community elected a youth representative?*)

● prompts (e.g., *Can you tell me a bit more about that?*)

● probes (e.g., *What do you mean by ‘ignored’?*)

These (and other) questions were designed to initiate conversations with the youth based on their personal views and experiences. A full sample of the interview questions is provided in Appendix A. The interview guide was developed in English and translated into Spanish with the assistance of Dr. Marlene Santos-Candia of IBIF.

Due to COVID-19 travel restrictions, as well as the location of many of the experts, all interviews were conducted remotely. Previous work has shown how this kind of data can be collected remotely (Murray, 2004; Murray & Harrison, 2004; Turner et al., 2002; Walker, 2013). I conducted interviews through online research methods, predominantly using internet-based video/voice calls. With the abundance of VoIP (Voice over Internet Protocol) software (e.g., Skype, Webex, and Zoom), Internet-based interviews are becoming increasingly popular (Lo Iacono et al., 2015). A potential advantage of doing video/voice call interviews is its ability to bridge a geographical divide in a time-efficient and affordable manner (Walker, 2013). In choosing the platforms to use for the interviews, I used whatever was most convenient and/or accessible to the participant in question.

As noted, I hired a community liaison/researcher to assist me with contacting participants, assisting in the remote interviews, and helping with translation. While I have sufficiently good Spanish to converse and transcribe interviews, on-the-ground help was necessary to ensure that interviews ran smoothly. I remained responsible for interview transcribing and all data analysis and interpretation.

3.4.2 Document review

A document review was done to provide supplementary data for Objective 3 and, to a lesser degree, Objective 4. A document review is a systematic way to review and evaluate both print and electronic documents (Bowen, 2009). It can be combined with other qualitative methods, such as interviews, to verify information generated by other methods (Bowen, 2009).
Specifically, I carried out a document review to help identify initiatives that aim to enhance youth participation in Indigenous territorial use and governance and to consider if and how gender is integrated into such initiatives. I used purposive sampling to select the documents to review. To limit my search and to find relevant and up-to-date information, I only looked for documents published in the last decade (between 2010 and 2021), with the main document type being institutional reports containing case studies on youth participation in rural and community development, specifically focusing on youth initiatives on agriculture, forestry, food security, climate change, and rural development. From my initial search, I focused on four documents as key source materials for my analysis (Table 3.5).

Table 3.5: List of documents reviewed for this research and the justification for selection.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title of the document</th>
<th>Justification for selection</th>
<th>Citation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Indigenous youth as agents of change - Actions of Indigenous youth in local food systems during times of adversity</td>
<td>Most recent publication of FAO on youth that centers on Indigenous initiatives related to climate change, food security, and the COVID-19 pandemic.</td>
<td>FAO, 2021</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth and agriculture: key challenges and concrete solutions</td>
<td>One of the early publications released by FAO, IFAD, and the Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation on youth and agriculture that is available online. It includes internal stocktaking of initiatives relating to youth as well as case studies gathered from a global survey, where gender is considered among the survey questions.</td>
<td>FAO, 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IFAD’s Engagement with Rural Youth</td>
<td>It provides a list of initiatives that are supported by IFAD and implemented by them or with/by other NGOs or development agencies. Aside from descriptions and approaches of the activities, it reports on the lessons learned from conducting these youth engagement efforts.</td>
<td>IFAD, 2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Future of Forest Work and Communities Learning from Youth Engagement Workshops in Asia, Africa, and the Americas</td>
<td>A report on my initial involvement on youth engagement work. It provides a good example on the experience on consulting young people about their aspirations and visions for their communities.</td>
<td>Robson et al., 2019</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From this review, I hoped to gain a clearer idea of the range and scale of interventions and approaches to date and look at geographic spread, impacts, lessons learned, and other pertinent information. Information gathered also informed my recommendations to Indigenous and local...
communities, development organizations, and government agencies on enhancing youth participation in Indigenous territorial governance (Objective 4; see section 5.4).

3.5 Data management and analysis

Interviews conducted via video or phone call were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim. All interview data were coded and analyzed. In coding and analyzing interviews with Indigenous youth, I followed Smith’s (2009) detailed step-by-step process, which involved a) listening to the recording and immersing myself in its contents; b) transcribing the recording verbatim; c) reading the transcription; d) exploring the language and content of the data and its meaning; e) finding emergent themes; f) listing down all emergent themes; and g) connecting these emergent themes.

Throughout process, I endeavored to use the same language used by the youth during the interviews, as coding “with their actual words enhances and deepens an adult’s understanding of their cultures and worldviews” (Saldaña, 2013). After following these steps for all youth interview transcripts, I looked for patterns across interviews and aggregated surfaced themes into a master list. I then analyzed the descriptions of the youth’s lived experiences, factoring in existing theoretical perspectives and my perceptions and biases.

Coding and analysis of practitioner interviews followed a similar initial process based on verbatim transcription. However, in this process, codes generated from the first interview transcript provided the foundation for the coding of subsequent transcriptions. I then performed thematic analysis, a method of data analysis widely used by qualitative researchers (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This involves searching for important emergent themes that are consistent across interview data, organizing them into clusters, and assigning meanings to them.

For the document review, I conducted content analysis, wherein I gathered information and interpreted raw data from texts, and came up with emerging themes, topics, or models (Thomas, 2006) related to youth-focused initiatives and interventions.

For coding analysis, I shared my transcripts and coding with my supervisor for both interviews and document review. We discussed and deliberated the emerging themes that I have analyzed. Checking and consultation were done periodically throughout the analysis. For the interview
transcripts in Lomerío, I was assisted by Ignacio Quiviquivi (IBIF) and consulted with Dr. Marlene Soriano-Candia regarding the translation and analysis of the responses.

No software was used in any of the coding processes. I initially explored using NVivo software for coding, but I switched back to a more organic way of analyzing the interviews. Given that the sample size is small, I believe that immersing myself deeply in the narratives would produce better results.

3.6 Ethics

This research formed part of two larger projects, “Engaging Indigenous Youth in Community Forestry in Bolivia,” supported by an International Research Partnership Fund at the University of Saskatchewan and “Building Inclusivity in Latin American Forest Commons,” funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. Both projects fell under Ethics Certificate #1128 granted by the Research Ethics Board of the University of Saskatchewan (see Appendix C). For my research, I was able to submit an amendment under the existing ethics approval in late June 2020, which was approved by the University on 30 April 2020. While the research was considered minimal risk, I followed strict protocols to ensure the study was conducted ethically. Participant recruitment in Lomerío was done in collaboration with IBIF and CICOL. Free, prior, and informed consent was obtained from participants before the interviews were conducted.

3.7 Knowledge mobilization

To enhance the impact of the research, I have carried out a series of knowledge mobilization activities that continue as of this writing. I presented the main study findings at the following conferences: International Association for the Study of the Commons Forest Conference 2021 (virtual, 13-17 September 2021) and partly during my presentation at the XV World Forestry Congress (Seoul, Republic of Korea, 02-06 May 2022). I am writing a summary report in Spanish to convey the outcomes of the research to participating youth and communities in Lomerío. I will visit Bolivia in October 2022 to present the results of the study to local partners.

3.8 Limitations

Previous studies on youth suggest participatory action research, community engagement, and community-based research as effective ways to engage young people in research (Cahill, 2007;
Liebenberg et al., 2017; Robson et al., 2019). Initial plans for the research followed these recommendations. However, travel restrictions due to the COVID-19 pandemic rendered in-person fieldwork in Bolivia impracticable. In response, I changed the research design to allow for remote data collection and a more diverse range of research participants/data sources. Conducting research remotely has its risks as it can limit face-to-face interaction and rapport-building with participants. Yet, at the same time, it could open opportunities to explore modalities and innovations, such as the use of new technologies and social media platforms, which the youth may be particularly responsive to. The difficulties faced in conducting this research during the COVID-19 pandemic are discussed in greater detail in section 6.2.

A further limitation of the research concerns the generalizability of the research findings. As previously discussed, young people do not belong to a homogenous group, and while the study aims to explore commonalities in the experiences of Indigenous young people, the applicability of the experiences captured from Lomerío cannot be said to apply to Indigenous youth living in other contexts.
CHAPTER FOUR: Study Findings

This chapter presents study findings for Objectives 1 (Investigate how young Indigenous women and men experience and perceive territorial governance), 2 (Identify and explore the barriers to and opportunities for Indigenous youth participation in territorial governance), and 3 (Document initiatives to enhance youth participation) of the research. It is split into four main sections: youth-community connections; youth and territorial governance; barriers to youth participation in community/territorial life; and strategies to enhance youth participation.

4.1 Youth-community connections

In this opening section, I explore what the young people from Lomerio told me about the meaning of community and the role(s) they play in it. Some of these insights are supplemented by what practitioners working in other regions told me about the youth-community trends they have observed.

4.1.1 What it means to be part of the community

In my conversations with the youth of Lomerio, one of the questions I asked was: *What does it mean to be a member of your community?* Responses coalesced around the idea that taking part and sharing in community activities were central to being an active community member: “It is to participate in different activities that are in the community” (18/male/Surusubi\(^{14}\)), “[to] contribute to the community by working together and getting along with the whole community” (16/male/Surusubi)]. Participants described an idealised community in which members work together (collective action) for a common vision, built around activities organized internally (within the community), and help each other in times of need (ideals of mutual support and reciprocity). This concept of sharing was integral to community life and identity, whereby interaction with and commitment to community traditions combine to foster individual and collective senses of belonging. As a 19-year-old female from the community of Monteritos in Lomerio explained, “it is sharing the same culture that we inhabit in the community, being part of the native place, respecting values and manners.”

\(^{14}\) For direct quotes from the youth of Lomerio, this format is used: (age/gender/community).
In Lomerio, once a young person turns 18 years of age, they are required to attend the general assembly and community-level meetings. Rather than seeing these merely as required activities, the youth understood their involvement in these meetings as constituting part of their “responsibility,” synonymous with active community membership. As a 22-year-old male from Palmira told me, “Upon reaching 18, you fulfill the functions of being a community member with [attendant] obligations and rights… [and a young person] can be elected as a representative of their community (called cacique\textsuperscript{15}). A 17-year-old from the same community noted that this means “participating through projects and helping the community [...] and making decisions for the benefit of all.”

I wanted to know a little more about how the youth felt about taking on obligations at their age, that is, to become ‘active’ members of the community. Nearly all participants said that contributing in this way makes them feel happy, proud, and increased their sense of belonging. As one 15-year-old male participant from San Lorenzo told me, “It is a [source of] pride to be part of my community, and to live in this territory.” Several participants spoke about the importance of youth involvement. A 17-year-old female from Surusubi said that the youth were able to “help each other and give opinions so that there is a development in the community”. Another young person (18/male/El Puquio), who helps his grandparents on their farm, stated how young people are perceived by others in the community as a valuable source of energy and labour: “[We] have that energy and action to help the [other] community members.” Through participation in community activities, the youth could help their community progress and strengthen their identity as Chiquitanians or Monkox\textsuperscript{16}.

I was interested to know whether the youth needed to be physically present in their home village and territory to feel a part of their community. In Lomerio, this was a relevant question given the realities of youth mobility, which may impact young people’s ability to participate directly in community affairs. In response to the question, what prevents you and other youth from participating in these activities and decisions? interviewees noted that “young people do not stay in the community… [there is] high migration […] to the city to search for better study and work

\textsuperscript{15} Caciques are leaders who receive a specific role in their communities or CICOL’s governance structure. The general Assembly gives mandates to CICOL’s caciques, who must comply with those mandates to their best ability (Personal communication, Marlene Soriano-Candia of IBIF, May 2020).

\textsuperscript{16} Chiquitani or Monkox is how the people from the Chiquitania region in Bolivia call themselves.
opportunities” (22/male/Palmira), which was seen as a result of “[a] lack of opportunity in the territory to generate money” (18/male/Surusubsí), as well as the “lack of programs and trainings to […] develop the knowledge of the youth” (23/female/San Lorenzo). One participant noted how “separation” can make it “impossible to come and be an integral part of the community” (17/female/Palmira). In Lomerío, few argued against this point of view. However, among Indigenous youth that I spoke to (from outside of Bolivia), some believed that feeling a part of one’s community was not wholly dependent on participating in community activities in person. For example, Araceli López Gutiérrez from the Zapoteca community in Mexico stated that “one thing is to be a member of the community, and another is to live in the community.”

4.1.2 Roles played by the youth in the community

Most of the youth from Lomerío who participated in this research still live with their parents or have (temporarily) relocated outside of the home community to attend school or university. Those studying in Santa Cruz (city) often go back to visit their territory during semestral breaks. In addition, during the COVID-19 pandemic, many students in Santa Cruz had no option but to go back to Lomerío, where they stayed for an extended period with their families. This meant that many continue to help with domestic chores and household livelihood activities, including working on their family’s farm or plots of land. While the youth remain heavily involved in household-level activities, I found that many were also involved in one or more types of community-level activities, although only a few of these were tied specifically to territorial use and management.

Among the most common activities were participation in religious/church activities (e.g., processions, rituals, altar boy, teaching catechesis), sporting events/clubs, community events (e.g., clean-up drive, festivals), sponsored workshops (e.g., beekeeping project, youth participation), and in the recently formed Jovenes Unidos por el Medio Ambiente (JUMA17) youth group. JUMA is a youth group established with the support of CICOL to engage young people in local environmental issues. One of its members explained how the group started in response to the forest fires of 2019 that devastated the region, and the youth wanted to become “more involved and ensure the revitalization of the environment” (18/male/El Puquio).

17 In English, JUMA means “youth united for the environment.”
From these conversations, I had the sense that the primary way that young people in/from Lomerío get actively involved in the community was by helping with communal farming lands (so-called *chacos*). Then there is a smaller set of young people, most still based or living in the home community, that are taking part in organized community activities.

### 4.1.3 Participation in general assemblies and community meetings

In Lomerío, a roaming van with a loudspeaker is popularly used to invite community members to attend upcoming community meetings. More recently, community leadership has started to use WhatsApp to disseminate information about such meetings and other community gatherings. Through these invitations, young people become informed about community meetings. Youth under the age of 18 are more likely to attend if encouraged or required to come along by parents or grandparents. However, interview data suggest that this only applies, in practice, to a few among this group. For those over 18, participation is much higher, in part not only because they are expected to attend once they reach that age, but also because a good number have a desire to stay informed about community affairs.

