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Indigenous peoples vs peasant unions: land conflicts and rural movements in plurinational Bolivia

Lorenza Belinda Fontana

Agrarian reforms do not constitute linear processes: rather, they are based on the interconnection between the crystallization of land governance in formal tenure rules and the way societies organize around a set of identities and power mechanisms. This paper focuses on how the misinterpretation of this two-way relationship, in setting up a new normative framework, can generate unintended consequences in terms of conflict. The recent wave of land conflicts in Bolivia shows how changes in the allocation of strategic resources inspired by the so-called 'politics of recognition' triggered processes of political ethnicization and organizational fragmentation, eventually contributing to fuelling new tensions between indigenous groups and peasant unions.

Keywords: Bolivia; land conflict; agrarian reform; indigenous movements; peasant unions

Introduction

2013 marks the sixtieth anniversary of Bolivian agrarian reform. In 1953, in Ucureña, a small village in the inter-Andean valleys of Cochabamba province, the then President and leader of the national revolution, Víctor Paz Estenssoro, signed the decree that started the first large-scale land distribution of Bolivian history. In 2006, in the same village, the newly elected president Evo Morales launched the so-called 'mechanized agrarian revolution'. Over nearly 60 years, the Bolivian agrarian legislation was repeatedly revised and the very symbolic and political value of land has shifted from a traditional class-redistributive focus towards (multi)cultural and social dimensions.

In Latin America, from the 1990s, the paradigm of ethnic recognition[1] inspired various regulatory reforms to deal with land tenure, self-determination claims and indigenous rights (Assies *et al*. 2000).[2] From an empirically grounded analysis of land conflicts emerging in Bolivia over the past two decades, this contribution aims to highlight the limitations of purely economistic approaches to the agrarian question, as well as indicating the

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[1]The argument underlying this paradigm is that individual and collective identities are in need of recognition and that the negation of this recognition would generate harmful consequences. Indeed, blindness to difference has been used to discriminate against others, and the solution to discrimination, exclusion and racism should therefore pass through the explicit recognition of discriminated identities.
[2]For a comparative discussion on the politics of recognition and the indigenous rights, including land governance, in different world regions, see Hodgson (2002), Kymlicka (2007) and Engle (2010).

shortcomings of some of the dominant approaches in collective action studies which share epistemological premises with the theories of recognition.

Bolivia is an interesting case for studying the dynamic relationship between land-related norms, social movements and conflict. It is one of the countries in which a set of reforms inspired by the politics of recognition was most radically and systematically implemented, with important effects on the way strategic resources are allocated and social differences are renegotiated. This occurred, in the first place, in the framework of the multicultural institutional reform implemented by neoliberal governments in the 1990s, and, more recently, in the so-called Movimento al Socialismo (MAS) 'cultural revolution'. The 'post-neoliberal' breakthrough and the 'Leftist turn' attributed to the Morales government[3] have generally attracted greater attention than have elements of continuity (Prashad and Ballve 2006, Macdonald and Rückert 2009). However, concerning the management of ethno-cultural diversity and resources, these two periods – the neoliberal and the 'post-neoliberal' – show a significant degree of consistency. In particular, the new Constitution (2009) – and the re-foundation of Bolivia as a Plurinational State – tend towards strengthening the system of resource allocation and identity differentiation set up by the neoliberal governments. This does not imply that significant changes in land allocation were absent. Indeed, the effort by the state to regain control over large and unproductive areas led to the redistribution of considerable extensions of land to rural communities[4].

After sketching the theoretical framework and summarizing the main reforms of land governance in Bolivia over the last 60 years, this paper focuses on the causes and characteristics of intra-societal land conflicts. An analysis of the Apolo conflict between the Leco indigenous organization and the local peasant union will show how, in certain contexts, social tensions around land tenure arose as a consequence of radical organizational and identitarian transformations, under the influence of broader regulatory and political changes. The emergence of new conflicts between social movements linked to neoliberal and post-neoliberal reforms of land governance will be the basis for a critical discussion of three assumptions embedded in mainstream collective action theories as well as in normative approaches to identity and recognition: (1) the relationship between recognition and redistribution in the genesis of social mobilization and in the process of claims-making; (2) the interchangeable meaning of 'claims' and 'rights' and the problematic nature of ideas of emancipation and social justice applied to land and resource conflicts; (3) the dichotomous portrayal of state vs civil society as the main framework for the analysis of collective action.

This paper relies on two years' fieldwork using multiple qualitative methods, including: 80 interviews with public officers, movements' leaders, experts and advisors, conducted between 2010 and 2013; four participatory workshops with grassroots and social movements' leaders (July 2010), and content analysis of national and local press and other documentary materials produced by social organizations and public institutions.

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[3]Post-neoliberalism is defined as a political phase characterized by an effort to build a new social consensus that combines the attempt to redirect economic policy by increasing government spending, export management and tax reform, with a citizenship project driven mainly by the recognition of ethno-cultural differences (Grugel and Raggirozzi 2009).

[4]According to the Instituto Nacional de Reforma Agraria (INRA), private owners had lost control over about 35 million hectares and indigenous and peasant people now occupy 55 percent of the land available in the country. In particular, between 2006 and 2012, land under state control increased by more than 23 million hectares, mainly due to the expropriation of unproductive lands (Razón 2012). The distribution of indigenous collective land was also significant: 8.35 million hectares in the highlands and 13.85 in the lowlands.

Land governance and the politics of recognition

Land reforms are not purely technocratic processes; they remain 'intense political acts', not only for their redistributive element (Pellegrini and Dasgupta 2011), but also for their power to influence the way societies are shaped (Bretón 2008, McNeish 2002, Bottazzi and Rist 2012, Haarstad 2012). From a theoretical point of view, the study of the relationship between the agrarian issue and social movements has often focused on how the latter have led struggles and strategies to pressure the state to reform the legal system of ownership, access and exploitation of the national territory (Hylton and Thomson 2007). With some significant exceptions (Assies 2002, McNeish 2002), less attention has been devoted to the retroactive effects of such changes in the legal system on the social body, i.e. the process of re-shaping rural collective identities, group interests and conflict linked to land governance reforms.

For instance, these aspects are not included in purely economic approaches focused on the possession, distribution and management of land primarily intended as a productive good (Bottazzi and Rist 2012). Nor are they properly addressed through sociological theories that consider social movements (and their identities) as exogenous variables, i.e. as drivers of change rather than social actors involved themselves in a continuous process of adaptation to the context. In this sense, the line of interpretation was at first one of redistributive justice and development (corresponding to twentieth-century Marxist-inspired and nationalist revolutions) (Alexander 1974, Duncan and Routledge 1977, Baranyi *et al.* 2004) and at a later stage, one of ethnic recognition (corresponding to the so-called 'new social movements' and 'neoindigenism') (Rivera 1984, Escobar and Alvarez 1992, Yashar 2005, Postero 2006, Van Cott 2007, Gustafson 2009).

The latter were deeply influenced by the theory of recognition (Taylor 1994, Honneth 1995, Kymlicka 2001), which, from the 1980s, has become one of the most widespread theses in political philosophy, and was subsequently transplanted to the social sciences. One of its main assumptions is that our identity is shaped by recognition – and also by its absence. Within the literature on identity-politics, recognition is connected not so much to the universal right to equal respect as to a group's specific cultural configuration. Identity politics are based on the idea that in the name of the survival of a given collectivity, a universal form of recognition is not enough. Taylor (1999, 29) defines identity politics as aiming at 'recognizing [a given group] in its particularity'. This would be even truer in the case of collective identities, grounded on cultural traditions that have the right to be preserved.

The theory of recognition had a great impact on the way in which the indigenous question was framed in Latin America.[5] From the 1980s, a new international logic gained importance, which was based on the assumption that the indigenous issue had to be addressed through a series of special measures, which in principle constituted exceptions to the post-war set of international rules regarding ethno-cultural minorities. In particular: the recognition of land claims, language rights and customary law, and groups' aspirations to exercise control over their own institutions.

