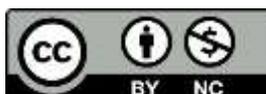

Fontana LB. [Indigenous Peasant 'Otherness': Rural Identities and Political Processes in Bolivia](#). *Bulletin of Latin American Research* 2014, 33(4), 436-451.

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Date deposited:

17/01/2018



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

Dr. Lorenza Belinda Fontana

Post-doctoral Researcher, Sheffield Institute for International Development (SIID)

University of Sheffield, ICOSS Building, 219 Portobello Road, Sheffield, S1 4DP

Telephone: +44 114 222 6068

Abstract: Since Morales’ election, rural movements have become the new protagonists of Bolivian politics. Previous analyses have emphasized their active role in shaping national politics, often focusing on those organizations 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, but also their interconnections with the broader socio-political context and the national legal and institutional changes.

Keywords: Collective Identities; Rural Movements; Indigenous; Peasant; Bolivia; Politics.

1. Introduction

Throughout the past six decades, Bolivia has experienced massive urbanization (UNDP Bolivia, 2004: 23). Despite this, rural areas remain a key social space, especially in terms of identity-building geopolitics. Bolivian rural organizational networks are historically rooted within two main identitarian pillars, peasant and indigenous. These correspond to two sociologic categories, class and ethnicity, two organizational and political traditions, syndicalism and native indigenous

organization, 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, passing through moments of separation and of rapprochement. This dynamic movement has depended mainly on two factors: (1) the characteristics of the dominant national ideology in the framework of different political projects (from the state); (2) 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 the different organizational and identitarian systems. Theoretically, this is close to a constructivist framework that refuses an objective and static correspondence between identitarian and demographic groups. Critically, important differences exist between identities that gather individuals with evident shared markers (for example, in terms of language, territory, phenotypical characteristics) and identities that characterize more heterogeneous human groups according to these very markers. In Bolivia, in some cases, indigenous and peasant identities mark out seemingly homogeneous groups while, in other cases, perceived pre-existent markers dominate the socio-political landscape. Examples of the latter scenario are the identitarian limits 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 native groups have been fragmented by different 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. This dynamic has been responsible for the generation of different meanings, feelings and strategies to trace more or less blurred boundaries between 'selfness' and 'otherness'. 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, cultural traits, dressing, well rooted 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, for the purpose of this study, I define identities’ articulation as the process of compatibilization 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. Thus, the two spheres of politics and discourse are interdependent. This dynamic equilibrium 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 paper argues that the modern history of the two identitarian pillars of rural Bolivia can be divided into four main moments: (1) The National Revolution of 1952 promoted a hierarchical articulation (class over ethnicity) through a process of massive syndicalisation (*‘campesinisation’*) and the construction of a cohesive narrative of its members in terms of class and *mestizaje*. (2) Between the 1970s and the 1980s, a phase of ideological articulation occurred under the intellectual and political leadership of the Katarism, a young and educated Aymaras’

indianist movement allied with the new peasant syndicalised vanguard; (3) Beginning in the 1980s, the fracture between peasant and indigenous identities reopens with the rise of the neoindigenism. The latter catalysed the claims of indigenous peoples but, unlike Katarism, took distance from peasant syndicalism, commencing a phase of organizational disarticulation, strengthened during the 1990s by the neoliberal institutional reforms; (4) With the election of Evo Morales in 2005, the new political project of the Movimiento al Socialismo (MAS) was based on an effort to reconcile the two sectors through a new articulation, which, on a discursive level emphasised ethnicity, but in practice strengthened its ties mainly with the peasantry. However, this failed to completely undo the disarticulation movement started two decades earlier at the level of the social organizations, which continues to generate tensions and conflicts today.

In this paper, 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 and the pattern of legal and normative reforms. 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 collected during more than two years of fieldwork (between 2009 and 2013) using mainly qualitative methods (semi-structured interviews with social organisations' leaders and grassroots,

state officers and authorities, academics and cooperation practitioners; participant observation; collective workshops; content analysis of documentary sources).