I asked the youth participants about their experiences attending and participating in meetings. One 19-year-old female from the community of Monterito said that most meetings and gatherings are called to discuss pressing community issues and affairs and to consider solutions to these challenges (for example, the same participant shared that she attended an assembly to tackle the community’s water tank problem). An 18-year-old male from El Puquio recalled the assembly he was a part of “to elect the candidates for mayor and councillor, [which] is carried out democratically.” Furthermore, two participants from Coloradillo and El Puquio had taken part in meetings to craft the new territorial management plan “so that the community members know the activities to be carried out during the year” (21/female/Coloradillo). When asked how they felt when participating in these meetings, most were positive (Table 4.1).
Table 4.1: Selection of youth responses to the two-part question, “How do you feel being in a community meeting? Do you feel welcomed by others at these meetings?”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responses</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>You feel good and welcome to participate in the meeting.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel good, because that is what the authorities like for young people to participate in, and I always feel welcome.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel good and participate knowing the opinions of older people.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel good because we are family, and it is required that we be united and listened to by others.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel happy and content to be able to listen and participate.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel very calm and welcome to the meeting.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel very calm, listening and learning to one day be just like them. I feel welcome by everyone.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I wanted to delve a little more into the reasons the youth felt this way. It was clear that almost all young people (15 out of 18) who had experience attending general assemblies/community meetings see these as a learning opportunity where they can hear about the situation of their communities and territory and know the opinions of its broader membership. One participant from Palmira (17/female) explained how she learns a lot from the experiences of older community members, while another participant from El Puquio (18/male) believed that through attending meetings and listening to others, the youth could “learn and have knowledge about the problems that happen in the community.” General assemblies and community meetings were considered important spaces for acquiring knowledge to help them (young people) “meet the needs of the community [and] to be able to collaborate in the work of the community” (23/female/San Lorenzo).

It was also striking how most youth feel welcomed by older community members. They had the sense that, overall, community elders wanted them there. They felt that this was because older people viewed the youth as among “the most dynamic” elements of community memberships and are “able [to contribute to] to progress [in the community]” (17/female/Surusubi). Several youth participants told me that the authorities felt “satisfied when a young person gives their opinion and participates with a suggestion for the benefit of the community” (18/male/Surusubi).

However, the fact that elders “need support and opinions of the young people” (22/male/Palmira) placed a degree of pressure on the youth to not only attend but also be active in these meetings, and that they were expected to “listen and analyze the topics presented” (23/male/Coloradillo). For some of the youth participants, this was a positive thing, as it meant that they got to learn a lot and felt valued, since their opinions are heard and validated: “I feel very comfortable
participating and feel well-received because we are being listened to when making decisions” (23/male/Coloradillo). Other participants were less effusive. Two females, one 15 years of age from San Lorenzo and the other 19 years of age from Monterito, did not have good memories of attending their first meetings, with one feeling “a little nervous due to [their] lack of experience” and another feeling “a little strange” or uncomfortable in that environment. In both cases, they needed to “adjust,” to become more acquainted with the situation and fall into a position where they can participate more in subsequent meetings.

In connection to this, I was interested to know how many youth participants were attending versus actively participating in these meetings. Of the 18 participants that I spoke to, three said they are vocal and provide interventions – a suggestion, an idea, or a solution to a problem. All three noted that whenever this happens, everyone listened [“I intervened with a suggestion, and everyone listens carefully when one asks to speak.” (22/male/Palmira), “In the group that I participated in, if I contribute an idea, everyone listens to me and supports me.” (17/female/Surusubi)] and this made them feel even more a part of things (of the collective). The majority (15 of 18 participants), however, had yet to offer their thoughts or opinions or share an idea or solution in a community meeting. Most felt that if they were to “take the floor,” then everyone would listen – that all opinions are valid and will be considered. They shared that they did not speak up because they felt they lacked the requisite experience to share their thoughts. It was not immediately obvious what kind of experience was missing or how much might be considered “enough” to speak up. When I probed a little, I got the sense that ‘experience’ referred to things like education obtained from outside the community and/or work experience. What was clear was that personalities are also important, that some young people are naturally self-confident and more at ease (than others) speaking in public, while many others are less so. Indeed, it’s possible that any “lack of experience” is used by some youth as a reason to not speak up more, especially when they attend their first meetings at ages 18 and 19 (when attendance becomes mandatory).

What was significant among the 15 youth who had attended but not yet intervened in a general assembly or community meeting was that most made clear that this lack of involvement was not a barrier to them attending or participating more actively in future gatherings. They valued what these meetings represent as spaces to learn and acquire knowledge, and they know that when
they do have something to say, older community members “listen when one takes the floor” (17/female/Palmira), especially when that person “knows how to express oneself well” (18/male/Surusubi).

4.2 Youth and territorial use and governance

I was particularly interested in the views and perceptions of young people in relation to territorial use and governance. In this section, I relay what young people in Lomerio told me about these relationships. Where appropriate, these insights are supplemented by what I heard from practitioners working in other places.

4.2.1 Current youth roles in territorial use and governance

First, when the concept of territorial governance is brought up in conversation, Lomerio youth were quick to focus on the central role that the caciques play in managing and making decisions on how their communal territory is accessed, used, and managed. Most youth recognised the cacique as “the highest authority in the community or territory” (22/male/Palmira), which plans activities, garners support from the broader community membership, coordinates with other internal and external organizations, interacts with individual families on land-based issues, and “carries the community forward.” Parallel to the work of the caciques, CICOL, as the centralized organization that brings together caciques from the 29 member communities, was also mentioned by nearly all youth participants, signalling both the role that CICOL plays in governing the Indigenous territory and youth-held knowledge of the organization.

These bodies and organizations are not set up to work in isolation from one another but form part of a larger coherent whole. Because the Indigenous Territory of Lomerio comprises so many communities, mechanisms are needed to bring things together under a hierarchical governance structure. Nearly all youth could, to a lesser or greater degree, articulate how this worked in their territory, with a 19 year-old female from Monterito perhaps capturing it best by saying: “We are organized and have a board of the TCO, which is at the head of the 29 communities that watch over the territory of Lomerio… we coexist with nature, the territory is our big house, it is where we work, live, and exist and have our own language, music, clothing, and culture”.

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For the youth, the idea of territorial governance was not confined to higher-level decision-making but extended to how the territory is used and by whom. They recognised agriculture as the main land use and livelihood source in the territory, with corn, rice, banana, and yucca as the main food crops. According to them, these were planted mainly for household subsistence. Aside from farming, raising of livestock, hunting, and fishing were also common land-based practices. A few participants mentioned timber extraction from local forests for use in construction or to make furniture. The youth thus exhibited a level of knowledge on territorial use and governance.

The youth participants harbour some knowledge of the rules and policies governing such activities. For example, they explained that for subsistence farming, “each family works on their own farm” (22/male/Palmira), and that “everyone [above 18 years of age] has the right to use the land without discrimination from anyone” (23/female/San Lorenzo). Within the TCO, “(if) the land is not sold, whoever works (on) it (can have) it and can lock up their possibility [to become productive through land-based activities]” (23/female/San Lorenzo). The participants told me that to get permission (to work the land), a letter of request must be written and sent to the authorities, and a maximum of five hectares per year can be granted for each person. Upon being granted rights to manage the plot of land, the holder is prohibited from using heavy machinery or chemicals and is responsible for preventing fires.

It should be noted that most of the youth that I spoke to (14 of 18) were current students, students about to graduate, or students who had recently graduated from “promotion”\(^\text{18}\) school and were back in the community because of the COVID-19 pandemic. While in the community, they help their parents or grandparents manage their lands. Most of them, regardless of gender, told me that they get involved in “agriculture, planting, livestock,” as well as in some forest-based activities, e.g., “to get wood” (25/male/El Cerrito). Thus, their involvement was organized primarily at the household or family level, “between parents and children” (22/male/Palmira).

However, it is also the case that any young person over 18 living in the territory “has the right to manage and use the land” (23/female/San Lorenzo). Of the 18 youth participants, four (two females and two males) were not current or recent students, and at least one had started a family. All four were working in some form of agriculture, with three of the four involved in an

\(^{18}\) Similar to high school/secondary school.
additional livelihood that provided an important source of cash income. One man was involved in carpentry/furniture-making, a woman was raising cattle, and the other woman was doing embroidery and weaving apart from working in agriculture. From my conversation with the youth, I got the sense that for those who do farm (work the land) independently, it can be easier (as a young person) to speak out (and have your views considered) in decision-making spaces. However, it was also noted by a participant that for any “big” land-related issue, “young people do not have the right to make decisions, but rather older people or the elderly [reserve that right]” (21/female/Coloradillo). Three participants from different communities noted that there is “no youth representative” in territorial decision-making spaces (22/male/Palmira; 21/female/Coloradillo; 17/female/El Puquio).

Finally, the participants told me that they were also invited to take part in communal labour days, which “are carried out every Saturday” among Lomerío communities (17/female/El Puquio). On these days, young people and other community members take part in the communal work to tend the land by planting crops and trees from which they get their subsistence and household income.

4.2.2 Perceptions about the youth and their potentials in the community

“Young people are the future” is a common refrain in the literature and among practitioners and, arguably, behind much of the focus regarding youth in rural development circles over the past decade. When I asked the young people in Lomerio, What do you think the leaders of your community and territory think about you [as youth]? their responses often echoed this idea. For example, one noted how community elders see youth as “the future [who will] be able to grow and [provide] progress [to the community]” (17/female/Surusubi), while another spoke about young people as the ones who are “active in the community” and how they (the youth) are motivated “to participate because we are the future” (15/female/San Lorenzo). Another interviewee (17/female/Palmira) said that this view had led older community members to “ask that there be more participation of young people” so that the youth could “follow in their footsteps and learn about the management of the territory and how to carry the community forward.” Indeed, some of the youth are expected to take on the role of “authorities and chiefs” (18/male/El Puquio), and “they (the elders) prepare us to be just like them” (16/male/Surusubi).
As they come of age, the young people in Lomerío are expected to “carry out an activity” (18/male/Surusubi) or “a project for the benefit of the community” (15/male/San Lorenzo). This is one major reason community leadership in Lomerío has started to get young people more involved in management and decision-making and encouraged those who leave for further study to “be professionals and be part of the community again by helping using [the] knowledge [they acquire]” (21/female/Coloradillo). As an 18-year-old male from El Puquio acknowledged, “Young professionals are [being] chosen for their authority to grow and progress.”

Although most interviewees from Lomerío saw the youth being portrayed in a positive light with regard to what they offer, or could offer, to the community, some have also aired more negative perceptions. A couple of participants felt that young people are not as active as they could be, and when they are in meetings, “not everyone is interested in participating” (22/male/Palmira). One interviewee felt that older community members “[think that] we (the youth) do not have the capacity to organize ourselves independently” (19/female/ Monterito).

4.2.3 Female participation in community life and activities

How women, especially young women, take part in land-based community activities and perform in decision-making spaces was an additional interest of this study. I was keen to explore how the youth and the practitioners consider female versus male participation in community work, activities, and roles.

On the topic of work, the youth in Lomerío expressed that “men have different jobs [compared to] women” (16/male/Surusubi). For example, the same participant said that in terms of land-based activities, women “do not go to the forests,” with another participant adding that “if we are talking about large forests, women do not participate there, because [that] labor is for men” (17/female/EL Puquio). Men were said to participate in “activities that require greater effort” (17/female/Surusubi), while women are given the “lighter work” (15/female/San Lorenzo) on the farm. Within the community, women “do cleaning in schools, churches” (16/male/Surusubi) and “dedicate themselves to housework” (17/female/Surusubi). However, not all participants saw such a divide, stressing that equal opportunities are present for “both men and women…” only in
some heavy jobs [do the] men go, but in simple jobs all [community members] go” (17/female/Palmira).

Gendered roles within the household appeared to impact the participation of young women in community activities, as well as their perception of their position within family and community life. This is illustrated most clearly to me when a 23-year-old woman from San Lorenzo referred to herself as an *ama de casa* (“housewife” in English), which seemed to underplay the contributions she was making to the household economy through embroidery, weaving, and agricultural work. Young women and girls were expected “to help mothers carry out activities at home” and in the *chaco*, and so roles and expectations outside these areas were not well-developed (17/female/Palmira).

Insights from outside of Lomerío suggest that in some parts of the world, this situation might be changing, as evident in migration, which contributes to altered gender dynamics. Several of the practitioners that I spoke with explained that when men find jobs outside the community, “it is the women who remain in the community and they are the ones who must make decisions about the resources… [they become involved] in decision-making, in assemblies, and meetings,” according to Fermín Sosa, a rural development practitioner from Oaxaca, Mexico. Migration in or from rural areas also involves young people. In Lomerío, as in other contexts that my research participants were involved with, young women and young men leave to continue with their education. This, Fermin added, could give “them experiences that [could] contribute to the community.”

I also wanted to know more about the opportunities for young women and men in territorial governance spaces and processes. When asked, *Do men or women have opportunities or limitations to participate in territorial governance?* eight of 18 participants said that men and women had the same opportunities and rights. As one participant told me, “There are no limitations, rather they [both] have the obligation to participate and work the land because it belongs to us, and we can make use of its natural resources” (18/male/El Puquio). When asked, *How are women and men considered in decisions regarding access to and use of land and forests?* all participants from Lomerío observed that “both […] are taken into account” and have the “same rights,” “voice and vote,” and obligations to the community, therefore deciding
equally on the use of land. Every participant pointed out that participation in the *chaco*, “group work,” and community activities are avenues where men and women can equally be accounted for in community decision-making. For Araceli López Gutiérrez (Mexico), the knowledge that women hold about the land and territory explains why it “is good that the voice of women be taken into account” … “They are […] in the territory and know about [it].” Although this was not noted explicitly in the case of Lomerío, insights from Indigenous youth elsewhere pointed to how young women can contribute skills and knowledge gained from outside the territory. As a youth from Mexico told me: “There are girls who have begun to study in different areas, such as sciences, forestry, social (sciences) and agriculture. They left the community to study, [and] it is good that they return…” As such, it was considered important that the community ensures that their knowledge “is taken into account (as) to enrich these management mechanisms.”

Only two of 18 interviewees in Lomerío felt that there were differences by gender, which were largely tied to the capacity to voice or express an opinion in decision-making fora. Some of the limitations to participation identified by interviewees appeared to affect men and women equally. Age was the most obvious. Once they turn 60, community members are not asked to participate in communal work anymore. The level (or lack) of interest to know more about the territory and its governance, however, appeared similar across genders.