Under the influence of this theoretical and normative framework, measures were taken at the state level to introduce new collective rights for indigenous peoples (Lucero 2006,

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[5]The situation has been slightly different in Africa. Yet also in this context, an over-emphasis on the ethnic element has been pointed out by a growing number of scholars. Different types of conflicts – from sporadic, localized violence to protracted civil and cross-border wars – have been read through ethnic lenses, obscuring the fact that most of them are linked simultaneously to 'preoccupations about land' and to 'contests over political power' (Peters 2004, 271).

Van Cott 2007) and international development institutions started to actively promote indigenous organizations in the effort to prioritize cultural claims, which appeared to be more compatible with the neoliberal model (Bretón 2008). One of the major and more widespread sets of reforms concerned the governance of land and territory. This was mainly developed in response to widespread claims of the indigenous movements, for whom territory progressively became a powerful binding medium for local group identification (Sawyer 1997, Perrault 2001). A new generation of land governance reforms was implemented, which, among the main innovations, included the institutionalization and effective implementation of collective and customary property rights.

Under the influence of post-modern thinking ('new social movements' and postcolonial), the rise of the indigenous issue in the political agenda has often been read as a process of 'empowerment of subaltern groups' and as the way through which new rights and participation spaces were achieved. As a consequence, the accent has been put on ethnic- or gender-specific sociological categories and cultural subjects, while the roles of 'the economic' – and of land as a strategic resource – have been either denied or downgraded (Brass 1991). In contrast, I argue that, beyond the symbolic nature of cultural struggles, analysis of conflicts over land must account for both its redistributive dimension as well as for changes in cultural and identity recognition. From a theoretical perspective, some attempts have been made to reconcile these two viewpoints (de Sousa Santos 2001, Fraser 2003). This complementarity nevertheless failed to achieve a consistent analytical paradigm for the study of the relationship between resource allocations (through governance reforms) and intra-societal conflicts. This paper addresses the challenge of considering redistribution and recognition simultaneously through a multidimensional analysis of contemporary conflicts between social organizations in rural Bolivia. The study includes a mid-term historical trajectory of land governance reforms, an empirically grounded analysis of contemporary conflicts between social organizations and discussion of some general theoretical implications.

Sixty years of agrarian reform

As in many other Latin American countries, in Bolivia the territorial issue has been a field of unresolved tensions and cyclical struggles since the formation of the state 200 years ago (de Janvry and Ground 1978, Kay and Urioste 2007). In the first half of the twentieth century, Bolivian agriculture consisted primarily of three different kinds of productive relationships: feudal-style relations typical of large and medium-sized *haciendas*, involved in export-oriented production, especially in the Santa Cruz region; a subsistence economy of local (indigenous) communities based on the combination of private and collective land ownership, mainly in the highlands and valleys; and a small sector of free production based on family labor working their own properties. The agrarian reform of 1953 targeted the feudal-style relationship by attempting to eliminate the system of bondage that supported *hacienda* production while strengthening rural peasant unions (Paz Ballivián 2009). This, however, was only partially effective in the Andean highlands, where it failed to satisfactorily resolve the demand for land and eventually resulted in land parcelization. At the same time, during the 1960s, there was an acceleration in the occupation of the eastern tropical lowlands, which led to the formation of huge landholdings, which were surrounded by smallholding colonists (Assies 2002). Indigenous communities were formally granted collective titles, but this was not implemented in practice.

Between 1953 and 1993, 52 percent of Bolivian land was redistributed with very different impact depending on the region. In the highlands and valleys, tenants and peasants

received a significant amount of land from the expropriation of the haciendas, while in the lowlands, redistribution strengthened the patronage system and the agro-industrial speculative bourgeoisie. At the same time, the peasant movement was fragmented by internal fights generated by the efforts of the political elites – especially during the Barrientos dictatorship – to co-opt part of the peasant leadership (an emblematic case is the series of conflicts in Cochabamba known as the *Champa Guerra*; Calderón and Dandler 1984, Gordillo 2000). Moreover, new groups linked to the state and the unions' bureaucracy grew, which used power in the detriment of the peasant sector. This also generated new conflicts between peasant communities and neighborhood *cholos*, i.e. the village elites who traditionally played a role as intermediaries between central and local administrative levels (Calderón 2010). Ultimately, this first round of land reform was not successful in sustainably addressing inequality or in contributing to socio-economic development (Bottazzi and Rist 2012).

A second pivotal moment in agrarian reform was the approval of Law 1715 (Law of the National Institute of the Agrarian Reform, INRA) in 1996 under the neoliberal government of Sanchez de Losada. Some of its main innovations were the distinction between individual and collective land tenure rights and the introduction of the *Tierra Comunitaria de Orígen* (TCO), institutionalizing the collective titling of large areas of land to social organizations formally recognized as indigenous (Figure 1). This type of property is inalienable, indivisible, collective, non-mortgageable and tax free, which implies limitations to private property rights and thus to accumulation (Regalsky 2010). This new form of collective tenure accelerated the titling process for indigenous land because of the relative ease of mapping the perimeter of large land areas and then issuing a single property title. This was true at least in contexts where no conflicts with third parties and neighboring landowners were encountered.

The Instituto Nacional de Reforma Agraria (INRA) Law also tried to resolve conflicts due to overlapping titles, which existed mainly due to errors in the implementation of the first agrarian reform.[6] The principle of exclusivity of land property was established. As a consequence, many community members faced the dilemma of deciding between individual or collective titling. In the lowlands, indigenous communities overwhelmingly opted for the TCOs. However, in the Andean region, the growing demands for TCOs of certain groups eventually increased the conflicts with a high number of landowners and even entire communities instead claiming for individual or communal titles.

The INRA law was highly influenced by new international trends (Assies 2007). In 1989, the most important international binding rule on the rights of indigenous peoples came into force: the 169 Convention of the International Labour Organization (ILO) on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples, which entitled these groups to special territorial, cultural and self-determination rights. The second part of the ILO Convention specifically contains provisions on the land rights of indigenous peoples, stating that 'The rights of ownership and possession of the peoples concerned over the lands which they traditionally occupy shall be recognized' (Ulfstein 2004, 16). The Convention was ratified by Bolivia in 1991.

The election of Evo Morales in December 2005 inaugurated a new political era. The land issue was integrated into the first round of reforms of the MAS government. On 2 June 2006, the President launched seven Decrees, which provided new guidelines on this

