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Caring over distance: multi-sited livelihoods, connectivity and care -an Andean case study

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Although the concept “multi-locational livelihoods” has been discussed since the early 1990s, it was mainly understood as household members linking urban and rural localities. Similarly the dynamics of transnational households have mainly been analysed in terms of household members maintaining linkages across national boundaries. Both approaches fail to capture the multi-sited nature of the migrating households in the Andean province of Junin (Peru).

The Andean population – and thus the population of Junin - has historically been characterized by high mobility patterns. Originally this was mainly a regional mobility, dynamically following ecological niches to improve livelihoods. This gradually transformed into a mobility spanning the national territory, including rural-urban migration to both the region’s capital Huancayo and the national capital Lima. Since the 1960s these migration movements have broadened in scope and now cover international destinations in Latin America, Europe and the United States. Consequently the multi-sited households in Junin can have members in the rural villages, the city of Huancayo

and/or Lima, and at international destinations. This study analyses how household members from the Junin Province maintain contact and caring relations over distance. It analyses these patterns from the perspective of the elderly stay-behinds in the Junin province, who have other household members living in other localities in Peru as well as abroad. It are not the often mentioned factors as gender, age or time of separation that most determine the practices of connectivity and care. Our analysis – based on survey research (N=250) complemented with in depth case-studies and life-histories of 20 member of 6 different households – shows that the kind of family relationship exerts more influence over how bonds are maintained over distance.