Working Paper Number 171

Discourses and Conditions of Possibility in Latin American Social Movements: The Cases of the Bolivian ‘Water War’ and the Movement of Opposition against the New Airport in Mexico City

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This work presents a comparative analysis of two Latin American social movements. The first case is the movement of opposition against the privatisation of water and sanitation services (WSS) in Cochabamba, Bolivia and the second case is the movement of opposition against the project for a new international airport in Mexico City. Both case studies are used to illustrate how the study of collective discourses or collective action frames (CAFs) and the study of collective identities from a new social movement (NSM) perspective can be linked to improve our understanding of contemporary social movements. For these purposes, the work proposes the concept of conditions of possibility, defined as the contextual and organisational conditions that allow the resonance between constructed discourses and collective identities during the visible and the non-visible stages of a social movement.

October 2008

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[1] This article was completed thanks to a publication grant from the Department of International Development, Queen Elizabeth House, University of Oxford. The author would like to thank Dr. Esteban Castro, Mr. Laurence Whitehead, Professor Fiona Wilson, Dr. Susan Spronk, Professor Joe Foweraker, Professor Guillermo O’Donnell, and Miss Marie Karaisl for their inputs to his research.

Introduction

This work presents a comparative analysis of two Latin American social movements and illustrates how the study of collective discourses or *collective action frames* (CAFs) and the study of collective identities from a new social movement (NSM) perspective are two approaches that can be brought together to improve our understanding of different instances of social mobilisation. These two approaches focus on different aspects of social movements and as such are not mutually exclusive. On the one hand, the analysis of movement frames focuses on the visible processes of discourse formation and assumes that identity is a pre-condition for acting collectively. On the other hand, a new social movement approach focuses on the processes of identity formation as constitutive and integral of collective action. Even though they reflect a methodological and epistemological divide, both approaches may be used complementarily. In this respect, this work proposes that an analysis through the lens of both approaches allows understanding a dimension of social movements that is often overlooked: the 'resonance' (Snow and Benford 2000) between CAFs and collective identities during the visible and the non-visible stages of a social movement and the conditions of possibility that enable it.

This work is based on fieldwork data collection undertaken in Bolivia during the autumn and summer of 2005 and Mexico during the summer of 2002 and the winter of 2005. The first case study is the movement of opposition that was led in Cochabamba, Bolivia, by the Coordinator for the Defence of Water and Life [*Coordinadora para la Defensa del Agua y de la Vida*] in the year 2000 against the increase of fees and new water regulations that were deemed to be excessively biased towards the interests of private investors. This conflict has become known in the literature as the 'Cochabamba Water War'. The second case is the movement of opposition against a new international airport in Mexico City (NIAMC) which was led by the Popular Front for the Defence of Land [*Frente Popular en Defensa de la Tierra*] between 2001 and 2002.

The rest of this work is divided as follows. Section Two presents a brief discussion of both theoretical approaches. Section Three analyses the case of the Bolivian Water War. It gives a brief background of this conflict, explores whether the movement that was led by the *Coordinadora* could be labelled as a NSM and presents an alternative analysis of the conflict by using the concept of CAFs. Section Four focuses on the case of the Frente Popular and Section Five develops and applies the concept of *conditions of possibility* to explain some of the main differences between the two social movements.

Theoretical Background

The 1960s and New Social Movements: The Role of Identity and Cultural Politics

New Social Movement (NSM) approaches emerged as a reaction to Marxist theories, which were unable to explain the social movements of the 1960s in terms of material interests and economic class conflicts. The first academic to use the term was Alain Touraine when studying the student movements of 1968. He was followed by others such as Habermas on critical theory and civil society in general and Melucci on the environmental, anti-nuclear, and feminist movements. In Latin America, the work of Álvarez (1990) on the women's movement in Brazil; Escobar (1997) on black groups in the Pacific Coast of Colombia; Mainwaring and Viola (1985) on different movements in Brazil and Argentina; and the various cases presented by Escobar and Álvarez (1992),

Nash (2005), and Slater (1985) constitute only a few examples among numerous other authors that have followed this intellectual tradition.[2]

However, what this 'newness' exactly means is an issue that remains contested and that has different meanings for different authors. For example, Cohen and Arato (1997:503-518) understand it in two manners. On the one hand, these 'new' social movements are characterised by a high degree of self-understanding and self-reflection. On the other hand, they can also be characterised by a 'self-limiting radicalism' or in other words, by the pursuit of a radical reform that is not necessarily directed against the state but strives to redefine the boundaries between the public, private, and political domains. Rather than seeking to gain power over the state, these movements intend to redefine normative values that rule the spheres of action inside and outside its apparatus.

Another proponent of NSM theory is Alberto Melucci. This author argues, what is new is not the kind of movements themselves but the particular features of the 'complex societies' in which these have emerged: 'symbolic content', 'individualisation', and 'globalisation'. The first characteristic – symbolic content- means that material production is increasingly replaced by the production of signs and social relations. The second one -individualisation- refers to the fact that '…society's capacity to intervene in the production of meaning extends to those areas which previously escaped control and regulation: areas of self-definition, emotional relationships, sexuality, and "biological" needs' (Melucci 1989:45). And finally, by 'globalisation' Melucci means that for the very first time in history movements emerge in response to 'global social problems' (Melucci 1989: 85). Some examples are the peace, feminist, and ecological movements.

The three distinguishing features of complex societies imply not only that identities play a crucial role in understanding social movements but that their study should be reconsidered and reworked. Traditional points of reference upon which identity is based –time, space, and knowledge- have weakened in the context of Melucci's 'complex societies' and therefore, the concept is now more volatile (Melucci 1989:108). As a consequence, he considers that instrumental analyses of collective action are limited because they see processes of self-reflexiveness as residual.

Melucci's work represents a significant contribution because it provides a characterisation of a particular conflictual scenario in which social movements have emerged after the 1960s. However, the work of Melucci and his colleagues is not free of criticisms. As Tilly (1978), Knight (1990), Bernstein (1997:535), and Pichardo (1997:418) point out, to talk about 'newness' shows a lack of historical perspective since there are other movements that in their own time were also 'new'. Even if there has been a tendency of social movements after the 1960s to emphasise post-material demands or to engage more in symbolic conflicts, their 'newness' needs to be further qualified.

From a theoretical point of view, what distinguishes NSM approaches from other social movement theories is not so much its focus on new kinds of movements or the new kind of societies where new movements have emerged. What distinguishes NSM approaches is the emphasis on the construction of identities, the associated cultural processes, and the networks of meaning deployed by these movements (Álvarez 1997:89; Gamson 1992:54; Melucci 1989). In contrast with other approaches, these theorists feel uneasy with an instrumental and strategic conception of social movements because they consider the construction and deployment of identity as a fulfilment in itself (Cohen and Arato 1997:510). That is, they assume that the process of identification is not only a pre-condition for collective action but an integral part of it.