2. National Revolution, Syndicalization and *Mestizaje*

The syndical corporative model was imposed in the rural Bolivia through a revolutionary shock. On the 9th April 1952, the *Movimiento Nacional Revolucionario* (MNR), with the support of the police, miners unions and workers' militias, took the administrative capital La Paz, inaugurating one of the most important twentieth-century nationalist revolutions in Latin America. During its first year in power, the new regime proceeded to nationalise mines, reform agriculture and reorganize popular movements under a union structure. From the very beginning, the government of the MNR wanted to guarantee a wide rural base, and the implementation of the peasant syndicalisation, inspired by the experiences of miners and workers (García Linera, 2007: 129), provided an efficient system of control over the countryside. According to Jorge Dandler (1984), this was implemented through the classic *divide et impera* strategy, while simultaneously co-opting peasant leaders by internal factions within the MNR. The relationship between state and peasantry was based on the 'cultural representative intermediaries', which were in charge of establishing patronage ties between hierarchical levels, granting mutual protection and support.

The peasant unions were also the main form of exercising legitimate citizenship. Indeed, the most important way of acquiring a 'palpable identity' in front of other people and to be recognized as a valid interlocutor by governmental authorities was through militancy in the unions' ranks (García Linera, 2007, 130 and 2010: 149). Moreover, the union constituted itself as the main referent for both the peasants and workers, through a cohesive classist narrative. This narrative was the symbolic condition of possibility that brought to the construction of powerful political identities, of both the miner proletariat and the peasantry (García Linera, 2007: 137). This became the basis for the main social movements of the revolutionary epoch: the Central Obrera Boliviana (COB) and the Confederación Nacional de Trabajadores Campesinos de

Bolivia (CNTCB). However, during this time, these organizations worked more as political bureaucratic arms of the state apparatus, than as independent powers able to catalyse social demands.

To improve state control in rural areas, efforts were made not only to build a strong corporative structure and strengthen new identities around classist categories, but also to lead an ‘homogenization campaign’ of the peasantry, eradicating indigenous identities, which were considered to be ‘externalities’ within the project of state modernization (García Linera, 2010: 142). 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 in the post-revolution considered the native indigenous population as a ‘race’ that should be transformed to be integrated into the project of modernity. The idea to convert indigenous into citizens found an ideological backing in the *mestizaje* project (Sanjinés, 2005: 17).

Although the *campesinisation* campaign was intense and massive both at the organizational as well as at the symbolic levels, it was not possible to completely homogenize the complex landscape of rural identities. Indeed, 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 organizations and new corporative structures (as in the Norte Potosí, Rivera, 1984) or shunned the syndical dominance almost for complete (mainly in the lowlands, Postero, 2006: 29).

In Bolivia the official ‘transformation’ of indigenous groups into peasants was deeper and much more accepted among local communities than in other countries (Albó, 2008: 145). This demonstrates the general myopia of Latin American Marxist ideologies and political projects in understanding the ethnic phenomenon, at least until the end of the 20th century. For example, a telling date is the first resolution of the COB on this issue, which appeared only in 1987. There was a sort of dominant hyperclassism that subsumed and conditioned every process of collective

identification and organization to the relationship with the means of production (Esperandín López, 2007: 307).

These historical processes and identitarian and corporative transformations characterize 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 political project (Zavaleta, 1986: 9).

3. 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 people into peasants, it was not possible to completely eradicate ethnic identities. This was due mainly to its 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) have been constituted over the last two centuries (López Caballero, 2011). After a few years, new highly politicized social movements emerged, underpinned by a strong ethno-cultural identity and agenda.

The first ideological stream that promoted the ethno-cultural revival developed at the end of the 1960s under the name of Katarism, in honour of the 18th century indigenous leader Tupaq Katari. It was pushed by a movement promoted by young and educated Aymaras interacting with urban indianist intellectuals (the most important being Fausto Reinaga) (Pacheco, 1992) and simultaneously by the generational changes in rural areas, where ‘the oligarchic and seigniorial continuities of the dominant ideological system’ appeared stronger as well as unacceptable (Rivera Cusicanqui, 1984: 153).

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, the awareness of the conditions of exploitation of the peasantry and the willingness to build up 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, with the aim to 'retake the great path that our ancestors pointed out for us' (quoted in Rivera Cusicanqui, 1984: 155).

