

The Open University's repository of research publications and other research outputs

Indigenous Peasant 'Otherness': Rural Identities and Political Processes in Bolivia

Journal Item

How to cite:

Fontana, Lorenza B. (2014). Indigenous Peasant 'Otherness': Rural Identities and Political Processes in Bolivia. *Bulletin of Latin American Research*, 33(4) pp. 436–451.

For guidance on citations see [FAQs](#).

© 2014 The Author; 2014 Society for Latin American Studies



<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>

Version: Accepted Manuscript

Link(s) to article on publisher's website:
<http://dx.doi.org/doi:10.1111/blar.12207>

Copyright and Moral Rights for the articles on this site are retained by the individual authors and/or other copyright owners. For more information on Open Research Online's data [policy](#) on reuse of materials please consult the policies page.

Indigenous Peasant ‘Otherness’: Rural Identities and Political Processes in Bolivia

LORENZA B. FONTANA

University of Sheffield, UK

Since Morales’s election, rural movements have become the new protagonists of Bolivian politics. Previous analyses have emphasised their active role in shaping national politics, often focusing on those organisations as a compact block. However, their relationship is marked by both cooperation and fragmentation. This article provides a narrative of Bolivian socio-political history over the last 60 years, establishing four main phases of identitarian articulations/disarticulations. It demonstrates the high degree of interdependence and fluidity of ethnic and class identities, as well as their interconnections with the broader socio-political context and the national legal and institutional changes.

Keywords: articulation, Bolivia, collective identities, indigenous, peasant, rural movements.

Throughout the past six decades, Bolivia has experienced massive urbanisation (UNDP, 2004). Despite this, rural areas remain a key social space, especially in terms of identity geopolitics. Bolivian rural organisational networks are historically rooted within two main identitarian pillars: peasant and indigenous. These correspond to two sociologic categories, class and ethnicity, two organisational and political traditions, syndicalism and native indigenous organisation, and two ideological streams, Marxism and Indianism/Indigenism. The boundaries between these two worlds draw a complex semiotic and narrative map that has been rearticulated over time, crossing moments of separation and rapprochement. This dynamic movement depended mainly on two factors: the characteristics of the dominant national ideology in the framework of different political projects (from the state), and the ability of adaptation, opposition and innovation of social forces (from society).

The fluidity of these frontiers was also made possible by the structural weakness of ‘objective’ criteria to define different organisational and identitarian systems. Theoretically, this is close to a constructivist framework that refuses an objective and static correspondence between identitarian and demographic groups. Important differences exist between identities that gather individuals with evident shared markers (e.g. in terms of language, territory, phenotypes) and identities that characterise more heterogeneous groups according to these very markers. In Bolivia, in some cases, indigenous and peasant identities mark out seemingly homogeneous groups, while, in other cases,

pre-existent markers dominate the socio-political landscape. Examples of the latter scenario are the borders that separate groups of peasant settlers and the small Amazonian indigenous peoples in the lowlands. The former is more common in the highlands and valleys, where Quechua and Aymara groups have been fragmented by political and corporative currents, which adopted either indigenous/native or peasant identities.

Indigenous and peasant identities, intended as mechanisms of collective self-identification, have gone through a continuous process of articulation and disarticulation. Stuart Hall defined articulation as:

the form of the connection that *can* make a unity of two different elements, under certain conditions. It is a linkage which is not necessary, determined, absolute and essential for all time. You have to ask, under what circumstances *can* a connection be forged or made? The so-called 'unity' of a discourse is really the articulation of different, distinct elements which can be rearticulated in different ways because they have no necessary 'belongingness'. The 'unity' which matters is a linkage between the articulated discourse and the social forces with which it can, under certain historical conditions, but need not necessarily, be connected. (Hall, 1986: 53, emphasis original)

Following this definition, the focus in this context won't be on the authenticity of identity, or on its anchorage to a given set of objective referents (language, culture, dressing, traditions), but on its functionality in terms of articulation, i.e. its ability to generate a sense of self-identification shared within a certain social aggregate. More specifically, I define identities' articulation as the process of compatibilisation and mutual interdependence between two or more identities, often in a functional way with respect to a political and historical context. Articulation and disarticulation between peasant and indigenous identities are thus defined in terms of alliance and conflict within both the space of ideas and more comprehensive world visions (ideologies and discourses) and the space of action, decision and projects (politics). The assumption being that, to win politically, it is paramount to gain a discursive supremacy and to come out with a dominant narrative. This dynamic depends on the results of the process of occupation of the symbolic spaces represented by the ideal-types 'indigenous' and 'peasant' in addition to the struggle around purity and authenticity criteria. This implies an essentialist and static interpretation of identities, although the use that people make of them is dynamic and changeable (Rubin, 1998).

This article argues that the modern history of the two identitarian pillars of rural Bolivia can be divided into four main moments: (a) The National Revolution of 1952 promoted a hierarchical articulation (class over ethnicity) through a process of massive '*campesinisation*' (syndicalisation) and the construction of a cohesive classit narrative; (b) Between the 1970s and the 1980s, a phase of ideological articulation occurred under the intellectual and political leadership of Katarism; (c) Beginning in the 1980s, the fracture between peasant and indigenous identities reopens with the rise of neoindigenism. The latter catalysed the claims of indigenous peoples but, unlike Katarism, took distance from peasant syndicalism, commencing a phase of organisational disarticulation, strengthened during the 1990s by the neoliberal reforms; and (d) With the election of Evo Morales in 2005, the political project of the Movimiento al Socialismo (MAS; Movement towards Socialism) was based on an effort to reconcile the two sectors through a new articulation, which emphasised ethnicity in discourse, but in practice strengthened its ties mainly with the peasantry. However, this failed

to completely undo the disarticulation movement started two decades earlier, which continues to generate tensions and conflicts today.