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[6]Overlapping titling affected between 30 percent and 60 percent of Bolivian national territory. Up to 60 percent of owners would have had questionable land titles as a result of overlap and irregularities in the procedures (Assies 2006).
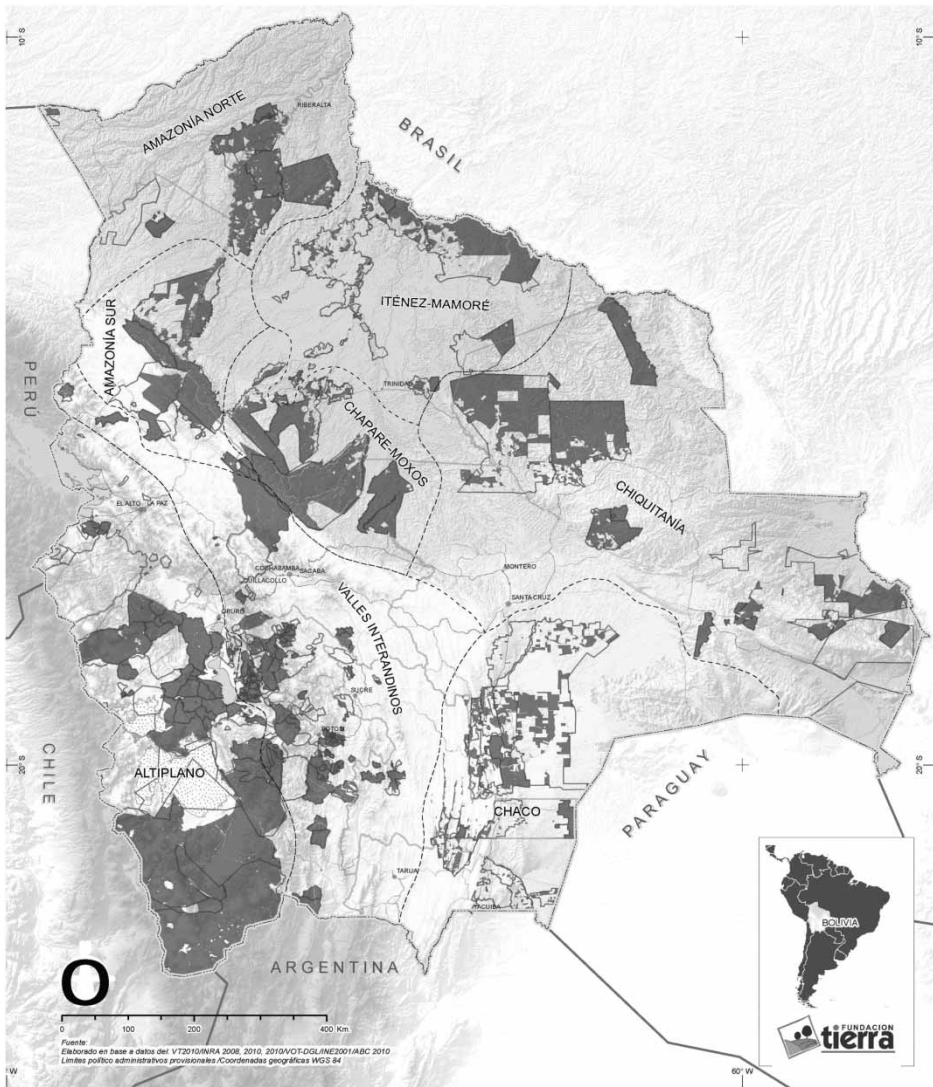
Figure 1.   Titled and claimed indigenous territories (TCOs) in Bolivia.
Source: Fundación Tierra 2010.

matter. Among the most important measures was the commitment to complete the cadastral study (*saneamiento*) of 2 to 4 million hectares of government-owned land for rural communities. The latter were now reclassified, no longer as peasant or indigenous, but under the 'trinitarian' concept of '*indígena originario campesino*' (native indigenous peasant).[7] The new legal framework was complemented by two other instruments: Law 3545 (*Ley*

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[7]'Native indigenous peasant people or nation is a human collectivity that shares cultural identity, language, historical tradition, institutions, territoriality and worldview, the existence of which is prior to the Spanish colonial invasion' (Bolivian Constitution 2009, Art. 30). The creation of this new discursive category capable of unifying all sectors of the rural world within a single indivisible

de Reconducción Comunitaria), enacted in November 2006, and the new Constitution, approved by referendum in January 2009.

The Constitution includes some principles of the previous body of norms, such as the enforcement of the Economic and Social Function (FES)[8] and expropriation as mechanisms for combating land concentration. In particular, Article 398 sets the limit of individual land property at 5000 hectares, although the resistance of the agribusiness sector led to a lack of retroactive enforcement. In addition, Article 2 introduces a special type of autonomy for 'native indigenous peasant peoples' (*Autonomia Indígena Origi-nario Campesina*, AIOC), which – in contrast to the other three types of autonomy (municipal, departmental and regional) – relies upon ethno-cultural rather than territorial and administrative bases (Albó and Romero 2009, Chumacero 2009). According to the Constitution, the introduction of differentiated sets of rights among different groups of the population is paramount in the definition of territorial autonomy, to guarantee the 'exercise of a political, juridical and economic system according to [its inhabitants'] world view' (Art. 18).

So far, 18 municipalities have started the procedure for conversion into indigenous autonomous territorial units. Twelve among them were authorized to carry out a referendum and, on 6 December 2009, 11 voted 'Yes'. They have therefore pioneered the implementation of a new ethnic-based system of autonomy (Salgado 2009).

In general, however, the new regulatory framework does not do much in the way of providing guidelines to help resolve longstanding or new conflicts between social organizations with incompatible views on land ownership.

Intra-societal land and identity conflicts

A land conflict is defined as a social fact where interests of at least two parties enter into a contradiction in relation to property rights and land use (Wehrmann 2008). In Bolivia, agrarian struggles' imaginary was often catalyzed by the conflicts between indigenous communities or landless peasants and big landowners, especially in the lowlands (Villanueva 2004). However, more recently, land conflict has shifted to the western highlands and valleys and has confronted rural social organizations themselves, becoming predominantly intra-societal (Bottazzi and Rist 2012). As the chief of the Conciliation and Conflict Management Unit of the INRA explains:

> Nowadays, the greatest land conflicts in Bolivia are between native communities and syndical organizations. These conflicts are more intense than the conflicts between communities and big landowners, since the latter could be resolved by applying the new Constitution and the principle of the 5000 hectares, while, for the former, there are no clear and defined criteria. Ideological and economic problems are at stake, which, however, are never openly admitted. (La Paz, 26 May 2010)

Indeed, beyond formal tenure claims, a variety of factors fuel these conflicts, such as organizational differences, natural resource control or power and identity issues that are connected to the land as a productive and social good.

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concept was one of the most evident manifestations of the cohesive effort undertaken by MAS. For an analysis of the category and its political implications see Fontana (2014).
[8]This implies the obligation to use the lands for the well-being and economic development of their owners, according to their carrying capacity.

A major cause of rural conflicts in Bolivia is land scarcity provoked by several factors such as population growth, highly fragmented tenures (*minufundio*) and loss of soil fertility. This is coupled with a highly unequal distribution of land between families and social groups, despite the improvements registered in recent years.[9]

The changes at the regulatory level also had important consequences on intra-societal conflicts. In 1996, the INRA Law instituted a 10-year period for the *saneamiento* to regularize property rights throughout the country. In certain cases, the intensification of conflicts between villages was thus the result of the acceleration in the process of mapping and formalizing territorial boundaries, which had remained fluid up until then (Reyes-García *et al.* 2012). In addition, since its creation, the administrative apparatus of INRA proved to be quite inefficient and was losing credibility vis-à- vis social organizations. These institutional weaknesses worsened situations of conflict due to the impossibility of INRA acting as a legitimate and reliable mediator.

Moreover, the collectivist policy implemented over the last 20 years – including the prioritization of TCOs' titling – created tensions between rural organizations and a sense of discrimination amongst the peasantry. This fact impacted on not only the number of conflicts, but also on their nature. Indeed, the introduction of a link between ethnic belonging and systems of resource allocation favored the instrumentalization of ethnic identities and contributed to the radicalization of social tensions.[10] Those social groups identifying themselves as indigenous, and who were formally recognized as such through a system of certification issued by the *Viceministerio de Asuntos Indígenas y Pueblos Originarios* (VAIPO), had priority to land titling. Critically, the process of ethnicization contributed to changing the very nature of rural conflicts. The parties' positions shifted from resource-based claims to ethno-identitarian issues, traditionally more resistant to bargained agreements (Taras and Ganguly 2008), and the conflicts became ethno-political in nature.[11] The situation was exacerbated as well by the fact that the TCOs' titling process was generously funded by international cooperation agencies[12] (Assies 2006), while the budget for peasant land titling was lower and did not receive international aid.