[2] As Davis (1999:586) explains, one of the main reasons for this trend is '…its emphasis on the transformative power of civil society [which] has appealed to the lived experience and normative ideals of many Latin American intellectuals during an extended period of democratic transition…'

Discourses and Collective Action Frames
An alternative approach to the study of identity-centred determinants of collective action is the analysis of *framing processes* (based on Goffman 1974) and more concretely, of the construction and role of collective action frames (CAFs). In this regard, Gamson et al. (1992:384) define a frame as a '…central organising principle that holds together and gives coherence and meaning to a diverse array of symbols…' Snow and Benford, who are two of the first theorists to use this notion for the study of collective action, define collective action frames as 'conscious strategic efforts by groups of people to fashion shared understandings of the world and of themselves that legitimate and motivate collective action' (cited in McCarthy et al. 1996:6).

In contrast with the work of Melucci and other NSM theorists, the concept of collective action frames takes into account identity, culture, and values from a 'cognitive perspective'. According to this view collective action is determined by the subscription to a certain explicit discourse that provides a frame to understand the world out there, organises experience, and guides action (Snow and Benford 1992:133-137; Snow et al. 1986:466; Snow and Benford 2000:613-617). In the words of Snow and Benford, the CAF works as a 'schemata of interpretation', or following Della Porta and Diani (1999:68), it provides actors with a guide to move in the world.

CAFs have a strategic character and play a paramount role in constructing a shared identity (Friedman and McAdam 1992:156). They involve symbolic elaborations that can have important effects on recruitment possibilities, access to organisational resources, and availability of powerful allies depending on how an issue is problematised. Scholars sympathetic with this approach consider that identity is a pre-condition for collective action (Tarrow 1994; Snow and McAdam 2000), and that the role of the CAF is precisely to publicise such identity by making visible the pronouns 'we', the challengers and 'they', the challenged. In the next two sections I shall use this approach to discuss the researched case studies. Some authors who have applied this kind of approach to Latin American social movements include Bayard de Volo (2004), Bruhn (1999), Hammond (2004), and Noonan (1995).

'Water as a Condition for Life': Powerful Discourses and the *Coordinadora* in Cochabamba

The privatisation of WSS in the city of Cochabamba, Bolivia was promoted by the government of Hugo Banzer and backed by international financial institutions in the year 1999. This scheme was implemented through a concession awarded to *Aguas del Tunari* (AdT) -a private consortium backed by Bechtel International. The respective contract was tied to the implementation of the Misicuni Multipurpose Project (MMP), which included the construction of a dam to increase the supply of drinkable water in urban areas of Cochabamba and water for irrigation in surrounding rural districts. For many decades the MMP had been conceived as one of the main projects to foster the development in the whole department of Cochabamba.

However, the main obstacles to the implementation of these policies were 1) the need to increase water fees to extend the water network and to make the MMP feasible and 2) the need to change existing regulations to allow the privatisation of WSS in the country. In both cases, these measures led to social and political tensions that resulted in street protests by different urban and rural actors claiming that the government colluded

with private actors to exploit water resources to the disadvantage of the most marginalised and disrespecting uses and customs.

In this context, the *Coordinadora* was created in November 1999 to coordinate the efforts of urban and rural organisations that opposed water reforms. Little by little, different groups, including neighbourhood associations, academics, farmers, middle-classes, students, and *cocaleros* [coca growers], joined the social movement led by this social movement organisation (SMO). Even different strands of the media joined in condemning the government responses, which included a state of siege, broken promises to reverse the water concession, and the detention of movement spokesmen a few months after mobilisations had begun.

The *Coordinadora* represented a collection of different urban and rural groups. In the words of García Linera et al. (2004:634), it was an 'association of associations' that was extremely diverse, and therefore, the CAF was a key element to achieve cohesion and sense of direction. Beyond the organisational details, the main challenge was the construction of an identity that was familiar and flexible enough to be shared by dissimilar constituencies. It required a discourse with the symbolic power to turn grievances into worthwhile reasons to mobilise (Snow and Benford, 1992; and Tarrow, 1992; 1998).

This discourse was based on a very simple and yet powerful argument: the idea that water is a condition for the reproduction of life, that the right to have water is inalienable, and therefore, that its management concerns everybody (Interviews B7 and B11). This became the foundation for a shared identity since the marketisation of water and the privatisation of WSS not only affected those who managed water sources in rural areas,[3] but those paying higher fees in the city (Crespo 11-08-05; Olivera 12-08-05). Thus, the elementary meaning of water as a condition for life became the overarching theme that eclipsed potential conflicts between urban and rural groups and provided an identity-umbrella for both of them.

The discourses and identities deployed by the *Coordinadora* were not static but experienced different transformations throughout the Water War. In this respect, it is possible to recognise at least three of the processes proposed by Snow et al. (1986): the linkage between two previously unconnected frames; its extension to cover a broader group of supporters; and finally, the partial displacement of one discursive universe by another.

Constructing Urban-Rural Alliances

The umbrella-identity that was shared by urban and rural groups supporting the *Coordinadora* was only possible thanks to the linkage between two discourses that had been unconnected until then, or that had been connected circumstantially and only in a tangential manner. One of these is based on the uses and customs kept by the *regantes* [farmers that control traditional water systems] in the rural areas of Cochabamba. The other was based on the idea of defending households' meagre economy and on the demand to implement social control over policies promoted by the state; that is, to build a more participative democracy. In this respect, three 'cultural themes'[4] were present in both collective action frames, working as a sort of 'hinge' between the two.

[3] In the absence of big projects such as the MMP, the extraction of underground water in rural areas constitutes the main source of water supply for the city of Cochabamba.

[4] This analysis is in the line of scholars like Noonan (1995) who argue that available cultural themes can be framed in such a way that they open political opportunities even when structural conditions do not seem ripe otherwise.

The first was the importance of 'solidarity' and 'reciprocity' as fundamental values to sustain the social fabric, both in clear opposition to the individualism and mercantilism characteristic of the technocratic discourse employed by institutional actors. The second discursive ingredient that functioned as a 'hinge' between the urban and rural worlds was the idea of 'the people' or 'plebeian crowd'[5] as a social body or collection of social entities whose mobilisation constituted –somewhat tautologically- a source of legitimacy for the social movement. That is, the idea that the *Coordinadora* did not exist beyond the demands and preoccupations of *the people* and that it did not exist beyond the people's self-organising capacity and ability to surpass traditional ways of mobilisation helped legitimizing the movement.

The third and final linkage was the simple idea that water is a condition for life and therefore has a natural, social, and historical meaning that transcends any economic valuation. As explained with more detail below, in the case of the *regantes*, this is an idea based on prevailing uses and customs with a long historical and cultural background. In the case of urban groups, the cultural and historical value attached to water is more ambiguous and less visible. Only in the more economically and socially marginalised areas –like the south of the city- is it possible to find that such non-economic value is based on communal efforts undertaken during the last two decades to implement traditional water systems to offset the limited access to formal networks. Still, the collective action frame that was publicised by the *regantes* sparked a similar discourse in the city; a discourse that legitimised and justified the support of other urban sectors –in addition to those with a high degree of economic and social marginalisation.