The key date that marked the official entrance of Katarism into the Bolivian political scene was 2 August 1971 when, during the national peasant congress in Potosí, its leader Jenaro Flores was elected at 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). This was signed in 1964 between the army and the peasant organizations to guaranty the loyalty of the latter and to organize them into militias with an openly anti-leftist stance.

In 1979, during a period of great political instability, the Confederación Unica de Trabajadores Campesinos de Bolivia (CSUTCB) was founded under a clear Katarist hegemony. The new organization immediately denied the PMC and became the focal point for practically the whole Bolivian peasantry, including the women's branch called Confederación Nacional de Mujeres Campesina de Bolivia Bartolina Sisa. The latter was created in the 1980s to 'accompany' men in their social struggles (Rousseau, 2011: 17) and is still the only exclusively female organization of the rural world (Arnold and Spedding, 2005).

At the same time, Katarism inspired the foundation of more traditional political parties: the Movimiento Indio Tupaq Katari (MITK) funded by a group of radical indianists, and the Movimiento Revolucionario Tupaq Katari (MRTK), closer to the CSUTCB and promoter of the 'two eyes theory' (which set out the need to find solutions to peasant's problems through a 'double glance': as peasants, together with the whole exploited class, and as indians, together with all the exploited Bolivian nationals). Not one of these political forces managed to impose itself at the national level, mainly due to problems of inefficiency, internal divisions and lack of trust from their potential electoral bases (Rivera Cusicanqui, 1984).

From the second congress of CSUTCB in 1983, the influence of other Marxist and leftist currents increased and Katarism's importance diminished (Ticona, 2003: 75). A period of tension between leftist and indianist sectors opened up, and brought to the weakening of the role of the Confederation in the country's political life, at a time when the peasantry urgently needed a space of convergence for its claims. In this process, 'the Katarist-indianist discourse and identity disarticulated from the social subject that originated them, and became a disperse and available ideological field, used by the left to find nourishment to confront 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 social forces. Meanwhile, the CSUTCB's leadership progressively took distance from its Katarist inspiration and opened the way for the rise of new forces, in particular, the *cocalero* stream. Despite the ideological defeat of Katarism, a radical indianist current, the *Ayllus Rojos*, started to grow and under the leadership of Felipe Quispe would end up as one of the main protagonists of the social conflicts at the beginning of the twenty-first century (García Linera, 2010: 118).

Although Katarism had a relatively short life as an ideological force occupying concrete spaces of power and political leadership, 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 MAS has tried to emulate in recent times, at least at the discursive level. This has been attempted through the promotion of an ethno-cultural profile, but without refusing the syndicalist organizational form that prevails among its grassroots (Albó, 2008: 147). In this sense, the cultural-ethnic as well as the syndicalist-classist dimension 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: 180-81). Thus the Katarist experience corresponds

to a *phase of convergence* between indigenous and peasant identities, able to juxtapose and resolve, the structural tensions between these two identities.

4. Democratic Transition and the Genesis of Neindigenism

From the 1980s, a new political doctrine, generally referred to as ‘neindigenism’ (Canessa, 2006) started to emerge, breaking with previous assimilationist models. Bolivia shared this process with other Latin American countries, where, in the same period, new constitutional and legislative reforms were implemented which recognized 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 (Gros, 1999; Yashar, 2005). This process greatly coincided with the *golden age* of neoliberalism in Latin America. Indeed, indigenous struggles and neoliberal ideology didn’t stand opposed to one another, and neoliberal government often pro-actively 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 (Postero, 2006). In this context, I will rather focus on the interactions between top-down and bottom-up processes, which were mainly driven by the interactions between three fundamental actors: the new indigenous peoples’ organizations, the international community (academics and practitioners), 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: 38). At the end of the 1970s, two meetings were organized in Barbados, where for the first time concern was expressed about the need to support the emancipation and development processes of autochthonous peoples, through the strengthening of their indigenous rights and cultural and ethnic identities. In 1978, in