The discourse of the most important rural movements reflects the plurality of causes of intra-societal conflicts. On one side, the two main indigenous/native organizations – the *Confederación de Pueblos Indígenas de Bolivia* (CIDOB) and the *Cosejo Nacional de Ayllus y Markas del Qullasuyu* (CONAMAQ) – claim the titling of their territories as

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[9]See Razón 2012.
[10]Similar effects on social fragmentation, increased competition and intra-communitarian power dynamics provoked by the neoliberal reforms have been described by Víctor Bretón (2008) in the case of Ecuador. His analysis of the World Bank-led *Proyecto de Desarrollo de los Pueblos Indígenas y Negros del Ecuador* (PRODEPINE) shows a high correlation between the amount of resources invested, their number, the number of executive entities and the proportion of indigenous population. The project followed essentialised culturalist parameters and, in little more than three decades, was responsible for the neglect of structural issues, the privatization and/or externalization of development interventions, and a near-exclusive focus on the indigenous population. Ultimately, the ethnicization of the indigenous movement through the prioritization of culture and identity politics at the expense of the class-based peasant agenda hindered the formation of alliances between indigenous groups and other sectors of society and increased the emergence of class tensions within indigenous groups themselves.
[11]Marchetti and Tocci (2011, 55–6) define ethno-political conflicts as 'situations in which groups, self-defined in ethnic terms, articulate their subject position in mutually incompatible ways'.
[12]A telling example is the 10-year long program of the Danish cooperation (DANIDA) *Support to the rights of indigenous peoples*.

TCOs and the protection of their collective rights. These demands are rooted in a strong ethno-identitarian narrative that has generally emerged from a recent process of cultural recovery:

> The natives want the titling of their territory to directly guarantee access to natural resources and to restore our territory and traditional collective life. We all have our own functions within our principles of rotation, complementarily and reciprocity in our *ayllus.*[13] (interview with a CONAMAQ advisor, La Paz, 05 August 2010)

On the other side, peasants affiliated to the union (*Confederación Unica de Trabajadores Campesinos de Bolivia* -CSUTCB) prefer individual land titles or, in some cases, communitarian title (one title in name of a particular community, rather than of the 'people'), but oppose the TCO, which is considered an unfair and irrational way of land management. Through a strong evocative analogy, they define the TCOs as the 'new *latifundio*'. Indeed, although the Peasant Federation was born in the late 1970s under the leadership of the indianist Katarism movement that was rooted in the tradition of the highlands' Aymara and Quechua 'native nations', in this new phase, no trace is left of those origins. Rather, a classist discourse regains strength, which puts emphasis on the peasant position in the mode of production, but through a narrative that links this identity with a sort of syndicalist native primordialism.[14]

> Blood and the surname that runs through the blood of each and every one that lives in the CSUTCB area is peasant, before indigenous. Peasants, whether farmers, stockbreeders, fishers, llama shepherds – we are identified as peasants. (…) [We] are from different cultures and languages, but before being 'indigenous' [we] recognize as native peasants. (interview with the CSUTCB's Secretary of Land and Territory, La Paz, 02 August 2010)

The processes of identity articulation around the categories of 'indigenous' and 'peasant' are not new in Bolivia. Two key moments can be identified in the dynamic of articulation/disarticulation of these identities: the period after the National Revolution of 1952 and the post-dictatorship neoliberal era (1980s–1990s).

   In the 1950s, a process of massive *campesinization* imposed the peasant unions as a new dominant form of rural organization. At the same time, the affirmation of the *mestizaje* ideology promoted class-based identities, rather than ethnic-based identities, as collective mechanisms of self-identification (Sanjinés 2005). In the following 30 years, the very notion of citizenship in the rural world overlapped with belonging to a peasant union (García Linera 2010). In many regions of the highlands, however, the new organizational system did not eradicate traditional regimes of territorial organization (Rivera 1984), which managed to survive in a more or less symbiotic or conflictive relationship with syndicates.

   In the mid-1980s, a changing political and economic climate in Bolivia, combined with important international transformations, created a situation that undermined both the state policies and the syndicalist tradition of the previous 30 years (McNeish 2002). With the

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[13]Traditionally, the *ayllu* was an endogamous social unit, which worked the land in a collective form in the framework of a commonly owned territory (Rivera Cusicanqui 1993). Nowadays, there is considerable variance in the form and meaning of the *ayllu*, generally defining groups based on kinship and virilocality with their own system of land management (McNeish 2002).
[14]This could also inspire further discussion on the new forms that the peasant 'consciousness' is taking, relying upon identity and recognition rather than 'on the firmer base of a concrete system of economic or social interrelations' (Hobsbawm 1973, 7).

end of the dictatorship and the rise of neoliberalism, a new movement of revitalization of ethno-cultural identities gained strength in the lowlands, with the creation of the indigenous organization CIDOB. About 10 years later, a similar process started among some communities of the highlands, leading to the foundation of the highlands' native confederation CONAMAQ (Andolina *et al.* 2005). As a result, new identitarian contours, mainly driven by the emergence of new ethnic-based social movements (self-defined *indígena* in the lowlands and *originario* in the highlands) reshaped Bolivian social geographies.

The revitalization of the 'indigenous issue' and a generalized process of 'political ethnicization' cannot be understood without considering the role of external actors. Indeed, the economic and ideological basis of this change lies, at least in part, in the actions of international cooperation agencies and some engaged anthropologists who supported and financed these new indigenous and native organizations (McNeish 2002, Andolina *et al.* 2005, Bretón 2008, Rodríguez-Carmona 2009). These actions were heavily criticized by the peasant sector, which accused international agencies of having deliberately favored one social group to the detriment of the other.

Beyond these accusations, it was clear that since the 1990s, with the creation and strengthening of new ethno-cultural movements, the corporatist monopoly of peasant and workers unions was definitively broken. Social organizations rearticulated around

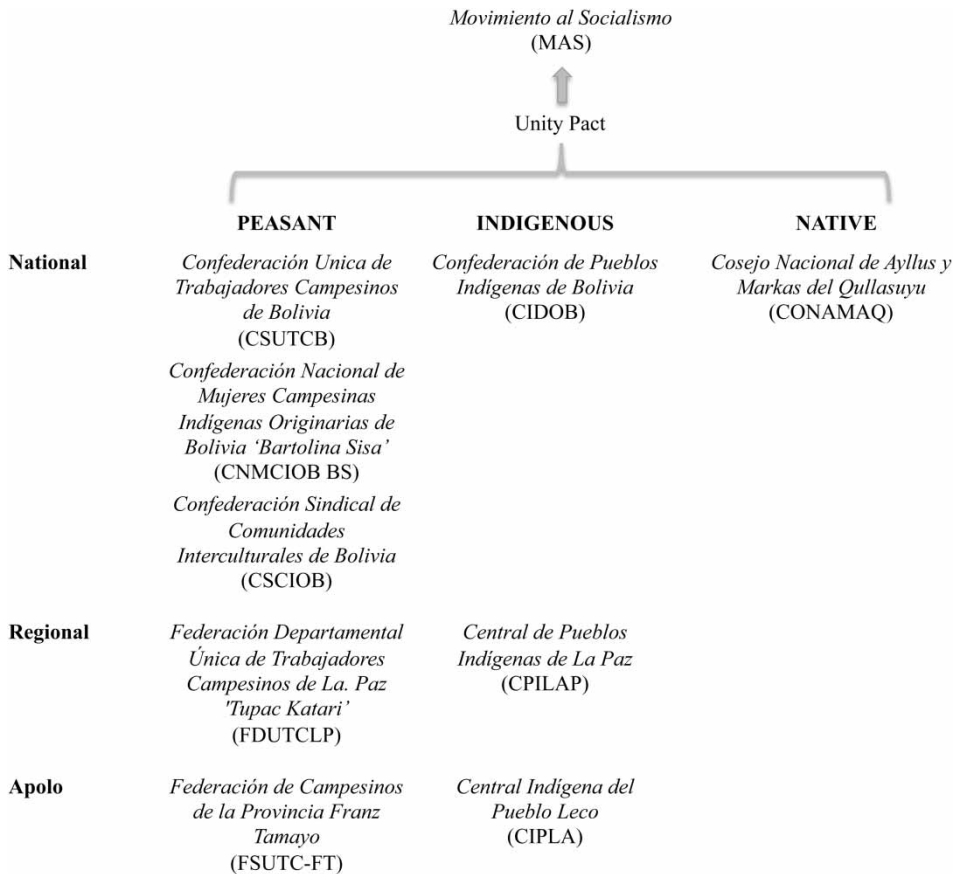|	PEASANT	INDIGENOUS	NATIVE
	Movimiento al Socialismo (MAS)		
	Unity Pact		
National	*Confederación Unica de Trabajadores Campesinos de Bolivia* (CSUTCB)	*Confederación de Pueblos Indígenas de Bolivia* (CIDOB)	*Cosejo Nacional de Ayllus y Markas del Qullasuyu* (CONAMAQ)
	Confederación Nacional de Mujeres Campesinas Indígenas Originarias de Bolivia 'Bartolina Sisa' (CNMCIOB BS)		
	Confederación Sindical de Comunidades Interculturales de Bolivia (CSCIOB)		
Regional	*Federación Departamental Única de Trabajadores Campesinos de La. Paz 'Tupac Katari'* (FDUTCLP)	*Central de Pueblos Indígenas de La Paz* (CPILAP)	
Apolo	*Federación de Campesinos de la Provincia Franz Tamayo* (FSUTC-FT)	*Central Indígena del Pueblo Leco* (CIPLA)	

