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**The Thesis Committee for Bridget Kelsey Footit  
Certifies that this is the approved version of the following thesis:**

**Constructing Alternatives to Western Modernity:  
CONAMAQ's Struggle for Indigenous Autonomy in the Bolivian  
Altiplano**

**APPROVED BY  
SUPERVISING COMMITTEE:**

**Supervisor:**

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Charles R. Hale

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Kamran Ali

**Constructing Alternatives to Western Modernity:  
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Altiplano**

**by**

**Bridget Kelsey Footit, B.A.**

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“Solo después que el último árbol haya sido cortado...

Solo después que el último río haya sido envenenado...

Solo después que el último pez haya sido pescado...

Solo entonces descubrirás que el dinero no se puede comer.”

-Anónimo

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## **Abstract**

# **Constructing Alternatives to Western Modernity: CONAMAQ's Struggle for Indigenous Autonomy in the Bolivian Altiplano**

Bridget Kelsey Footit, M.A.

The University of Texas at Austin, 2015

Supervisor: Charles R. Hale

How are indigenous peoples negotiating their cultural, political, and economic autonomy in twenty-first century Bolivia? This thesis explores one iteration of that struggle, through a case study of the National Council of Ayllus and Markas of Qullasuyu (*Consejo Nacional de Ayllus y Markas del Qullasuyu*, CONAMAQ). I provide a historical overview of how highland indigenous peoples have resisted centuries of exclusion and forced assimilation through state and non-state avenues in order to create spaces for their autonomy to flourish. In particular, I emphasize CONAMAQ's efforts to revalorize traditional political, juridical, economic, agricultural, and spiritual practices. I frame these efforts within a larger epistemological challenge to hegemonic notions of Western modernity and liberal citizenship.

The Plurinational State of Bolivia under president Evo Morales has accomplished profound institutional shifts in an effort to respect indigenous rights. However, I argue that the (neo)liberal understanding of a homogenous indigenous subject continues to drive this *Proceso de Cambio* (Process of Change). In order to realize the goals of a plurinational state (in practice, not just in title), the Bolivian government, and non-state actors, will need to acknowledge and respect the distinct identities and goals of different subjectivities throughout the country (indigenous/non-indigenous, urban/rural etc.). I demonstrate complex relationships amongst members of CONAMAQ, the Morales government, and transnational companies, through a series of land and mining conflicts that ultimately led to CONAMAQ's decision to break away from a historical Unity Pact of civil society organizations in 2012. This discussion helps us understand the complex struggle for indigenous rights in Bolivia, why an indigenous movement has retracted their support of a supposedly pro-indigenous government, and how these struggles are tied to a larger effort to harvest alternatives to Western modernity.

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Figure One: Map of Bolivia

## Introduction

“Without territory we cannot live, we are no one. Therefore, we will always defend Mother Earth” (Peralta 2014). These are the words of Mama Nilda Rojas, an indigenous Aymara woman, and current co-leader of the *Consejo Nacional de Ayllus y Markas del Qullasuyu* (National Council of Ayllus and Markas of Qullasuyu, CONAMAQ) in Bolivia. She invokes a battle cry that her compatriots and their ancestors have asserted for hundreds of years in the struggle to reclaim indigenous land rights. How has this resistance to systemic discrimination developed in Bolivia? And how does CONAMAQ weave in and out of the larger movement?

This thesis explores how distinct peoples with unique customs, traditions, and political and juridical systems collaborate, cooperate, and clash. I consider efforts that have emerged to harvest social change as well as the obstacles that impede profound transformation. While much has been written about the revival of indigenous identity and mobilization in Latin America and specifically Bolivia, very little has been written about CONAMAQ and their struggle to re-valorize traditional political, juridical, economic, agricultural, educational, and spiritual practices. By focusing on the rise of this Andean movement in the 1990s, and their efforts to gain greater autonomy throughout neoliberal and ‘post-neoliberal’ governments, this thesis provides a nuanced perspective on the ways that certain indigenous peoples are challenging hegemonic notions of Western modernity and liberal citizenship.

A historical exploration developed throughout the first two chapters of this thesis will provide necessary context in order to ultimately understand why CONAMAQ

recently decided to break away from a decade-long *Pacto de Unidad* (Unity Pact). Why has this indigenous movement distanced itself from an alliance with four other civil society organizations and a left-wing political party that have been main proponents of pro-indigenous social change in twenty-first century Bolivia? I propose that scholars and journalists alike have simplified the motivations behind CONAMAQ's decision to leave the Unity Pact. While most sources attribute this rupture to the 2011 TIPNIS land conflict (in which the government supported building a highway through indigenous protected territories), there is much more lying beneath the surface. By looking at a longer historical period and engaging with heterogeneous perspectives from within the movement, we see that CONAMAQ's decision to break away from the Unity Pact is deeply rooted in epistemological discrepancies over land use and development.

## **THEORETICAL LENSES**

I situate CONAMAQ's movement in the broader theoretical context of coloniality, indigenous rights, decolonization, and alternatives to Western modernity. While these themes will become clear at different points throughout the body of this text, two theoretical lenses are worth pointing out from the start. The first refers to heterogeneity amongst indigenous peoples, and the second recognizes the importance of social emancipation outside of state domination.

Early scholars of indigenous studies searched for similarities amongst diverse groups, pinpointing a spiritual connection to the land and common liberating struggles against conquest, genocide, and political marginalization. This scholarly approach is supported by neoliberal-multicultural systems of governance that tend to homogenize indigenous peoples in order to create a limited space for certain permitted types of others

to exist. However, with the onset of the twenty-first century, scholars such as John Bowen (2000), Charles Hale (2005), Karen Engle (2010), and Joanne Rappaport (2013) brought attention to the profound heterogeneity amongst and within indigenous peoples as well as the immobilizing effects of lumping them together.

The following analysis contributes to this strain of thought, recognizing that there are many different ways of being indigenous in contemporary Bolivia. Throughout the entirety of this essay I am careful not to homogenize indigenous peoples under one othered category. In particular, chapter one and two will elaborate on the similarities and differences between highland and lowland indigenous peoples, and chapter three will engage with the diversity of beliefs within CONAMAQ. Recognizing this heterogeneity, I propose that the newly founded Plurinational State of Bolivia must move beyond dichotomies of highland/lowland and urban/rural, to recognize that being indigenous in the twenty-first century encompasses a plurality of histories, identities, and lived experiences.

In order for multiple ways of being indigenous to coexist, many scholars, politicians, activists, and grassroots movements strive to create a *pluriverse* (Blaser 2010, de la Cadena 2010, Escobar 2011, Mignolo 2011). This is a global system in which a plurality of ways of knowing and being are recognized as equally legitimate. It de-centers the Eurocentric mode of thought that assumes universal notions of Truth, objectivity and a linear notion of progress. Recognizing that the majority of the world is not supported by this system, it emphasizes racialized and gendered Western influence on non-Western culture, psychology, linguistics, and bureaucracy. By analyzing CONAMAQ's recuperation of traditional knowledges, technologies, and political and legal structures, I consider whether Bolivian soil is fertile ground for the emergence of a pluriverse.

This effort to recognize many ways of being and thinking is dependent on the social emancipation of historically subjugated subjects. Raquel Gutierrez states that this process is most dignified and possible when enacted independently from the state. Drawing on John Holloway, she suggests that, “Taking power is a condition neither necessary nor sufficient to change the world” (2012, 55-57). On the contrary, she argues that emancipation is reliant on the “recurrent upheaval and escape from what is imposed on us as actuality and as destiny... it lies in the persistence of the capacity to subvert the dominant order” (2012, 57-58). In other words, social change is a politics of disruption enacted by thinking critically and challenging hegemony.

Members of CONAMAQ agree with this perspective that the radical change necessary to overcome colonial and postcolonial racism and sexism will not come merely through state reform. While President Morales has accomplished significant social and economic changes (including the establishment of a Vice Ministry of Decolonization), his *Proceso de Cambio* (Process of Change) is not the *Pachacuti*—the complete overturning of societal hierarchies—that many indigenous peoples hoped for. CONAMAQ recognizes that the state is an inherently colonial organism. Therefore, their goals do not rely on creating a political party to generate institutional change, but rather pushing state policies from an outsider’s stance. This is deeply rooted in a desire to revive and legitimize pre-Columbian organizational structures that precede colonial conquest and the Bolivian nation state. CONAMAQ has learned how to act creatively within and without the geographic and ideological boundaries of the state in order to push for profound social change. This thesis will explore numerous ways in which the state’s bureaucratic processes have pacified and even demobilized social movements through institutionalization and appropriation—a trap that CONAMAQ strives to evade.

While Gutierrez recognizes the need to create social change outside of state governance, there are many different tiers of association and distance. Charles Hale (2011) explores different strategies of grassroots movements that have either completely refused to engage with the state or maintained their separation while working within the ideological boundaries of political frameworks. He recognizes the risks of the former stance that focuses on utopian dreams without recognizing the here and now, often resulting in the inability to meet immediate needs. In the latter case, by working within the system, movements risk appropriation and entrapment (2011, 203). Using this lens will be particularly helpful in chapter three of this thesis as a way to theorize the internal dynamics of CONAMAQ. We will see how “impossible subjects” utilize radical refusal while others accept funding and support from the government at the risk of complying with a profoundly capitalist system.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This thesis is informed by two months of ethnographic research conducted in the departments of La Paz, Cochabamba, and Potosí in June and July of 2014.<sup>1</sup> During this time I interviewed current and former leaders and members of CONAMAQ, Bolivian intellectuals, and allies of the movement. I also attended government and non-government sponsored events. My fieldwork is supplemented by archival research in the Benson Latin American Collection, newspaper articles collected at CEDIB (Bolivian

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<sup>1</sup> The origins of this project run much deeper than this master’s thesis. In 2010, I began researching the intersections between spirituality and the environment in the Inca Empire, which inspired me to learn about more contemporary Bolivian history and the rise of President Evo Morales. In 2011, I spent five months living in La Paz, studying at the Universidad Privada de Bolivia and traveling throughout the country with the School for International Training. As a final research project, I interviewed functionaries of the Vice-Ministry of Decolonization and the Unit of Depatriarchalization as a way to understand how the state was spearheading efforts to put decolonization theory into practice. This background has greatly informed this thesis in direct and indirect ways.



Documentation and Information Center), and public resolutions, declarations, photographs and film clips provided by members of CONAMAQ.

Compiling the details of certain events has been difficult from afar due to temporal and spatial restrictions. Particularly in chapters two and three, I utilize blog posts that are explicit about their political bias. I use these sources recognizing that they may not provide a complete picture, but because they serve to illuminate a side of the story that is not generally reported in traditional media or formal accounts. I recognize that no primary or secondary source is ever complete, but rather one piece of an utterly complicated picture.

Throughout this thesis I favor detailed description, and then critical reflection. My goal is primarily to present a reality to a broader audience and secondarily to analyze the larger implications of these actions in a global and historical context. I hope that this technique will promote a philosophy of *listening* as modeled by Audra Simpson (2000). Given my positionality as a white woman trained in a western institution of higher learning, perhaps the most productive thing I can do is to step into the background and act as a platform for other people to speak. I therefore include the voices of members of CONAMAQ without imposing my perspectives and opinions as a way to listen in silence, and encourage the reader to follow suit.

I do not aim to tell *the* story of CONAMAQ, but rather the way that I have come to view CONAMAQ through my research. I do not claim to be representative of the entire movement that includes people from 16 indigenous nations across seven different departments. This would be irresponsible and impossible given the amount of time that I have spent in the highlands of Bolivia. Nonetheless, I hope that the story I have compiled will serve to spark transnational dialogue about the strategies and struggles of defending social justice

My own methodology is inspired by activist anthropologists and decolonial scholars such as Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui, Linda Tuhiwai Smith, Florencia Mallon, Joanne Rapaport, Mario Blaser, Charles Hale, and Donna Haraway. I view the effort to minimize hierarchical relationships between scholar and community as a crucial development in academia. I do not claim to be a neutral, objective observer. My personal dedication to imagining alternatives to Western hegemony, capitalism, neoliberalism, and neo-extractivism align with those of the indigenous people I work with in Bolivia.

I hope that telling the following story will contribute to a movement that aims to awaken the masses that have become placated by the seeming inevitability of capitalism. David Graeber refers to the current political moment as one in which, “we are left in the bizarre situation of watching the capitalist system crumbling before our very eyes, at just the moment everyone had finally concluded no other system would be possible” (2013). While this is true in many contexts, Graeber has overlooked the many indigenous movements throughout the world that strive to create and maintain a space outside of exploitative capitalist structures. By making CONAMAQ’s struggle visible to a Western audience, I hope to demonstrate the existence, potential, and possibility of alternatives grounded in lived experience. I do not see these alternatives as utopian, but rather inspiration for reflection, reevaluation, and continued resistance. I am dedicated to fostering communication through transnational networks so that the struggles of CONAMAQ might influence other indigenous and non-indigenous movements throughout the world, and so that CONAMAQ may also learn from the strategies of international movements.

Furthermore, I believe that indigenous struggles are human struggles. We are all interconnected in a human ecological system, so that changing the way that people live and relate to the earth is necessary for all of human survival. In this vein, my positionality

as a scholar and activist in the United States is intimately connected to histories and contemporary iterations of invasion and exploitation. I hope to use my voice in the United States to change a culture of heedless exportation of imperialist Truths, and thoughtless consumption of material goods, in order to confront climate change and environmental racism that disproportionately affects the global South and marginalized populations within the global North.

This thesis aims to engage with the complexities of being indigenous in a country ruled by an indigenous man, but in a predominantly Western liberal world burdened by the legacies of colonialism and imperialism. I hope to present contradictions in an active manner, not as a way to paralyze us from creating change but as a way to inspire us to think critically and take action. I do not aim to pose dichotomies between predatory state and defenders of indigenous rights, but rather blur these lines so as to recognize the deep embeddedness of racialized and gendered structures in everyday interactions.

## **OVERVIEW OF THESIS**

Three major historical periods guide the following investigation. In chapter one, I focus on exclusion and forced assimilation of indigenous peoples in Bolivia during Spanish colonial occupation and internal colonialism within the national Republic. Tracing this history, in combination with ongoing indigenous resistance situates the founding of CONAMAQ in 1997. This section is contextualized within scholarship on liberal citizenship, and the rise of identity politics and indigenous rights on an international, regional (Andean), and national scale. In chapter two, I investigate the role of CONAMAQ in the formation of the Unity Pact (2005), an alliance amongst five different Bolivian social movements that supported President Evo Morales in his ascent

to power. I analyze CONAMAQ's role in the Constituent Assembly (2006-2007) to better understand how they utilize the language of the state to preserve their right to live and think autonomously according to their own traditions. Finally, chapter three describes a series of land and mining conflicts amongst members of CONAMAQ, the Morales government, and transnational companies that ultimately led to CONAMAQ's decision to break away from the Unity Pact in 2012. Each of these events helps us understand the complex struggle for indigenous rights in Bolivia, why an indigenous movement has retracted their support of a supposedly pro-indigenous government, and how these struggles are tied to a larger effort to harvest alternatives to Western modernity.

## **Chapter One: Indigenous Determination in the Wake of Colonial and Liberal Exclusion**

In June 2014 I met two young men at an international anti-imperialist conference outside of Cochabamba, Bolivia. They were dressed in colorful ponchos, and knitted chullo hats with the indigenous whipala flag draped around their shoulders. Their communities had sent them to this meeting as representatives of their highland indigenous organization, the National Council of Ayllus and Markas of Qullasuyu (CONAMAQ). After explaining my research to these men, I asked if they could tell me about the history of their organization. With great excitement, the younger man immediately responded, *Well it begins with the Spanish colonization of indigenous peoples*. He deferred to his friend who was a bit older, a local leader, or *Mallku*, of his community. *Tell her about how our people were colonized. Tell her about how they enslaved our ancestors*. We postponed this conversation so that we could attend the scheduled conference discussions, but not before coordinating a time to meet the next day and a trip for me to visit their community in Northern Potosí.

Upon asking these young men about the history of their indigenous organization, I expected them to begin with the inauguration in 1997, or perhaps a few years earlier to establish context. To my surprise, they began at the moment of indigenous contact with Spanish Colonizers nearly five hundred years ago. They shared the collective memory that their parents and grandparents have passed down to them, recounting how foreigners invaded their land, enslaved their ancestors, and exploited their resources. They shared a flame of resistance against the oppressive legacy of colonialism, and for the revitalization and revalorization of indigenous customs and traditions. For this reason, it seems only right to begin the following story in a similar manner.

The ensuing chapter situates the rise of CONAMAQ, a contemporary Bolivian highland indigenous organization, within the context of a five hundred year legacy of colonialism, the imposition of Western modernity's liberal citizenship, and the emergence of the global indigenous rights movement. The history presented here is general and sweeping at times, but serves to frame short and long term systemic discrimination of indigenous peoples as well as determined resistance. Ultimately, it helps to contextualize CONAMAQ's contemporary clashes with the Bolivian government and other civil society organizations.

Chapter one explores how indigenous peoples have fought for greater autonomy from colonial and liberal governments. In this sense, they exist in a space neither completely inside nor outside the colony or nation state, never truly autonomous nor conquered, but negotiating a unique third space. A particular emphasis on laws excluding indigenous peoples from land and voting rights situates CONAMAQ's struggle for political and cultural autonomy, collective land rights, and preservation of natural resources. The final section of this chapter will describe the founding mission of CONAMAQ to recuperate pride and dignity for highland indigenous knowledges, technologies, and traditions through cultural, political, and legal systems.

In the scope of this thesis' larger argument, the following chapter contextualizes the emergence of CONAMAQ on a vast historical and geographic scale. It establishes CONAMAQ as one of many organizations in the global movement for indigenous rights, as well as the current day iteration of a long trajectory of resistance in Bolivia. Subsequent chapters will emphasize CONAMAQ's struggles for autonomy through negotiations with the Bolivian government, other civil society organizations, and transnational companies (from formal written proposals to street level protests). However, to begin with, we must respect the will of my friends from Northern Potosí and

engage in a discussion about the Spanish colonization of Bolivia and the legacies of oppression that have haunted indigenous peoples for centuries.

## **SPANISH COLONIALISM**

The Spanish conquest of the Inca Empire in 1532 persists in the collective memory of many Bolivians today. With firearms, horses, and infectious diseases, colonizers thrived on mechanisms of physical domination, accumulation of territory, and exploitation of labor. Whether through the spread of disease, overworking slaves to death, or outright murder, the Spanish enacted genocide on indigenous peoples. Estimates show that the Andean indigenous population decreased by over fifty percent in the mid-sixteenth century. However, a logic of conquest was coupled with economic exploitation that depended on enslaved labor. That is, genocide does not imply complete elimination as portrayed by the disappearing native trope, but rather a violent and xenophobic practice that has continued to shape native and non-native relations.

Colonizers manipulated Inca systems of collective, reciprocal labor to earn excessive riches for the crown creating an interdependent market relationship between center and periphery. They enslaved indigenous and African peoples to extract gold and silver, and cultivate large agricultural haciendas. This practice ignored native practices of subsistence farming and techniques of irrigation, terracing, and crop rotation and diversification. These traditional methods, long-perfected in the region, were seen as unscientific and amateur in the age of European Enlightenment and scientific exploration. Europe's modernizing project of industrialization was not only dependent on colonial natural resources and labor, but simultaneously excluded peripheral peoples from modernizing. That is, indigenous peoples became the antithesis of modernity in the

colonizer's social imaginary. Spaniards justified this forceful implementation of European systems with the rationale of spreading mercantilism as a superior system to reign over indigenous reciprocal archipelagic trade. Differential ways of understanding the relationship between labor, production, consumption, and dignity has marked a persistent clash between descendants of pre-Columbian empires and Spanish and mestizo lineages. These epistemological discrepancies over practices of land use and development guide this thesis as a lens to understand continued resistance to Western logics of modernity.

Colonial missionaries imposed Catholic ideological values in an effort to save and civilize those they deemed 'savage pagans'. They destroyed *huacas* (spiritual sites) and forbid local peoples from conducting ceremonies for their numerous deities that helped assure abundant crops and control harsh weather (McEwan 2006). Spanish colonizers imposed the patriarchal values of Catholicism, teaching women that they were born from the rib of Adam and are therefore inferior to men. They used the logic of elimination (through religious conversion and cultural assimilation) to augment self-proclaimed moral superiority and eliminate other modes of being and thinking.

Spanish colonization began to restructure indigenous ontological and epistemological subjectivities throughout the long colonial period in Bolivia (1532-1825). Western values of individualism, accumulation, patriarchy, and profit began to overshadow indigenous Andean values of collectivity, reciprocity, and subsistence. In an interview with a government functionary of the Bolivian Viceministry of Decolonization, he explained the effects of colonialism to me by saying that,

The most fundamental change is that they began to restructure schemes of thinking... It was an imposition that is difficult to break... The [indigenous] philosophy was *ama llulla*: do not lie. So there was no sentiment of deception. *Ama súa*: do not steal. Therefore, there was no



necessity to have doors on homes because there were no thieves. *Ama q'ella*, do not be lazy. Everyone worked [interview conducted by author, November 22, 2011; Translated by author].

The ideology of *ama llulla*, *ama súa*, and *ama q'ella* guided pre-Columbian Andean society, and continues to motivate contemporary indigenous Bolivians as they strive to replace Western capitalist logics of accumulation with collective moral guiding principles. As with all ideologies, the absence of deceit, thievery, and laziness is not an exact reflection of society, but rather a goal to strive for. Therefore, most indigenous peoples I spoke with recognize the faults of many ancestors, but also the guiding principles that re-connected them to their society.

The process of imposing Western values and ways of thinking was forceful at times, but also became an act of strategic self-driven assimilation. For example, anthropologist Edgar Esquit has written extensively about processes of education and professionalization as a way to enhance the position of indigenous Guatemalans throughout the twentieth century (2010). He writes about how indigenous peoples opted for education or military service to learn the tools of elite institutions in order to combat and confront racism and push for social mobility. We can imagine that many indigenous peoples within the Spanish colony and the Bolivian Republic may have used catholic conversion, or learning the colonial language as a way to gain the trust of colonizers, to augment dialogue, negotiation, and minimize brutal treatment.

Physical, psychological, epistemological, and spiritual violence spawned centuries of subjugation, but also creative resistance. Perhaps the most notable colonial indigenous rebellion occurred in the late eighteenth century. Aymara leader Tupac Katari fought for the expulsion of Spanish colonial officials in an effort to restore equilibrium to the Andean region. For six months, between March and October of 1781, Katari and his 40,000 supporters (including infamous Peruvian indigenous leader Tupac Amaru)

maintained a siege over the city of La Paz. However, after nearly two hundred years of colonial domination, Spanish loyalists to the Crown quelled the uprising. They brutally executed Katari and many members of the rebellion, decapitating and burning them alive.<sup>1</sup> This ruthless oppression has haunted the collective memory of Bolivians to this day, at once discouraging and motivating them to break the colonial legacy of coercion.

The Creole and mestizo elite strengthened their political, economic, and racial superiority through exclusive judicial, educational, and religious systems. The upper class monopolized intellectual property distributing Eurocentric logics and delegitimizing indigenous modes of thought. Institutionalization of individual private property ownership took precedence over ancestral collective territorial claims and validated land-grabbing practices. Arbitrary nation-state borders persist in which goods, but not people, are able to cross. This undermines indigenous community networks that cross departmental and national borders like an archipelago of diverse islands. All of these factors contributed to a racialization process, forming indigenous and European subjectivities in contrast to one another.

Colonial mechanisms that justified and maintained elite power encumbered Bolivia and most colonies throughout the Americas, Asia, and Africa. The following section engages with several theoretical interventions regarding academic understandings of the legacies of colonialism and Eurocentrism. This discussion will give way to an overview of the post-independence Bolivian Republic and the effects of liberal citizenship on indigenous peoples.

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<sup>1</sup> Tupac Katari's rebellion was not the only of his time, but rather the one that has been best documented in written and oral histories. Nonetheless, it is worth acknowledging that Katari and his supporters stood on the shoulders of many indigenous leaders who fought against the initial Spanish invasion and the persistence of slavery.

## THE LEGACIES OF COLONIALISM

*“They have filled our heads with the history of our colonizers.”*

*- Fausto Reinaga, La Revolución India (1969)*

The colonial relationship explained above initiated a legacy of power, race and gender relations systematizing the exploitation of indigenous peoples. Edward Said, Anibal Quijano, J.M. Blaut, Walter Mignolo and Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui provide nuanced analyses of how European exceptionalism influenced power hierarchies in colonial and post-colonial contexts. They dispel myths of inherent superiority in an effort to respect and revive subaltern modes of thought and governance.

Many scholars of decolonization stand on the shoulders of Edward Said. In the mid 1970s, he wrote extensively on the West’s patronizing perceptions and depictions of the other. He emphasized the subtle yet persistent Eurocentric prejudice against Arab-Islamic peoples in the Middle East, Asia, and North Africa and the role of academics in legitimizing superiority. The west portrayed the east as an irrational, weak, feminized other to bolster the West as a rational, strong, masculine subject. This xenophobia served to justify colonial and imperial projects throughout the world but also resulted in an internalization of inferiority on the part of the colonized (Said 1978). Said’s understanding of the East/West divide provides important tools to understand North/South subordination and its effects on self-making and being-made.

In an American context, Anibal Quijano acknowledges the creation of racial hierarchies through his notion of the “coloniality of power” (2000). According to Quijano, the confrontation of three distinct “races”—African, indigenous and European—during the colonial encounter gave way to the formation of elaborate racialized power relationships that persist to this day. The hierarchy of power and race is based upon a colonial misunderstanding of human biology, that people of different races

are fundamentally different from each other, some being inferior, and others superior. Explorers, settlers, and anthropologists used scientific racism to connect race with control of paid and unpaid labor and natural resources to assure European dominance. This relationship has remained linked in spite of the fact that race and class are not inherently dependent on each other. The following thesis engages with the intersections of race, ethnicity, and class, to challenge stereotypes of the poor, under-developed native. It recognizes complex indigenous economic and political systems in an effort to question the centrality of a Western dominated world.

Colonization, internal colonialism, and imperialism have strengthened the myth that Europe is the center of the world, the producer of knowledge, and the leader of progress. In *The Colonizer's Model of the World* (1993), J.M. Blaut describes the pervasiveness of Eurocentrism in the creation and dissemination of knowledge through “European diffusionism”. This is the understanding that Europeans are *inherently* creative, inventive, and innovative, while non-Europeans remain stagnant because they *inherently* lack intellect and are meant to imitate instead of lead. Blaut demonstrates how the myth of European superiority has been perpetuated through “universal” notions of space and time, through the Cartesian map that places Europe at the top-center, and at the zero-point of time in which all other time zones are measured in relation to Greenwich, London.

Blaut attacks the notion of European superiority by claiming that the “European miracle” is simply a myth that has been strengthened over centuries through the work of academics, scientists, and anthropologists. He argues that Europe did not rise to power autonomously, but on the backs of those they colonized. European conquest was not a result of inherent, natural superiority or internal characteristics, but rather, a phenomenon based strictly on geographic location (Blaut 1993, 183). Furthermore, non-European

countries are not behind in time, or peripheral in space, but have their own unique histories, traditions, and beliefs. This is crucial to the Bolivian context in which complex indigenous political, judicial, agricultural, medicinal, and spiritual practices preceded Spanish-imposed systems. A major goal of CONAMAQ, as we will see at the end of this chapter, is to revive traditional practices, in turn disproving notions of European exceptionalism.