I will analyse in detail the four moments that mark out the different articulation/disarticulation dynamic between indigenous and peasant identities, redefining the meaning of the 'other' as the excluded from a community of belonging that, at the same time, serves as an oppositional referent for collective self-identification. For each one of these moments, I will consider the historical contextualization, the characteristics of identities and social actors, and the relationship among them. The aim is to provide a narrative of socio-political Bolivian history over the last 60 years, taking rural identities as its main subject. The value of the work will rest in highlighting the interdependence and fluidity of ethnic and class identities in rural Bolivia, as well as their interconnections with the socio-political context. In a moment in which Bolivia is high in the agenda of social researchers that often tend to focus on contemporary processes in a rather a-historical way, this work is meant to provide a broader, historically grounded perspective on state-mediated constructions of rural identities.

This article relies both on an extended literature review as well as on primary data. The latter were collected during more than two years of field research (between 2010 and 2013) using multiple qualitative methods, including: 80 interviews with public officers, politicians, movement leaders, international cooperation experts and advisors. These sources were complemented with content analysis of documentary materials produced by indigenous and peasant organisations and cooperation agencies as well as with participant observation in social organisations' meetings and public events.

National Revolution, Syndicalisation and *Mestizaje*

The corporative model was imposed in Bolivia through a revolutionary shock. On 9 April 1952, the Movimiento Nacionalista Revolucionario (MNR; National Revolutionary Movement), with the support of the police, miners' unions and workers' militias, took La Paz, inaugurating one of the most important twentieth-century nationalist revolutions in Latin America. During its first year in power, the new regime nationalised mines, reformed agriculture and reorganised popular movements under a union structure. The MNR government wanted to guarantee a wide rural base, and the implementation of the peasant syndicalisation, inspired by miners' and workers' experiences (García Linera, 2007), provided an efficient system of control over the countryside. This was implemented through the classic *divide et impera* strategy, while simultaneously co-opting peasant leaders by MNR internal factions (Dandler, 1984).

The peasant unions were also the main form of exercising legitimate citizenship: the most important way of acquiring a 'palpable identity' in front of other people and being recognised as an interlocutor by governmental authorities was through militancy in the unions. The latter constituted themselves as the main referents for both the peasants and workers, through a cohesive classist narrative. This narrative underpinned the construction of powerful political identities (García Linera, 2007, 2010). The main social movements of the revolutionary epoch – the Central Obrera Boliviana (COB; Bolivia Workers Organisation) and the Confederación Nacional de Trabajadores Campesinos de Bolivia (CNTCB; National Confederation of Peasant

Workers of Bolivia) – were rooted in this system. However, during this time, they worked more as political bureaucratic arms of the state apparatus than as independent organisations able to catalyse social demands.

To improve state control in rural areas, efforts were made not only to build a strong corporative structure, but also to lead an ‘homogenisation campaign’ of the peasantry, eradicating indigenous identities, which were considered to be ‘externalities’ within the project of state modernisation (García Linera, 2010). However, this attitude should not be confused with the typical racist discourse of Latin American conservative elites, which regarded the indigenous as inferior human beings. Instead, drawing on Marxist and leftist egalitarian ideals, the MNR’s leadership considered the indigenous population as a ‘race’ that should be transformed to be integrated into the project of modernity. The idea of converting indigenous into citizens found an ideological backing in the *mestizaje* project (Sanjinés, 2005).

In Bolivia the official ‘transformation’ of indigenous groups into peasants was deeper and more accepted among local communities than in other countries (Albó, 2008). However, it was impossible to completely homogenise the complex landscape of rural identities. In some areas the model was almost perfectly implemented (for example the region of Cochabamba, Gordillo, 2000), while others experienced symbiotic relationships between pre-existent indigenous organisations and new corporative structures (as in the Norte Potosí, Rivera Cusicanqui, 1984) or shunned the syndical dominance almost completely (mainly in the lowlands, Postero, 2006).

These historical processes and identitarian and corporative transformations characterise this first moment as a phase of hierarchical articulation between indigenous and peasant identities, triggered mainly by an effort of inclusion of the rural masses within the national-popular project (Zavaleta Mercado, 1986).

The End of Dictatorship and the Katarist Syntesis

Despite the efforts of the Bolivian post-revolutionary government to initiate a systematic project of ‘transformation’ of indigenous peoples into peasants, it was not possible to completely eradicate ethnic identities. This was due mainly to their historical and sociological relevance, not only in the pre-colonial epoch, but also as an essential way in which the Bolivian state (and more generally the Latin American states) was constituted over the last two centuries (López Caballero, 2011). After a few years, new highly politicised social movements emerged, underpinned by a strong ethno-cultural identity and agenda.

The first ideological stream that promoted the ethnic revival developed at the end of the 1960s under the name of Katarism, in honour of the eighteenth-century indigenous leader Tupac Katari. This was a movement promoted by young and educated Aymaras interacting with urban indianist intellectuals (Pacheco, 1992). Katarism questioned the universal model of the *mestizaje* and proposed a new anti-colonial narrative, arguing in favour of the recognition of the Indian culture and history, and the need to build a ‘powerful autonomous peasant movement’. This would work as an ‘instrument for the peasants’ liberation’ and would be ‘created, led and sustained’ by the peasants themselves (quoted in Rivera Cusicanqui, 1984: 155).

The key date that marked the official rise of Katarism was 2 August 1971 when, during the national peasant congress in Potosí, its leader Jenaro Flores was elected to

the head of CNTCB. After the *coup d'état* of General Barrientos in 1964, Flores went into exile and Katarism went underground, only to return to the political scene after the massacre of peasants in the Valle Alto of Cochabamba in 1974, openly confronting the Pacto Militar Campesino (PMC; Military Peasant Pact). This was signed in 1964 between the army and the peasant organisations to guarantee the loyalty of the latter and to organise them into militias with an openly anti-leftist stance.

In 1979, during a period of great political instability, the Confederación Sindical Única de Trabajadores Campesinos de Bolivia (CSUTCB; Unitary Syndical Confederation of Peasant Workers of Bolivia) was founded under a clear Katarist hegemony. The new organisation immediately denied the PMC and became the focal point for practically the whole Bolivian peasantry, including the women's branch called National Confederation of Peasant Women of Bolivia Bartolina Sisa (Arnold and Spedding, 2005; Rousseau, 2011).