Figure 2.   Multi-scale organogram of peasant and indigenous organizations (author's elaboration).

a multi-polar system with two main and opposed poles: the peasant unions and the native indigenous movements. This process was also accelerated by the weakening of the *Central Obrera Boliviana* (COB) as articulator of popular fights and social claims. Looking at the Bolivian rural organogram, on the side of the peasant unions are the CSUTCB, the *Confederación de las Mujeres Campesinas Bartolina Sisa* (CNMCIOB BS) and the *Confederación Sindical de Comunidades Interculturales de Bolivia* (CSCIOB) and, on the side of native indigenous movements, CONAMAQ and CIDOB (Figure 2). The divide between peasant and indigenous/native sectors has been growing despite the fact that from 2005, all the major rural movements decided to join a coalition of social forces to support the MAS. This alliance was paramount to ensure the electoral victory of Evo Morales, but, as it became clear over the following years, he eventually found himself depending on a quite unstable and conflictive constituency (Fontana 2013). The fractures between indigenous and peasant sectors are increasingly evident in the discourse of their respective leaders. Here are some examples:

> They [the indigenous] do not think for the whole country, they think only for their landowners and some groups that want to make profit (...). In contrast, the CSUTCB has always thought through a structural economic and political perspective of state unity. (interview with the CSUTCB Land and Territory Secretary, cit.)
>
> The three national movements – CSUTCB, Bartolinas and Interculturals – are our *wawa qhallus* ['sons', 'children']. They don't have territory. They are in our territory. (interview with a CONAMAQ leader, La Paz, 5 August 2010)

At the local level, the fight between peasant and indigenous organizations was manifested mainly in the effort to strengthen control of their political power. In certain cases, the leaders carried out 'conversion campaigns' to persuade people to join their organization, taking advantage of the strong corporatist sense present in the Bolivian population, the ambivalence and fluidity of collective identities and the endemic scarcity of economic resources. This is how a former advisor of CONAMAQ described the native proselytism:

> There are leaders who enter the peasant territories to convince people. They go and put native authorities where once there was the peasant union (...). For many leaders of CONAMAQ, reconstitution means controlling the peasant communities that, before, were part of their ancestral territories. This is exactly the root of the ideological and political conflicts that exist in the local ambit. *The members of the Peasant Federation do not want to be reconverted into indigenous.* [Emphasis added]. (interview with a former advisor of CONAMAQ, La Paz, 30 June 2010)

In some cases, the initial situation was quite clear in terms of identity and cultural features, such as in many areas of the highlands where Quechua and Aymara people preserved their language, culture and traditional organizational structures, although sometimes adapting to the syndical system. In other areas, where indigenous groups were smaller and more vulnerable to external shocks, many of the local cultural, linguistic and identitarian traits were lost. Here, the identity revitalization was more complex, generating, in certain cases, ethnogenesis processes.[15] The rise of new indigenous groups is a telling example

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[15]These are processes of creation of new ethnic identities in which members of a collectivity recognize and affirm themselves as different from other groups' members and from the social environment.

of the ethnicization dynamic that Bolivia is experiencing and, in certain contexts, it is at the origin of new intra-societal conflicts.

Indigenous Leco vs. Peasant Federation: the land conflict in Apolo

An interesting case of ethnogenesis concerns the Leco people of Apolo, an Amazonian municipality in the northwest of Bolivia. Here, the creation of a new ethnic-based organiz-ation (*Central Indígena del Pueblo Leco*, CIPLA) triggered a conflict with the local peasant union (*Federación de Campesinos de la Provincia Franz Tamayo*, FSUTC-FT), which, in 2007, reached frightening peaks of violence and still remains unsolved at the time of writing.

The conflict in Apolo originated in the mid-1990s, as a consequence of a combination of events. At the national level, in October 1996 the INRA Law was approved, introducing the TCO as a form of collective land titling for native and indigenous peoples. At the local level, the FSUTC-FT – at that time the only organic organization in the region – was upset by divisions among its leaders. In 1997, a breakaway group decided to found a new indigenous movement: the CIPLA. They rapidly made contact with local communities and instituted a form of discourse based on ethno-identitarian claims and on the revival of culture, traditions, routines and customs of the Leco people.

The Leco was one of the four dominant groups in the Apolo region in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (together with the Aguachiles, Tacanas and Quechuas). Following colonization by the Inca and then the Spanish, the Leco mixed with populations of different cultural and ethnic origins.[16] A few traces of their language and traditions still survive among contemporary Apolo inhabitants. It is important to note, however, that nowadays no evident cultural, physiognomic or class markers distinguish subgroups among the local population. According to the *Instituto Nacional de Estadistica* (INE), 93.13 percent of the population of Apolo is poor (2001). Seventy-nine per cent of the *Apoleños* speak Quechua, 18 percent Spanish, 1 percent Aymara, and 0.27 percent speak other native languages. According to self-identification criteria, 72 percent identify themselves as Quechua, 15 percent do not identify with any indigenous peoples, 10 percent as native or other indigenous peoples, and 3 percent identify themselves as Aymara (INE and UNDP 2006).

Soon after its creation, the CIPLA was included in the network of the Eastern indigen-ous movements, joining the *Central de Pueblos Indígenas de La Paz* (CPILAP) at the departmental level, and the CIDOB at the national level (Figure 2). According to its statute, the organization works following an 'identity-based development model' articu-lated around four points: (1) organizational strengthening, (2) territorial consolidation through the recuperation of traditional lands, (3) territorial planning based on sustainable management of natural resources and (4) promotion of sustainable productive alternatives and the exercise of indigenous autonomy as a form of self-government and self-

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[16]In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, with economic growth and the decline of the missions, there was a migration wave towards the region, which facilitated the imposition of the Quechua, the weakening of the Leco, and the appearance of Spanish as the new *lingua franca*. Migrants came to Apolo attracted by possibilities of employment related to the quinina and rubber industries. These changes in the local economy favoured the rise of the *hacienda* and of a local non-indigenous elite. The subordination of the local population to the *hacienda* system continued until the latter half of the twentieth century, when the National Revolution started the process of land redistribution and pro-moted the creation of the peasant workers' unions (Assies 2002, Sotomayor 2009).

determination (CPILAP 2009). The issue of land and territory is indeed one of the key features of CIPLA's development model. In its Strategic Plan, it is stated that:

> We consider it vital to guarantee the consolidation of the land-territory in favor of the indigenous peoples, in quantity and quality enough to ensure their harmonic and sustainable development, according to their values and practices, identities, space visions and conceptions, and priorities. (CPILAP 2009)