Walter D. Mignolo (2010) understands the basis of Eurocentrism through the theo- and ego- politics of knowledge. He argues that the *humanitas* inhabited the “epistemic zero point” (the center in which everything else is based), and from there, orchestrated a global, linear understanding of the world. Mignolo’s proposed decolonial option aims to displace this zero point epistemology by recognizing that multiple ways of knowing and being have persisted relative to where an individual is located within the epistemic and ontological racial coordinates of imperial knowledge. His proposed decolonial option aims to unveil the pretentious sense of superiority of Eurocentrism to show how illogical and violent their self-centered logic is (Mignolo 2010). Eurocentrism does not recognize that its project of Truth emanates from a specific positionality. Instead, Western modernity disperses certain Truths as universal and all other experiences as behind in time and in the order of myth, legend, or folklore. This logic serves to delegitimize certain political, juridical, and territorial claims, assuring the inferiority of non-Europeans. By rejecting Eurocentrism, decolonial thinkers do not reject all European models, but instead recognize that there is no such thing as a universal trajectory or Truth that is Right, unless that Truth is that there is no Truth.

Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui has written extensively about the long-term effects of European influence on indigenous and mestizo subjectivities and social stratification in modern Bolivia. She traces the ways in which the liberal and populist Republic of Bolivia

recreated colonial racial, class and gender hierarchies (2010, 45). She critiques the nation-state project of mestizaje as a hegemonic colonial-patriarchal ideology meant to subjugate and homogenize non-European peoples, particularly women. The following section will engage more deeply with Rivera Cusicanqui's analysis of the effects of Eurocentrism in a specifically Bolivian historical and social context.

Understanding the myth of Western superiority and its long-term effects on subaltern peoples is crucial to understand why the rise of indigenous rights, and the process of decolonization is such an important yet difficult task. It requires analyzing everyday thoughts and actions in an effort to delink from dominant, exploitative systems. Recognizing the global hierarchy of center and periphery and the internalization of inferiority urges and inspires scholars and activists to confront the roots of racial and geographic inequality. A mere critique of Western modernity however is insufficient. The next step is to acknowledge and respect multiple histories, traditions, and beliefs as equally legitimate to the story that one is a part of. Beyond simply acknowledging a plethora of lived experiences, we must also allow ourselves to imagine future possibilities that break with this long history of subordination and exploitation. Finally, we must take steps to live intentionally: to slow down the engine of mindless subjection to the capitalist machine that exploits and commodifies humans and nature, and to actively challenge the norm and embrace the discomfort of not knowing what will come next.

An underlying motive of this chapter's emphasis on colonialism, Eurocentrism and colonality is to consider the long and painful history of racial and ethnic discrimination and the responsibility of Western institutions. This context helps to contextualize the long struggle for indigenous rights in Bolivia and throughout the world. It will help situate the difficulties of changing laws and systemic biases as well as personal interactions. The Western-centric world has suppressed indigenous ways of

thinking and being for long enough, it is time that we listen to the voices that have been silenced for centuries and respect their desire for self-determination.

## **INDEPENDENCE AND NATION MAKING IN BOLIVIA**

Bolivian independence in 1825 did little to change the hierarchical relationship between indigenous peoples and the mestizo elite that took power. While it did guarantee the abolishment of slavery (1826), policies and mechanisms of elimination and assimilation continued to strip indigenous peoples of their identity and livelihood in order to integrate them into the nation state as ‘civilized’ producers and consumers within a Western-centric scheme of progress. The following section elaborates on the process of nation making in Bolivia through the imposition of Western liberal citizenship. It specifically focuses on land grabbing processes that sustained the subjugation of indigenous peoples. This serves to reinforce the distinct epistemological discrepancies over indigenous and non-indigenous land use and development. By drawing on theorists who have pinpointed exclusion as a fundamental basis of liberal citizenship, this segment moves beyond Bolivia’s history to interrogate the roots of social inequality inherent in liberal theory.

The South American wars of independence, led by Creole elite Simón Bolívar and his militias, fought for a homogenous, unified region encompassing Bolivia, Peru, Colombia, and Venezuela. Largely influenced by European enlightenment and Lockean liberal theory, they strived for the creation of modern states that would integrate all citizens under one language and one culture. This model proved to liberate the Bolivian Republic from Spain’s direct control, but failed to free indigenous peoples from the subjugation of the creole and mestizo internal power elite.

Fausto Reinaga, an indigenous Bolivian intellectual, describes the exclusion of indigenous peoples by referring to two different Bolivian nations within the Republic's territorial boundaries: one Europeanized mestizo nation, and another indigenous nation. He stated that,

since August 1825 [the year of Bolivian independence]... the Indian fell victim to the revenge of both the Creole traitors of the king, and the national mestizos. They were subjected to the cruelest slavery they had ever known. There has never been a Bolivian president that did not massacre Indians (Reinaga 1969, 407).

This parallels Chatterjee's notion of "modernity in two languages", "our modernity", and "their modernity" (1998). Reinaga refers to the widespread feeling of not belonging in a nation that tries to include indigenous peoples by stripping them of their identity, their humanity, and even their lives. Like Chatterjee, Reinaga also recognizes the distinct visions of what progress and development, or modernity might look like for an indigenous nation and a mestizo Republic.

Pablo González Casanova, a Mexican sociologist, described the transition from a colonial international elite to a small national elite as 'internal colonialism' (1965). He proposed the idea that indigenous communities throughout the Americas were merely colonies within the boundaries of nation states. The indigenous population therefore continued to confront exclusion, subjugation, and exploitation with resistance. In Bolivia, early policies within the Republic allowed the national elite to exploit indigenous labor through tributary taxes and usurp their land. These laws were seemingly identical to colonial orders in practice, if not in discourse.

The first national leaders of Bolivia believed that indigenous peoples should be integrated into society little by little as a way to civilize them. This, they recognized, needed to be a slow and cautious practice, for the elite feared the power of strong masses



of indigenous peoples. This paranoia grew out of memories of Tupac Katari's revolts, news of the Haitian Revolution (1791-1804), and the organizational strength of indigenous communities or *ayllus*.<sup>2</sup> The Bolivian Republic limited full liberal citizenship to literate, salaried, male landowners. These standards contributed to the formation of a mestizo, elite oligarchy that excluded nearly three quarters of the population (Larson 2004, 204). Independence never promised to fulfill Tupac Katari's rebellion with the goal of returning to an indigenous system of governance, but rather aimed to incorporate Bolivia into the industrial world of Western modernity.

According to the first national census in 1846, over half of the Bolivian population lived in semi-autonomous *ayllus* with communal landholdings (Larson 2004, 204). The rest of the population lived on private estates. Up until this point, there was relative leniency and tolerance for indigenous self-governance. Since indigenous peoples continued to pay significant tributary taxes, the republic had no option but to appease the masses by allowing them to live in their traditional communities and govern according to their local justice systems.

However, the slow post-independence transition period ended abruptly with the onset of the 1870s and 1880s. This period is marked by aggressive economic liberalism due to the recovery of silver and tin mining in the highlands and therefore an increase in export economy. This spike in trade brought the "Indian problem" to the forefront of the political stage, as indigenous peoples were tired of paying taxes to a government that did not recognize their full citizenship within Bolivia nor their complete sovereignty outside of the Republic. Furthermore, the elite class wanted to eradicate communal indigenous

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<sup>2</sup> The ayllu is a complex concept that will be explained in more detail towards the end of this chapter. In the mean time, it is best to understand the ayllu as the total fabric of indigenous Andean communities including geographic location, traditions, and customs.

land holdings by fragmenting plots into private property to be incorporated into a free market economy to fund the industrialization of the modern world.

By 1866 President Melgarejo passed a series of confiscation decrees in which the state became the owner of all communal property rights throughout the country. Indigenous peoples living on those lands therefore were forced to buy individual titles from the state for their ancestral land, disregarding complex indigenous ontological relationships with their territory. Any indigenous community unable to prove land possession through a formal colonial title, or too poor to pay the fee, could be stripped of their fields and pastures. An 1868 edict allowed wealthy landholders to hold bidding wars over an entire community's territory (Larson 2004, 218). The elite class claimed that the state should grant them land so that they could protect Indians, and rid the state of this responsibility. This infantilizing whitening solution became a legitimate justification for re-feudalization (Larson 2004, 213-217).

Liberalization of Bolivian policies sparked a three-year period (1869-1871) of the intensified indigenous resistance and rebellion. The necessity to fight for communal land ownership in the face of increasing privatized individualization led to a revival of collective indigenous identity, strengthened by a trans-regional archipelagic network of indigenous ayllus. However, it is crucial to recognize the differences amongst diverse indigenous peoples of this time. Some continued to live in their traditional ayllus, while others worked on haciendas or in the mines, and some who fled enslavement became landless *foresteros*. Furthermore, indigenous peoples had different levels of interaction with official bureaucratic structures depending on their proximity to the capital city of La Paz. Resistance therefore took many different strategic forms. Should communities search for a way to legitimize their territorial claims through formal land titles? Or should they reject the Spaniard-imposed written system that devalued indigenous people and

their traditions? Major debates ensued in regards to working either within, or without the dominant Bolivian Republic.

In 1874, the Ley de Ex-vinculación granted indigenous peoples the right to individual landownership (under limited terms), but simultaneously stripped them of their right to communal landownership and absolved the ayllu as a juridical entity. The law dismantled Bolivia's tributary system in which communities could collectively pay tribute to the state, and implemented a universal, individual property tax, expanding capitalism to rural areas. Indigenous peoples were integrated into liberal citizenship through the right to own land, but only within the mestizo elite's jurisdictions. It assumed that indigenous peoples would be motivated by market incentives to buy and sell private property as a way to incorporate them as good citizens and their presumably "unused" land as productive agricultural plots. This law was based in premises of Western modernity that substantially differed from traditional indigenous systems of governance and relationships with territory.

Zarate Willka led one of the most documented rebellions of this time period in 1899. He gained mestizo trust by organizing an indigenous army to defend and protect the nation-state. At the last minute, Willka's army used their weapons to rebel against the Republic demonstrating that while he was capable of using the nation-state's institutions, they were not the institutions of his people and could not be used to dominate them (Condarco Morales 1965). Out of this conflict, an enhanced effort to 'domesticate' the Indian race once and for all emerged. Extermination campaigns materialized in the eastern lowland frontiers, but were not as feasible in the highlands where community networks thrived as a result of the Inca Empire's systematization.

With no state-recognized political representation and the legal disintegration of communal property, the 1910s-1930s saw the growth of a national indigenous movement

in an effort to defend communities from liberal assimilatory processes. A current member (and previous leader) of CONAMAQ told me how her father escaped from an hacienda during this time in search for paid labor. He, like many others, sought work in the mines, which offered a bit more freedom, and when necessary, a hiding place from *hacendados* (interview conducted by author, July 4, 2014). Taking refuge in the mines created a space for indigenous peoples to organize politically while enduring harsh working conditions. On a larger scale, an activist network of *Alcaldes Mayores Particulares* emerged in the 1920s, supporting traditional *pachamámico* spirituality to challenge the white minority's violation of mother earth, to end segregation policies, and to establish autonomous education for indigenous peoples. This *ayllu*-based movement offered alternative conceptualizations of citizenship and nation making in modern Bolivia, proposing an Aymara republic of Qullasuyu, separate from the Bolivian nation state (Ari 2014).

The 1920s-1960s marked a long process of assimilation, particularly through the use of total institutions such as public schools and military service. Throughout the Chaco War (1932-1935), the military sent indigenous men to the southeastern lowlands to confront Paraguayan troops. This was a transitional moment of integration for many indigenous peoples who began to feel a sense of nationalism in their military training. It also sparked an acute awareness of the Bolivian citizenship rights that were being withheld from them (Morales 2010). In 1937, Coronel Germán Busch declared August 2 *el Día del Indio* (National Indigenous Day) in an effort to include indigenous peoples within the social imaginary. By 1945, a left-leaning government led by Villarroel permitted the first national indigenous organized congress in La Paz. This monumental encounter brought over one thousand *ayllu* leaders from the highland areas and valleys to the capital city as a symbol of alliance and integration (Gotkowitz 2008, ch 7). Here we

see how processes of assimilation simultaneously served to give indigenous peoples platforms to express themselves, but only within the parameters of the state.

The second wave of liberalization swept over Bolivia in the lead up to the 1952 populist Bolivian revolution. Led by the Revolutionary Nationalist Movement (MNR), the insurgency emerged as a means to break down the historical oligarchy of silver barons, *latifundistas*, and the creole elite. Overthrowing a military junta that had controlled Bolivia off and on for nearly two decades, the revolution achieved universal suffrage by banning prior literacy and property requirements. In this moment, the number of Bolivian voters multiplied by five times. The MNR government nationalized all of the mines owned by the nation's three great tin barons and established the Mining Corporation of Bolivia (COMIBOL) as a semi-autonomous enterprise to run state-owned mines. One year after the '52 revolution, the government implemented an agrarian reform. This abolished the remnants of forced labor and established a program of expropriation and redistribution of rural property from traditional landlords to rural peoples.

While indigenous peoples were finally granted full citizenship, they were nonetheless explicitly excluded from the agrarian reform. It is crucial to differentiate between peasants and indigenous peoples (*campesinos* and *indios*) within the underlying ideology of mestizaje. In an effort to integrate indigenous peoples into Bolivian society as peasants (emphasizing their class distinction rather than their ethnicity), labor unions controlled land distribution to individuals (not communal holdings). The word *indio* was eliminated from public discourse practically overnight. The *Día del Indio*, established 15 years earlier, was changed to the *Día del Campesino*, a nominal change symbolic of deeply rooted racialized policies. However, many indigenous peoples did not identify as peasants. They claimed that they belonged to indigenous nations, separate from the nation

state of Bolivia. They had their own governing structures, originary authorities, separate territorial jurisdiction, and administration.

While the revolution accomplished three fundamental goals (universal suffrage, nationalization of mines, and land reform), it is largely seen as unfinished. This is particularly because the MNR focused more on economic reform than social reform. The position of indigenous peoples and women did not change as much as the lives of poor peasants and miners. In the words of indigenous intellectual Fausto Reinaga,

What did the agrarian reform grant us? Lies! The agrarian reform of 1953 was another conquest of the Indian. By liquidating the latifundio, we wanted the restoration of the Inca community, the collectivization of land. We have been cheated. The white mestizo, instead of collectivize, turned the land into private smallholdings (Reinaga 1969, 423).

Older men and women in contemporary Bolivia echo Reinaga's opinion after watching their dreams of the 1952 revolution whither away throughout their lifetime. Speaking with several retired miners at an anti-imperialist conference in Cochabamba (July 2014) opened my eyes to the promise they see in President Morales' *Proceso de Cambio* as a revival of what they hoped would be achieved in the mid-twentieth century. Many see the recent re-nationalization of the mines (after neoliberal privatization) as an opportunity for the government to implement social programs that did not emerge after the 1952 revolution. Furthermore, they hope that a more complete land reform will occur with the increase of legal avenues for indigenous communities to receive and defend collective land holdings.

After only a decade, the MNR revolutionary party gave way to US-funded military regimes that controlled Bolivia off and on from 1964-1982. This period of dictatorship marks the strongest effort to integrate indigenous peoples into a mixed homogenous nation. The word *indio* was largely eliminated from language (only used as

a derogatory slur), and speaking indigenous languages became socially unacceptable. The mestizo class took pride in certain indigenous history, but simultaneously degraded indigenous peoples and their traditions. In this moment, many indigenous peoples tried to assimilate their children into mestizo society, so as to protect them from discrimination. They truly believed that by stripping their children of indigenous identity, they could liberate them from the violent subjugation they and their ancestors had endured.

This recapitulation of Bolivian history follows the dominant trends of nation making in Bolivia driven by liberal notions of citizenship. We see how some indigenous peoples resisted assimilation while others reveled at the opportunity to benefit from upwards social mobility, acclimating to the goals of Western modernity. This section served to demonstrate the overarching trend of simultaneous exclusion and assimilation of indigenous peoples through a discussion of land access and ownership. The next segment will build off of these Bolivia-specific trends to look at deep-rooted exclusionary practices embedded within liberal citizenship.

### **INHERENT EXCLUSION IN LIBERAL THEORY**

Liberalism, in which individual citizens are universally granted the right to life, liberty, private property, to elect and be elected, is not necessarily the foundation of a healthy and happy society. As we have seen in the case of Bolivia, this notion tends to protect the elite while disproportionately disenfranchising traditionally subjugated sectors or more broadly, those who prescribe to non-dominant epistemologies. Uday Mehta argues that the exclusion and marginalization of certain peoples in the British Empire is central to liberal theory, not simply an anomaly when put into practice (1999). He

demonstrates how a theory so fundamentally rooted in inclusion is based in practices that are predicated on marginalization.

Liberal theories that have guided Western modernity and spread through political and cultural imperialism inherently exclude all identities that do not fit within the universal, imagined permitted subject. Despite a discourse on equality, liberal theory fails to acknowledge the prevalence of multiple ontologies and epistemologies so that when colonizers encounter foreign peoples they are struck by what they find. Instead of accepting difference, colonizers felt that all peoples and nations that deviated from Western notions of progress and modernity were backward and in need of ‘more developed’ countries to guide them in their journey towards progress (Mehta 1999). This has done much damage historically in assuring that subaltern peoples remain subjugated.

The presumption of liberal equality as a baseline for societal interactions disregards the very legacies of colonialism and subjugation as explained earlier in this chapter. While pre-modern moral orders acknowledged hierarchy due to privilege, liberal theory assumes sameness without taking genuine action to assure that everyone has access to the same resources. Nonetheless, legal recognition often becomes an instrument of regulation and subordination instead of self-determination (Brown 1995, 99).

In *The Politics of the Governed*, Partha Chatterjee points to the space between utopian dreams and harsh realities of discrimination. He recognizes the intrigue of an imagined space in which all individuals are seen as equally important members of a homogenous, unbounded nation state. However, he questions whether these types of relationships and ways of identifying with other humans can exist anywhere except in utopian (imaginary) spaces. He recognizes that the “slogan of universality is often a mask to cover the perpetuation of real inequalities” (Chatterjee 2004, 22). That is, until we reach this utopian dream state (which may be an unrealistic objective), we first must



acknowledge the fact that historically, individuals and groups of people have been marginalized, systemically oppressed, and socially condemned by the elite. The liberal nation state is not a level playing field, nor is it homogenous. Therefore, direct representation is necessary to create spaces in which the voices of disenfranchised communities can be listened to on their own terms.

The moral orders of society under Western modernity have spread to entire societies and blinded the masses to other ways of thinking and being. Liberal modernity has infiltrated the market economy, the public sphere, and self-governance to an extent that a collective social imaginary has become incredibly difficult to penetrate. Canadian philosopher Charles Taylor elaborates stating that, “Non-Western cultures have modernized in their own ways and cannot be properly understood if we try to grasp them in a general theory that was originally designed with the Western case in mind” (2002, 91). This is an argument that indigenous intellectuals such as Fausto Reinaga have declared throughout the twentieth century. It implies that indigenous peoples have the right to be autonomous and do not need to be understood under western-centric epistemologies.

One of Taylor’s greatest contributions is reminding his readers that the social fabric of Western modernity has not, and will not always be the norm. He writes about the long march of transitioning from a pre-modern to a modern society. It is not only a matter of changing laws and political mechanisms, but changing the social imaginary of all citizens. This history of transitioning is “easy to forget, because once we are well installed in the modern social imaginary, it seems the only possible one, the only one that makes sense. After all, are we not all individuals? Do we not associate in society for our mutual benefit? How else to measure social life?” (Taylor 2002, 99). Indigenous peoples in Bolivia who have fought for centuries to destabilize liberal Western social imaginary

would beg to differ. They have not forgotten the ways of their ancestors and have fought both peacefully and violently for the right to live according to their own social imaginary, according to their own political philosophies.

## **THE RISE OF GLOBAL INDIGENOUS RIGHTS**

While indigenous peoples have resisted physical and psychological colonial domination and Eurocentric liberal assimilation for centuries, a new wave of formally recognized international indigenous rights movements have gained momentum within the past fifty years. After a century of widespread national efforts to assimilate all people into one homogenous national identity, politicians, scholars, and activists have largely recognized that respecting difference and multiplicity is as important as breeding similarities. Subaltern and decolonial scholars shed light on the inherent discrimination of assimilationist policies, Eurocentric notions of Western modernity, and linear progress. They in turn push for local, national, and international policies that tolerate and accept heterogeneity guided by identity politics. The following section presents a brief description of the international indigenous rights movement, with an emphasis on Latin America. It ultimately provides context for a more specific exploration of the rise of indigenous rights in Bolivia in which we can finally place the emergence of CONAMAQ.

Beginning in the 1970s and 1980s, indigenous rights movements achieved more momentum on an international scale. One of the most important functioning international laws that guarantees the rights of indigenous peoples is the International Labor Organization (ILO) Convention<sup>169</sup> adopted in 1989. The document is based on principles developed in the UN Declaration of Human Rights (1949) and revises the outdated ILO Tribal Populations Convention and Recommendation (1957). First and

foremost, the document recognizes, “the aspirations of these [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” (ILO 169). This statement recognizes the right to live according to traditional sovereign principles within state parameters. Twenty different countries have ratified the document (predominantly within the Americas), pledging to respect indigenous peoples within their borders. Upon ratifying ILO 169, nations have one year to align policies and legislation before it becomes legally binding.

The United Nations General Assembly proclaimed 2005-2014 to be the second International decade of the World’s Indigenous Peoples. After more than twenty years of negotiations by indigenous peoples around the world, on September 13, 2007, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. This document guarantees life and security, language, cultural and spiritual identity, education, resources and knowledge, employment, participation, development, economic and social rights, and self-governance without coercion. According to the UN declaration, indigenous peoples have the right to participate in all decision-making that affects them. This particularly refers to contemporary struggles against extractive industries for water rights and access to national parks and forests. Together, ILO 169 and the UN declaration mark a crucial turn in legitimizing indigenous struggles within a Western legal framework.

Greater accountability for human rights on an international scale brought limited protection for previously marginalized peoples including women, indigenous peoples, and children. However, it did so within a profoundly liberal system. A rights-based legal framework inherently leads to questions of whose responsibility it is to guarantee rights,

as well as when, and how? Furthermore, formal recognition of cultural rights can lead to unwanted entanglement with the state.

The rise of indigenous rights on an international scale occurred at the same time as the rise of neoliberalism. Many scholars have observed increased recognition of cultural rights and endorsement of intercultural equality in tandem with the conservative economic reforms that neoliberalism is known for (privatization, decentralization, deregulation, free market etc). This may seem contradictory given the last section of this chapter emphasizing the detriment of liberal policies on indigenous peoples. However, the neoliberal regime simultaneously produces and contests state recognition and inclusion of indigenous peoples. Neoliberalism relies on a strong civil society to care for itself in lieu of large government. Policies of decentralization redistribute power and resources from the hands of few politicians to local leaders. This transition from centralized homogenous power to a more diverse system is mirrored by a transition from policies of unification and mestizaje through assimilation and integration to policies of multiculturalism that recognize cultural diversity and difference.

Shifting our focus to Latin America, we see large indigenous populations who have gained substantial indigenous rights, particularly in Mexico, Brazil, Guatemala, Ecuador, Bolivia, and Peru. While these countries have sizeable indigenous populations and well-documented histories of ancient pre-Columbian traditions, native rights have persevered in nearly every single Latin American nation. Major progress has been made in respect to cultural and territorial rights. For example, in 2001, the people of Awas Tingni won a landmark case in the Inter-American Human Rights Court, ruling that the Nicaraguan state had violated their right to collective land. This case marks the first time that a court favored a group of indigenous peoples over the State on a collective lands claim. Despite this legal victory, the Nicaraguan government negotiated with the

community and its lawyers for almost two years before taking any action. Four years after the Awas Tingni case ruling, no progress had been made (Hale 2005).

Charles Hale (2005), Jose Antonio Lucero (2009), and Karen Engle (2010) remind scholars that the recent rise of indigenous mobilization, recognition of cultural and territorial rights, and endorsement of intercultural equality throughout Latin America exists within the matrix of neoliberal multiculturalism. While state actors and international organizations have seemingly supported indigenous rights, this support is accompanied by an ‘invisible asterisk’ that greatly restricts self-determination (Povinelli in Engle 2010). Neoliberal multicultural governing mechanisms constrain indigenous mobilization through webs of administrative and bureaucratic negotiations. Despite support from international governing bodies, the cultural, political, economic superstructure continues to restrict the evolution of indigenous rights. That is, even though subaltern voices are heard in the government, deeply rooted racialized and gendered power hierarchies persist.

Engle explores the “unintended consequences” that indigenous peoples endure when working within the neoliberal state matrix that views indigenous peoples as a homogenous entity (Engle 2010, 168). Governments and corporations place restrictions on rights, an asterisk if you will. For example, if indigenous peoples cease to treat the land in the way that the nation believes a ‘noble savage’ should, they are stripped of their identity, and their label, as a ‘real’ indigenous group. Therefore, if a community is forcibly relocated, they may not have the cultural knowledge of the land and can in turn be stripped of their rights. The formal rights framework does not account for the diversity of experiences, traditions, and movements of indigenous peoples. Conversations of authenticity (defined by non-indigenous powers) limit access to rights and resources. For example, indigenous peoples who use slash and burn techniques or chemicals have been

accused of not being authentic. Furthermore, those that have been forced to move from their ancestral land and are living in exile are seen to have lost what makes them indigenous, creating complex hierarchies and limited access to benefits.

Charles Hale explains this hierarchy of indigenous peoples through his notion of the “indio permitido” (2004). He acknowledges that certain types of indigenous peoples are permitted by society and therefore supported by the government, while others remain too far beyond the realm of what is acceptable or normative. The “permitted Indian” is generally one that is willing to cooperate and be coopted. They produce, consume, and participate in the global economy.

Lucero problematizes the unilineal neoliberal view of indigenous identity, arguing that social organization does not always emerge from an indigenous formula (Lucero 2009, 64). There are many ways of being indigenous with different goals and methods that should not be lumped together. He argues that we must recognize the role of war and authoritarianism, the unequal reach of state benefits, as well as differing levels of willingness to be incorporated into the nation state. Lucero attributes the rise of indigenous rights to the pressures of neoliberal state reforms as well as the existence of rural networks and the collective memory and tradition of indigenous resistance. One might push back on this statement, asking how this is different from previous pressures as described throughout this chapter. Scholars and activists must continue to ask, “under what conditions can indigenous movements occupy the limited spaces opened by neoliberal multiculturalism, redirecting them toward their own radical, even utopian political alternatives” (Hale 2005, 11)?

While indigenous rights did in fact emerge at the same time as neoliberal economic and cultural policies, macro structural decisions are only one factor in a long struggle of indigenous rights. While neoliberalism may have been a final spark to light

the fire, it is crucial to recognize the long term oppression that native peoples were fighting against, as well as the legacy of struggle and organization that have inspired contemporary indigenous peoples. The following section will take a closer look at the struggle for indigenous rights in Bolivia.

## **THE RISE OF INDIGENOUS RIGHTS IN BOLIVIA**

*“You kill me now, but I will return as millions”*

*- Tupac Katari’s last words before decapitation- 1781*

The rise of indigenous rights in Bolivia emphasizes a transition from class-based identity imposed as a mechanism of mestizaje, to a recuperation of indigenous identity through the revalorization of traditional customs. Despite formal recognition of indigenous peoples as full citizens after the 1952 Revolution, many were still largely excluded and marginalized. In the wake of state efforts to homogenize the nation, many indigenous peoples declared that their ayllu communities fostered an authentically indigenous form of communism that suited them better than the Euro-centric Marxism that Bolivian labor parties supported. The rise of Katarismo (a reincarnation of Tupac Katari’s eighteenth century resistance) in the 1970s laid the groundwork for contemporary indigenous movements, such as CONAMAQ.

In 1969, Fausto Reinaga engaged with tensions between class and ethnicity in his indigenous manifesto titled *La Revolución India*. Until the 1960s, Reinaga had been an ardent supporter of Communism. He was a member of the Communist Part of Bolivia, attended labor union congresses in East Germany and spent time in the Soviet Union. However, upon returning to Bolivia after traveling throughout Europe, he had an overwhelming realization that his indigenous brothers and sisters were continuing to

follow the white European, mestizo dream, in turn abandoning the indigenous revolution their ancestors had been fighting for centuries. In his manifesto he declares,

We have resisted all of this infernal torture; we have carried all of this suffering for four long centuries, and we have not disappeared. And it's not only that we haven't disappeared, but also that—and this is most important—we have persisted in our liberatory struggle. The West has not conquered us (Reinaga 1969, 429).