Extending the Pool of Supporters

The CAF that made the urban-rural alliance possible was also based on discursive elements that were flexible enough to attract other powerful allies beyond the *regantes* or neighbourhood associations from the south of the city. The main element has a historical-ideological character which according to the personal views of social leaders and academics that sympathise with the social movement, makes reference to a long fight against 'unjust' elites and 'repressive' governments. From this point of view the mobilisations of April 2000 signalled the revival of ways and levels of social mobilisation that had not existed since 1986, after the *Marcha por la Vida*[6] (García Linera et al. 2000:125).

In this context, the movement of resistance headed by the *Coordinadora* could be framed in a longer and broader fight; one that transcended the privatisation of water and sanitation services. In other words, it became yet another chapter of the Long Bolivian History (Quintana 08-05 and Mamani 09-05), which includes events such as the siege that was led by Tupac Katari in 1781, the Revolution of 1952, and many other episodes when *the people* –in particular indigenous people- exerted their right '…to become guides of the country's destiny…' (Mamani 02-10-03). The last chapter of this Long History –the resistance against neoliberal policies- began fifteen years before the Water War, when the government of Paz Estenssoro launched the implementation of market reforms in 1985. Thus, the circumstances that catalysed the Water War such as the secret agreements between official authorities and AdT made the extension of the collective action frame easier. A few months after the *Coordinadora* began its mobilisation efforts it was evident

[5] The concept of forma multitud or multitud plebeya, also translated as the 'multitude-form' [of collective action] was originally coined by Bolivian intellectual René Zavaleta (1983) and has been recently adopted –and adapted- by other intellectuals and activists such as Alvaro García Linera (see García Linera, cited in Olivera and Lewis 2004:71-79 and García Linera et al. 2000:151).

[6]The *Marcha por la Vida* [March for Life] was a protest in which around 30,000 people participated. It took place in August 1986 after the government announced the closure of mining centres given the collapse of tin prices.

that the pronoun 'we' not only referred to those who opposed the privatisation policies in the water sector, but to all those who opposed neoliberal policies in general. In this way, it became possible to enlarge the universe of potential supporters and to legitimise the participation of important allies. A clear example was the coca growers from the tropical areas of Cochabamba, headed by Evo Morales.

Frame Displacement and the Conclusion of the Water War

The third and final framing process -closely related to the CAFs own flexibility- was the displacement of one discursive universe by another. Claims publicised by the *Coordinadora* changed gradually as the conflict evolved and stances became more polarised. They shifted from demanding the revision of the contract with AdT and the content of new water regulations to their respective cancellation and annulment. Those changes were a response to many political and operational mistakes that the government committed while implementing the new water policy.

The changing demands and more specifically, the subtle modifications in rhetoric such as using the verb 'cancel' instead of 'revise' or 'annul' instead of 'modify', implied substantive changes in two aspects of the social movement. It altered its action orientation and its source of legitimacy in the public space. Consequently, the constructed collective identity was also transformed. These two changes signalled the displacement of a discursive universe wherein the validity, functionality, and appropriateness of institutional boundaries as legitimate boundaries to engage in politics and design public policies were questioned; by another discursive universe wherein such boundaries should be *totally* annulled and substituted.

Furthermore, the leaders themselves did not realise that the pronoun 'we' had changed again. Now it did not only refer to those opposing unjust public policies, but to those that may and should *take control* of the policy process (Dominguez 2007). Thus, on 10 April 2000, after many confrontations between police and the military on the one hand, and civil society on the other, the contract with AdT was finally cancelled, the water company reverted back to municipal ownership, and a model of *control social* [social accountability] was later implemented.[7] A new law that affected uses and customs in rural areas was amended one month later after heated negotiations between *regantes* and government representatives.

Over the years, the Water War became a milestone in the history of social movements and public policies of Bolivia. For the first time since neoliberal reforms were initially implemented, Bolivia experienced large scale mobilisations that rejected, in an articulated manner, the introduction of market policies in the water and sanitation sector. The Water War was also the first major conflict in a long queue of protests, marches, and mobilisations that culminated in the forced resignation of President Gonzalo Sanchez de Lozada half way through his second mandate (2001-2003), as well as the toppling of an interim president in 2005, the election of the first indigenous president, and the call for a Constituent Assembly at the end of the same year.

Although the *Coordinadora del Agua y de la Vida* became gradually less active after the Water War ended, the same organisational model was replicated at a larger geographical scale when the *Coordinadora del Gas* formed to oppose a project to export liquefied natural gas (Pacific-LNG) to California (Olivera and Lewis 2004:158,177; Perreault 2006). Many spokesmen and leaders who were protagonists during the conflict in Cochabamba also became central actors in subsequent political struggles. The most emblematic is Evo Morales, whose visibility as leader of the *cocaleros* increased

[7] The main feature of this model is the inclusion of a wider array of civil society representatives in SEMAPA's board of directors.

precisely during the Water War (Van Cott 2003:755) and whose political capital helped him to become president in 2005. As a result, the balance of power shifted in favour of left-wing and non-traditional political parties such as the *Movimiento hacia el Socialismo* (MAS).

The next section presents the Mexican case study and confirms the usefulness of these analytical categories to identify patterns and points of comparison across different instances of social mobilisation. It identifies similarities between the social movements led by the *Coordinadora* in Cochabamba and the *Frente Popular* in Mexico City, even though their outcomes and long-term consequences differ sharply

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'Deaf Ears' and Unjust Expropriations: The Case of the *Frente Popular* in Mexico City

The project for a new airport in Mexico City was promoted by the administration of President Vicente Fox in the years of 2001 and 2002. This project had been on and off the governmental agenda for more than three decades and its implementation had been discarded and/or postponed by the five presidents previous to Vicente Fox. According to the official version, the site for the project was chosen on the basis of its technical-aeronautical advantages, cost-benefit analysis, minimisation of environmental impacts, and opportunities for socio-economic development. Moreover, the new airport was conceived as one of the most important projects of the new democratically elected government after seventy years of hegemony by the Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI). The main obstacle, however, was the necessity to expropriate 5,391 hectares of ejidos[8] and displace 4,375 landowners who live in the municipalities of Atenco and Texcoco, in the south-eastern outskirts of Mexico City.

The groups rejecting the project created the Popular Front for the Defence of Land [*Frente Popular en Defensa de la Tierra*]. The call to fight for the land swept through other communities that were affected by the expropriation decrees (EDOMEX 2003b). Even beyond Texcoco and Atenco, the general population felt uneasy with the expropriation decrees. A variety of NGOs, intellectuals, writers, journalists, ex-members of the 1968 student movement, and other public figures condemned the project. In just a few months the protesters included radical students, striking teachers, and sympathisers of the Zapatista Movement in Chiapas. Overall, it was perceived as an outrage from the government. In some cases, the protests became an opportunity to express discontent about other issues such as neoliberal economic policies, the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), and the expected reforms in the tax system and energy sectors. Reciprocally, members of the *Frente Popular* began supporting other contentious groups that all had one thing in common: 'the fight against an outrageous and incomprehensive government' (Espinoza 08-03).