The youth in Lomerío were somewhat more divided in their views on whether gender influences participation in committee meetings and assemblies. Eight participants (six males, two females) felt that gender affected how they participate in community meetings and activities, while eight (six females, two males) felt that it has no effect. In the former group, a 22-year-old man from Palmira noted that young people generally participate more in community work and that young girls participate more when there is “light work” involved. Meanwhile a 17-year-old woman from El Puquio lamented that “women still suffer from discrimination, and they (others) doubt our capacities in matters related to governance.” Among the latter group, one participant did not see “the difference, since men and women participate and have an opinion” (23/male/Coloradillo). Three observations can be seen here in terms of communal work. First, young people think that they are given more work, especially those that require more physical labour. Second, women are given “light work” and young women can feel discriminated against
in terms of their participation. Lastly, young people, especially young men, do not see marked any differences between older men's and women’s participation in communal activities.

4.3 Barriers to youth participation in community/territorial life

In this section, I present some of the main barriers to participation that the youth and other actors have identified. Where applicable, I comment on the gendered differences in how the youth appear to be affected and impacted. Insights come from both the youth participants from Lomerío and rural development practitioners working elsewhere.

4.3.1 The limitations of local education

Based on the responses from the Indigenous youth I interviewed, the most common reason that young people leave their communities is the lack of access to higher levels of education. This was supported by insights from practitioners, one of whom confirmed that in many places where they work, local education access is limited to “primary school but not high school or university or any type of technical college” (Harlem Mariño Saavedra, previously with the Organización Nacional de Mujeres Indígenas Andinas y Amazónicas del Perú. This pushes young people who aspire to careers and livelihoods that require a certain level of education and training to move out of their communities.

It was also apparent from speaking with practitioners that the education the youth receive in their home communities is not always well-matched or attuned to the lived realities and contexts of these communities. This can manifest in a “lack of understanding [among young people] of [how the community’s] political structure [works],” which in turn can impede the youth from knowing how best to participate in and navigate such structures. This issue did come up in interviews with several of the participants from Lomerío, who noted how limited knowledge (of how things work in the community) can stop them from participating fully in community meetings. Although no one mentioned the development of locally oriented curricula, most young people in Lomerío are eager to gain more skills and knowledge, which they see could be delivered through workshops and trainings.
Working in other contexts, some of the practitioners I spoke to said that young men are more likely to leave for additional schooling, while young women are more likely to stay in the community. As a result, they thought that reorienting local education could be important to better equip these young women so that they can make more informed choices and decisions and claim or assert their rights. This can be particularly important in places where rights are traditionally gendered, such as rural Mexico. As Araceli López Gutiérrez, teacher and Indigenous member of a Zapotec community explained, “[In Mexico] when the husband leaves, the woman in the community, is legally not the one who makes the decisions, she is not the one who participates in the assemblies, she is not the one who owns the rights to use the land. Although she is there, the one who has the rights is the one who left, it is required that the communities internally work on these aspects, to know how to consider these issues [that result from these migration realities].”

The information I gathered from Lomerío is insufficient to know if this reality holds true there, although this points to an important line of inquiry for future research.

4.3.2 Lack of knowledge leads to a lack of voice?

Several practitioners pointed to limited education not well matched to local realities as a factor that makes young people poorly “equipped” to give their opinions in public or community meetings. As Jessica Clendenning, formerly of the Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR) and now with the National University of Singapore, saw it, “They don’t necessarily learn this in school so they don’t understand why or how their voice would make a difference.”

The lack and sometimes underestimation of youth voice or opinion are also linked to how young people are expected to consider “authorities” in their community. For example, several of the people I interviewed felt that young people were often reticent out of “respect” for community elders. One practitioner, Rose Hayahay from the Philippines, reflected that “they (youth) think they are too young; they have so much respect for the elder and whatever the elder says, they’ll follow.” These views differ somewhat from what the youth in Lomerío shared to me. They said they are welcomed by the elders and feel appreciated in these decision-making spaces. Their reticence stems from the feeling that they are still not equipped or experienced enough to do so.

Some of the practitioners also felt that limited understanding and knowledge about the land, the history of land use and tenure, the nature of their (and their family’s) relationship to the land,
were reasons for the youth being less involved or vocal about territorial issues and decisions. As Jessica Clendenning explained, young people still value land, often because it remains their family’s biggest asset. However, as farming shifts from a tradition of communal work practices to the use of wage labour, young people will shun farming and other land-based activities if they don’t get paid for it. Farming for subsistence purposes holds limited appeal.

From a practitioner’s standpoint, the idea that the youth do not always express themselves or put forward their voice within the community sphere (about such issues) also incorporated a gendered dimension. Gender is one of the identities in a myriad of “intersections” that could influence having a voice in these platforms (Collins & Bilge, 2016; ADB & Plan International, 2018), along with race, class, (dis)ability, ethnicity (White, 2019), and land access or ownership (Silverman, 2015). Marlène Elias, from the Alliance of Bioversity International and CIAT, said was clear that “there is still a privileging of men’s knowledge, including young men over young women, […] that often goes to the young men in terms of having a voice in public affairs and so on.” This observation was different from Lomerío, where most youth participants (both men and women) told me they do not see or are not aware of gender differences in terms of participation and giving opinions in general assemblies and community meetings.

4.3.3 Limited connectivity

Twila Cassadore, a member of the San Carlos Apache Tribe and who educates Indigenous youth in Western Apache tribes in Arizona, USA, was adamant that “a barrier would be transportation,” explaining further that living in a territory, especially one that is large and/or have difficult topography, can be tricky for members when it comes to travelling between their communities and moving equipment or materials needed for certain activities. I saw this issue emerge in Lomerío while I was (remotely) scheduling and conducting interviews there. The research assistant who helped me on-the-ground found connecting with the youth across the territory extremely difficult because of torrential rains at the time, which made travel between some communities impossible. It is worth remembering that the Indigenous Territory of Lomerío comprises 29 different communities spread out over more than 256,000 hectares, making the issue of inter-community movement a very real one.
Limited connectivity not only relates to physical movement between places, but also extends to digital infrastructure (or lack of) – with people and places (and economies) often being disadvantaged by limited access to technology. As Twila Cassadore explained: “some [don’t] have technology available like WiFi or social media… it depends on the location you’re in.”

Digital connectivity is important to the youth of Lomerio, where internet connection has become essential for them to continue their studies, particularly during the pandemic. Even then, there are limitations, especially the variable quality of connection in such a remote region. In a number of virtual interviews that I conducted with the youth in Lomerio, inclement weather often made such calls difficult. When connectivity is a challenge, whether in person or via digital platforms, this translates into missed opportunities for young people to meet, share work and ideas, and benefit from these encounters – from tapping into new knowledge and information to identifying new market opportunities.

4.3.4 Access to assets

As noted in Chapter 2 of this thesis, the literature points to land as an asset that young people, especially young women, might struggle to gain access to and that this struggle shape and indeed limit the kind of active role they could assume in territorial use and management. Looking back at her work on tenure-related issues, Cécile Ndjebet, founder and president of the African Women’s Network for Community Management of Forests (REFACOF), said that “The cultural barrier is that a young girl cannot (participate); like their mother, they don’t own anything.” Marlène Elias, who leads the gender research and gender integration for the Alliance of Bioversity International and CIAT, shared a similar insight, noting that while young women may have access to land, “they’ll never have control over the land in a way that a man will.” More than ownership, the gendered roles of young girls with respect to the land are further exacerbated by inheritance, as parents prefer sons to inherit land. Cécile Ndjebet shared that, “In many families, a girl cannot inherit from their parents because they are supposed to get married, and they will go there and build their own families.”

Although this study did not collect explicit data in Lomerio on who exactly “owns” and holds rights to land, the youth gave me a clear sense that obtaining tenure rights to land was feasible for young people in the territory, and that this was possible for all genders. They explained to me
that by applying to the cacique, one could secure a plot of land to tend. The community authorities and leadership, to get more young people involved in territorial use and management, would be supportive.

Aside from land, Iliana Monterroso of CIFOR also identified the lack of access to other types of “assets’ as being important: “I’m not talking only about land, I’m talking about life, and of course, you know, I guess it would depend on if you’re talking about the individual within the collective, youth as the individual person, youth as a group of people within the community organization. I would say in general and at the individual level, assets are an important constraint." Notably, access to credit, information, and technology can be a barrier to young people, limiting their involvement in community life and decision-making. In addition, the lack of access to such things “are still quite defined by gender, restricting the type of opportunities (for) young men or women,” although things are starting to change or as she put it, “they are being opened [up].” She expanded on this point by explaining that such barriers are tied to the norms and laws that a community conforms to, and to how these norms provide differentiated roles for members of different ages and genders: “The access to decision making processes is mainly related to the community by laws guiding the type of norms that exist, the type of access that you would have in terms of how young men and women can actually participate.”

The youth understand that access to assets is important. In Lomerio, several young people have ideas regarding transforming their territory into more productive landscapes and recognized that their ability to realize such goals are shaped by whether they can access these types of assets or not, and then maintain access over time.

4.3.5 Mobility and migration

Data suggest that the ability of youth to carve out a greater presence in their communities is to some degree shaped by what they are pressured to do; the pressure may come from the parents or from seeing what their peers are doing. Staying in or leaving their communities is a decision that many (if not all) of the youth face, something that was evident with all of the research participants. Bharati Pathak, a practitioner from Nepal who chairs the Federation of Community Forestry Users Nepal and, for decades, has worked on women’s rights and community rights
over natural resources and for conservation, shared that when young people finish their “education, all […] go outside of the country for work, for education, and other (opportunities)”.

The phenomenon of rural out-migration is well reported in literature and was also evident in Lomerío. Many community members told me that migration was a primary reason for the reduced interest in territorial governance among the youth because they don’t see their plans and aspirations lining up well with community-based livelihoods. Most of the young people I interviewed are still based in the community but expressed interest in jobs not directly linked to land-based livelihoods, such as language teacher, veterinarian, and nurse or doctor. When asked, *What prevents you and other youth from participating in community activities and decisions?* one youth participant commented on the “high magnitude of] migration of young people to the city… in search of better study and work opportunities” (22/male/Palmira). In Lomerío, it has become common for young people to move to Santa Cruz (nearest city to the community) and other regional urban centres for “better” work and educational opportunities.

While youth mobility can be seen as a barrier, it is also an opportunity (for communities). It was notable that many young people I spoke to wanted to maintain a relationship with and connection to their community even if they needed to leave. This was brought up by practitioners working in other global regions. For example, Araceli López Gutiérrez of Mexico spoke about the pull of the community where she was born and raised, that this was where her “home” was, where she became the person she is, and that this translated into a desire to return: “I have studied… but always with the aim of being able to return and […] to do something for my community”.

Maintaining connections and keeping the door open to a possible return could help communities access a pool of skilled labour among their broader memberships.

Such feelings also point to a possible conundrum facing the rural youth, and one picked up on by some of the practitioners, namely, a tension or “conflict of wanting to be modern yet not wanting to lose their connection to the [home] village,” as noted by Jessica Clendenning. In terms of a future pathway, the rural youth are currently presented with multiple options associated with access to education, jobs, or services and infrastructure. These options or “distractions” can act as powerful pull factors to encourage migration or, once absent, result in a diminishing interest in community life.
4.3.6 Limited interest in community affairs and livelihoods

Data showed that migration is sometimes the result of, and can be a precursor to, limited interest among young people in local community affairs and in carving out a community-based livelihood for themselves and their (future) families.

For example, Jessica Clendenning, who did an extensive work on rural youth migration and agrarian change, shared her observations from rural Indonesia. According to her, it was not at all obvious that young people would want to have a greater voice in community decision-making: “In terms of young people having a voice in those matters, no… young people weren’t too concerned about that.” Where she worked, most young people were too preoccupied with social life to worry about local governance structures and decision-making. As she half-joked, “They were just more into hanging out with other young people and going around on motorbikes!”

When it came to land-based livelihoods, there was a sense among some practitioners that young people “don’t really want to do these things [farming and forestry] anymore” because it “require(s) a lot of time and they’re not paid or maybe they’re paid with in kind stuff through food, coffee, or cigarettes.” Being poorly compensated (monetarily) for such work was something that could turn off the youth, who could consider better paid alternatives after obtaining higher education and training for a professional career. Jessica shared that, “[The problem] is not farming per se but […] how difficult farming has become to make a livelihood. They grow amazing crops there. They could grow vanilla, they grow excellent coffee, but the prices they get […] are generally, you know, a small, small part of what middlemen get when they sell these crops elsewhere.” The practitioners I spoke to noted that when too few young people take up land-based activities, it can shrink the local labour force needed to farm. As Jessica explained, “farm work is becoming a lot more expensive for families because they have to pay […] if they want extra help.” Labour shortages favor more individualized working arrangements over collective farming, as well as leaving more lands fallow or idle.

Some of these issues resonated among the youth in Lomerío. Among those under 18 years old, who are not required to participate in community meetings, participation in farming was generally low and tended to be among those encouraged to do so by their parents or grandparents (rather than of their own volition). It was also apparent that many youth leave the community to continue their studies, often to train in areas not well matched to land-based livelihoods. At the
time of research, only a few youth under the age of 25 were working on agricultural plots independently. Many more were helping their parents or grandparents in farm activities during school breaks. At the same time, interest in land-based activities was evident among the youth. Most of them found working in the chaco a positive and valuable experience and would participate in community events. A few had got involved in JUMA as a youth-focused community organization.

4.4 Strategies to enhance youth participation

Checkoway & Gutierrez (2006) argued that there can be no single strategy to enhance the participation of young people in community-making processes. Objective 3 of my research focused on documenting initiatives for youth participation. I asked participants (both youth and practitioners) what strategies are currently done to engage the youth and what are the potential ways that would work best in their contexts and experiences. I juxtaposed the information from the interviewees from my document review of selected initiatives across global regions.

4.4.1 Existing strategies in Lomerio

In recent years, leadership in Lomerio has taken steps to integrate young people into territorial governance structures and processes. As mentioned in the previous section, a youth group called JUMA Monkox was established on January 17, 2020 to gather and mobilize ideas and support from young people in the territory for environmental actions and concerns (personal communication with M. Soriano-Candia in May 2020). Four of the 18 youth participants were aware of this youth group, suggesting that knowledge of JUMA has yet to percolate widely among young people in Lomerio and that more work needs to be done to engage and empower the youth in the territory. However, the fact that JUMA is very new and that the last two years have been dominated by the COVID-19 pandemic means that creating the right conditions is a work in progress. In addition to the establishment of JUMA, Marlene Soriano-Candia from IBIF explained how “some communities [from Lomerio] started to elect young professionals as their caciques in a way to give them some work experience but also to give them an opportunity to put in place what they learnt outside the community.” Lastly, CICOL, with support from IBIF, has also organized several workshops in the past five years to invite, discuss, and analyze the insights and opinions of young people about their role in territorial governance. As I spoke with
the young people in Lomerío, I had the impression that the attitude towards the workshops was generally positive and that many wanted to have more of these activities.