Bolivia the German anthropologist Jürgen Riester obtained funds from the international cooperation to build the Casa del Campesino, a shelter for the Ayoreos who had migrated to the city of Santa Cruz de la Sierra and lived in conditions of poverty and marginalization. In 1980, Riester founded the NGO Apoyo Para el Campesino Indígena del Oriente Boliviano (APCOB), which received funds from the Dutch cooperation (DANIDA), and the NGOs HIVOS, Oxfam America and Cultural Survival. From that moment, lowland indigenous groups started to be politically structured and, in 1982, the Central Indígena del Oriente Boliviano (CIDOB later becoming Confederación de Pueblos Indígenas de Bolivia) was founded. This organization became one of the main social actors of the lowlands and played a key role within national politics, proposing an innovative project of state reform and putting forward the issue of indigenous rights (Lacroix, 2011: 105). Initially, this generated tensions with other organizations that worked in the area, such as the Centro de Investigación y Promoción del Campesinado (CIPCA), which still followed a classist paradigm of development, working with the peasant unions of CSUTCB, and considering the traditional organizations, especially the Guaraní traditional authorities (the *capitanías*), corrupted and involved in the exploitation of people in harvesting sugarcane. However, 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 ‘transnational ethno-development’ or ‘development with identity’ (Andolina, et. al., 2004; Andolina et al., 2009; Laurie et al., 2005). The most important of these was the Taller de Historia Oral Andiana (THOA) created in 1983 in La Paz with the support of Oxfam America. This project developed research on the indianist movement between 1869 and 1950, with the aim of promoting a policy of strengthened indigenous history, culture and identity in the highlands (Choque and Mamani, 2003: 162). The results served as a discursive basis for the legitimation 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: 36).

A second example of transnationally rooted ethno-development was the Proyecto de Autodesarrollo Campesino (PAC). This was started in the Oruro department in 1988 and was sponsored by the European Union. 21 million euros were invested to finance micro-projects with the aim of improving local small scale agricultural and livestock production (Andolina, et. al., 2004). The principal stakeholders of this programme were the organization of the *ayllus*, which acquired legitimacy at the expense of local syndical leaders. Mainly thanks to these projects, at the end of 1989, three sub-departmental federations of *ayllus* existed, which promoted an alternative development and organizational model based on ethnicity. As a culmination of this process, in March 1997 in Ch'allapata, the Consejo Nacional of Ayllus y Markas del Qullasuyu (CONAMAQ) was founded and consecrated as the 'national authority of the Aymaras, Quechuas and Urus' (Choque and Mamani, 2003: 166; Molina Rivero 2006). Initially, this organization made great efforts to differentiate itself from its natural competitor, the CSUTCB, through an ethnic-based discourse that emphasized the 'genuineness' of this movement as an expression of an 'original' Andean peoples' identity (Albó, 2008: 161). The key concept in this sense was the 'nativeness', which allowed this organization not only to take distance 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 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. [...] In the highlands there are no peasants. They call us peasants, but we are not. We are native. We are native nations (Interview with the Jiliri Apu Mallku of CONAMAQ, La Paz, 5 August 2010).

Meanwhile, CONAMAQ started a 'proselytism campaign' in the highlands 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 *ayllu*'s activists presented their organization and the native authorities as 'more native' (in term of authenticity) and with more potential (in terms of development), rapidly creating a powerful rival movement for the peasant organizations of the highlands (Andolina, et. al., 2004; Le Gouill, 2011). Nevertheless, CONAMAQ did not manage to replace the peasant union that, conversely, imposed itself on the national scene by leading important social mobilizations after 2000. A multifaceted relationship was thus established between the two organizations 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 Organization (ILO), which was ratified by the Bolivian government in 1991. This agreement established the adoption of '[...] new international standards [...] recognizing 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, within the framework of the states in which they live'.

At the national level, the rise of the indigenous movement was also favoured by a series of conjunctures. During the 1980s, the lack of capacity to catalyse social forces led to the weakening of COB. Moreover, from the declaration of the first normative instrument of the new neoliberal doctrine, the Supreme Decree 21.060 in 1985, a paradigmatic change occurred in the way the state interpreted and managed rural issues. There was an effort to reorganize the population in symbolic terms: 'as specialized 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 prioritized 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: 473).