The communities affected by the expropriation decrees faced the most adverse scenario: the Fox administration was promoting one of the most important projects of the *sexenio* and as the 'government of the democratic transition' it seemed to have all the necessary political capital to do so. Moreover, the decision to build a new airport had been delayed for more than three decades, and to a certain extent, it had been turned into a kind of mystified prophecy whose time had come: its implementation seemed inevitable. To overcome these challenges the people in Atenco and surrounding communities needed to activate whatever organisational resources they had, to appeal to

[8] Ejidos are plots of communal land that is held by the State for the use of others in communal status.

powerful allies, and to mobilise national and international public opinion. In this context, it was crucial for the *Frente Popular* to craft a suitable collective action frame for opposing the project for a new airport. As with the case of the *Coordinadora* in Cochabamba, it was necessary to create bargaining resources and to overcome the mobilisation of bias.

The CAF in Atenco was socially and historically grounded in the importance of 'solidarity with our people' and 'solidarity around the land' (fieldwork interviews). This idea was not new and did not appear spontaneously; it already existed when the Federal Government announced the expropriation decrees. Thus, the expropriation was not an isolated event, but constituted the 'straw that broke the camel's back'. In the words of the main spokesman of the *Frente Popular,* '…people here [in Atenco] were used to facing the government's bureaucracy…and the government's arbitrary and clientelistic decisions [regarding the provision of services and public goods, including justice and basic civil rights]…Therefore, protest was already latent inside each one of us…' (del Valle 08-03).

The social value of 'solidarity with our people' is a cultural construction that is valid independently from the expropriation decrees. It has been socially embedded as a result of adversities that these people have historically faced living in the outskirts of Mexico City; and in the context of the disenchantment with the state,[9] its apparent indifference towards the *Atenquenses*, and their perception that it has always been better to solve their social and economic problems by themselves (del Valle 08-03). However, the expropriation decrees added a new dimension and made apparent the fact that the *Atenquenses* were in a structurally contradictory position against the state.

In this respect, the references to historical adversities constitute the foundation of important mobilising structures that were developed long before the announcement of the NIAMC. In other words, this was not the first time that the *Atenquenses* united to solve a problem. They had organised before to construct water wells, acquire farming equipment, expel illegal settlers, as well as fight 'the injustices of the state' (fieldwork interviews). Informal social networks, which are grounded in everyday life experiences of the *Atenquenses,* were crucial for the *Frente Popular*. These include celebrations around the land, such as festivities to venerate and to express gratitude to *San Salvador* and other saints for the opportunity to work the land, no matter how good or bad the harvest is.

Other social events, such as funerals, weddings, baptisms, the pagan celebrations during Carnival, and Easter festivities also provide the organisational learning experience that is useful for facing adverse circumstances. Many times throughout the conflict, flares were lit or the Church bells tolled in the middle of the night to warn the *Atenquenses* about police incursions, just as they would otherwise call people to attend mass (Reforma 17-11-01). Those responsible for leading traditional festivities were often in charge of patrolling Atenco while the municipal head was still taken by the *Frente Popular*.

Extending the Pool of Adherents in Atenco

But local networks were not enough to guarantee the success of the social movement headed by the *Frente Popular*. Right from the beginning, the *Atenquenses* who joined the movement knew that it was necessary to get support and to activate informal social networks beyond their own villages. Citing a member of the *Frente Popular*, '…we knew that there was no way to do this on our own…we began to mobilise, to visit other villages, and to diffuse our movement nationally and internationally…' (Espinoza 08-03).

[9]The people in Atenco used indifferently the terms 'state' and 'government'. Both terms usually encompass the different government levels –federal, state, and municipal.

Therefore, the collective action frame of the *Frente Popular* did not make exclusive reference to the grievances of the people in Atenco. The constructed categories were broad enough to be shared by other actors. It was possible to identify the unfavourable terms of the expropriation decrees as the source of grievance, the 'state' and the 'bourgeoisie' as the enemy, and 'all those who fight against the government's injustices' as potential supporters of the *Frente Popular* (fieldwork interviews; EDOMEX 2003b). Even if it was only through public stances, the people in Atenco and surrounding municipalities were supported by diverse actors because the constructed frame was appealing and/or convenient for them. These included international NGOs, legal and technical advisors that volunteered independently, the left-wing Government of Mexico City, and the Zapatista movement. In other words, their particular demands and statuses echoed in and identified with the causes of the *Frente Popular*.

In some cases, such resonance was straightforward. For example, the discursive and visual allusions to the revolutionary hero Emiliano Zapata and the use of machetes as visual symbols constituted a kind of frame amplification (Snow et al. 1986:470): a successful attempt to identify, increase the visibility, and idealise the importance of land and the historical fight associated to defending this resource. This strategy appealed to other peasant movements around the country. The *Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional* (EZLN), groups from Tepoztlán, Morelos, and in the last stages of the conflict, members of the *Ejército Popular Revolucionario* (EPR) constitute only a few examples, perhaps the most visible ones.

In the specific case of the Zapatistas, there was a two-way relation between their discourse and that of the *Frente Popular*. On the one hand, as one of the first, best known, and popular indigenous anti-globalisation movements in the world, the Zapatista Movement has diffused and consolidated a powerful *master frame*, a kind of collective action frame that fulfils the same functions -i.e. condenses the world out there-, but on a larger scale and in a way that constrains the discursive choices of other social movements coming afterwards (Snow and Benford 1992:137-138). This phenomenon is not exclusive to Mexico: the Zapatistas are perceived all around the world as an obliged reference for human rights, indigenous, environmental, and anti-globalisation movements alike.

Discursive references and strong movement stances such as *¡No hay país sin maíz!* ['...there is no country without corn'] and *¡La tierra no se vende, se ama, se defiende!* ['...the land should not be sold; it should be loved and defended'] are often found in the first discourses and communiqués of the EZLN (Ross 2006). They were reproduced textually –or almost textually- by the *Frente Popular* during the conflict in Atenco.

The other way round, the Zapatistas were somehow obliged to respond to this gesture. After all, the Zapatistas' extensive network of alliances with other SMOs and with international NGOs has been forged on the basis of this kind of sympathetic and moral exchanges. Moreover, this is one of the few reasons why the Zapatista movement has stayed alive despite the inevitable exhaustion, divisions, and demoralisation of almost a decade of fighting without winning more than small material victories (Nash 2001:231; Ross 2006:127). Following Le Bot (1997:20, cited in Bruhn 1999:48): '…it is like an agreement: [the international allies] get from Zapatismo what they need, the reminder [to struggle], that trampoline to take off again, and the [Zapatista/indigenous] communities get that backing, [the] help that guarantees their survival…'

The categorisation of the airport as a 'bourgeois' and 'neoliberal' project served as a kind of frame bridging (Snow et al. 1986:467) between the causes of the *Frente Popular* and the causes of other 'victims' of the neoliberal state such as striking teachers, members of the *Consejo General de Huelga* (CGH), and other SMOs, whose

associational roots are found in the resistance against population displacement and land expropriations. The most illustrative example is the *Frente Popular Francisco Villa* (FPFV), a SMO that was created in 1989 when 5,000 families were expelled from a natural reserve located in the south of Mexico City (Jiménez 2001).