After heavy communist influence, Reinaga rejected the impositions of Western modernity in an effort to revive the traditions of his ancestors.

*La Revolución India* is an effort to bring indigenous thought to the forefront of society, demonstrating that Marxism, while useful for some, would only weaken their struggle for an autonomous indigenous state. He resisted efforts to turn indigenous peoples into peasants, claiming that their spirituality and epistemology differentiated them in many ways. “Inti and Pachamama- unlike the terrifying Jehova, breathe and exude love, and make man a cheerful being, lover of good and peace. Inca philosophy has the mission of ennobling life” (1969, 397). Reinaga claimed that indigenous peoples have their own socialist essence that is unique from European communism, yet serves similar purposes. David Choquehuanca (the Minister of Exterior Relations) has echoed this sentiment in relation to the concept of *vivir bien*. He claims that while capitalism privileges money, and socialism privileges men, that *vivir bien* privileges life of both humans and non-humans (Colque Condori et al 2013).

The international movement towards decolonization motivated local Bolivian indigenous communities to denounce the legacies of colonialism, genocide, and white supremacy. Reinaga cites scholars of the negritude movement such as Frantz Fanon and Aimee Cesaire as inspiration. Like Reinaga, these Martinican scholars proposed a radical revolution of consciousness and a complete destruction of racial hierarchy.



By the 1970s, discontent with an incomplete agrarian reform, assimilationist policies that aimed to silence indigenous identity, and a wave of oppressive military dictatorships, inspired action from a new generation of young indigenous rural and urban peoples. Since the mid 1950s, indigenous parents had sent their children to urban universities so that they would mix with the mestizo class, with the dream of cleansing them and their families from centuries of subjugation. However, racism persisted in urban centers as teachers and peers discriminated against indigenous students, their native languages, and modes of thinking (Rivera 1984). One member of CONAMAQ that I spoke with recounted that she felt safe in her ayllu, but once she moved to the city of Sucre to attend university, both students and teachers made fun of her braids, her name, her accent when she spoke Spanish, and her traditional pollera skirt (Interview conducted by author, July 4, 2014). Continued discrimination led to internalization of inferiority but also to a renewed sense of resistance.

Perhaps the final factor that radicalized the katarista movement was the Tolata massacre in 1973 in which dictator Hugo Banzer approved the murder of thirteen Quechua peoples. Recognizing that indigenous peoples constituted the majority of the population and that they need not stand for the subordination of their people under the mestizo elite, Aymara leaders organized in a radical political movement. With the wisdom of elders who had fought for centuries, Reinaga's inspiration, the international human rights movement, and young peoples energy, the indigenous Katarista movement emerged in La Paz reviving the name and legacy of Tupac Katari.

The founding document of Katarismo, the Tiwanaku Manifesto (1973), declared that Bolivia's historical economic and social instability was a result of oppressing and silencing the positive contributions of indigenous peoples. The document denounced inequality of wealth, insufficient rural education and the intentional destruction of

indigenous culture. They proposed that the state support the development of indigenous communities according to their own identity as a move that would ultimately benefit the country as a whole. They argued that despite discourses of mestizaje, the state had brushed aside many of the indigenous systems that would truly benefit the country. That is, they did not want to be assimilated into the liberal norm, but wanted to bring uniquely indigenous political and judicial systems to the nation-state. They argued that the Western driven international economy continued to exploit Bolivia's natural wealth. The manifesto stated, "the greatest good that governments and political parties can do for the indigenous peoples is to let us... design our own socioeconomic policies taken from our cultural roots" (Tiwanaku Manifesto 1973). They did not favor complete autonomy, but rather a new state that would draw on the best of both worlds—a new Bolivian-specific type of modernity.

By the 1980s, the Katarista movement fractured into two different factions based on heterogeneous indigenous groups and needs. Until then, highland Aymara and Quechua activists who lived in close proximity to the capital of La Paz had largely dominated the indigenous movement. In the 1980s, lowland indigenous peoples began to speak up on a national scale, claiming that highland indigenous peoples did not speak for their particular needs. This split between lowland and highland indigenous movements will be explored further in chapter two.

Similar to other Latin American countries, the onset of the 1980s debt crisis and neoliberal structural adjustment programs acted as an impetus for indigenous resistance and multicultural policies creating a space for indigenous voices to be heard on a national platform. The 1985 privatization of the Bolivian Mining Corporation (COMIBOL) reversed the 1952 nationalization of mines, resulting in massive layoffs of over 20,000 miners. With no work, many miners and their families were forced to return to their

native communities where they found the support of kinship networks. The same member of CONAMAQ who attended university in Sucre and described the discrimination she felt there, explained how it was upon moving back to her community as a teenager that she realized the strength of her indigenous culture and heritage.

Her family escaped from an hacienda and found refuge in the mine of Huanuni in Oruro. When her father passed away in 1985, just prior to the relocalization of miners, she moved back to her mother's community with her eleven brothers and sisters. Her family was able to recuperate fifty percent of their ancestral land. At the age of fourteen, she left the miners town and learned how to live in the rural area of her mother's ayllu in the province in southern Oruro. She told me how she had to learn the norms of her community, the culture, and the ceremonies, how to work the land, and how to participate in the ayllu. She remembered that her community welcomed them, as they were family, and taught them how to live in a system that was not communism nor socialism, but something unique to indigenous Bolivians. She recounted how living in her ayllu and returning to her roots felt right. This taught her the importance of fighting for indigenous rights, a motivation that ultimately encouraged her to become a local leader of CONAMAQ (Interview conducted by author, July 4, 2014).

A series of neoliberal reforms called the *Plan de Todos* created space for indigenous peoples to participate in local politics at an unprecedented level. The Law for Popular Participation (1993) decentralized governments and created almost 400 different municipalities with local offices. This reorganization of political society redistributed power and resources away from the centralized state, putting it in the hands of local leaders. This transitioned rural areas into political forces as any peasant or indigenous person could run for mayor. While this decentralization meant more responsibility, it also meant wider participation (Medeiros 2001). The *Plan de Todos* also implemented

bilingual education and set the groundwork for the formal recognition of communal territory through an agrarian reform in 1996. This recognition of communal territory marks a historical landmark finally reversing the law of ex-vinculación in 1874 after over one hundred years of private landownership.

A long history of indigenous struggles against subjugation brings my analysis to the present day. According to the 2001 national census, sixty-two percent of Bolivian citizens self-identified with one of thirty-six recognized indigenous nations. The majority of indigenous Bolivians identifies as either Quechua or Aymara and inhabits the western highland region. Thirty-four of the indigenous nations inhabit the Eastern lowlands, most notably the Chiquitano, Guaraní, and Mojeño peoples. Indigenous peoples have reclaimed approximately twenty percent of Bolivia's land through collective land titles to Native Community Lands (TCOs). Bolivia is the first country in South America to elect an indigenous president, and was also the first country to sign the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples into law (International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs). Chapter three will elaborate on the many achievements of the Morales administration.

Indigenous peoples in Bolivia live in both rural and urban areas. Urban centers have attracted young indigenous peoples to universities and the formal and popular markets. Loss of land and job opportunities has begun to change the rural ayllu, but many indigenous peoples continue to strive for equilibrium between humans and the natural world, animals, gods, and authorities. The following section will elaborate on contemporary life in the ayllu and the alternative platform CONAMAQ provides indigenous highland Bolivians in a world dominated by Western modernity.

## THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF AYLLUS AND MARKAS OF QULLASUYU

The Bolivian indigenous movement CONAMAQ (*El Consejo Nacional de Ayllus y Markas del Qullasuyu*) has brought national and international attention to the ayllu system since their inauguration in March 1997. This movement composed of predominantly Aymara, Quechua, and Uru peoples aims to reclaim the ayllu as a central economic, social and political community structure in place of the dominant Eurocentric labor union. CONAMAQ values a model of horizontal solidarity with humans and non-humans rather than a vertical chain of command characteristic of Western modernity. In reviving the ayllu, they aim to reconstitute legitimacy for local indigenous leaders, gain respect for the historical role of originary peoples, and protect the environment that they depend on for survival (CONAMAQ 2008).

One member of CONAMAQ remembers that before its formation, ayllu leaders were active but hadn't formed a cohesive movement yet. She reminded me that CONAMAQ is the contemporary iteration of a pre-colonial lifestyle that has never truly died. She told me about the many nests of indigenous resurgence throughout the country that had not yet revived networks of communication. For example, the Federation of Ayllus of Southern Oruro and the Central Ayllu of Northern Potosí (los Jacha Karanagas) in the late 1980s marked the beginning of organizing across ayllus at the regional level. Furthermore, there were a series of regional meetings throughout the early 1990s in La Paz, Oruro, and Potosí (Interview conducted by author, July 4, 2014).

She said that when she returned from university during her vacations, members of her community told her that there was a movement rising with force. Little by little the state government began creating indigenous institutions, including the viceministry of indigenous affairs. Communities gained support from international NGOs that focused on cultural heritage and revitalization in the wave of neoliberal multiculturalism (Interview

conducted by author, July 4, 2014). Ultimately, CONAMAQ was founded on March 22, 1997 in the Challapata Marka of Oruro at a gathering of representatives from eight different suyus (CONAMAQ 2008). The first initiatives of CONAMAQ struggled to have the ayllu system recognized as a legitimate collectivity given the dominance of labor unions. Early projects involved requesting government-subsidized seeds, but in the past nearly twenty years, the organization has grown into one with much greater political influence as we will see in chapters two and three.

Before engaging in a discussion of the ideological principles that guide CONAMAQ as an organization, it is important to recognize the internal diversity within the group. The national organization represents sixteen different indigenous nations (or suyus) across five different departments in Bolivia, including the voices of both rural and urban peoples, with differing cultural traditions and contemporary needs. In Sucre, Oruro, and Northern Potosi, the role of the ayllu is much stronger than in places like La Paz and Cochabamba. This is because the traditional indigenous community structures of governance have been better preserved in departments further away from the capital, where assimilation processes were not as strong. Many indigenous communities in La Paz prefer to align themselves with labor unions, because these organizations continue to offer better services as a result of the 1952 revolution. In contemporary Bolivia, if you are affiliated with a labor union, you are siding with President Evo Morales and will therefore receive greater benefits from the government. Nonetheless, CONAMAQ has been the predominant body to represent the needs of highland indigenous peoples for nearly twenty years and have negotiated indigenous autonomy in crucial ways.

While CONAMAQ has brought attention to the ayllu throughout the past two decades, this ancient Andean community structure has existed for thousands of years. Even after Spanish conquest, internal colonialism, Western imperialism, liberal

democracy, and neoliberal governance the ayllu has resisted appropriation and persisted as a locus of indigenous ideology (Fernandez Osco 2010). Many indigenous peoples have resisted efforts to create a homogenous Bolivian republic by maintaining their own epistemologies despite facing extraordinary racism and discrimination under Bolivian law. The declaration of Bolivia as a plurinational state and the re-writing of the constitution (2009) has nominally reopened a space in which indigenous traditions and customs are seen as legitimate options, but in practice are still subordinate to the laws and economy of the nation-state. For this reason, many indigenous communities have rejected state governance and embraced local indigenous ayllu-based traditions.

But what exactly is an ayllu? Does the ayllu really represent an alternative to capitalism and Western modernity? We can begin to think of the ayllu as a geographic space, although we will soon learn the importance of the values and ideology that bind the ayllu as a cohesive community structure. Tawantinsuyu, the region that the Spaniards called the Inca Empire, is made up of four suyus, or regions. Qullasuyu is the southern most region that is now home to the nation-state of Bolivia. Each suyu is composed of a group of smaller regions called markas, which are further broken down into kin-based neighborhoods. These kin-based neighborhoods are called ayllus. The ayllu, however, is much more than a territorial claim of a community, or a socio-economic unit of Aymara and Quechua culture. It is a space of strong epistemological values that bind the community, recognizing the interconnectedness of all humans and non-humans.

Marcelo Fernández Osco, a Bolivian sociologist, anthropologist, and author of *La ley del ayllu* (The Law of the Ayllu), reflects on the role of the ayllu as one that keeps order by maintaining an understanding of the sacred character of everything human and non-human (2010). Justo Oxa, a self-identifying Aymara elementary school teacher describes the ayllu as a,

dynamic space where the whole community of beings that exist in the world lives; this includes humans, plants, animals, the mountains, the rivers, the rain, etc. All are related like a family. It is important to remember that this place [the ayllu] is not where we are from, it is who we are (de la Cadena 2010, 354).

Each ayllu is part of a larger agricultural network of *markas* and *suyus* so that goods and peoples traverse across great distances in a reciprocal system of economic trade. John Murra describes this interaction as a “vertical archipelago” based on ecological complementarity (McEwan 2006). Given the diverse microclimates throughout the Andes Mountains, the valleys, and the lowland Amazonian region, ayllus have traditionally depended on a shared labor system (*minga*) to cultivate or create goods (food, ceramics, textiles etc) to trade in a non-monetary arrangement of *ayni* (reciprocity).

The ayllu represents a space governed by principles of duality, complementarity, reciprocity, solidarity, collectivity, horizontality, ancestrality, and self-sufficiency (Fernandez Osco 2010). These values are in stark contrast to capitalist values of individualism, hierarchy, linear progress, productivity, efficiency, and accumulation. I elaborate on a few of these values as a way to demonstrate how the ayllu ideology of *vivir bien* diverges from Western capitalist values but might resonate with Westerners nonetheless.

Within the ayllu, duality is demonstrated by the belief that everything comes in pairs. This means that the individualistic “other” does not exist as it does in Western society, but is rather the flip side of a coin. An enemy is one in the same as the individual and must be treated with dignity and respect. Leadership within the indigenous movement CONAMAQ reflects this duality as all leaders come in pairs of male *tata mallkus* and female *mama tallas*. Furthermore, individuals are parts of collectivities and can never be seen as separate from the larger human and non-human collectivity. Unlike



Western rationality, which is ego-centric, Aymara and Quechua rationality is based in collective memory which integrates the past, present and future of both humans and nonhumans.

Indigenous epistemologies within the ayllu represent a non-Western understanding of space and time. In contrast to Western linear progress, indigenous ancestrality implies that the past is always brought with us to the present so that the unveiling of events is spiral. The past is not rigid, dead, nostalgic, nor fantasized, but alive and continuously acting on the present. On the contrary, Western modernity assumes that time proceeds in a linear fashion, implying that 'tradition' is in the past and can no longer be relevant to present progress. Western chronopolitics (in contrast to Foucault's biopolitics and Mbembe's necropolitics) has become one of the main tools to promote competition and capitalism, linking speed to success so that going faster means getting ahead (Mignolo 2011). This capitalist notion of success destroys collectivities and ultimately quells political activity by overworking individuals.

Instead of accumulation, over-production and over-consumption, the ayllu values self-sufficiency, which brings us back to the ideology of *vivir bien*, living well instead of living better. This means living harmoniously with other humans and non-humans and finding dignity in work without exploiting others or the land. It means appreciating care-giving roles such as mothers, teachers, and healers.

Within CONAMAQ, constant communication and consensus across regional levels is accomplished through a series of meetings (*cabildos*) and councils of rotating leaders. Apu Mallkus and Asesores (local leaders) coordinate six different commissions for the Markas in their jurisdiction. One such commission serves to facilitate communication and coordination throughout the ayllus, markas, and suyus. A Territorial Commission works towards the sanitation and titling of communal land holdings. The

Juridical Human Rights Commission has representatives in the Organization of American States (OAS) and the United Nations to further the international protection of indigenous rights and hold these bodies accountable. They also help to implement community justice at the local level. One Mallku in this commission told me that a major part of his job is dealing with issues of violence or robbery within the community so that they do not need to deal with the overburdened, bureaucratic police system. Furthermore, he works to implement traditional justice practices that are often different from the State's punishments. The Commission for International and National Relations links CONAMAQ with other indigenous organizations to share strategies of resistance in an act of solidarity. A Health Commission focuses on traditional medicine, and finally, the Commission on development and the environment emphasizes sustainable growth of the ayllu (CONAMAQ 2008).

CONAMAQ's goal as an organization is neither to create a political party nor to take state power, but rather to use a politics of protest, refusal, and disruption in order to challenge the state government and defend their indigenous autonomy. CONAMAQ is an indigenous, originary government that represents peoples whose ancestors pre-date the nation-state. Garcia Linera et al. (2004) critique this stance, claiming that it preserves the colonial structure of the state. Simultaneously, these authors hold another Bolivian civil society organization, the CSUTCB, up on a pedestal for their efforts to take power and radically decolonize the state through the *Movimiento a Socialismo* (Movement Towards Socialism, MAS) political party (Garcia Linera et al. 2004, 337). Given Raquel Gutierrez's emphasis on changing the world without taking power, one might question the narrowness of this critique, recognizing the value of grassroots alternatives and indigenous demands for recognized autonomy (2012).

CONAMAQ exerts change on the national government from the outside, calling for direct representation in decisions that affect their communities and a higher level of self-determination, particularly in regards to land and natural resources. Furthermore, they challenge the state to leave behind their colonial hierarchical model and create a more horizontal structure based on the ayllu model. In the early years of CONAMAQs development, they pushed for and participated in a major constitutional reform (CONAMAQ 2008). The next chapter will engage with the details of the demands and outcomes of the constituent assembly.

CONAMAQ views the Western subordination of non-Western knowledge as temporary and cyclical. Fernandez Osco compares the reign of Western modernity to a period of suffering, of *llaki pacha*, or of hunger, *awti pacha*. This is a time to withstand political injustice in the same way that one might withstand hunger during barren months of the year. You persevere until times of abundance return (Fernandez Osco 2010). From this Aymara perspective, the current reign of the West is neither irreversible nor without alternatives. However, it will require a radical turn of events.

Nicole Fabricant provides a pertinent criticism of CONAMAQ, noting that, “when it comes to urban or periurban areas, this ethno-territorial model can leave many indigenous peoples out of the conversation, legitimizing certain indigenous identities, while deligitimizing others” (2013, 165). This is a fundamental critique that must be recognized in a country with such profound diversity as a result of such a complex history as described throughout this chapter. Urban indigeneity is a major component of Bolivian society with increasing migration to cities like El Alto. Fabricant’s critique forces us to consider the heterogeneity of indigenous peoples within Bolivia and the risk of marginalizing certain communities based on standards of authenticity.

## CONCLUSION

By understanding the long history of CONAMAQ in a vast geographical context, we can better understand why the movement is focused on reclaiming communal land rights and asserting their indigenous identity after centuries of subjugation. While the council formally materialized in 1997, we see that its mission is largely based in the oppressive legacy of race relations within Bolivia. By looking at the effects of colonialism in the form of control over intellectual property, land grabbing practices, and the imposition of psychologically and socially destructive assimilation policies we see how indigenous peoples have been consistently stripped of their right to self-identify according to their own traditions. Nonetheless, indigenous peoples have resisted in an effort to restore self-determination. Furthermore, they have resisted in *different* ways, asserting that not all indigenous peoples fit neatly into one homogenous category. Subsequent chapters will explore CONAMAQ's negotiation of indigenous autonomy within the national constituent assembly, with the Bolivian government and in the face of encroachment by transnational corporations.

## **Chapter Two: Envisioning a Plurinational State: CONAMAQ's demands during the Bolivian Constituent Assembly**

Traveling across Bolivia by bus, watching how the landscapes, animals, plants, and people change demonstrates extreme diversity and interdependence. Some indigenous descendants of the Inca Empire harvest potatoes and herd alpacas and llamas in the highland Andes Mountains. They engage in a unique ancestral spiritual relationship with the land that sustains them. Some design new forms of architecture and clothing in the city of El Alto, where others are perfecting the art form of Aymara hip-hop. All have inherited the economic legacy of colonial natural resource extraction and a select few continue to profit off mineral wealth, while others risk their lives to protect their land. To the east, lowland indigenous nations live the legacy of the Spanish rubber industry and elite owned latifundios. New crops of soybeans and palm oil have brought a new wave of capital to the region. Somewhere in the middle of these two extremes, driving down the winding roads from the mountains to the jungle, the traveler journeys through the Chapare valleys that provide lush earth for coca harvests. Bolivians use this crop not only for ritual practices and for lessening the effects of extreme altitude, but many have also manipulated it into a dangerous drug, trafficked throughout the region and the world. Understanding the rich diversity of this land and its indigenous and mestizo people reveals the difficulty of the liberal nation-state project that strives for one singular imagined national identity.

The Republic of Bolivia has never been a cohesive homogenous imagined community in the way that Benedict Anderson describes, or in the way that Western influenced liberal politicians envisioned. While nationalist state sponsored policies attempted to condition citizens to identify according to their class (as opposed to their

ethnicity) throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, this only worked to a certain extent. Projects of assimilating indigenous peoples into a mestizo, urban, Western educated society altered the lives of many Bolivians. Yet, countless fought against this process in diverse ways, struggling to revive respect for their ancestral lifestyles, and modify the forced national identity to encompass a plethora of identities that are equally legitimate. The recent constitutional reformation of Bolivia as a *plurinational state* (2009) is, at the very least, a nominal step towards acknowledging and supporting the many ways of thinking and being that have existed in the region for centuries. The epoch of striving for a homogenous national identity is over. The *Republic* of Bolivia, tied to liberal theory, is no longer a realistic goal. But will a plurinational state allow for the level of autonomy that many indigenous Bolivians are striving for? Does it continue to be wrapped up in the liberal matrix of power?

The following chapter delves into the diverse demands made by a number of different political parties and grassroots indigenous and *campesino* organizations in the process of writing a new Bolivian constitution. Active civil society organizations struggled to define the future of Bolivia from the first march in 2002, to the many meetings with hundreds of representatives throughout 2006, to the consolidation of a historical Unity Pact (2004), to the final ratification of the constitution in 2009. Protests and numerous resolutions influenced the creation of a final document that defines Bolivia as a secular, unitary, *plurinational state* that recognizes indigenous autonomies, communal land rights, and restricts private land ownership.

This chapter is not an all-encompassing analysis of the constituent assembly. Salvador Schavelzon has already accomplished that in *El nacimiento del Estado Plurinacional de Bolivia: Etnografía de una Asamblea Constituyente* (2012). On the contrary, this chapter focuses on the specific role of civil society organizations in re-

defining the state, with an emphasis on CONAMAQ's proposals for indigenous autonomy and territorial and resource rights. Reviewing the organization's propositions demonstrates the utopian Bolivia that this highland indigenous movement is struggling to realize and the legal base that they are constructing to present the possibility of real self-determination. Furthermore, analyzing why the constituent body as a whole rejected certain proposals helps to demonstrate CONAMAQ's contentious relationship with the state and other sectors of Bolivian society. By understanding these two aspects of CONAMAQ in light of the historic discrimination described in chapter one, their recent denunciation of the Morales administration and decision to break away from the Unity Pact (as described in chapter three) is recognizable as grounded in a long-term struggle for cultural recognition and rights to land and natural resources.

Kevin Bruyneel's "third space of sovereignty" provides a useful theoretical framework to understand the cracks in which indigenous resistance flourishes throughout the Americas. He suggests that in spaces of colonial ambivalence, indigenous political actors can effectively contest the imposition of dominant politics, economic systems, and ideology. Through refusal, negotiation, and straddling of two systems, indigenous peoples create alternative spaces within the liberal democratic state to assure that their autonomous rights are respected (Bruyneel 2007). This third space of sovereignty rejects the imperial binary of understanding indigenous peoples as either inside or outside of the nation-state, and instead demonstrates how indigenous peoples transcend these borders through creative articulations of agency.

This chapter engages with CONAMAQ's role in the Bolivian constituent assembly (2005-2007) to show how an autonomous indigenous movement used the language of the state to push monumental constitutional change. They demand rights and resources from the state, while simultaneously recognizing and rejecting its inherently

colonial nature, situating themselves both inside and outside of the imagined state. Did CONAMAQ avoid the entrapments of working within dominant legal frameworks? Were they able to use the national judicial system to ultimately create a space for community justice systems to prevail?

This discussion of resistance is a continuation of the previous chapter that explored the *longue durée* of indigenous struggles for self-determination since Spanish colonization in 1532. An in depth exploration of the constituent assembly will lead to an analysis of the risks associated with the incorporation, cooptation and appropriation of indigenous systems into state governance. But first, this chapter puts body and form to the third space of sovereignty by recalling who initiated the constitutional reform, how they did so, and why they felt it was necessary.

#### **THE MARCH FOR THE CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY**

From May 13 to June 19, 2002, members from over 50 different Bolivian social organizations marched in solidarity from the lowlands of Santa Cruz to the highlands of La Paz. While a network of lowland indigenous peoples led by CIDOB (Confederation of Indigenous Peoples of Bolivia) initiated the movement, highland members of CONAMAQ joined them in a historical act of solidarity foreshadowing a Unity Pact. Participants and the press referred to this event as “The Indigenous People’s March for Popular Sovereignty, Territory, and Natural Resources,” but it would ultimately become known as “The March for the Constituent Assembly”.

This march was by no means the first time that Bolivians had called for a process to rewrite the constitution. The ultimate realization is a result of a number of protests, marches, and assemblies throughout the 1990s and early 2000s. First, a 1994 reform



recognized the country as multiethnic and pluricultural, setting the precedent that all citizens have the right to participate in decision-making (but only when done through formal, recognized means). These policies established a system for collective land titles, recognizing the economic, social, and cultural (but rarely political) rights of indigenous peoples. In 1996, the March for the Right to Land and Natural Resources successfully brought about a national land reform (INRA). The Water War in Cochabamba (2000) and the larger struggle to nationalize hydrocarbons demonstrated profound discontent with a neoliberal system that had restricted the right to water. Finally, the Gas War of October 2003 fought for the nationalization of natural resources as well as the realization of a constituent assembly. In each of these earlier battles, indigenous and *campesino* peoples pushed the neoliberal Republic to open the possibility for constitutional change. They used grassroots methods of marching, protesting, and holding demonstrations to voice the needs of the masses.

The March for the Constituent Assembly was a monumental display of organization, solidarity, and transformation. Upon arriving in La Paz, after walking and meeting with leaders in local communities for thirty-seven days, representatives presented two main points to President Jorge Quiroga's administration. First, they demanded "popular sovereignty", including control of and respect for communal land holdings (Garcés 2011). This point was a continuation of several demonstrations led by indigenous peoples in the 1990s, but also the impetus of hundreds of years of struggle as described in chapter one. Thousands of people marched to remind government officials that the people create and sustain government by consent, that the majority of the population is indigenous, and that they demand control over their own territory and the natural resources according to their own traditions.

Second, leaders called for an assembly to rewrite the antiquated Bolivian national constitution. They specified that the committee must be composed of representatives from all sectors of society (Garcés 2011). With this proposal, they denounced the monopoly held by political parties, declaring that civil society organizations and communities should have the right to participate freely and directly in decision-making processes. Indigenous organizations (CIDOB and CONAMAQ) declared that the elitist parliament should not have the power to dominate constitutional reform, because they only represented a small sector of people, had controlled the country for centuries, and steered Bolivia into a neoliberal economic crisis.

Up to seven thousand indigenous and non-indigenous men, women, and children participated in the March for the Constituent Assembly. Supporters included rural farmers, labor union members, university students, neighborhood organizations, informal workers federations, and women's confederations, all of which united to fight for the rights of the Bolivian people. Upon crossing the border from the department of Santa Cruz to Cochabamba, indigenous brothers and sisters from Peru, Ecuador, and the Brazilian Rural Workers' Movement joined the march in solidarity. As the mass of Bolivians and their allies pushed forward, they held meetings with local organizations and government representatives, particularly from the ministry of peasant and indigenous affairs, gaining a wide base of support and explaining their specific proposals (Centro de Medios Independientes 2002).