The state played a key role in the process of the neoindigenist rise. In the 1990s, three reforms made by neoliberal governments changed the rural identity-building process, particularly the political space around indigenous peoples: (1) The Popular Participation Law that, in 1995, introduced a formal distinction classifying communities as indigenous or peasant; (2) The Ley del Instituto Nacional de la Reforma Agraria (INRA) of 1996 that legalized the Tierras Comunitarias de Origen (TCOs), i.e. vast territorial extensions assigned on an ethnic bases; (3) The Law of Cultural Bilingual Education that promoted the teaching of indigenous languages and culture (Postero, 2006). 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: 247), these reforms triggered a process of ethnicization of politics and development strategies (Andolina et al., 2009; Lacroix, 2007; Boccara, 2010), which, despite the explicit aim to deepen the country's democracy, ended up generating centrifugal tendencies and unsuspected consequences (Postero 2006). Also, this process benefited geographically concentrated social movements, whether regionalist or ethnically-rooted (author et al., 2012). As Manuel Centellas wrote, 'Ironically Bolivia became politically unstable after reforms that improved the political system's representativeness and embraced multiculturalism' (Centellas, 2010: 171).

These legislative initiatives of the neoliberal governments benefited greatly from international support. One of the most important and effective initiatives was the DANIDA's program 'Support to the Rights of Indigenous Peoples'. The program, which ran from 1995 to 2010, provided support and advice to the Bolivian state to implement the TCOs' titling, the process of decentralization and popular participation, the bilingual education in the lowlands, and the sustainable management of natural resources in the TCOs. At the same time, it sought to mainstream indigenous issues in the design of development programs and public policies (DANIDA and IWGIA, 2010: 12). The Danish cooperation has considered its strategy of support

to Bolivian indigenous peoples as one of its most successful programs. As the Danish officer in charge of the program for four years stated:

This program has been one of the most successful I have ever seen, since it was well formulated and it led to interesting results. It was not only a land titling process, but an empowerment process of these [indigenous] peoples (Interview with a Project Manager of DANIDA, La Paz, 11 June 2011).

However, the role of international cooperation in supporting ethno-cultural movements has been strongly critiqued. As a former officer of the Viceministry of Indigenous Issues stated:

There are cooperation agencies that expressly supported exclusively indigenous peoples, and not the peasant sector, because they thought that, from the 169 ILO Convention, the logic of indigenous peoples was different and that it had been made invisible. This fact has been contributing to the resurgence of certain identities and to the empowerment of others. [...] In fact, distortions introduced by the international cooperation's funds generated conflicts, since it is true that there are cooperation agencies that only sponsor indigenous, and not peasants (Interview with a former officer of the Viceministry of Indigenous Issues, La Paz, 5 August 2010).

A further critique is that within such programs the civil society's stakeholders were mainly indigenous organizations – i.e. CONAMAQ and CIDOB – while CSUTCB, for its syndical nature, was not taken into consideration, contributing in the weakening of its indianist stream. According to the Danish Embassy's officer, the stakeholders' selection was made mainly according to a criteria of 'most representativeness' in ethnic terms. However, these decisions generated many critics and discontent within peasant organizations, which accused the international actors of unjustifiably benefitting a social group to the detriment of another.

The cooperation is the empire and we are puppets that say what the cooperation wants us to say. The cooperation makes the agenda. Since there is money, invitations, good hotels, flight tickets, they buy

interlocutors, ventriloquists. All the money that comes from Finland, Norway, Denmark, comes to destroy syndicalism, Marxism. Supposedly, they think they come to destroy communism. Who are the communists? Syndicates! Who should they support? The neutral, those that are not going to make any problem, the *cariñosos*. And who are they? Indigenous and CONAMAQ (Interview with an advisor of the Bartolinas, Santa Cruz de la Sierra, 19 August 2010).

The ‘professionalization’ of these movements, and mainly of their leaders (Laurie et al., 2003), as development actors is another side effect of such programs. As Yvon Le Bot wrote about Latin America in general: ‘Indigenous actors and the militants that support them would tend to ‘professionalize’ themselves, to adopt essentially strategic conducts, fights of position and resources harnessing – financial, juridical and symbolic’ (Le Bot, 2009, 295). A ‘project-based logic’ is thus 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: 169). This demonstrates the capacity of these actors to adapt, while at the same time it constitutes a consistent limit to their autonomy.