Plates 4.1-4.3: Youth from the Indigenous Territory of Lomerío during one of the consultation workshops conducted by CICOL and IBIF (Source: CICOL).

4.4.2 Existing strategies from other locations

I conducted a review of projects around the world to provide an overview of the type and range of initiatives currently in place that aim to involve Indigenous and/or rural youth in community-based rural development.

Four main sources of information were used. First, I asked development practitioners to identify global initiatives that they thought were noteworthy and could potentially be replicable in other
rural settings. Second, I scanned grey (online) literature for documents that reported on youth-focused projects and initiatives. Three documents, compiled by FAO and IFAD, were selected for further analysis. Another is a synthesis report from my previous involvement at the Future of Forest Work and Communities project. These four documents covered 66 youth-focused projects. Table 4.2 lists these projects and provides information about the project title, where it was conducted, and the year or duration it was implemented. I tried to ascertain how these projects were conceived through reading and analysing the descriptions and information provided in the literature. I noted if these initiatives were specific for Indigenous youth groups, if gender had been considered in designing and implementing these projects, to what degree they were youth-led or co-designed with youth, or if the youth has at least been consulted. Key lessons from some of the projects were also detailed in the latter part of this subsection.

In terms of geographic scope, most initiatives are implemented in the Global South, two initiatives have global focus or implemented in multiple locations, and only 22 percent of the initiatives are from the Global North. Most initiatives are implemented in Africa (29 initiatives), followed by Asia (13), North America\(^1\) (8), Europe (6), Latin America and the Caribbean (6), and Pacific Islands (2). It was not clear from practitioner interviews or the document review why this was the case. Except for the founding of two organizations, projects on rural youth have increased in the past two decades, with the earliest implementation in 2000. Most initiatives are conducted in the past decade (2010-2021).

\(^1\) Mexico is classified under North America.
Table 4.2: List of selected youth initiatives from the four selected documents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Initiative</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Indigenous</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Consultation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dynamic conservation and sustainable use of agrobiodiversity in traditional agroecosystems of the Philippines</td>
<td>Philippines</td>
<td>2017</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kipkandule Code Area youth promote resilience through health information, infrastructure and sustainable agriculture amongst the Endorois people</td>
<td>Kenya</td>
<td>2018</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chi-Nations youth council enhances nutrition and secures food for Native Americans</td>
<td>USA</td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sakha Indigenous youth ensure food security, good nutrition and health during the pandemic</td>
<td>Russia</td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Indigenous Support Project provides access to food, water and health-related products to communities</td>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>2020</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indigenous youth collaborate locally to ensure food security and provide hygiene products</td>
<td>USA</td>
<td>2020</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agri-enterprise development and management</td>
<td>Cambodia</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rebranding agriculture in schools</td>
<td>Uganda and Saint Lucia</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Young Women Open Schools</td>
<td>Pakistan</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On-the-job training</td>
<td>Madagascar</td>
<td>2009</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PhD training in agriculture</td>
<td>Africa</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distance learning for young farmers</td>
<td>Brazil</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICTs for extension services</td>
<td>Ghana and Kenya</td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICT solutions for agriculture</td>
<td>Rwanda</td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth resource centres on agriculture</td>
<td>Zambia</td>
<td>2000-2011</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Land tenure, farm productivity and enterprise development</td>
<td>Philippines</td>
<td>since 2001</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>NO</td>
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<tr>
<td>Land ownership for shea butter producers</td>
<td>Burkina Faso</td>
<td>founded in 1990</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>NO</td>
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<tr>
<td>Distributing hillside land to landless youth</td>
<td>Ethiopia</td>
<td>1999</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Young rural entrepreneur and land fund programme</td>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>2004-2008</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>NO</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reclaiming desert land for young graduates</td>
<td>Egypt</td>
<td>2002-2012</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small landlords and large tenants programme</td>
<td>Taiwan</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short-term land leases for youth</td>
<td>Uganda</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initiative</td>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Indigenous</td>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Consultation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>Installation aid</td>
<td>France</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public-Private investment fund</td>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth Venture Capital Fund</td>
<td>Uganda</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO</td>
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<tr>
<td>Youth socio-economic empowerment service</td>
<td>Moldova</td>
<td>2005-2008</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial services for youth through rural entrepreneurship</td>
<td>Senegal</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends Help Friends Saving Group</td>
<td>Cambodia</td>
<td>2009</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loan project for young entrepreneurs</td>
<td>Bangladesh</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crowdfunding: The goat dairy project</td>
<td>Grenada</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finance and mentorship for innovative young social entrepreneurs</td>
<td>Asia</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior Farmer Field and Life School programme</td>
<td>Zanzibar Archipelago</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocational training in small biogas companies</td>
<td>Rwanda</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocational training for young beekeepers</td>
<td>China</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO</td>
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<tr>
<td>Green jobs apprenticeship programme</td>
<td>USA</td>
<td>no date</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raising youth’s awareness of organic agriculture</td>
<td>China</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO</td>
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<tr>
<td>Agro-ecotourism business</td>
<td>Bahamas</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transforming water hyacinth into paper</td>
<td>Kenya and Uganda</td>
<td>no date</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connecting farmers</td>
<td>Kenya</td>
<td>no date</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Innovation in distribution and sales</td>
<td>Ghana</td>
<td>no date</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>NO</td>
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<tr>
<td>Linking producers and consumers</td>
<td>Southern Europe</td>
<td>no date</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO</td>
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<tr>
<td>Certifying social youth business</td>
<td>USA</td>
<td>no date</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milk and dairy processing</td>
<td>Tanzania</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO</td>
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<tr>
<td>Innovative models for young coffee producers</td>
<td>Colombia</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO</td>
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<tr>
<td>Independent business born from the commitment of youth</td>
<td>Benin</td>
<td>no date</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO</td>
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<tr>
<td>Young farmers’ representation</td>
<td>Togo</td>
<td>2009-2011</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
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<tr>
<td>The African Union listening to youth</td>
<td>Africa</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Documenting youth policies and initiatives</td>
<td>Africa</td>
<td>2011-2013</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth peasant federation</td>
<td>Nepal</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Echoing the voices of Youth</td>
<td>Pacific Is.</td>
<td>2008/2009</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth caring about the environment</td>
<td>Brazil</td>
<td>2005-2009</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initiative</td>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Indigenous</td>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Consultation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>------------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>--------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The European Council of Young Farmers</td>
<td>Europe</td>
<td>founded in 1958</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YPARD – Young Professionals’ Platform for Agricultural Research for Development</td>
<td>Global</td>
<td>no date</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capacity-Building for Resilient Agriculture in the Pacific</td>
<td>Pacific Is.</td>
<td>2014-2018</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strengthening Knowledge-sharing on Innovative Solutions Using the Learning Routes Methodology</td>
<td>Asia</td>
<td>2011-2015</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orissa Tribal Empowerment and Livelihoods Programme (OTELP)</td>
<td>India</td>
<td>2003-2016</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skills Enhancement for Employment Programme</td>
<td>Nepal</td>
<td>2008-2010</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural Youth Vocational Training, Employment and Entrepreneurship Support Project</td>
<td>Mali</td>
<td>2013-2021</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promoting Young People’s Entrepreneurship in Poor Rural Territories</td>
<td>Latin America and the Caribbean</td>
<td>2012-2016</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rural Enterprises Programme II</td>
<td>Ghana</td>
<td>2011-2020</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>NO</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rural Youth Economic Empowerment Programme</td>
<td>Near East and North Africa</td>
<td>2013-2016</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agricultural Value Chains Support Project</td>
<td>Senegal</td>
<td>2008-2014</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community-Based Natural Resource Management Programme</td>
<td>Nigeria</td>
<td>2005-2015</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural Financial Services and Agribusiness Development Project</td>
<td>Moldova</td>
<td>2011-2016</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural Finance and Community Improvement Programme</td>
<td>Sierra Leone</td>
<td>2008-2014</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Future of Forest Work and Communities</td>
<td>Multiple regions</td>
<td>2016-2019</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Based on the review, most initiatives appeared heavily skewed towards ‘skills and livelihoods development’ aimed at building capacity and income-generating potential among young people, as well as to strengthen local economies. It was notable that so few initiatives (seven of 66) focused on tenure, given how the youth are reported to be one of the most disadvantaged groups in terms of tenure. I also noticed that a lot of finances for rural youth engagement have poured in, and financial inclusion strategies are popular as an approach, such as the creation of venture capital funds, Public-Private investment fund, and financial services (IFAD, 2018). Similarly, few initiatives (nine of 66) had explicitly targeted Indigenous groups, with six of these initiatives equally concentrated in North America and Asia. The only obvious exception was the Orissa Tribal Empowerment and Livelihoods Programme (OTELP), which catered specifically to Indigenous young people in India (Box 4.1). Gender is also seldom considered (27 of 66), or if considered, it is reduced to reporting on the number of women beneficiaries. Of particular significance to my study, only 15 initiatives prioritized youth consultation, and even those that are counted greatly vary in terms of the quality of their approach towards consultation and has only mentioned "participatory," "rushed counselling," or "rapid-assessment meeting."

**Box 4.1: Orissa Tribal Empowerment and Livelihoods Programme in India**

The Orissa Tribal Empowerment and Livelihoods Programme (OTELP) ran from 2002 to 2016 and supported the development of skills among vulnerable tribal groups in Orissa State in India, with a particular focus on young people, especially young women. It was created partly in response to the reluctance among young people in rural Orissa to take up agriculture and harvesting of forest products. Supported by IFAD, vocational training provided target actors “better access to and management of natural resources, improved access to financial services and markets, and the development of non-farm enterprises” (IFAD, n.d., para. 2). During its 14 years, the programme provided skills and training for 3,044 youth, with 1,100 subsequently placed in employment. At least one-fifth of the youth trained were young women (IFAD, 2018). Despite successes, several important lessons were also learned. These included the following: “1) improper, rushed counselling of tribal youth resulted in a high dropout rate; 2) homesickness and exposure to different cultural regimes were additional challenges, and led to some graduates not presenting at job placement; 3) vocational training should be placement (demand)-driven, in collaboration with agencies; and 4) the importance of compensating loss of wages during vocational training proved extremely significant for the target group, as it ensured continuity and a steady income stream” (IFAD, 2018:15).

Interesting lessons in conducting youth engagement were drawn from these documents. The lack of proper consultation with young people was seen as a detrimental factor in training, resulting in
dropouts (see Box 4.1 for more lessons from OTELP). One of the practitioners mentioned a programme that aimed to engage young people in the development of cacao livelihood in Peru and that has given focus on youth consultation and intergenerational discussion (see Box 4.2). Another project emphasized the need to understand and learn from young people’s own “strategies, demands and aspirations” (IFAD, 2018, p. 23). Creating a network among young people enabled them to communicate their expectations to the project implementers. The attention and interest of young people, especially of adolescents, were also challenged and limited. For example, in the Rural Youth Vocational Training, Employment, and Entrepreneurship Support Project in Mali, “facilitators talk about the need to engage them with dynamic, participatory approaches and to develop games to share information in an interesting way,” such as participatory photography or staging of performances and sketches (IFAD, 2018, p. 22). The same project recognized the need to work closely with parents to allow their children to participate in programme activities (IFAD, 2018).

Box 4.2: Fine Flavor Cacao Project in Peru

An example provided by one of the practitioners in this study (Marlene Elias of the Alliance of Bioversity and CIAT) is the Fine Flavor Cacao Project in Peru. This project recognized the importance of “inter-generational succession,” especially the roles of women and youth as underrepresented sub-groups. The Fine Flavor Cacao (FFC) project launched a series of conversations with the local youth in Peru “to identify training and mentorship needs that focus on the role of these groups in the future of fine flavor cacao” (Lubke, 2020, p. 2). One of the dialogues, titled “Conversation with Youth: Successful Experiences of Young Entrepreneurs in Fine Flavor Cacao,” brought cacao growers and entrepreneurs to speak with the youth and inspire them. The youth learned about “the educational and professional opportunities in fine flavor cacao” so that “all young people, regardless of gender or background, are able to fully appreciate fine flavor cacao as a promising [livelihood] option” (Lubke, 2020, p. 7). This is an option that looks to marry exciting global markets with sustainable environmental practices and to support family and community livelihoods. The project, which ran from 2017 to 2021, was led by the Alliance of Bioversity International and CIAT. It was funded by the German Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ). Intergenerational dialogues on cacao were organized in collaboration with the Intercultural University of Quillabamba and funded by the CGIAR Research Program on Forests, Trees, and Agroforestry.
4.4.3 Ideas for strategies from young people

The previous section provides a snapshot of youth-focused (but rarely youth-led) initiatives across global regions. I wanted to learn from young people themselves about the ideas they had for enhancing territorial governance and their participation in these processes by drawing on interview data from Lomerío.

For a couple of young people from Lomerío, the first thing that they felt was needed was to “generate interest among young people so that they can voluntarily participate.” This can be achieved by giving young people “good information” and “assigning them responsibilities” (17/female/El Puquio; 18/male/Surusubi). For another interviewee, information sharing could also be an opportunity for peer-to-peer learning or to “demonstrate knowledge to others” (21/female/Coloradillo). A few young people in Lomerío told me that before effective strategies can be implemented, the youth themselves need to get organized. An 18-year-old male from El Puquio believed that the youth need to “create an organization” and “make groups of young people… where young people have to be involved and use their knowledge.” An older male (25 years old) from El Cerrito explained that being in or part of a group can also help “motivate young people” and enable them “to be leaders…to represent everyone and to listen to them”. Other participants saw a group of organized youth as having the potential to “work for the benefit of the community” (22/male/Palmira) and more likely to feel “encouraged” and to “participate in […] training(s)” (18/male/El Puquio).

By being connected as a group and motivated to be “more participative,” young people would be better able “to make decisions and contribute to the community” (17/female/Palmira). Young people in Lomerío identified different sources of empowerment to enhance participation. For one, empowerment “starts with the family and the parents” as “they have to talk with their children to participate and become more involved in the community” (23/female/San Lorenzo). Another source of inspiration are the community leaders or the caciques, as they possess authority at the community and territorial levels and have the responsibility to “invite and gather the young people, [to] motivate them to participate more actively” (15/female/San Lorenzo). A few young people felt that their leaders could do more in this regard, “to be mindful (take into consideration) of involving young people” (15/female/Surusubi) and to trust the youth by “assigning them responsibilities within the community so they can demonstrate their
capabilities” (17/female/El Puquio). The empowerment of young people was deemed important, and this could be done by letting “young people carry out new activities for the benefit of the community” (21/female/Coloradillo) and by providing “opportunities to hold a position in a work group” … for which “they can be considered in the member selection processes” (23/male/Coloradillo).