Representatives of CONAMAQ left their highland communities to march with the lowland organizations. On the tenth day of the thirty-seven day march, indigenous peoples from the Ayllus of Chuquisaca left the city of Sucre and met the rest of the group one day later. Meanwhile, supporters from the Ayllus of Potosi and the Ayllus of Oruro began journeying through the Andes and joined the march on June 16 in the town of

Calamarca in the department of La Paz (Centro de Medios Independientes 2002). This demonstration of lowland and highland solidarity marked one of the early moments of the consolidation of the *Pacto de Unidad* (Unity Pact), a conglomeration of Bolivian civil society organizations that supported President Morales in his ascent to power. However, this did not mean that CONAMAQ and eastern lowland organizations agreed on all of the constitutional proposals. A later section of this chapter will interrogate the basis of the Unity Pact's alliance and their different visions of how a plurinational state should function.

Lack of oxygen due to high altitudes, drastic change in temperature from afternoon to evening, and unexpected storms haunted the marchers along their five-week journey. One marcher described their exhaustion and excitement on the sixth day:

Despite being tired from yesterday's journey...today we awoke again with the sunrise to continue our march. We began our journey, as long as yesterday's, to Yapacaní. It would be 30 more kilometers of walking, and walking quickly because despite our blistered feet everyone wants to be at the front of the march. At first, it was harder because of the pain, but later with the energy of the movement walking became easier. We marched for eight hours, half of which were under the hot sun. Peasants and small land owners along the way gave us water and oranges. They greeted us and gave us strength (Equipo Nizkor 2002, Translated by author).

Children, women, and men supported each other as they weaved through the Andes Mountains to the city of La Paz calling for radical change in how the state treated its citizens. They were met by solidarity and support from their brothers and sisters along their journey urging them to continue.

The March for the Constituent Assembly held particular importance due to its timing. The movement attracted national media attention only weeks before general elections on June 30, 2002. This inspired a number of different responses from presidential candidates. While some used indigenous demands to bolster their political

campaign by supporting the call for a constituent assembly, others promised that they would protect the country from a process that would destabilize societal norms. While some politicians agreed that community voices should direct the assembly, others supported a constituent body dominated by political parties that would serve to reassure their continued power. To this propaganda, indigenous peoples reiterated that they fought not only to realize a constituent assembly, but one in which representatives from all sectors of society could be elected as official members (Centro de Medios Independientes 2002).

Many who marched for the realization of the constituent assembly recognized the need for systemic change, but did not see value in doing so through elections or political parties. Indigenous peoples had been largely excluded from these units for centuries and preferred a forum where they could speak on behalf of their communities and regional organizations on their own terms. The Coordinator of Ethnic Peoples of Santa Cruz (CPESC), a lowland indigenous organization, denounced propaganda that associated the march with specific political parties stating that,

Our march is political because we are struggling for a truly democratic country where the rights of our peoples, communities and citizens are recognized and applied; because we speak of the political constitution, where we should define the rights of all and how the state should function. This is political. But when they say that our march is based in one particular political party, they are confused (Equipo Nizkor 2002, Translated by author).

The march was about more than elections and political leaders, it was about the voices of the masses. It was a gathering of communities, outside of formal structures, supporting each other in their struggle to create a more just country in which historically subjugated peoples would have equal opportunity.

On June 10, 2002, when the procession arrived in Vinto (a town just beyond the city of Cochabamba) the marchers called for an extraordinary congress before the elections on June 30 to approve a law declaring the need for a constitutional reform. The draft stated that the constituent assembly would occur in the next presidential term and that it would include participants from all sectors of society without the mediation of political parties. Finally, on August 8, 2002, Jorge Quiroga passed a slightly altered version of this law that stated the necessity of reforming the constitution.

After the March for the Constituent Assembly, many of the participating social organizations began an intense process of drafting a communal proposal for the constituent body. They convened in a series of meetings in Cochabamba, Santa Cruz, and La Paz, culminating in the inauguration of the national constituent assembly in Sucre on August 6, 2006. The next section will explore CONAMAQ's specific proposal for the constituent assembly published months before the march. This chapter will then engage in a discussion of their strategic collaboration with other civil society organizations in the Unity Pact.

### **CONAMAQ'S VISION FOR A NEW BOLIVIA: ARUSKIPASIPXAÑANI**

By tracing CONAMAQ's proposals during the national constituent assembly, we see the ways that they redefine and negotiate the meaning and location of indigenous political identity. Is it contradictory that CONAMAQ, an indigenous organization striving for greater autonomy, is also calling for participation in the constituent assembly? Do they want to be a part of the larger nation-state? Or do they want a separate entity called Qullasuyu? Legacies of colonialism and exploitative relationships between indigenous nations and the Bolivian nation state complicate this either/or scenario. To become totally

self-sufficient, as members of CONAMAQ desire, they must first overcome the power hierarchies that have become deeply entrenched after centuries of exclusion, subjugation, and forced assimilation.

In analyzing the relationships between Native Americans and the United States government, Kevin Bruyneel suggests that “indigenous tribes and nations claim a form of sovereignty that is unclear because it is not easily located inside or outside” of the dominant nation state (2007, xiii). The previous chapter of this thesis demonstrated how indigenous nations are neither part of the Bolivian nation nor complete sovereign bodies. They have been excluded by state policies and segregated in social scenarios, yet simultaneously forced to assimilate. This chapter builds on Bruyneel to argue that members of CONAMAQ strategically place themselves in the cracks between spatial and temporal boundaries imposed by the nation-state. They reject the assumption that indigenous peoples are backwards in time and peripheral in space. They claim a form of sovereignty that is unclear because it is not easily located in the dominant political system or imaginary but rather exists on the edges, pushing the boundaries of normativity through strategic ambivalence. It is an evasive, inassimilable space, so as to avoid the entrapments of the modern liberal democratic nation state.

In February 2002, the National Council of Ayllus and Markas of Qullasuyu (CONAMAQ) developed a reformist proposal for the future of Bolivia based on grassroots demands and regional consultation. Indigenous leaders presented this document to the country as a whole, and to President Jorge Quiroga. Given that the previous constitution only acknowledged indigenous peoples in two of the 235 articles, CONAMAQ wanted to assure that indigenous peoples would be represented according to their own identity (Aruskipasipxañani 2002, 5). This analysis draws heavily upon the

Aruskipasipxañani proposal to recognize and analyze the specific demands of CONAMAQ.

The document admonishes the “poverty that affects indigenous peoples in rural communities and large cities in such a perverse manner” (Aruskipasipxañani 2002, 1). They recognize that marginalization and exclusion are structural problems reified by the elite class, not a natural inferiority or backwardness of indigeneity. As described in chapter one, the capitalist system imposed upon Bolivia through colonial and liberal governments disproportionately disenfranchised native peoples. Traditional ways of subsistence became increasingly difficult as large-scale mining and agriculture relied on massive labor-forces and unfair compensation. This poverty breeds financial dependency on the state for goods and services.

Relations between indigenous peoples and q’aras (non-indigenous ‘outsiders’, or mestizos) have been laden with insults, aggression, violence, war, and genocide since European colonialism. Homogenizing policies have not included indigenous peoples in the nation state according to their own identity, but rather the labor-based identity that the elite class imposed upon them. CONAMAQ’s proposal declared a desire to move beyond this tumultuous relationship through *aruskipasipxañani* (the Aymara word for communication), understanding, and a reevaluation of institutional and local norms. These goals require a politics of listening and recognition of indigenous peoples as worthy speakers. If only the state would listen instead of unilaterally make decisions, then indigenous and non-indigenous peoples could engage in a long overdue conversation in regards to what nationhood and sovereignty mean in overlapping, yet distinct, spaces.

Audra Simpson, a Mohawk scholar, suggests that a philosophy of listening would enable open dialogue between colonized and colonizer in a process of “reconfiguring the relationships of power that characterize native-state relations” (Simpson 117). By truly

listening to indigenous peoples, we could escape the linear trajectory of Western modernity, from nationalism to nationhood, and recognize that many indigenous peoples have separate systems that shape and are shaped by distinct experiences. To many members of CONAMAQ, this means the creation of a state-like body called Qullasuyu that resembles pre-colonial systems of reciprocal trade, community justice, and traditional land stewardship. For others it means integration into the nation-state but with dignity. By listening, observing, and communicating, colonizers and colonized could engage with commonly misunderstood experiences. By mixing knowledge with emotion and experience, we could escape “static and necessarily reified representations of identities and cultures” (Simpson 125). CONAMAQ’s proposal calls upon the Bolivian State to listen and think beyond western-centric modes of governance that understands indigenous peoples as the distant, inferior other.

CONAMAQ proposed both specific and ideological reforms to the Bolivian State according to five themes: cultural politics, territory and natural resources, legal rights, development of the ayllu, and the constituent assembly. Specifically, they demanded an immediate de-bureaucratization of the 1996 INRA land reform that legalized collective land ownership so that indigenous communities could access official titles for the territories they inhabit without the risk of confiscation. A victory won through discourses of multiculturalism, finally obtaining formal land titles would prevent further invasion of indigenous land, but would also subsume communities into the gaze of state bureaucracy. Furthermore, the key to the Aruskipasipxañani proposal was the call for a new constitution that recognized Bolivia as a plurinational state so that “our voices in aymara, qhichwa, chipaya, guaraní, moxeño... and Spanish will be written in stone and bronze for eternal memory” (Aruskipasipxañani 2002, 2). This discourse of inclusion into the Bolivian national constitution seems like a step towards total enclosure, however, their



subsequent proposals demonstrate how legal recognition was a tool to gain greater autonomy, acting as a shield to protect indigenous peoples from state encroachment. Furthermore, their propositions do not rely on inclusion into a static state, but rather suggests fundamental changes to the governing body so as to create a less exploitative relationship.

First, in regards to cultural politics, CONAMAQ's proposal called for the reconstitution and strengthening of indigenous systems of governance, language, and spirituality. They advocated for a transformation of the exclusive, inherently colonial Bolivian political system to a more just governing body based on the horizontal model of the *ayllu*. That is, CONAMAQ did not want to be integrated into the liberal state, but rather wanted the state to transition to a style of governance inspired by traditional indigenous systems. They proposed a political system that would respect autonomy and disentangle institutionalized racism from law and education. They called for the obligatory use of indigenous oral and written languages in educational systems, public administration, and private institutions and for government sponsored cultural-linguistic research to develop literature in indigenous languages. Furthermore, CONAMAQ declared that respect for nature and Pachamama should guide development policies and protect indigenous sacred land (Aruskipasipxañani 2002, 2-3).

Each of these changes would serve to transform the Bolivian nation state into an institution that would recognize the value of traditional indigenous institutions. In the short-term, there is nothing separatist about these proposals. However, in the long-term, they would serve to create a space in which respect for indigenous customs may lead to less exploitative relations amongst indigenous and non-indigenous peoples and in turn, further cultural and political autonomy.

Second, the proposal critiqued the historical and contemporary elite monopoly over territory and natural resources as a system that benefits few and assures continued indigenous exclusion and poverty. CONAMAQ demanded the right to autonomous administration of indigenous territories and resources, both above and below the earth's surface. They insisted that a new constitution and a modification of the 1953 agrarian reform were necessary to systematize and legitimize indigenous land rights. They also called for the reconsideration of arbitrary political-territorial departmental boundaries as designated by the Republic to recognize the socio-cultural borders of their traditional *suyus* and *markas*. This challenged the colonial imposition of political spatial zones that fail to account for indigenous kinship networks, trade, and relationships with territory. While striving for greater autonomy in regards to land use, CONAMAQ supported the direct representation of indigenous leaders into state level decision-making processes on natural resource management and exportation (Aruskipasipxañani 2002, 4-5).

Third, CONAMAQ denounced the national justice system that disregarded local indigenous community norms and strengthened historical systemic discrimination. They demanded a new judicial system that would respect a balance of autonomy and participation while recognizing cultural, socio-economic, and territorial rights. Members of CONAMAQ recognized that written state law does not always result in tangible change and they therefore pushed for mechanisms such as local and national seminars and workshops to educate the masses about indigenous rights. They acknowledged that despite international human rights agreements such as ILO 169 (ratified by Bolivia in 1991), indigenous peoples continue to suffer from oppressive racism and inhuman exploitation. Part of respecting ILO 169 means greater democratization through the participation of *ayllus* and *markas* as viable platforms to express community positions without relying on political parties that have traditionally prioritized self-gain over the

common good (Aruskipasipxañani 2002, 5-7). Formally recognizing traditional justice systems as legitimate on a national scale would allow for greater autonomy at the community level. It also denounces the Western understanding of indigenous peoples as lawless and backwards in time, by recognizing complex community justice systems. Nonetheless, we must consider the limitations of formal recognition given the plenary power of the state.

Fourth, CONAMAQ called for the development of the ayllu. Six million Aymara, Quechua, and Uru people continue to live in ayllus but remain excluded from national development programs and funding that tend to emphasize urban areas and labor syndicates. While critics have written-off CONAMAQ as an organization that aims to ‘return to the past’ and is inherently against development, they prefer to bring the past to the present, striving for a different type of development that recognizes their identities and involves direct representation. The Aruskipasipxañani proposal declared that municipal governments should be required to communicate with ayllu leaders in transparent ways and collaborate in financial decisions regarding the allocation of multilateral funding to indigenous communities. It called for poverty reduction and redistribution of resources through improved infrastructure and communication services, safe drinking water and electrification for indigenous communities, promotion of local modes of production and participation in international markets, multilingual educational reform, support for traditional technologies and intellectual property, indigenous nutrition programs and support for traditional crops and medicine, as well as culturally sensitive state-funded health services (Aruskipasipxañani 2002, 7-11). Each of these services as determined by communities but subsidized by the state demonstrate the need for support after hundreds of years of subjugation, but the desire for local decision-making in allocating that funding.

CONAMAQ's willingness to request state sponsored services and the fulfillment of social, cultural, and economic rights is not contradictory to their desire for greater autonomy. The goal of complete self-sufficiency is stifled by restrictive spatial, and temporal assumptions based on colonial imposition, so that assistance is necessary in the short term while searching for total self-determination in the long term. Indigenous peoples need not choose between assimilation and separation, they can engage with a third space of sovereignty, a space of maneuver and navigation.

CONAMAQ's proposal concluded by stating that recognition of cultural rights, redistribution of land, a legal reform, and support for developing the ayllu can only be fulfilled by the reconstruction of a new political constitution that reflects a *heterogeneous plurinational* country (Aruskipasipxañani 2002, 11). For hundreds of years, the mestizo elite had silenced indigenous peoples, attempting to assimilate them into a homogenous nation state. After being excluded from decision making for centuries, CONAMAQ declared that a new constitution should recognize a more horizontal state structure with a different composition that is representative of the country's cultural and linguistic diversity (Aruskipasipxañani 2002, 11-12).

Indigenous highland leaders proposed that their driving principles were based in listening, conversing, and offering creative alternatives and solutions, and that these actions should be met by the national government. In an effort to overcome nearly 500 years of hate and lack of communication, the proposed dialogue invited a discussion in order to search for collective compromise. The following section investigates the alliance that CONAMAQ made with other Bolivian civil society organizations in an effort to assure that their demands were heard. While this pact assured power in numbers, forcing the government to listen, it also became clear that CONAMAQ would have to modify many of its propositions to adhere to the needs of the larger group. For example,

CONAMAQ wanted to change the name of Bolivia to “Qullasuyu Bolivia” or “Republic of Qullasuyu”. The issue with this change is that the peoples of lowland Bolivia were never part of the Qullasuyu identity within the Inca Empire. This change would have been Andes-centric and exclusionist given the profound diversity of the country. The following analysis will provide a deeper understanding of CONAMAQ as an organization by comparing its vision for a more just Bolivia in relation to an array of Bolivian civil society organizations.

### **ESTABLISHING THE UNITY PACT**

In September 2004, representatives from many of the social organizations that participated in the March for the Constituent Assembly (including CONAMAQ) gathered for a National Encounter of Peasant, Indigenous, and Originary Organizations in the department of Santa Cruz. They gathered to draft a proposal of the law calling for the constituent assembly. With over 300 representatives in attendance, this meeting marked the first encounter of a historical Pacto de Unidad (Unity Pact).<sup>1</sup> Marking a monumental alliance, highland originary peoples, lowland indigenous peoples, and peasant labor union organizations strategically put aside their many differences in an effort to confront the elite class that politically and economically dominated the country. Principal players in the Unity Pact included five major national organizations: CONAMAQ, CIDOB (Confederation of indigenous Peoples of Bolivia), CSUTCB (Confederation of Peasant

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<sup>1</sup> The Unity Pact initially included the CSUTCB (Central Sindical Única de Trabajadores Campesinos de Bolivia), CIDOB (Confederación de Pueblos Indígenas de Bolivia), CONAMAQ (Consejo Nacional de Ayllus y Markas del Qullasuyu), CSCB (Confederación Sindical de Colonizadores de Bolivia), CPESC (Coordinadora de Pueblos Étnicos de Santa Cruz), FNMCB'BS' (Confederación de Mujeres Campesinas Indígenas Originarias de Bolivia Bartolina Sisa), CPEMB (Central de Pueblos Étnicos Mojeños del Beni), APG (Asamblea del Pueblo Guarani), MST-B (Movimiento sin Tierra- Bolivia), BOCNAB (Bloque de Organizaciones Campesinas e Indígenas del Norte Amazónico), and CDTAC (Central Departamental de Trabajadores Asalariados del Campo).

Workers of Bolivia), FNMCB-BS (Bartolina Sisa National Federation of Women Peasant Workers of Bolivia), and CSCB (Confederation of Unionized Colonists of Bolivia). Other regional indigenous and peasant organizations also participated in this encounter, including representatives of the Guaraní and Moxeño peoples, and the landless peasant movement, but they are not considered key long-term actors within the Unity Pact (García Linera et al. 2004).

The Unity Pact's proposal for the constituent assembly (2006) identified their members as *naciones y pueblos indígenas, originarios y campesinos* (indigenous, originary, and peasant nations and peoples). This terminology was a compromise after much discussion and debate and ultimately included nomadic ethnic groups, subsistence land based populations, and peasants who owned individual private property (Schavelzon 2013, 97). Grouping these three categories of Bolivian peoples together recognizes overlapping identities as a result of homogenization processes that encouraged indigenous peoples to identify as peasants. Nonetheless, by using three different terms, they accounted for the distinct identities that have remained separate despite assimilation processes (Schavelzon, 2013 93-94).

The Unity Pact included Aymara, Quechua, and Guaraní originary *nations*, as represented by CONAMAQ, as well as smaller-scale lowland *indigenous peoples*, represented by CIDOB. Both of these social groups distinguish themselves as native to the land. While they have had historical differences (predominantly because highland land struggles often overshadowed the needs of lowland peoples) they have built strong networks of solidarity over the past several decades. The most distinct category is that of the *campesino* (peasant), represented by the CSUTCB, Bartolinas Sisas, and Colonizadores. These peoples claim that they have maintained many originary cultural forms and territorial organizations despite being subjected to a process of liberal

peasantization through practices of mestizaje and land reform. As such, peasant organizations claim indigeneity despite reterritorialization and a strong identification with their class identity. For example, many members of the CSUTCB emerged from the katarista indigenous movement as described in chapter one and may identify with their local ayllu as well as their labor union.

By lumping “indigenous, originary, and peasant nations and peoples” together within the Unity Pact, CONAMAQ risked simplifying and even homogenizing their demands, yet they also recognized the profound diversity of subjects who had been discriminated against for centuries. While the Unity Pact acknowledged many ways of being indigenous, those who remained distanced from the modern state, preserving their communal lifestyles, disapproved of the inclusion of mestizo, modernized, peasants within their definition of indigeneity (Schavelzon 2013, 97). Nonetheless, they acted strategically to assure that their demands be heard in front of the constituent assembly. They were able to form alliances with other subjugated peoples throughout the country to create a collectivity outside of traditional nation-state politics dominated by political parties.

The Unity Pact established in this moment would become a strong political mechanism within the constituent assembly. Different organizations came together to confront a common oppressor that had played these three distinct identities against each other in recent history as a mechanism of divide and conquer. Despite a common adversary, the organizations did not have a strong tradition of communication or collective demands. Given this level of heterogeneity within the Unity Pact, their most powerful collective demand was for a plurinational state that recognized and respected local autonomy. The alliance remained unified until 2011 when CIDOB and CONAMAQ (in 2012) decided to break away from the three peasant organizations due to ideological

differences and waning allegiance to President Morales. The fragmentation of the Unity Pact will be discussed in further detail in chapter three. However, the moment of creating a plurinational Bolivia and the collaboration of indigenous, originary, and peasant peoples created an unprecedented and powerful political force.

### **REALIZING THE CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY**

In March of 2006, the Bolivian congress under the leadership of newly elected President Evo Morales approved the law to convene the constituent assembly. This motion summoned members from different civil society organizations to gather in a national meeting to re-write the constitution. On July 2, 2006, Bolivian citizens voted for 255 representatives to form the constituent assembly. The law declared that all members of the assembly would be “equal in hierarchy, rights and obligations”. Of these elected members, 137 representatives (54%) identified with the MAS (Movement towards Socialism) political party while 60 members (24%) represented the right wing pro-business PODEMOS political party (Albó 2008). This turnout is telling of the political fervor and desire for change, sparking great resentment from the rightwing elite who had the most to lose from the rewriting of a constitution that clearly favored their interests. Out of the 255 representatives who participated in the constituent assembly, members of CONAMAQ acquired eight seats. According to Xavier Albó, a remarkable 56% of the constituents self-identified as indigenous (2008). This is monumental considering that indigenous peoples had never been included in writing previous Bolivian constitutions. Furthermore, the president of the constituent assembly, Silvia Lazarte, self-identified as an indigenous Quechua woman.



The inauguration of the constituent assembly occurred in Sucre on August 6, 2006. In this moment, different factions submitted the proposals they had developed in the months leading up to the congregation. The Unity Pact's proposal will be discussed in further detail in the next section. CONAMAQ's leadership met in Sucre two months after the inauguration to assure that their voices were being heard and incorporated into the new text of the constitution. This effort intended to assure that the eight representatives were being taken seriously within the assembly. On November 30, 2006, leaders of CONAMAQ (as well as CSUTCB, and the Confederation of Colonizers) announced that 150 of their members from the Unity Pact would monitor the constituent assembly to assure full transparency (Carrasco and Albó 2008).

The right wing *media luna*<sup>2</sup> presented numerous roadblocks to the reconstitution of Bolivia and formulated a major opposition to the Unity Pact. They had benefitted from exclusionary policies for centuries and were not willing to give up their elite privilege. In particular, the agenda to nationalize natural resources fell in stark contrast with the elite agenda. Leading up to the assembly, the *media luna* initiated an autonomous secessionist movement claiming that eastern departments should be sovereign from the rest of Bolivia. This movement is a fascinating counterpoint to indigenous proposals for greater autonomy. However, the proposition met much resistance from the rest of the country due to the eastern region's richness in natural resources. On the brink of civil war, voters rejected the referendum for eastern lowland autonomy on a national level, although all four *media luna* departments voted yes to eastern secession (July 2006). The conflicts between the *media luna* and the Unity Pact continued throughout the constituent assembly. The MAS party proposed that a majority vote (128 votes) would pass any

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<sup>2</sup> The *media luna* is the elite political base residing in Santa Cruz, Pando, Beni and Tarija, a geographical region that resembles a "half moon".

given decision, and that a 2/3 vote (170 votes) would approve the final constitutional text. However, representatives of the right-wing PODEMOS party fought for a 2/3 vote for all decision making (Garcés 2010). This strategic move aimed to stall the assembly's progress. Overall, in the discussion of CONAMAQ's vision of a new Bolivia, it is important to recognize the extent to which elite sectors disagreed with the Unity Pact's proposals.

Elite opposition is crucial to understand the deeply rooted conflict between indigenous peoples, peasants, and mestizos. The land reform and redistribution of wealth that the Unity Pact strived for was in direct opposition to elite ownership of large-scale agricultural businesses and mining companies. While indigenous and peasant peoples aimed to gain respect, dignity, and control over their own development and resource management, they could not risk completely alienating the elite class that lived on the most fertile and mineral rich lands. This underlying fear is a key barrier to both sectors as they drafted a new constitution with disparate interests. The following chapter will explore this tension in further detail in an effort to understand the clashing objectives of development through mineral extraction wealth, and protection of mother earth. Before looking at these wealth and power disparities between the elite and the civil masses, the subsequent section engages in yet another level of conflict and compromise amongst the distinct social organizations within the Unity Pact.

#### **THE UNITY PACT'S VISION FOR A NEW BOLIVIA**

This section delves into the official proposal that the indigenous, originary, and peasant organizations presented to the board of directors of the constituent assembly on behalf of the Unity Pact on August 5, 2006. It serves to demonstrate what the Unity Pact

proposed, in order to later recognize what ultimately became the final constitution. They strived for a complete reconstruction of the state model as opposed to mere reform that they believed would fail to fundamentally change both systemic discrimination and micro-level forms of everyday oppression. They began the document by stating that,

Today, originary nations, indigenous peoples, and peasants have the challenge of participating in the refoundation of Bolivia, constructing a new country based in peoples as a collective subject, towards the construction of a plurinational state that transcends the Liberal state model cemented in individual citizenship (Pacto de Unidad 2006, Translated by Author).

The Unity Pact addressed both short-term and long-term injustices. They fought to reverse neoliberal policies, for the nationalization of hydrocarbons, and for explicit rights to land and water. However, embedded in this immediate goal was a deeper recognition that the neoliberal system is a perpetuation of the liberal system consolidated in 1825. The Unity Pact agreed that the Bolivian Republic should be transformed into a plurinational state. This, they declared, would recognize internal heterogeneity, finally distinguishing indigenous peoples as legitimate collective contributors to the nation as a whole (Pacto de Unidad 2006). Reviving indigeneity as a source of pride and dignity, they hoped, would begin to reverse hundreds of years of liberal policies and the imposition of Western modernity as explained in chapter one. A plurinational state would legally recognize diverse nations, peoples, and cultures that have a right to peaceful and respectful coexistence.

The Unity Pact's 2006 proposition reaffirmed many of the key ideas that CONAMAQ delineated in their 2002 Aruskipasipxañani document described above, but provided further elaboration and specificity. The collaborative proposal drew particular political strength from the fact that it represented nine different civil society organizations, but this also required compromises for each of the included parties. As

such, the language contrasted starkly between the group document and the one that CONAMAQ had proposed years earlier. Perhaps the most notable difference is the complete omission of the word *ayllu* in the Unity Pact's proposal. They instead refer to autonomy and direct representation through "communal cabildos and assemblies" as well as "territorial autonomies" distinguished by "language, history, culture, geography, and organizations". This definition includes the ayllu as a community structure, but broadens the conversation to include peasants and indigenous peoples who do not live in originary ayllus. While CONAMAQ broke up their proposal into five main points (ie. cultural politics, territory and natural resources, legal rights, development of the ayllu, and a call for the constituent assembly), I have broken the Unity Pact's proposal into eight different, yet overlapping themes.

First, the Unity Pact criticized Bolivia's monoethnic hegemony that supported white supremacy and the subjugation of indigenous peoples. Instead, they proposed a *Pluricultural* state that would respect coexistence and interrelation amongst indigenous and mestizo peoples. This would include reaffirmation and recuperation of indigenous, originary and peasant culture and systems. Each of these sectors of society, they agreed, should have the right to preserve and develop material and spiritual culture including music, film, archaeological sites, technologies, dress, food, crafts, cosmovision, myths, legends, languages, cultural identity, customs, traditional medicine, science and technology, intellectual property, and self esteem (Pacto de Unidad 2006).

