

DIE AMERIKAS - VORTRAGSREIHE DES INSTITUTS FÜR ETHNOLOGIE

LEITUNG: PROF. DR. EVELINE DÜRR

Institut für Ethnologie
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Raum 123
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Aymara Futurisms: Imagining and Expressing Visions of Wellbeing through Ideal Homes in the City of El Alto

Abstract

In recent years, El Alto, now Bolivia's second largest city with a predominant Aymara population, has attracted national and international attention for its unusual forms of architecture. Futuristic constructions with forms alluding to science fiction and Hollywood movie characters such as "Transformers" coexist with others inspired by pre-colonial archaeological sites. These architectural interventions are the result of the emergence of an Aymara commercial bourgeoisie that has, in recent years, become a thriving sector in economic, social and political terms, and which, through these buildings, expresses their visions of prosperity and wellbeing. This presentation, based on ethnographic research with Aymara traders in El Alto, aims to unpack the visions of wellbeing that underlie these constructions, both in commercial and cosmological terms. It delves into the diversity of these architectural expressions, their exterior and interior designs, and the use of space, to understand the processes through which they become references of the ideal home. I argue that the case of the Aymara architecture and its futuristic forms is an example of the disruptive ways in which Indigenous people approach urban life on their own terms, often in contrast with official urban aesthetics and projects, thus reconfiguring the cityscape and providing multiple building blocks for imagining and expressing Indigenous futurism in the Andes.

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