Ethno-development policies implemented by the Bolivian government and supported by international cooperation agencies were confronted to the problem of setting up a system that categorizes and draws boundaries around different human ‘sub-groups’. Related to this issue, there is the problem of ethnic ‘authenticity’, linked to the definition of a criteria that determines whether a certain ethnic group is considered legitimate or is an ‘artificial construction’. The practical solution implemented by the Bolivian administration was the creation, at the end of the 1990s, of a Viceministerio de Asuntos Indígenas y Pueblos Originarios (VAIPO), 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 (Special Needs Assessment Study). This system, which was as well supported by DANIDA, basically 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 to start the TCOs’ titling process. In

spite of the efforts to improve the efficiency of the certification system and the direct participation of social actors, structural epistemological problems remain unsolved, namely because they are inseparable from the very idea of institutionalization of ethnic and identitarian differences (Author 2012b).

The two decades corresponding to the neoliberal governance, the rise of neoindigenism and of new indigenous/native movements with the support of international actors clearly marked a *phase of disarticulation* between indigenous and peasant identities, which led as well to organizational fragmentation and higher degrees of competition in many rural spaces.

5. Evo Morales' 'Cultural Revolution' and the Wobbling Trans-rural Alliance

In the 2000s, the wave of massive social fights (the so-called 'social wars', Dangl 2007), the rise of MAS as the social movements' coagulator and the electoral victory of Evo Morales opened a new political phase. The latter radically modified the power equilibria between traditional political elites and social movements, but also among social actors themselves. The MAS was founded as a 'political instrument' of the peasantry, and especially of coca-growers' unions (Do Alto 2011, Zuazo 2009). 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 Morales' first mandate.

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 the social forces, and, at the same time, these forces needed to be compensated with an equal access to the reforms' outcomes. Moreover, from a strategic point of view, this alliance was important in order to

implement more substantial reforms, to benefit from a block of cohesive forces against external (political) threats, and to frame an appealing international imagery, recalling the indigenous-related symbolism.

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 sectors of the rural world within a single indivisible concept. The ‘trinitarian category’ of *‘indígena originario campesino’* (native indigenous peasant), carefully negotiated during the Constitution-making process, hence becomes one of the main pivots for the institutionalization 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 colonizer and *cocalero* sectors); and the highlands population (mainly Aymara and Quechua). The final result of this definitional quest is summarized within the Constitutional text:

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, at least in discursive terms, of a category that includes and represents all the rural sectors, that is one and triune, gave a certain breadth to the political project and served as a propulsive force for more radical reforms.

However, in spite of these efforts of articulation, the Morales’ political project still shows the tensions embedded in the indigenous-peasant relationship, especially when confronted to the definition of an agenda of reform for the rural areas. Key polarizing issues were the decisions to deepen both the ethno-developmentist initiatives started in the 90s (in particular the TCOs’ titling) and an economic agenda based on extractivism and reprimarization. During the first mandate certain continuity with pre-existent policy initiatives was more consistent and the MASista 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 ethnicization of Bolivian political life started in the 1990s, but in the framework of a new national project that tries to control those 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 with the unpopular neoliberal model) and of indigenism (incarnated 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 is 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 basically in the strengthening and radicalization of certain collective identities, in the increase of its potential in terms of social cohesion, performative effects and, thus its political power regarding peer organizations and the state.

In this fourth phase of *rising disarticulation* between indigenous and peasant identities, characterized by high tensions and centrifugal trends, there is not only a radicalization of the 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. Whether farmers, stockbreeders, fishers, llama shepherds, we are identified as peasants. [...] They are from different cultures and languages, but before than indigenous they recognize themselves as native peasants (Interview with the Land and Territory Secretary of the CSUTCB, La Paz, 2 August 2010).