The Unity Pact denounced Bolivia's liberal democracy that adhered to private property and legitimized haciendas, latifundios and oligarchy. On the contrary, they prioritized human and collective rights and respect for life and dignity as well as transparency and social responsibility. They encouraged the recognition of two different types of land: first, collective, community lands, and second, individual land. Members of

CONAMAQ promoted this first type of relationship with the land, and did not agree that the country should allow for private ownership. However, members of the CSUTCB insisted that private property was necessary. The joint proposal compromised, stating that a plurinational state would privilege the first as inalienable, irreversible, indivisible, and exempt from taxation, while establishing certain conditions for the second. More specifically, they asserted that the state should recognize private property only if the owner personally works the land and meets environmental and social economic functions. While they did not specify a maximum permissible limit for individual property, they stated that it should be discussed and stated in the constitution (Pacto de Unidad 2006). This would prevent excessive accumulation of land.

The Unity Pact reprimanded monolithic political power that restricted representation to official political parties, and advocated for direct representation and participation of communities, and recognition of local authorities elected according to local customs and traditions. They specified that national representatives should not only be ethnically diverse but also 50% male and 50% female. Furthermore, all elected representatives should be able to speak the predominant languages of the region that they serve. Indigenous, originary, and peasant peoples, they contended, have the responsibility of the administration, use, and management of renewable natural resources according to their customs and traditions in accordance with the norms of the plurinational state. They would also aid in the administration of goods and local services including culturally appropriate education and healing practices (Pacto de Unidad 2006). A major discrepancy, however, came when discussing what bodies should represent local communities. This clash emerged between members of CONAMAQ who relied on the ayllu as a form of social organization and Mallku's as representative leaders, who disagreed with peasant peoples who depended on labor unions.

Similar to CONAMAQ's proposal, the Unity Pact condemned the colonial geographic political and administrative structure of the country that fragmented historical community structures. Unlike the Aruskipasipxañani proposal that called for a return to ayllu, marka and suyu geographical borders, this statement encouraged a new juridical regionalization according to "traditional territories" and "local ecosystems" (Pacto de Unidad 2006). Representatives of CONAMAQ fought for the explicit inclusion of ayllus, but were overruled by the rest of the Unity Pact. Furthermore, they advanced a three-tiered administrative system with local autonomous regions and intermediate departmental regions within the centralized unitary plurinational state (Pacto de Unidad 2006). This, they declared would assure unprecedented levels of self-determination.

The proposal rejected Bolivia's uniform judicial system that favored the market economy and pressed for a plural juridical system that would recognize community justice systems and collective rights as well as direct representation and respect for local leaders. They asserted that indigenous, originary, and peasant peoples should be included in a plurinational congress that would communicate in Spanish as well as indigenous languages. Local justice systems would be responsible for defining and implementing legal standards for workplace safety and administering justice in accordance with their local legal systems in combination with the functions and powers of the legislative branches of the central government. The major conflict in regards to community justice was the role that indigenous communities would have and when the plenary power of the state would overrule smaller systems. The proposed juridical system, at a national level, placed major emphasis on water as a human right that should not be concessioned, privatized, nor exported. The Unity Pact contended that the state must guarantee, regulate, and protect the sustainable use of hydrological resources, free from contamination (Pacto de Unidad 2006).

Elaborating on cultural rights, they maintained that indigenous, originary, and peasant peoples had the right to free, compulsory, participatory, pluricultural and plurilinguistic educational programs that would aim to recuperate indigenous customs and traditions. Furthermore, they asserted that the plurinational state should promote indigenous universities. The Unity Pact encouraged the right to labor with dignity so that private and public companies would treat workers with equality and equity according to ethnic and gender identities. All Bolivians, they stated, should be guaranteed fair working hours and wages, social benefits, social security, stability, and compensation as well as universal insurance without discrimination. Intercultural health services should be organized at the autonomous community level according to norms and traditions. In addition, the state should promote research and implementation of traditional medicine in an effort to diminish the current hierarchy of Western medicine (Pacto de Unidad 2006).

The proposition also admonished the repression and coercion of indigenous, originary, and peasant peoples by the police and military. They demanded greater respect for human rights stating that the military colleges should recognize and accept peoples from all sectors of society for military careers. The Unity Pact called for the end to the systematic genocide and ethnocide of indigenous, originary and peasant peoples (Pacto de Unidad 2006).

The proposal denounced the exclusive and unsustainable socio-economic model dependent on natural resource extraction and environmental depredation. Instead, they called for development with identity, acknowledging that local knowledges and technologies are valuable to the development of the country as a whole. Members of CONAMAQ pushed for self-sufficiency through the Andean notion of *vivir bien*, striving for solidarity, reciprocity, food sovereignty, communal economies, and equal access to the market economy and basic services. The Unity Pact solicited aid from the state to

promote agro-ecological productive associations and cooperatives, and prohibit monopolies (Pacto de Unidad 2006). They highlighted the importance of striking equilibrium between natural resource extraction and protection of the environment in an effort to guarantee sustainability for future generations. The next chapter, however, will highlight the varied opinions of what sustainable development means and to whom it ultimately benefits. Disagreements on this point would ultimately result in CONAMAQ and CIDOB breaking away from the Unity Pact.

Unlike CONAMAQ's proposal that demanded the right to autonomous administration of resources both above *and* below the earth's surface, the Unity Pact made a compromise on this topic. They declared that the benefits from the exploitation of non-renewable resources from indigenous territories would be subject to equitable redistribution and social justice for the whole country (Pacto de Unidad 2006).<sup>3</sup> However, renewable natural resources would be within the domain and property of the originary nations and indigenous peoples who would have the right to use the benefits and resources as they saw fit. Furthermore, they distinguished that non-renewable resources should never be privatized or concessioned under any given circumstance. This question of natural resources has become a tense issue in contemporary Bolivia as we will see in chapter three. In an effort to limit the depredation of biodiversity, they asserted that the Plurinational state should prohibit genetically modified seeds.

Finally, the Unity Pact solicited autonomy at the local level according to linguistic, historical, cultural, geographic, and organizational criteria. Autonomous

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<sup>3</sup> This decision, that non-renewable resources would benefit the Bolivian society as a whole, sparked ongoing discussion and disagreement within the Unity Pact. CIDOB, an organization that recognized lowland indigenous peoples believed that non-renewable resources should be split between the state and communities, while other members of the Unity Pact oscillated between declaring them state property, or property of the Bolivian peoples as a collective.



peoples on autonomous lands would be protected by mandatory, binding procedures of free, prior and informed consent with the power to veto any exploration or exploitation of non-renewable resources. This aimed to break the state's vertical, exclusive power structure. They also advanced a fourth political body beyond the executive, legislative, and judicial bodies called the "plurinational social power". This organization would be composed of non-governmental civil society representatives elected through universal vote and would be responsible for watching and controlling the power of the state and denouncing irregular acts of the military (Pacto de Unidad 2006). This body would help to protect autonomy within the state and theoretically minimize state appropriation. They specified that autonomous territories must be culturally differentiated according to distinct language, culture and history, an indigenous, native or peasant local government and legal administration based in customs and traditions, cultural norms and knowledge, community based management of territory, land and natural resources and a budget for their own resources.

Each of these eight proposals drew attention to the exclusive nature of the Bolivian Republic and proposed viable alternatives to the constituent body in an effort to create a more horizontal, decolonized, plurinational state. The Unity Pact would ultimately revise their proposals as necessary, but largely maintained these positions as crucial for indigenous, originary, and peasant peoples. The proposal greatly influenced the assembly, especially members of the MAS party. Isaac Ávalos, a member of the CSUTCB declared that,

The Pact was a fundamental step. We had some problems. We fought a bit amongst ourselves. But in the end we had to sit down and reach an agreement about the articles that we had conflict with and continue advancing. Eighty percent of the proposals we worked on they accepted; so we should be proud of our leaders, our organizations, we have achieved what we wanted in the constitution (Interview in Garcés 2010, 88).

Other representatives such as Florentino Barrientos (also a member of CSUTCB) estimated that the Unity Pact had achieved closer to ninety percent of their original proposals (Garcés 2010). Most importantly, the civil society organizations that initiated the March for the Constituent Assembly in 2002 were able to reflect and recognize that after years of struggle, the people of Bolivia had gathered to write a new constitution, with representatives from many sectors of society.

#### **FINAL ALTERATIONS TO THE CONSTITUTION**

On January 25, 2009, the Bolivian masses voted and approved the new plurinational constitution with 61.43% of the votes, but not without major discrepancies between the *media luna* and the Unity Pact. On November 24, 2007 members of the assembly approved a preliminary draft of the full document, however, the eastern elite opposition boycotted the final stages of the assembly vote and incited violent protests against the larger group. On December 8, the assembly moved its sessions to Oruro for safety reasons, but the majority of the *media luna* decided to boycott these meetings. Only 165 of the 255 delegates attended and participated in the final vote (Carrasco and Albó 2008). Throughout the night, the present members approved each article, one at a time, and sent the document off to La Paz for final editing. On December 14, 2007 Silvia Lazarte, the president of the constituent assembly, submitted the approved version of the constitution to Vice President Alvaro García Linera for final revisions pertaining to “style and consistency” (Carrasco and Albó 2008). After over a year of revisions, discussions, and negotiations, the Bolivian masses finally approved the plurinational constitution.

While prior constitutions had barely recognized indigenous rights, the new constitution did so right from the start. Article two highlights the historical importance of

indigenous peoples, establishing legitimacy for contemporary constitutional rights to self-government according to their traditions:

Given the pre-colonial existence of nations and rural native indigenous peoples and their ancestral control of their territories, their free determination, consisting of the right to autonomy, self-government, their culture, recognition of their institutions, and the consolidation of their territorial entities, is guaranteed within the framework of the unity of the State, in accordance with this Constitution and the law (Article 2).

The constitution moves beyond guaranteeing indigenous peoples special rights, and establishes that the entire nation “adopts and promotes” indigenous moral principles, including “do not be lazy, do not be a liar or a thief”, “live well”, “live harmoniously”, “good life”, “land without evil”, and “noble path or life” (Article 8). These values aim to minimize capitalist forces of accumulation and greed. The constitution promises that rural native indigenous institutions may be part of the general structure of the state, a way for indigenous systems to gain legitimacy, but at the risk of state appropriation. One of the most important rights is that to free, prior, and informed consent. Article 30.15 states that rural native indigenous peoples enjoy the right

to be consulted by appropriate procedures, in particular through their institutions, each time legislative or administrative measures may be foreseen to affect them. In this framework, the right to prior obligatory consultation by the State with respect to the exploitation of nonrenewable natural resources in the territory they inhabit shall be respected and guaranteed, in good faith and upon agreement (Article 30.15).

Chapter three of this thesis will explore the practices of the state in regards to extracting resources and promoting infrastructural development on indigenous land.

While many of these aforementioned rights are monumental in comparison to previous constitutions, a series of under the table alterations has stained the democratic process of the constituent assembly. Between the moment that Lazarte presented the

assembly's draft to Vice President García Linera, and the final ratification, numerous modifications changed the document from one that valued the rights of indigenous, originary, and peasant peoples to one that privileged corporate elitism. Manuel Morales Alvarez, a Bolivian scholar, analyzed both of these documents, discovering that approximately 25% of the articles differed in the final version. He claims that these changes largely benefit right wing political parties and the traditional oligarchy, favoring wealth over the rights of mother nature. Representatives from the four political parties that worked with García Linera to finalize the constitution claimed that the changes were only minor structural corrections. However, of the 101 revised articles, Morales Alvarez's report states that they altered 26 themes substantially, emitted 93 articles, paragraphs, or concepts, and arbitrarily included 78 additional entries, proving substantial adjustments (Morales Alvarez, unpublished). The following section is a brief overview of several modifications in regards to indigenous autonomies, participation and social control, and land rights that have left many Bolivian people disillusioned by the Morales Administration's Process of Change. Only time will reveal whether some of the adjustments are significant in practice, or merely in discourse.

The final version of the constitution altered the definition and limitation of indigenous autonomies, one of the key rights that CONAMAQ and the Unity Pact fought for. To begin with, the constitution recognized indigenous peoples as *idiomas*, or languages, instead of the proposed *nacionalidades*, or nationalities. Furthermore, the conclusive edits substituted the term *autodeterminación* for *libre determinación* (Article 289). In English, both of these words translate to "self-governance", however, in Spanish political- juridical terms, the connotations differ. According to Morales Alvarez, *libre determinación* refers to the rights of minorities, while *autodeterminación* recognizes the right of indigenous, originary and peasant peoples as legitimate self-governing bodies at a

level that is complementary to the plurinational state (Morales Alvarez unpublished). This linguistic difference may in practice demarcate small groups with special rights within the nation state (ex. labor unions) from legitimate governing bodies that pre-date modern day Bolivia and have complex historical traditions and systems. Only the implementation of the constitution will dictate the severity of this modification.

The constituent assembly agreed that civil society organizations must establish their own rules to fulfill the functions of participation in decision-making and social control. The Unity Pact had proposed a political body called the “plurinational social power” (Pacto de Unidad 2006). Non-governmental civil society representatives would be responsible for watching and controlling the power of the state and denouncing irregular acts of the military. This would ensure active participatory checks and balances to minimize state authoritarianism. However, the final version of the constitution stated that, “The law *shall establish* the general framework for the exercise of public monitoring” (Article 241.4, italics are my own). The final version also completely eliminated the constituent assembly’s description of the social body’s responsibilities as “ensuring proper implementation of general jurisdiction, the agricultural jurisdiction and native indigenous peasant jurisdiction” (CELAC summit in La Habana, Cuba in January 2014). That is, they essentially postponed discussion of what this body would look like and what its role would be for a later date.

President Morales has stated that the new constitution is a tool to recognize the new needs of indigenous peoples and subjugated peoples, while simultaneously recognizing the rights of companies. However, many indigenous Bolivians have proclaimed that the constitution guarantees the desires of companies and powerful sectors, while only nominally incorporating the rights of indigenous peoples. For example, the final constitution eliminated the statement that limits the amount of private

property any given individual can own. Article 315.1 disregards the social benefit clause for land ownership as suggested by the Unity Pact and agreed upon by the constituent assembly. Instead the approved constitution states that,

The State recognizes the title to land of all legal persons that are legally constituted in the national territory, provided that it be used to fulfill the objective of the creation of an economic agent, the generation of employment, and the production and commercialization of goods and/or services (Article 315.1)

This language emphasizes the importance of economic gain over environmental protection.

The biggest critique of the new constitution is that it prioritizes companies and private business interests over the right of indigenous peoples and Mother Nature. In contrast to the constituent assembly's proposal, it grants the state "control of exploration, exploitation, industrialization, transport and sale of strategic natural resources through public, cooperative or community entities, which may in turn contract private enterprises and form mixed enterprises" (Article 351). Furthermore, the editing process eliminated 'crimes against the environment' from the list of offenses that are not extinguishable (Article 111). Finally, the constituent assembly agreed that the state should *prohibit* the production, import, and commercialization of genetically modified seeds. However, the revised version states that the "production, importation, and commercialization of genetically altered products shall be *regulated by law*" (Article 409, italics are my own).

Each of these last minute revisions contributed to a bureaucratic process that limited the rights of indigenous, originary, and peasant peoples in an effort to appease right-wing business interests. It is hard to tell which revisions substantially limit the rights of indigenous peoples. At this point only time and implementation will be able to reveal those answers. The new plurinational constitution is not as revolutionary as many

members of the assembly had hoped for, and ultimately became a derivative of the political powers that have controlled Bolivia for centuries (Morales Alvarez, unpublished).

Major alterations to the constitution demonstrate how the Bolivian nation state and conservative elite class view indigenous autonomy and political presence as a threat to Bolivian civil and political life. CONAMAQ and several other civil society organizations unified in a historical pact to confront the elite class and demand that they recognize their privilege and discriminatory acts. The March for the Constituent Assembly shows how indigenous peoples refused to work through political parties, and instead called for an assembly of over three hundred different representatives—men, women, indigenous, non-indigenous, urban, rural, lower-class, middle-class, and elite. The final modifications to the constitution demonstrate the fear of civil society, and in particular indigenous peoples who work both inside and outside of the nation-state's political structure. In creating a third space of sovereignty, they are viewed as dangerous, threatening, and elusive. Having analyzed over five hundred years of indigenous exclusion and forced assimilation in chapter one, we can understand how the dominant system was not built for indigenous peoples. For this reason, members of CONAMAQ and the Unity Pact have decided to use the constituent assembly in order to imagine a new system that would recognize their needs, and also the value of their contributions.

Major changes to the constitution also represent the first instances of the government betraying the trust of members of the Unity Pact, foreshadowing a rupture within the alliance that would occur only a couple years later. When speaking with one member of CONAMAQ, she told me how many felt betrayed before the constituent assembly was even over, particularly in regards to the amount of land that individuals could own privately, the lack of restrictions on genetically modified seeds, and the

limitations on the right to prior consultation. She said that she, and many members of CONAMAQ, felt let down by President Morales and by the constituent process that held the semblance of participant democracy, yet ended in cooptation (interview conducted by author, July 4, 2014). Her frustration is indicative of the real threats of indigenous peoples working within the system to gain greater levels of autonomy. She told me that after years of protesting, marching, writing proposals, monitoring working sessions, and making compromises, that the government has still decided to favor private corporations at the expense of indigenous peoples. Members of CONAMAQ not only felt used but have potentially risked greater entrapment with new jurisdiction on land titling and monitoring.

## **CONCLUSION**

Rewriting the Bolivian constitution is a pivotal moment in the long struggle for indigenous rights. After centuries of exclusion, subjugation, and forced assimilation, the constituent assembly created a space for disparate sectors of society to piece together a vision for the country that would recognize a plurality of desires and lived experiences. Despite violent disagreements, the constitution approaches a document that at the very least is a greater compromise than past iterations. While the constitution has laid the groundwork for future transformation, many members of the constituent assembly recognized that real transitions would occur after the ratification. Even when a constitution guarantees equal rights, this does not mean that individuals and communities will be treated equally in everyday life amongst individuals or between individuals and institutions. Laws are only as good on paper as they are in social practice.



This chapter has traced the creation of a new constitution from the 2002 March for the Constituent Assembly to final under the table modifications. By tracking the visions of CONAMAQ through their own Aruskipasipxañani proposal, to their strategic alliance with other civil society representatives of lowland indigenous peoples and peasant organizations, we see under what circumstances they were willing to negotiate their autonomy (Refer to *Figure Two: Proposals for the Constituent Assembly*). CONAMAQ challenged the coherency of both spatial (territorial, legal, and political) and temporal (Western-centric development, progress, and modernity) boundaries imposed upon them by colonial rule and the contemporary nation state.

After hundreds of years of discrimination and subjugation, CONAMAQ strives for a sense of belonging, and the ability to participate in the reconstruction of a more just Bolivia. Yet, they simultaneously strive for self-determination, autonomy, and differentiated citizenship. Scholars such as Tom Perreault point out that CONAMAQ uses the state apparatus to accomplish their goals, yet simultaneously desires freedom from the state (2013). These two goals do not have to clash. While Perreault suggests an ambivalence in CONAMAQ's behavior, using Kevin Bruyneel's analysis of US Native Americans points to the structural forces that make this position so (2007). That is, while movements such as CONAMAQ desire total autonomy from the state, centuries of subjugation have situated them such that breaking away from this dependency is complicated. Furthermore, indigenous entanglement with different sectors of society and relative levels of privilege suggests drastic measures to regain equilibrium.

Autonomy is not a gift from the government, but rather a long-standing inherent status of indigenous peoples long before Spanish colonization. Many indigenous peoples believe that they have the inherent right to self-governance, but must defend and secure it within the same Bolivian political system that has displaced them (territorially and

culturally) to begin with. However, this does not mean that indigenous peoples concede to the national government's plenary power. It is the formation of "co-constitutive interaction among groups, governments, nations, and states" where competing notions of political time, space, and identity are negotiated (Bruyneel 2007, xix).

The next chapter will explore CONAMAQ's struggles in contemporary Bolivia and their decision to break away from their alliance with President Evo Morales and the historical Unity Pact. What happens when the government suspends constitutional rights in the name of revolutionary change? The current crisis of climate change and the push for energy development threatens the very existence of indigenous peoples and is forcing them to adapt and resist for survival in unprecedented ways. With increased globalization and new technologies for extraction, indigenous nations exist in a battle zone, a balancing act of indigenous autonomy and development strategies. While some recognize the need for development, others ask, at what cost? And for whom? The following chapter argues that autonomous rights to land and natural resources within indigenous territories as well as the guarantee of free prior and informed consent is crucial to indigenous peoples and their ability to choose what kind of development they want, if at all.

Figure Two: Proposals for the Constituent Assembly

<b>Rights</b>	<b>CONAMAQ's Proposal (2002)</b>	<b>Unity Pact's Proposal (2004)</b>	<b>Plurinational Constitution (2009)</b>
<b>Cultural Politics</b>	Reconstitution and strengthening of indigenous systems of governance, language, and spirituality; respect for intellectual property	Preserve and develop traditional music, film, archaeological sites, dress, food, crafts, cosmovisions, myths, legends, languages, traditional medicine, science and technology, intellectual property, and self esteem; right to free, compulsory, participatory, pluricultural and plurilinguistic education; State support for indigenous universities.	Nations and rural native indigenous peoples enjoy the following rights: To their cultural identity, religious belief, spiritualities, practices and customs, and their own world view (30.2); To collective ownership of intellectual property in their knowledge, sciences and learning, as well as to its evaluation, use, promotion and development (Art 30.11); To an inter-cultural, intra-cultural and multi-language education in all educational systems (30.12)
<b>Participation in Government</b>	Direct participation of indigenous leaders in the state political system, including gender duality/ complementarity (mama y tata), and rotating leadership	Direct representation and participation of local authorities elected according to local customs and traditions; National representatives should be ethnically diverse and 50% male and 50% female; Representatives should speak languages of the region they serve	Nations and rural native indigenous peoples enjoy the following rights: That its institutions be part of the general structure of the State (30.5)

Table Two Continued

<b>Rights</b>	<b>CONAMAQ's Proposal (2002)</b>	<b>Unity Pact's Proposal (2004)</b>	<b>Plurinational Constitution (2009)</b>
<b>Natural Resources</b>	Autonomous administration of indigenous territories and resources, <i>both above and below the earth's surface</i>	Gains from <i>non-renewable</i> resources from indigenous territories subject to equitable redistribution to the whole country; <i>non-renewable</i> resources should never be privatized or concessioned; <i>Renewable</i> natural resources stays within the autonomous domain	The state controls exploration, exploitation, industrialization, transport and sale of <i>strategic</i> natural resources (351.I); The State owns the entire hydrocarbon production of the country and is the only one authorized to sell them (359.I); The State shall be responsible for the mineralogical riches found in the soil and subsoil. The private mining industry and cooperative companies shall be recognized as productive actors of the state mining industry (369.I)
<b>Territory</b>	Debureaucratization of INRA law; reconsideration of arbitrary political-territorial departmental boundaries as designated by the Republic to recognize the socio-cultural borders of traditional <i>suyus</i> and <i>markas</i>	New juridical regionalization according to "traditional territories" and "local ecosystems"; Privilege collective land rights as inalienable, irreversible, indivisible, and exempt from taxation; Recognize individual private property only if the owner personally works the land and meets environmental and social economic functions	Nations and rural native indigenous peoples enjoy the rights to collective ownership of land and territories (30.6); Bolivia is organized territorially into departments, provinces, municipalities, and rural native indigenous territories (269.I); The creation, modification and definition of the territorial units shall be made by the democratic will of their inhabitants, in accordance with the conditions established in the Constitution and law (269.II)

Table Two Continued

<b>Rights</b>	<b>CONAMAQ's Proposal (2002)</b>	<b>Unity Pact's Proposal (2004)</b>	<b>Plurinational Constitution (2009)</b>
<b>Community Justice</b>	Respect a balance of autonomy and participation while recognizing cultural, socio-economic, and territorial rights; local and national seminars and workshops to educate the masses about indigenous rights	Plural juridical system; recognize community justice systems and collective rights; direct representation and respect for local leaders	Proportional participation of the nations and rural native indigenous peoples shall be guaranteed in the election of members of the Plurinational Legislative Assembly (147.II); The State shall promote and strengthen rural native indigenous justice. The law of Jurisdictional Demarcation shall determine the mechanisms of cooperation between rural native indigenous jurisdiction and all the constitutional jurisdictions (192.III)
<b>Development</b>	Development of the Ayllu: Poverty reduction and redistribution of resources through better infrastructure and communication services, safe drinking water and electrification, promotion of local modes of production, support for traditional technologies, intellectual property, nutrition programs, traditional crops, and medicine, culturally sensitive state-funded health services.	Development with identity: local knowledges and technologies are valuable to the development of the whole country; self sufficiency through <i>vivir bien</i> , solidarity, reciprocity, food sovereignty, communal economies, equal access to market economy and basic services; state promotes agro-ecological cooperatives, and prohibit monopolies; guarantee fair working hours and wages, social benefits, social security.	Native indigenous peoples enjoy right to be consulted by appropriate procedures, in particular through their institutions, each time legislative or administrative measures may be foreseen to affect them. In this framework, the right to prior obligatory consultation by the State with respect to the exploitation of nonrenewable natural resources in the territory they inhabit shall be respected and guaranteed, in good faith and upon agreement (Article 30.15).

Table Two Continued

<b>Rights</b>	<b>CONAMAQ's Proposal (2002)</b>	<b>Unity Pact's Proposal (2004)</b>	<b>Plurinational Constitution (2009)</b>
<b>Ideology</b>	<i>aruskipasipxañani</i> (the Aymara word for communication), understanding, and a reevaluation of institutional and local norms; Respect for nature and Pachamama should guide development policies and protect sacred land; reciprocity (ayni)	prioritizes human and collective rights and respect for life and dignity as well as transparency and social responsibility; values the coexistence and interrelation amongst a variety of cultures both indigenous and mestizo	The entire nation “adopts and promotes” indigenous moral principles, including “do not be lazy, do not be a liar or a thief”, “live well”, “live harmoniously”, “good life”, “land without evil”, and “noble path or life” (Article 8); Nations and rural native indigenous peoples enjoy the following rights: To the practice of their political, juridical and economic systems in accord with their world view. (Art 30.14)
<b>Autonomy</b>	Indigenous autonomy through the archipelagic ayllu system; local leadership; control over natural resources, community justice etc.	Autonomy and direct representation through “communal cabildos and assemblies” as well as “territorial autonomies” distinguished by “language, history, culture, geography, and organizations”; fourth political body called the “plurinational social power” composed of non-governmental civil society representatives elected through universal vote and responsible for watching and controlling the power of the state and denounce irregular acts of the military	Recognizes indigenous peoples as <i>idiomas</i> , or languages, instead of the proposed <i>nacionalidades</i> , or nationalities; Substituted the term <i>autodeterminación</i> for <i>libre determinación</i> (Article 289); “The law shall establish the general framework for the exercise of public monitoring” (Article 241.4).

### **Chapter Three: Alternatives to Development: CONAMAQ's Struggle Against Neo-Extractivism**

A long struggle for indigenous rights and liberation from subjugation has evolved in Bolivia ever since the Spanish colonial encounter: from Tupac Katari, to Fausto Reinaga's *Revolución india*, to the rise of *katarismo*, to the election of an Aymara president, to indigenous representation in re-writing the constitution. These efforts slowly chipped away at the deeply embedded cultural norms and political institutions of colonial racism. In light of such accomplishments, the following chapter recognizes that the struggle is not over. For, even with an indigenous president, legacies of unequal land distribution, and an extractivist economy continue to burden progressive policies. Despite a discourse of decolonization and plurinationalism, this chapter suggests that the nation-state's modes of governance continue to rely on homogenous notions of a plurality of subjects. That is, while the constitution recognizes the rights of many different types of peoples (ie. indigenous peoples), it assumes a unified subjectivity of all indigenous peoples without recognizing profound heterogeneity of needs and desires. This chapter demonstrates that there are many ways of being indigenous in Bolivia and that in order to work towards a pluriverse, the state, corporations, and civil society must recognize epistemological discrepancies, particularly in regards to land use and development.