At the same time, Katarism inspired the foundation of more traditional political parties: the Movimiento Indio Tupac Katari (MITK; Indian Movement Tupac Katari) funded by a group of radical Indianists, and the Movimiento Revolucionario Tupac Katari (MRTK; Revolutionary Movement Tupac Katari), closer to the CSUTCB and promoter of the 'two eyes theory' (which set out the need to find solutions to peasants' problems through a 'double glance': as peasants, together with the whole exploited class, and as Indians, together with all the marginalised Bolivian nations). Not one of these political forces managed to impose itself at the national level, mainly because of problems of inefficiency, internal divisions and lack of trust from their constituencies (Rivera Cusicanqui, 1984).

From the second CSUTCB congress in 1983, the influence of Marxist and leftist currents increased and Katarism's importance diminished (Ticona, 2003). A period of tension between leftist and Indianist sectors started, bringing about the weakening of the political role of the Confederation at a time when the peasantry urgently needed a force of convergence for its claims. In this process, 'the Katarist-Indianist discourse and identity were disarticulated from the social subject that originated them, and became a dispersed and available ideological field for the left to use to nourish its confrontation of the crisis' (Rivera Cusicanqui, 1993: 51). With the fall of the Katarist proposal, collective subjects and discursive productions based on Indian identities lacked social representation, and this socio-political space remained open to new proposals that would be catalysed, during the 1980s, by new Eastern-based movements. Meanwhile, the CSUTCB's leadership took distance from its Katarist inspiration, which encouraged the rise of the *cocalero* (coca growers) stream.

Although Katarism had a relatively short political life, its historical importance is rooted mainly in its capacity of discursive and identitarian regeneration in a converging and amalgamating sense, whose main expression is an ethnic-classist co-identity: as Indian and peasant. This was a great innovation of Katarism that the MAS has tried to emulate in recent times, at least at the discursive level. It has been attempted through the promotion of an ethno-cultural profile, but without refusing the syndicalist organisational form that prevails among its grassroots (Albó, 2008). In this sense, the cultural-ethnic and the syndicalist-classist dimensions constituted the two historical horizons of Katarism, rooted into a 'dialectic complementation' of long and short memories (anti-colonial fights and ethnic pre-Hispanic order vs. syndical revolutionary power and peasant militias from 1952) (Rivera Cusicanqui, 1984). The Katarist experience corresponds to a phase of convergence between indigenous and peasant identities, able to juxtapose and resolve the structural tensions between them.

Democratic Transition and the Genesis of Neindigenism

From the 1980s, a new political doctrine, generally referred to as 'neindigenism' (Canessa, 2006) emerged, breaking with previous assimilationist models. Bolivia shared this process with other Latin American countries, where, in the same period, constitutional reforms were implemented that recognised the pluriethnic and multicultural character of national societies (Van Cott, 2000). These reforms entailed a symbolic change of perspective, as well as a concrete turning point generated by the institutionalisation of new rules to regulate the recognition of diversity through the positive right (Yashar, 2005). This process greatly coincided with the golden age of neoliberalism in Latin America, which often proactively endorsed an agenda of cultural and ethnic recognition. Referring to the Guatemalan case, Charles Hale argued that neoliberal multiculturalism has come about mainly as a response to the growing 'demands for rights by culturally oppressed and excluded' (Hale, 2002: 490). Nancy Postero applies a similar argument to the Bolivian case (2006). In this context, I will focus on the interactions between top-down and bottom-up processes, which were mainly driven by the interactions between three fundamental actors: new indigenous peoples' organisations, international practitioners and academics, and the state.

From the 1970s, in Latin America and mainly in the Andean region, a number of anthropologists and ethno-historians started to highlight the specificities of indigenous communities, privileging ethnic over classist categories (Arnold, 2009). At the end of the 1970s, two meetings were organised in Barbados, where concern was expressed about the need to support the emancipation and development of indigenous peoples through the strengthening of their rights and identities. In 1978, in Bolivia the German anthropologist Jürgen Riester obtained funds through international cooperation to build the Casa del Campesino (Peasant's House), a shelter for the Ayoreos who had migrated to the city and lived in conditions of poverty and marginalisation. In 1980, Riester founded the non-governmental organisation (NGO) Support for the Apoyo Para el Campesino-Indígena del Oriente (APCOB; Support for the Lowlands Indigenous Peasant), which received funds from the Dutch cooperation (Danida), and the NGOs Hivos and Oxfam America and Cultural Survival. From that moment, lowland indigenous groups started to be politically structured. Central de Pueblos y Comunidades Indígenas del Oriente Boliviano, later renamed the Confederación de Pueblos Indígenas de Bolivia (CIDOB; Confederation of Indigenous Peoples of Bolivia) was founded in 1982, becoming one of the main social actors of the lowlands and playing a key role within national politics. Moreover, within a few years, ABCOB and CIDOB had become two of the most important receptors of international funding.

Simultaneously, in the western part of the country, similar experiences of symbiosis between academic and cooperation sectors took place, which started to implement projects of what was defined as 'ethno-development' or 'development with identity' (Andolina et al., 2005, 2009; Laurie et al., 2005). The most important of these was the Taller de Historia Andina (THOA; Andean Oral History Workshop) created in 1983 with the support of Oxfam America. This project developed research on the Indianist movement with the aim of strengthening indigenous history, culture and identity in the highlands (Choque and Mamani, 2001). The results served as a discursive basis for the legitimisation of a movement of 'reconstruction of the *ayllus*'. The latter was in its origins a form of extended familiar community, which worked the land in a collective form in the framework of a commonly owned territory (Rivera Cusicanqui, 1993).