Seven of 18 young people in Lomerío mentioned the need to train and develop the capacities of young people. As one made clear: “Through a call to young people, train them and train them in different areas, workshops have to be held where they are being trained” (16/male/Surusubi). These young people wanted to be invited to capacity-building activities, including “some courses or trainings,” “meetings,” “workshops,” and “projects,” which they saw as a chance to “meet and [to] learn, and [for] their opportunities [to] grow” (18/male/El Puquio) and “[to] be able to develop the community” (23/female/San Lorenzo). Few were able to provide concrete examples of such capacity-building activities. The interviewees also provided little input on what needs to happen to make these activities a reality.

4.4.4 Ideas for strategies from practitioners

I solicited ideas from practitioners on what could be done to advance youth engagement in territorial governance based on their experiences and observations working with Indigenous and rural youth.

For Iliana Monterroso from CIFOR, existing laws on territorial governance – both customary and statutory – are mostly designed with informal roles defining how men, women, and the youth can access land. As such, these laws may require further amendments to facilitate the participation of youth in territorial use and governance: “I would say those (laws) are significant barriers but [reviewing them is] […] an entry point.” Iliana went on to talk about capacity-building projects and workshops, and how some rural development agencies and organizations, which have long worked to enhance women’s participation, “are [now] making quotas for youth or creating […] a committee” to do something similar for young people. She added that this kind of adapted governance structure provides a foundation with which to involve and work “with youth in terms of training, in terms of solving […] issues [related] to assets, [to] production.” In the eyes of Sarah Wright at the University of Newcastle, enhancing youth participation involves “a
commitment to develop open spaces.” What she means by this is that young people need to be made more visible in governance. Through working with Indigenous groups, NGOs, and social movements in Australia, the Philippines, and Kenya, she has observed how “existing practices [for how] youth can and are involved are often invisibilized,” and in being so, “different governance practices or frameworks get lumped on top [without considering young people].”

The importance of collective action among youth was also noted in conversations with practitioners. Yemi Adeyeye, former Director of the Young Professionals for Agricultural Development (YPARD) and who now works for the Global Landscapes Forum, told me how “there is strength in numbers; rural youth, indigenous communities, groups coming together is always better for advocacy, and for calling attention to [an] issue.” He emphasized the value of “networks” and of “being collaborative,” as well as how the youth are “more visible when they become more aggregated” rather “than doing it solo.”

Cécile Ndjebet from REFACOF expressed the reality that strategies for youth engagement would only materialize if the resources were available to support them: “(We) should build the capacities, should fund those movements, and influence national policies towards [being] more responsive [to] the youth … [they would only be successful] if you fund all of them.” Sarah Wright, however, noted a word of caution, explaining the importance of building on youth-led initiatives “[to] support those kinds of mechanisms […] rather than importing something [from the outside].”

Lastly, with respect to getting the youth interested in territorial use and governance, there was a sense that young people themselves did not always fully appreciate or understand the value of the land, the relations with the land, and the livelihood potential of working the land. Jessica Clendenning spoke at some length about this, noting that if young people knew more about “how land relations have changed from the past,” they would have understood “more about the value of goods” and would have been keener to building a livelihood locally, whether from “[making] agriculture a business or [wanting] tourists to come to [their] village.”

4.5 Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I explored the nature of youth-community connections in the Indigenous Territory of Lomerío, Bolivia, including their current participation in key governance institutions.
and structures. I then presented the relationship that young people have with territorial governance in terms of territorial use and management, what other community members think about youth roles within this sphere, and if participation in community activities differs along gender lines. Next, I explored the factors that can limit young people’s participation in territorial activities and decision-making and how these are shaped by barriers tied to education, knowledge and voice, connectivity, assets, mobility, and personal aspirations. Lastly, I laid out the strategies and recommendations suggested by research participants to enhance the participation of Indigenous young people in territorial governance.
CHAPTER FIVE: Discussion

This study was designed to investigate the experiences and perceptions of Indigenous youth regarding territorial use and governance. The research was operationalized through the following four objectives: 1) Investigate how young Indigenous women and men experience and perceive territorial governance; 2) Identify and explore the barriers to and opportunities for participation among young Indigenous women and men; 3) Document initiatives to enhance youth participation; and 4) Develop recommendations for communities, government agencies, and development organizations in supporting youth participation in Indigenous territorial governance. Key findings for the first three objectives were presented in Chapter 4.

In this chapter, I reflect upon these findings and discuss their broader meaning and relevance in the context of scholarly work on youth engagement in rural development and environmental governance. This discussion is organized into three thematic sections. First, I consider the case of youth-community relations in Lomerío and argue that it offers important lessons for building Indigenous youth engagement and empowerment in community settings more broadly. Building a community culture that values the youth can provide the foundation for thriving engagement and empowerment initiatives. Second, I consider youth engagement in territorial governance to highlight the challenges faced not only by the youth in Lomerío but also across Indigenous territories, driven by current rural realities, as well as to reiterate the importance of developing initiatives in conjunction with youth rather than using a top-down approach. Finally, and based on findings for Objectives 1 to 3, I present a series of recommendations to help communities, development organizations, and government agencies make Indigenous youth engagement (specifically in community-making processes and territorial use and governance) more meaningful and effective.

5.1 Lomerío: A blueprint for engaging and empowering Indigenous youth?

Here, I consider if and how the case of Lomerio offers significant insights and lessons relevant to building youth engagement and empowerment in broader Indigenous and rural contexts. I reflect on the importance of having community norms and practices in place that value young people, that help create an open and welcoming space for them to function within the community sphere and become the platform for developing initiatives that really engage the youth.
5.1.1 Building from a solid foundation

As I got to know the youth from Lomerío who participated in the research, I was struck by the pride they felt in being Indigenous and a part of their home community/territory. They said that who they are (their identity) was intimately tied to their community and, in a broader sense, the Indigenous territory. In Lomerío, young people participate in community activities with various levels of involvement, beginning in the fields (the chacos) and extending to community meetings and assemblies. Young people in Lomerío become cognizant of their culture by taking part in community activities. This resonates with findings from previous studies indicating that when young people are not involved in community-level activities and processes, they hold less knowledge about their community (Zetina et al., 2019; Robson et al., 2019) and can feel less invested in that aspect of their identity.

Multiple factors likely underpin such feelings, but interview data suggested that the Lomerío youth are viewed favourably within their communities and, consequently, spaces available for them to be visible (to others) and to voice their opinions and ideas. Most of the youth I spoke to said they were made to feel “a part of the collective,” welcomed, and to some degree represented in local governance and decision-making spaces. It was notable that most of the young people I interviewed believed that elders would listen to them and that they have the right to speak up. This is a scenario not widely reported in literature, which often discusses the limitations that the youth face in terms of representation in community institutions or the nature of opportunities to express their opinions in decision-making spaces (Yunita et al., 2017; Brown, 2021; Quaedvlieg et al., 2019; Robson et al., 2019; Zetina, et al., 2019).

The strong sense of belonging among the youth in Lomerío deserves further exploration, since ‘belonging’ is arguably integral to how several Indigenous communities are structured and function, built as they are around notions of working together to manage local commons and deeply intertwined with the connected concepts of shared norms and cultural identity (Kelles-Viitanen, 2008; Berkes et al., 2000). In Lomerío, the youth felt that they were a part of a shared culture, of the traditions, practices, and customs that define the place and community they call home. This holds true for girls as much as it does for boys based on my conversations with young people there. This sense of belonging appears to be strengthened by the way they are
encouraged to participate in community spaces and processes, and manifests in many of them feeling represented in community decision-making spaces and wanting to maintain connections with community and territory. In other words, the youth are made to feel valued in Lomerío.

Again, this contrasts with how youth-community ties are reported in literature, which often points to customary institutions being exclusionary of youth (in terms of access and voice). This can lead to a sense of alienation (rather than belonging) vis-à-vis community institutions and sometimes the community at large, and the building of tensions between young and old (ECLAC, 2014). Compared with contexts where young people’s thoughts and opinions are often dismissed, or where the youth need to “earn” the right to speak and make decisions through service and experience (Mora Sánchez, 2021), contemporary Lomerío comes across as more inclusionary.

I say ‘contemporary’ Lomerío because one of the research limitations involves the difficulty I had ascertaining whether this is a “new” situation or something that is longstanding in Lomerío: whether there is a history of harmonious relations across generations rather than something that has emerged more recently. There have certainly been recent (formalized) efforts to engage the youth to perhaps bridge that generational divide and consolidate youth-community relations. An example would be CICOL (with support from IBIF) being proactive in running youth consultation workshops to enable community leaders to hear from young people, understand their views and interests, and perhaps better realize the roles that young people could and should play. It is also apparent that young people are leaving their communities, and so the leadership in Lomerío could be making a more concerted effort (now) to address this.

In light of these findings, can we say whether the situation in Lomerío is typical or atypical of Indigenous and rural communities in a broader sense, not only in Bolivia but in other parts of Latin America? This is hard to ascertain but, based on my reading of the literature, youth in Lomerío appear to be less limited by the hierarchical and patriarchal nature of structures and norms that have been reported to shape and often limit the integration of youth, women, and other sub-groups elsewhere. For example, researchers reported that in rural Mexico, young people have limited opportunities to participate in community-making institutions and processes (Robson et al., 2019; Mora Sánchez, 2021). Certainly, Lomerío provides an interesting case of a
community (or, in this instance, a set of communities that share a territory) that looks to connect youth into community affairs, where young people are regarded as valued actors and can be a part of decision-making processes and platforms (see IFAD, 2019; Cahill, 2007 for the significance of this observation). But what seems important (perhaps paramount) is that rather than simply giving youth access to shared spaces, one first needs something rooted in the culture of the place and people that value young people for the contributions they (could) make despite limited life and work experience – in other words, a culture of acceptance that allows young people’s presence and voice to be accepted, indeed, welcomed, by older (and more experienced) community members. One example of this involves how young people are invited to general assemblies, feel welcomed by the elders, and even get to be elected in leadership positions in Lomerío. Another instance, which in my view is more importantly, involves how young people are engaged in the shared responsibility of taking care of communal lands. This seems to be a key finding, pointing to the commitment of the community leadership to enhance intergenerational relations/engagement as a powerful indicator of potential success in youth engagement, integration, and possibly empowerment.

5.1.2 What is still missing in Lomerío

While Lomerío provides several important and positive lessons to reflect upon within the context of youth-community relations, as well as points to some important ingredients for youth engagement and empowerment, gaps remain, and ongoing efforts are needed to ensure that youth inclusion moves beyond the symbolic to become meaningful and real to the youth themselves (Brennan & Barnett, 2009). My conversations with the youth gave the impression that community leadership in Lomerío is genuine in its desire to involve young people. However, there is always the danger or risk of tokenism, which Hart (1992) would view (in this context) as young people being given a voice or platform but are unable to formulate or communicate their opinions effectively. This might happen for a host of reasons. When we consider the case of Lomerío, young people feel welcomed in community meetings and general assemblies – an important barrier to overcome – with workshops organised as additional venues to elicit youth-held thoughts and perspectives. However, it was also clear that youth often choose not to speak up in these spaces. This is not uncommon in rural communities in Latin America, indeed in many group settings, where “newcomers” (in the sense that most youth are not allowed to participate in
community assemblies and meetings until they reach a certain age, often ‘adulthood’) can stay reticent before they get used to the dynamics and/or feel they have the experience to give their words weight and meaning (both to themselves and to others). While this can be a choice, it also represents an obstacle to active participation. This shows that more could be done to build capacities and confidence among young people so that they can give voice to their ideas.

Different things could be considered, such as changing how meetings and assemblies are conducted, sharing power within engagement processes between facilitator and participants (Cahill, 2007), and ensuring that content is relevant to and grounded in youth-held concerns (Jennings et al., 2006). Similar to the recommendation of one youth-focused project in Mali, dynamic and participatory approaches should be explored for young people to keep their interest and share information (IFAD, 2018). Moreover, establishing a formal space for youth representation within such gatherings can be productive. One notable example is the creation of the Asociación de Jovenes Emprendedores\(^\text{20}\) in El Salvador, which acts as a technical advisory council “where young people could meet with public and private stakeholders and discuss issues relevant to youth” (IFAD, 2018, p. 25). In Lomerío, new institutions such as JUMA offer similar opportunities, with similar ‘youth councils’ emergent in other Indigenous community contexts, from Guatemala (Zetina et al., 2019) to Bangladesh (International Land Coalition, 2020). Lomerío has also been active in using digital platforms (such as WhatsApp group chats) to connect young people living in the territory and to build linkages between youth and community institutions. These new forms of engagement should continue and are examples of new and innovative tools that can better engage young people (Crowley & Moxon, 2017).

It is also noted that the youth in Lomerio valued training opportunities, with several participants calling for more training and skills enhancement opportunities, including topics such as livelihood development. As Zetina et al. (2019) noted for Indigenous youth in northern Guatemala, training is seen as going hand-in-hand with amplifying youth voice and presence within community settings. It can also be important in offering pathways for more youth to envision and aspire to specific livelihood opportunities in their home community (Robson, Klooster & Hernandez Diaz 2019).

\(^{20}\) In English, “Young Entrepreneur’s Association”.
In the next section, I further reflect upon the case of Lomerío but do so considering the specific role of young people in territorial use and governance, and if and how Indigenous communities might engage their youth to be more than just a source of physical labour (in farming or forestry activities) but also players and potential leaders in the territorial sphere. I ask how this might be achieved (or made feasible) within the context of contemporary rural realities and rural-urban linkages.