Drawing on history that provided fertile ground for the emergence of CONAMAQ (in chapter one) and the details of their alliance with the Unity Pact (in chapter two), this chapter explores why this indigenous movement broke away from the Unity Pact and openly denounces the Morales administration. This contentious relationship makes one wonder, did CONAMAQ change? Did the Morales administration change? Or was the Unity Pact a perfect storm of people and aspirations, only to blow

away with the next sunrise? Engaging with divergent perspectives harvests better understanding of the complexities and contradictions embedded within indigenous negotiation of autonomy, the implementation of Bolivia's *Proceso de Cambio* (Process of Change), and the creation of a plurinational state.

This chapter traces the waning allegiance of CONAMAQ to the Morales administration from the ratification of the new plurinational constitution (2009), to January 2014 when MAS sponsored dissidents ambushed and seized CONAMAQ's offices in La Paz. Between these two dates, tensions grew, peaking in 2011. While most scholars, activists, and news sources have attributed CONAMAQ's rupture from the Unity Pact (2011) to the TIPNIS highway conflict, this chapter engages in a more nuanced analysis of fundamental thematic issues over land use and development.. CONAMAQ's clashes with the Morales Administration are rooted in differing perspectives on neo-extractivist policies and alternatives to development. This chapter moves beyond the TIPNIS to explore other mining oriented social conflicts that have marked the past decade. In particular, the Mallku Khota mining conflict demonstrates a local level struggle for territory and natural resource rights.

This analysis intentionally tries to avoid contributing to the dichotomy between indigenous rights and development. It proposes that, with the pressure from CONAMAQ and other civil society organizations, the Morales administration (and future governments) can continue to flourish by rethinking Western style development and engaging with a type of development that recognizes the plurality of identities across Bolivia. In this moment of profound climate change, both social movements and state governments will need to struggle to find a balance between protecting the rights of indigenous peoples and the environment while continuing to develop in an effort to lift people out of poverty.



While chapter two demonstrated indigenous victories in constitutional law, the following segment pushes this process to consider the difficulties of turning law into practice and societal norm. Tensions between discourse and implementation help explain why an indigenous movement such as CONAMAQ has broken away from the Unity Pact and publically denounced the Morales administration.

#### **PRESIDENT MORALES' *PROCESO DE CAMBIO***

President Evo Morales has been praised internationally for recognizing indigenous rights to territory, natural resources, and self-determination. His 2005 campaign with the *Movimiento a Socialismo* (Movement Towards Socialism, MAS) highlighted his Aymara heritage and transformation from a cocalero labor organizer to president. He promised an anti-neoliberal Process of Change prioritizing the rights of the indigenous majority through administrative and institutional reforms in an effort to decolonize both state and society. He repeatedly declared that global climate change was the result of capitalism and proposed reciprocity and communality rooted in indigenous cosmovisions as an alternative to protect *Pachamama* (Mother Earth).

Billboards and street art throughout the country declared *Bolivia cambia, Evo cumple* (Bolivia changes, Evo comes through). In August 2006, Morales nationalized forestry, gold-mining, and petrol concessions in the country's protected areas. He proclaimed sovereignty over Bolivian soil as a nationalist, anti-imperialist, anti-neoliberal discourse, and affirmed that traditional lands would be returned to indigenous peoples. He interwove indigenous and environmental discourses promising that indigenous peoples would protect the land, and in turn be protected by the state (Nación 2006). While this speech delivered at Madidi national park may have served to affirm the trope

of the native environmental steward, it also recognized the importance of balancing development with indigenous and environmental rights.

Throughout his first two terms (2005-2015), Morales accentuated an international pro-environment discourse. He hosted numerous conferences on climate change proclaiming, “The climate is not for sale”. He demanded respect for Mother Nature, singling out northern nations for treating her as a commodity and killing her with unlimited industrial development. Morales invoked indigenous cosmology, stating that; “Humankind is capable of saving the earth if we recover the principles of solidarity, complementarity and harmony with nature”. He proclaimed that delegitimizing the capitalist system is the only way to halt devastating energy, food, and financial crises (Morales 2008).

As described in depth in chapter two, the Morales Administration ratified a new progressive constitution recognizing indigenous autonomy, collective land titles and rights to free, prior and informed consent. The constitution states that indigenous peoples have the right

to be consulted by appropriate procedures, in particular through their institutions, each time legislative or administrative measures may be foreseen to affect them. In this framework, the right to prior obligatory consultation by the State with respect to the exploitation of non-renewable natural resources in the territory they inhabit shall be respected and guaranteed, in good faith and upon agreement (Paragraph 15, Article 30).

While this declaration mandates fair consultation processes, it does not give indigenous peoples the power to veto projects planned on their territories. Nor does it specify when consultation must happen—before exploration or before extraction. Ultimately, this means that indigenous autonomy is overruled by the plenary power of the nation-state. This distinction is key in the unraveling of the Mallku Khota conflict described later in this chapter.

In his latest inaugural address, Morales reiterated the need to defend Bolivia's indigenous peoples. He proclaimed that,

For more than 500 years we have suffered darkness, hate, racism, discrimination and individualism, ever since the strange [Spanish] men arrived who told us we had to modernize, we had to civilize ourselves... But to modernize us, to civilize us, first they had to make the indigenous peoples of the world disappear (Morales 2015).

Recognizing this long legacy, the Morales Administration embarked on a journey to claim a new form of development dictated by, and for indigenous peoples. The government founded a Vice-Ministry of Decolonization and an office on Depatriarcalization in 2009. In December 2009, voters approved autonomy for twelve indigenous municipalities, providing them the right to define development in their own ways.

The Morales Administration uses funding from nationalized resources to implement numerous social programs to help alleviate poverty, and fund small-scale rural infrastructure projects for underprivileged communities. In doing so, he has gained international attention for demonstrating that left wing policies can initiate economic growth and reduce inequality. According to a report by the Center for Economic and Policy Research (CEPR), social spending has increased by more than 45% so that one in three Bolivians directly benefit from government social security payments. Poverty has decreased by over 25%, from 60.6% of the population in 2005 to 43.4% in 2012. Furthermore, the real minimum wage has increased by 87.7% (O'Hagan 2014). The Morales Administration is confronting issues of illiteracy, marginalization, racism, and sexism head on so as to create a more just society. With these powerful statistics, we must ask how Morales was able to create such profound economic change, and at what cost.

## **ACTIONS SPEAK LOUDER THAN WORDS**

There are profound contradictions between Morales' original platform and international image and the experiences of many indigenous peoples within the country. Many rural indigenous peoples would argue that Morales' politics have changed from the protection of Pachamama and respecting indigenous land claims, to favoring extractivist industries and unsustainable development. Social cash-transfer programs are reliant on natural gas, oil, minerals, and large-scale agro-industry. This model emphasizes the need for regional and global capital rather than searching for alternative visions of development and local sustainability. It promotes accumulation of wealth and goods, while stagnating self-sufficiency by turning otherwise fertile land into monocultures or mining pits. In short, development practices foreclose possibilities of subsistence.

The false premise that there are no legitimate alternatives to the capitalist market system represses the ability to imagine anything other than economic development as a viable pathway to sovereignty. Incapable or unwilling to participate in a deep rethinking of Western norms, Vice President Alvaro García Linera has defended a neo-extractivist economic model based on the premise that the only way Bolivia can develop is through extracting and selling raw materials. Argentine sociologist Maristella Svampa critiques this notion stating that Latin American "progressivism's practice and policies ultimately correspond to a conventional and hegemonic idea of development based on the idea of infinite progress and supposedly inexhaustible natural resources" (Lang 2013, 135).

Unlike colonial extraction of gold, silver, and tin that explicitly benefited European empires, or post-colonial capitalist corporate accumulation, *neo-extractivism* is characterized by an increased presence and role of the state. While still based in large-

scale removal and industrial scale agriculture, forestry, fishing and mining, these resources, are not exported to other countries. Garcia Linera argues that neo-extractivism is a point of departure for overcoming capitalism. He argues that the new economic model is based on generating wealth and distributing it with justice (2012, 107). This political strategy emphasizes the short-term, urgent needs of the Bolivian population. As a politician, this is particularly important. He states, “if you don’t bring well-being, the people will begin to become disenchanted with your work, they will start to listen to conservative fantasies that promise paradise through an act of magic” (2011, 149). However, the structures and fundamental features of production remain unaltered so that money overrides concerns of environmental and human justice, and local economies maintain their subordinate position in the global market.

Beyond questioning whether neo-extractivism is truly different from colonial extractivism, the underlying fact is that extractivism has expanded under the Morales administration. Between 2005 and 2014, Bolivia’s daily average production volume of natural gas doubled (Energy Press 2014). Land area conceded to gas and oil companies has increased from 7.2 million acres in 2007 to 59.3 million acres in 2012 (Achtenberg 2013b). This includes expansion of hydrocarbon concessions into 11 of Bolivia’s 22 national parks. Furthermore, Bolivia exported more silver in this decade than in 300 years of Spanish rule (Williams and Oliveira 2015). While Morales has freed Bolivia from the talons of US imperialism, he has turned to China and Brazil, forces that many Bolivians claim to pose the same old threats of historical foreign dependence, simply with a new face. Bolivia’s state oil and gas company, (*Yacimientos Petrolíferos Fiscales Boliviano-YPFB*) announced in 2013 that it would begin studies to identify shale gas deposits in the Chaco region. The Vice Ministry for Hydrocarbons Exploration and Exploitation has stated that a new hydrocarbons law is underway and will support the potential for shale

gas operations. Bolivia has plans to build 19 industrial gas plants and has committed to supply Argentina and Brazil with gas in the future.

The Morales administration has seemingly compounded class and ethnicity, believing that relieving poverty would simultaneously liberate indigenous peoples. However, being indigenous is not only about being economically disadvantaged. If this were the case, then Marxist peasant movements in the mid twentieth century would not have clashed so much with the rising ethnic movements. Fighting for indigenous rights is also about eliminating the subjugation of indigenous knowledges and technologies, customs and traditions, and communal land holdings. These traits are not purely economic (although frequently interwoven after centuries of economic subjugation), but rather linked to cultural pride and dignity.

On the contrary, Morales' short-term initiatives to lift Bolivians (both indigenous and non-indigenous) are important. A vast majority of the population have benefited from his social programs that rely on neo-extractivism. Furthermore, there are many ways of being indigenous in Bolivia, not all of which identify with traditional epistemological values and alternatives to development. Due to forces of urbanization and globalization, indigenous peoples are living in urban and rural areas. They are miners, peasants, musicians, fishers, union organizers, scholars, government functionaries, and even elite property owners in the city of El Alto.

CONAMAQ has expressed frustration with the Morales administration's development model that discursively holds Pachamama on a platform only to use and abuse her for human needs. During the April 2009 World People's Conference on Climate Change and the Rights of Mother Earth (held in Tiquipaya, Cochabamba, Bolivia and organized by the Morales government), seventeen working groups comprised of activists, labor organizers, and indigenous peoples from over 150 different countries met

to discuss issues of climate change. Members of CONAMAQ shed light on the contradictions between the expansion of an extractive model of development and proposals for climate justice. They proposed an eighteenth panel that would focus on social conflicts in Bolivia related to climate change. This open opposition to the government's climate policies resulted in CONAMAQ's expulsion from the conference. Rafael Quispe, the national leader at the time denounced Morales for his hypocrisy, stating, "this government is neoliberal and capitalist. It's all a political show" (Weinberg 2010, 21).

They proceeded to hold 'table eighteen' in a local restaurant nearby. This event was well attended with people who recognized that when putting theory into practice problems arise, and the people must recognize these conflicts in an effort to move forward. They critiqued the government for refusing to recognize these bumps in the road, and limiting the possibility of social emancipation outside of state governance. Government officials criticized the participants of table 18 for trying to divide the summit in support of capitalists. In this moment, CONAMAQ, led by Rafael Quispe, demanded "the expulsion of all extractive industries" from Bolivia (Weinberg 2010, 24). They also encouraged the government to adopt a new development model based upon the ayllu system and local self-sufficiency, a platform they had proposed as a basis for the Constituent Assembly years ago. This system would include collective land holding, equitable distribution of resources, rotational leadership, and accountability. This proposal would be an alternative to destructive and expansive capitalism.

In an interview with Bill Weinberg, Rafael Quispe stated that "We support the process of change, and CONAMAQ is a protagonist, but we do not participate in the government. We don't make deals, we don't support candidates—absolutely nothing. And this systematic violation of the rights of the peoples and of the Pachamama shows

that there is something wrong with the process.” He echoed the words of Raquel Gutierrez as quoted in the introduction of this thesis, stating that it is possible to change the world without taking power. Quispe continued by saying that, “In these last elections, I had to say, ‘Evo, you are wrong. What you are saying is pure talk. You are not complying with your own discourse.’ And therefore, I didn’t vote” (Weinberg 2010, 21). This stance demonstrates an indigenous man and leader of CONAMAQ who refused to work within the parameters of the Western-centric state apparatus.

Critics of the Morales Administration argue that the MAS’ Unity Pact with peasant, indigenous, and originary peoples, has transformed into a new pact with eastern agribusiness and transnational oil businesses. The constitution (as described in chapter two) protects private landownership and business practices over the autonomy of local populations. However, Morales has successfully eliminated the threat of *media luna* secession, gaining support from the majority of Cruceño voters in the 2014 elections. While Morales is still working within the Western liberal matrix, and appeasing the *media luna* elite, he has also openly rejected US imperialism (expelling the US ambassador, the DEA, and USAID between 2008 and 2013), setting the stage for further innovation and gradual distancing from Western notions of modernity and progress.

Many Bolivian activists have reprimanded Morales, stating that he must not be indigenous, because his policies no longer prioritize traditional indigenous systems of governance. I do not share this stance, but rather prefer to recognize that there are many ways of being indigenous in contemporary Bolivian society. Even siblings that grew up in the same community may fall on different sides of a debate surrounding what it means to be indigenous and what rights accompany claims to indigeneity. While the Morales administration has promoted an indigenous image, it has not transformed the governing structure to include indigenous epistemologies, or even to protect fundamental rights as



he had promised. They have not yet transitioned from capitalism and Western modernity to a uniquely Bolivian alternative rooted in the Andean cosmovision of *vivir bien*. The government has chosen mining and neo-extractivism as their priority, but certain indigenous communities as represented by CONAMAQ understand that these policies will only bring them closer to death. This council of local ayllus prefers instead to mix tradition with contemporary advancements to construct feasible alternatives. Suggesting that tensions between CONAMAQ and the contemporary Bolivian government are rooted in epistemological discrepancies over land use and development, the following section teases out the ways in which CONAMAQ, scholars, and activists contribute to a new understanding of sustainable alternatives to development.

#### **CONSTRUCTING ALTERNATIVES TO DEVELOPMENT**

In *The Darker Side of Western Modernity*, Walter D. Mignolo proposes the following question to his readers: “Why would you like to save capitalism and not to save human beings? Why would an abstract entity be saved, and not the ecological and human lives that capital is constantly destroying?” (2011, 144). Mignolo pushes his readers to imagine a world in which humans do not live to produce and consume, but rather produce and consume enough to live. This is the basic premise of the indigenous Andean ideology *vivir bien*, or live well, which can be contrasted with the Western capitalist ideology of live better.

In contrast to Morales’ neo-extractivist model, many scholars and indigenous activists, particularly members of CONAMAQ, believe that the indigenous ayllu community system and ideology of *vivir bien* is emblematic of a feasible Andean alternative to capitalism. As described in chapter one, Ayllus are tight-knit highland

indigenous communities that have been spaces of contentious politics since the pre-Columbian era, rejecting exploitative systems and striving to live more harmoniously with other humans and with nature. I do not present the ayllu as a universal or utopian solution to end capitalism. On the contrary, I recognize this indigenous space as a locus of one of many ontologies that should be valued on an equal plane with Western modernity. Sovereignty and the pluriverse rely on respecting systems on a horizontal platform without unwanted imposition. For this reason, CONAMAQ must be careful of exporting the ayllu system to an unreceptive nation, while simultaneously demanding that their autonomous rights be respected. On the contrary, they, and the nation-state as a whole must recognize the profound diversity of indigenous peoples within the country.

Rafael Quispe, a former leader of CONAMAQ, recognizes that both capitalism and socialism are destructive models based in extraction, consumerism, and development. Reminiscent of Fausto Reinaga's writings in the mid-twentieth century, Quispe notes that CONAMAQ's ayllu system of communitarian development provides a basis of equilibrium. He supports wind energy and other clean technologies to create electricity and power transportation as an alternative to petroleum exploitation (Weinberg 2010, 21). This is what some scholars would call development with identity in which states recognize distinct cultural needs (Hale 2011, 195).

The subsequent analysis focuses on two land-based conflicts in which members and leaders of CONAMAQ clash with government sponsored development projects. Before engaging with the details of each encounter, it is worth highlighting local epistemological and ontological connections to the land. While tied up with economic needs and internal community fissions, the following conflicts are also rooted in long-term connections to place so that the death of land is the death of indigenous knowledges and life systems.

*Vivir Bien* is a concept that emerges predominantly in rural, agricultural areas that are able to self-sustain. Factors such as over population and therefore lack of housing and employment curtail the ability to ‘live well’. Allison Spedding has critiqued the notion of *Vivir Bien*, stating that it is invented by indigenous intellectuals, and that it does not even represent the reality of rural communities, and much less urban centers. However, like most ideologies, *vivir bien* is an ethos to live by, not necessarily a reflection of everyday life. Nonetheless, recognizing the heterogeneity of indigenous peoples and Bolivians as a whole is crucial to recognize that the concept of *vivir bien* may not be implemented in the same way in the city of El Alto, as in a llama herding community in Potosí, an agriculturalist center in Santa Cruz, or an indigenous fishing village in Beni.

Eduardo Gudynas and Arturo Escobar have emphasized the need to search for “alternatives to development” as opposed to “development alternatives”. The former practice involves completely rethinking capitalist development, while the latter settles for minor reforms to a system that has been built on human and environmental exploitation (Gudynas 2013). This movement requires individuals and policy makers to reject the assumption that capitalism and Western modernity are natural, and instead imagines alternative systems other than resource extraction. While it would be irrational and unattainable to propose closing down all extractive industries in the immediate future, scholars such as Gudynas recognize the desperate need to focus conversations on how to best overcome extractivism.

People like Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui, a major ally of CONAMAQ, propose self-management, and self-sufficiency through small-scale production and sale of crafts, food, and everyday goods. Rivera Cusicanqui critiques the state’s new form of colonialism that dominates the political spectrum and all expressions of collectivity. “The only space left for us is the micro, and from there we establish affinity communities that allow us to

connect and link networks into a fabric capable of overcoming colonial practices” (Zibechi 2014). This comment is inspired by the Tambo Collective in La Paz, a cultural, educational, and political meeting place recovered by a group of young students. There, they organize fairs and exhibitions and run a garden to promote urban agriculture with the objective of promoting food self-sufficiency. They have also begun to hold small informal classes on themes such as migration, and decolonization in art led by local intellectuals. I have personally spent many days attending classes with this collective, working to construct the main building, and to landscape the outdoor area.

Recognizing the colonial legacy of extractivism is crucial to breaking the historical dependency on exporting raw materials and the importance of self-sufficiency. Members of CONAMAQ have expressed that Pachamama is tired. The harmony and equilibrium that indigenous peoples maintained with her has been lost. Refusal to promote alternatives will not allow the region to move in a new direction. Claiming that the legacy is so deeply rooted that we cannot make a change is both lazy and paralyzing. The struggle for an alternative, post-capitalist development model is intertwined with the need to overcome extractivism.

In short, a complete overturning of the norm is necessary. Not a reform, or a Western-style revolution, but a *pachacuti*—a shift in perceptions of time, space, being and dwelling. The Andean pachacuti seeks the reconstitution of a political collectivity that understands reality in their own ways rather than those dictated by Western modernity. This decolonial option places human and non-human lives first, promoting thoughtful production and consumption as a means of survival not as a way of life. Vice President Garcia Linera has declared that, “We respect Mother Earth, but we are not going to live like 300 years ago” (Ross 2014). However, CONAMAQ’s mission is not about returning to the past, it is about reviving ancient practices and intentionally

molding a more sustainable lifestyle that respects both the old and the new. We will see in the following section that these ideological battles sometimes clash with the immediate needs of poor communities that prefer development as a short-term way to confront poverty, over long term systemic changes.

### **TIPNIS LAND CONFLICT**

The tensions between development and indigenous rights are pronounced in the TIPNIS land conflict. In June 2011, President Morales inaugurated construction on a highway connecting the agricultural region of Beni to the commercial hub of Cochabamba. This project formed part of the Brazilian led Initiative for Integration of Regional Infrastructure of South America (IIRSA), an effort to build interoceanic roads, ports, bridges, dams, hydroelectric plants, and pipelines to integrate and open up the continent. Brazil offered a loan to cover substantial costs for the US\$420 million, 190-mile highway project as well as a construction company to begin work (Israel 2013). The new highway would be crucial to transport Brazilian soybeans to Pacific ports for shipment to China.

However, 32 miles of the highway route was planned to pass directly through the Isiboro Sécure National Park and Indigenous Territory (TIPNIS), an area that President Morales had designated as an autonomous indigenous reserve in 2009. This territory is home to 69 communities and approximately 12,000 residents from three different indigenous groups (Tsimanes, Yuracarés, and Mojeño-Trinitarios). While leaders of community organizations expressed resistance to the highway in early planning stages, Morales declared that the highway would go ahead "whether they [indigenous groups] like it or not" (Los Tiempos 2011). Leaders conveyed concern that a highway would

alter the entire ecosystem, contaminate the park's three main rivers, allow land grabs by loggers and *cocaleros* (coca growers), and aid the influx of sizeable migrant populations. A study published by the Strategic Research Program in Bolivia in 2011 estimated that 64% of the national park would be deforested by 2030 if the highway were built (PIEB 2011). Indigenous leaders expressed concerns that the highway would not bring development of schools and hospitals for local communities but rather benefit the interests of big business passing through the region.

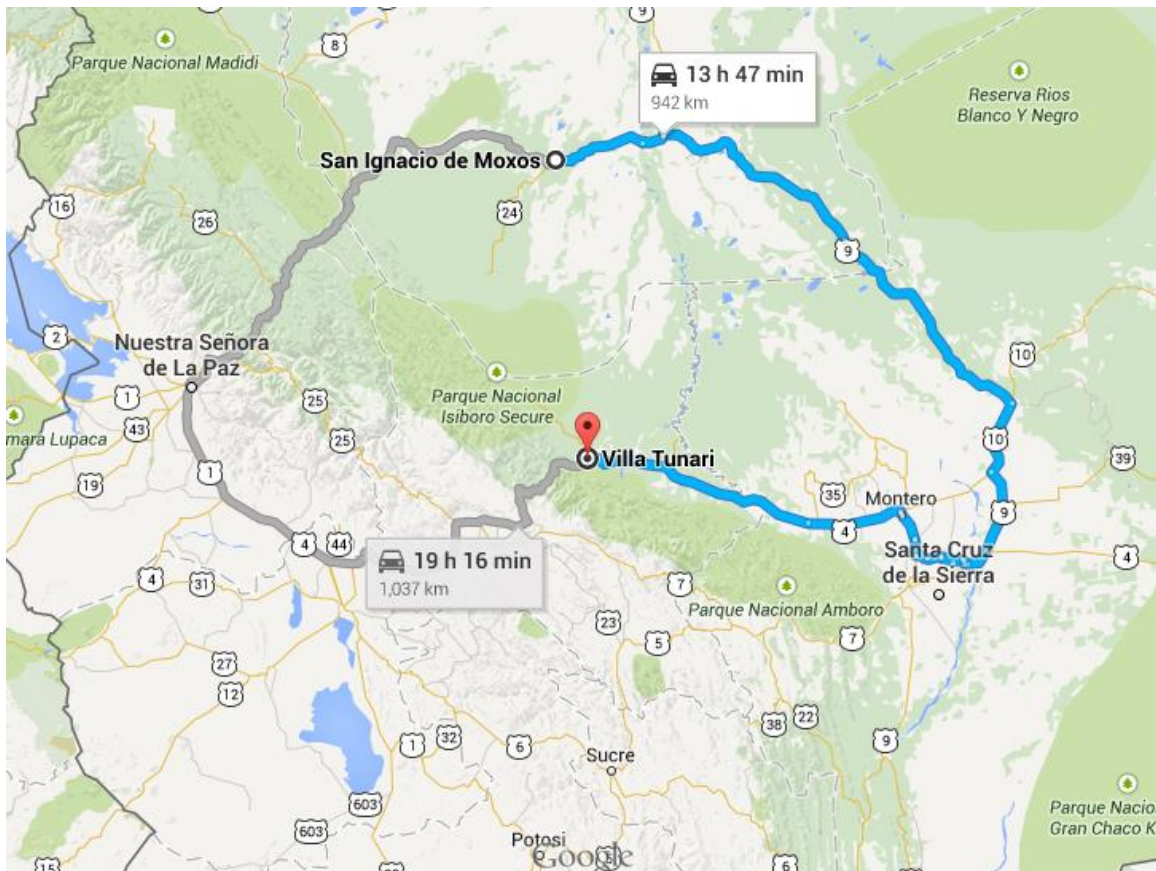


Figure Three: Map of the TIPNIS Region

In response to the Morales Administration's disregard for the lack of resident consent, CIDOB, the lowland indigenous organization that formed part of the Unity Pact as described in chapter two, and CONAMAQ joined forces to stop the highway. CIDOB initiated a 350-mile march leaving Trinidad on August 15, 2011. Over 1,000 supporters (including several hundred residents of the park) arrived in La Paz after two months of walking through rain and blistering heat. This march rejected highway construction and the governments' incomppliance with the constitution they had worked so hard to pass only years earlier. Environmentalists and indigenous peoples from throughout the country joined the protest proclaiming that Morales was contradicting his pro-Pachamama discourse in favor of unapologetic development (CIDOB 2012b).

At the time of this conflict, the decision to support the people of TIPNIS in denouncing the government-planned highway was not unanimous amongst members of CONAMAQ. In September of 2011 a subsection of CONAMAQ led by local leader Carmelo Titirico denounced Rafael Quispe and his hard line pro-TIPNIS platform. Opposing factions supported the highway that they claimed would promote further development (particularly schools and health centers) in rural communities throughout the country. Furthermore, this faction of CONAMAQ supported the Process of Change, recognizing that development was not only necessary for much of the country, but a right that had been withheld from indigenous peoples for centuries (Fundación Tierra 2011b). Later sections of this chapter will further interrogate the heterogeneous perspectives on development within CONAMAQ that have ultimately led to a split within the council.

The government's disregard for consulting local communities evolved into blatant disrespect for human rights mid-way through the march. On September 25, 2011 a fully armed anti-riot group of over 500 Bolivian police officers raided the peaceful march, brutally repressing indigenous men, women, and children with tear gas, rubber bullets,

and truncheons. In this encounter, four people were killed (including a young child) and 74 protesters were wounded. As hundreds of marchers were detained in Chaparina, protests erupted in the capital city resulting in the rapid resignation of four high-level government officials, including the Minister of Defense and the Minister of Interior Relations. Thousands of people stormed the government buildings in La Paz yelling, “*No se matan niños, Carajo*” (Don’t kill children, \*\*\*\*\*), and “*No a la carretera de la muerte!*” (No to the highway of death!).

The official investigation of the Chaparina massacre has been marred by confusion, a lack of transparency, and delays. The investigation has mainly tried to uncover who is responsible for ordering the intervention. Morales has consistently denied responsibility, claiming he learned about the event after it occurred, and blaming a number of different police officers. Critics claim that the executive branch was involved in purchasing supplies used during the attack and for arranging the buses, trucks, and military planes used to transport the detainees (Saavedra 2014). Still, no one has been charged with the responsibility for ordering the violent police intervention.

