



Sustainable Agriculture and Natural Resource Management Collaborative Research Support Program

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Trip Report: Mexico

10-14 January 2012

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Purpose: Present gender research in Bolivia at the Conference of Latin Americanist Geographers (CLAG)

Sites Visited: Mérida, Yucatán

Description of Activities

I attended the Conference of Latin Americanist Geographers (CLAG) in Mérida, Yucatan, Mexico from January 11-13. CLAG is an independent membership organization that was originally a specialty group within the Association of American Geographers (AAG). The Conference of Latin Americanist Geographers was organized to foster geographic education and research on Latin America. Any geographer who is interested in Latin America is welcome to attend and participate but the conference also welcomes social and natural scientists from various other disciplines. CLAG publishes the *Journal of Latin American Geography*. This year, over 130 papers were presented at the conference. In addition to making a presentation and networking with professional colleagues, I served as chair for a session entitled "Livelihoods in Transition."

I attended the conference to present our gender research in Bolivia in a talk titled, "Gendered Perspectives on Sheep, Livelihoods, and Sense of Place in Sank'ayani Alto, Bolivia" (see abstract below). The presentation was co-authored by SANREM CRSP graduate research assistant, Keri

Agriesti (Virginia Tech), and Rubén Botello from PROINPA. I received many positive comments from the audience. The conference presented important professional networking opportunities as well as a space for presenting our research. I benefitted from the session and was particularly interested in a session, “Alternative and Participatory Methodologies in Latin America,” that directly relates to the methods we employ in the SANREM gender cross-cutting research activity. I met Sara Radcliffe, a geography professor at the University of Cambridge, who has a focus on gender and development.

I also met with Dr. Antoinette WinklerPrins, program director for the Geography and Spatial Science Division of the National Science Foundation and a geography professor at Michigan State University, to discuss SANREM research and her upcoming visit (co-sponsored by SANREM) to Virginia Tech. Dr. WinklerPrins studies the connection between changes in livelihoods, local environmental knowledge, and landscape transformation. From urban agriculture in Amazonia to floodplain sedimentation in the Amazon River, she researches how socio-economic changes influences the way people shape both themselves and their environments. Her upcoming talk is funded through the Women and Minority Artists and Scholar Lecture Series (WMASLS) from the Office of the Provost at Virginia Tech, the Department of Geography at Virginia Tech, and SANREM CRSP. Her presentation will be a part of the Women in International Development (WID) Discussion Series and the Colloquium for the Department of Geography.

Abstract for the CLAG presentation:

Cultural practices and gender roles influence women and men farmers’ specialized knowledge of, access to, and control over different spaces and resources in the landscape. This presentation explores local soil knowledge and gendered space in a Quechua-speaking, smallholder farming community in the Andean Region of Bolivia from the perspective of cultural and political ecology. This work is a part of a larger international collaborative research-for-development program targeting conservation agricultural production systems (CAPS) as a means to address food security and soil health with localized farming practices. Qualitative research methods included focus groups, participatory mapping, plot visits, and listing soil names and characteristics. These revealed that though some activities are shared by men and women, there are gender differences in activities, perceptions, and use of land. Women’s livelihood and sense of place are linked to pasturing sheep, planting potatoes, and making chuño. Men’s income-earning activities include tilling land for hire. Implementation of CAPS could lead women to lose control over spaces and local knowledge essential to their livelihoods; as well, the minimum-tillage component of CAPS could cause men to lose money from community labor or renting out cows and tractors.