At the same time, the message of the *Frente Popular* became appealing to a more diffuse, but not less important actor: public opinion.[10] In other circumstances, it would have been difficult for the 'ordinary citizen' to decide if the expropriation decrees were just or unjust. The issue is ambiguous because an expropriation decree is issued on the basis of the *public interest* and such a concept is elusive and contested. However, this was not the case in Atenco and Texcoco because the land was compensated at an obviously unjust price for two reasons: a) the land was valuated at 7.5 pesos (USD 0.7) per square meter -25 pesos (USD 24) in the case of irrigated land- and b) even if the land was hardly productive and had very few alternative uses at present, it would be used to develop the most important airport in Latin America.

Frame Transformation and the Decline of the Frente Popular

Nearly one year after the public announcement, the resettlement and expropriation negotiations failed and the movement of opposition radicalised sharply. Members of the *Frente Popular* organised a 'local coup' in Atenco and declared it 'autonomous municipality' (Reforma 22-09-02; Salinas and Alvarado 11-07-02). The conflict reached its peak on 11 July 2002. A violent confrontation with local police took place when representatives of the *Frente Popular* tried to approach the Governor of the State of Mexico during a public ceremony. Thirteen peasants including two main leaders were arrested, while nineteen police officers were taken as hostages. The tension grew when the *Frente Popular* threatened to burn the hostages alive, and was not resolved until State of Mexico authorities agreed to exchange prisoners.

On 1 August 2002, President Fox announced the cancellation of the project. The central argument was that the costs of any additional negotiation had far exceeded the benefits of Texcoco as a possible policy alternative. The cancellation came so abruptly that even high standing civil servants within the transport sector were taken by surprise. In Atenco, when the expropriation decrees were cancelled, the movement's action orientation changed and the CAF took another view based on three new demands: a) the family of a peasant who died during confrontations with policemen should be compensated, b) all arresting orders against members of the *Frente Popular* should be cancelled; and c) Atenco should be declared 'autonomous municipality'.

The first claim seemed to be unambiguously just and could constitute the basis to justify further support from external allies, such as human rights organisations. However, the idea of revoking the arrest warrants was controversial because the distinction between collective violence and crime is difficult to delineate (Tilly 2003a:19). Even when certain acts are legally defined as forbidden, the frontier between illegality and illegitimacy is blurred if an act that is prescribed by law is clearly unjust –e.g. the expropriations decrees in Atenco and Texcoco. In this respect, the *Frente Popular* became increasingly more radical towards the end of the conflict. Leaders and supporters blocked roads, burnt vehicles, took public servants as hostages, and threatened to kill them. All these acts were illegal, but it is not clear if they were seen as illegitimate in the context of the expropriation decrees. The relevant argument, however, is that a change in the 'tactical repertoire' (Taylor and Van Dyke 2004) and the mere ambiguity of this new grievance –revoking arresting orders- might have alienated some allies of the *Frente Popular*. Actors

[10] For the purposes of this work it will be defined as '…not the opinion of the majority but the opinion that is active in the public realm…' (Scruton 1982:387-388).

that had hitherto sympathised with and supported the movement, such as the left-wing government of Mexico City, academics, and technical and legal advisors became increasingly more neutral and/or cut themselves off from the events in Atenco and Texcoco.

The third claim -declaring 'autonomous municipalities'- is contested in Mexico because it has deep implications for the social and political cohesion of the country. Even in the case of Chiapas, where the communities demanding to become autonomous are clearly different in terms of customs, traditions, and language, the Mexican government has hesitated to grant such autonomy. One reason is that the definition of who is actually indigenous is not straightforward, especially since the boundaries of 'indianness' continue to widen even in remote rural areas of the country. At the same time, government representatives have expressed concern over the incompatibility between customary laws on the one hand, and basic individual civic and political rights on the other. And most importantly, the autonomy of indigenous groups such as the Zapatistas in Chiapas would encompass command over their territory, including environment and natural resources. From a national-security and strategic point of view, this last concern is particularly delicate in the case of Chiapas, a state with considerable reserves of oil, biodiversity resources, and rivers that supply more than half of the country's electricity. This is not the case of Atenco and Texcoco where the environment has been irreversibly depleted. However, conceding the *Frente´s* demands for autonomy could have had a domino effect on other communities around the country.

Overall, the demand for municipal autonomy found little backing amongst the movement's allies. Even within the population of Atenco, it is not clear if there was widespread support for such political aspiration. The *Frente Popular* and the *Atenquenses* in general, showed deep divisions after the airport project was stopped in 2002. Many communities that had eventually reached an agreement with the Federal Government expressed their disenchantment when the airport was cancelled and some disputes between members and non-members of the *Frente Popular* have been registered thereafter (EDOMEX 2003b; Reforma 04-08-02; and fieldwork interviews). The most dramatic of these quarrels took place when movement leaders tried to obstruct municipal elections in 2003 and were met with sticks and stones by inhabitants of Santa Isabel Ixtapan (Reforma 10-03-03).

'New Social Movements' as an Alternative Analytical Approach

New Social Movements in Cochabamba and Mexico City

The mobilisations that were headed by the *Coordinadora* in Cochabamba and the *Frente Popular* in Mexico City could very well be labelled as 'new social movements' because they constituted expressions against three phenomena: commoditisation, bureaucratization, and crisis of representation. Firstly, the opposition against the privatisation policies in the water sector was based on a conflict between divergent valorisations of the water resource. On the one hand, the institutional argumentation was in line with a privatisation discourse that proposed the water resource should be recognised as an economic good, assigned and regulated through market mechanisms. But on the other hand, the groups that were summoned in the *Coordinadora* and particularly those from rural areas, proposed a valorisation of water as a social good whose access constitutes a natural and inalienable right, based on traditional uses and costumes.

In a similar fashion, groups in Atenco and Texcoco brought back an important dimension of conflict to the policy debate: the social and historical value of land regardless of its potential use for urban and infrastructure developments. Both social movements contributed to transform and problematise the public space, offering alternative symbolic articulations that contrast to those that prevail in the policy process. An airport is not only a policy solution for problems of aerial capacity but a potential disruption of the social tissue in affected communities; the concession of water and sanitation services is not only a matter of economic efficiency but social justice.

Secondly, the social movement in Cochabamba only gathered momentum when water fees increased and when people became aware of the secretive policy process behind the concession to AdT and new water regulations, which affected traditional uses and customs in rural areas. The movement also radicalised after repeated dismissive responses from government officials. All these factors provided more elements to justify the rejection against the privatisation policy that was promoted by the State (Crespo 11-08-05; Olivera 12-08-05; Kruse 19-08-05). They were a direct consequence of a bureaucratic system that did not recognise the existence of certain actors outside the institutional arena.