Moving towards the achievement of these goals, in 1999, the CIPLA submitted to INRA a demand for the titling of the TCO-Leco for a total of 654.000 hectares. At the same time, the organization received the official recognition of the Viceministry (VAIPO), which issued the Certification of Ethnic Identity and Actual Settlement. The VAIPO declared that 'the claimant people maintain their own identity and cultural practice as indigenous native people', and that this corresponds to the 'Leco Indigenous People/Quechua Native People'. This is a highly ambiguous denomination that eventually brought about problems in the relationship with the peasants.[17]

Between 1995 and 2005, 17 out of 86 communities in the Apolo municipality joined the CIPLA (Sotomayor 2009). In general, the fact that a community decided to join the indigenous organization was linked to the role played by local leaders and to the awareness of an indigenous past among the local population, as well as to pre-existing tensions and power dynamics at the local level. The case of the Torewa community illustrates the complexity of this process. Torewa is a very isolated community in the heart of the Madidi National Park. Here, two factors played a major role in the shift from the peasant union to the indigenous organization (interview with a leader of the Torewa community, La Paz, 8 August 2013). On the one side, one of the CIPLA leaders migrated to the area at the beginning of the 1990s, after 'losing the battle' against the peasants in his native community near Apolo. His role as intermediary between CIPLA and local people was fundamental. On the other side, in the 1990s, some initiatives were started to create eco-touristic projects in this area under the coordination of non-native professionals, which sympathized with the Peasant Federation. Part of the community was not happy with this initiative, which was perceived as 'coming from outside' and not benefitting the community. The affiliation to the CIPLA and the titulation of the TCO contributed to neutralize those projects. Yet a similar initiative of community-led eco-tourism is currently being developed by CIPLA leaders and sponsored by the Indigenous Fund.

In 2002, the demand of the TCO-Leco was included within the funding plan of the Danish cooperation and, in 2003, the cadastral study begun. The area was divided into three zones. The study of Zone 1 (almost completely included within the Madidi National Park) was relatively quick (4 months), and in November 2006, INRA issued the first title for the TCO-Leco (Figure 3). This fact triggered the most violent phase of the conflict, which catalyzed all the tensions that had been growing over the years between the peasant and indigenous organizations. In May–June 2007, the conflict reached a critical phase: the peasants started to mobilize, firstly with marches, blockades, hunger strikes, occupying public buildings and, as an extreme measure, with the invasion of the protected area of the Madidi Park. The occupants threatened to start cutting down trees, if the government did not listen

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[17]One of the ex-officers of the Vice-Ministry in charge of the process of certification explains: 'We recommended calling the TCO "Leco-Quechua", to acknowledge the presence of Quechuas in the area. However, INRA did not consider our recommendation and started the cadastral study as TCO Leco' (interview, La Paz, 5 August 2010).
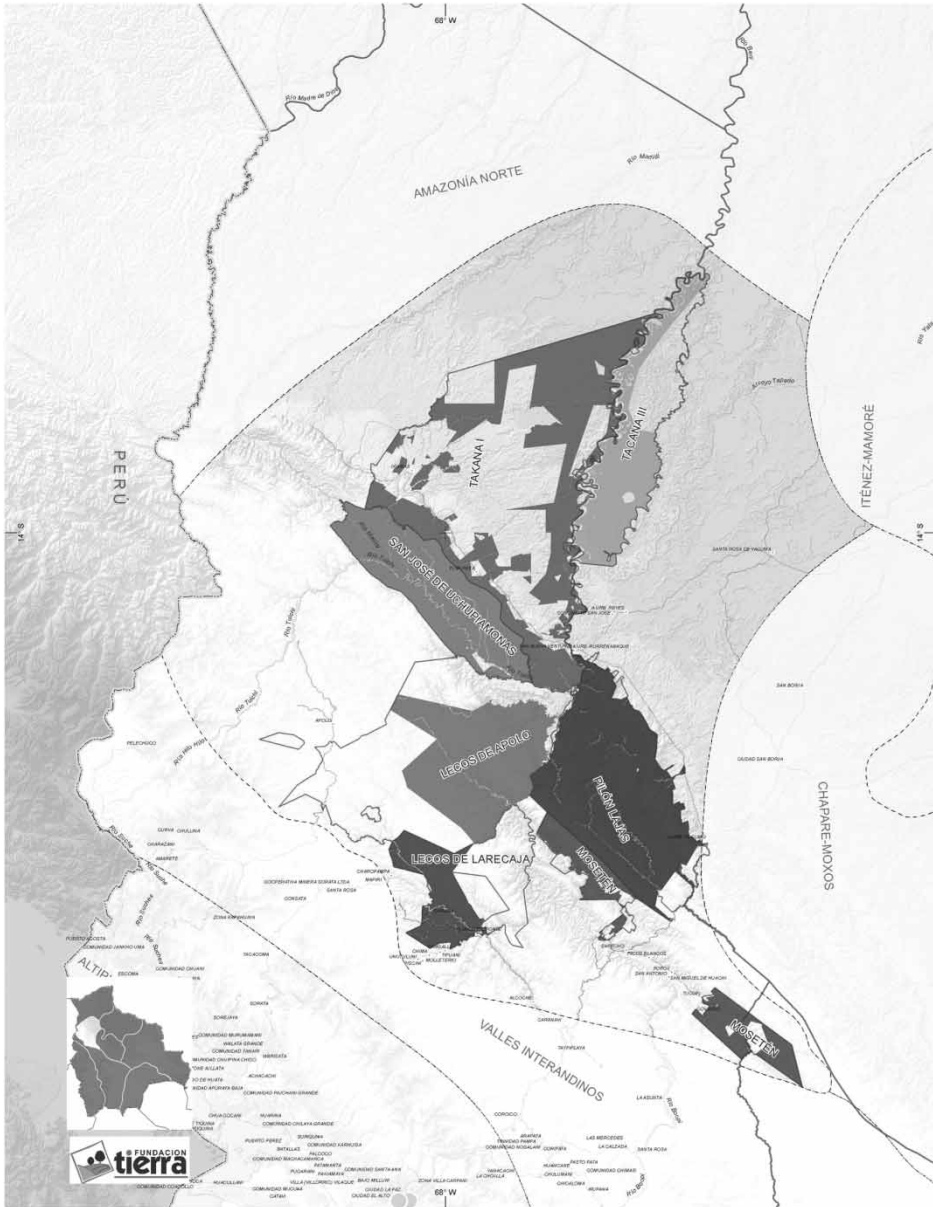
Figure 3.   Titled and claimed indigenous territories (TCOs) in the region Amazonía Sur (including the TCO Leco of Apolo).
Source: Fundación Tierra 2010.

to their claims. These claims were, in brief: the construction of a road between Apolo and Ixiamas (cutting across the Park), the beginning of hydrocarbon exploration[18] and the cancellation of Zone 1 titling (Razón 2007).

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[18]On 13 May 2007, the government issued a decree that authorized the exploitation and exploration of energy resources in Apolo (Diario 2007).

After three attempts at negotiation by the government, a minimal agreement was reached and tensions calmed down. The peasants presented a motion to the National Agrarian Tribunal (TAN) asking for the revocation of the TCO-Leco. Since then, there has been an improvement in the titling, mainly of the peasant areas, since INRA feared that entrance into contested territories would provoke a new wave of mobilization and violence. This worry became even stronger after the rejection of the peasant demand by the TAN in January 2010.[19] Ultimately, the conflict still lacks a sustainable solution and there appear to be no reliable institutions able to lead an effective mediation process.

Not only do social actors themselves have divergent collective memories of the main historical phases of the conflict, but they also continue narrative apparatuses of 'self' and 'otherness' that contribute to the perpetuation of tensions. In both narratives, there is evidence of how identity plays an instrumental role as a tool to gain advantages in the political struggle and to adapt to the context, responding to international, national and local opportunities and constraints.