All along, from our ancestors we are syndicalists. We form part of the Departmental Federation Tupaq Katari. But now the *compañeros* think they are another organization. They think they are well tied up with the government. They want to diminish us, because they recognize us as syndicalists, with

deceptions and swindles (Interview with a member of the community of Puchahui, Franz Tamayo Province, 25 July 2010).

For this reason, in contemporary Bolivia the hybrid category of ‘*campesindios*’ (see Bartra, 2010) is not applicable. Despite being conceptually, empirically and historically compatible, politicized narratives have produced conflicts between the ‘*campesinos*’ and ‘*indios*’ identities. Peasants do not recognize 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 instrumentalization 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 people and peasants have formed alliances during the rise and consolidation of Morales’ political project, forming the *Pacto de Unidad*. Meanwhile, at more local scales where indigenous and peasant organizations coexist, it is common to find situations of polarization and conflict. Tensions between social organizations 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 Potosi, the Chuquisaca valleys, the colonization regions of the East, and the internationally famous Indigenous Territory of the Isiboro Sécore National Park (TIPNIS).

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 organizations 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 emphasized more than incompatibilities, with the concept of '*indigena-originario-campesino*' deriving exactly from this kind of effort and 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 is varied. In particular, in many rural areas, the indigenous and peasant populations represent the vast majority of the population. This results in an instrumental fragmentation, both organizational and identitarian, which has particular resonance in local politics, and the context of competition for resources. Differences are emphasized by political candidates creating increasingly extreme concepts of identity.

Moreover, from 2010, after the Constitutional referendum and Morales' re-election, the alliance that was built around the MAS' government entered into a crisis that still persist. The breakthrough was marked by the conflict around the TIPNIS. The node of contention was an infrastructural project for the construction of a road between the two towns of Villa Tunari and San Ignacio de Moxos (across the departments of Cochabamba and Beni) that would facilitate the communications and connect these areas of central Bolivia to the transamerican commercial corridors, thus promoting a new wave of 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 to expand the agricultural frontier beyond the protected area's borders, although this is not explicitly stated (Webber, 2012). On the opposite side, other inhabitants of the Indigenous Territory of the Natural Park Isiboro Sécure (*Territorio Indígena del Parque Natural Isiboro Sécure*, TIPNIS), allied with indigenous-native organizations, urban middle-classes and ecologist sectors, were strongly resisting a project that would cut across the heart of the natural park in which they live, altering its environmental and social equilibria. Moreover, they criticized the fact that no previous consultation took place with local communities, as established by the new Constitution approved in 2009 (Perrier Bruslé, 2012 ; Laing, 2013).

The conflict suddenly reached the national and international public opinion when, the 15th August 2011, more than 2000 people left the town of Trinidad, starting the VIII Indigenous March for the Defense of TIPNIS that ended, after more than two months and 1500 km through Bolivian Andean valleys, in the administrative capital La Paz. Meanwhile, various initiatives of dialogue between the government and the indigenous authorities took place, and, the 25th September, an episode of repression against the marchers by the Bolivian police raised the indignation of national and international public opinion. The indigenous protesters did not claim only for the suspension of any infrastructural project within the TIPNIS region, but they also added 15 more points to the agenda of negotiation, most of them oriented to preserve the integrity of their communitarian territory. When the marchers were about to reach La Paz, the 24th October, the government promulgated a law for the protection of 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. 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 fairness and transparency that would have characterized the process (Comisión Interinstitucional de la Iglesia Católica et al., 2012) as well as the willingness of the communities to participate into the Consultation (Sub-central TIPNIS Comisión de Recorrido, 2012). In this context, the representative of the Coordinating Committee of Andean Indigenous Organizations (*Coordinadora Andina de Organizaciones Indígenas*, CAOI), Rafael Quispe, declared: "If it is demonstrated that the rights of indigenous peoples have been violated, there will have effects on Morales. From an indigenous president, he passed to be a violator of the rights of the natives", adding that the "TIPNIS is just the tip of the iceberg".