A second example of ethno-development was the Programa de Autodesarrollo Campesino (PAC; Peasant Self-development Project) started in the Oruro department

in 1988. Twenty-one million euros were invested by the European Union to finance micro-projects with the aim of improving small-scale agricultural and livestock production (Radcliffe et al., 2002). The principal stakeholders of this programme were the organisation of the *ayllus*, which acquired legitimacy at the expense of local syndical leaders. As a culmination of this process, in 1997 the Consejo Nacional de Ayllus y Markas del Qullasuyu (CONAMAQ; National Council of the Ayllus and Markas of Qullasuyu) was founded and positioned as the 'national authority of the Aymaras, Quechuas and Urus' (Choque and Mamani, 2001: 166; Molina Rivero, 2006). Initially, this organisation made great efforts to differentiate itself from its natural competitor, the CSUTCB, through an ethnic-based discourse that emphasised its link to an 'original' Andean identity (Albó, 2008). The key concept in this sense was the 'nativeness', which allowed this organisation not only to distance itself from the peasants, but also from the indigenous peoples of the East, and to build its own identitarian boundaries. I present here an example of this kind of discourse:

We are native. We are neither indigenous, nor peasants. Everyone could be a peasant! Ruben Costas [One of the most important leaders of the regionalist movement of Santa Cruz de la Sierra] could be a peasant, since he has his own ranching activity. We didn't come from another country, but we are native, legitimate owners of our land and territory. (interview 3, 2010)

Meanwhile, CONAMAQ started a 'proselytism campaign' trying to 'convert' rural communities to the *ayllus*' cause through a discourse based on a shared historical memory and pre-colonial identity. Reinterpreting the anti-colonialist principles of the indigenous movement's ideology, the *ayllus* activists presented their organisation and the native authorities as 'more native' (in term of authenticity) and with more potential (in terms of development), rapidly creating a powerful rival for the peasant organisations (Andolina et al., 2005). Nevertheless, CONAMAQ did not manage to replace the peasant union that, conversely, imposed itself on the national scene by leading important social mobilisations after 2000. A multifaceted relationship was thus established between the two organisations that would generate a complex socio-political scenario.

This process was influenced by contemporary international and national events. Significant at the international level was the 1989 approval of the 169 Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention of the International Labour Organisation (ILO), which was ratified by the Bolivian government in 1991. This agreement established the adoption of 'new international standards [...] recognising the aspirations of [indigenous] peoples to exercise control over their own institutions, ways of life and economic development and to maintain and develop their identities, languages and religions'.

At the national level, the rise of the indigenous movement was favoured by a series of conjunctures. During the 1980s, the lack of capacity to catalyse social forces led to the weakening of the COB. Moreover, though the promulgation of Supreme Decree 21.060 in 1985, which inaugurated the cycle of neoliberal reforms, a paradigmatic change occurred in the way the state interpreted and managed rural issues. There was an effort to reorganise the population in symbolic terms: 'as specialised indigenous and not as producers of goods (peasants and workers) that the class-based definition established in the previous decades' (Arnold, 2009: 38). Moreover, indigenous movements were explicitly prioritised within development programmes sponsored by multilateral and bilateral cooperation agencies, which often introduced a requirement for indigenous

participation and a specific attention for cultural difference within beneficiary groups (Laurie et al., 2005; Bretón i Solo de Zaldívar, 2008).

The state played a key role in the process of the neo-indigenist rise. In the 1990s, three reforms made by neoliberal governments changed the rural identity-building process: (a) The Popular Participation Law, which, in 1995, introduced a formal distinction classifying communities as indigenous or peasant; (b) The Law of the National Institute of the Agrarian Reform (INRA) of 1996, which legalised the *Tierras Comunitarias de Origen* (TCO; Native Communitarian Lands), that is, vast territorial extensions assigned on an ethnic basis; (c) The Law of Cultural Bilingual Education, which promoted the teaching of indigenous languages and culture. Although indigenous issues were not of particular interest to a wider electorate, or even to the vast majority of people who might be described as indigenous (Canessa, 2006), these reforms triggered a process of ethnicisation of politics and development strategies, which ended up generating centrifugal tendencies (Postero, 2006). Also, this process benefited geographically concentrated social movements, whether regionalist or ethnically rooted (Do Alto and Fontana, 2013).

These legislative initiatives benefited greatly from international support. One of the most important and effective initiatives was the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark's Danida programme, 'Support for the Rights of Indigenous Peoples'. The programme, which ran from 1995 to 2010, supported and advised the government on implementing the titling of the TCOs and their sustainable management of natural resources (Danida and IWGIA, 2010: 12). The Danish cooperation has considered its strategy of support to indigenous peoples to be one of its most successful programmes (interview 6, 2011).

However, the role of international cooperation in supporting ethno-cultural movements has been strongly criticised. One reason is that within such programmes the civil society's stakeholders were mainly indigenous – i.e. CONAMAQ and CIDOB – while CSUTCB, because of its syndical nature, was not taken into consideration, contributing to the weakening of its Indianist stream (interview 2, 2010). According to an officer of the Danish Embassy, the stakeholder selection was based mainly on the criteria of 'most representativeness' in ethnic terms. However, these decisions generated discontent within peasant organisations, which accused the international actors of unjustifiably benefitting a social group to the detriment of another (interview 1, 2010). The 'professionalisation' of these movements, and mainly of their leaders (Laurie et al., 2003; Bretón i Solo de Zaldívar, 2008), as development actors is another side effect of such programmes. A 'project-based logic' is installed within the indigenous movements' leadership, which converts them into advocates and managers of development, experts in fund-raising and in the use of a specific ethno-developmentist language (Rodríguez-Carmona, 2009). This demonstrates the capacity of these actors to adapt, while at the same time constituting a consistent limit to their autonomy.

Ethno-development policies implemented by the Bolivian government and supported by international cooperation agencies were confronted by the problem of setting up a system that categorises different human 'sub-groups' and defines their ethnic 'authenticity'. The practical solution was the creation, at the end of the 1990s, of a *Viceministerio de Asuntos Indígenas y Pueblos Originarios* (VAIPO; Viceministry of Indigenous Issues and Native Peoples), which has been in charge of issuing a 'Ethnic Identity Certification' accompanied by a document that identifies the special needs of each and every certified indigenous people. This system, which was as well supported by Danida, provides the state with the 'bio-power' to define who is indigenous and who

is not, and what the needs of these social groups would be. These documents are also indispensable for starting the TCOs' titling process.

The two decades corresponding to the neoliberal governance, the rise of neo-indigenism and of new indigenous/native movements with the support of international actors marked a phase of disarticulation between indigenous and peasant identities, which led to fragmentation and higher degrees of competition between rural organisations.