Affiliates of the indigenous organization describe the conflict as a struggle for their rights and the recovery of their cultural identity, routines and customs, and native origins. They do not deny their past within the Peasant Federation and they refer to the separation as a process of emancipation, motivated by the need to find the historical roots of Apolo. This break gave birth to an 'organization with identity' – the CIPLA:

> From that day on we started to rescue all our traditions and customs, *we are true indigenous with identity*. Therefore, we had also to suffer a bit with the brothers of the Federation … they maltreated us, kidnapped and flagellated us. (…) Those are the roots of the claim for our culture. [Emphasis added]. (Workshop with CIPLA's leaders, Apolo, July 2010)

> We keep on strengthening the fight for our rights and for the reproduction of our cultural identity (...). When we discovered that the Leco existed here, that they organized a resistance, their way of living and all those things, thus, this was the root of Apolo. This is the identity, and *we have got possession of this identity*. [Emphasis added]. (Interview with a CIPLA's leader, La Paz, August 2010)

For the members of the CIPLA, the most important difference between a Leco and a Quechua lies in their vision of their worlds: the indigenous is community-oriented and has close ties with nature, while the peasant is individualist and 'emerges' from the colonial past. Nevertheless, the criteria for affiliation with CIPLA seem to be quite blurred and do not imply strict requirements, but simply the will to individually self-identify as indigenous. More concrete elements that would prove the contemporary existence of the Leco are the language (although, according to the indigenous leaders, it is currently spoken only by a few elders in small remote communities) and its traces in toponymy, as well as typical local dances attributed to the Leco tradition.

Conflictive elements clearly emerge by comparing the Lecos' statements with the discourse of the peasants. The union uses the same rhetorical tools as those of the indigenous group, but in order to highlight the inconsistency of the indigenous identity. In particular,

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[19]The main arguments of the decision were that the Federation had no legitimacy to demand the revocation of the Zone 1, since the protected area of the Madidi Park could only be dealt with under the provisions of the TCO. Moreover, the existence of a Pre-Inca and pre-republican Leco people was confirmed. It was clarified that 'the Leco people exercise possession for the use and traditional exploitation of this territorial area for its 17 communities' and that 'their language is the Leco, but that they also speak Quechua and Spanish'. This judgment therefore favoured indigenous groups' rights over the peasants groups' claims to titles (TAN 2010).

the fact that the Leco language is no longer spoken by people would invalidate the legitimacy of the claim for recognition. Moreover, the members of the Federation deny the existence of typical Leco surnames and they consider the Leco dance a local cultural feature shared by all the communities as a memory of the old inhabitants of the region.

> There is only one Quechua people, native Quechua. In reality, these Leco people are only *supposed Leco*, since *they do not exist*. Even in their own surnames, they don't have anything native. All their surnames are Spanish, while in the Federation we still have native [Quechua] surnames. [Emphasis added]. (Workshop with Peasant Federation's leaders, Apolo, July 2010)

According to the peasants, the Leco people are neither recognized nor legitimate, and their claim to Leco identity is an issue of 'belief' that has no ties with what really matters, i.e. the roots and the ancestors. In the peasant narrative, there is an alternative narrative of origin, which strengthens the present situation ('we are syndicalists') by sinking their roots into an ancestral past ('we have always been syndicalists'):

> Forever, *from our ancestors*, we have been syndicalists. We belong to the departmental Federation. But now *the fellows* [the Lecos] *believe they are another organization*. They believe that they are well linked to the government. They want to diminish us through concealments, misleading us. [Emphasis added]. (Workshop with Peasant Federation's grassroots, Puhchaui community, July 2010)

The members of the Federation have a strong native feeling: by no means do they consider themselves colonizers. For that reason, there is great resentment of the CIPLA, which puts emphasis on the 'non-nativeness' of the peasants: 'They treat us as settlers, as the Spanish that arrived here. We are not settlers (…) We are native. Our grandfathers were born in these lands' (workshop with Peasant Federation's grassroots, Puhchaui community, July 2010). For the peasants, the process of identity recognition is grounded in verifiable data (such as the place of birth, the language and blood ties), more than in the kind of self-identification process that is valued by the CIPLA.

However, within the peasant syndicate, discordant visions around identity issues also coexist. By the second half of 2010 (at the time of my fieldwork), during a Federation meeting (*ampliado*), some peasant leaders proposed changing the name of the organization to 'Native Indigenous Quechua'.[20] The argument was that this would improve the position of the organization with the government and international community, enhancing chances of gaining access to economic resources. Moreover, in some areas where there are conflicting land claims, 'putting the CIPLA members in a minority' could be a tactical solution, using an identity-based demographic parameter as a conflictive tool.

This brief analysis of the conflict in Apolo provides an example of how the reforms on land governance inspired by the politics of recognition have worked 'in practice' in a context characterized by high levels of poverty, a dynamic social environment and a history of colonization and *mestizaje* that, however, didn't cancel memories and traditions of other peoples and identities. The discursive space becomes a privileged 'battle field'. Linguistic representations contribute to generating a collective feature of the adversary while, at the same time, dialectically influencing the representation of the 'self'. This

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[20]A similar discussion, taking place in the late 1990s in the Santuario de Quillacas municipality, is reported in McNeish (2002).

'self' is mainly built in opposition to what the enemy is or is assumed to be. In the words of Noel Castree (2004, 152),

> This is more than just a semantic issue of signifiers and signifieds. It is also an issue of how identities are claimed or made, on how 'insiders' and 'outsiders' are created through the identification process, and how real place-projects are pursued in the name of these identities.

Conclusions

This contribution has analyzed the conflict over land between social organizations (peasant vs indigenous) in the light of the latest phase of the Bolivian agrarian reform. I have argued that the new type of land governance – which introduced identitarian criteria for the allocation of property rights – is one of the main factors that can explain the rise of new ethnic-based intra-societal tensions. The empirical evidence presented also contributes to challenging three assumptions often embedded in mainstream conflict and social movement theories as well as in normative approaches to identity and recognition: (1) the relationship between recognition and redistribution in the genesis of social mobilization and in the process of claims-making; (2) the interchangeable meaning of 'claims' and 'rights' and the problematic nature of ideas of emancipation and social justice applied to land and resource conflicts; (3) the dichotomy of state vs civil society as the main framework for the analysis of collective action.

Recognition vs. redistribution

This paper has questioned the relationship between the social construction of collective behaviors and identities and strategic thought and action. I argue that norm-based collective claims and behaviors cannot be explained only by preferences that are entirely material, nor by purely ideological, cultural or identitarian arguments. This would imply not a resource vs identity model, but a multi-dimensional analytical framework, which includes both 'interests' *and* 'passions' (Hirschman 1974), social reproduction *and* recognition, identity *and* resources. Beyond the complementarity between recognition and redistribution that has already been pointed out in theoretical literature, I would like to challenge the way the very concept of 'recognition' has traditionally been used.

Generally, the discourse on recognition tends to establish a link between certain types of social movements (identity or ethnic-based) and claims for recognition (Kymlika 2001, Postero and Zamosc 2004, Stavenhagen 2007, Canessa 2012). This is achieved by presenting these claims under the form of demands for rights, justice and citizenship. However, in certain cases, this implies a highly normative interpretation of recognition and an essentialized vision of identity. The empirical evidence presented in this paper shows how recognition is a necessary attribute for each and every collective actor. This is illustrated by analyzing how different organizations (indigenous and peasant) manage to ensure a certain degree of identitarian autonomy (illustrated by Barth's idea of boundaries, 1998), differentiation (as the set of mechanisms that regulate access to a social group) and power control. In this sense, recognition is not a prerogative of identity-based social movements, but a need of all social groups and individuals. As Hannah Arendt (1958) pointed out, identity is not so much a substance as a requirement: that of knowing (and being able to define) whom we are dealing with. To recognize is first and foremost the operation through which an observer identifies something or someone as durable and different from whatever surrounds it. Hence, recognition operates by selecting those identities that enable the establishment of a cognitive order in a differentiated social landscape.