5.2 The role of youth in territorial use and governance

In Lomerío, connections between youth and the territory, as well as their “participation” in associated spaces, appear to be forged through hands-on involvement in land-related activities. In this way, the significance of family and community chacos should not be overlooked, as it is through working in the chaco that young people build ties to the land, see the opportunities that land-based livelihoods offer, and appreciate the importance of having rights to work the land and benefit from it. In Lomerío, it is probably significant that young people can access and use the land if they want to. While not unique, this is not a common reality for Indigenous youth in other contexts, where (as we saw in Chapter 2 of this thesis) many can be denied rights to work the land (Yeboah et al., 2018; FAO et al., 2014). In other words, tenure security cannot be considered the norm for Indigenous youth, with many being effectively landless (without tenure rights), and with access restricted to heads of household or only available to community members at a later stage of adulthood. The result is youth with limited power and authority within their home community (IFAD, 2019). Also, the fact that young people in Lomerio have access to productive lands offers an additional point of contrast with other settings where the rural youth, if they are given land to work, often have access to degraded plots of limited value (Yeboah et al., 2018; FAO et al., 2014). A possible lesson from the Lomerío experience is that providing access to fertile lands can be an important entry point for youth engagement and integration into broader community-making processes, as it is a clear way for young people to feel valued (by their community and territory-at-large) and exercise their rights, capabilities, and power in the community sphere (UNDESA, 2013). And this (feeling) may remain irrespective of whether they choose a land-based livelihood or not.
5.2.1 Intersection of youth and gender

In Lomerío, data indicated little difference in how the youth perceive participation in territorial governance, with few participants highlighting differences in the roles and expectations ascribed to young men and women. Most young people that I conversed with from Lomerío did not see any significant disadvantages (with respect to being a man or a woman) in decision-making processes, such as voicing their opinions and making decisions about territorial-related issues and activities. This contrasts with a growing literature that reports (indeed assumes) marked gendered differences, with women considered disadvantaged players within the rural community sphere (Lastarria-Cornhiel et al., 2014; Silverman, 2015). The recent work of IBIF (Oropeza et al., 2022) related to gender relations in the territory debunks the notion of ‘balance’ and argues that patriarchal structures reinforce a gender divide, that women must exert double or triple effort compared with men to achieve the same results and that men still do not share household responsibilities. In terms of younger generation, Oropeza et al. (2022) observed that there is generational change in gender roles since more young men help with housework, while young women spend less time taking care of the home and more time in economic activities. IBIF points out that the governance structure of the territory is characterized by democratic and participatory leadership, by which internal rules and procedures support equality, which may contribute to this change (Oropeza et al., 2022).

What factors might be contributory to the (possibly) ‘atypical’ reality in Lomerío? First, women’s participation in the territorial sphere is aided by the ability to take part in key land-based activities (\textit{chacos}) and community assemblies. While I did not delve deeper into this as part of my interviews, my assumption here is that through recent tenure reforms, the community has created a more open environment for broader swaths of community members, including youth of all genders, to participate in and contribute to territorial activities and use. Something similar has been seen in places where gaining access to fertile lands provides a sense of empowerment and independence to younger people (IFAD, 2019; Yeboah et al., 2018; FAO et al., 2014). However, I acknowledge that this is speculation on my part and more research is needed to understand if and how evolving tenure arrangements interplay with changing gender dynamics (see section 6.2 on Limitations for further detail on this). Second, I think it likely that the social structures dominant in Lomerío also play a role. For example, the integral role of
family in encouraging (even expecting) young people to get involved, and then actors, such as the *caciques*, that are key in enabling (and possibly incentivizing) such involvement. This experience is contrary to that of other projects that found that parents hinder their children from taking part in community activities (IFAD, 2018). Particularly for the *caciques*, there is a (perceived) need to identify capable individuals who can be trained to take on the mantle of leadership at the community and territorial levels. I would speculate that this has had influence on how the youth are regarded by others in a community or territory, with the increased acceptance of young people in community-level spaces and, subsequently, emergent structures to enable young people to play a key role in community-level processes and initiatives.

5.2.2 Youth and their limits as territorial actors

The youth might be territorial actors in terms of use and livelihood, but does that really extend to being players in decision-making on how shared lands and territories are used and managed? And if not, how easy is it to make that transition?

In Lomerío, the formation of JUMA, the recent series of youth engagement workshops, and the emerging trend of young professionals taking on the role of *cacique* are all examples of how the Indigenous Territory of Lomerío is not only open to and welcoming of its youth but is also keen on empowering younger community members to move beyond participating in general assemblies and take on more active leadership positions or roles in territorial matters. But the reality is that most young people in Lomerío are not key players in the decision-making sphere. As interview data made clear, most are still confined to being a source of “energy, ideas, and skills” for production or livelihood work, with limited potential to contribute to community governance, which is supportive of findings from youth-focused work in other settings. For example, reporting on the FOFW initiative, Robson et al. (2020) showed that the majority of the 14 forest communities from Asia, Africa, and the Americas that participated in the initiative fell under this category.

We also see the issue of youth as governance actors having lower priority in youth-oriented interventions sponsored or supported by external development agencies and organizations. The document review I conducted on youth-focused initiatives across global regions made clear that
these external actors are starting to look seriously at youth engagement in community contexts, with an attendant increase in youth-related projects and programmes since the 2000s (FAO, 2014; IFAD, 2018; FAO 2021). These initiatives, however, have focused largely on market-oriented livelihood and skills development designed to boost local rural economies. Few of the 66 projects/initiatives covered in the four reports analysed for this research (FAO, 2014; IFAD, 2018; FAO, 2021; Robson et al., 2019) focused on engaging the youth in dialogue (about community-related issues and pathways) or consultation to understand their situations and possibly co-create the solutions intended that they have in them. None of the initiatives was expressly interested in the question of youth as actors in territorial governance at the community level, although most advocacy on youth in the decision-making sphere are present at the higher levels of roundtable [i.e., global (YPARD), regional (The European Council of Young Farmers), or national spaces (Asociación de Jovenes Emprendedores in El Salvador).

Why do interventions targeted at young people focus on community development for livelihood, but neglect the role of youth in territorial governance? I think this reflects the fact that most development initiatives are mandated to focus on market and profit-oriented goals, neglecting the social and cultural dimensions of their target sector (in this case the youth). Increasing income and livelihood opportunities could be a mechanism to retain the youth in rural communities, but this seems to fall short of what was depicted by the youth in Lomerío or what was expressed in related work (Robson et al. 2020), namely, that the youth want “a seat at the table” and would like to raise their concerns and opinions together with the other members of the collective.

The fact that interventions have not changed direction is a disappointment, despite formal criticisms of past projects and programmes (UNDP, 2015). While there is a prevailing rhetoric espousing young people as having agency, the evidence from interview and document review data suggests that the support needed to give the youth voice has not been forthcoming. The four main reports reviewed (FAO, 2014; IFAD, 2018; FAO, 2021; Robson et al., 2019) suggest that too few initiatives are co-designed with or led by young people themselves, which scholars and commentators consider vital for capturing young people’s views and ideas, building their capacity, and strengthening their ownership of associated projects, initiative, and policies (Clendenning, 2019; IFAD, 2018; IFAD, 2019; Robson et al., 2019). In other words, the move...
from engagement to empowerment, considered so important to long-term, transformative change (Salter, 2022), remains largely elusive.

Section 5.1 highlighted how youth-community relations and the (relative) culture of inclusivity of youth in the community sphere foster the integration of youth into community institutions, practices, and structures, including the area of territorial use and governance. This is particularly relevant when we consider youth as the next generation of environmental stewards in regions of high biocultural diversity (Garnett et al., 2018; Gorenflo et al., 2012; Howitt, 2018). Section 5.2 demonstrated that despite positive advances in the case of Lomerío, more needs to be done and there are factors that currently limit how the youth participate in these territorial spaces. In the next section, I further reflect on how participation can be enhanced or maintained.

5.3 The prospects of youth as territorial actors in a contemporary rural context

As communities like those in Lomerío consider how best to encourage their young people to take up land-based livelihoods and become integrated into territorial use and decision-making, they do so in a rural development context where migration, mobility, and perceptions of what constitutes the good life create certain challenges to success. Several barriers to youth engagement were highlighted in Chapter 4, and while these predominantly drew on insights from Lomerío, they resonate with the global picture of the place and plight of young Indigenous Peoples in rural contexts (FAO, 2014; IFAD, 2019). The barriers range from limited educational and work opportunities (in the home community/territory) to being disadvantaged by minimal knowledge and information (about community and territory), restricted voice and representation, connectivity problems, access to land and assets, and degree of interest in community affairs. So, what the youth from Lomerío shared with me regarding the challenges of rural life was often similar to what is being reported in other settings, such as in Latin America and beyond (IFAD, 2019; Robson et al., 2018; Robson et al., 2019; Mora Sanchez, 2021). It also struck me as notable how the youth are fully aware of both the realities they face and the implications (for their community) if they choose to migrate, including the pressures then placed on the continuity of community practices, institutions, and solidarity (Robson et al., 2018; Robson et al., 2019; Mora Sanchez, 2021).
Do places like Lomerío offer the things that young people want and believe they need? Several realities associated with agrarian and rural life were highlighted by the youth of Lomerío and by practitioners working elsewhere. One has been mentioned already, namely, the lack of access to land as a particular driver of out-migration in rural contexts (Kosec et al., 2018), with differentiated impacts on young females in some places (Doss et al. 2019; Berckmoes & White, 2014; Kosec et al., 2018). In Lomerío, interviewees did not regard this as a major barrier, suggesting that problems around access to land is less acute here than in other contexts. Furthermore, it appeared that young men and women enjoyed equal access to productive land if they so desired21. Yet it was also the case that many Lomerío youth, despite having access to good land upon turning 18, still consider leaving their home community or territory for work or study. This is a powerful reminder that secure tenure rights is only part of the puzzle (to retaining youth), as noted in other global regions (Hecht et al., 2015; Sarmiento Barletti et al., 2021). Decisions made by the youth to migrate suggest that we cannot discount the work, education, and life aspirations of young Indigenous people and how they match or stack up against the realities of local life and livelihoods, an issue reported previously as being important to understanding and designing for youth-stated needs and interests (Robson et al. 2020).

During my interviews, the youth complained about the lack of infrastructure and services and how these gaps influenced their decisions regarding their life plans. Improved transport links between communities and between the territory and the outside world form part of what the youth in Lomerío wanted to see. Transport and communication links have also been an issue raised by many of the youth who participated in the FOFW project (Robson et al., 2020). But improved transport links can be a double-edged sword. On the one hand, they can be essential if the youth are to meet, connect, and organize in-person in their territories. On the other, they facilitate rural-urban linkages and the mobility of young people (Mora Sánchez, 2021) as they look to access jobs, education, or livelihood opportunities outside the territory.

Another reported reality in Lomerío, and observed in other rural contexts (Mora Sánchez, 2021), involves the trend of parents “encouraging,” sometimes even “forcing,” their children to go on to higher education. This stems from the perception that formal education is a barometer of success

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21 Although given that I only spoke to a relatively small number of young people, and only a few young females, this is informed speculation on my part.
and a “better” option for young people compared to staying and working in the fields (Eversole, 2001.; Mora Sánchez, 2021). There is no doubt that education opens possibilities and pathways to young people. But it also pushes young people down the path of leaving their home community for urban centres where most technical colleges or universities are located. Once they leave, there is no guarantee that they will return for anything more than visits home to see family.

This further demonstrates the tension evident in many remote and rural communities, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous, between the traditional (land-based) and the modern, which came out clearly in the study findings (Chapter 4). Even if they are proud of their Indigeneity and feel that they “belong” to (and in) their communities, some of the youth may be expected – whether by themselves and/or their parents – to leave for a “better” life elsewhere where some of these barriers may not exist. This presents community leadership with something of a conundrum; they are tasked with bringing young people more into the (community) fold, yet they are also aware (as parents themselves) that children may be told to seek their futures elsewhere. This is perhaps an example of the type of deep-seated barrier that Brennan & Barnett (2009) argue must be tackled before integrating the youth in community development processes can be achieved. Community leaders (and broader memberships) cannot ignore the fact that life in the community is but one option open to many young people, and so bridging the gap between youth-held aspirations and on-the-ground social and political realities and structures becomes one critical issue (Checkoway & Gutierrez, 2006; Rajani, 2000; Ibrahim, 2011). How might longstanding governance structures be adapted, even reimagined, to better reflect these emergent realities and get the youth on board for the long haul? This question has already been explored in a recent study by Robson, Klooster & Hernandez-Diaz (2019), analyzing how Indigenous communities in rural Mexico are adapting to the demographic, social and environmental changes driven by pervasive out-migration). However, this requires a lot more empirical investigation and tracking.

5.4 Recommended actions for supporting youth as territorial actors and stewards

Drawing from my study findings, this last section provides specific recommendations to three key actors in rural development – Indigenous and local communities, development organizations
and practitioners, and government agencies and policymakers – as they work to enhance the engagement and empowerment of Indigenous youth in territorial use and governance. I look at each actor in turn.

5.4.1 For Indigenous and local community leaderships

This study mainly focused on Indigenous youth, but as I conducted my interviews and reviewed documents, Indigenous and local communities were often brought together in my analyses. In this first sub-section, recommendations are written in the context not only of Indigenous communities but also of rural, resource-dependent communities in a more general sense.

**Action: Create a welcoming culture and environment for young people**

The case of Lomerío has provided us with a good example of what kind of space we should create to make young people feel welcome in territorial use and governance spaces. It has shown us that cultural acceptance of young people, their roles, and their potential can be ingrained within community activities and community-making processes. It has demonstrated how young people in Lomerio are exposed to and can start to build knowledge about the way their territory is governed. While this can strengthen youth-community connections and the desire among the youth to be invested in community activities, the youth also have other aspirations, such as the desire to become more educated, gain skills, and generate income. This tells us that more work is needed to understand the contemporary dynamics of young people – the challenges they face and the possibilities (other than community life and land-based livelihoods) presented to them. It suggests that leaderships can always be more welcoming of young people and aim to expand their roles in the community, such as making it possible for young professionals to find their place in the community and potentially within leadership/decision-making authorities.

In this sense, four main recommended actions that came out of the Lomerío case study can be considered relevant to other Indigenous and rural and remote communities, which are as follows: 1) maintain the connection with young people and find the appropriate entry points for their engagement; 2) promote intergenerational communication; 3) understand the realities that they face and build engagement (and then empowerment) with those realities/contexts in mind; and 4) believe that young people can (and should) have agency as community members and broaden the
roles they could play in the community sphere. By doing this, community leaderships might be better placed to approach youth involvement and integration in ways that will be relevant and meaningful to young people themselves (Jennings et al., 2006).

5.4.2 For development organizations and practitioners

Development organizations have a crucial role to play in advancing youth engagement in rural regions and communities. The interventions of IBIF in Lomerio and the review of current and past initiatives for youth engagement provided important insights as to what else could (and should) be done to improve youth-based strategies.

**Action: Fully understand the realities of youth beneficiaries**

Development organizations need to get to know the youth they want to work with. Practitioners must understand who they are and what they want to see. Being more consultative and open to engaging young people in dialogue (long before action) will enable development practitioners to hear (and begin to understand) for themselves the ideas, challenges, and aspirations of young people in community settings, their ‘place’ within these communities, and from there start to think about applicable and appropriate strategies given those realities. Some youth-related initiatives have shown that co-designing and even letting young people lead projects for their peers can create avenues better aligned to the needs of young people. Co-designed or youth-led strategies could also build capacities among the youth (e.g., communication skills) that are key to their effective participation in the community. Moreover, practitioners should not only include young people in the conceptualization and implementation of these initiatives but also in their assessment, to allow the youth to exercise their reflexive thinking and for practitioners to understand what works for young people better.

