

Doctoral Candidates in Cultural Anthropology needed for an NSF field study in Bolivia

“Construction ahead”: The effects of roads on indigenous people’s well-being and use of natural resources. A natural experiment in lowland Bolivia.

Duration of field work: May 2011- December 2012

The Bolivian government plans to build a road linking Villa Tunari in the highland department of Cochabamba with the town of San Ignacio de Moxos, a town in the lowland department of Beni. The proposed road will cut through a national park and territories inhabited by several native Amazonian groups. The proposed study uses the construction of the road as a natural experiment and includes measuring indicators of well being and use of natural resources before and after the construction of the road in treatment and control communities.

To carry out the study, three doctoral candidates in Anthropology from a US university are needed to serve as research associates for a 20-month study of the effects of roads on the well-being and use of natural resources of two native Amazonian populations in Bolivia that will be affected by the road: Tsimane' and Moxenos. Candidates should have a strong background in the social or natural sciences, including courses in statistics and research methods and be fluent in Spanish.

Two ethnographers: Two students will be responsible for conducting ethnographic research, administering surveys on local ecological knowledge, household economics, food consumption, and use of natural resources. Other topics include the history of roads in the area (e.g., logging, cattle), policies of logging and oil firms and cattle ranches of using local resources and hiring locals, land use rights. An important aspect of the ethnographic work centers on how to obtain culturally specific measures of variables that can be compared across communities and ethnic groups. Some of these variables are central to the study, such as: ethnicity, income, wealth, status, social capital, attitudes toward the proposed road.

Political economy: The third student will focus on the broader political economy background of the road construction project: the local, national, and international pressure groups that favor or oppose the road and how these tensions might affect the trajectory of the road. The student will be responsible for obtaining the latest maps of indigenous territories, latest census of indigenous communities in the parks, and mapping the presence of local institutions working in the area.

Research will take place in indigenous villages within the Territorio Indígena Parque Nacional Isiboro-Secure (TIPNIS), a National Park in lowland Bolivia. Research will be coordinated with the Centro Boliviano de Desarrollo Social e Integral (CBIDSI) and Cooperación Médica Canaria, local NGOs that have been continuously working in the area since 1999.

Students are encouraged to pursue their own research plan and collect data for their dissertation. Travel and living expenses while in the field will be paid for. The project will also cover round-trip travel from US to Bolivia.

The field work component of the research is scheduled to begin in May of 2011, but familiarization with the road construction project, and with the history and ethnography of Moxos should start in January 2011. Training in the key field methods will take place in the area during May-June 2011. Interested students should contact: Professors Victoria Reyes-García (vreyes@brandeis.edu) or Ricardo Godoy (rgodoy@brandeis.edu) by December 31, 2010 to receive full consideration. Contact either Reyes-García or Godoy to obtain a copy of the proposal.

This research is funded by the Program in Cultural Anthropology of the National Science Foundation.

Doctoral Candidate in Environmental Sciences needed for an NSF field study in Bolivia

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The Bolivian government plans to build a road linking Villa Tunari in the highland department of Cochabamba with the town of San Ignacio de Moxos, a town in the lowland department of Beni. The proposed road will cut through a national park and territories inhabited by several native Amazonian groups. The proposed study uses the construction of the road as a natural experiment and includes measuring indicators of well being and use of natural resources before and after the construction of the road in treatment and control communities.

To carry out the study, a doctoral candidate in environmental sciences is needed to serve as research associates for a 20-month study of the effects of roads on the well-being and use of natural resources of two native Amazonian populations in Bolivia that will be affected the by road: Tsimane' and Moxenos. Candidates should have a strong background in the social or natural sciences, including courses in statistics and research methods and be fluent in Spanish. The student needs to be familiar with geographic information systems, GIS, and remote sensing. The student will be responsible for conducting a Land Use-Land Change analysis of the affected areas (including the TCOs TIM and TIPNIS).

Research will take place in indigenous villages within the Territorio Indígena Parque Nacional Isiboro-Secure (TIPNIS), a National Park in lowland Bolivia. Research will be coordinated with the Centro Boliviano de Desarrollo Social e Integral (CBIDSI) and Cooperación Médica Canaria, local NGOs that have been continuously working in the area since 1999.

The student is encouraged to pursue her/his own research plan and collect data for her/his dissertation. Travel and living expenses while in the field will be paid for. The project will also cover round-trip travel to Bolivia.

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