The movement in Atenco and Texcoco received extensive support and public legitimacy due to a price offer that was unambiguously unjust, at least during the first phases of the conflict. The anger of the *Atenquenses* and the movement's radicalisation had partly to do with the trifling land prices, the dismissed attempts to talk with the authorities, and with other policy and political mistakes by key government actors. For example, the expropriation decrees were based on an outdated land registry that was twenty years old and that contained serious errors regarding which *ejidos* had irrigation infrastructure and which ones did not.

Third and closely related with the bureaucratisation of public decisions, the Water War emerged in a context of general disenchantment with the institutions of public representation. That is, after more than a decade since the transition to democracy, political parties had been incapable of representing the genuine interests of numerous sectors of the population. They were far from undertaking the necessary internal reforms after 1982 and from improving their relations with civil society. In contrast, traditional political parties had a mild reaction to its own crisis of representation. They promoted normative changes that had little implications for the system of representation and only delayed its own demise (Lazarte 2005:185-186).

Faced with this gap of representation, the meetings and assemblies organised by the *Coordinadora* became a space of participation and deliberation wherein *the people* could take decisions about a theme that interested everyone: the control over water. And therefore, it was in fact about questioning and redefining existing boundaries between the public, the political, and the private. In the words of Carlos Crespo (11-08-05), it was about '…another way of making politics…[according to which] it is not about seeking to take power, but to reduce the relations of domination…' This is precisely what NSM theorists have endorsed in the last three decades.

The conflict in Atenco and Texcoco is slightly different in this sense. The Mexican party system was not experiencing any serious crisis in the years 2001 and 2002. Therefore, the *Frente Popular* did not find the necessary conditions to consolidate as an alternative space for political representation. While the *Coordinadora* organised a popular referendum to ask the people in Cochabamba whether the contract with AdT had to be cancelled, the *Frente Popular* never implemented a similar strategy to build a stronger position.

Identity through Collective Action

The social mobilisations during the Water War showed processes of identification *through* collective action and not necessarily *previous* to it. As many 'water warriors' express it, the barricades, the marches and the blockades were spaces where people that had never seen each other before used to exchange and share personal experiences. And after realising that they were fighting for the same cause, their feelings of solidarity were strengthened (interview with 'water warrior', 18-08-05). In a few words, '…the streets and the roads were spaces of mutual recognition…' (Olivera, in Ceceña 2004:74).

For example, the confrontations with the police would often force the crowd to disperse and run from one barricade to another. And throughout many days of resistance, different activists had the chance to meet people from different sectors and walks of life, sharing experiences and little by little, constructing a collective identity that grew stronger in the context of the erroneous responses from the government and other institutions. Open discussion of vital subjects such as water and the defence of water contributed to a shared identity that was based on the ideas that water is for everyone, that water is life, and, at least in the case of rural people, that it is a gift from *Pachamama* – Mother Earth- (fieldwork interviews).

Furthermore, for many protesters that participated in the Water War of Cochabamba, the very chance of marching and taking the streets became a goal on its own. In many cases it was a way to gain some 'dignity through struggle and moral expression' (Bell 1992, cited in Jasper 1998:417), given the frustration caused by the deplorable economic and political situation. Even those groups that were not directly affected by the privatisation policies -such as homeless children- participated eagerly in the barricades and other activities of the social movement. They provided mobilising resources and added to the construction of a collective identity *through* action.[11]

Similarly, there are many examples of how *Atenquenses* and other movement supporters constructed a shared identity *through* action: protesters talked about their grievances in barricades and road blockades and CGH students staged theatre plays and painted murals to remind people about the connection between the movement in Atenco and the revolutionary hero Emiliano Zapata. Hitting machetes against the ground while marching down the streets of Mexico City is another example of acts that were charged with symbolic energy and that helped construct and strengthen movement identities. However, it seems that these expressions were not enough to cement a shared collective identity that lasted throughout the different stages of the conflict as it happened in the Bolivian Water War.

Conditions of Possibility in Latin American Social Movements

Conditions of Possibility in the 'Water War'

The above discussion reflects an epistemological and methodological divide between two different theoretical approaches. Still, this does not mean that both approaches are mutually exclusive but that their heuristic tools are useful to explain different phases of collective action (Dominguez 2007:162-163). For example, the CAF might be a useful device to explain the phases when social movements 'go public' –that is, phases posterior to what Gamson and Meyer (1996:283) call the process of 'framing consensus'. And cultural and anthropological approaches might be more useful in the previous and less visible phases –those that Melucci (1989) calls 'latent'.

[11] Some examples of these processes of identification have been documented by Crabtree (2005), Ceceña (2004), Peredo et al. (2004:147), and García Linera et al. (2000:149).

In this respect, the case of the Water War is illustrative of a dialogic relation between both universes: the universe where identity is embedded in action and the universe where it works as a precondition for it. Far from the romantic idea the rank and file played a protagonist role in articulating demands, identities, and strategies, they actually set the limits for the articulation of identities and discourses by the leaders –or spokesmen- of the movement (Kruse 19-08-05). On the one hand, it is possible to talk about a multiplicity of stories that converged and derived in shared identities in houses, streets, trenches, and other spaces that are usually less visible. These are processes that were not registered –or at least not immediately- in the media and that did not play a paramount role to publicise and project the movement before other actors. But simultaneously, there was a protagonist role that leaders and spokesmen played in articulating demands and identities that were projected in the public sphere and that had a specific weight in the relations between the *Coordinadora* and other actors such as the government and the public opinion.

After all, leaders of the *Coordinadora* and representatives of different SMOs involved in the Water War used to discuss during the movement's 'board' and during the assemblies before actually taking their proposals to open discussion and validation in more general meetings. In this way, there was a phase in which strategies –including articulating demands and collective identities- took place according to the construction of collective action frames. But before its public projection could take place, the CAFs went through the people's filter: a multiplicity of stories and identities, more in line with a NSM approach. This process would repeat itself over and over again.

The conditions that allowed this dialogical relation derived from a historical, economic, and socio-political context that already existed in 2000, independently from the social movement led by the *Coordinadora.* This scenario facilitated the resonance between the respective collective action frame and the individual experiences of those who supported the movement directly or indirectly.[12] These conditions of possibility, defined as *the contextual and organisational conditions that allow the resonance between constructed discourses and collective identities during the visible and the non-visible phases of a social movement* were mainly four. Three of these conditions were external to the social movement or socio-political contextual and one of them was internal or organisational.