**Action: Understand and work with the diversity and intersectionality of ‘youth’**

Development organizations should understand that ‘youth’ is not a homogenous group but one that is diverse in terms of gender, age, background, class, values, and aspirations. This must be taken on board when designing and implementing strategies to engage the youth (Clendenning, 2019; Clendenning et al., 2019; Panelli et al., 2007). Contemplating how gender intersects within
the contexts and realities of young people is an important factor to consider (Clendenning et al., 2019; Park & White, 2018). More work needs to be done to normalize gender considerations in youth-related approaches to rural development. Even if this study showed little marked difference in the perspectives and experiences of young men and women from Lomerío, this is not the case in many rural contexts, where local norms and institutions often embody gender inequality and disparity (Silverman, 2015). Better understanding will open our consciousness to what drives and leads young people towards their choices and actions. Better understanding of the conundrum that the youth face can result in policies and interventions that are more inclusive and where no one gets left behind.

**Action: Be reflexive and innovative when engaging with the youth**

From the review of youth engagement strategies, development organizations could greatly benefit from documenting the lessons learned from strategies implemented previously and elsewhere. Practitioners should be reflexive and open to learning from their engagements with young people to help them and other development organizations become more dynamic, responsive, oriented towards constant learning, and open to readjustment for improved performance. In a practical way, what does reflexive mean? Aside from lessons learned, development organizations could be more transparent about the impacts of the strategies they employ and publicize the failures in design and implementation. Doing so will support ongoing improvements that warrant continuous reflections to better suit the interventions to their target beneficiaries, ensuring that these programs are appropriate and applicable to the context therein.

Young people’s realities and influences are constantly changing. Development organizations must be forward-thinking. They should be open to innovation and think creatively (and sometimes “outside the box”) to engage with the youth. For many working in development organizations, social media platforms offer ‘new’ ways to connect with young people. This research has provided lessons about working remotely, suggesting that innovative communication tools can be honed to connect with and engage the rural youth, both in person and remotely.
The above recommended actions can help development organizations and practitioners create forms of youth participation that are meaningful, relevant, and grounded (Jennings et al., 2006), and become much more than a box-ticking exercise.

5.4.3 For government agencies and policymakers

Government agencies and policymakers are key to making youth engagement successful, with government policy and support crucial, and certainly enabling, to drive and then sustain youth engagement strategies.

**Action: Develop locally appropriate education and infrastructure for rural youth**

Based on the challenges of Indigenous youth in Lomerío, governments could provide support for the development of locally appropriate curricula and infrastructure for Indigenous and rural education. This would help young people attain the capacities and skills that they think they need to contribute to the progress and development of their home community. Financial supports (and other forms of investments) will be needed to fully realize the objectives of youth engagement; otherwise, promises to build youth participation may end up as no more than mere lip service. Policymakers should engage on a continual basis to monitor and ensure that policies remain supportive, enabling, and appropriate to (changing) realities on the ground.

**Action: Build an enabling policy environment for young people’s land-based engagements**

Government interventions related to Indigenous and rural lands should be rights-based. Securing tenure for such communities, respecting land rights, and acknowledging self-determination, must be central to the policies and political spaces that governments and policymakers create.
CHAPTER SIX: Conclusions

This study sought to investigate the experiences and perceptions of Indigenous youth regarding territorial use and governance. The research was qualitative in design and approach. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and document review, with two sets of participants, namely, the youth from the Indigenous Territory of Lomerio in eastern Bolivia and rural development practitioners working with Indigenous communities, including youth members. In this concluding chapter, I summarise the main lessons learned, explaining the key findings and takeaways for each of my four research objectives. I then consider the main scholarly and applied contributions of the work, and provide some final reflections, including ideas for future research.

6.1 Key lessons by research objective

6.1.1 Objective 1

Investigate how young Indigenous women and men experience and perceive territorial governance

Lomerio provided important insights into the experiences and perceptions of young Indigenous women and men in community and territorial governance. Young people feel they are part of their home community and territory through shared culture and values, as well as a level of acceptance by older community members. With obligatory attendance in community meetings and assemblies upon turning 18 years of age, the youth feel a responsibility to participate in community processes, encouraged by parents and family members. By being and feeling a part of decision-making spaces and other community activities, the youth generally feel positive about the community and their place in it. This positive feeling further strengthens their sense of Indigenous identity (of being Chiquitanian). Female participation is also encouraged in Lomerio, in contrast to experiences reported in many rural contexts.

These findings indicate that Lomerio represents an important yet atypical case of youth engagement, which also provides lessons for other places. These include the need for community
leadership to be aware of the needs of young people in the home community, as success in youth engagement is more likely if efforts are built on a solid foundation of accepting and valuing young people within community settings. Yet Lomerío is not perfect in this regard, as this study found that community leadership still needs to fully understand the lived realities and aspirations of young people and see these reflected in their participation strategies. This entails both creating the conditions and/or mechanisms (e.g., youth council/network) through which young people, regardless of age and status in the community, feel confident to speak up and voice their opinions, as well as providing the training and skill enhancement opportunities desired by the youth to create meaningful livelihoods for themselves in their home territory.

6.1.2 Objective 2

Identify and explore the barriers to and opportunities for participation among young Indigenous women and men.

This research highlights the relevance of contemporary rural realities (and challenges) to youth engagement and empowerment processes. Seven main barriers that can impede young people from participating fully in general assemblies and community meetings, and ultimately fulfilling a key role in community/territorial life, were identified. These were the following: 1) limitations of local education, both in terms of access and content (which is rarely well-oriented towards local culture and lived realities; 2) lack of knowledge, skills or “local” education that makes young people feel ‘ill-equipped’ to participate, resulting in a lack of youth voice in decision-making processes; 3) limited connectivity or infrastructure (both digital and non-digital) that hinders young people’s potential to access educational materials, reach potential markets, and share their ideas and culture with their peers and people from outside of their communities; 4) the difficulty faced by young people to access assets – whether land, capital, networks – that are needed to forge vibrant local livelihoods for themselves; 5) the mobility and migration of young people that reduce the local pool of ideas, energy, and labour; 6) young people’s limited interest in community affairs and livelihoods; and, 7) a mismatch between community activities and the aspirations of Indigenous youth.
At the same time, these barriers can also offer potential entry points for young people in places like Lomerío to improve their situation while strengthening youth-community-territorial linkages. Almost all youth participants desired training and skills development related to land- or forest-based enterprises, as well as a locally relevant rural education. Another window of opportunity involves the provision of adequate infrastructure to improve connectivity for young people to meet and organize through digital or in-person platforms. Turning barriers into development opportunities that keep more young people in their home communities and regions should be the goal. If this can be done in conjunction with crafting appropriate platforms or mechanisms for young people to give voice to their opinions – to create a more inclusive space in territorial decision-making – then positive and sustainable community futures are more likely.

6.1.3 Objective 3

*Document initiatives to enhance youth participation*

Most initiatives over the past decade that focus on youth in rural development have used a largely top-down approach. Few initiatives were identified that have consulted, engaged in a dialogue, or been co-created with young people. Many initiatives focused on the ‘production’ aspect of rural life, revolving around income generation and developing markets or value chains for rural products. Few initiatives, including recent ones, have tackled local ‘governance’ and the roles that young people can and do play in community-making processes. It was also notable that few initiatives focus on supporting young people’s access to, ownership of, or use of rural lands for development, despite these issues being well-established as destabilizing factors in many rural contexts. This research found that the intersection of youth and gender in community participation is underexplored in most cases.

6.1.4 Objective 4

*Develop recommendations for Indigenous and local communities, development organizations and practitioners, and government agencies and policymakers to support youth participation in Indigenous territorial governance*

Sets of recommendations were developed for multiple key actors based on insights from the Lomerio youth and rural development practitioners.
For Indigenous communities, the valuing of young people, their agency, and their contributions to community life was viewed as the starting point (and thus an imperative) to create genuine and long-lasting youth engagement initiatives. By developing a culture that is accepting of young people and spaces where young people would feel welcome, Indigenous communities can create opportunities for more young people to take part wholeheartedly in territorial life. But as noted under Objective 2, it is important that community leaders are mindful of the barriers that hinder the full participation of young people, and address these through full consultation or a co-design approach. The case of Lomerío and other relative success stories can become points of reference and sources of inspiration as communities strive to develop more adaptive governance approaches.

For development practitioners working on youth development initiatives, it is critical that they get to know the youth they want to work with or support. They should understand that young people are not homogenous, and each individual youth faces different situations. Practitioners should be more responsive to the youth and more open to learning from past experiences, including failures. Practitioners, including those oriented towards the co-creation of knowledge (with young people), can employ several methods and techniques that were developed to engage the youth. In addition, gender is seldom explored in these youth initiatives, so development organizations could benefit from work to identify and understand the nature of youth-gender linkages where they work.

Lastly, government agencies and policymakers should support youth engagement initiatives through financial investments and policy reforms. Supporting the youth through the provision of funding and materials is the most tangible way for government agencies to help. Policy reforms to support the development of local education curricula attuned to the needs and realities of Indigenous communities is another important intervention. Also critical is the support for equitable land rights for Indigenous and local communities, which goes beyond the provision of land tenure. Support through investment in tools and capacities for broadening community participation to include young people, will encourage more youth to invest their time and energies into viable land-based livelihoods.
6.2 Research limitations and future lines of inquiry

As with all research, limitations in design and time affect the type and quality of data collection and shape the empirical grounding of study findings and their interpretation. It is important for researchers to acknowledge such limitations, explain how they affect data analysis and interpretation, and point to ways in which the research could have been enhanced, including future lines of inquiry that might help to address gaps in the work done to date.

For my research, the COVID-19 pandemic required me to modify my research design to allow for remote rather than in-person data collection. Originally, the case in Bolivia was to be the prime focus of the research, involving a three-to-four-months stay in the Indigenous Territory of Lomerio for me to get to know the place, the culture, and my youth participants. Unfortunately, this was not possible and data collection had to rely on remote interviews conducted via phone or Internet-based applications (e.g., WhatsApp). While these tools enabled me to ask the questions I wanted answered, they did not allow for observations or multiple informal conversations possible with in-person fieldwork that would have given me a deeper understanding of the issues at hand, as well as the opportunity to identify the nuances that can help researchers interpret and also validate responses. For example, it proved difficult to explore the intersection of youth and gender remotely. While I tried during remote interviews with the Lomerio youth to get explore this question, I found it hard to generate data that gave me a sense of what was going on at this intersection. My data suggested no marked difference in the experiences of, and opportunities for, young men and women in the realm of community and territorial governance, which deviates somewhat from the experiences written about in the broader literature (as laid out in Chapter 5). Yet I felt that I wasn’t getting the whole story. In no single remote interview (with youth participants) did I get to scratch beneath the surface to understand what might be happening. Spending time in the community could have supported greater understanding if coupled with the right kind of methodological approach (e.g., interpretivist phenomenology) to enable difficult and sensitive topics to be broached. I think that by being embedded in place and allowing time to build trust (with research participants), I would have had the opportunity to engage both informally and formally, and on multiple occasions, with the youth. More time spent with the participants may have increased the likelihood of at least some of them opening up about these issues.
This challenge ties into the broader limitation of this research, which was linked to technological and language challenges. Working remotely meant conducting interviews by WhatsApp (especially with the Lomerío youth) and Zoom (with rural development practitioners). To my mind, this limited the quality of interactions and rapport I built with my participants. In the case of using WhatsApp to connect with the youth in a fairly remote region of Bolivia, this also meant having to navigate and deal with poor (and sometimes lost) connections, not to mention the challenge of making interview questions easily understood and flow well. I am not fluent in Spanish, so this was an added problem. I had taken Spanish courses ahead of embarking on this research (including immersive experiences in Mexico and Peru) but had hoped for an in-person experience in Bolivia that would incorporate time (prior to data collection) getting to know the people in Lomerío and the local dialect. Immersing myself in community life may have helped me to build rapport and better interpret the participants’ responses.

For every challenge or difficult moment, there is often a positive or a silver lining. A key limitation for me involved having to do what in essence was or would have been community-engaged research implemented remotely. On the flip side, by being unable to travel to Bolivia and make Lomerío the prime (sole) focus of the research, I decided to complement the insights from Lomerío youth with interviews with rural development practitioners working internationally. I think this was an important decision, since it provided data to strengthen this thesis primarily by helping me to better situate the Lomerío data in the broader context of Indigenous territorial governance and allowing me to speculate the degree to which the Lomerío experience (to date) is typical or atypical when compared to experiences in other parts of Latin America and other global regions.

6.3 Contributions of the thesis

Young people are seen as an integral part of Indigenous and rural communities, with “they (the youth) are the future” serving as a common refrain among both community leaderships and rural development NGOs. But young people in these places are also the present – as potential critical contributors to community and territorial life and governance in the here and now. The major contribution of this thesis does not involve delivering a blueprint for creating space for the integration and empowerment of youth in territorial governance at the community level, but it rather set out to propose recommended actions that community leaderships, as well as support
organizations and agencies, could undertake to provide a foundation for youth engagement that in turn leads to youth empowerment as community actors. The case of the Indigenous Territory of Lomerio in eastern Bolivia may be atypical rather than typical, but by standing out in several ways it generated important lessons on how the youth could be integrated into community and territorial processes. It also demonstrated how engagement outcomes are shaped by the challenges and opportunities the youth face in a contemporary rural context. We learned that enabling cultural conditions (that view the youth positively) is foundational to making youth engagement and empowerment possible or probable. This is an important finding as most work on youth empowerment (in environmental stewardship and governance) to date has tended to focus on engagement strategies and training, rather than on understanding whether community spaces, institutions, and processes are “ready” (i.e., already receptive and welcoming to active youth participation).