The Chaparina massacre is pinpointed as a key moment in which lowland and highland indigenous movements as well as the Bolivian population on a national scale lost confidence in Morales’ administration and his dedication to indigenous rights. One Bolivian woman, a good friend of mine, told me that this incident changed everything. The elite cruceños critiqued Morales for violating indigenous people, claiming that Morales was an *indio bruto* (ignorant indian), that could never succeed as president. Racism throughout the country was at an all time high. While this outrageous use of force and denial of basic human rights is unforgivable, I believe that it is crucial to look beyond the Chaparina Massacre, at the broader picture; to understand deeply rooted epistemological opposition to Morales’ development strategies.



Despite physical and emotional hurdles, the marchers arrived in La Paz on October 19, 2011 with 15 key demands, and promptly engaged in negotiations with the Morales administration. That same month, the Plurinational Legislative Assembly passed law 180 authored by indigenous deputies declaring TIPNIS as an “intangible zone”, prohibiting further construction of the highway according to the original route (SomosSur 2011). This victory, while a monumental testimony to the public pressure that indigenous and non-indigenous peoples placed on the government, was short lived as the MAS party rallied pro-highway supporters in an effort to reverse the law. From December 2011 to January 2012, a pro-highway march led by CONISUR, an organization of communities living in the southern region of the TIPNIS, brought attention to the heterogeneous opinions surrounding development. In response to this second march, the government passed law 222 issuing a formal consultation process of indigenous communities living in the TIPNIS (Los Tiempos 2012b).

To show discontent with law 222, members of the original pro-TIPNIS march (including members of CONAMAQ) initiated yet another march that ran from April to June 2012, claiming that the government initiated consultation process was not free, prior, or informed (CIDOB 2012a). According to one member of CONAMAQ who participated in the march in solidarity with lowland indigenous peoples, not enough people knew about the second march, “no se discutió bien en las comunidades, la gente no sabía” (They didn’t discuss it [the consultation] much in the communities, the people didn’t know [it was happening]) (Interview conducted by author, June 18, 2014). Beyond lack of communication, many members of CONAMAQ were simultaneously fighting their own anti-development battle in the northern region of Potosí. In the midst of the TIPNIS conflict, over forty communities fought for their right to free, prior and informed

consent in the face of a Canadian transnational mining company. The next section of this chapter will elaborate on this conflict in Mallku Khota.

The MAS government refused to listen to the opinions of marchers from the second pro-TIPNIS march. From July to December of 2012, the Plurinational Electoral Organ carried out a consultation process concluding that 57 of the 69 communities rejected “intangibility” while 55 actively supported the highway. From November-December of the same year, a human rights fact-finding mission led by the Permanent Assembly for Human Rights of Bolivia (APDHB), the Inter-American Federation for Human Rights (FIDH), and the Catholic Church reported conclusions drastically different from the government sponsored consultation process. Of the 36 communities they visited, the government had contacted only 19, and 30 avidly opposed the construction of the highway. Three communities approved the road on the conditions that an impact assessment be carried out, the road path be changed, and that a cleanup project for the neighboring river be put in place to improve river transport. The human rights commission reported “numerous irregularities in the consultation process” in regards to international protocol and that “the communities consulted reported having received gifts, having been pressured or being imposed restrictions in exchange for acceptance of the consultation; some were coerced through the suspension of development projects in case of refusal” (International Federation for Human Rights 2013). These differing opinions demonstrate the heterogeneity of opinions in regards to the TIPNIS highway, but also the incongruence between different consultation processes.

After ongoing conflict, the Morales administration decided that the government would put the highway project on hold through the end of 2015 and concentrate instead on eliminating extreme poverty in the TIPNIS region. This decision curiously occurred just in time for Morales’ 2014 elections. Nonetheless, this emphasis on confronting rural

poverty is a direct response to desires as articulated during the consultation process (Achtenberg 2013a). Only time will tell the future of the TIPNIS. However, in early August 2014 Senator Julio Salazar (MAS) confirmed that the government intends to build the controversial highway between 2015-2020 (Pagina Siete 2014a).

The TIPNIS land conflict highlights the complex heterogeneity of indigenous peoples on the topic of development, rupturing the idea of a singular homogenous indigenous subject. The TIPNIS conflict was a watershed moment in which groups of all sizes fractured along the lines of in favor or against the highway. One member of CONAMAQ described the many fights in the streets of La Paz, particularly in the San Francisco Plaza in regards to the building of the highway (Interview conducted by author, June 18, 2014). Perhaps neither an untouchable TIPNIS, nor a multi million-dollar highway is sustainable, but instead an alternative way to improve access to health and education while recognizing indigenous knowledges and technologies, and without immense deforestation and mass migration.

CONAMAQ's decision to break away from the pro-MAS Unity Pact has been attributed to this violation of indigenous and human rights (Achtenberg 2014; Farthing and Kohl 2014, 154; Interview conducted by author, June 18, 2014). Perhaps the TIPNIS land conflict did convince CONAMAQ to break away from the Unity Pact, but we must recognize the numerous other factors, ones that most authors have brushed aside. The remainder of this chapter argues that there are numerous conflicts in relation to Morales' neo-extractivist policies that have slipped under the radar, yet contribute greatly to CONAMAQ's resentment of the MAS government. The following analysis suggests that, while TIPNIS was a massive event with ample media coverage that allowed CONAMAQ to denounce the Morales administration in an open manner, epistemological grievances with Western-centric development policies run much deeper than the TIPNIS.

## **MALLKU KHOTA MINING CONFLICT**

While the TIPNIS land conflict is one example of lowland struggles for autonomy, mining in the Andes region fuels another crucial source of tension between indigenous peoples and the MAS government. While immediate closure of all mines would result in a national economic collapse, ongoing large-scale extraction fuels excessive capitalist consumerism while delegitimizing and decelerating potential alternatives. This section emphasizes the Mallku Khota mining conflict as experienced by members of one of CONAMAQ's 16 suyus, Charka Qhara Qhara. Shedding light on this conflict that occurred simultaneously with the later TIPNIS marches provides a deeper understanding of why CONAMAQ broke away from the Unity Pact. While demonstrating many of the same fundamental tensions as displayed in the eastern lowlands (government violation of indigenous, collective, and basic human territorial and political autonomy), this distinctly highland issue adds another layer to the tensions between indigenous rights and the type of development revered by Western modernity.

Mallku Khota is an ayllu in the Sacaca Marka of the Charkas Qhara Qhara Suyu, in the northern region of the department of Potosí. It is also rich with one of the largest undeveloped silver deposit and the largest indium deposit in the world. Indium is used in touchscreens and liquid crystal displays (LCD), making it a highly desirable resource in the current age of technology. Mallku Khota also has traces of gold, copper, lead, and zinc. When President Morales came to power, he inherited a contract (signed in 2003) that entrusted the legal rights of all mining concessions in Mallku Khota to the Canadian South American Silver Corporation (SASC) (CEDIB 2008). However, 46 different communities also held official collective titles (TCOs) to this land. For years, while SASC explored the region in their pre-exploitation phase they encountered resistance from members of the six affected ayllus in the region.

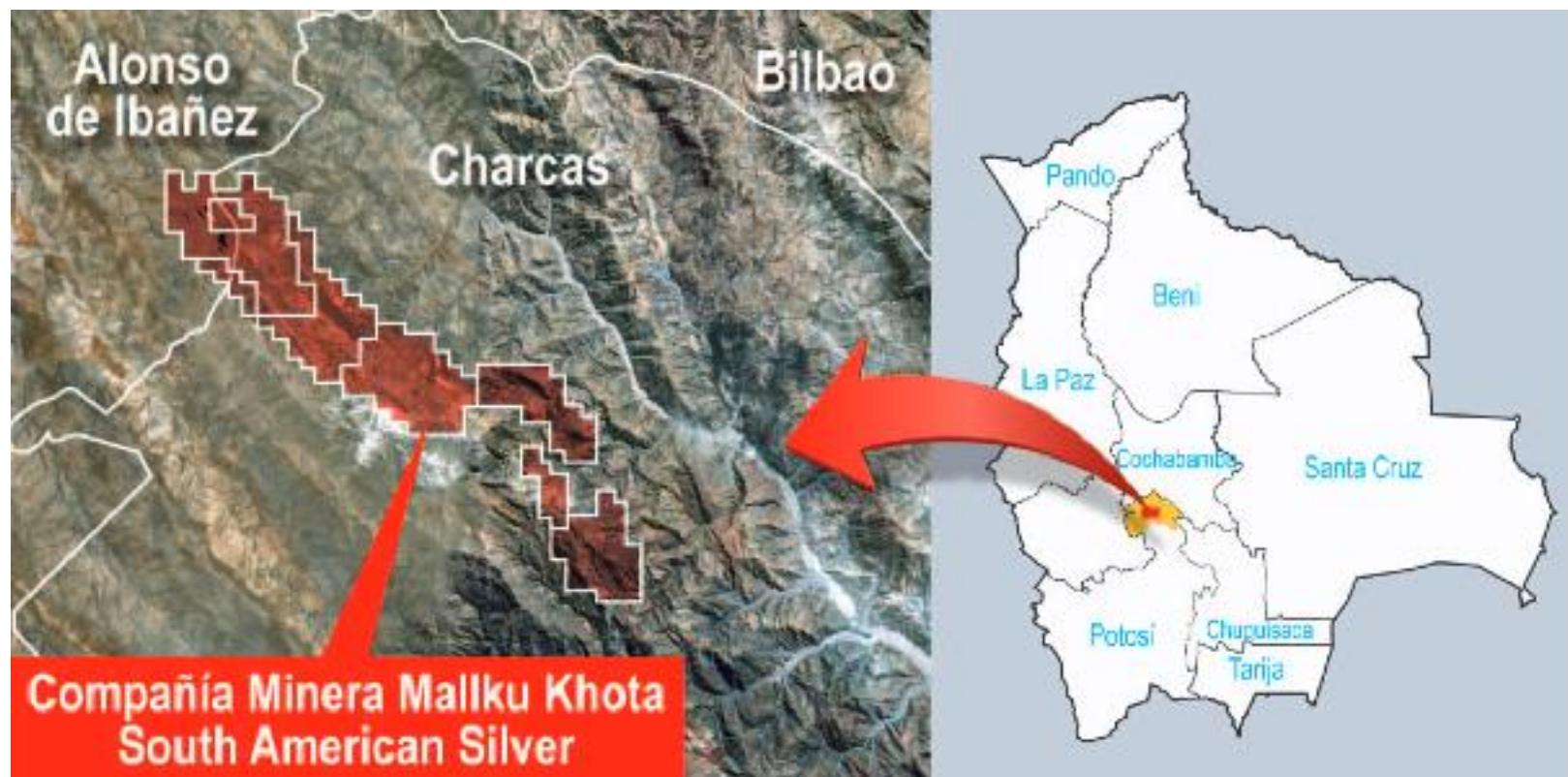


Figure Four: Location of Mallku Khota

(<http://www.cedib.org/wpcontent/uploads/2013/01/Dossier-MallkuKhota.pdf>)

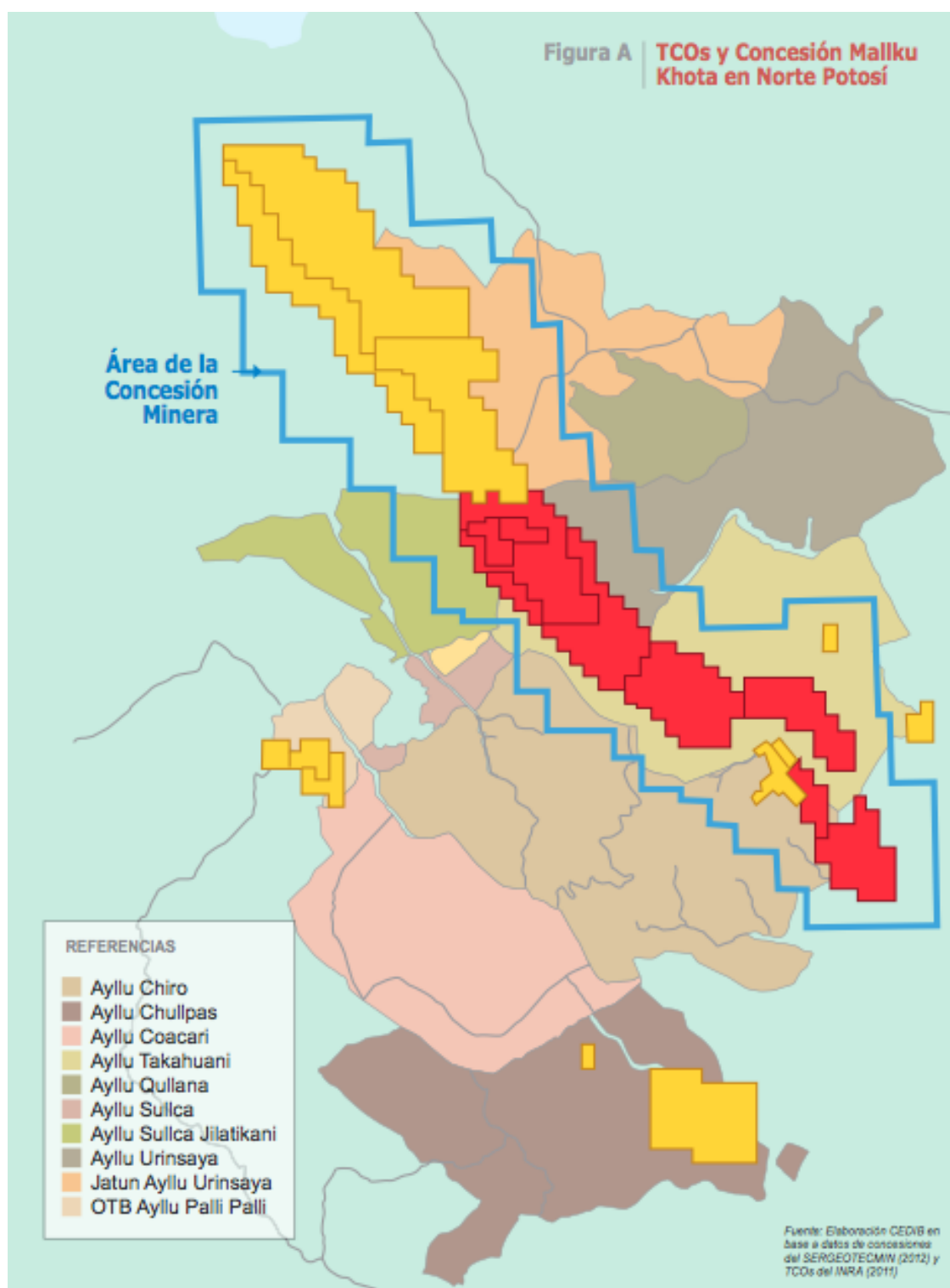


Figure Five: Affected ayllus in the Mallku Khota region

Indigenous peoples, many affiliated with CONAMAQ, proclaimed that they had not been consulted, feared environmental degradation, and reprimanded the private, transnational nature of the project. CONAMAQ criticized the government for disrespecting the constitution and violating indigenous rights to prior consultation, allowing transnational companies to exploit resources like prior colonial and republican governments (CEDIB 2008). Practices of free, prior and informed consent in this case are particularly complex because SASC obtained the rights to the Mallku Khota concession before the implementation of the new constitution (2009). Furthermore, the constitution does not specify when consultation efforts must occur: before exploration or extraction (Los Tiempos 2012a). Since SASC was still in their exploratory stage, the Bolivian government declared that the company was not violating their contract. The company hired two doctoral sociology students and a local NGO (Cumbre del Sajama) to work with community members to “help them understand the benefits that the project could bring them”, but never reached terms of free consent (Garces 2012).

A primary reason that communities did not consent to SASC exploration is due to environmental concerns. Indigenous peoples unequally experience the impacts of mining’s environmental degradation while foregoing most of the social benefits. Rural resources power urban spaces, so that those who are poisoned from the effects of extraction are both physically and mentally distant from those who benefit from development. Local community members feared deforestation, desertification, drought, water, air, and soil pollution, displacement and destruction of sacred sites. Due to the nature of the minerals, extraction would be through sky exploitation, an open pit technique that results in much higher environmental impact than small-scale subsistence mining practices. Members of CONAMAQ fought against SASC in order to protect the

three lakes in the area where they raise trout and water their sheep and cattle (Garces 2012).

Discontent with the Mallku Khota mining concession also stemmed from the neoliberal nature of a private transnational company pumping riches out of a developing nation and into a select few corporate hands. While the mining concession would produce some wealth for the country, it would also infringe on the grazing and farming land, in turn stripping the possibility of local self-sufficiency. Community members saw that SASC had placed a flag in sacred soil to fuel the world market's insatiable greed. Despite all of these breaches of indigenous autonomy, environmental degradation, and private accumulation of wealth, the Morales administration continued to support SASC's exploration process.

Opposition to SASC's mineral extraction was fragmented according to a diverse array of ideological and material needs. While many indigenous peoples rejected the concession for the aforementioned reasons, other residents supported the nationalization of the mine. They believed that if the land was laden with valuable natural resources, that this nationalized wealth would help lift the country out of poverty and reject dependence on foreign aid. Other indigenous and non-indigenous peoples in the community advocated for the creation of a local mining cooperative.<sup>7</sup> While a smaller cooperative would not be able to extract certain minerals that relied on large machinery as provided by the Canadian company, it would provide income for local communities.

As vocal leaders of CONAMAQ fought to protect their land, other indigenous community members supported the potential social and economic benefits the company would bring to the region. SASC did not thwart their exploratory efforts because

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<sup>7</sup> Unfortunately, space does not allow for an in-depth discussion on the nuances of nationalized mining and small-scale private entrepreneurial cooperative mining, but it is worth pointing out that there are profound differences amongst the two groups.



according to their own surveys, 43 of the 46 affected communities strongly supported the company. The transnational corporation invested in local infrastructure to aid exploratory processes and promised “significant employment on project related jobs” (South American Silver Corp 2012b). Celia Garces contests that these opportunities would be limited to approximately 275 positions (2012). Nonetheless, SASC promised to “facilitate job training, education, agricultural enhancement and water management for long-term sustainable development” (South American Silver Corp 2012a).

Negotiations between the government and South American Silver at the institutional level resulted in violent conflict at the local level. In May 2012, SASC ordered fifty police officers to suppress dissent to the company’s mining activities. They entered the homes of community members in the early morning using gas and physical abuse. In response, local leaders took two police officers hostage, releasing them two days later when the governor of Potosí promised that the community would finally be consulted (CEDIB 2012). Two weeks later, CONAMAQ’s leader of the Sacaca Marka, Cancio Rojas, was arrested on claims of taking the officers hostage, harassing them, threatening to bury them alive, and attempting to murder them.

The detention of Cancio Rojas was laden with rumors, false accusations, and biased trials. Rojas claims to have been in the city of La Paz presenting petitions to the Ministry of Mining when the police intervention and abduction occurred in Mallku Khota. However, this assertion, supported by many witnesses, was not publically reported. The only testimonies taken into account were those of the police officers. Community members claim that seeking the truth was never the intention of officers, only the representation of an indigenous leader as violent, cruel, savage and radical, a tactic that has been used throughout the 19th and 20th century to justify indigenous genocide and exclusion. Rojas and his supporters asserted that his arrest was based on

complete fabrication and that rapid diffusion of unverified, false testimonies was a strategy to demobilize the community. After ten months of imprisonment, the public prosecutor's ministry in Potosí declared the dismissal of the proceedings against Cancio Rojas for lack of evidence. However, he is still under accusation for other more minor claims.

On May 28, 2012, thousands of people left Mallku Khota to march 190 miles to La Paz, demanding the eviction of SASC. CONAMAQ organized this march in defense of the sacred lake Wara Wara of Mallku Khota, water, land, territory, indigenous collective rights, national parks, and mother earth. According to local leader, Damián Colque, "We cannot let our Plurinational State in a Process of Change illegally detain our leader. We have to mobilize in massive numbers" (Damián Colque, Erbol, 24 de mayo 2012). As mentioned earlier, this march coincided with the second pro-TIPNIS march, emphasizing the government's lack of respect for both highland and lowland indigenous rights to consultation. Several days into the march, the Mining Minister, Mario Virreira, declared that they would consult indigenous communities before SASC could transition from exploration to extraction. Upon arriving in La Paz on June 7, 2012, representatives demanded respect for human and collective rights, the renunciation of SASC's contract, the initiation of a free, prior and informed consultation process, and the liberation of Cancio Rojas (CONAMAQ 2012). When Virreira made clear that these points would not be heard, 25 leaders began a hunger strike in defense of their territorial and political autonomy.

Throughout the following month, numerous conflicts broke out between community members and employees of the mining company. Protesters blocked a local mining camp, two SASC engineers were caught spying on community members during their meetings, and a mining site in Sacani was raided and burned. As a result, the

government militarized the area, dispatching nearly 500 officers in hopes of minimizing further conflict (CEDIB 2012). On the contrary, increased police presence escalated tensions.

During a clash with police officers on July 5, four community members sustained gunshot wounds, and one man, José Mamani Mamani was brutally killed. The ministry of the government claimed that the police didn't have mortal firearms and that the man had mishandled dynamite while he was drunk. However, community members claim that a police officer put a gun in the man's mouth and shot him. According to the community, Mamani Mamani was an evangelical man who never drank, and that he had left his home with a bible to try to reason with the police. Instead, the police killed him. Medical examiners and the Permanent Human Rights Assembly confirmed that he died from a bullet entering the nape of his neck. A joint inspection by local authorities found 24 used tear gas cans, thirty bullet casings, four loaded bullet shells, thirteen rounds of used nine-millimeter casings, and other police paraphernalia at the site of Mamani Mamani's death. It wasn't until the murder of Mamani Mamani that South American Silver Company decided to "temporarily cease all field activities while government-led talks proceed to seek a peaceful resolution" (South American Silver Company 2012c).

Finally, on July 7, the state entered into dialogue with community members. After two months of tense and violent conflict, Morales finally agreed to the demands presented by the Federation of Originary Indigenous Ayllus of Potosí (FAOI-NP), CONAMAQ's local branch of the Charka Qhara Qhara suyu. This included nationalization of the mining concession, compensation for the family of José Mamani Mamani and investigation into the police officers. Furthermore, they demanded that the engineers caught spying on local meetings must comply with their local community

justice system, mandating that the engineers must build 1,000 adobe houses for the community.

The Mallku Khota conflict sheds light on two fundamental issues. First, in the case of Cancio Rojas, the criminalization and discrediting of community resistance movements and their leaders, and second, in the case of José Mamani Mamani, the unwillingness to hold perpetrators of state violence accountable for their actions. While the land concession dispute has been settled, the murderers of Juan Mamani Mamani have not been convicted, nor have extensive investigations been realized. This unwillingness and inefficiency to develop the case of Mamani Mamani stands in stark contrast to the quick conviction of Cancio Rojas'. The government's treatment of Mallku Khota demonstrates a model that silences community resistance instead of representing the defense of human rights, mother earth, and democratic values. Nonetheless, it also proves that very little will not stop indigenous communities who organize to defend their rights. It also demonstrates the often-clashing visions of development between different indigenous peoples, cooperative miners, and the state.

Very little has been written about Mallku Khota, and even less from the perspective of local community members. The analysis I have compiled is largely dependent on national news articles, SASC's official updates, and alternative digital news sources. Accusations of illegal mining, spying, and murder complicate the story depending on the article you read or the account you hear. However, one thing is clear: the growing distance between members of CONAMAQ and the Morales Administration is deeply rooted in disputes over extractivism and development.

The sentiments surrounding Mallku Khota are bolstered by a long list of mining conflicts throughout the altiplano. While this chapter cannot engage with each conflict, it is worth noting community outrage over copper mining at Corocoro in CONAMAQ's

Jach'a Suyu Pakajaqui community (Department of La Paz) as well as the Vitichi mining conflict with the Kumorana Company, the Challapata conflict, and the Colquiri conflict. All of these battles are emblematic of state power that has favored mining interests over the autonomy of local communities. Anti-mining activists receive criticism that they are anti-development and hindrances to the Process of Change. However, development is often a justification for the violation of human rights and indigenous autonomy. Many hope that the government could cooperate with communities (and vice-a-versa) so that rich mineral deposits can be utilized in sustainable ways without excessive environmental degradation and with full consensus and participation of local peoples. By emphasizing the details and complexities of one mining conflict, I hope to shed light on the numerous voices that must be listened to in order to realize this goal.

CONAMAQ has abandoned restrictive nation state boundaries in search for international alliances. They are forming solidarity networks with indigenous peoples and environmentalists throughout the region and the world in the struggle against unapologetic extractivism to fuel development. The victims of mining are plentiful from the many Native American tribes fighting against the Keystone XL Pipeline, to Mapuche people fighting against Shale Oil in southwest Argentina and logging companies in Chile. From Apache peoples denouncing foreign concessions of a uranium mine on sacred ancestral lands to Sarayaku people fighting off oil company in Ecuador's Amazon and Miskitu and Garifuna peoples speaking out to defend their coral reefs from oil and gas activity.

## CONAMAQ BREAKS AWAY FROM THE UNITY PACT

While the economy has boomed and poverty rates have plummeted in Morales' two terms, the TIPNIS and Mallku Khota conflicts demonstrate two major clashes in regards to impacts on the environment and violating the autonomy of indigenous movements. The MAS party has prided itself as being the "government of the social movements." However, in recent years, it has increasingly coopted these bodies, often causing internal conflicts, and stripping away their ability to critique the government. Vice President Garcia Linera's book *Geopolítica de la Amazonía* (2012) demonstrates his belief that all indigenous demands must be subordinate to the state's capitalist development model. He claims that indigenous critics of the government are against the Process of Change, and therefore support the right wing. His book specifically refers to CIDOB's critiques of the government during the TIPNIS conflict. However, given new developments, Garcia Linera has also included CONAMAQ in this critique, claiming that they are pro-imperialist, and are funded by USAID (Garcia Linera 2012). This discourse elucidates the shift in discourse from championing indigenous autonomy, decolonization, and self-determination to unapologetic development. It assumes that all rural indigenous peoples prefer to be integrated into the national economy on the terms of Western-style development.

When speaking with a member of CONAMAQ, he curtly told me that he is not part of a *social movement*, that his organization is an *indigenous movement* whose role is to pressure the government from the outside. He explained that the MAS party has coopted social movements like the CSUTCB, Bartolina Sisas, and Interculturales as censored government subjects. Raquel Gutierrez has critiqued the proximity of relations between civil society and the Bolivian state at earlier points in history, highlighting the need for more social movement autonomy. While this particular member of CONAMAQ

would certainly agree, the following section will demonstrate the heterogeneity of opinions in regards to this claim. With the election of Morales and the presumed overthrow of neoliberalism, social movement representatives assumed positions inside of the MAS party hoping to contribute to the systemic change that Morales preached. It has become increasingly difficult for many of these people who identify as both politicians and activists as they simultaneously strive to remain loyal to their support base as well as the political party they represent. In recent years many have left their posts in government due to pressures of censure and conforming.

The conglomerate effects of state intervention in TIPNIS and Mallku Khota, blatant disregard for indigenous autonomy, constitutional rights, and basic human rights have led both CIDOB and CONAMAQ to break away from the Unity Pact. While CONAMAQ slowly and increasingly denounced the Morales administration's policies, they made a formal decision to break away in December 2011 claiming that MAS did not lead the "real process of change" (Alarcón 2011). One ally of CONAMAQ who attended this historical meeting told me that the decision came from intense discussion, even more so because the government sent representatives to the meeting, resulting in physical fights (interview conducted by author, June 18, 2014). She highlighted the long process of this decision as leaders relied heavily on the opinions of CONAMAQ's local masses, trying to gage government criticism from the communities. She told me that in this meeting she realized that there was a real critique that came from the bases, from the communities, not just national leaders (Interview conducted by author, June 18, 2014). It was a major transition for the counsel to break the historical alliance between peasant and indigenous movements that had flourished since 2005.