The discredit of neoliberal policies accumulated during the last fifteen years, together with the difficult situation that Bolivia experienced in 2000 constituted the first condition of possibility for the discourse of resistance endorsed by the *Coordinadora.* This scenario contrasted, for example, with the scenario that prevailed during the *March for Life* in 1986.[13] Back in those years, the traumatic experience of hyperinflation, the recurrent economic and political crises during the 1970s and 1980s, and the disappointing performance of the political coalition led by the Popular Democratic Union [*Unión Democrática Popular*] created a context that was much less favourable for a social movement to construct a CAF that contested the public policy discourse used to legitimise the implementation of neoliberal policies. In other words, by the mid-1980s it was possible to grant the benefit of doubt to the proposal of a new economic model, based on a smaller state and the market as the main instrument to assign economic

[12] More specifically, this is what Snow and Benford (2000:621) call the frame's 'salience to targets of mobilisation.
[13] For this purposes, see data presented by Laserna (2004).

resources. But in 2000, it was clear that many promises associated with this new model had not been fulfilled.[14]

In close relation with this last argument, the practices and the discourses employed by government authorities to negotiate and implement the concession of SEMAPA constituted the second condition of possibility. Again, in 1985 it was much easier to argue that market policies were *inevitable* as an instrument to regulate the access to natural resources, in comparison with 2000 when it was now evident that many aspects of the capitalisation policy in Bolivia had failed.[15]

The low levels of legitimacy enjoyed by a loose governing coalition led by former military dictator Hugo Banzer constituted the third condition of possibility. In the first years after the political transition of 1982 it was easier to endorse a democratic discourse that was based on a narrow conception of democracy as *electoral* democracy. Back in those days, Bolivia was considered a model to follow in terms of modernisation and soundness of the electoral and political party system. Nevertheless, fifteen years later, in 2000, Bolivia was experiencing a crisis of political representation and it was much more difficult to support the same discourse when it was already clear that traditional political parties had failed in their attempt to fill the gap of representation and participation left behind by the union movement. It is in the context of this gap that the *Coordinadora's* CAF about the need for a more participatory scheme found resonance and became *possible*.

The fourth and final condition of possibility is related to the *Coordinadora's* organisational structure. Compared to traditional movements such as the workers' movement led by the Bolivia's Workers Union (COB) or the peasants' movement led by the Confederation of Peasant Workers from Bolivia (CSUTCB), both of which have vertical and hierarchical structures, the *Coordinadora* was a loose, flexible, and non-hierarchical network. At the same time, the *Coordinadora* did not create a boundary between members and non-members. On the contrary, there was no strict membership of this SMO except for the informal partisanship that was shown through action itself. In contrast with COB or the CSUTCB, the decision to join was not contingent on fixed categories such as 'being a peasant' or 'being a worker' but was completely voluntary. This opened the door for a flexible constituency that grew or shrank depending on the particular situation. Everyone contributed to different social movement activities and provided their input on tactics and strategies and on the articulation of claims and demands. The 'pluriformity' of this amorphous SMO did not represent an important drawback for the movement of resistance. Quite the contrary, it helped leaders and spokesmen to create a common frame of reference based on simple and powerful ideas such as 'participatory democracy' or 'water as a condition for life'.

Together, these four conditions of possibility moulded a specific conflict scenario that helped different individuals, from all walks of life, to identify through their personal stories and their respective actions of resistance. These conditions also allowed the CAF to make sense in the public sphere and to work as an instrument to publicise the pronouns 'we', which subsumed and gave sense of direction to the heterogeneity and multiplicity of individual experiences. Compared to the mobilisations registered in the mid 1980s, these

[14] Other examples in Latin America which show how historical-structural conditions can make certain discourses 'possible' are the works of Noonan (1995) on the women movement in Chile and Bayard de Volo (2004) on women during the Nicaragua Contra war.

[15] The capitalisation scheme was designed to attract private investment to state enterprises. It worked as a public-private joint venture: the government contributed state assets to start a new company in which private investors held 51 percent of equity and management control in exchange for new investments. The other 49 percent of the share was transferred to pension funds benefiting all adult Bolivian citizens (Jemio et al. 2000).

three elements facilitated the resonance between the visible and the non-visible levels of the social movement.

Conditions of Possibility in Atenco

The case of Atenco shows a slightly different story. Although the *Frente Popular* crafted a collective action frame that helped to publicise existing grievances, to construct strong collective identities, and to appeal to powerful movement allies, this SMO did not face the same conditions of possibility that the *Coordinadora* did in Cochabamba. In this respect, it is worth mentioning at least four obstacles that hampered the resonance between constructed discourses and collective identities during the visible and the non-visible phases of the social movement in Atenco: the extent that social movement alliances were sustainable throughout the various stages of conflict, the political context, the organisational traits of the *Frente Popular*, and the movement's framing strategies towards the end of the conflict.

Firstly, a closer look to the movement headed by the *Frente Popular* in Atenco reveals that there were two kinds of supporters in the affected communities: those who wanted to stop the project at any cost and those who wanted to bargain for a better deal with the government. Both groups backed the creation of the *Frente Popular* and agreed on strategies that were pursued at the beginning of the conflict in Atenco and Texcoco. They worked together to attract powerful allies, gain critical mass, and create bargaining resources. It was necessary to gain visibility, to appeal to public opinion, to problematise the airport project, and to expand the scope of conflict. However, their ultimate goals and their political orientation differed sharply and some supporters of the *Frente Popular* eventually became disaffected.

On the one hand, choosing Texcoco as the ideal site to build the new airport put the affected communities on the map. This situation represented 'the opening of political space' (Gamson and Meyer 1996:277): those semi-urban people who had been living in an institutional limbo became unexpectedly important from a developmental point of view; even if it was just because the land where they were living was necessary to build the NIAMC. Although the airport project represented a grievance, it also presented an important opportunity to improve the conditions in Atenco and Texcoco. In other words, it represented a chance for communities that had remained invisible to public policies for more than three decades to place their demands, raise their voices, and attract the attention of authorities, regardless of the expropriation decrees. This was the case of the moderate factions within the *Frente Popular.*

On the other hand, although the conflict in Atenco did not open any substantial space for the emergence of alternative ways of political and social representation as happened with the *Coordinadora* in Cochabamba, the airport project did represent a new opportunity for social movement organisations that had traditionally opposed the PRI and that became opposition 'orphans' and lost their political flag after the historical elections in 2000. The magnitude of the airport project and the initial leanings of public opinion exerted a kind of gravitational effect: 'everyone wanted to be in the picture because it was an opportunity to show that the right-wing *Partido Acción Nacional* (PAN) had to pay its dues if it was to claim the title of *gobierno de la transición*.

However, when the *Frente Popular* changed its demands –e.g. calling for municipal autonomy-, transformed its collective discourse, and resorted to more radical repertoires of contention it induced a realignment of its own movement allies. As already mentioned above, institutional actors and technical and legal advisers distanced themselves from events in Atenco; public opinion became less favourable for the movement; and many affected communities withdrew their support to the *Frente*

Popular. At the same time, new actors came into play. The *Frente Popular* attracted groups that are more radical compared with the FPFV or the EZLN and whose support became particularly influential during the last phases of the conflict.[16]

The Bolivian case by contrast shows a similar division between 'radicals' and 'moderates', but the separation is only relevant throughout the first stages of mobilisation. Supporters of the *Coordinadora* were first split between those who wanted mere amendments to the contract with AdT and those who wanted its full cancellation. This distribution changed after technical advisors to the *Coordinadora* found and publicised more technical and legal faults in the concession contract and in the respective legal reforms. At the same time, government representatives committed significant political errors; they dismissed the *Coordinadora* as an invalid channel of representation, ordered the detention of movement spokesmen, and backed the repression of protests and marches during February and April 2000.