Therefore, it would be more appropriate to talk about *recognition needs*, where recognition is a general form of identitarian distinction that includes a plurality of elements (not only ethnicity) and that is compatible with strategic decisions. Moreover, recognition could be a *need* that is not necessarily beneficial for the whole population but, in certain cases, responds to the agenda of a small group, e.g. an elite or a few leaders. In this sense, recognition claims cannot be understood only through the lenses of rights. The dimensions of power and interests must be considered as well.

Rights vs. claims

Interpretative frameworks employed to understand Latin American ethno-cultural movements often assume an empirical coincidence between claims and rights: social movements claim for the effective entitlement of rights and, consequently, a state that is responsive to those claims would contribute to the widening and deepening of the 'citizenship frontier'. These are often embedded assumptions in those scholarly works influenced by recognition and theories of new social movements. Although there is often a complementarity between rights and claims, I consider it useful to keep them separated at the analytical level. I argue that social movements' claims can be in the name of expanding the access to certain rights, but not *always* and not *only*. In fact, processes of claims-making are often complex and, more than coincidentally, they imply an interdependent relationship between claims and rights.

Another step could be to consider norms (and norms' changes) as independent variables (instead of the goals of social movements, as is often the case in collective action studies). This theoretical shift enables a highlighting of how institutional changes contribute to reshaping social movements' claims and identities, triggering mechanisms of both resistance *and* adaptation. In the case of the Apolo conflict, both dynamics co-exist: following contextual (regulatory) changes, some leaders responded through a process of adaptation, reframing their identities and claims in ethno-cultural terms (Lecos). This fact triggered conflict with another section of the local leadership (peasants), who decided to resist the change for ideological and pragmatic reasons (disagreement with the new legal standards; an attempt to maintain the control of local spaces of power). Among the peasants, however, some people have recently started to argue in favor of a process of adaptation to the legal and political context while, at the same time, preserving clear boundaries with respect to the competing indigenous organization. Contrary to mainstream narratives of resistance, in this case, the self-identified peasants are those who are resisting, while the indigenous were more receptive with respect to new contextual incentives.

Moreover, the analysis of this case demonstrates how the politics of recognition fail to take account of the interrelational and fluid dynamics that characterize identity-building processes and, as a consequence, the performative potential embedded in the political and legal reforms they advocated. Nor is the affirmation of the coexistence of recognition and redistribution within certain social claims able to account for the complexity of the problem. Attention should be devoted to the deconstruction and dissection of those claims, looking at their different components and socio-historical roots. This operation could lead to the identification of a 'primacy' either of recognition *or* redistribution, i.e. of a driving force underlying social conflicts. For instance, looking at the socio-historical context in which the Apolo conflict (and other similar ones) developed, the prime focus seems to lie with redistribution. Tellingly, no clear ethnic distinctions existed among the local population before the creation of the indigenous organization. The claim for recognition in this case is the result of the performative effects embedded in identity policies,

which provide incentives for social groups to claim recognition for the sake of redistribution. A remark is in order to clarify that this argument does not question the 'authenticity' of collective identities, nor the legitimacy of the means utilized to reach social goals. In other words, no moral judgment is implied.

The case of intra-societal conflicts related to land in Bolivia highlights the dissonance between goals and means that characterizes the culturalist and egalitarian explanatory arguments. Both these arguments are concerned with equality and redistribution. Multi-culturalist approaches put the issue of formal 'recognition' at the center (i.e. a differentiation of legal and political treatment depending on ethno-cultural identities) as the only means for guaranteeing freedoms and as an effective principle of justice and equality among individuals and social groups. Liberal egalitarian approaches, in contrast, focus on the formal rules of societies, principally on economic redistribution to guarantee citizens equality, arguing that cultural freedom will be an implicit consequence of the correct functioning of a liberal egalitarian economic system. The formal absence of discrimination ('natural liberty', as Rawls 1971 calls it) would thus allow people to make use of their freedom in all its forms, without the need to differentiate among cultural, social, economic or political spheres.

Beyond the well-known critical responses to both of these theoretical stances (Rudanko 2012), it has been rarely pointed out that both approaches share a common interpretative and normative disjuncture between the means and goals of their predicates: they look for (cultural) equality through the means of (economic) redistribution. In the case of theories of recognition, the economic elements have been almost completely neglected and are rarely addressed explicitly. However, multi-culturalist policy prescriptions are very much about the direct management of key material resources (from land and natural resources to more general access to state or international funding) and also have indirect effects that can hardly be understood without considering the more or less implicit economic incentives. In the case of egalitarian theories, culture is included in the principle of equality that is mainly achieved through economic redistributive measures, i.e. through a differentiated treatment of worst-off and best-off groups in society.

Ultimately, the conflicts between peasant and indigenous groups point to a dissonance between means and ends, showing the side effects of a regulatory system which aims to achieve ethno-cultural recognition by means of material redistribution. Both recognition and redistribution could be valuable goals indeed, but problems arise when there is a lack of analytical clarity and normative consistency, and when either economic goods are considered exclusively for their social value or cultural goals are mainly shaped in material terms. In this sense, it is paramount to consider how norms work in terms of providing incentives, not simply recognizing rights. The mechanism would thus be a two-way flow: from claims to norms, but also from norms to claims. Social agency must thus be understood as the capacity of actors not only to modify the context, but also to adapt to contextual changes. The success of an organization is not determined exclusively by its capacity to make compelling claims to rights, but by its *fitness* with respect to a changing context.

Relying upon these observations and the empirical evidence presented, it is legitimate to wonder whether legal recognition of ethno-cultural groups through means of resource (land) redistribution is actually leading to an improvement in terms of social justice and rights for the whole population, or if it is rather framing a different balance of inequalities. As McNeish (2012, 43) writes: 'Although indigenous activism can be linked to social justice and inspire transformative visions, as a political order it can equally be motivated by different ideological positions, all of them able to effect exclusion or forced inclusion'.

This issue is even more compelling in a context where basic subsistence resources are generally scarce for the whole population, which is forced to live in extreme poverty, and in a condition of social, political and economic marginalization and of progressive environmental degradation.

State vs civil society

This paper has instigated a third shift: from the classic dichotomous perspective of collective action studies – as well as of Marxism (Brass 1991) – which sets the state against society, towards an approach that focuses on endogenous social tensions and on intra-societal conflicts (rather than on social struggles against the state). By so doing, it contributes to a problematization of the widespread interpretation of civil society as a compact and relatively homogeneous group of actors. I argue that this dichotomous perspective (state vs society), as well as the assumed social homogeneity, constitutes important analytical limits – if not normative biases – in understanding collective action dynamics. This is clear, for example, when social movements are assumed as agents of emancipation – i.e. as bearers of rights and citizenship claims – in opposition to a state that is systematically trying to limit social spaces of freedom and autonomy (Postero and Zamosc 2004). As contemporary Bolivian history shows, the boundaries between political and social spaces can sometimes be highly unstable and blurred, as can the multiple identities of social actors. Ultimately, the political geography of collective identities is always dependent on changing dynamics of power, mechanisms of differentiation and social conflicts, which are related not only to the state but also takes place within society as such.

Growing attention has been directed to new phenomena, in particular to social mobilizations for rights, recognition and citizenship, which are theoretically presented as a novelty with respect to previous phases (as suggested by the very name of 'new social movements'). This is sufficient to explain the growing interest in these phenomena, but does not justify the disappearance from the analytical framework of more 'traditional' variables, such as the economic dimension linked to resources. Intra-societal agrarian conflicts help to bring the economic and strategic elements back into the epistemological framework and to question a linear view of the relationship between claims, rights and social justice. It is 'in the shadow' of recognition that a more balanced understanding of the dynamics of contemporary social and resource conflict emerges.

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