This key finding extends to rural development programming oriented towards the youth. Such programming is often premised on the assumption, or assumptions, that the youth will respond if training is provided, and job opportunities created. But such assumptions (as to what youth interventions should look like) largely disregard the lived realities and expectations of youth living in Indigenous territories and the conundrum they face in terms of balancing personal, societal, and community expectations. My research has shown that it would be much more effective if young people are not only consulted but also help co-create the interventions designed for them. Although efforts to engage youth in rural development has increased over the past decade, this thesis shows that such work has concentrated on the labour and income they contribute to rural production and community livelihood. A further contribution of this research involves calling for a much broader envisioning of the role of young people in the community sphere (e.g., taking leadership positions). This can only come about by taking youth-held opinions and views seriously, providing the space for them to speak up, and then building their capacities and agency to do so. These were the key insights that inform this thesis’s recommendations for stakeholder groups who support youth engagement in territorial governance and rural development in a much broader sense. These are seen as actionable items to advance youth-held roles in Indigenous and rural communities through genuine youth engagement and empowerment.
Lastly, doing this research during the COVID-19 pandemic contributes lessons to future students and researchers who may face the same situation or who plan to conduct research remotely. For example, despite being distant, I learned a few cultural aspects about my place of study ahead of the interviews from books and conversations. I used this information to give my research participants a sense that I am eager to know about them and their culture. I also asked them about their day-to-day lives, about school, farming, and their friends. Sometimes, I find commonalities from their stories and mine. For example, one of the youth participants and I spent several minutes talking about how much I love yuka (cassava), one of the crops they grow on their farm. It appeared to me that having a few minutes of casual talk before I proceed with the interview questions makes my participants more relaxed and enthusiastic to tell me their stories. There was even a time when an interviewee introduced me to her family and gave me a virtual tour of their house and its vicinity. After the interview proper, I allowed them to ask me anything and most interviewees were interested in my age, where I’m from, and what I do. Whenever I mention that I live in Canada, I discern a certain wonder and curiosity on their faces, albeit virtually. This ‘strategy’ worked for most interviewees, especially young women. For very few participants, this was less effective, probably because they are naturally shy, or it could be that long video calls are boring, or they tend to get distracted easily by other things during the interview.

This research also shows that building trust and relationships with participants is a tall order when it comes to doing participatory and qualitative research. While building trust and relationships can be achieved remotely through appropriate methods and innovations, remote and digital ethnographies cannot be a substitute for in-person encounters. As we move into a post-pandemic world and considering that there may be an urge to maintain remote work as a cost-effective option for research, the limitations of such an approach should not be discounted.

6.4 Final reflections

This study touched upon several areas that merit further investigation. One that I think is particularly promising involves exploring what locally adaptive education curricula could (should) look like for Indigenous communities in the Global South. Improving opportunities for education could provide support to the youth, perhaps even to the point when they no longer felt compelled to cast their gaze at the nearest city and at the perceived opportunities that lie beyond their community’s borders. Following education, researchers might then determine if a shift
towards self-sufficiency could lead the youth to create for themselves a more hybrid existence, maintaining feet in both rural and urban settings by strengthening rural-urban linkages. This way, some of the broader debates in rural development that frame young people as the ‘future’ of their communities who need to be more involved in community initiatives are missing a more detailed and nuanced exploration of youth-held aspirations and mobility dynamics. Understanding deeply how youth aspirations are formed and how young people choose to live or stay in the community could further improve territorial/environmental governance. For example, the role of Indigenous families in influencing the career choices of young people can be investigated further with the view of determining how these choices can better cater to the needs of the community. Considering the current migration trends of young people steering a course towards urban areas, the knowledge and skills gained by Indigenous youth and their impact on their relation and contribution to the community could be explored (e.g., Willi young people lose their skills in farming or rural living and become more adept at surviving urban life? Will young people know or want to know how to manage forests and land in the future?) If the current out-migration scenario continues and if the rural youth become more skilled at urban work, what would future forests look like? Knowing these dynamics would help us provide more concrete and grounded interventions for territorial management plans.
References


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Appendix A. Interview guides

For Indigenous youth

(Available in English and Spanish)

Interviewer: Read the Consent Form statement to the participant and sign the oral consent portion.

Experiences and perceptions in territorial governance
1. What is your role in your community/organization?
2. Can you describe how your territory is governed? What are the activities and policies of the community on forest resource use? Do you think men or women have any particular opportunities or constraints for participating? What about young people? What are their roles? How are women and men brought into decisions relating to forest use?
3. Do/Did you participate in general assembly meetings?
4. How do they invite attendees to the general assembly meetings? How did you start attending the general assembly meetings?
5. Can you share an instance when you attended a meeting? What was the proportion of women and men? Did women speak out more often than men? Or what did you notice about the participation of women and young people? What do you think about it?
6. How do you feel when you are in a community meeting? Do you feel welcomed by other community members in these meetings?
7. Have you had an experience raising an issue in a community meeting? Do you feel that the community members will listen to you if you say something in the meeting?
8. What do leaders in your community think about youth?
9. Is there a youth representative in the community or General Assembly? If so, how do you feel when youth are heard/represented in your community?
10. What changed (from before) after the community elected a youth representative?
11. Which gender do you most identify with? Do you think being male/female has an implication to the extent of your participation? Can you identify a situation where you think your gender or your age was an issue that limited your participation in community meetings? When they were an advantage?

Barriers to and opportunities for participation among young Indigenous men and women
12. What stops you and other young members in participating youth participation in territorial governance?
13. Are there opportunities to make youth participate more meaningfully?
14. Are opportunities in the community the same or different for young men and women? If yes, what are these?

Initiatives to enhance youth participation
15. What do you think about current efforts to involve youth in decision-making processes?
16. What do you think are other opportunities for youth participation? What should be done to tap these opportunities?

**Recommendations for youth participation in Indigenous territorial governance**

17. What do you think we could do to make Indigenous youth participate meaningfully in the governance activities in your territory?

Thank you very much for participating in this interview and for your time today.

**For practitioners**

Interviewer: Read the Consent Form statement to the participant and sign the oral consent portion.

1. What is the name of the organization that you are involved with? What is its mandate?
2. Please describe your role in your organization. How many years have you been working on the themes of youth, gender, and Indigenous Peoples?
3. What is your organization’s role in working on themes of youth, gender, and Indigenous Peoples?
4. Provide and describe the programmes/projects that relate to youth that you have implemented or currently implementing.
5. From your observation in implementing these projects, what are the usual roles for youth in Indigenous communities? Do young women and men participate in equal numbers? (yes or no) What accounts for this?
6. What do you see are the common barriers that impede youth participation in territorial governance? Can you provide an instance or a case that exemplifies these barriers? Do women and men face the same barriers or are they different? (Explain)
7. What do you see as potential opportunities for youth in Indigenous communities? Can you provide an instance or a case that exemplifies these opportunities? Do young women and men have the same opportunities? (Explain)
8. Do you know of other examples that have opened or restricted opportunities for young men or women in territorial governance? Please explain.
9. How does gender affect these barriers and opportunities for youth?
10. How different is it for Indigenous youth to participate in governance activities?
11. Are there current or planned initiatives by your organization to enhance youth participation? Have you given any particular attention to Indigenous youth? Opportunities for young men? Opportunities for young women? Tell us more about that?
12. What would you recommend enhancing youth participation in Indigenous territorial governance?
   a. For the governments
   b. For Indigenous communities
   c. For development organizations
13. Are there any relevant documents you think I should look at in relation to this topic? Could you provide me with a copy?

Thank you very much for participating in this interview and for your time today.
Appendix B. Example consent form

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

(for Indigenous youth and practitioners)

This consent form, a copy of which will be sent to you for your records and reference, is only part of the process of informed consent. It should give you the basic idea of what the research is about and what your participation will involve. If you would like more detail about something mentioned here, or information not included here, you should feel free to ask. Please take the time to read this carefully and to understand any accompanying information.

You are invited to participate in a research study entitled:

YOUTH PARTICIPATION IN INDIGENOUS TERRITORIAL GOVERNANCE

**Researcher:** Maria Paula Sarigumba, Masters Student, School of Environment and Sustainability, University of Saskatchewan, 317 Kirk Hall, 117 Science Place, Saskatoon, SK, S7N 5C8, +1 (639) 998 9372, mp.sarigumba@usask.ca

**Supervisors:**

James Robson, Assistant Professor, Human Dimensions of Sustainability, School of Environment and Sustainability, University of Saskatchewan, 336 Kirk Hall, 117 Science Place, Saskatoon, SK, S7N 5C8, Phone: +1 (306) 966-1017
Purpose and Objectives of the Research:

1. Investigate how young Indigenous women and men differ in their experiences and perceptions of territorial governance;
2. Identify and explore the barriers to and opportunities for participation among young Indigenous women and men;
3. Document initiatives to enhance youth participation, and explore if and how gender can be mainstreamed in such initiatives; and
4. Develop recommendations for communities, government agencies, and development organizations in supporting youth participation in Indigenous territorial governance.

Procedures:

- My participation will consist of attending a 60-minute semi-structured interview with the researcher.

- I understand that the study will employ video calls depending on internet capability in the area where the participant is based. If a reliable and stable internet connection is not available, I am aware that voice calls where video feature is disabled can be used. Telephone calls may also be an option if I prefer.

- Whether by voice, video, or telephone calls, I understand that all interviews will be recorded through the software recording function if I provide consent. The information I provide will be collected and recorded on local storage (the interviewer’s password-protected computer) and personal note-taking. I can request to stop the recording at any time during the interview. I should feel comfortable with the nature of this project at all times. I also agree not to make any unauthorized recordings of the content of a meeting/data collection session.

- I am aware that this research will use Zoom communication software. The privacy policy of this platform can be found at https://zoom.us/privacy. The policy also contains the kind of data that is stored outside of Canada. The server of the platform is located in California, USA. I understand that there is no guarantee of privacy of data can be made.

Funded by:

- This research is funded through the “Building Inclusivity in Latin American Forest Commons” project which is funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. The researchers have no conflicts of interest relevant to this study.
Potential Risks:

- The risks to participating in this research are minimal; however, you may experience feelings of discomfort, frustration, or anxiety in talking about your experiences.
- Risk(s) will be addressed by: ensuring confidentiality of your identity throughout data collection, analysis and reporting, and ensuring that you feel free to discontinue the interview at any time.
- Please feel free to contact the researchers at any time after this interview with any questions or concerns you may have. Please feel free to skip any questions you would rather not answer.

Potential Benefits:

- The potential benefits of this research include contributing to improvements in committee decision-making processes and governance more generally, and sharing effective strategies and practices with Indigenous youth, forest-based communities, and development practitioners.

Confidentiality:

- The data from this research project may be published, presented at conferences and used in a graduate thesis; however, your identity will be kept confidential. Although we may report direct quotations from the interview, identifying information (such as your name and the name of your organization) will be removed from the report.
- The research team will be responsible for managing research participant information and responses. Long-term data storage is the responsibility of the principle investigator, and data storage will be linked to the identity of participants. This is because the research aims to obtain varying perspectives that may be connected to the role or position of participants. I understand that my personal integrity and privacy will be respected. The researcher will not use my name unless I request it.
- The researcher will not use the participant’s name in any publications unless granted requested.

Storage of Data:

- The information collected from this interview will be stored with the researcher in password-protected digital files and locked offices for a minimum of 5 years post publication. After this period, the data files will be destroyed.
- There are several options for you to consider if you take part in this interview. You can choose all, some or none of them. Please put a check mark on the corresponding box (es):
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>I would like to review the transcript from my interview</td>
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<tr>
<td>You may use a direct quote from my interview in any publication</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>I want the opportunity to review my quotes prior to any release of information</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>You may quote me and use my name</td>
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**Right to Withdraw:**

- My participation in this project is voluntary. I have the right to withdraw from the project before or during an interview, or to refuse to answer any individual questions. I may withdraw from the study up to 14 calendar days after the interview. After that time, it is possible that some form of research analysis and dissemination will have already occurred, and it may not be possible to withdraw your data.
- If I decide to withdraw from the project, any information I have given will be promptly destroyed and will not be included in the project in any way. I understand that there is no penalty if I withdraw. My withdrawal will bear no consequences, and no judgments or prejudice will be held against me.

**Questions, Concerns & Follow Up:**

- To obtain results from this study, or if you have any additional questions or concerns, please contact the researcher/supervisor using the information at the top of page 1.
- This research project has been approved on ethical grounds by the University of Saskatchewan Research Ethics Board (No. 1128). Any questions regarding your rights as a participant may be addressed to that committee through the Research Ethics Office ethics.office@usask.ca (306) 966-2975. Out of town participants may call toll free (888) 966-2975.

**Consent:**

Option 1 - SIGNED CONSENT *(for interviewees who have the capacity to submit a signed form electronically)*
Your signature below indicates that you have read and understand the description provided; I have had an opportunity to ask questions and my/our questions have been answered. I consent to participate in the research project. A copy of this Consent Form has been given to me for my records.

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<th>Name of Participant</th>
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<tr>
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By signing below, I authorize the inclusion of my name in the acknowledgements section of the thesis.

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<th>Researcher’s Signature</th>
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<th>Participant’s Authorization</th>
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<th>I request a copy of the transcript: Yes/No</th>
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<th>I request a copy of research output(s): Yes/No</th>
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A copy of this consent will be sent to your preferred email address, and a copy will be kept by the researcher.
Option 2 - ORAL CONSENT

Since this interview is conducted remotely, I read and explained this Consent Form to the participant before receiving the participant’s consent, and the participant had knowledge of its contents and appeared to understand it. In addition, consent may be audio or videotaped.

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<th>Name of Participant</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Researcher’s Signature</td>
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<td>Date</td>
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Appendix C. Ethics certificate

Certificate of Re-Approval

Application ID: 1128
Principal Investigator: James Robson
Department: School of Environment and Sustainability

Locations Where Research Activities are Conducted:
- San Juan Evangelista Analco (Sierra Norte region), Mexico
- Jalapa del Valle (Valles Centrales region), Mexico
- Other communities, Mexico
- Chiquitania region, Bolivia

Student(s):
- Maria Paula Sarigumba
- Sylvia Mora Sanchez

Funder(s):
- School of Environment and Sustainability
- Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada

Sponsor: Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada

Title: Building Inclusivity in Latin American Forest Commons

Approved On: 30/04/2020
Expiry Date: 29/04/2021

Review Type: Delegated Review

* This study, inclusive of all previously approved documents, has been re-approved until the expiry date noted above

CERTIFICATION

The University of Saskatchewan Behavioural Research Ethics Board (Beh-REB) is constituted and operates in accordance with the current version of the Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (TCPS 2 2014). The University of Saskatchewan Behavioural Research Ethics Board has reviewed the above-named project. The proposal was found to be acceptable on ethical grounds. The principal investigator has the responsibility for any other administrative or regulatory approvals that may pertain to this project, and for ensuring that the authorized project is carried out according to the conditions outlined in the original protocol submitted for ethics review. This Certificate of Approval is valid for the above time period provided there is no change in experimental protocol or consent process or documents.

ONGOING REVIEW REQUIREMENTS

In order to receive annual renewal, a status report must be submitted to the REB Chair for Board consideration within one month prior to the current expiry date each year the project remains open, and upon project completion. Please refer to the following website for further instructions: https://vpresearch.usask.ca/researchers/forms.php.

Digitally Approved by Diane Martz
Chair, Behavioural Research Ethics Board
University of Saskatchewan