Morales's 'Cultural Revolution' and the Fragile Trans-rural Alliance

In the 2000s, the wave of massive social fights, the rise of MAS as the social movements' coagulator and the electoral victory of Evo Morales opened a new political phase. The power equilibria not only between traditional political elites and social movements, but also among social actors themselves, were radically modified. MAS was founded as a 'political instrument' of the peasantry, and especially of coca-growers' unions (Zuazo, 2009; Do Alto, 2011). However, throughout a relevant change, mainly in the symbolic and discursive referents of the government, the indigenous element was included in its discourse together with its more traditional referent: the peasantry. This new balance played a key role in the management of tensions derived from the 'ontological heterogeneity' of the political instrument, at least during the first mandate. Morales's cultural discourse also contributed to strengthening a sense of community and feeling of pride among the grassroots, acting as a resource for political change (Postero, 2010).

The definition of a shared identity became paramount both at the symbolic and the operational levels. The new political project sought to be representative of all social forces, and, at the same time, these forces needed to be compensated with equal access to the reforms' outcomes. Moreover, from a strategic point of view, this alliance was important in order to implement more substantial changes, to oppose external (political) threats, and to frame an appealing international imagery.

One of the most evident manifestations of the cohesive effort undertaken by MAS was the creation of a new discursive category capable of unifying all rural sectors within a single indivisible concept. The 'trinitarian category' of 'indígena originario campesino' (native indigenous peasant), carefully negotiated during the Constitution-making process, becomes one of the main pivots for the institutionalisation of a new type of plurinational citizenship. As a new discursive tool, it was able to provide a shared narrative and symbolic space for the different actors in the coalition: the constellation of Eastern indigenous groups; the peasantry (including its coloniser and *cocalero* sectors); and the highlands population (mainly Aymara and Quechua). The result of this definitional quest is summarised within the Constitution:

An indígena originario campesino nation or people is each and every human collectivity that shares cultural identity, language, historical tradition, territorial institutions and view of the world, and whose existence is previous to the Spanish colonial invasion. (Art.30)

The negotiation of a category that includes and represents all the rural sectors, that is one and tripartite, gave a certain breadth to the political project and served as a propulsive force for more radical reforms (Fontana, 2014a).

However, despite these articulation efforts, Morales's political project still mirrors the tensions embedded in the indigenous-peasant relationship. Indeed, the strategic

essentialism that imbued the political discourse also contributed to fuelling racist fears and embittered the relationship between different social groups (for example lowland vs. highland indigenous) (Postero, 2007). Other key polarising issues were the decisions to deepen the ethno-developmentist initiatives started in the 1990s (in particular the titling of the TCOs) and an economic agenda based on extractivism and natural resources exploitation. During the first mandate, certain continuity with pre-existent policy initiatives was more consistent and the MAS-ista agenda was still very much influenced by the effort to find an innovative way towards 'inclusion with identity'. The outcome was the strengthening of the process of ethnicisation of Bolivian political life started in the 1990s, but in the framework of a new national project that tries to control centrifugal forces continuously negotiating new bases for an inter-rural political alliance. The construction of a political hegemony was based on the combination of a nationalistic discourse (in opposition to the unpopular neoliberal model) and of neo-indigenism (inherent in the idea of plurinationality).

In terms of identitarian reconfiguration, during this period both indigenous and peasant identities strengthened their cultural and ethnic connotations. In extreme cases, the outcome was the creation of new identities (ethnogenesis) or the definition of brand new patterns of indigenous militancy (what Charles Hale calls 're-Indianisation', 2002: 486). This results in the strengthening and radicalisation of certain collective identities, in the increase of its potential in terms of social cohesion, performative effects and, thus, of its political power regarding peer organisations and the state.

In this fourth phase of rising disarticulation between indigenous and peasant identities, there is not only a radicalisation of the neo-indigenist discourse, ethnic by definition, but also a narrative shift of the peasantry towards the 'ethnic', not as indigenous, or Indian, but as a sort of 'blood peasant'. This narrative introduces ethnic frames, linking peasant identities to origins, blood and surnames. For example:

Blood and the surname that runs through the blood of each and every one that lives in the CSUTCB area is peasant, before indigenous. [...] They are from different cultures and languages, but before indigenous they recognise themselves as native peasants. (interview 4, 2010)

All along, from our ancestors we are syndicalists. We form part of the Departmental Federation Tupac Katari. (interview 5, 2010)

For this reason, in contemporary Bolivia the hybrid category of *campesindios* (Bartra, 2010) is not applicable. Despite being conceptually, empirically and historically compatible, politicised narratives have produced conflicts between the *campesino* and *indio* identities. Peasants do not recognise themselves as indigenous even if it is perceived that they form part of an ethnic group because of the language they speak, and their culture, routines and uses. At the same time, indigenous peoples do not identify themselves as peasants, although subsistence farming and agriculture constitute the main mode of production of this population.

Analysing the Bolivian geopolitical map, additional evidence can be found that supports the hypothesis of a high instrumentalisation of ethnic and cultural identities. In particular, it is interesting to note how alliances formed along identitarian boundaries vary depending on the geographic dimension that we consider. Nationally, indigenous peoples and peasants have formed alliances during the rise and consolidation of Morales's political project, forming the Pacto de Unidad (Unity Pact). Meanwhile, at more local scales where indigenous and peasant organisations coexist, it is common to find situations of

polarisation and conflict. Tensions between social organisations occur, although with different dynamics and intensities, depending on the context. Such tensions have been witnessed in areas such as the Norte of La Paz, the Norte Potosí, the Chuquisaca valleys, the colonisation regions of the East, and the internationally famous Parque Nacional y Territorio Indígena Isiboro Sécure or Territorio Indígena y Parque Nacional Isiboro Sécure (TIPNIS; Isiboro Sécure National Park and Indigenous Territory).

This evidence can be linked to the hypothesis of Daniel Posner (2004), who argues that the relevance of ethnic divisions depends on the political and social arena where groups coexist, which constitutes how these groups come to be defined. During the first Morales government, it was perceived to be more convenient for indigenous and peasant organisations to find systems of alliance within the national political arena in order to confront other hostile political forces with opposite identitarian referents, such as the Right, the oligarchy and the business sector. Similarities are emphasised more than incompatibilities, with the concept of *indígena-originario-campesino* deriving exactly from this kind of political strategy. In local spaces, the balance of power is very different. The demographic and cultural map is relatively simpler. Relationships between indigenous and peasant populations, and the characteristics of the social aggregate and political space are varied. Indigenous and peasant groups often represent the vast majority of the population. This results in an instrumental fragmentation, both organisational and identitarian, which has particular resonance in local politics, and in resource competition (Fontana, 2014b).