One representative of CONAMAQ told me that the government has appropriated all of their struggles since the constituent assembly. She said that every proposal that they

made, the government coopted and tweaked to benefit the nation state, straying from efforts to protect and respect indigenous peoples. Members protested that representatives from MAS were dividing the community by allowing miners, oil companies, and private water and land projects onto community land. By denouncing the government's disrespect for indigenous rights, CONAMAQ takes a stance to defend Pachamama and their right to self-determination as rooted in pre-Columbian sovereignty.

While breaking away from the Unity Pact as a whole, CONAMAQ decided to reaffirm their “natural alliance” with the lowland indigenous movement, CIDOB (Alarcón 2011). In a 2013 resolution, CONAMAQ and CIDOB drew on ILO 169 and international norms, declaring that, “executive power has been biased against the participation of indigenous organizations, valuing organizations related to MAS above all others, the intent of which directly affects our territories, cultures and natural resources” (Resolución 01). The final nail in the Unity Pact's coffin occurred when both CONAMAQ and CIDOB decided as organizations to remain independent of any established political party during the October 2014 elections.

## **DIVIDE AND CONQUER**

Since breaking away from the Unity Pact, both CONAMAQ and CIDOB (the two major representative bodies of indigenous peoples in Bolivia) have experienced coups of their organizations by government-sponsored dissidents (Vacaflor, 2014). Government cooptation of social movements often takes the form of funding responsive factions in an effort to gain their further loyalty, while making other groups appear radical and irrational. In the case of CONAMAQ, the government provided numerous vehicles and computers to national and local leaders to show support and assure loyalty. Cancio Rojas



states that the government “gives them pills so that they don’t fight for their real rights”, implying a sense of trickery, steering them away from their natural desires, and from their roots (Somos Sur 2015). On the contrary, many of these indigenous peoples would say that the government is finally fulfilling their needs. They recognize that indigenous peoples have been marked as backwards in time for centuries, and now is their opportunity to benefit from national development.

For nearly a decade, scholars have applied Hale’s notion of the ‘indio permitido’ to different case studies, in which rights are granted to ‘permitted’ peoples when they pertain to cultural elements like language and dress, but not when they threaten state power (Hale 2006). President Morales’ recent speech at a meeting of supportive members of CONAMAQ highlighted their rich cultural contribution to Bolivian society encouraging recuperation of an annual traditional festival. He simultaneously delegitimizes non-conformative members of CONAMAQ for straying from the Process of Change (Morales 2015).

On December 10, 2013, nearly 200 MAS-affiliated members of CONAMAQ raided the La Paz headquarters, beating and expelling other affiliates of the organization. Violent arguments lasted over five hours leaving five people injured and extensive damage to the office’s infrastructure. The government had tried to take over CONAMAQ’s office six times since 2012, however the organization was able to hold off threats (CONAMAQ 2014a). One member of CONAMAQ reported that there were about twenty people in the office, many of whom had been living there off and on for an extended period of time. When the MAS representatives arrived they yelled that they wanted to enter the house that rightfully belonged to them. Many female leaders left through the back of the building disguised so as to escape the violent attack, but MAS representatives were outside, in the back waiting to attack them. Some people were able

to hide in a little store, next to the office (Interview conducted by author, June 18, 2015). Days later the police declared that the office belonged to the government.

On December 12 and 13, 2013 MAS-sponsored members of CONAMAQ held a *Jacha Tantachawi* congress in order to vote for the upcoming leadership. The organic commission demanded that the office be returned to CONAMAQ and that the police retire from custody so that CONAMAQ could return to their normal functions. When the offices were not returned, members of the organic CONAMAQ initiated a vigil outside of the office. The vigil lasted 30 days in which time men women and children survived off of the kind support of human rights defenders and sympathizing citizens. During this time the original authorities looked to speak with government authorities to peacefully regain their office (CONAMAQ 2014a).

On January 14, 2014 a pro-government protest defending the Morales Administration's Process of Change attacked CONAMAQ's vigil using knives, bottles, sticks and whips to destroy tents, chairs, and food. They insulted, beat, and wounded authorities, women, children, and the elderly without distinction, even threatening to kill bystanders. The police officers stationed at the office refused to offer assistance (CONAMAQ 2014a, Saavedra 2014). Several authorities fled the violence and death threats hiding to protect their lives. Ex-Authority Felix Becerra and newly elected authorities Nilda and Cancio Rojas took refuge in the basement of a nearby house for more than 24 hours, deprived of food, communication, and warm clothing (CONAMAQ 2014a).

Upon expulsion and persecution of CONAMAQ's elected organic authorities, the Permanent Assembly for Human Rights-La Paz (APDHLP) offered a safe space and welcomed the leaders. Thanks to this institutional support the authorities were able to reinstate the council of councils where they expressed rejection of the events, reaffirming

the defense of self-determination and autonomy of indigenous peoples. Members of the organic CONAMAQ claim that their office has since been converted into a campaigning center for Morales, instead of the headquarters of a civil society organization.

Hilarión Mamani, a supporter of the Morales Administration, took control of the CONAMAQ office after the takeover. Mamani has been accused of being a *dirigente eterno* (eternal leader) for not abiding by the rotating leadership of CONAMAQ in which all leaders serve for two-year terms. The government argues that Hilarión Mamani is the rightful leader and that he represents the masses. He is part of a mining cooperative and supports mineral extraction (CONAMAQ 2014a). The government pays Mamani, and funds development projects in pro-MAS communities. Members of the organic CONAMAQ argue that if the government funded hospitals utilized traditional medicine, that would be one thing, but instead it is funding soccer fields with synthetic turf. This leaves one young woman wondering, “What are we going to eat, the synthetic grass that Evo Morales gives us? No. So we prefer to take care of our territory” (Interview conducted by author, June 18, 2014). Other members of CONAMAQ, those that were expelled from their office, have been cut off from all resources and development projects sponsored by the indigenous fund.

Many members of the organic CONAMAQ feel like pawns that are being played against each other by government intervention. Local conflicts are microcosms of greater systemic issues of unequal wealth distribution and deeply embedded racism. “It’s a battle between poor people. We are indigenous peoples that are fighting amongst ourselves” (Interview conducted by author, June 18, 2015). Due to this increasing intervention, members of CONAMAQ have been instilled with a sense of fear. One young woman told me that many of her friends had been threatened for their involvement with CONAMAQ

and that many had been bribed to stay silent (Interview conducted by author, June 18, 2015).

The final portion of this chapter will elaborate on some of the key distinctions between indigenous members of CONAMAQ who have continued to support the MAS government, and those who have abandoned Morales' Process of Change. This section stresses multiple ways of being indigenous in contemporary Bolivia urging scholars, activists, and politicians to recognize heterogeneity of experiences and desires. It also demonstrates how neighbors within the same ayllu or marka can support mining or risk their lives to protect their land. By looking at structural issues of poverty and ethnic discrimination such drastic contradictions begin to feel normal.

### **CONAMAQ ORGÁNICO**

*“Ya no queremos ser folklore, ni afiche del gobierno. Queremos participación política y económica en este país. Queremos un estado plurinacional en práctica.”*

-Cancio Rojas, May 13, 2014

While CONAMAQ historically supported President Morales' rise to power, a major faction of the organization has since denounced the Morales administration's tendency towards neo-extractivism and capitalist policies, seeing him as yet another pawn controlled by Western modernity. Members of the organic CONAMAQ view the government's ongoing repression as an attempt to block the 'real' revolutionaries from fulfilling the process of change in a way that respects the 2009 constitution. The organic CONAMAQ continues to propose alternatives to development working at local, national, and international levels to fight for collective rights to land and territory and greater indigenous autonomy (CONAMAQ 2015).

Cancio Rojas and his daughter, Nilda Rojas, are the current national leaders of the organic CONAMAQ. Despite being kicked out of their office, they have been able to rent out a small space in the center of La Paz. When speaking with Nilda, we sat in two chairs in an empty room. When the sun set, we sat in darkness, for with all their funding sources cut off, the organization was not able to pay electricity bills. Nilda told me that she, and other members of CONAMAQ felt betrayed by the government, just as Tupac Katari was betrayed by his own people. Despite substantial setbacks, Cancio and Nilda continue fighting to represent the ayllus, suyus and markas of Bolivia with a deepening sense of urgency. Pachamama cannot be bought, nor can the leaders and members of CONAMAQ. They have turned down bribes from the government, choosing instead to fight for the rights of their communities.

Historically, CONAMAQ received the majority of their funding from the *Fondo Indígena de los Pueblos Indígenas de América Latina y El Caribe* as well as NGOs. However, upon breaking away from the Unity Pact, the organic CONAMAQ lost all funding from the indigenous fund. Now Hilarion Mamani and CONAMAQ-MAS receives this money. Furthermore, the Morales administration recently expelled a Danish NGO, IBIS, from the country due to their financial support of the organic CONAMAQ. In a monumental and symbolic push for autonomy, the group led by Nilda and Cancio has been directing their efforts in the last year to focus on creating a financially self-sufficient CONAMAQ. Some critics have stated that the money from the indigenous fund should be given to organizations that do not receive the same level of funding as those that are still part of the Unity Pact. Others believe that this money is soiled with the exploitation of Pachamama and communities who live off of the land. They instead opt for the ultimate struggle for autonomy in front of a government that has chosen not to recognize them as legitimate subjects.

This may be an example of what Charles Hale calls the “impossible subject” (Hale 2011). Seeking fundamental structural change, they are, “analytically acute; willing to talk but only according to their own rules; preferring continued protest over incomplete concessions; always a force to contend with, in large part because they are so difficult to pin down” (201). Hale highlights the downside of this strategy, that radical organizations “elude the entanglements, but forgo the quite significant benefits as well” (Hale 2011, 201). Radical refusal often results in inability to meet immediate material needs. In seeking autonomy, CONAMAQ will need to find a balance between fulfilling short-term needs and long term goals.

The organic CONAMAQ has been fighting against the Mining and Metallurgy law 535 passed in May 2014, critiquing its stance on free prior and informed consent, environmental damage, and the right to protest. The law favors the rights of transnational corporations and cooperatives over the interests of indigenous and non-indigenous Bolivians who rely on the land. In order to be considered for prior consultation, a community must have formal certification proving status as a pre-colonial originary indigenous community with territorial claims, that is conserving their nation’s patron culture. Without this formal title, indigenous peoples will have no right to prior consultation (CONAMAQ 2014). Furthermore, it fails to recognize indigenous communities’ right to veto any decision after consultation processes, meaning that consultation is essentially a hollow formality. Finally, the law clarifies a previously unsolved conflict, stating that companies do not need to consult communities before exploration stages of extractive projects. This legalizes the actions of South American Silver and ensures further disturbances and contamination on indigenous territories. The law also fails to recognize sacred spaces as off limits to mining.

Law 535 gives the mining industry the right to use public water for its water-intensive and toxic operation, while disregarding the rights of rural and farming communities to that same water. A leader of CONAMAQ declared, “mining produces contamination, not food, and when the land no longer produces, we have nothing left” (Interview conducted by Author July 7, 2014). The ruling elite has extracted minerals from Bolivian land for over 500 years, and peasants and indigenous peoples have been left destitute. She told me that if the government had also passed the water and forestry laws that CONAMAQ proposed to protect Pachamama, then they would feel more comfortable preserving the rights of miners on an equal level with the rights of the earth. However, without any protection, these laws will allow extreme levels of exploitation.

Perhaps most devastating to members of the organic CONAMAQ, the Mining law criminalizes protest against mining operations (Article 99-101). This leaves communities that would bear the brunt of the industry’s pollution and displacement without any right to defend their land. The law penalizes ‘encroachments on miners rights’ with prison sentences between 6 and 8 years for those who block mining activity. The government has made protecting mother earth a crime. In an interview with Ben Dangl, the current leader of CONAMAQ proclaimed the irony in which, “We’re well aware that it was the same Evo Morales who would participate in marches and road blockades [years ago]. And so how is it that he is taking away this right to protest?” (Dangl 2014).

Many members of CONAMAQ have endured hunger strikes and violent government attacks, yet they choose to continue fighting even to the death. For without water, without land, there is no life. Nonetheless, fear is beginning to control members of members of the organic CONAMAQ. In many of my interviews I experienced the fear of constant surveillance. When meeting with members of the organic CONAMAQ, they often whisked me away to their new office or a friend’s nearby home so as not to be

heard by people on the street. When speaking with an ally of CONAMAQ in a café, she abruptly stopped the interview and changed the subject. Minutes later she told me that a government official had been watching us. Many people I spoke with told me about the death threats they or their friends had received. Many of my interlocutors expressed the increasing fear that the government had instilled in them as well as their excitement to share stories with me, as though letting the words slip off of their tongue and into my mind lifted some kind of burden. As an outsider, I could take these stories away with me without the immediate threat of danger.

### **CONAMAQ-MAS**

Another faction of CONAMAQ applauds Morales and his administration for nationalizing natural resources, using the money gained from neo-extractivism to promote social services, and promoting a new constitution that recognizes the cultural rights of indigenous communities. They argue that they have been excluded from development for centuries and now they finally have access to a status of living that has been restricted to mestizo and Creole elites. Furthermore, they are not advocating extravagant living, but rather fundamental facilities such as schools, hospitals, roads, and soccer fields. Hilarión Mamani and his followers believe that they must stand with the CSUTCB, Interculturales, and Bartolinas Sisas (the remaining organizations that compose the Unity Pact) in order to realize the Process of Change. By working with the government, they hope to influence systemic change. President Morales congratulated Hilarión Mamani and CONAMAQ-MAS at the most recent regional *Marka Tantachawi*. He clarified that, “We all have the right to be leaders, but we don’t have the right to betray our political movement, especially when we are being watched not only by



Bolivia, but by the entire world” (Morales 2015). Morales sheds light on the fact that Bolivia is a progressive country with many rights imbued in the constitution that states would never guarantee their citizens. His administration’s fear of the organic CONAMAQ’s radical behavior is legitimate, as it pushes Morales’ Process of Change to levels that the global elite has not come to terms with.

Morales has congratulated CONAMAQ-MAS’ efforts to reconstitute the modern ayllu, denouncing European colonizers and the capitalist system. The MAS administration hopes to use the organization as a beacon of cultural light on an international scale to legitimize indigenous culture. Many anthropologists have been keen to demonstrate the fracturing image of strategic essentialism by demonstrating how indigenous peoples are involved in extractive industries. They point out that native communities also take part in market-based mechanisms (McNeish 2013). While this is generally used as a critique, it is also indicative of a 21st century reality. A ‘return to our roots’ ideology (as displayed by the organic CONAMAQ) will not always function in light of migration and globalization in which individuals may not identify with those same ‘roots’, or have created their own new systems out of necessity or desire. Many people who have migrated from rural to urban areas do not necessarily want to return to their previous lifestyle. Often they were forced to relocate from their homes because they could not survive as small-scale subsistence farmers, miners, or merchants. Nicole Fabricant recognizes that the ideas of *vivir bien* and the ayllu system focus on rural realities. Emphasis on how to live in harmony with the environment and how to protect the natural surroundings largely ignore urban realities of over population, poverty, and inequality (Fabricant 2013). Living well in a place like El Alto would be dependent on an entirely new infrastructure.

When speaking with one member of CONAMAQ-MAS he told me how the ‘right-wing CONAMAQ’ (the way that CONAMAQ-MAS refers to the organic branch) is a small portion of the movement that is not acting rationally. He told me that they were jealous of the development that other indigenous peoples were benefitting from, the access to diverse food, the highways, and the soccer fields. He told me a story of an ongoing conflict between his ayllu and seven others that ended nearly 20 years ago. It was a disagreement that had been passed down through generations over territorial borders and bred much resentment between the groups. The ayllus had been separated under the nation state’s political-geographic borders with four positioned in Potosí and four in Oruro. Just a couple years ago, the Morales administration built 3,000 homes for orphans of this conflict. Last year they helped build 2,000 more and several synthetic soccer fields. This man told me that instead of fighting brutally amongst neighboring ayllus, they have begun organizing soccer tournaments. These factors force us to ask whether the government has appropriated CONAMAQ-MAS, or if they are acting as rational citizens in the twenty-first century. Are they following the guise of western modernity in an effort to confront immediate needs? Are they losing their indigeneity? Or are they widening the global perspective of what it means to be indigenous?

Hale concludes that we must find a balance between the impossible subject and the appropriated subject in search for, “*creative articulation* between these utopian sensibilities and the always compromised, always urgent, struggles for relief from oppression and for modest material wellbeing in the here and now” (Hale 2011). In a concrete sense, Bolivia will need to find a balance between lifting people out of poverty through neo-extractivism, and protecting Mother Nature and the rights of indigenous peoples. By looking at the split between two factions of CONAMAQ, we see the very

real and distinct needs of peoples who have emerged from similar situations. The next step will be for the Morales Administration to legally recognize both of these stances.

## **CONCLUSION**

An indigenous movement can break ties with an indigenous president because there are many ways of being indigenous. The organic CONAMAQ is pushing for societal changes that the president is not in a position to push forth. Morales must appease the needs of many different sectors of society: The Cruceño elite, the mestizo middle class, afro-descendants, lowland indigenous peoples, rural peasants, urban workers, highland indigenous peoples, and everyone in between. It is the role of social movements, outside of state governance, to push the boundaries in an effort to create change and social emancipation.

The dissolution of the Unity Pact marks a crucial moment in Bolivian history. It does not mean that the movement for indigenous rights in Bolivia is losing traction or is incompetent. Instead, it is a clear sign that activists, politicians, and scholars must reconsider how we understand indigeneity. We must recognize that there is not one way of being indigenous, for Morales is an indigenous man, as are members of CONAMAQ, and members of the other organizations that once made up the Unity Pact. Indigenous peoples are not necessarily rural guardians of Mother Nature. They live in urban areas, they rap in Aymara, and design houses in El Alto. They starve themselves in an effort to win the rights of their land that they have been promised. They are enthusiastic and hopeful. They are depressed and defeated. They are determined to create a better world for their children and grandchildren. These realities push us to recognize the plurality of indigenous experiences in order to create a harmonious Plurinational state.

## Conclusion

How are indigenous peoples negotiating their cultural, political, and economic autonomy in twenty-first century Bolivia? This thesis has explored one iteration of that struggle, through a case study of the National Council of Ayllus and Markas of Qullasuyu (CONAMAQ). I provide an overarching view of how indigenous peoples have resisted histories of exclusion and forced assimilation through state and non-state avenues in order to create spaces for their autonomy to flourish. The Plurinational State of Bolivia under president Evo Morales has accomplished profound institutional shifts in an effort to respect indigenous rights, but I argue that the (neo)liberal understanding of one homogenous indigenous subject continues to drive this project. In order to realize the goals of a plurinational state (in practice, not just in title), the Bolivian government, and non-state actors will need to acknowledge, respect, and listen to the distinct identities and goals of different subjectivities (indigenous/non-indigenous, urban/rural etc.) throughout the country. More specifically, I propose that many conflicts have arisen due to epistemological discrepancies over land use and development and can only be mediated by attention to the diverse identities of many indigenous peoples.

## CHAPTER SUMMARY

Chapter one, *Indigenous Determination in the Wake of Colonial and Liberal Exclusion*, explores the legacies of colonialism in Bolivia in order to contextualize the rise of CONAMAQ in a historical framework. Said's understanding of the other, Quijano's coloniality of power, Blaut's emphasis on European diffusionism, and Mignolo's decolonial response to Euro-centrism, theorize the pervasive effects of colonialism that continue to tint the hue of everyday life. Racialized and gendered

subjectivities are evident in the fibers of institutions, interpersonal interactions, and modes of thought. Drawing on Uday Mehta, Partha Chaterjee, Charles Taylor, and Fausto Reinaga, chapter one interrogates the inherent exclusion embedded in liberal citizenship. Emphasis on individual equality through private property delegitimizes indigenous modes of thought and interactions with the natural world rooted in collective, reciprocal relations with humans and non-humans.

Despite this ontological and epistemological subjugation, a retelling of Bolivian history demonstrates how indigenous peoples have forged a space for their own modes of governance to persevere. Chapter one concludes by situating the rise of indigenous rights in Bolivia within a global process that emerged out of the cracks of neoliberal multiculturalism. Policies of decentralization and recognition of cultural rights permitted certain indigenous subjects access to tradition and territory by working through (and risking entanglement with) dominant institutions. Out of this framework, CONAMAQ emerged as a contemporary indigenous autonomous movement in the highlands of Bolivia that is striving to reconstitute and revalorize indigenous systems of government, justice, and land tenure based in the traditional ayllu.

Chapter two, *Envisioning a Plurinational State: CONAMAQ's demands during the Bolivian Constituent Assembly*, employs Kevin Bruyneel's notion of the third space of sovereignty to explore the ways that CONAMAQ utilizes state apparatuses to negotiate further autonomy in regards to cultural politics, territory and natural resources, legal rights, and development of the ayllu. By investigating CONAMAQ's collaboration with other indigenous and peasant organizations, and opposition to the eastern *media luna* elite in the process of re-writing the Bolivian constitution, this chapter gives insight into the diverse groups that are fighting for space in Bolivian politics. Chapter two concludes with an overview of significant changes that were made behind closed doors

after the constituent assembly voted on a final version of the constitution, emphasizing the power hierarchies that continue to dominate Bolivian politics despite discursive change.

Chapter three, *Alternatives to Development: CONAMAQ's Struggle Against Neo-Extractivism*, commends the Morales Administration's institutional process of decolonization, but recognizes that their reliance on neo-extractivism reproduces the very hierarchies that their discourse aims to overcome. In an effort to understand why CONAMAQ broke away from the historical Unity Pact that supported President Morales in his rise to power, this chapter points to deeply rooted discrepancies over what it means to *vivir bien* (live well). I argue that CONAMAQ did not break away from the Unity Pact only due to the infamous TIPNIS land conflict, but rather a series of localized clashes over neo-extractivist projects and policies. I emphasize one such contentious encounter that occurred in the Mallku Khota region of Potosí in an effort to demonstrate the complex relationships between the state, transnational companies, cooperative miners, and members of CONAMAQ. Through this case study, we see that rural indigenous peoples who have been subjugated for centuries continue to be deprived of basic rights in the name of progress and development for the greater good.

#### **DEEPENING THE BOLIVIAN PROCESS OF CHANGE**

This thesis draws on long histories of oppression to suggest that contemporary expansion and extraction continue to breed dependency and limit sustainability. I have touched on many of the problems that the Morales Administration will have to confront in the next four years. These include diminishing support from certain indigenous peoples, whether they will go forward in building the TIPNIS highway, determining how

consultation processes will be enacted, and balancing extraction with environmental protection. Further issues that this thesis has not touched on include violence against women, overcrowding of the prison system, and impunity for human rights violators. These issues (particularly the latter) are not unique to Bolivia. Rather, they are symptoms of a larger struggle to explore how we can meet basic economic needs while transitioning to more sustainable forms of development.

Studying revolutionary grassroots projects and major shifts in political thought reveal the length of time necessary to sync institutional changes with social imaginary. Decolonization and plurinationalism remain in the early stages of turning theory into praxis and require time and energy from both the state and grassroots movements to become sedentary. While alternative lifestyles are flourishing at the community level, they are not yet respected on a larger scale. While CONAMAQ and CIDOB, the two major indigenous movements in Bolivia, have broken away from the Movimiento a Socialismo (Movement towards Socialism-MAS), this does not mean that the effort to decolonize society is dwindling. On the contrary, it is a sign that social organizations are confronting complexities and contradictions in an effort to push the Process of Change to new levels.

The country of Bolivia has recognized that striving to create a unified nation state through homogenous liberal citizenship will inevitably favor the dominant group at the expense of disenfranchised populations. Bolivia has not yet realized a post-liberal state, however it may very well be at the forefront of creative alternatives. There is profound multiplicity within Bolivia so that one sibling may make a living off extracting resources, while another risks their life to protest mining companies. While one woman harvests potatoes, her sons and daughters may be in the city of El Alto attending university or buying and selling electronics sent from China. This thesis is an exercise in recognizing

that there are many ways of being in this world, in Bolivia, in the Andes, and within indigenous communities. Furthermore, it promotes the right for those who choose to live according to their own systems of governance to do so without the threat of displacement and environmental degradation.

I do not believe that the ayllu is *the* decolonial solution, but rather one decolonial option. This does not mean that the Bolivian State should adopt the ayllu system on a national scale, for we know that indigenous peoples make up only about half of the population, and that amongst them only a fraction desire to live according to ayllu community structures. Nonetheless, the ethics of the ayllu provide insight into how national and global markets could rethink capitalist assumptions in an effort to create less exploitative systems.

## **GLOBAL IMPACTS**

There are substantial obstacles to the widespread adoption of socio-political alternatives. Perhaps the greatest obstacles are presented by political-corporate power and vested interests, yet at times the psychological barrier to believing that alternatives can work seems almost as difficult to overcome. Political and economic barriers make change feel impossible. This feeling of helplessness that is perpetuated by environmental statistics that say even our greatest efforts won't be enough to save the planet are paralyzing. I hope that by acknowledging an existing alternative to capitalism and Western modernity (even on a small scale), we will recognize that imagining the impossible is possible, taking us one step closer to realizing the (im)possible.

In his essay *Future City*, Frederic Jameson laments, "Nowadays it seems easier to imagine the end of the world than to imagine the end of capitalism". The realist in me



acknowledges that human beings are voluntarily sleepwalking towards natural catastrophe and human annihilation through warfare, exploitation, and the destruction of our planet. As I reflect on Mignolo's frustration that humans would like to save capitalism instead of humans and nature, I am reminded of the ways that people are more concerned about the health of their bank account than their own health or the health of the planet. By describing the Andean indigenous ayllu system, the optimist in me hopes to challenge myself (and others) to abandon the belief that 'there is no other way' and push us to reimagine what labor and human and non-human relationships could look like through intentional living.

In light of global economic decline and environmental disaster, exploring grassroots movements such as CONAMAQ provides local communities, national governments, and non-governmental organizations around the world a sense of what one alternative for one community might look like. I reiterate that the ayllu is not a universal solution, but that there are larger lessons to be learned when imagining more horizontal and reciprocal ways of cohabitating with humans and nature. I continue to consider how these lessons of equilibrium, solidarity, and collective well-being can be applied to both rural and urban areas without appropriating indigenous struggle.

By recognizing the ayllu as a legitimate center of indigenous knowledge production, and the local center of a decolonial option, I hope to contribute to the ongoing movement to recognize and value the numerous ontologies and epistemologies that make up the pluriverse. Furthermore, I hope that some of the ethics of *vivir bien* as described throughout this thesis are ones that indigenous and non-indigenous peoples alike might value in their own ways so that we can all strive to create a more harmonious relationship with those around us and with nature.

## **TAKING RESPONSIBILITY**

In order for the decolonial option to thrive as a legitimate player in a pluriversal world, Western powers must acknowledge the existence of multiple ways of knowing and being. By promoting universal truths, the West continues to silence indigenous ways of life that do not fit neatly within their scientific matrix of reason. The colonization of knowledge and existence reduces humans and non-humans to disposable and exploitable objects, commodities and resources. CONAMAQ and other Andean indigenous movements are subjected to these subordinating, homogenizing, racist threats and violences. In the words of Lilla Watson, an indigenous Australian Murri activist, “If you come here to help me, you’re wasting your time. If you come because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let us work together.” I believe that non-Indigenous peoples have a role in the indigenous struggle, for we are all part of a greater ecosystem. Decolonization relies on the white man’s consciousness that their privilege and power is in turn oppressing other people whether or not they are aware of it.

Therefore, we must engage in ongoing discussions, guided by a praxis of listening to negotiate a balance between promoting alternatives to development while simultaneously recognizing immediate economic needs. In a world where businesses, corporations, and government tend to heavily favor economic needs, I believe that organizations such as CONAMAQ hold a crucial role in the creation of alternatives to development. It is worth noting once again that the ayllu is not a utopian space, nor a universal solution, but is proof that alternatives to Western modernity can and do exist.

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