This conflict is representative of a growing number of struggles all over Latin America, which combine claims for indigenous rights with the defense of the environment (Humphreys Bebbington and Bebbington, 2013). Referred to the Bolivian political context, it highlighted three

important gaps that have been widening within the MASista political project: a) between discourse and practical political management; b) between developmentist and indigenism; c) between indigenous and peasant sectors. These gaps show as well the fragilities of the trans-rural alliance build during the Constitutional negotiations and open a new trend of increasing disarticulation between indigenous and peasant identities, whose main characteristic is the unprecedented level of politization. Peasant and indigenous interests seem to be moving towards opposing goals, which makes extremely difficult to identify new heterodox model of development.

The MAS political instrument proved to be a flexible and unstable coalition of social forces. Fernando Mayorga (2013: 130) identifies three main concentric circles of social basis around the MAS' core. The first one is occupied by peasant organizations; the second one is formed by the indigenous movements; and the third one includes other trade unions (miners, workers, retired people). Both the umbrella organizations that served as platforms of coordination for most of these social sectors (the *Coordinadora Nacional para el Cambio* CONALCAM and the *Pacto de Unidad*) 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 increasing important role as a key ally of the government and its leaders are generally very close advisors and operative arms of Morales himself (as was the case for Leonilda Zurita and Juanita Ancieta).

At the basis of this fracture between indigenous and peasant sectors, there is the lack of capacity of the MAS to keep the coalition together, event in absence of highly aggregational claims (such as the Constitutional Assembly or the nationalizations) or generalized conflicts (such as the 2008 political crisis) (Mayorga, 2013). At stake now is the implementation of an ordinary public administration agenda that tends to mobilize rather corporatist and group interests. As a result of this new political scenario, the strengthening of the disarticulation

between indigenous and peasant identities will probably be the prevailing trend over the next few years.

6. Conclusion

Over the past three decades, the process of articulation/disarticulation of rural identities went through different phases, whereby indigenous and peasant ‘self’ and ‘otherness’ were mutually redefined. These depended on political and contextual changes and, in particular, on national-institutional projects that have dominated Bolivian political life, as well as on the capacity to adapt, resist or innovate of social movements.

Looking at the historical periodization proposed in this article, many similarities can be noted between the two most important moments of national-popular construction: the national revolution of 1952 and the ‘cultural revolution’ of 2005. In both cases, ‘ethnic’ and ‘classist’ factors took on models of political articulation based on hierarchies of identities. The revolutionary epoch of the 1950s saw the emergence of both indigenous-peasant co-optation (as in the case of PMC or of rural movements of the Valle Alto of Cochabamba) and the main endogenous movement of rural articulation (the Katarism and eventually the CSUTCB). In the case of the MAS’s government, the agglutination effort under the flag of plurinationalism became efficient in conforming a political coalition and an agenda of structural reforms, particularly with the convocation of the Constituent Assembly. However, the project did not manage to completely revert the trend towards disarticulation between the indigenous and peasant sectors – a disarticulation started more than 20 years earlier, with the rise of neoindigenism and of the native/indigenous movements, and their political legitimation through the reforms of the 1990s.

Although the ideological bases, the political strategies and the discursive repertoires present relevant differences between the neoliberal epoch and the MAS government, from the normative and institutional point of view as well as in the dynamics of adaptation of rural social movements to the contextual changes, there is a certain degree of continuity. The latter could be

observed mainly in the level of disarticulation of peasant and indigenous organizations; 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 for cultural and ethnic pluralism, being at the same time unable to control fragmentation trends and endogenous centrifugal tensions.

Despite the introduction of discursive construction that tend to amalgamate the different elements of the MAS rhetoric, in practice the promotion of ethnic criteria within the normative framework as well as within the system of resources and rights allocation contributed to complicate even more the organizational and identitarian map of rural Bolivia. Spaces of democracy and the direct participation of traditionally marginalized 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 rightist conservative opposition and of secessionist regionalism and Morales' re-election. The weakening of some of the main historical enemies of MAS brings in practice to the reversion of the catalysing trends introduced by the Morales' political project, reopening the gaps between the main identities and organizations of the rural world: the indigenous and the peasant. However, these trends towards fragmentation and conflict could only be explained in the context of the political and social history of the country over the last 50 years, i.e. the degeneration of the revolution, the defeat of Katarism as hegemonic project, the raise 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 the rural world 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 should face in the future.

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