From 2010, after the Constitutional referendum and Morales's re-election, the alliance that was built around the MAS government entered into a crisis that still persists. The turning point was marked by the TIPNIS conflict around the construction of a road between the two towns of Villa Tunari and San Ignacio de Moxos (across the departments of Cochabamba and Beni). The infrastructure would facilitate the communications and connect these areas of central Bolivia to the trans-American commercial corridors, thus contributing to development and economic growth. These, at least, were the arguments of the government and of its local allies, mainly peasant and coca growers communities. The latter were also interested in the possibility of expanding the agricultural frontier beyond the protected area's borders, although this was not explicitly stated (Webber, 2012). On the opposite side, other inhabitants, allied with indigenous-native organisations, urban middle-classes and ecologist sectors, were strongly resisting a project that would cut across their territory, altering its environmental and social equilibria. Moreover, they criticised the fact that no previous consultation took place with local communities, as established by the 2009 Constitution (Laing, 2012; Perrier Bruslé, 2012).

The conflict suddenly reached national and international public opinion when, on 15 August 2011, more than 2,000 people left the town of Trinidad, starting the VIII Indigenous March for the Defence of TIPNIS, which ended, two months and 1,500 km through Bolivian Andean valleys later, in La Paz. Meanwhile, various initiatives of dialogue between the government and the indigenous authorities took place, and, on 25 September, an episode of repression against the marchers by the Bolivian police resulted in the indignation of the public both nationally and internationally. Under rising public pressure, on 21 October, the government promulgated a law guaranteeing that the road would not pass through the TIPNIS. However, a few weeks later, some ministers and the President himself initiated a campaign in favor of the construction of the road. As a result, the conflict persisted and, in July 2012, a process of consultation with the local communities began (for a chronology of the conflict and the march see UNIR, 2011 and Fundación

Tierra, 2012). According to the government, the majority of TIPNIS's communities eventually agreed with the infrastructural project. However, some non-governmental reports raised doubts about the lack of transparency (Comisión Interinstitucional de la Iglesia Católica et al., 2012) and the communities' actual willingness to participate into the consultation (Sub-central TIPNIS, 2012). In this context, the representative of the Coordinadora Andina de Organizaciones Indígenas (CAOI; Coordinator of Andean Indigenous Organizations), Rafael Quispe, declared: 'If it is demonstrated that the rights of indigenous peoples have been violated, there will be an effect on Morales. From an indigenous president, he has become a violator of the rights of the natives', adding that the 'TIPNIS is just the tip of the iceberg' (*El Día*, 12 October 2012).

This conflict is representative of a growing number of struggles in Latin America, which combine claims for indigenous rights with the defence of the environment (Humphreys Bebbington and Bebbington, 2013). With reference to the Bolivian political context, it highlights three important gaps that have been widening within Morales's political project: (a) between discourse and political praxis; (b) between developmentism and indigenism; (c) between indigenous and peasant sectors. These gaps show the fragilities of the trans-rural alliance built during the Constitutional negotiations and open a new trend towards disarticulation between indigenous and peasant identities, whose main characteristic is the unprecedented level of politisation. The social alliance which combined ethnic and class claims envisaged by Postero (2006) in the aftermath of the neoliberal reforms, in the new political context, seems to have been overcome by more sectorial and fragmented interests, making it even more difficult to identify a new heterodox model of development.

MAS proved to be a flexible and unstable coalition of social forces. Fernando Mayorga (2013) identifies three main concentric circles of social basis around the MAS's core: (a) peasant organisations; (b) indigenous movements; (c) trade unions (miners, workers, retired people). Both the umbrella organisations that served as platforms of coordination for most of these social sectors (Coordinadora Nacional para el Cambio [CONALCAM; National Coordination for Change]), and the Pacto de Unidad [Unity Pact]) have collapsed over the last three years. As a result, the political coalition has been progressively contracted to the first circle, where the most loyal sectors are concentrated: CSUTCB and the Confederation Bartolina Sisa. The latter has been playing an increasingly important role as a key ally of the government, and its leaders are generally very close advisors and operative arms of Morales himself.

At the basis of this fracture between indigenous and peasant sectors, there is the incapacity of MAS's leadership to keep the coalition together in the absence of highly aggregational claims (e.g. the Constitutional Assembly or the nationalisations) or generalised conflicts (e.g. the 2008 political crisis). At stake now is the implementation of an ordinary public administration agenda that tends to mobilise corporatist and group interests. As a result of this new political scenario, the strengthening of the disarticulation between indigenous and peasant identities will likely be the prevailing trend over the next few years.

Conclusion

Over the past three decades, the process of articulation/disarticulation of rural identities has gone through different phases, whereby indigenous and peasant 'self' and 'otherness' were mutually redefined. These depended on political and contextual changes as well as on social movements' capacity to adapt, resist or innovate.

Looking at the historical periodisation proposed in this article, many similarities can be noted between the two most important moments of national-popular construction: the 1952 revolution and the 2005 ‘cultural revolution’. In both cases, ‘ethnic’ and ‘classist’ factors took on models of political articulation based on hierarchies of identities. The revolutionary epoch saw the emergence of both indigenous–peasant co-optation (as in the case of PMC and the Valle Alto of Cochabamba’s movements) and the main endogenous movement of rural articulation (Katarism and CSUTCB). In the case of the MAS’s leadership, the agglutination effort under the flag of plurinationalism became efficient in forming a political coalition and defining an agenda of structural reforms, particularly with the convocation of the Constituent Assembly. However, it did not manage to completely reverse the trend towards disarticulation between indigenous and peasant sectors – a disarticulation started more than twenty years earlier, with the rise of neo-indigenism, the native/indigenous movements and their political legitimation through the neoliberal reforms.