While the aggregation of demands and the accumulation of radical powerful allies eventually eclipsed the interests of moderate groups that had supported the *Frente Popular* in Mexico, Cochabamba experienced a radicalisation phase that aligned different constituencies, both moderate and radical. The peak of this radicalisation in the Bolivian case became obvious when the *Coordinadora* organised a public consultation which estimated that 96 percent of the population supported the cancellation of the concession contract. This was followed by a week of continuous demonstrations and road blockades that culminated in protesters bypassing the *Coordinadora* spokesmen, taking over the headquarters of SEMAPA, and demanding that AdT should leave the country. Only a few voices expressed discontent immediately after the private concessionaire was expelled from Bolivia.

The second obstacle was socio-political contextual. From a comparative perspective, the Bolivian political party system was experiencing a crisis of representation in 2000 whereas the Mexican party system was still experiencing the last spurts of confidence after the first opposition party president had been elected one year before the project's official announcement. Therefore, the discourse publicised by the *Coordinadora* was more likely to echo across broader sectors of the population. The struggle found resonance with groups calling for 'participatory democracy' across broad constituencies that were very dissimilar at the outset. This was not the case in Mexico, where public opinion and key supporters alienated from the *Frente Popular* after radical sectors took over the course of the movement and demanded Atenco to be declared autonomous municipality. Overall, the political opportunity structure in Mexico was narrower because the PAN had just won the presidential elections after more than seventy years of uninterrupted PRI rule, and broad sectors of the Mexican population were optimistic about the political transition.

Thirdly, it is also possible that tensions between different factions of the social movement in Atenco were exacerbated by the organisational traits of the *Frente Popular*, which seems to be more hierarchical and centralised in comparison to the *Coordinadora* in Cochabamba and which seems to have some characteristic ingredients of what Cornelius (1975:139-150) calls 'urban *caciquismo*'. Supporters of the *Coordinadora* could express openly their opinions as long as they kept participating actively and continuously; the people's inputs and concerns were actually taken into account, based on the idea of the 'plebeian crowd'. In contrast, even though supporters of the *Frente Popular* were welcome to join the movement of resistance, their opportunities to contribute to the movement's discussion were more restricted (Reforma 22-09-02). This

[16] An example is the Ejército Popular Revolucionario (EPR), a guerrilla that endorses a much more confrontational discourse (Bruhn 1999:29-30).

factor shaped the spaces for participation, created asymmetries between different movement supporters, and contributed to channelling the processes of identity formation and demand-making in a different manner. Thus, the dialogical relation between the hidden processes of identification and the more visible articulation of demands in the case of Atenco was thwarted when it came down to taking certain strategic and tactical decisions such as whether or not to negotiate with the government, and whether or not to release control of the municipal offices after the project was cancelled.

Fourth and finally, the *Frente Popular* never managed to construct a discourse that was nearly as inclusive and elaborated[17] as that of the *Coordinadora's.* Whereas the *Coordinadora's* core claims travelled much better across different social groups –i.e. 'water is a condition for the reproduction of life'-, this was not the case of the *Frente Popular* who endorsed more issue-oriented claims such as the 'land is not for sale' or less credible demands as 'declaring an autonomous municipality'. In this respect, the differing levels of elaboration and inclusiveness between both discourses are partly explained by the nature of the respective grievances themselves, but they are also partly explained by the differing organisational experience of the movement leaders.

Even though people in Atenco had some mobilising experience derived from organising traditional festivities and from articulating their demands against the state, this was not comparable with the experience that key members and spokesmen of the *Coordinadora* could offer to the movement against the privatisation of WSS in Bolivia. Some of those who joined the opposition against AdT were ex-leaders from mining centres that closed down in the late 1980s and who migrated to Chapare and to the City of Cochabamba (Toranzo 2006:11). Others were leaders of unions such as the FFC, and yet others were intellectuals who were involved in social movements and guerrillas throughout the 1970s and 1980s.[18]

Conclusions and Further Reflections

This work has used two case studies to show that identity-centred analyses such as those endorsed by NSM theorists are not necessarily incompatible with the study of discourses and more general framing strategies. In this respect, the concept of *conditions of possibility*, defined as *the contextual and organisational conditions that help the resonance between constructed discourses and collective identities during the visible and the non-visible phases of a social movement,* has been proposed as a way to bridge these two analytical angles. The concept is also useful to explain divergent patterns and outcomes between different instances of social mobilisation which are not easy to identify if both theoretical approaches remain unconnected.

For example, the *Frente Popular* and the *Coordinadora* could be explained in terms of their framing strategies. They crafted discourses –or collective action frames- that were powerful enough to overcome the mobilisation of bias, to appeal to powerful allies, and to construct and publicise collective identities that worked as a pre-condition for collective action and contributed to the opposition against policies promoted by the Mexican and Bolivian states respectively. However, both social movements can also be explained through a 'new social movement' perspective that gives more importance to

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[17] Following Snow and Benford (1992), cited in Noonan (1995:87), 'elaborated…frames are more flexible and inclusive…allowing numerous aggrieved groups to tap it and elaborate their grievances in terms of its basic problem-solving schemata…'

[18] An example is the current Vice-president, Alvaro García Linera, who used to support the Revolutionary Movement Tupac Katari (MRTK).

cultural politics and processes of identification *through* collective action which were not necessarily publicised through a social movement discourse and still contributed to their final outcomes.

In this respect, this work has argued that significant differences between both social movements surface when the dialogical relation between these two universes is studied with more detail. In the case of Cochabamba, the prevailing economic crisis in 2000, the crisis of political representation suffered by traditional political parties, the government dismissive responses towards the social movement, and the flexible and non-hierarchical organisation of the *Coordinadora* represented the main conditions of possibility that helped the dialogical relation between the hidden and the visible phases of collective action. In contrast, in the case of Atenco, the change towards more radical demands in the context of a narrower political opportunity, the organisational traits of the *Frente Popular*, and the collective action frame itself did not favoured the same dialogical relation.

Ultimately, the theoretical discussion presented above shows that there are different levels of explanation as to why people join social movements. On a first and non-visible level, people who are exposed to contradictory requirements of a social system begin to construct a contentious identity, both individually and in small groups. In this respect, people might complain, share grievances, and articulate demands, but a social movement has a limited impact if these are not publicised and become more visible. That is why a second level of explanation should focus on the generalisation and homogenisation of demands which is always necessary to articulate and connect individual grievances, and to attract others to the group. It is only then that analysing collective action frames becomes more useful.

And yet, this is not the end of the story. Even with a discourse that appeals to a social group, with available organisational resources, and with an environment that is conducive for collective action, the decision to mobilise is ultimately a personal decision. Moreover, potential supporters are not passive recipients of the messages contained in the movement's discourse but are active participants that contribute to accept or reject meanings and collective identities (Tilly 2003b). Therefore, the relationship between the visible and non-visible levels of a social movement is necessarily a dialogical one, making it necessary to go back to the less visible level to study processes of self-reflexiveness and identity formation.

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