Although the ideological basis, the political strategies and the discursive repertoires present relevant differences between the two periods, from the normative and institutional perspective as well as in the dynamics of adaptation of rural organisations to the contextual changes, a certain degree of continuity can be identified. The latter can be observed mainly in the level of disarticulation between peasant and indigenous organisations; in the importance of external influences; in the high capacity of adaptation of social actors; in the contradictions of institutional and normative designs that bet on cultural and ethnic pluralism, while at the same time being unable to control fragmentation trends and endogenous centrifugal tensions.

Despite the introduction of discursive constructions that tend to amalgamate the different elements of the MAS rhetoric, in practice the promotion of ethnic criteria within the normative framework and the system of resources and rights allocation complicated rural Bolivia’s organisational and identitarian map even more. Spaces of democracy and the direct participation of traditionally marginalised sectors of the population were widened. However, problems of fragmentation and conflict among social sectors were deepened. Such dynamics became even more evident from the end of the 2008 political crisis, with the defeat of the right conservative opposition and of secessionist regionalism, and Morales’ re-election. The weakening of some of MAS’s historical enemies brought, in practice, the reversal of the catalysing trends introduced by Morales’s political project, reopening the gaps between the main rural identities and organisations. However, these trends towards fragmentation and conflict can only be explained in the context of the country’s socio-political history over the last 50 years, that is, the degeneration of the revolution, the defeat of Katarism as hegemonic project, the rise of new indigenous movements, the role of international actors and the neoliberal reforms.

The growing tensions between those two dimensions – on the one side, the national-popular political project that pushes towards the articulation of rural identities and, on the other side, the landscape of strong fragmentation and divergent claims between collective actors – appear to be one of the most important challenges that the Morales government will face in the near future.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank J. Oldekop and W. Wright for proofreading the article.

References

- Albó, X. (2008) *Movimientos y poder indígena en Bolivia, Ecuador y Perú*. CIPCA: La Paz.
- Andolina, R., Laurie, N. and Radcliffe, S. A. (2009) *Indigenous Development in the Andes Culture, Power and Transnationalism*. Duke University Press: Durham and London.
- Andolina, R., Radcliffe, S. and Laurie, N. (2005) 'Development and Culture: Transnational Identity Making in Latin America'. *Political Geography* 24(6): 678–702.
- Arnold, D. (ed.) (2009) *Altiplano. Serie de investigaciones sobre identidad en las regiones de Bolivia*. UNIR: La Paz.
- Arnold, D. and Spedding, A. (2005) *Mujeres en los movimientos sociales en Bolivia (2000–2003)*. CIDEM/ILCA: La Paz.
- Bartra, A. (2010) 'Campesindios. Aproximaciones a los campesinos de un continente colonizado'. *Memoria* 248: 5–13.
- Bretón i Solo de Zaldívar, V. (2008) 'From Agrarian Reform to Ethnodevelopment in the Highlands of Ecuador'. *Journal of Agrarian Change* 8(4): 583–617.
- Choque, M. E. and Mamani, E. (2001) Reconstrucción del ayllu y derechos de los pueblos indígenas: el movimiento indio en los Andes de Bolivia. *Journal of Latin American Anthropology* 6(1): 202–224.
- Canessa, A. (2006) 'Todos somos indígenas: Towards a New Language of National Political Identity'. *Bulletin of Latin American Research* 25(2): 241–263.
- Comisión Interinstitucional de la Iglesia Católica et al. (2012) *Resumen de informe visita a las comunidades del TIPNIS*. [WWW document] URL http://www.la-razon.com/nacional/Informe-Iglesia-Catolica-APDHB-TIPNIS_LRZFIL20121217_0003.pdf [accessed 10 December 2013].
- Comisión Interinstitucional de la Iglesia Católica and Asamblea Permanente de Derechos Humanos de Bolivia (2012) *Resumen del informe visita al TIPNIS*. [WWW document]. URL <http://www.eldeber.com.bo/2012/2012-12-17/tipnis.pdf> [accessed 8 May 2013].
- Dandler, J. (ed.) (1984) *Bolivia: la fuerza histórica del campesinado*. UNRISD/CERES: La Paz.
- Danida and IWGIA (2010) *The Rights of Indigenous Peoples. The Cooperation between Denmark and Bolivia (2005–2009)*. Danida/IWGIA: La Paz.
- Do Alto, H. (2011) 'Un partido campesino en el poder. Una mirada sociológica del MAS'. *Nueva Sociedad* 234: 95–111.
- Do Alto, H. and Fontana, L. (2013) 'Social Conflict and Reterritorialization: Diverse Perspectives on Rural and Regionalist Movements in Bolivia'. *Trace* 63: 24–34.
- Fontana, L. (2014a) 'Imagining a Plurinational Community: Narrative Artefacts and Strategic Contingency in the Redefinition of Political Identities in Evo Morales' Bolivia'. *Environment and Planning D*. (forthcoming).
- Fontana, L. (2014b) 'Indigenous Peoples vs. Peasant Unions: Land Conflicts and Rural Movements in Plurinational Bolivia'. *Journal of Peasant Studies*. (forthcoming).
- Fundación Tierra (2012) *Marcha indígena por el TIPNIS. La lucha en defensa de los territorios*. Fundación Tierra: La Paz.
- García Linera, Á. (2007) 'Condición obrera y forma sindicato en Bolivia' in J. Esperandín López and P. Iglesias Turrión (eds.) *Bolivia en movimiento. Acción colectiva y poder político*. El Viejo Topo: Madrid, 129–154.
- García Linera, Á. (2010) *La potencia plebeya. Acción colectiva e identidades indígenas, obreras y populares en Bolivia*. CLACSO/Comuna: La Paz.
- Gordillo, J. (2000) *Campesinos revolucionarios en Bolivia. Identidad, territorio y sexualidad en el Valle Alto de Cochabamba, 1952–1964*. Plural: La Paz.
- Hale, C. (2002) 'Does Multiculturalism Menace? Governance, Cultural Rights and the Politics of Identity in Guatemala'. *Journal of Latin American Studies* 34(3): 485–524.
- Hall, S. (1986) 'On Postmodernism and Articulation: An Interview with Stuart Hall'. *Journal of Communication Inquiry* 10: 45–60.

- Humphreys Bebbington, D. and Bebbington, A. (2013) 'Post-What? Extractive Industries, Narratives of Development and Socio-Environmental Disputes across the (ostensibly changing) Andean Region' in H. Haarstad (ed.) *New Political Spaces in Latin American Natural Resource Governance*. Palgrave Macmillan: Oxford, 17–38.
- Laing, A. F. (2012) 'Beyond the Zeitgeist of "Post-neoliberalism" Theory in Latin America: The Politics of Anti-Colonial Struggles in Bolivia'. *Antipode* 44(4): 1051–1054.
- Laurie, N., Andolina, R. and Radcliffe, S. (2003) 'Indigenous Professionalization: Transnational Social Reproduction in the Andes'. *Antipode* 35(3): 463–491.
- Laurie, N., Andolina, R. and Radcliffe, S. (2005) 'Ethnodevelopment: Social Movements, Creating Experts and Professionalising Indigenous Knowledge in Ecuador'. *Antipode* 37(3): 470–496.
- López Caballero, P. (2011) 'Altérités intimes, altérités éloignées : la greffe du multiculturalisme en Amérique latine'. *Critique Internationale* 51: 129–149.
- Mayorga, F. (2013) 'Bolivia: Escenarios políticos del desarrollo' in A. Aranibar and B. Rodríguez (eds.) *América Latina, ¿Del neoliberalismo al neodesarrollismo?* Siglo XXI/UNDP: Buenos Aires, 117–145.
- Molina Rivero, R. (2006) *De memorias e identidades. Los aymaras y urus del sur de Oruro*. IEB/ASDI/Fundación Dialogo: La Paz.
- Pacheco, D. (1992) *El indianismo y los indios contemporáneos*. HISBOL/MUSEF: La Paz.
- Perrier Bruslé, L. (2012) 'Le conflit du TIPNIS et la Bolivie d'Evo Morales face à ses contradictions: analyse d'un conflit socio-environnemental'. *EchoGéo*. [WWW document]. URL <http://echogeo.revues.org/12972> [accessed 13 April 2013].
- Posner, D. (2004) 'The Political Salience of Cultural Difference: Why Chewas and Tumbukas are Allies in Zambia and Adversaries in Malawi'. *The American Political Science Review* 98(4): 529–545.
- Postero, N. G. (2006) *Now We Are Citizens: Indigenous Politics in Postmulticultural Bolivia*. Stanford University Press: Stanford.
- Postero, N. G. (2007) 'Andean Utopias in Evo Morales's Bolivia'. *Latin American and Caribbean Ethnic Studies* 2(1): 1–28.
- Postero, N. G. (2010) 'The Struggle to Create a Radical Democracy in Bolivia'. *Latin American Research Review* 45(4): 59–78.
- Radcliffe, S., Laurie, N. and Andolina, R. (2002) 'Indigenous People and Political Transnationalism: Globalization from Below meets Globalization from Above?' WPTC-02-05. *Paper presented at the Transnational Communities Programme Seminar*, University of Oxford, 28 February 2002.
- Rivera Cusicanqui, S. (1984) *Oprimidos pero no Vencidos*. Aruwiwiri/Yachaywasi: La Paz.
- Rivera Cusicanqui, S. (1993) 'La raíz. Colonizadores y colonizados' in X. Albó and R. Barrios (eds.) *Violencias encubiertas en Bolivia*. CIPCA/Aruwiwiri: La Paz, 27–142.
- Rodríguez-Carmona, A. (2009) *El Proyectorado. Bolivia tras 20 años de ayuda externa*. Plural: La Paz.
- Rousseau, S. (2011) 'Indigenous and Feminist Movements at the Constituent Assembly in Bolivia: Locating the Representation of Indigenous Women'. *Latin American Research Review* 46(2): 4–28.
- Rubin, J. (1998) 'Ambiguity and Contradiction in a Radical Popular Movement' in S. Alvarez, A. Escobar and E. Dagnino (eds.) *Cultures of Politics/Politics of Cultures: Revisioning Latin American Social Movements*. Westview Press: Boulder, 141–164.
- Sanjinés, J. (2005) *El espejismo del mestizaje*. PIEB: La Paz.
- Sub-central TIPNIS (2012) *Informe de Recorrido realizado por las comunidades del TIPNIS*. Fundación Construir: La Paz.
- Ticona, E. (2003) 'Pueblos indígenas y estado boliviano. La larga historia de conflictos'. *Gazeta de Antropología* 19: 1–8.
- UNDP (2004) *Índice de desarrollo humano en los municipios de Bolivia*. Plural: La Paz.
- UNIR (2011) 'Análisis de la conflictividad del TIPNIS y potenciales de paz'. *Cuadernos de Investigación Sobre la Conflictividad* 1(1): 1–67.

- Van Cott, D. (2000) *The Friendly Liquidation of the Past: The Politics of Diversity in Latin America*. University of Pittsburgh Press: Pittsburgh.
- Webber, J. (2012) 'Revolution against "Progress": The TIPNIS Struggle and Class Contradictions in Bolivia'. *International Socialism*, 9 January. [WWW document]. URL <http://www.isj.org.uk/?id=780> [accessed 8 December 2013].
- Yashar, D. (2005) *Contesting Citizenship in Latin America, the Rise of Indigenous Movements and the Postliberal Challenge*. Cambridge University Press: Cambridge.
- Zavaleta Mercado, R. (1986) *Lo nacional-popular en Bolivia*. Siglo XXI: México City.
- Zuazo, M. (2009) *¿Cómo nació el MAS? La Ruralización de la política en Bolivia*. Fundación Friedrich-Ebert: La Paz.

Interviews

- Interview 1, Advisor of the Bartolinas (2010), 19 August, Santa Cruz.
- Interview 2, Authority of CONAMAQ (2010), 5 August, La Paz.
- Interview 3, Former officer of the Viceministry of Indigenous Issues (2010), 5 August, La Paz.
- Interview 4, Land and Territory Secretary of CSUTCB (2010), 2 August, La Paz.
- Interview 5, Member of the community of Puchahui (2010), 25 July, Apolo, Franz Tamayo Province.
- Interview 6, Project Manager of Danida (2011), 11 June, La Paz.